

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 20 OCTOBER 1885**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 20 October, 1885.

Questions. — Petitions. — Assent to Bills. — Question without Notice. — Formal Motion. — Noble Estate Enabling Bill—third reading. — Cooktown Railway Extension. — Beamaraba Branch Railway. — Federal Council (Adopting) Bill (Queensland) — second reading. — Pacific Island Labourers Act Amendment Bill — committee. — Supply — resumption of committee. — Adjournment.

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

### QUESTIONS.

Mr. SHERIDAN asked the Minister for Works—

If it is true that tenders for a number of ballast waggons have been called for with a condition that a portion of the ironwork is to be supplied from Ipswich and another portion from Rockhampton?

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

A portion of the cast-iron work for the Central Railway waggons is to be supplied from what is in stock at Rockhampton; and some of the wrought-iron work from a quantity ordered in 1883, from England.

Mr. NORTON asked the Colonial Secretary—

Is it the intention of the Government, after the information which they have received to the effect that the German law does not allow subjects of that country to enter into agreements in Germany for service in other countries, to recall Mr. Pietzcker?

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

The Government expect to receive further information from the Agent-General on the subject of Continental emigration in a few days, on receipt of which they will decide whether Mr. Pietzcker should be recalled.

### PETITIONS.

Mr. BEATTIE presented a petition from certain landed proprietors in Fortitude Valley, against the extension of the Southern and Western Railway to Fortitude Valley, as proposed by the Government; and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. BEATTIE, the petition was received.

Mr. MOREHEAD presented a petition from the clergyman, churchwardens, trustees, and members of All Saints Church, Wickham terrace, against the extension of the Southern and Western Railway to Fortitude Valley, as proposed by the Government; and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. MOREHEAD, the petition was received.

### ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER read messages from the Governor, conveying His Excellency's assent, on behalf of Her Majesty, to the following Bills:—Victoria Bridge Closure Bill; Probate Act of 1867 Amendment Bill; and Elections Bill.

### QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. DONALDSON asked the Minister for Works—1. Was the lowest tender accepted for the erection of the Townsville bridge? if not, why not?—2. What was the amount of the lowest tender, and the name of the tenderer?—3. What was the estimated quantity of cast iron, wrought iron, and steel, in the said bridge?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—1. The lowest combined tenders for the supply of material and erection of the Townsville bridge were accepted.—2. Supply of material, £9,223; erection, £8,868. G. H. Royce.—3. Cast iron, 261 tons; wrought iron, 303 tons; steel, 39 tons.

### FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. BUCKLAND—

That there be laid on the table of the House,—

1. All papers in connection with the employment of John Harvey as horse-driver, etc., to the Water Conservation Department during the construction of the dam at Aramac, from August, 1882, to March, 1883, or thereabouts.

2. The nature of the agreement and the amount of wages actually paid to the said John Harvey.

### NOBLE ESTATE ENABLING BILL—

#### THIRD READING.

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

### COOKTOWN RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following Resolutions, namely:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Cooktown Railway from 50 miles to 62 miles (third section), as laid upon the table of the House on the 13th instant.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Cooktown Railway from 50 miles to 62 miles (third section), as laid upon the table of the House on the 13th instant.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

—said he might as well point out to hon. members that the second section of the Cooktown Railway had already been approved of by Parliament; but the place at which the section terminated was very inconvenient for the purpose of forming a

station; and hence the necessity for the short section now proposed, which would extend the line as far as the Laura River, where there was a very convenient and good place for the purpose of forming a station. The first section, which was about 32 miles in length, would be completed within about a month or six weeks at the outside. The second section, which, as he had said, had been already approved of by Parliament, was about 18 miles in length, and the plans now on the table proposed an extension for 12 miles further to the Laura River, where there was a good place for the purpose of a terminal station. Mr. Ballard, in his report, said:—

"The object of submitting this short section is to provide a suitable terminus, there being none until the Laura River is reached. We propose to place the terminus at or about 61 miles where there is a suitable site on the east bank of the Laura River.

"The line may be called an easy one and the earth-works will be unimportant. Escort Creek is crossed at 51½ miles, where 250 feet of opening will be required. Sandy Creek, at 53½ miles, will require 400 feet of opening; Slaty Creek, at 56½ miles, 260 feet; and the Deighton River, at 57½ miles, will require 800 feet of opening; Scrubby Creek, at 60 miles, will require 30 feet of opening; and the Laura River, at the end of the section, will probably require about 800 or 900 feet of opening."

There was no land to be resumed on that portion of the line, and Mr. Ballard estimated the cost of construction at about £4,000 per mile. He said the steepest gradient would be 1 in 55, and the sharpest curve need not exceed 20 chains. There was also an abundance of ballast and timber on the line. He had already explained the object of extending the line to the Laura River. He had not been there himself, but he was informed that the land between the end of the second section and the Laura River was good. Whether there was likely to be very much settlement there or not he did not know, but one thing was settled: that line was to be carried to the Palmer Gold Fields, and if they were to be worked profitably it could only be with the assistance of railway communication. He believed that when those gold-fields came to be developed by deep sinking they would turn out successful and profitable. It was, therefore, very necessary that that line should be extended so as to enable them to properly develop that very extensive goldfield at the Palmer. He therefore moved the resolution standing in his name.

Mr. HAMILTON said he would like to know whether there had been an examination by a surveyor of the two lines? On the Cooktown line there was a point of divergence to Palmerville and Maytown, after one got a certain distance on the second section. There the line diverged and might be constructed straight to Maytown or by way of Palmerville. He would like to know if a surveyor had examined those routes, and if the Minister for Works had a report from the Chief Engineer as to the comparative length of the lines diverging from that point to Maytown and Palmerville, and as to the comparative cost of construction of a railway along each route?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no report upon the subject of the various routes; but he could inform the hon. member that under any circumstances the line must proceed to the Laura River; before there was a divergence one way or the other. He understood the hon. member wanted to ascertain whether there had been any report as to which was the best route to take—whether to Maytown or to Palmerville?

Mr. HAMILTON: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had had no such report, but he could inform the hon. member that up to this point it would be equally to the advantage of either route.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is the point to which this section is to go?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; to the Laura River.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Works had stated that the object of carrying the line on as proposed was because there was not a proper place for a terminal station at the 50-mile peg, and it was necessary to carry the line on to the Laura River to have a good place for the line to stop for some time. He would like to know at what time the Minister for Works got that information about the 50-mile peg not being a suitable place for a terminus; or why, if the information was not in his possession, tenders were called for a second section of 18 miles only? He believed it was better to call for a long section than a short one, and why should it be divided into two? He was quite aware that the terminus proposed for the last section was not a suitable one, and it was a great blunder on the part of the surveyors to propose that the 50-mile peg should be made the terminus. It was in the middle of sandy country, 8 miles short of the Deighton River, at a place where there was neither timber nor water, nor grass, nor any convenience whatever. No wonder the Minister now had to propose an extension of 12 miles. He saw that the surveyor, in his report, held out the most dismal prospects, and thought it would be years before the line could pay. The same thing had been said of the Maryborough and Gympie line, the Charters Towers and Townsville line, and a great many other lines. A surveyor had no right to come to a hasty conclusion of that sort about a line of which he knew so little as to propose that the second section should end in the middle of a desert. The second section should have been carried on to the Deighton or the Laura, at first, instead of only going a paltry 10 or 12 miles. It showed there was not sufficient information about the lines when it was proposed to carry them out on such conditions as that. He had intended to refer to the inconvenient terminus at the 50-mile peg when the Estimates were going through. The Minister now was short of information. He neither told them where the line was going nor when there was likely to be a further extension. Until there was a further extension the report of the surveyor might be true—that the line would not pay—but that was all the more reason for pushing it on. The sooner the department came to a decision which way the line was going the better.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, while not intending to oppose the motion, he wished to call the attention of the Minister for Works to the handwriting on the wall, which showed that his reign and the reign of the present Ministry would not be a long one. The people of St. George found their portion of the colony was so shamefully neglected in the matter of railway communication that they were appealing to another colony to give the assistance their own Government refused. No doubt the answer of the Minister for Works would be that it was proposed by the Government to construct a second railway to Warwick and extend it to Goondiwindi and St. George. He did not think there was the slightest chance of such a line receiving the sanction of any Queensland Parliament. The people of St. George had asked for bread and were offered a stone—although they had not got even the stone yet. While the Government persistently refused to extend the railway from Dalby to St. George—though it could easily be done at very slight cost, and with the certainty of a large traffic, not only from this colony but from the northern portions of New South Wales—they told the Committee they

were prepared to spend an enormous sum of money on a prospecting railway that might or might not pay—it depended upon what happened at the Etheridge. The railway to St. George by the shortest route—that was through Dalby—would not be a prospecting line, but would at once bring in an enormous amount of traffic. He was certain both the hon. members for Toowoomba would join him in condemning as a monstrous extravagance the proposition of the present Government to make a second line to Warwick, and proceed thence through almost desert country to Goondiwindi and on through almost equally desert country to St. George, while by a comparatively short and inexpensive line they could connect the metropolis with St. George, and, by going on to Cunnamulla, tap the great southern and western interior of the colony—always supposing that the Government assimilated their rates of carriage to the rates in New South Wales. Unless they did that, no matter what railways they made approaching the New South Wales border, they would never get the traffic which the colony had a right to. The present Administration made railways in the North almost into space, hoping they might get traffic. Possibly they would; he hoped they would—he believed they would; but at the same time they left a large electorate, which up till within the last year or two had been a very prosperous community, though now suffering severely from the drought—they allowed, or rather forced, the inhabitants of that portion of the colony, when all hope of assistance from this colony had failed, to appeal to the Government of another colony to bring railways to the border and carry away their produce. He admitted that his sympathies were entirely with the people of St. George; he thought it his duty to strongly advise them to send in the petition they contemplated; and he would do all in his power to get the Government of New South Wales to extend their line to Mungindi. They were so shamefully neglected by the present Government of Queensland that nothing else could be done. It might be a step towards federation. Perhaps it was an insidious design of the Premier's to promote federation by driving trade out of the colony, but that was a policy which was not likely to find favour with the constituencies. He sincerely hoped the members for Toowoomba, Darling Downs, and Dalby would assist him in preventing the enormous and uncalled-for expenditure on what was called the short line to New South Wales. It was an expenditure which was perfectly unwarranted, and which would in no way bring about the good which those people pretended who promulgated the scheme.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government had not the slightest intention of entering upon a discussion of the St. George railway at the present time. It was all very well for the hon. member for Balonne to try and get up a scare about our trade going over the border, but the question at present before the Committee was for the approval of plans and sections for an extension of the Cooktown Railway. He failed to understand what the hon. member for Burke was complaining about, unless it was that the sections were too long. But it was always desirable to have the sections as long as possible, for several reasons. One was that there was more likely to be a trade on a long section than on a short one. The second section of the Cooktown Railway was only 18 miles in length, and it was not likely that any contractor at a distance would put in a tender for so short a length; therefore a third section, giving an additional 12 miles, had been added. They would consequently be more likely to get an acceptable tender for the work. But for that they would have been entirely in the hands of

the present contractor, who had all his plant there. Whatever deviation might afterwards be made, it could not be made before reaching the Laura River. He had no information beyond this, that he knew that trial surveys had been made.

Mr. HAMILTON asked whether any permanent survey was being made beyond the Laura River in the direction of Palmerville?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that no permanent survey was going on beyond the point up to which the sanction of the Committee was now asked. There had been a trial survey in both directions; but he was not in a position to give any information about them.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he thought the Minister for Works was shutting his eyes to facts, when he referred to what had been said by the hon. member for Balonne as an attempt to get up a scare about the New South Wales people taking our trade over the border. If the hon. member had listened to the Colonial Treasurer the other night, he would have learned that it was a fact, and a very disagreeable fact, and that it had been going on for some time. It had been the policy of every previous Government to facilitate trade between the southern part of the colony and the coast and the interior, but the efforts of the present Government seemed to be directed to driving trade across the border. The hon. gentleman would learn before long, from the discontent that actually existed among the merchants of Brisbane, that the hon. member for Balonne was referring to an actually existing fact when he spoke about the discontent that prevailed along the Queensland border as to what the Government proposed to do with regard to railway communication. That was a disagreeable fact that the hon. gentleman would have to deal with before long. However, coming to the question before the Committee, he wanted to understand from the Minister for Works whether he had it in a report from the Chief Engineer that the part of the line for which he now asked the approval of the Committee would be common to whichever route was ultimately adopted, whether to Palmerville or to Maytown? The Government surely did not contemplate changing the instructions they had received from Parliament to make a line from Cooktown to Maytown! The money for that specific purpose was voted in 1882. He had been told that the section for which sanction was now asked would go beyond what he might call the point of junction, and that if they gave their sanction to it they would be actually committing themselves to a line to Palmerville, and not to Maytown. No doubt Maytown was not at present a flourishing goldfield, but that it would ultimately be one he had very little doubt, and it was mainly to assist in that development that the railway was ordered to be constructed. But there was nothing whatever to justify the Government in making a railway thirty miles down a river, where there was neither a goldfield nor a population to make it pay. In fact, he did not think they knew about it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no special report from the Chief Engineer on the point referred to by the hon. member, but he had always understood that the line to the Laura River was common to both deviations, whether to Palmerville or to Maytown. If the Committee approved of the present plans and sections, however, he would take special care that tenders should not be called for beyond that point, which would be equally suitable for both lines.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said they had got a pledge from the Minister for Works that he would not take any action in pushing the

railway beyond what he had spoken of as the junction, unless with the sanction of Parliament. It would have been much more satisfactory, of course, if the Committee could have been positively assured that that point had not been reached, because it would have saved them from sanctioning plans and sections which would not ultimately be carried out. Did he understand the hon. gentleman to say that there was no intention to change the destination of the railway from Maytown and take it to Palmerville—that he intended to stand by the resolution of the House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was the intention of the Government to make the line where it was likely to be most profitable and suitable for the district. It was not determined whether the line would go to Palmerville or to Maytown. As he had already stated, he had been led to believe that up to the point mentioned the line would be equally available for both routes, and, with respect to the extension beyond that, tenders would not be called for it until the Government were thoroughly satisfied as to which was the best route to take—whether to Palmerville or Maytown.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentlemen had stated that it had not been determined whether the line should go to Palmerville or Maytown, but he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) understood that that was determined by the House when they voted the money. They passed a vote for a railway from Cooktown to Maytown, and not to Palmerville. He did not know whether the hon. gentleman knew the difference there was between the two places. One was in the centre of a large auriferous district; the other—Palmerville—was outside the borders of that district, 30 miles down the river, and several miles below where payable gold had been got. If it was determined not to take the line to Maytown the Minister for Works must rescind the resolution the House came to before; but he held that it had been determined, and that the Minister for Works would make a great mistake if he attempted to take the line towards Palmerville. It would go through pastoral country that was comparatively useless. He did not know whether the Minister for Works had ever been in that part of the country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Several members of the House had been. He himself had been there. He was not certain whether the Premier had been there.

The PREMIER: No.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: If the hon. gentleman had been there he would know that a very large portion of the country was nearly useless—or, as described by the hon. member for Burke, sandy desert. The hon. gentleman said he had an impression on his mind, although he had no report from the engineer respecting the portion of the line he now asked the Committee to approve, that it was common to both routes—to Palmerville and Maytown; but how did he get that impression if it was not from a report of the engineer? Was it because it crossed the Laura River? The difference, so far as the Laura was concerned, was that in one case the line would cross it higher up and in the other lower down; so that the impression on the hon. gentleman's mind could not have arisen simply because the line crossed the Laura. If he crossed the Laura 12 or 15 miles lower down than he ought to cross it to go to Maytown, he would certainly go in the direction of Palmerville. If the hon. gentleman took the line to Maytown,

as he was bound to do by the resolution of the House passed years ago, he would take it through the centre of a goldfield. For 20 or 25 miles it would go through auriferous country which would be very profitably worked when the district was brought into communication with the seat coast by railway; but if he took it to Palmerville it would pass through poor country where there was no gold and almost no minerals of any kind, and which was only fit for stocking with cattle at about one head to fifty acres. As the hon. gentleman knew something about stock, he could form an idea what sort of country that was. The only way a railway would pay there, was by taking it through the conglomerate right into Maytown, and that was his intention when he introduced the resolution into the House some years ago; and he believed it was also the intention of the House in adopting it. If the line was taken to Palmerville it would be lengthened. No doubt the engineer would take it through the easiest country from an engineering point of view, to get as much *kudos* as possible for himself, but, at the same time, it would lengthen the line about 20 miles, and the expenditure for the additional length would very likely make the railway through the difficult country going direct to Maytown through the conglomerate. Of course hon. members were aware that most goldfields were in country more or less hilly, and therefore more or less difficult for railway building, and the engineer would avoid that if he possibly could—unless he was compelled to take the line that way. He was certain, notwithstanding the impression on the mind of the Minister for Works, that the line now proposed was not common to both routes. He had been to Maytown but not to Palmerville, but he knew the character of the country there, and they must cross the Laura to go to either place. If he knew the particular portion of the Laura which the line crossed, he would have a better knowledge whether it was going straight to Maytown or to Palmerville, or whether that line was common to both routes. He thought the Minister for Works should be certain about that before he asked the Committee to approve of the plans, because he might possibly be taking the line in a direction the House did not approve of.

Mr. CAMPBELL said he did not know the country the proposed line would go through, but he did know that the line approved of when the late Government were in office was from Cooktown to Maytown. However, he rose chiefly to refer to some remarks made by the hon. member for Balonne. He wished to endorse, as well as he could, all that had fallen from that hon. member with respect to the line to St. George. He was sure the cheapest and nearest and best route for a large section of the hon. member's constituents would be to take the line from somewhere about Dalby, and not according to the plan proposed by the Minister for Works. He (Mr. Campbell) knew every inch of the country from Warwick to St. George, and for the first 50 miles the proposed line traversed it would scarcely feed the rabbits they had heard so much about. There was not likely to be any settlement there. It was indifferent country to Goondiwindi; after that it was fairly good country, but unfortunately for the community that land had been secured by the action of the Land Board to the pastoral tenant, and consequently no settlement could take place upon that to any extent. If the line was taken from Dalby, or Yeulba, or even from the station of the proposed Beauaraba line, either of those three routes would be much more profitable and convenient for the people of St. George and the surrounding country than the one proposed to be taken from Warwick.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said, to go back to the line before the Committee, if hon. members would look at the plans and the map they would see that the course of the survey up to the Laura River was common to both routes—Maytown and Palmerville. The Opposition appeared to think that the Minister for Works had got some insidious desire to change, in some crafty manner, the route from Maytown—the route that had been ordered by that House; but he (Mr. Lumley Hill) had not seen any such desire, nor heard of it before, and he did not understand why any objection should be taken to the action of the Minister for Works. The hon. member for Burke had taken exception to the course he adopted in removing the terminus from a bad place to a good place, but he (Mr. Lumley Hill) thought it was the only and the best thing he could do. He did not see that there was any cause for blaming him for that, even if an additional section had to be provided for. He believed the Minister was pushing the line on as fast as he could, and no doubt it would produce very good results from the opening up of extensive reefs and other mineral country. From a mineral point of view the resources of the district were unlimited.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he might inform the hon. member for Townsville that the present Government had never interfered in any way as to the route the railway in question should take. The instructions given in the first instance to the Engineer-in-Chief had not been altered, and the Government had no intention whatever of diverting the line to Palmerville. He was himself of opinion that the best country was towards Maytown.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was the Minister for Works who himself raised a doubt when he stated that the Government had not determined whether the railway should go to Maytown or Palmerville. The original instructions were to make a line from Cooktown to Maytown, and as the Minister said now that he intended making the line to Maytown, he (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) was perfectly satisfied. The hon. member for Cook, however, was mistaken when he said that the plans showed whether the line was going to Palmerville or Maytown.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said what he stated was that the third section of the line was common to both routes.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that if the plan did show that the section was common to both no one could have a word to say about the matter, not even after the expressed doubts of the Minister for Works. He, however, had a right to know that the line was going to Maytown. Its only chance of paying was by going straight over the Laura to Maytown. If it went to Palmerville it would not pay during the present generation.

Mr. HAMILTON said he failed to see how the plans could show that a certain point was common to both routes. There were only two members who had been over both routes—Mr. Palmer and himself. His own opinion was that the point at the end of the third section would determine that the railway would go to Palmerville. He was borne out in that opinion by a gentleman who came from Maytown the other day. That gentleman was chairman of the Ham Board and the Progress Association at Maytown, and had been assured by the Minister for Mines that the direction taken by the third section did not determine the route of the railway in the slightest degree. On the way down, however, he saw the surveyor at work on the third section, who had given him the following information, according to a letter which he (Mr. Hamilton) had just received. The surveyor who was

engaged on the line should surely know what was doing. The chairman of the Ham Board had written to him as follows:—

“Riding down from Maytown, some three weeks ago, I interviewed the survey party’s encampment, and the head of the party did not disguise the fact that he was now engaged on the permanent survey of a railway to Palmerville; assuring me of the fact that otherwise the route would have struck off in the direction of the range ten miles back; at the same time reminding me that he had told me so twelve months ago.”

He (Mr. Hamilton), however, was satisfied with the pledge of the Minister for Works that if he ascertained that such was the case he would see that tenders were not called for the construction of a railway towards Palmerville past the point of divergence. But for that assurance he could not have supported the passing of the third section. He agreed with the hon. member for Townsville in saying that it would be a perfect farce to make a railway to Palmerville. Such a line would not go through auriferous country, but only through some very fair land. The Minister for Works had himself stated that to make the railway pay it must be made to the goldfields, the development of which would create traffic. The making of a line to Palmerville would develop no goldfield. There were no reefs at Palmerville. The nearest working reef to it was 22 miles distant. Many years ago alluvial gold was discovered at Palmerville, but that locality had been deserted even by Chinamen long ago. Maytown, on the other hand, was the centre of the present goldfield in that district, and Mr. Jack, whom everyone would acknowledge as our greatest authority, as well as everyone who had any knowledge of the place, were of the opinion that the auriferous resources of the district were immense, and only required the facility of railway communication to become developed. If the railway was taken to Maytown by Palmerville, it would not only be very much greater in length, but would pass through 25 miles of very rough country. As the reason for the construction of the line was admitted to be the development of the Palmer Gold Field, it was evident that it was to that goldfield the railway should be constructed, instead of to a point over 20 miles outside the goldfield. Although the route direct to Maytown might cost more per mile, still the distance would be shorter, and the line nearly the whole distance from the point of divergence would pass through auriferous country. On the Palmerville route, on the other hand, there would be nothing to create traffic. The Minister had assured them that if the third section was approved of he would accept no tender for railway construction which would determine that it should go to Palmerville, and they had to be satisfied with that assurance. He hoped that the Minister would, as soon as possible, put them in possession of information as to the comparative distance and cost of construction of lines from the point of divergence to Maytown and Palmerville.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the House had ordered the construction of a line from Cooktown to Maytown, and the Government, even if they were so inclined, could not carry it to Palmerville without getting the sanction of the House.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he was glad to hear the last remark of the Minister for Works. It seemed, however, that it was the intention of the engineer who had charge of the survey to take the line to Palmerville. The hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, had said that the plans and sections showed on the face of them that the third section of the line was common to Maytown and Palmerville. That was not the case.

There was nothing whatever to show that the section for which sanction of the Committee was now asked was common to both routes. There was nothing whatever to identify the position, but there was a great deal that would lead him to suppose that it was a long way from the Maytown road; because, if it were anywhere within half-a-mile of it, the road would be shown upon the plan. There was no reference whatever to the Maytown road that would lead the engineer to come to the conclusion that it was different from the present one, at all events. Now that the attention of the Minister had been directed to the matter he hoped he would see that the line was not being diverted by the engineer to a different place from what Parliament intended it should go. He had never seen the plans until to-day. There was another point well worth the consideration of the Minister for Works. He read to them, from the report of the Chief Engineer, that the line was to cost £4,000 per mile. If they looked at the plan they would see that it was a mere surface line all the way, and as straight as the proverbial line from St. Petersburg to Moscow. It could be ruled on the plan from one end to the other. There were no curves or cuttings, but yet it was to cost £4,000 per mile, and the same engineer had often told them that he could make such a line for £2,500 per mile, and had even offered to make them himself for £3,500 throughout the whole colony. There must be some wonderful change in the construction of the lines initiated since he knew the department, and it was a change that ought to receive the sanction of the Committee. He did not think Parliament ought to sanction the expenditure of £4,000 per mile upon a level line like that.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Minister for Works had frequently taken up the position of not interfering with the engineers or heads of departments, but he would have to depart from that position in the present instance if he meant to take the line to Maytown, as if he let the engineer have his own way, he would take it to Palmerville. There was not the slightest doubt about that; he would take it upon that route from an engineering point of view. The Minister must give the engineer instructions to go to Maytown, or else he would go in another direction. If anyone looked at the map he would see that the line was going to Palmerville and passing Maytown, which was left some miles off; and if the Committee determined to make a line to Maytown it would have to come back about 25 miles through the same kind of country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the Chief Engineer was instructed by the Minister for Works, who was not a professional man, he would be apt to lead him astray, and cause a great deal more cost to the country than if he were allowed to carry out his own ideas. As to the engineer's estimate, he had repeatedly found that the tenders were considerably under it—in some cases as much as £10,000; it made little difference what amount was stated in the engineer's estimate. He did not feel disposed to interfere with a professional man and instruct him to build railways on this or that gradient, or this or that curve. He was under the impression that when the hon. member for Townsville was Minister for Works he interfered a little too much with the engineer, and a great deal of his work had to be done over again, in the way of cutting down gradients on the Sandgate line, at a tremendous cost. The hon. gentleman knew very well they were not able to carry heavy traffic on that line on the steep gradients.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman ought to know that it did not require

a professional man to say whether the line should go to Palmerville or to Maytown; no professional skill was required to decide upon that. The Minister should give instructions to the engineer to take the line to Maytown. If he did not, he would take it to Palmerville. It was no answer to that, to point out that he was cutting down the gradients upon the Sandgate Railway. If the hon. gentleman knew anything about the Sandgate line, he would know that there was no gradient upon it steeper than 1 in 50, which was the ruling gradient upon all lines in the southern part of the colony. The gradient the hon. gentleman was having reduced was no blot upon the late Minister for Works; it was a blunder on the part of the engineer. He supposed the hon. gentleman referred to the gradient between the stations of Albion and Lutwyche, which was an ascending one the whole way. No other engineer would ever have begun to start from a railway station on a gradient of 1 in 50; but he did so. The engines had no impetus upon them, and they could not get up, because they had to start at the bottom, which was a very different thing from running at it. It was a blunder on the part of the engineer. The only instructions were that the gradients should be the same as those upon the Southern line, which was done; but instead of easing the gradient from the station he started at the bottom, and it was very hard for an engine to go up it. That was not the fault of the Minister for Works, but of the engineer. Nevertheless, he hoped that in the present case the engineer would be instructed to carry the line to Maytown, even although the engineer was a professional man and the hon. gentleman was not.

Mr. HAMILTON said he quite agreed with the hon. member for Townsville, that special instructions should be given to the surveyor to carry the line to Maytown, because the railway was determined upon by Parliament for the purpose of opening up and developing that goldfield. Would it not be absurd, for instance, if, after a line had been decided upon from Brisbane to Gympie, the surveyor should be allowed to take it to a point 50 miles or 60 miles to the left or right instead, simply because there were fewer engineering difficulties? The absurdity was just as great in the present case. Because the engineering difficulties were less on the line to Palmerville was no reason why the line should not be taken direct to Maytown. It was the intention of Parliament that the goldfield at Maytown should be developed, and so far as that was concerned it would be as much developed by a railway to Cape York as by a railway to Palmerville. It was a resolution of the House that a railway should be made to the centre of the Palmer Gold Field. Maytown was that centre; and the resolution should be carried into effect, and the engineers not be allowed to take the line to Palmerville simply because it was easier to do so.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the Chairman leave the chair and report the resolution to the House.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to ask the Minister for Works if he intended cutting down all the gradients of 1 in 50 in the southern portion of the colony, or was he cutting down the one he (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) had referred to on account of the blunder made by the engineer?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he only intended to cut down the one the hon. gentleman referred to, as it was very hard to start a heavy train there. He was very sorry if he had offended the hon. gentleman. On suburban lines

the stations were very close together and it was very difficult to start a train straight away from them. It was not intended to cut down all such gradients.

Question put and passed.

The report was adopted.

#### BEAUARABA BRANCH RAILWAY.

The SPEAKER read a message from the Legislative Council intimating their concurrence in the resolutions sent up from the Assembly with respect to the proposed Beauaraba Branch Railway.

#### FEDERAL COUNCIL (ADOPTING) BILL (QUEENSLAND)—SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—On the 22nd of July last year I moved—

“That a humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that Her Majesty may be graciously pleased to cause a measure to be submitted to the Imperial Parliament for the purpose of constituting a Federal Council of Australasia, upon the basis of the draft Bill adopted by the Convention held in Sydney in the months of November and December, 1883.”

On the following day, the 23rd of July, an address was adopted, which, after the usual loyal assurances, proceeded thus :—

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

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

The motion that I made was seconded by the hon. member for Balonne, who was then leading the Opposition in the absence of the hon. member for Mulgrave, and was unanimously adopted by this House. Similar resolutions, in the same terms, I think, were adopted by the Legislatures of all the Australian colonies except New South Wales, where the question was put aside by a majority of one on a vote on the “previous question.” The Bill which had been prepared by the Convention in Sydney was adopted by them in a resolution which I have read on more than one occasion, and will now read again to the House. It is as follows :—

“That this Convention, recognising that the time has not yet arrived at which a complete federal union of the Australasian Colonies can be attained, but considering that there are many matters of general interest with respect to which united action would be advantageous, adopts the accompanying draft Bill for the constitution of a Federal Council, as defining the matters upon which, in its opinion, such united action is both desirable and practicable at the present time, and as embodying the provisions best adapted to secure that object, so far as it is now capable of attainment.”

The Bill, as adopted by the Convention and approved of by this Parliament and the Parliaments of several other colonies, was submitted to Her Majesty's Government, and, after some discussion between the Colonial Office and the several colonies, a measure was introduced into the Imperial Parliament based almost entirely on the draft which had been prepared in Sydney. There were some minor alterations made in the draft, and these were submitted to the Governments of the various colonies in order that they might express their opinions upon them. I do not think it necessary to call attention to all the alterations which have been made, because, with one exception, they were scarcely anything more than mere

verbal matters, and no objection was taken to them. There was, however, one important alteration. But before going into that matter perhaps I should first explain the scope of the Bill which is now an Act of the Imperial Parliament. It is proposed to constitute a Federal Council of limited authority, with limited powers; not in any sense a federal parliament such as exists in the Dominion of Canada, or such as was proposed in South Africa. This is a matter for which, as stated in the resolution I have just read, the time has not yet arrived, though I trust it may come in the life-time of most of us. But there are many matters in which at the present time common action is desirable. It has been the practice in the past to hold conferences at which various resolutions have been passed defining what would be a proper basis for common action on matters of more or less importance; but those conferences have had no power to give effect to their decisions. Their powers were limited; practically, all they could do was to agree provisionally to some financial arrangement. At the present time the colonies were unable to pass any law which would have effect in more than one colony. There is a great deal of difference between a law having effect in several colonies and a similar law having effect in each of those colonies separately. Take, for instance, the removal of offenders from one colony to another, or the arrest of an offender in one colony who has committed an offence in another. We may in this colony pass an Act providing that a South Australian offender may be arrested and may be taken to the border of Queensland. There our power ends. South Australia may make a similar provision; but the two colonies together cannot provide this simple thing, that an offender committing an offence in South Australia, just across our own border, can be tried somewhere in Queensland. That power is at present possessed only by the Imperial Parliament; and there are numerous matters of that kind. It is extremely inconvenient, to say no more, that we should have recourse to the Imperial Parliament upon such matters—matters which really concern ourselves and not them, and of which they have no special knowledge, and in which they have no special interest. Where they act at all it is upon the recommendation of the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and he receives his information from the colonies themselves. That the time has arrived when some federal action should be taken in respect of matters of this kind need not now be discussed, because it is a proposition which has been assented to in this Parliament and in some of the other colonies before. The Act which the Bill before the House proposes to adopt constitutes a Federal Council to consist of two representatives from each of the constitutional colonies and one from each of the Crown colonies. The way in which the colonies shall appoint their representatives is left entirely to each colony to decide. Each colony may appoint its representatives in any way it likes, either by election or by nomination for life, for a number of years, during pleasure, or in any way they like. The Council will not be constituted until at least four colonies adopt the Act. There are numerous provisions in the Imperial Act to which I scarcely think it necessary to call attention, because they have already received the approval of this House. However, I will call special attention to the 15th clause of the Act. That is the one which confers powers upon the Council. It provides :—

“Saving Her Majesty's prerogative, and subject to the provisions herein contained with respect to the operation of this Act, the Council shall have legislative authority in respect of the several matters following :—

(a) The relations of Australasia with the islands of the Pacific.



- (b) Prevention of the influx of criminals.
- (c) Fisheries in Australasian waters beyond territorial limits.
- (d) The service of civil process of the courts of any colony within Her Majesty's possessions in Australasia out of the jurisdiction of the colony in which it is issued.
- (e) The enforcement of judgments of courts of law of any colony beyond the limits of the colony.
- (f) The enforcement of criminal process beyond the limits of the colony in which it is issued, and the extradition of offenders (including deserters of wives and children, and deserters from the imperial or colonial naval or military forces).
- (g) The custody of offenders on board ships belonging to Her Majesty's Colonial Government beyond territorial limits."

Then comes this general provision :—

- "(h) Such of the following matters as may be referred to the Council by the legislatures of any two or more colonies, that is to say,—general defences, quarantine, patents of invention and discovery, copyright, bills of exchange and promissory notes, uniformity of weights and measures, recognition in other colonies of any marriage or divorce duly solemnised or decreed in any colony, naturalisation of aliens, status of corporations and joint-stock companies in other colonies than that in which they have been constituted, and any other matter of general Australasian interest with respect to which the legislatures of the several colonies can legislate within their own limits, and as to which it is deemed desirable that there should be a law of general application: provided that in such cases the Acts of the Council shall extend only to the colonies by whose legislatures the matter shall have been so referred to it, and such other colonies as may afterwards adopt the same."

Then came general provisions as to the convening of the Council and as to giving the Royal assent to measures passed by them. It was proposed by the Colonial Office that the Federal Council should have jurisdiction to a certain extent over financial matters. The proposition was this :—

"If any Act of the Council involves expenditure, the Council may provide therein that such expenditure shall be constituted and paid by the several colonies in proportion to their population."

That was strongly objected to by this colony and by Victoria and South Australia. The matter was most carefully considered by the Convention held in Sydney, and it was finally agreed there unanimously that if the Federal Council were to be able to impose taxation their constitution must be of an entirely different character. In that case they would have to be an elective body; and the Convention were not disposed to recommend that a body, constituted as it was proposed the Federal Council should be constituted, should have the power to impose taxation, which would really be interfering with the fiscal policies of the colonies. Those matters were the subject of very strong remonstrances to the Secretary of State for the Colonies; and I will take the liberty of reading the observations I made on behalf of this colony on the subject. I said, in a letter which will be found at page 9 of the correspondence laid upon the table of the House :—

"The amendment suggested in the twenty-sixth clause, to the effect that if any Act of the Council involves expenditure the Council may provide that such expenditure shall be contributed and paid by the several colonies in proportion to their population, raises a question of great importance, than which none was more carefully considered by the Convention. A power to authorise the expenditure of money necessarily involves not only an authority to raise the necessary revenue, but an authority to superintend its disbursement. In some form, therefore, such a provision would necessitate the creation of a federal treasury, and the appointment of federal executive officers. Moreover, the individual legislatures might, and probably would, be reluctant to delegate to a body constituted in the manner proposed by the draft Bill any power to expend

money, which would carry with it a power to compel taxation and consequently interfere with the fiscal arrangements of the several colonies.

"Such a proposal as that contained in this amendment would therefore involve a reconsideration of the constitution as well as of the functions of the Council. These and other arguments were fully weighed by the Convention, with the result that a provision of the kind now suggested was intentionally omitted.

"I do not anticipate any real difficulty, however, in the event of any Act of the Federal Council involving expenditure. The case would, no doubt, be dealt with by common agreement, as in the case of the contributions to the expenses of the New Guinea Protectorate.

"For the reasons I have stated, this Government is unable to assent to the proposed amendment."

That amendment was dropped. A further amendment was proposed, and is now, I am sorry to say, the 31st clause of the Act :—

"This Act shall cease to be in operation in respect to any colony the legislature of which shall have passed an Act or ordinance declaring that the same shall cease to be in force therein: Provided nevertheless that all acts of the Council passed while this Act was in operation in such colony shall continue to be in force therein, unless altered or repealed by the Council."

That clause we objected to on the ground that it looked as if the authors of the scheme did not believe in it, and it looked also as if they desired to suggest the dissolution of the Council, even before it was actually constituted. However, one of the colonies—South Australia—believed it should be in, and New South Wales apparently approved of it, but I will say what New South Wales did afterwards. South Australia was anxious that the clause should be retained, and Victoria, Queensland, and Tasmania agreed it was not worth while to oppose the passing of the measure by insisting upon their objection to it. Another amendment was to the effect that any colony might repeal all Acts passed relating to them by the Council. That would have made the whole thing just a partnership at will, which either partner might leave at will. I considered that a contract or agreement which might be broken by any of the parties to the contract the moment they became discontented was not worth having at all. A good deal of negotiation took place upon that. Victoria was willing to agree even to that in their desire for the adoption of the Bill. I advised Mr. Garrick to very strongly urge the omission of the amendment, and I am very glad to say it was omitted. With respect to the action of New South Wales, I had an opportunity of meeting Mr. Dalley, who was then acting as Colonial Secretary, in Sydney in January last, and I was certainly led to believe that they would take some steps in the matter. Finally, however, New South Wales ceased to have any communication with the other colonies on the subject. Then at the last moment Sir A. Stuart came back, and I am sorry to say the action he took was to endeavour to spoil all that had taken place before. Numerous objections were urged against the Bill upon the Secretary of State for the Colonies in London, and we only heard of the objections through him. I am very sorry indeed that the action of New South Wales throughout this matter has been of a most unfriendly character. I have not laid on the table of the House all the correspondence that has taken place, but what has been laid on the table shows that their conduct has been of a most unfriendly character. I regret extremely that the mother colony of us all should at the present time hold herself aloof and endeavour, instead of acting with the other colonies, to thwart them in every possible way; but I hope the other colonies will work together, and if New South Wales wishes to be alone, let her be alone. If the rest of Australia work together, and form a union for any purpose, New South

Wales will find it very inconvenient to be isolated. We need not have any animosity between us; but at the same time I do not feel in the least disposed to pay attention to any remonstrances New South Wales makes on this subject at the present time. Since the time of her last unfriendly action the other colonies working in concert have left her entirely out of consideration. The Bill passed by the Imperial Parliament is practically the Bill framed by the Convention. It is admittedly imperfect; but it goes as far, I believe, as we can go safely at the present time. At any rate it may lead to a great deal of good. It will require amendment very soon; and I may remark that the sooner necessities for amendment are discovered the better I shall be pleased; because when we have got so far into working order as to see that we can do some work and to recognise the difficulties in our way, our future course will be much clearer. I need not refer further to the Act passed by the Imperial Parliament. The question now is whether it shall be adopted by Queensland. The Bill of which I have to move the second reading provides for its adoption here, and I wish to say a few words in addition to those I used in moving the first reading. As I pointed out, the Imperial Act requires that that Act should be adopted by four colonies at least. We propose then to provide for its adoption by the 1st section of the Bill, by which it is—

“Declared and enacted that the said Act shall come into operation and be in force in Queensland on and from the first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, if at that date the said Act is in force in at least three other of the Australian colonies.”

If not then in force in three other colonies, it is to come into operation as soon after the 1st of December as it comes into operation in three other colonies. On this clause a question arises which I do not think it is any use trying to disguise. If the Act comes into operation in any four colonies, there will be a Federal Council constituted, and the majority of members of that Council will have jurisdiction over all the colonies adopting it. Now, the Act has been already adopted by Western Australia, and I received information a day or two ago that it would be adopted by the colony of Fiji as soon as instructions come from the Secretary of State. We know they are on their way, and are probably there by this time. The Act will also certainly be adopted by the colony of Tasmania. Now, supposing no other colony adopted it except Queensland, there would be a Federal Council constituted, but not such a Federal Council as we desire. In the first draft of this Bill which was prepared by me, it was proposed to add to the first paragraph of this clause these words—“of which two of the colonies of New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria, must be two”—so as to ensure that there should be at least three of the great continental colonies, having constitutional government, in the union. In deference to a suggestion made by the Premier of Victoria, those words were omitted from the Bill; but having regard to the present position of affairs—seeing that this colony will most likely be the next to adopt the Act—it is a matter for very serious consideration whether those words should not be inserted. I do not think it would be desirable to constitute the Council unless three of the continental colonies, having constitutional government, took part in it. The next question to be dealt with is the mode in which the representatives of this colony shall be appointed. These are matters upon which many suggestions may be made. The Government considered the question very fully, and so

did the other Governments. I believe the Governments of the other colonies think there should be no restriction on the qualifications of the representatives; and most of them think that the term of office should be during pleasure. When the Bill was submitted by this Government to the other colonies, two alternative schemes were suggested: one, that the appointment should be during pleasure; the other, that it should be for a term of years subject to removal. For various reasons this Government came to the conclusion that it would be better to have it for a term of years. The position is an honourable one and ought to confer a certain amount of dignity both in Australia and outside it; and it appeared to us it should not be merely held from to-day till to-morrow. At the same time, it is very important that every representative should be entirely in accord with the Government of the colony. I do not mean to say he should necessarily be a member of the Government: he might be a member of the Opposition, or a member of the Legislative Council. There might be many occasions when any man occupying a distinguished position in either House might be a proper person to appoint as a member of the Federal Council, whether a member of the Government or no. Considering that the Council is to meet not less than once in two years, and that it may delegate many of its functions to committees, it seemed to the Government, on the whole, that the better system would be to have a certain amount of permanency about the office, it being distinctly understood that if any member of the Federal Council ceases to be in harmony with the Government of the colony he represents he may be removed from office without the removal being regarded in any way as casting a slur upon him, just as is the case with the Agent-General. If it is intended that a member of the Federal Council should hold office longer than during pleasure, then it is undoubtedly necessary to specify certain disqualifications which are to necessitate his removal. It is proposed that the appointment of members of the Federal Council should be notified by the Governor to Parliament by message, and also in the *Gazette*. The Imperial Act provides for its being notified to the Governors of the other colonies. It is proposed that the representatives should be entitled to their travelling expenses, and that the payment of these expenses shall not bring them under the operation of the Officials in Parliament Act. The 9th section provides that, in addition to the matters specially referred to the Council by the Imperial Act, the Council shall have authority to deal with these two additional subjects:—

“The status of corporations and joint-stock companies in other colonies than that in which they have been constituted.

“The trial and punishment in one colony of offenders against the laws of an adjoining colony.”

The status of corporations and joint-stock companies is a vexed question, and probably will remain so until it is settled by some authoritative legislation. I have suggested to the Victorian Government, and also to the Governments of South Australia and Tasmania, that they should insert a similar provision; but I do not know whether they are going to do so or not. If the matter is dealt with by the Council, corporations registered in Victoria will obtain much greater facilities for carrying on business in Queensland than corporations established in New South Wales. It is proposed to specially refer these matters to the Council, because it is thought probable and desirable that they may be dealt with in the first session of the Council, which it is to be hoped will be held early next year. The second matter is the trial and punishment

in one colony of offenders against the laws of an adjoining colony. That has special reference, as far as we are concerned, to the border between Queensland and South Australia. There is a large tract of country there, extending about 700 miles from north to south, a great part of the border being already defined by posts; so that an offender or criminal can know exactly which colony he is in. The nearest towns on the South Australian side of the border are Farina, which is 400 miles distant to the south-west, and Port Darwin, which is a great deal further than that to the north-west. Next our border we have the township of Birdsville, and two other places where police are stationed; and Burketown is, of course, not very far from the border. Under such conditions, and in the present state of the law, a man who has committed an offence in one colony knows exactly how far he need go to escape pursuit. I am constantly receiving information as to the lawless state of society—or perhaps I ought to say the population—along both sides of the border, and I think it would be a very good thing if we could agree with South Australia for the punishment of such offenders. It is a matter of considerable importance, and I trust it will be allowed to be referred to the Federal Council. It is scarcely necessary for me to say more on the present occasion. Nearly two years have elapsed since the scheme was adopted, and since that time it has stood the ordeal of a great deal of discussion with very little change. If tried it will, I believe, be found satisfactory, and will prove to be the initial step in the establishment of a great federation of Australasia. I have great pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad that this Bill has come before us this session, and that it seems to have every prospect of passing. I only hope it will have an equal chance of success in the other colonies before the end of the year. When the Convention finished their labours at the end of 1883 it was a subject of great gratification to me that they had done their work so well. There was not a little of that work that I disagreed with, and it went a great deal further than I had anticipated. But nothing, perhaps, gave me greater pleasure than the hearty way in which the two important colonies of New Zealand and New South Wales went into the work. I think it was a great misfortune that the proceedings of that Convention were not made public. It was a mistake, and how it originated I really forget; but I believe that if the discussions that took place in that Convention had been made public—if the reporters had been present, as they are here—so that acts could have been confronted with words, one of the colonies, at all events—New South Wales—would not have taken up the position of which the Premier has so justly complained to-day. The question was then referred to the English people, and no one can read the speeches that have been made by men of all the different political parties in England without being perfectly satisfied that they were each one with the colonies in trying to enable them to federate in the best way possible. We had the full sympathy of Liberals and Conservatives alike, and if they made a mistake, as I believe they did two or three times, in trying to get amendments into the Bill as drafted by the Convention, it was made entirely in our interests. We have had every possible help from the whole people at home to guide us towards this first step in our becoming a great nation. With regard to the position subsequently taken up by New Zealand, we have little blame to cast. Unfortunately, the men who represented New Zealand at the Convention left office. Their successors took

a different view of the matter, and seemed to advocate a kind of confederation of which I have not the slightest notion, but which does not seem to me to be confederation at all. Their action has been distinctly hostile to any action taken by the English Government to pass the Bill which was sanctioned by the Convention. The conduct of New South Wales in the matter has been most decidedly much worse. I say I cannot blame New Zealand, because the men are no longer in power who represented her at the Convention; but I do blame New South Wales, because the very men who took the most prominent part in the Convention of 1883, who moved the most important resolutions, and who acquiesced in everything done by the Convention, are the very men who have surreptitiously tried everything in their power, first to avoid being held to the pledge they had given, and then, when they found they could not get out of it with any degree of propriety, to take steps in what the Premier has rightly characterised as underhand means to block any work being done in the cause of federation. I do not know what the Premier refers to, but I can only say that the correspondence that has been published by this House satisfies me at once that New South Wales has certainly not taken up a dignified position. In speaking of New South Wales, I do not refer so much to the colony as to the Government of New South Wales, because I believe the members of the Convention who have recalcitrated are not in unison on that subject with the people of New South Wales. I am not going too far when I say that those who have helped the question forward in the most practical way were Mr. Service, of Victoria, and our own Premier. They acted with great tact and discretion, for which they ought to get credit, in stopping the many manoeuvres of New South Wales to frustrate the efforts of those who were working towards federation. I have no knowledge of what the hon. member referred to, but he is justified from those documents in every word he said with regard to the action of the New South Wales Government. It is perfectly plain from the papers that have been put on the table of the House that New South Wales was afraid of the conclusions they had come to at the Convention. They neglected for a whole year to ask the decision of Parliament on a resolution to which they had pledged themselves to ask the consent of Parliament. The very man who moved the resolution in the Convention, Mr. Dibbs, was the man who proposed the last resolution that each member of the Convention should pledge himself to everything he could to carry out the resolution. When he brought the question before Parliament at last, after waiting a whole year, it was lost by a small majority. Anyone who read the reports on that occasion can come to no other conclusion than that, in a very cowardly way, they themselves had brought about the defeat of the resolution they had pledged themselves to support. Mr. Dalley's action in the matter was, I consider, a great deal worse. When pressed by the Agent-General at home to express an opinion, on the invitation of Lord Derby, on the different amendments that he had proposed in the Bill, he said that from the circumstances in which the colony was placed—possibly referring to the illness of Mr. Stuart—and the fact that the resolution had been lost in the Lower House by a majority of one, he had nothing whatever to suggest. He washed his hands of it—had nothing to propose. Speaking from memory, I think this was about the month of March. It was about the time when Lord Derby, in view of bringing forward the Bill in July, asked the colonies to give their opinions on his suggestions. Very

well—this ended the thing as far as New South Wales was concerned. It had been seen for some time that the New South Wales Government were trying to get out of the pledge they had given in the Convention. Then, what follows next? We find Mr. Stuart himself coming forward voluntarily—plunging into the thick of the fight, and raising every possible objection, not in the colonies, but at home, where he thought they would have more effect. He has tried everything he possibly could do—his Government have, at all events—to make the people at home believe that federation without New South Wales would be an absurdity. Few members spoke on the Bill in the House of Lords, and Lord Bury described federation without New South Wales as being “like the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark.” I think by this time New South Wales has come to the conclusion that federation looks very nearly being a success, and she will not be there, and I for one do not regret it. I believe that the men who will next take the government of that colony will see things in a different light and will be glad to come forward, seeing the success it has actually been, and join us in our federation. That Mr. Stuart sees it himself I have no doubt at all. Hon. members have of course read the correspondence, but there is one remark made by Mr. Stuart which ought to show him the danger in which such a colony as New South Wales is at the present time. In the last page of the correspondence published is the following telegram sent to the Premier of Queensland and also to the Premier of Victoria—only it is worded a little differently:—

“Sydney, 20th July, 1885.

“The feeling in this colony is very strong against Federal Council dealing with subjects other than those specified except when referred by all the colonies for although their decision would only be law in the colonies referred yet as it would go forth as Federal Council law it would carry a prestige which sooner or later would override the opinion of non-consenting colonies. The evils you conjure up would be slight in comparison with the non-acceptance of the Council by this colony and so strong is the feeling here that I would not ask Parliament’s assent to the Bill as it now stands.”

Then he says to the Premier of Victoria:—

“Strong objection has been made here to reference of important matters by two colonies only, for although only the two colonies would be bound thereby, yet the decision would have gone forth as the pronouncement of the Federal Council, and thus we would have one portion of the colonies ruled by Council law whilst others were outside of it and might find themselves almost forced to adopt it against their better judgment.”

That is just the position in which New South Wales stands at the present time. She has put herself outside federation, and it is very likely she will be forced to adopt it. Mr. Stuart himself has depicted the position in words exactly suited to the occasion. I have no intention of criticising the Bill at any length. I think the Home Government were right in their ultimate conclusion to stand as close as they possibly could by the Convention Bill. I think it was a mistake that they did not adopt that Bill word for word, because every argument that induced them to adopt the Convention Bill so closely ought to have forced them to carry it through exactly as it stood. The reason why they did not propose an amendment which would have been judicious was this: that they believed in passing into English law the suggestions of the colonies themselves. It was drafted so well that they had no objection to offer on that ground, and they departed—at the instigation of New South Wales, and with the laudable desire, I believe, of encouraging that colony to come into it—very materially from the resolutions adopted in the Convention, in putting in the 31st clause. I think that is a blot in the Bill; at the same time

I think the Home Government were perfectly right in getting the Bill passed through, even with that clause, as it was passed. It was amended ultimately, and the most objectionable feature—enabling each colony, as soon as it had cut away from the federation, to repeal the whole of the Federal Acts applicable to that colony—was excised, and I believe that the other portions of the clause will work no damage whatever. There is one point in which I do not agree with the Premier. It is a matter of detail, but it is one of very considerable importance. I myself have no anxiety on the subject. He seems to consider that federation would be almost a farce if it was commenced by four such colonies as Fiji, Tasmania, Western Australia, and Queensland. It certainly would not be as well as if we had all the colonies; but under the circumstances I quite disagree with the hon. member. I believe that even in the event of only four of the colonies joining we ought to federate, because we are just commencing our work. The work is purely tentative, purely experimental; we have put our best ideas into it, and there is already such a determination in the colonies that they will federate, that good will come out of it; of that I have not the slightest doubt. Therefore, the sooner we federate the better, even although we commence with only four colonies. I would point out that under clause 9 as it stands each colony will require to pass an Act whenever they refer to any matter dealt with by the Federal Council. I think that is highly inconvenient. I do not see that a resolution of both Houses, or of one House, should not be as sufficient for the purpose as the passing of a Bill. I shall not go further into the details of the Bill, because it is, as it has been characterised by the Premier, just a Bill to enable us to bring the English Act into operation; and I have no doubt, from the broad discussion that has taken place, not only in the whole of the colonies, but in the English papers, that it is perfectly well understood throughout Australia—at all events by members of this House.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have made myself acquainted with all the papers put before the House in relation to this Australasian federal question, and I feel bound to say a few words on the matter. In the first place there are two measures before the House. One is the Queensland Adopting Bill, which is before us for its second reading, and the other is the Federal Council of Australasia Act. It is very little more than two years ago since this question was merely one of theory, but in that short time it has come within the range of what may be called practical politics. Although the measure, as the Premier stated, may not be considered a perfect measure or one that will suit all parties concerned, still I think it is our duty to accept it as it is, as a foundation, and time, which ripens all things, will, I hope, make it suitable to the various colonies. You will recollect, sir, that the Constitution of the United States was not at first agreeable to all parties concerned. It was very far from that. The Constitution of America may be now taken as the height of political wisdom, but it was many years before it became adapted to the wants of that great country. I have hopes that although some of the colonies have shown an inclination to throw cold water on this federation proposal they will come to adopt the Act in time. I have not the slightest doubt that all the colonies will eventually come under the pale of federation. I am the more inclined to think this on account of the events and change of Government that have occurred within the last few days in New South Wales, from which colony the greatest opposition to federation has come. Sir John Robertson, the

present leader of the Opposition in that colony, may come back to power, and he is a gentleman who, in a minute addressed to the Earl of Carnarvon, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1875, advocated very strongly the annexation of most of the islands in the Pacific. To show that this gentleman, who was then the head of the New South Wales Government, was in accord with a good deal of the feelings which prompted the calling of the Convention together, I will quote the following from the minute referred to:—

"My colleagues and myself venture respectfully to offer our opinion that on many grounds it is desirable in the highest interests of civilisation that Great Britain, with as little delay as possible, should take possession, not only of the magnificent island of New Guinea, but of the islands of New Britain, New Ireland, and the chain of islands to the N.E. and E. of New Guinea, from Bougainville Island to San Christoval, the south-easternmost of the Solomon Group; the group of the New Hebrides, including Espiritu Santo, Mallicolo, and Sandwich, with smaller adjoining islands, and the Marshall, Gilbert, and Ellice Islands; to all of which the traffic from the port of Sydney extends."

That is comprehensive enough for the annexation question which is covered by the 15th clause of the Federal Council Act. There is no doubt that if the Federal Council, when constituted, acts with vigour, energy, and spirit, it will bring itself into notoriety, and will be supported by the Australian public. The clause I have referred to gives the Council power to deal with the relations of Australia with the islands in the Pacific, and also with various other questions, including matters which the different colonies may, if they choose, submit for consideration. Although Bills passed by the Council could not take effect until submitted to and passed by the Imperial Parliament, yet I think the opinions or actions of the Federal Council will not be disregarded by the Imperial Parliament, as we notice that the spirit of the day is to coincide with the aspirations and hopes of Australasia more than it was a few years ago. The vigorous protest that went from Australia, at the time of the sitting of the Convention, against the influx of criminals, had a marked effect in inducing France to transport a great many of her criminals to Cayenne. No doubt a great many of the French criminals will still be sent to New Caledonia, and the subject will again become one for federal action. As to the statement that any Australian federation in which the great colonies of New South Wales and New Zealand do not participate would be similar to the play of Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, I am quite in accord with the Premier when he says that even in the event of these colonies not joining we should carry this measure through, and show that they are not the only parts of Australia that are of importance. The great questions that will come before the Federal Council will affect all the colonies, and we should go on with the Bill irrespective of whether New South Wales and New Zealand come in or not, and then wait until better counsels prevail. I feel convinced that, as matters have changed in New South Wales to the extent they have done, better counsels will prevail. The action taken lately by the Government of New South Wales was not endorsed by the whole of the people of that colony. It was merely the outcome of the whims and fancies, very likely, of the Government or of the Premier. In fact, I have reason to believe that the people of New South Wales were not in accord with the Government on that question. I hope that this Bill may be the commencement of a thorough federal system of Australia. All the colonies blessed with self-government have shown themselves capable of carrying it on. This is merely a further extension of the principle. It is, I suppose, the centre

or key stone of the arch. I think the Premier is to be congratulated on the spirit in which he has, from the time of the Convention until now, carried on the correspondence, and on the action he has taken throughout.

Question put and passed.

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

#### PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL—COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into Committee to consider this Bill.

Preamble postponed.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed as printed.

Clause 3 agreed to with a verbal amendment.

On clause 4—

"The fifth section of the Pacific Islanders Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1884 is hereby repealed"—

The PREMIER said the section proposed to be repealed was as follows:—

"When at the expiration of the engagement of any islander he enters into a fresh engagement for service, then if—

- (a) The sum of five pounds has been paid by his first employer to the immigration agent to defray the cost of his return passage; or
- (b) That sum has been paid by his then last employer to a former employer under the provisions of this section;

the sum so paid shall be recouped by the new employer to the next preceding employer by whom it was so paid."

That clause was introduced with the idea that if the islander did not go back to his island at the expiration of his term his next employer should pay £5 to the preceding one, and the next one to him, and so on, and instructions were given to the immigration agent to inform the succeeding employers of their liability to pay. Some employers thought that the agents should collect that money from the succeeding employers, and sometimes there was a difficulty about paying it over to the former one. Many employers thought that if the man did not want to go home there was no reason why they should be out of pocket at all. It had been represented to him, however, that there were some very good points in the clause proposed to be repealed; but he found it did not operate to the advantage of the "boys." Sometimes the "boys" were re-engaged in a different district, and it was very difficult to trace out who the first employer was. Sometimes they did not serve under an engagement to work for any certain time, and in such cases they often gave different names, and there was a lot of trouble in identifying them. Another objection, that seemed to him to be the principal one, was that when an employer engaged a man for a short time—three or six months—he had to pay £5, and in such cases he in effect took it out of the "boy's" wages, and made him recoup the previous employer. Those arguments had attracted his attention, and it was a matter of some importance. He should be glad if hon. gentlemen who had a practical acquaintance with the subject could assist the Committee.

Mr. BLACK said that the clause under discussion—the 4th clause in the amending Bill—had been characterised by the Premier as one which he was not quite decided about. Well, from his experience on the subject, he was of opinion that the 5th section of the Pacific Islanders Act of 1880 Amendment Act of 1884 was one of the best clauses passed at that time. It was well known that the antagonism to coloured labour arose, to a very great extent, in consequence of

that labour being employed for purposes for which it was not introduced. Islanders, after having fulfilled their agreements on plantations, got adrift, and were employed by townspeople, by carriers, and by people who were not engaged in tropical agriculture; and, consequently, they came frequently into competition with, and caused undoubted irritation among, Europeans, who saw that the avocations which they were quite capable of fulfilling were, in very many instances, filled by Polynesians. It was always the wish of those engaged in tropical agriculture to retain the labourers. Human nature was human nature, and when they found an intelligent labourer who had already fulfilled his agreement and become a civilised labourer they naturally wished to secure his services; but the islanders were induced by the promise of high wages, or better conditions of life, to depart from the employment for which they were introduced; and they were thus in some instances brought into competition with European labour. Clause 5 of the Pacific Islanders Act stipulated that any fresh employer employing one of those labourers must become responsible for £5, the amount of his passage money. The Government always had that £5 as a guarantee, because the previous employer had to deposit it. That clause had worked satisfactorily and had been the means of confining that description of labour to the employment for which it was really introduced. Some persons now said that they could not get the twos and threes of those men they were in the habit of getting previously, without paying £5; and they raised an objection to it, and wanted to repeal that clause. If they did that, the evil that was guarded against by the 5th section of the previous Act would at once be in force again, and there would be a number of persons securing islanders for employment in many cases outside the conditions under which they were introduced, just as they did previous to the passing of that very good clause. It should be borne in mind that the importer of that labour was under very heavy expense. It cost him now from £25 to £30 for each islander he imported. He got a comparatively uncivilised individual, and after three years of steady work, with conditions of food and clothing to which he was previously unaccustomed, he became a very much more civilised individual, and it was only right that the new employer, even though he were engaged in tropical agriculture, who wished to take advantage of that man's labour, should contribute something towards the expenses incurred by the first employer in making that man a better labourer than when he was first introduced. The Premier had kindly given him the objections to which he referred, and he did not think there would be any trouble in refuting most of the arguments there used. The paper said:—

"The 5th clause was interpreted to mean that the money paid by the first employer was to be held by the department and was available for the islander whenever he wished to go home, leaving all recoupments to be worked out amongst the employers themselves."

He believed that was the intention, and he should like to see it further amended by stating that every Polynesian inspector, when certifying a new agreement, should ask the new employer to deposit the £5. It would then be the duty of the Polynesian inspector to refund the previous employer the £5 paid by the second. That would be only fair. At the present time, when a new agreement was certified to, the previous employer did not get the benefit of the £5 which he believed it was intended by the 5th clause of the previous Act he should get. It would be merely doing justice that the second employer should refund the £5; and the Poly-

nesian inspector, before certifying to the second agreement, should see that the sum was deposited by the new employer. It further stated:—

"Instructions, however, were issued that employers were to be notified when boys took new employment, and that payment was to be taken by inspectors from employers other than the first."

They were instructed that they might take it or not, but they should be instructed not to certify to any new agreement until the £5 for the return passage was paid. It further stated:—

"The observance of this order has given rise to a great deal of labour and inconvenience."

Well, he did not think that a very valid objection. The majority of Polynesians were confined to certain centres in the more northern portions of the colony, and there were inspectors and sub-inspectors in every one of those districts. Considering the enormous cost of the management of the department to the planters, it was only a matter of justice that a question of a great deal of labour and inconvenience should not be allowed to interfere in their getting justice. Further—

"If the boys re-engaged in their own district the matter would be simple; but they like to travel about, and when their first three years are up they go elsewhere, without the knowledge of the inspector."

That was really what he wished to guard against. He thought they should be kept as far as possible in districts under the control of an inspector. That was no argument for giving greater freedom for committing abuses than had hitherto prevailed. It went on:—

"If they do go under agreement (a course which they do their best to avoid):—"

That was no argument. He did not know that they did their best to avoid agreements. They should be prevented from getting out of agreements.

—"they likely give other names than those by which they were known previously, and which renders their identification a very difficult matter and takes much time."

Some cases perhaps did occur in which they gave wrong names; but he did not think it was the rule. The "boys" were perfectly aware that their return home depended entirely on their giving their right names; and another thing was that some of the "boys" were very considerable depositors in the savings banks, and were thoroughly well known to the inspectors of the district:—

"An employer for a short period (three and six months are very common terms), having the possibility of being called upon for £5, and with a very remote hope of tracing out some subsequent employer, by whom he may be recouped, will not give the islander the wages he is worth, seeking to make up the £5 that way."

He could not agree with that. He could assure the Committee that the demand for labourers whose time had expired was so great in the North that, though the employer knew he had to pay that £5 to the previous employer, it was unusual for the islander to be re-engaged under 10s. to 15s. a week. In his (Mr. Black's) own district, "boys" who had completed their term of engagement were frequently re-engaged for ports farther north. The demand was so great for that kind of labour that they had agents continually on the lookout, and as soon as it was known that ten, twenty, or thirty hands were to be paid off on one plantation they were at once engaged at 10s., 15s., or 20s. a week, and sent up to the Herbert or Johnstone. The agreements had to be attested by the Polynesian inspector, and they were generally for terms, not of three months, but of from one to three years. It

would be a most easy matter for the inspector to ask for the £5 return passage money before he attested the agreement.

"He also aids the 'boy' in breaking clause 3 for the purpose of avoiding any liability for passage-money."

There was nothing in that objection. It was maintained that in the interests of the observance of the law the clause should be repealed, but he held that in the interests of the observance of the law the clause should certainly stand. In the interests of the islander himself also the clause should be allowed to stand; for it was not the interest of the islander to excite animosity by coming into conflict with that portion of the European population with which he formerly did come into contact. Another objection to the clause was raised on the ground of economy in working the Act; but he did not think that should be allowed to interfere with the intention of a clause which had proved one of the best clauses in the previous amended form of the Act.

The PREMIER said he had no very strong feeling on the subject, nor any strong convictions. If the clause was considered to have worked well by hon. members who had personal knowledge of the matter there was no valid reason for repealing it. He left the matter to the Committee.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 5—"Annexation of islands by Her Majesty or other civilised power not to exclude application of Acts"—passed as printed.

On clause 6, as follows:—

"The sum to be paid by an applicant to the immigration agent under the provisions of the eighth section of the principal Act shall be three pounds for each islander proposed to be introduced, instead of thirty shillings as therein provided. And the said eighth section of the principal Act shall hereafter be read as if the sum of three pounds were therein mentioned instead of thirty shillings, whenever the latter sum is therein mentioned."

Mr. BLACK said he was anxious that the Bill should go through without unnecessary delay, but he thought there should be some explanation of the increase in the capitation fee. On the second reading he had pointed out that in his opinion the enormous expense of administering the department had more to do with the necessity for increasing the capitation fee and hospital fee than anything else. Since then another return had been distributed showing the expenditure of the Pacific Islanders Fund from 1st July to 30th September, and the details of that expenditure more than confirmed his impression that the fund was being very extravagantly administered. He would point out that the office expenses—salaries, allowances, expenses of head office and inspectors—for the whole year, from 30th June, 1884, up to the corresponding date in 1885, was £3,398 14s. 5d. During the last three months, with a considerable decrease in the number of Polynesians employed, the cost amounted to £1,205 17s., or at the rate of £4,823 8s. a year. Under the circumstances, an increase so large as £1,500 per annum should receive some proper explanation from the Premier.

The PREMIER said the amount voted last year for the head office was £6,850, or, including contingencies for forage allowances for inspectors, and incidentals, £7,750. The actual sum expended was a little less. This year it was proposed to increase the amount by £800 for additional inspectors at Townsville, Ingham, and Bundaberg, and £500 for incidentals. It was quite certain that the item for expenditure in the head office, including Government agents, could not be reduced below £6,500 a year. The apparent increase

for last quarter might have been due to the payment of outstanding accounts, but there had been no general increase. The total number of islanders introduced last year was 1,781, as against about 1,800 the year before; and not more than 2,000 could be expected during the present year. That number, at £3 per head, would only come to £6,000, to cover a total expenditure of over £8,000. To allow the capitation fee to remain at 30s. would only produce £3,000 to cover the same expenditure; and of course they could not go on in that way. Expenditure could only be reduced by reducing efficiency, and they could not do with less inspectors, less Government agents, or less staff in the office. Even a £3 capitation fee would not be sufficient to pay general expenses, and they would have to fall back partly upon the money already accumulated and partly on what might come from deceased islanders, which was a very unsatisfactory source of revenue; and it was a source which would not all be available, because some of it would have to bear part of the expense of hospitals.

Mr. BLACK said the expenditure was made up, to a very large extent, of items which he did not think could fairly be charged to the Polynesian Fund. The head office itself was carried on at far too great an expense. There was no necessity to have a separate staff for the work; it was carried on fairly well when it formed a portion of the Immigration Department.

The PREMIER said it was not carried on at all then.

Mr. BLACK said that at all events it could not be denied that on the 30th September, 1883, there was £37,000 to the credit of the Polynesian Fund, and that by various means, chiefly by an unnecessary expenditure, it had since been reduced to £4,701. The cost of the head office was £3,398, and that seemed to him a great deal too high for such a department. The item of £3,557 for Government agents he could not take exception to, although he did object to the number of incompetent supernumeraries who were employed; but he should like some explanation of the item of £165 14s. 7d. for misappropriation of savings bank deposits of Polynesians, and another item, to the same purport, of £48 17s. 2d. Why should the planters be charged with any default on the part of a Government officer who was dishonest? Was the Polynesian Fund an assurance fund on the fidelity of Government officers? Surely the hon. gentleman could not justify such charges as that being made on the fund? Then there was an item of £275 for expenses attendant upon return of rejected and kidnapped islanders. Why should the planters be charged with that? Captains of vessels had to enter into a bond of £500, and if they brought kidnapped islanders it was the duty of the Government to enforce the bond, and not to charge it against the planters. Then there were three items for law costs, amounting in all to £740 13s. 2d. That surely required some explanation. In fact, he felt justified in saying that the expenditure of the Polynesian Fund had not received that control which it ought to have had, and the result was that the Premier naturally came down and asked Parliament to double the capitation fee. And what guarantee had they, if the additional fund was contributed by the planters, that there would not be still greater neglect in the control? The law costs for last quarter were not very heavy—8 guineas; but, notwithstanding the decrease in the number of islanders in the colony, there was the undoubted fact that the administration of the Polynesian Department was now at the rate of £4,823 a year as against £3,398 last year. He was leaving out



the expenses of Government agents altogether, and taking the salaries, allowances, and expenses in the head office and for inspectors in Brisbane; and the returns showed an increase this year of between £1,500 and £1,600.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman persistently refused to deal with the figures he (the Premier) put before the Committee, and referred to others. During last year there was certain extraordinary expenditure, and the hon. gentleman referred entirely to that, while his (the Premier's) argument was based upon the ordinary necessary expenditure. If he took the same basis as the hon. member, he should say the expenses of last year were about £9,000, instead of £7,000. He thought the necessary expenditure for the year was between £7,000 and £8,000 for the head office, inspectors, and Government agents, including a small amount for incidentals. That could not be reduced. If it were it would be necessary to prohibit islanders from coming here at all. For the credit of the colony the necessary supervision must be maintained, and to meet the expenses the fee must be doubled. The law costs incurred by inspectors were for necessary legal proceedings. With regard to the misappropriation of savings banks deposits, it was unfair to say that the planters were called upon to pay that. They had contributed nothing towards it. It was paid out of the wages of deceased islanders. Of course, all the money went into a mixed fund, and, as a matter of fact, the planters had not contributed nearly two-thirds of the expenses. The misappropriation of savings banks deposits arose from an officer in the Immigration Department misappropriating money standing to the credit of islanders, while pretending to have paid them to others, and of course the Government were bound to recoup it, and they took it out of the accumulated wages of deceased islanders. The actual contributions of the planters did not amount to much more than half the amount expended.

Mr. BLACK said he would like to get some information as to the items "Law costs, £147," and "Expenses attendant upon inquiries and court cases, £592 8s. 11d.," also, whether there were many convictions, and if there were, whether the penalties were in any way credited to the account?

The PREMIER said the total amount of fines during the year was shown in the same return—£53 16s. 9d. The law costs in the case *West and Blissett v. O'Connell* were costs in the Supreme Court. The Polynesian inspector at Bundaberg prosecuted certain persons and got a conviction; but it was upset in the Supreme Court on a technical point, and the inspector was ordered to pay the costs. Of course, they were really part of the cost of the administration of the Act, and were paid out of the fund. The item "Amount expended by Inspector of Distilleries, £30 2s. 9d.," was incurred at the express request of a deputation of planters. "Expenses attendant upon inquiries and court cases" he could not give particulars about. There were several inquiries into matters that arose on voyages, held in Brisbane and elsewhere, when the vessels arrived.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 7, as follows:—

"Every employer of islanders in a district in which a hospital for islanders and labourers has been established shall pay a hospital capitation fee at the rate of twenty shillings per annum for every islander in his employment, instead of at the rate of ten shillings for every labourer as provided by the twenty-eighth section of the principal Act; and the said section shall be read and construed as amended to that effect accordingly.

"Such sum shall be payable on the first day of January in every year, in respect of every islander then in the employment of an employer.

"Provided that if the term of engagement of an islander will expire before the first day of July following, one-half that sum only shall be payable.

"The like sum of twenty shillings shall be payable by every employer in respect of every islander engaged by him between the first day of January and the thirtieth day of June inclusive in any year, and one-half that sum shall be payable in respect of every islander engaged by him between the first day of July and the thirty-first day of December inclusive. Such sums shall be payable upon the engagement of the islander.

"Upon the first establishment of a hospital in a district the hospital capitation fee shall be immediately payable in respect of every islander then employed in the district, and shall be at the rate of twenty shillings for each islander so employed, unless the time of such establishment is after the thirtieth day of June, or the term of engagement of an islander will expire within six months from the time of such establishment, in either of which cases the fee payable in respect of all the islanders, or of the islanders whose engagements will so expire, as the case may be, shall be at the rate of ten shillings only.

"When the time of the establishment of the hospital is after the thirtieth day of June, and the term of engagement of an islander will expire within six months from the time of such establishment, no further fee shall be payable in respect of such islander on the first day of January following."

Mr. BLACK said that expenditure was also very excessive. Under "Hospital Expenses" he found, notwithstanding the decrease in the number of patients, the expenditure was increasing to an enormous extent. The expenses under that head for the year ending June, 1884-5, in the Mackay district was £4,695.

The PREMIER: Take £3,133. You are including buildings.

Mr. BLACK: He would take £4,695; the expenses for the quarter just ended amounted to £1,573, or at the rate of £6,295 a year.

The PREMIER: You are including other items besides cost of maintenance.

Mr. BLACK: The hon. gentleman would see that that made the case worse. It meant twelve months' expenses, £3,133—was that right?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. BLACK: Last quarter, according to the last return to hand, £1,343, or at the rate of £5,372—an increase at the rate of £2,000 a year, judging by the expenditure of last quarter. No reason was assigned for the increase. He himself knew that the number of Polynesians in the district had decreased considerably. But even supposing they had not decreased in number, there was no reason why the expenditure on the hospital should have risen from £3,133 to £5,372.

The PREMIER said nothing had been done by the Government to cause any general increase in the expenditure for the hospital. There were, however, many items which, although for ordinary maintenance, were during the first year charged to principal. Although the number of patients in the hospital last month was only 64, the average number for the year was 103. September was about the healthiest month of the year. During the summer months the number of patients increased very much. He had said that the daily average for the year was 103. In addition to that, an average of from 30 to 100 were attended by the doctor as out-patients. The expenditure mentioned was not, then, so very great for a hospital having an average of over 100 in-patients and from 30 to 100 out-patients. Indeed, he thought the institution was very economically conducted. If there was any extravagance in the management the committee had only to represent the matter, and he—and no doubt the officers in charge as well—would be only too glad to control the expenditure. There were about 3,400



Islanders in the district, representing capitation fees, at the present rate, to the amount of £1,700, whilst the cost of managing the hospital was not likely to be less than £4,000. Of course if the hospital could not be made self-supporting the only plan would be to close it, and leave the employers to provide medical attendance, as they were bound to do under the Act. The hospital, however, was instituted with the object of saving the employers' money as well as for bettering the condition of sick islanders.

Mr. BLACK said that before the hospitals were opened the planters could always secure the attendance of a medical man for 10s. per head per annum. The Government were now going to charge them £1 per head for the hospitals.

The PREMIER said that too many of the islanders died under the old arrangement.

Mr. BLACK said that if he went into the mortality question he would very likely be able to prove that the mortality amongst the islanders was just as great after as before the establishment of the hospitals. It was the duty of the Government, under any circumstances, to see that the boys got proper medical attendance, and it was certain also that the employers, in seeing that they got it, were studying their own interests. He would not admit that the mortality was greater before the establishment of the hospitals than it had been since. On the contrary, he had reason to believe that it was rather the reverse. As the Premier knew, the mortality amongst the islanders during the first three months of hospital administration was greater than it had ever been before.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 8 passed as printed.

On clause 9, as follows:—

"Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Intestacy Act of 1877, when an islander dies all moneys which are then to his credit in the Government Savings Bank, or which are received by the Curator of Intestate Estates, shall be paid into the Treasury to the credit of the Pacific Islanders' Fund.

"But the Minister shall nevertheless apply such moneys, in a due course of administration, in payment of any debts due by the deceased islander, and may pay the surplus or any part thereof to any person proved to his satisfaction to be the next of kin or one of the next of kin of the deceased islander."

Mr. PALMER said the clause should be amended so that unclaimed surpluses of wages of deceased islanders might be always sent to the islands or tribes of the deceased men and given to their friends or relatives.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that was provided for in the latter part of the clause.

The PREMIER said he thought the clause should remain as it stood. It would be absurd to insist that in every case unclaimed surpluses should be sent to the islands, or that inquiries should be made in every case for the relatives of deceased islanders. It frequently required a great deal of discretion to administer the Act. Any islander might come forward and claim to be a brother of one deceased, but the relationship must be proved. Every case had to be dealt with on its own merits. It was impossible to lay down a hard-and-fast rule. Sometimes he (the Premier) was satisfied that a man was recognised by tribal laws as the brother of a deceased islander. Sometimes it was quite clear to him that the claimant was not a brother or any relative at all. In cases of that kind somebody had to be entrusted with discretion, and he thought the Minister was the best tribunal, as he had the command of reports from the inspectors and of information from the employers. He was not sure that the administration of the money of deceased islanders in the past had been in strict accordance with the law, hence the introduction of the clause.

Mr. BLACK asked if, under the clause, the Government would be able to refund an employer the money due to a Polynesian woman whose child was left on his hands? He had referred to the case on the second reading of the Bill and had stated that the Government had declined to pay the money.

The PREMIER said the case the hon. member referred to was that of a Polynesian woman who died. There was about £3 due to her. She left a child who was wet-nursed by another woman on the plantation for about a farthing a week. Six months afterwards the employer sent in a claim to the Government for the deceased woman's wages to pay him for the keeping of the child. He (the Premier) thought the claim was a monstrous one, and told him so, not in those words, but stating that he thought it was inconsistent with the employer's reputation as a kind and honourable man. He therefore refused to entertain it. It was a matter of the most ordinary humanity that the little baby should be wet-nursed on the plantation.

Mr. BLACK said he would tell the real facts of the case, and he would vouch that his version was the correct one. The mother died when the child was four or five months old. The child was not put out on the plantation to be wet-nursed at a cost of less than one farthing per week. The child was, in fact, brought up at the employer's house, and a Polynesian woman was employed to attend to it. So far as he knew she did not even wet-nurse it, in the sense the hon. gentleman referred to. The child was still there, and not turned out amongst the other Polynesians on the estate. He supposed the planter would be liable for having a Polynesian about his house. The gentleman referred to went to considerable trouble, and took an interest in the child, and he had daughters who also took a special interest in the child; and it was only reasonable that he should have wished to have the £3—which amount he believed was incorrect, as the mother had considerably more than that. It was not that he wished to have the money, but he thought the child should have the benefit of any money to the credit of the mother when she died.

The PREMIER: That is my idea.

Mr. BLACK said that was a plain statement of the case and the hon. gentleman need not try to get up any sensational statement. He knew all about the case, and had seen the correspondence, in which he did not think the Premier got the best of it. He certainly wrote to the employer stating that, as he thought he was a good and humane man, he would not hand the child over to the police authorities, or something to that effect. The reply was that the employer thought that if the Colonial Secretary was also a humane man he also would do what was right and proper; but the hon. gentleman had not seen fit to do it up to the present; and very likely he put the clause in the Bill in order that he might be able to do justice.

The PREMIER said he thought the clause would enable the Government to do justice in cases of that kind. But justice would be done better by keeping the money for the child.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said there was a general principle underlying the clause, and that was, whether the Government were to take possession of the estates of deceased islanders or whether they would take the trouble to find out who were the next of kin. The hon. gentleman, when speaking a few minutes ago, seemed to make light of the matter. He did not think it was too much trouble to try and find out. Every islander belonged to

a certain tribe, and there was generally more than one of that tribe in Queensland. It was very seldom one man only from an island emigrated to Queensland or to any other colony. Therefore, when one died it was an easy matter for the agent to find out, when he landed at the island, who were the nearest relatives of the deceased; and if the Government would just simply instruct the agent to do that it could be easily found out. Instead of that, the money was to be placed to the credit of the Polynesian Fund, and to be used in the interest of the planters and the Government. He looked upon the Pacific Islanders Fund as a kind of chancery estate out of which nothing ever came. They would be doing far more justice if they adopted the plan he proposed, and sent the amount—£6 or £8, or £10—down to the islands, in trade of course, as cash would not be of much use there. It would give the islanders a very strong opinion of the justice of the country to which their deceased relatives went. That broad principle ought to be looked to more than any particular case about a child.

The PREMIER said a great deal of what the hon. gentleman said was true. In the case of the New Guinea islanders the Government had adopted that rule, and sent something to represent the wages of the deceased islanders to their nearest of kin. It was a difficult thing to say that that must be done. The clause would give power to do it, and when cases arose where relatives of the islanders established their claims a sufficient sum of money could be paid out of the fund. He admitted that the principle the hon. member advocated was a good one, and it was very important that the colony should bear a good reputation in the islands. He would not promise that the principle would always be carried out, but the clause gave power to do so.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he should be satisfied if the hon. gentleman would try to carry it out. Of course there would be cases where it would be impossible to do so; but such cases would be very few indeed.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the hon. gentleman did not give the Ministry credit for any honesty of purpose. It was quite natural for him to do so, or he would not be in opposition. He believed the Government would pay the relatives of deceased islanders when they found them; but they could not guarantee to find them.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman knew nothing at all about it. The Government might be actuated by honesty of purpose and yet be mistaken.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 10 passed as printed.

On clause 11—"Application of Pacific Islanders' Fund"—

Mr. BLACK said he believed in the first part of the clause; but he objected to the words "or in and about any act or thing done by the Minister for the protection or benefit of any islanders." He would ask the Premier if the whole expense of the New Guinea expedition would be charged to that fund?

The PREMIER said that if there was another New Guinea expedition perhaps it would be; but the expense of the last expedition would be submitted in Committee of Supply and be paid out of the consolidated revenue.

Mr. BLACK asked if the word "any" applied to Pacific Islanders only?

The PREMIER: The term is defined in the Act.

Question put and passed.

On clause 12—"Persons may enter upon enclosed lands to discover contravention of provisions of section 10 of 47 Vic. No. 12"—

The PREMIER said he would formally move clause 12; but he did not propose to press the clause, because he did not think it necessary after the discussion which had taken place upon the subject.

Clause put and negatived.

On clause 13, as follows:—

"Every complaint of a breach of the provisions of the Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880-1885 shall be heard and determined by a police magistrate, and no other justice shall hear or determine or take part in hearing or determining any such complaint."

Mr. BLACK said that after what had been said on the second reading of the Bill the Premier might negative that clause as well as the last. That clause cast a great reflection upon the bench of magistrates, and placed the police magistrate in a very invidious position indeed. If the clause were passed, there would be no reason why any employer of labour should not be debarred from taking a seat on the bench upon any case under the Masters and Servants Act. *Aprpos* of the clause, he would ask the Premier a question in reference to the deputation that waited upon him yesterday? The hon. gentleman was reported in the *Courier* as having said that the Mackay planters deliberately packed the bench in one of the Polynesian cases. Was that the case?

The PREMIER said a strange mistake occurred in both reports. He referred to Bundaberg and the notorious case which occurred there. At the same time, though he had not said so before, he had had reported to him from Mackay numerous cases in which the Mackay planters had packed the bench there. It had been reported to him that it was useless to take objection to evasions of the Act, because the bench would be packed and the police magistrate would be overridden.

Mr. DONALDSON: Is that an official report?

The PREMIER said it was not from the police magistrate. He was speaking from memory; but his impression was that the reports were from officials—in fact, he was sure of it.

Mr. DONALDSON: Was the police magistrate one of them?

The PREMIER said he did not want to make anybody a marked man or to get anybody into a row; though the hon. member opposite evidently did. As to the hon. member's objection to the proposition that no one but the police magistrate should sit on the bench in such cases, it was not more invidious than to provide that no wine-merchant should sit on the licensing bench; or in New South Wales, that nobody should sit on the bench in Sydney except a police magistrate. Such a provision was found necessary in many cases. When it happened that a case against an employer of one of those islanders was brought on they found employers of that labour or their agents in town going on to the bench. They might do so with good motives, but still the administration of justice should not be suspected. Their police magistrates were, as a rule, impartial men. He was quoting from memory, but he was sure his memory served him aright when he said that in British Guiana, for instance, the employers of coolie labour were not allowed to sit on the bench on the hearing of complaints under the Coolie Act there—and very properly so, too.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said, of course, that clause applied not only to planters, but to anybody else. He thought that in cases of the kind where the bench was packed it was

packed not by the planters but by the planters' antagonists. That was the case at Bundaberg. There the bench was packed by particular friends of the Premier.

Mr. SMYTH : By both sides ?

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : Exactly ! When the planters saw that the Premier's friends insisted upon sitting upon the bench they sat on the bench also, and they happened to have a majority. He could not see any great objection to the clause himself, though there might be something in what the hon. member for Mackay said : that the police magistrates would be placed in a somewhat invidious position ; but he thought they ought to be able to take the responsibility, and he thought they would be able to take it.

Mr. BLACK said he was very glad the Premier had corrected the mistake in the papers. He had been astonished to see such a report in two of the daily papers. He knew from what the hon. member had told him before that the only case he had heard of where the bench had been packed in Polynesian cases occurred at Bundaberg, and he was naturally astonished to find the hon. member reported as having said it occurred at Mackay. He was very glad to accept the hon. gentleman's explanation. The hon. gentleman, in order that no one should be a marked man in that district, declined to mention any one individual, but he would point out that, in a district where the hon. gentleman assumed that party feeling ran so high as to necessitate such a clause as that, they would be making the police magistrate rather a marked man. He would not envy police magistrates placed in so invidious a position. He knew that the police magistrate at Mackay had invited planters to sit on the bench and they had refused. He did not know who the officials were who gave the Premier the information, and he doubted very much whether they were officials. There was one very turbulent friend of the Premier he knew, and who, according to his own account, was in very intimate communication with the Premier.

The PREMIER : Who is that ?

Mr. BLACK said he did not wish to point out a marked man either ; but he could form a very good idea at whose instigation a good many of those frivolous prosecutions took place up there. No doubt some hon. members who represented Maryborough knew the individual to whom he was referring. As he could see the feeling of the Committee was in favour of the retention of the clause he should not delay the Committee unnecessarily in discussing it. He would prefer to see the clause so worded that no one interested in tropical agriculture should take part in those cases. There might be some reason in that. But to disqualify the whole bench of magistrates in that way was very unsatisfactory, and no sufficient reason had been given for it. Many would hold that it was done simply to secure convictions in accordance with the views expressed by the Premier of the colony. He hoped that there would be some opportunity given for a reversal of the decisions of police magistrates—at all events when the Estimates came before them—if it was found they acted unfairly. They knew that the police magistrates of Mackay and Townsville were really removed from their positions to less advantageous ones in consequence of their opinions being adverse to the opinions held by the Premier on certain occasions.

The PREMIER said he did not intend to discuss the reasons for the removal of the police magistrates at Townsville and Mackay ; he

simply rose to say that there was no foundation whatever for the statement the hon. member had just made.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he believed the hon. member for Mackay had alluded to him. He did not know the individual the hon. gentleman alluded to, but he suspected who he was, and he could only say it was fortunate for the people of Mackay that they had such a good, conscientious, honest man amongst them. As for the police magistrate at Maryborough, he was a man not afraid to do his duty, and he did not think anyone in the whole district would suspect him of being biased or prejudiced. So far as the district of Maryborough was concerned, he believed everyone would be perfectly satisfied that the police magistrate should have the sole jurisdiction in Polynesian cases.

Mr. BLACK said he would be obliged if the hon. gentleman would inform him what he was talking about. He had not the most remote idea what the hon. gentleman was referring to. He had said nothing whatever about the police magistrate at Maryborough, and he was quite prepared to accept the hon. gentleman's assurance that that gentleman was one of the most able magistrates in the colony. Neither had he made any allusion whatever to the hon. gentleman himself.

Mr. SHERIDAN said the hon. member had not alluded to the police magistrate at Maryborough, but he had alluded to him (Mr. Sheridan) as knowing whom he meant. He suspected whom the hon. gentleman meant, and he repeated that the hon. gentleman ought to be very well satisfied to have such a man amongst the Mackay magistrates. He (Mr. Sheridan) had then alluded to the fact that he believed the people of Wide Bay and Maryborough were satisfied that the police magistrate could do his duty under that clause fearlessly and well.

Mr. ANNEAR said he believed he was the innocent cause of the misunderstanding ; and he took the opportunity of asking the Premier whether a statement he had heard was true or not. He had been in the company of the hon. member for Mackay when the conversation turned on an inspector in that district—an appointment of the Premier's—who was reported to have gone through the different plantations, telling everyone with whom he came in contact that he had been sent up by the Premier to harass the planters. He assumed that he (Mr. Annear) was the member for Maryborough to whom the hon. member for Mackay had alluded.

The PREMIER said it was highly improbable that any inspector would make such a statement as that, because he must know that if he was proved to have said what was attributed to him it could only be followed by his dismissal. He did not think anyone would be such a fool as to do anything of the kind. He need not contradict the statement that anyone was sent up to harass the planters ; it was too absurd to need contradiction.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he would have been inclined to support the striking out of the clause, because he considered it a serious reflection upon the magistracy of the colony. No doubt abuses had crept in, and some wrong appointments had been made by both sides ; but it was the duty of the Government to apply the pruning-knife freely. If they were to accept the law that no justice of the peace was to sit at all, as in Sydney, the sooner they came to one decision or the other the better. He was not sure that it would not be a good thing to have the law everywhere administered by police magistrates. So long as employers of

labour were allowed to sit upon any masters' and servants' case, he did not see any inconsistency in allowing planters to sit in cases where islanders were concerned. In places where he had been, before police magistrates were appointed, the unpaid magistracy had to sit, and there was very little dissension from their ruling. When the police magistrates were appointed the unpaid magistrates did not trouble the bench much, except, perhaps, in Bundaberg, where they seemed to have stuffing matches. He never heard of it anywhere else, and, as the Press had pretty considerable liberty, if anything of the kind occurred they were pretty sure to hear of it. He thought the clause was an unnecessary one.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 14, as follows:—

"After the thirty-first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and ninety, no license to introduce islanders shall be granted."

Mr. BLACK said he would like to ask the Premier, as that was a matter involving a very great industry of Queensland, whether he had any defined views as to what the labour policy of tropical Queensland was to be after the date mentioned. It must be fully understood that the passage of that clause meant the gradual depreciation of property till the term was reached; and it was only fair that the country should be given some intimation what the future labour policy of the Government was to be. The hon. gentleman had already told them he had reason to believe that the Government of Germany, from which country it was anticipated they would have been able to draw a considerable quantity of plantation labour, had refused to allow their subjects to enter into any engagements to come to this colony; and he believed the hon. gentleman was aware that the Government of Denmark had also prohibited the recruiting of labour for plantation purposes in that country. Every man who had the welfare of the country at heart wished to see some satisfactory solution of the difficulty. Not 3 per cent. of the people of the colony would willingly see so important an industry perish; but it was positively certain that without some other kind of cheap and reliable labour the industry could not possibly continue to exist. It had been admitted that their own countrymen were unwilling to engage at the only rate of wages at which the industry could be carried on. Continental powers, having no doubt ascertained that the labour was unsuitable and the wages insufficient, refused to allow their subjects to enter upon it. The Government was the most serious competitor in the labour market with the industries of the colony; and it was only fair, therefore, that the hon. gentleman should show by what means he wished to see the industry carried on in Queensland. Although the five years gave a certain breathing time to the planters, it would not be looked upon by those who had invested large sums of money in the industry as a solution of the difficulty, but rather as increasing the difficulties of the situation.

The PREMIER said he did not expect to please the hon. gentleman. It was only the other day that the hon. member expressed his great pleasure at seeing that clause in the Bill, and he was surprised at it, because he did not expect to hear him say anything of the kind. That clause was the first change that had been made in the labour system of the colony for many years. It had been said that the present Government had altered the labour system in all sorts of ways so as to injure sugar-planters, but that clause was the first thing the Government had really done to interfere with the planting industry. He was not prepared to say what would be the con-

dition of the industry in five years' time. He hoped it would be in the same condition as all other industries. He anticipated that that would be the case, and he had not the slightest fear that the industry would be stopped. Instead of being as it was it would be far more profitable, and of lasting value; but he was not prepared to say exactly by what means that would be brought about. Five years would at any rate afford breathing time, and planters, knowing what the intention of the Legislature was, would see exactly what they ought to do; and that if they wished to exist it would be their business to work with the rest of the community, and not go against the rest of the community with regard solely to their own interests. He did not wish to say anything unkind about the sugar-planters, although he easily might, as to the manner in which they had met the efforts of the Government to assist them during the last two years; but the five years' breathing time would give ample opportunity to settle the question on a proper basis. It had long been admitted that there must be a termination of the existing conditions, and he expected that they would terminate long before the five years had expired, from the operation of other causes altogether.

Mr. BLACK said the hon. gentleman said he did not wish to say anything unkind of the planters, but perhaps the planters were not of the opinion that they had been so much the subjects of his extreme solicitude as the Premier would infer. It was quite plain that the hon. gentleman wished to pose before the country as an opponent of coloured labour; yet he had entirely failed to point out in what way the planters were to get relief. The expenses in connection with Polynesian labour were now so excessive that that alone was one reason why Polynesians would not be introduced in any very large numbers. As to another remark of the hon. gentleman, he could assert that the planters had always worked with the rest of the community; and certainly, the hon. gentleman could not point to one single instance where any who believed with him had carried out his theory of carrying on tropical agriculture exclusively with European labour.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he recollected the hon. gentleman once saying in the North that the man who could solve the labour difficulty would deserve well of his country. He was led to hope that the hon. gentleman had some such remedy to offer. In due time the hon. gentleman proposed his remedy, and only the other night he told them it could not be carried out because the German Government objected to it. Now he very coolly told them his belief that in five years' time the planting industry would be in a better condition than it was in now, but he could not say how that better condition was to be brought about. That was a very small mouse to be produced after such a prodigious labour. In fact the hon. gentleman seemed very much in the position of Mr. Micawber; he was "waiting for something to turn up."

The PREMIER said he should take the opportunity, in Committee of Supply, of saying a good deal on the question of the sugar industry. When proposing a vote for £50,000 for aid to central mills he should state what was proposed to be done. A statement had been prepared on the subject, and he hoped the papers would be laid on the table to-morrow or next day.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he did not believe in the clause, because it could not but injure an industry in which vast sums of money had been invested. There was no labour better suited to tropical agriculture than kanakas, and none that was less likely to come into conflict with the outside working men. The wages men in

the North fully recognised the necessity and the usefulness of the kanaka. Some sort of cheap and reliable labour was absolutely necessary to enable the sugar industry to exist at all. He believed that in the event of their being deprived of that labour, say, within one year, three-fourths of the sugar plantations throughout Queensland would shut up at once in hopeless despair. Putting it off for five years was a sort of relegation to the *Kalendas Græcas*—waiting for something to happen in the meantime. In fact, he looked upon it as a sort of bunkum clause in the Bill. He did not see any use in it at all, and should support the hon. member for Mackay if he moved that it be struck out.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he looked upon the clause as the main clause of the Bill. There were fourteen clauses in the measure, and that one was worth the other thirteen put together. In fact the Bill would be nothing at all without it. As to the fear of the hon. member for Mackay that the sugar industry would suffer through want of black labour, he did not believe that it would. If the sugar-planters were left to work out their own salvation they would not give up without a struggle. The industry was far too precious; it was one that they would endeavour in every way to preserve, and the planters were not the men to give way easily. They had too much determination, and if they were like the hon. member for Mackay they were sure to succeed. If a planter had 100 acres of cane planted, what was to prevent him from letting it to ten men in blocks of 10 acres each, in a kind of co-operative way? In that way the work could be done easily; there would be no trouble about recruiting and importing islanders, and it would be beneficial to the planters themselves and to the country. In fact he believed that at the end of three years the industry would be in a very much better position than ever it was before. He hoped the hon. member for Mackay would take heart, and do his best under the circumstances, and he would find that the colony could do very well without black labour.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he did not for a moment believe in the theory advanced by the hon. member for Ipswich. He knew that there was a lot of work connected with the industry that was absolutely distasteful and unprofitable for any able-bodied working man to engage himself in. He did not believe one bit in letting small patches of land to men to grow cane for central mills. He was certain that it would be a failure. He had looked into the matter like a great many other business men; he had peculiar advantages for doing so, and he was perfectly satisfied that the system could not be worked profitably. He should be sorry to see any man engage in such an enterprise, because for economical reasons it could not be a success in a district such as he represented—a tropical district. No doubt in the neighbourhood of the Logan and the cooler portions of the colony white men might be able to do the whole of the work; but, judging from what he had seen up north, he was convinced that white labour must be supplemented by black, or the industry must be deliberately stamped out there.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he intended to support the clause, as he had said he should over and over again during the last eight years; but he thought at the same time that the Premier was simply putting off the evil day, and not facing the difficulties before him. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) was inclined to defer the debate on the subject until the hon. member brought forward what he called his remedy—that was, a vote to subsidise sugar-mills in various districts. Possibly that would be the most convenient time to discuss the ques-

tion. At any rate, the black labour question would come on again then. He supported the clause, not because he believed the sugar industry, or any other tropical cultivation, could be carried on in Northern Queensland without black labour, because he did not. He supported it because the colony could not go on creditably before the world and continue the South Sea Island traffic. They had been in that position for years, and they were placed in a much worse position—one which was forced upon them—in the eyes of the world, by the highly sensational style in which the high-handed actions of the Premier had been put before the English public. As he had said, he believed that tropical cultivation could not go on without black labour for any long time. For many years he believed it was quite possible that it could, judging by his experience in the west country; but from what he had seen of the coast country he hoped he should never live to see the day when his own countrymen would be so degraded as to accept employment on the sugar plantations of the North or in any other tropical product. That was his opinion now, and the Premier had to accept the position and find a population for the agricultural lands of the North suitable for the climate or give up considering them as agricultural lands at all and let them revert to a state of nature, which some of them were fast doing at the present time. He had no doubt the Premier would be able to carry his scheme for subsidising planters with sugar-mills. It would receive support from both sides, but he did not believe that one-fifth of the members who supported it believed in it. Some would support it conscientiously believing that it would be a success; others would do so because they were satisfied that it would all the sooner prove the Premier's scheme to be a failure. But the Premier must not consider, if he succeeded in devising a scheme by which big plantations were to be cut up into smaller ones, that he had solved the black labour difficulty, because he would find that the small men would then go in for black labour as well as the wealthy planters. At the present time it was unpopular to advocate black labour, because the working classes were deceived on the subject. They did not see where their own harm was; they simply saw the harm to the rich man. It was a bad motive; but at the same time it was sufficient for them as long as there was plenty of employment. The present state of affairs, however, would not continue. The colony would be in a different position when the expenditure on railways was to a certain extent stopped, and the best agricultural industries in the North had ceased. Then, if the Premier's scheme simply meant the cutting up of the big estates, he would find that he had brought the black labour question nearer solution, as he would have increased the number of advocates for black labour on the plantations. Hon. members ought to consider whether white labour could be employed on the plantations. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) had studied the question with care. He had some doubts at one time as to whether white labour could not be profitably employed as far north as Bundaberg. He had given up that idea now, and, so far as the northern part of the colony was concerned, he was satisfied, as he had always been, that they would have to get another kind of labour, not because it was cheap and reliable, but because labour from the countries in which hon. members were born was quite unfit for the purpose.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the present trouble was caused by the Premier having had to take high-handed measures to remedy an evil. In doing so the Premier only took the best means at his hand. The evil, he (Mr. Lumley Hill) was

afraid, was the result of bad supervision in the past, or due to the deliberate way in which the supervision of the labour traffic was slurred by the previous Government. But for that there would have been no necessity to bring in the coolie cry, or for the attempt to introduce the coolies, which was regarded with repugnance throughout the length and breadth of the colony. Hon. members were there to lead in the direction the people were willing to go, and not to force down their throats labour which was repugnant to them. They would have been perfectly contented to accept the kanaka as far as the Northern constituencies were concerned—perfectly contented to see him working on plantations on which they were practically unable to work themselves—but it was the nature of the trade which caused the cry of indignation to be raised against it. If the late Government had carried on a proper supervision, which they should have done for their own self-protection, none of the present trouble would have occurred, and the scandal which circulated throughout the land would have been prevented.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the argument of the hon. member for Cook was that the late Government had slurred or skipped their work, or failed to perform their duty, and that the trade in consequence got into such a demoralised state that thousands of men were in slavery in the colony; and that owing to those facts the present Government had no other course open to them than the one they were pursuing. When the late Government left office there were 11,000 islanders who had been introduced under their supervision. The present Government allowed things to go on for about a year, and then an examination was instituted. But was that examination into the circumstances under which islanders were introduced by the late Government? No; they picked out six ships, every one of which sailed from the colony during the present administration. The permits were granted to men who were licensed by the present Government; and the whole of the ships examined were condemned. That proved that there must have been very bad administration during the present reign. The very fact that the Premier took no steps to discover scandalous cases under the previous Government proved that he himself had either insuperable difficulties in the way, or knew perfectly well that there were no such cases.

The PREMIER said it was perfectly true the ships referred to were licensed by the present Government, but the licenses were issued before the present Government had had time to know what was going on in the office. He, however, was not in charge of the office for three months before the regulations which had been so much opposed were made. The blame should fall on the right shoulders, and not on a stranger in office. The introduction of the labourers from New Guinea occurred just about the time the change of Government took place. The ships started just before or after the present Government came into power. He (the Premier) did not say the late Premier knew anything about it, and it was not necessary to blame one Ministry more than another.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier had flatly contradicted what the hon. member for Cook had stated. He had admitted that he was in office twelve months before he took any active steps.

The PREMIER: Three months.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the ships left three months after the hon. member was in office.

The PREMIER: Three days.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said every one of the ships left after the hon. gentleman was in office. What he had to say, however, was that amongst the 11,000 islanders who were in the colony at the time of the change of Government not a single case of inhumanity or slavery could be found, and the hon. gentleman would have been very glad of any such case to bring against the late Government. On the contrary, it was proved that the men were not in slavery, and, as the hon. gentleman knew, he (Sir T. McIlwraith) took most active steps months before he left office to prevent any ship recruiting in New Guinea; and ships that did so acted against his express instructions.

Clause put and passed.

Preamble passed as printed.

The House resumed, the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

#### SUPPLY—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into Committee further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving that £37,079 be voted for Harbours, Lighthouses, and Pilots, said the increases in the vote arose chiefly from increases in the number of officers required. In the Brisbane office there was an additional clerk at £160, and in the executive branch there were salaries provided for an engineer for the pilot steamer and two firemen—£480 altogether. At Maryborough there were two additional officers, with salaries amounting to £288.

Mr. HAMILTON called attention to the state of the Committee.

Quorum formed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, resuming, said at Rockhampton there was an increase of £25 to a clerk, which he believed was the only increase in salary in the whole of the estimate. There was an additional officer provided for the steam launch at £26. At the Johnstone River there was a second boatman appointed at £108. At Thursday Island there was an assistant pilot at £180 appointed on account of the increasing amount of shipping. The chief item in the general contingencies was represented by the sum of £4,700 for new engines and boiler for the steamer "Fitzroy." There was an apparent crease of £20 in the salary of the pilot at Port Douglas, which had crept in by error; and he would therefore move, with the permission of the Committee, that £37,059 only be granted.

Mr. PALMER asked if the attention of the Colonial Treasurer had been drawn to a paragraph in the report on harbours and rivers, relating to the necessity of erecting and maintaining a lighthouse at Booby Island. His attention had been called to it when travelling through Torres Straits, and he and some fellow-passengers landed there and spent a few hours going over it. In the opinion of many seafaring men it was a most desirable place for a lighthouse.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said there was no vote available at present for the erection of a lighthouse at Booby Island; but the matter would receive the attention of the department, and provision would be made for it on next year's Estimates.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why is the item "Pilot steamer for Moreton Bay" put down as a new item?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the item did not appear on the last Estimates.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he asked "Why?" It was not since the commencement of the year that they had got the steamer.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the "Advance" had only been at work for the present year, and the salaries in connection with the boat were not on the last Estimates.

Mr. NORTON said, in connection with the Port Curtis business, he would like to ask how the Bustard Head Lighthouse was attended? The pilot at Gladstone used to go down every month or fortnight.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: He goes down every month.

Mr. NORTON said that a good many complaints had been made, and it was thought that the time should be altered from a month to a fortnight, for sometimes the provisions ran out. There was another matter he would like to ask the Colonial Treasurer about, and that was the deepening of the Boyne River. He understood the deepening of the Calliope had been finished; but was anything being done towards deepening the Boyne?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the deepening of the Calliope was completed a short time ago, and the Boyne was being deepened at the present time.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked what was the cost of the "Advance," and from what fund was it paid?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that, the "Musgrave" having been wrecked, the insurance money was put to a vote for two pilot vessels. The "Advance" cost £12,000, and the insurance money derived from the loss of the "Musgrave" covered the cost of the "Advance."

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked where the "Advance" was built, and what she was built for?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the "Advance" was built in Melbourne. She was examined by the harbour-master—Captain Heath—before she was purchased, and was reported to be a suitable vessel. She was brought up here during the war-scare, and sent up to Thursday Island. After the necessity of that kind was passed she was brought down to Brisbane again, and devoted to pilotage work. The "Advance" was built for pilotage purposes in Hobson's Bay.

Mr. HAMILTON said the Colonial Treasurer might recollect that he had brought under his notice some time since the desirability of having a small steamer stationed at Cooktown, instead of the sailing craft stationed there at the present time. He would like to know if the hon. gentleman had seen the necessity for that, or otherwise?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it was no doubt very desirable to have a steamer stationed there if they could afford the money. There were many other ports in the colony where it would be desirable to have a steamer stationed likewise. He was informed that the requirements of the port were answered by the pilot vessel there at the present time. To have a steamer stationed there would mean a very great enlargement of the present establishment; and it had been his desire, without impairing the efficiency of the service, not to encourage any larger expenditure than was absolutely necessary.

Mr. HAMILTON said he thought when they could afford to pay £1,000 a year for the crew alone of a steamer used for picnics they could surely afford a small steamer at Cooktown, where it was urgently required. The one was

a luxury, and the other was an urgent necessity. They all knew that the part of the coast at Cooktown was more dangerous than any other part. Wrecks occurred more frequently there than on any other part of the coast. Search parties had often to be sent out to save lives and property, and that cranky old tub, the "Spitfire," was not fit for the purpose. If they had a small steamer the result would probably be that many valuable lives and much property would be saved that were now lost because of the inefficiency of the present boat.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the matter had been before him several times, but he could not find that there was any necessity for a steamer at that port, nor was the work there such as would justify the additional expense that would be incurred.

Mr. HAMILTON said he would give an instance of how it was perfectly impossible for the work to be performed by the present boat. One of the reasons for a boat being stationed there was for the saving of lives and property, because of the dangerous nature of the coast there. They knew the trade winds existed there. When they came from the north the sea was very heavy, and there was a greater likelihood of wrecks occurring north of Cooktown. The "Spitfire" being stationed south of Cooktown would find it impossible to travel against those winds. The consequence was that at the very time the vessel was most needed she was perfectly useless for the most important purpose for which she was stationed there—namely, the saving of valuable lives and property.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he wished to draw the attention of the Colonial Treasurer to the necessity for laying down buoys in Moreton Bay. There were some as beautiful channels about the islands in Moreton Bay as one could imagine, and plenty of boats would go down there on trips if they only knew the way. The cost of deepening and marking those channels would be very little, and as there were plenty of unemployed men in the Government Service it would scarcely involve any expense at all. Again, he did not think it a creditable thing that they should have such a fine river as they had between Brisbane and Ipswich and not be able to go up it because there were no beacons. The beacons did exist there once, and it would not take a very large expenditure to have them replaced. It used to be beacons, but there were no beacons now. £100 spent in beacons, and perhaps £200 or £300 in dredging, would make it fit for almost any of the river steamers. Anyone who went up to Ipswich would say it was discreditable that steamers could not go up without a pilot.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that whenever any representations had been made about the condition of the lower part of the river and the Bay they had received immediate attention. If the hon. member would indicate any part of the Bay which required attention, he would have the matter looked into. He was glad the hon. member had brought under his notice the condition of the upper part of the river. He had not heard any complaints about it, and he was under the impression that the old beacons still remained. Any moderate expense for maintaining the navigation of the river would be money well expended.

Mr. PALMER said that he wished to call the Colonial Treasurer's attention to the pilot's quarters at Kimberley. He saw by the schedule that the pilot's quarters were estimated at £25. There was not a vestige of habitation there at present. He believed the pilot had stuck up a few sheets of iron to shelter himself from the weather, but the residence was not worth £5.

Mr. JORDAN said he wished to refer to another portion of the Brisbane River, situated exactly opposite his own house. They had had the promise of the Colonial Treasurer a year and a-half ago that the Dry Dock at South Brisbane would be lengthened, but the promise had not yet been carried out. Now that there was such a large amount of shipping on the river, the matter was one of very great importance. He saw by the papers that they were going to lose the hon. gentleman for a time, and perhaps he would never get back again; so he (Mr. Jordan) would like to hear before the hon. gentleman went when the Dry Dock would be lengthened.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he could not now give any full information about the matter referred to by the hon. member for Burke; but he would give it his consideration. With regard to the dock at South Brisbane, that was a matter which belonged to the Harbours and Rivers Department; and when the estimate for that department was under consideration the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers would probably be present and be able to give him full information. In the meantime he might say that the work was not delayed through any desire of the Government. Instructions had been given to have it proceeded with as quickly as possible; but he believed some technical difficulties had retarded the calling for tenders.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER moved that there be granted a sum of £19,590 for Lighthouses. That was an increase on the previous year of £1,876. The salary of the light-keeper at Comboyuro Point had been increased from £96 to £108; there was an additional £45 required for the light-keeper at Tongaluma, for whom there had only been seven months' salary on last year's estimates; £25 each for light-keepers at Toorbul Point and the quarantine station, Whitedcliffs. There was a new provision of £256 for lights in the Mary River, which was now lighted regularly up to Dundathu; £20 for a light-keeper at Auckland Point; there was a new establishment at Balaclava Island requiring £204; Port Alma, £25; at Pine Islet, the provision for nine months on last year's Estimates had to be increased this year by £112. At Port Denison there was a light-keeper at £20. The amount for Hinchinbrook Bar was increased by £48, the former estimate having been for eight months. The item for Norman Bar lightship contained a similar apparent increase of £268, the former estimate having been for only six months. Contingencies were increased by £500 in consequence of the increased consumption of oil and stores. There was also an increase of £91 in the item of sustenance allowance to the crew of the Norman Bar lightship, and an item of £700 for repairs to the Keppel Bay lightship. The total increase on the estimate was, as he had said before, £1,876.

Mr. ANNEAR said he thought the present was a proper time to draw attention to the centralising tendencies of the department. It seemed to be the idea of the hon. gentleman in charge that nothing could be done in that department outside Brisbane. Going up to Maryborough the other day he saw the Keppel Bay lightship being towed from Rockhampton to Brisbane to get some little repairs done. If a job of that kind could not be done at Rockhampton, it could certainly be done at Maryborough. Again, a lightship was built by a firm in Maryborough, and it cost £100 to bring that ship to Brisbane to have a light put on her—could anything be more absurd? When a lighthouse wanted a new lamp the lighthouse was not brought to Brisbane; the lamp was taken to the lighthouse, and why should not the same rule apply to a lightship? Only the

other day something was wanted to be done in Great Sandy Straits, and the contract was given to a Maryborough man to build a punt; but the pile engine, the winch, and monkey-crane, that could have been made there, were sent up from Brisbane. It seemed as if nothing could be done but in Brisbane. That was carrying coals to Newcastle. A week or so ago the hon. gentleman very carefully guarded the Treasury against the claims of the widows for compensation, but many a £200 of good money had been thrown away in the way he was stating. It was a waste of money to bring a lightship from the North to Brisbane for repairs, when Maryborough had a slip that would dock a 400-ton ship. He hoped that way of doing things would no longer continue. It was a bone of contention amongst his constituents, because there were as good shipwrights and mechanics in Maryborough as in Brisbane; the work could be done as cheaply, and much money would be saved.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said there was no slip at Rockhampton where the lightship could be repaired, and it was deemed advisable to bring her to Brisbane to have her overhauled and re-coppered. The hon. member was in error as to the distribution of work, for not less than £4,700 worth of that particular kind of work was now being constructed at one of the Maryborough foundries; and the work done there was highly creditable to all connected with it.

Mr. NORTON said there was a place just inside Port Curtis Heads where a great many of the A.S.N. Company's vessels and others had been repaired.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that spot could not be made use of, as the lightship needed to be taken into the dock to be coppered.

Mr. NORTON called attention to the case of a lighthouse-keeper at Sea Hill whose house had not a stove, while that of his neighbour was fitted with one. It might seem a trifling matter to call attention to, but if the hon. gentleman would take notice of it it would make a great deal of difference to the comfort of the lighthouse-keeper.

Mr. SHERIDAN said that, as he had had twenty-two years' experience as harbour-master at Maryborough, he ought to know a little as to the way in which the Portmaster had managed his business there; and he was happy to say that he could not support his hon. colleague (Mr. Annear) in all that he had said. His experience was, that whatever he required for the advancement of the place he had no difficulty in obtaining, and repairs to vessels were made on the spot. The only thing he really had to find fault with was that the pilots of Maryborough were the only pilots on the coast whose residences were not provided for them. They lived forty or fifty miles from their work, and were obliged to keep up two homes. They should be allowed residence, or some consideration in lieu of residence. He had brought the matter under notice more than once in the course of his official career, but he was sorry to say that the men still remained in nearly the same position. Their condition was a little improved now that they had a pilot steamer, by means of which they could get more expeditiously to and from their work; but still he contended that they ought to be supplied with residence, or be allowed some consideration in lieu of residence.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said with regard to Maryborough he was informed that the pilots were now very well housed on board their new steamer; their condition was much more comfortable than previously, and none of them had made any complaint. He was sorry to say that he could not give the hon. member for Port Curtis the information he wanted about



stoves. Perhaps the case arose through primitive houses being built without chimneys and stoves being supplied, but it was not usual to supply stoves.

Mr. NORTON said he would like to ask the hon. gentleman for some information about the lighthouse-keeper at Keppel Bay. He was very much grieved to hear a short time ago that a serious charge was brought against that officer, but he understood that an inquiry was held by the Auditor-General which resulted in his acquittal.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said certain charges were made against Mr. Birrell, one of the oldest pilots at Keppel Bay, which appeared of such a very serious character as to justify very minute investigation. The inquiry which was held at first did not clear the matter up to his satisfaction, and he requested the Auditor-General, who was then about to visit that port, to hold an inquiry into the whole of the circumstances. It was conducted in a very able manner, and resulted in the exoneration of the pilot from suspicion of any irregularity in the discharge of his public duties. It appeared that a practice had grown up in the port for captains of vessels to make small presents to pilots, and amongst others to Birrell. The practice was not a satisfactory one; but it had been sanctioned, and every case was satisfactorily explained, it being clearly shown that the revenue had not suffered in any way. Consequently, he was very glad indeed to be able to remove the suspension from Pilot Birrell.

Mr. NORTON said he was very glad to hear the statement made by the hon. the Treasurer, because, although he had heard that the matter was satisfactorily cleared up, he had referred to it for this reason: When charges were made against Government officials holding responsible positions, a great many people heard of them, but never heard the explanation or that the matter was satisfactorily cleared up. In this case he was well aware that the charges were satisfactorily cleared up, and he had brought it forward in order that through *Hansard* it might get as much publicity as possible.

Mr. SHERIDAN said it was true that the pilotmen at Maryborough were a little more comfortable in the steamer than they were previously, but it must be borne in mind that they had to keep, as it were, two homes, and were allowed no compensation for food or sustenance, so that they were severely handicapped as compared with other pilots. He hoped the hon. the Colonial Treasurer would give the matter consideration.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he should make full inquiry into the matter, and, if there was any cause of complaint, endeavour to remedy it. Of course the hon. member knew perfectly well—none better—the great size of that department, and that once a privilege was conceded to one or two men in one port of the colony numerous others would demand the same. Had the times been good he should have felt disposed—knowing the arduous duties that those men had to perform, and the frequent expressions of opinion in the House that their salaries ought to be increased—to have made a special recommendation to the Cabinet for permission to grant a general increase; but the times not being very flourishing he had not felt justified in doing so; and he could only repeat his promise that during the recess he would make inquiries into the cases mentioned, and if the men were suffering any hardship he would see that it was removed.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving £846 for Powder Magazines, said the item was decreased by £231 on last year, that being the amount then required to complete the magazine at Cairns.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in moving £300 for Oyster Fisheries, said it would interest hon. members to know that the item was covered by no less than £2,502 derived from oyster leases and licenses during last year.

Mr. ARCHER asked if the inspector's report had been laid on the table, and if it was as favourable in regard to the oyster-beds in Moreton Bay as was the one of last year?

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the oyster fisheries yielded the Government a revenue of £2,500, and only cost them £300 a year. Very little was done by the Government that was of any benefit to the lessees. Not the slightest protection was given by the law or the Government to those engaged in the cultivation of oysters.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the lessees could prosecute anyone found taking their oysters.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said they had to prove that the offenders were removing the oysters for sale. A man who gathered oysters for his own use committed no offence under the law.

Mr. SHERIDAN said Captain Fison could not do justice to the oyster fisheries. He did not seem to have the time to give an industry which yielded such a handsome revenue the attention it deserved. The Government should spend a little more money and have the work of inspection done more efficiently.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it had been the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill dealing with the subject this session, but the measure had to stand over on account of other business. As to the protection of oyster fisheries, the practice was to hold that a person found removing any large quantity of oysters from the fisheries was removing them for the purpose of sale. The matter would receive the early attention of the Government.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he had seen a valuable paper on the culture of oysters, which emanated, he thought, from the Harbours and Rivers Department. It was a paper which contained a great deal of information which would be most useful to the public.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he had just been informed that Captain Fison's report for the present year had not yet been laid on the table. He would have it circulated as soon as possible for the information of hon. members.

Mr. NORTON said he believed that the present Act absolutely discouraged the cultivation of oysters. Under it leases were issued for seven years, but when half the term had expired half the leasehold could be taken from the lessee and sold by auction. The lessee, too, did not know which half might be taken from him. It was not the practice to so treat a lessee, but it was one that could be indulged in under the present Act. If the Government wished to encourage oyster cultivation, they should make the lessees certain of the whole of their leaseholds for the whole term of seven years. He would also ask the Colonial Treasurer if a certain marine animal Captain Fison had once reported on was still destroying the young oysters?

Mr. SHERIDAN asked if there were any paid inspectors of oyster fisheries at the Northern ports?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said there were places in the North which were proclaimed under the Oyster Fisheries Act, as far north as Cairns, and the duties of inspectors were carried out by the local harbour-masters. With regard to the questions asked by the hon. member for Port Curtis, Captain Fison's report spoke hopefully of the oyster cultivation in Moreton Bay. The ravages of the little animal that attacked the young oysters had not been so injurious of late. At all events, no reference was made to them in the report. It appeared from the report that a very extensive amount of cultivation was going on in the Bay; and altogether the oyster industry, as shown by the quantity available for exportation, was in a flourishing condition.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that, in deference to the feelings of hon. gentlemen who desired to fully discuss the vote for Harbours and Rivers, he would postpone it until to-morrow, and would see that the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers was present. He moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again to-morrow.

Mr. BLACK asked if there was any chance of the annual report of the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers Department being laid upon the table to-morrow? They had not had one this year.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he was aware that the report had not been laid upon the table, and he could not promise it for to-morrow. However, he would see that the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers was present, so that any information hon. gentlemen might desire would be available. The report would be before the House before Parliament rose.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. We propose to-morrow, after the approval of the plans of the Beaudesert Railway, to take the Federal Council (Adopting) Bill in committee, and then proceed with Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at three minutes past 10 o'clock.