

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 13 JULY 1886

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QUEENSLAND

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

FOURTH SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT,

APPOINTED TO MEET

AT BRISBANE, ON THE THIRTEENTH DAY OF JULY, IN THE FIFTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER
MAJESTY QUEEN VICTORIA, IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD 1886.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 13 July, 1886.

Additional Members.—Vacancies during the Recess.—
Ministerial Statement.—Leader of the Opposition.—
Auditor-General's Reports.—Elections and Qualifications Committee.—Bill *pro forma*.—The Opening Speech.—Address in Reply.

THE House met at 12 o'clock, a few minutes after which hour a message was conveyed by the Usher of the Black Rod that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government requested the attendance of Mr. Speaker and hon. members of the Legislative Assembly in the Council Chamber.

THE SPEAKER, accompanied by hon. members of the Assembly, accordingly proceeded to the Legislative Council, and, having heard the Address of His Excellency, returned to their own Chamber.

The House resumed at half-past 3 o'clock.

ADDITIONAL MEMBERS.

THE SPEAKER said: I have the honour to report that writs issued by me for the election of a member for the electoral districts of Barcoo and Musgrave respectively have been duly returned to me, with certificates endorsed thereon of the election of the following gentlemen, namely:—

1. Francis Reid Murphy, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Barcoo.
2. Robert Philp, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Musgrave.

VACANCIES DURING THE RECESS.

THE SPEAKER said: I have further to report that since the termination of the last session the following vacancies have occurred in the House:—

1. By the resignation of Archibald Archer, Esquire, member for the electoral district of Blackall.

2. By the death of Francis Beattie, Esquire, one of the members for the electoral district of Fortitude Valley.

3. By the resignation of the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, K.C.M.G., member for the electoral district of Mulgrave.

That upon the occurrence of each of the said vacancies I issued my writ for the election of a member to fill the same; and that two of such writs have been duly returned to me with certificates duly endorsed thereon, of the election of the following gentlemen, namely:—

1. William Pattison, Esquire, as member for the electoral district of Blackall.
2. Samuel Wood Brooks, Esquire, as a member for the electoral district of Fortitude Valley.

MEMBERS SWORN.

Mr. Samuel Wood Brooks was sworn in, and took his seat as a member for the electoral district of Fortitude Valley.

Mr. Francis Reid Murphy was sworn in, and took his seat as member for the electoral district of Barcoo.

Mr. Robert Philp was sworn in, and took his seat as member for the electoral district of Musgrave.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I have to inform the House that during the recess a change has taken place in the formal constitution of the Government. The work attached to the office of Colonial Secretary, which was held by myself, was found more than I could attend to in addition to other matters more particularly connected with my position as head of the Government. Advantage was therefore taken of the powers conferred by the Officials in Parliament Act of 1884 to make a change in the nominal constitution of the

Government. His Excellency the Governor was pleased to constitute a new office—that of Chief Secretary; and it was declared that the Chief Secretary should be one of the Ministers who might sit in Parliament, and, further, the offices of Colonial Secretary and Secretary for Public Instruction were at the same time combined. The Chief Secretary is charged with the business connected with the following matters:—Legislation, defence, foreign correspondence, immigration, commissions and other instruments under the Great Seal of the Colony; and correspondence with His Excellency the Governor, the Judges of the Supreme Court, the President and Clerk of the Legislative Council, the Speaker and Clerk of the Legislative Assembly, the consuls of foreign States, naval and military authorities, the Secretaries of Colonial Governments, the Agent-General, the heads of the several Churches, and the Government Resident at Thursday Island; and is further charged, in conjunction with the Colonial Secretary, with the control of such other matters attached to the Colonial Secretary's Department as may from time to time be found expedient. That arrangement has been carried out, and I now hold the office of Chief Secretary, and my hon. friend Mr. Moreton holds the combined offices of Colonial Secretary and Minister for Public Instruction.

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to make an explanation to the House in regard to a change which has taken place since the prorogation of the House last session. As hon. members are aware, the leader of the Opposition has resigned his seat in Parliament and therefore it devolved upon the party to elect someone else to fill, so far as he can, the place previously occupied by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, or at any rate to fill that place to the best of his ability. I had hoped, when the hon. gentleman opposite rose to make the announcement concerning the change in the Government offices, that he might possibly make some graceful reference to the gentleman who has for many years occupied a distinguished position in this House and a distinguished position in the Australian colonies. I am quite sure that on both sides of the House there is a feeling of general regret that one who has occupied the position Sir Thomas McIlwraith has held—who has occupied so important a position in the history of the colony—I am sure that a general feeling of regret is felt on both sides of the House that he has felt it incumbent upon him to retire, not only from his position as leader of the Opposition, but also from Parliament altogether. I need not say more on this subject, because any words I may make use of will not add one atom to the feeling of general regret felt throughout the colony at Sir Thomas McIlwraith's retirement, both by his friends and his foes. The announcement I have now to make is that the gentlemen who form the Opposition, or those of them now in town, met together this afternoon, and have done me the honour to select me as their leader. I can only regret that the office has not fallen upon one who could fill it with more ability, and one who is more, I might say, ready to take the office than myself. It was with some reluctance I accepted it; but I felt bound, under the circumstances in which I was placed, to act in accordance with the wishes of the gentlemen with whom I am associated. I shall not say anything further on the subject, but I hope the conduct of business will be somewhat furthered by the help of this side of the House. No doubt we shall have to criticise the action of the Government in

some respects; but whatever may take place, I am quite sure the desire of this side of the House is that no unfriendly feeling shall be exhibited, and that no unfriendly remarks shall be made which are likely to cause the least friction between the two sides.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORTS.

The SPEAKER said: I have to report to the House that I have received the following letter from the Auditor-General:—

"Audit Department, Queensland,

"Brisbane, 13th July, 1886.

"SIR,

"In pursuance of the provisions of the Audit Act of 1874 (38 Vic., No. 12), I do myself the honour to transmit herewith, for presentation to the Legislative Assembly, the Treasury Statements of the receipts and expenditure of the Consolidated Revenue, the Loan, and the several Trust Funds for the financial year ended 30th June, 1885, together with my report thereon.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. L. G. DREW,

"Auditor-General.

"The Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly."

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson), the Statements and Report enclosed were ordered to be printed.

The SPEAKER said: I have also to report to the House that I have received the following letter from the Auditor-General:—

"Audit Department, Queensland,

"Brisbane, 13th July, 1886.

"SIR,

"In compliance with the provisions of the 6th clause of the Savings Bank Act of 1870 (34 Vic., No. 10), I have the honour to report to the Legislative Assembly that the Government debentures and other securities held in trust for the Savings Bank by the President of the Legislative Council, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the Colonial Treasurer, were duly examined, counted, and audited, on the 1st instant, and that they were found correct.

"The enclosed statement shows how the funds of the Savings Bank were invested on that date.

"I have the honour to be, sir,

"Your obedient servant,

"W. L. G. DREW,

"Auditor-General.

"The Honourable the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly."

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the Report and Statement enclosed were ordered to be printed. *

ELECTIONS AND QUALIFICATIONS COMMITTEE.

The SPEAKER, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution Act, laid on the table his warrant appointing the Committee of Elections and Qualifications for the present session.

BILL PRO FORMA.

The PREMIER presented a Bill to amend the law relating to smuggling, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

THE OPENING SPEECH.

The SPEAKER reported that the House had, in the earlier part of the day, attended His Excellency the Administrator of the Government in the Legislative Chambers, where His

Excellency delivered an Opening Speech to both Houses of Parliament; of which, for greater accuracy, he had obtained a copy, which he would now read to the House:—

“HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“I have summoned you somewhat later in the year than has lately been usual, the delay having been caused by the necessary and prolonged absences of some of my Ministers from the capital upon public business of urgent importance.

“Early in this year the first session of the Federal Council of Australasia was held at Hobart. Much important work, mainly of a preliminary character, was transacted; and I am glad to believe that the foundation has thus been laid of a Federal Union, whose influence upon the future welfare of the Australasian colonies will be of continually increasing importance. I hope that the colonies at present unrepresented in the Council will before long join with the federated colonies, to which end my Government will not fail to devote its best attention and efforts.

“The Joint Address agreed to by you at the close of last session with respect to the relative rights and powers of the two Houses of Parliament in regard to money Bills was duly transmitted to Her Majesty, who was graciously pleased to refer the matter for the report of the Privy Council. The report of that tribunal will be laid before you, and will, I trust, be found to be a satisfactory termination of a much-vexed question.

“I regret that the question of the future administration of the government of British New Guinea is still unsettled. My Ministers have formulated proposals on the subject, which have received the assent of the Governments of the colonies of New South Wales and Victoria, and under which the primary responsibility of the administration would devolve upon Queensland. I am confident that these proposals will meet with your concurrence, and I trust shortly to be in a position to inform you that they have received Her Majesty’s approval, and to recommend for your consideration the necessary measures to give effect to them.

“My Ministers have joined with those of the other federated colonies in remonstrating with Her Majesty’s Government against the proposed abrogation of the agreement now existing between the Governments of Great Britain and France for respecting the independence of the New Hebrides. I am happy to be able to inform you that these remonstrances are likely to have good effect.

“The Indian and Colonial Exhibition, in London, which has lately been opened by Her Majesty in person, cannot fail to make better known the wealth and resources of the Australasian colonies. It affords me much satisfaction

to know that the various industries of Queensland have been well represented, and I have great pleasure in expressing my recognition of the services rendered by the Commissioners in the colony, to whose unremitting exertions is mainly due the success that has been attained.

“The tribunal appointed for assessing the compensation to be paid to the employers of the natives of New Guinea who were returned to their homes by order of the Government has concluded its labours, and the several amounts awarded have been paid in anticipation of your sanction.

“Papers on all these subjects will be laid before you.

“Notwithstanding the adverse seasons, considerable steps have been taken to bring into operation the provisions of the Crown Lands Act of 1884; and I am glad to be assured that its provisions are already conducting in a large degree to a beneficial settlement upon the lands of the colony.

“GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“The Estimates for the current year will be laid before you without delay.

“It was not to be expected that Queensland would wholly escape the consequences of the long-continued and disastrous drought with which the Australian continent has been visited. The finances are nevertheless in a sound condition, and the unprecedented success of the stock lately offered in London is abundant proof of the high credit of the colony.

“The recent rains with which nearly all parts of Queensland have been blessed, and the improving prospects of many of our industries, give good ground for confident anticipations of future prosperity.

“It will, however, be necessary for the present to exercise the most rigid economy in expenditure, and I am sure that you will cordially concur and assist in this course.

“HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

“The advantages of the system of local government now established in the colony can hardly be over-estimated. The statute laws on the subject are, however, in many respects defective, and you will be invited to devote your early attention to the consolidation and amendment of these laws, particularly with regard to the constitution and working of divisional boards and the joint action of local authorities.

“You will also be asked to consider a measure having for its object to define and declare the rights to natural water, and to provide for the storage and distribution of water by local authorities constituted for the purpose.

“The Bills relating to justices of the peace and to settled lands, which have already been

under your notice, have been carefully revised, and will be again submitted for your consideration.

"Amongst other measures which will be laid before you as occasion offers are—

"A Bill to provide for the Payment of the Expenses incurred by Members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament;

"A Bill to constitute a Tribunal for the trial of Election Petitions;

"A Bill to amend the law relating to the Occupation of Crown Lands on Gold Fields;

"A Bill to amend the laws relating to Quarantine;

"A Bill to amend the Mineral Lands Act of 1882, so far as it relates to Mining for Coal;

"A Bill to amend the law relating to the Incorporation and Winding-up of Gold Mining Companies;

"A Bill to extend and regulate the Liability of Employers to make Compensation for Personal Injuries suffered by Workmen in their Service;

"A Bill for the Protection of Oysters and the Encouragement of Oyster Fisheries;

"A Bill to regulate the Manufacture and Supply of Gas;

"A Bill to repeal the Acts relating to the Introduction of Labourers from British India;

"A Bill to put Restrictions upon the Sale of Opium;

"A Bill to amend the criminal law so far as regards the Punishment of Persons convicted of First Offences; and

"A Bill to amend the Pearl-Shell and Bêche-de-Mer Fisheries Act of 1881."

"You will also be invited to sanction the construction of several lines of railway for which the necessary funds have already been appropriated.

"Complaints have occasionally arisen of delay in the administration of public business in the more remote parts of Queensland, and sometimes of apparent inattention to local requirements. I hope that time will allow of your dealing with this subject, and of adopting such measures as may lead to the removal of any similar grounds of complaint in the future.

"I invite your most careful consideration to the various matters that will be brought before you, and I trust that under the blessing of Divine Providence your labours may tend to the permanent advancement and prosperity of the colony."

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS moved—

1. That a Select Committee be appointed to prepare an Address in Reply to the Speech delivered by His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, in opening this the fourth session of the Ninth Parliament of Queensland.

2. That the said Committee consist of Mr. Griffith, Mr. Lumley Hill, Mr. Smyth, Mr. Bulcock, and the Mover.

Question put and passed.

The Committee thereupon retired, and having returned brought up the following Address, which was read by the Clerk :—

"To His Excellency the Honourable Sir ARTHUR HUNTER PALMER, Knight Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of St. Michael and St. George, President of the Legislative Council and Administrator of the Government of the Colony of Queensland and its Dependencies.

"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful subjects, the Members of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland, in Parliament assembled, desire to assure Your Excellency of our continued loyalty and affection towards the Throne and Person of Our Most Gracious Sovereign, and we thank Your Excellency for the Speech with which you have been pleased to open the present Session.

"We will give our most careful attention and consideration to the various matters to which Your Excellency has referred, and to such other matters as may be brought before us, and it shall be our earnest endeavour so to deal with them that our labours may tend to the permanent advancement and prosperity of the colony."

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to move that the Reply to his Excellency's Address, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted by this House; and in doing so I may be allowed to remark that when juniority of membership and average modesty meet together in the same man, as they happen to do in the junior member for Fortitude Valley, parliamentary usage operates somewhat harshly. At a time when such a man desires to begin a course of listening, watching, and learning, parliamentary usage calls upon him to take the floor and talk. There is, however, some mitigation of misery in the fact that a member in such a position speaks in the ears of hon. members each of whom has probably a lively recollection of the time when he stood upon his feet to make his first talk; and also in the fact that in the Speech to which I have to move the Address in Reply there is so little to cause dispute and so much that will commend itself to hon. members as good and reasonable. The Address in Reply seems at a glance to fall into two parts. It refers, first, to things which have been done, and, secondly, to things which will be done or which it is hoped will be done. Of the things that have been done, the first-named seems, unless I mis-estimate the matter, the most important. His Excellency says :—

"Early in this year the first session of the Federal Council of Australasia was held at Hobart. Much important work, mainly of a preliminary character, was transacted; and I am glad to believe that the foundation has thus been laid of a Federal Union, whose influence upon the future welfare of the Australasian colonies will be of continually increasing importance. I hope that the colonies at present unrepresented in the Council will before long join with the federated colonies, to which end my Government will not fail to devote its best attention and efforts."

I take it, Mr. Speaker, that all hon. members who have read the report of the proceedings of the first session of the Federal Council—which has been laid on the table of the House to-day, and which has, I presume, been forwarded to every hon. member—and who have read it with any degree of care, will come to the conclusion that in that preliminary session of the Federal Council very good and very important work was done. They

will also, I think, join in His Excellency's regret that certain colonies in the Australasian group were not represented in that Council, and will further hope that as political vicissitudes bring around other men, men will in time be brought to the front in the colonies at present unrepresented who will feel that their strength lies in union, and their weakness in isolation, and that in future sessions those colonies will be represented. Attention is directed in the Speech of His Excellency to the fact that the Joint Address which was agreed to by both Houses at the close of last session, in respect to the relative rights and powers of the two branches of the Legislature, has resulted in that question being settled. I think all hon. members of both Houses have good grounds for satisfaction in the settlement of that question, a question which to some of us, who were then outsiders, appeared to threaten inconvenience of a very serious nature. But, thanks to the forbearance of hon. gentlemen at that time, the question was submitted to an outside authority, and that outside authority has considered the question in cold blood, and has decided that the contention of the Legislative Assembly was a correct contention. But that does not forbid the assumption that each House at that time believed itself to be in the right and the other House in the wrong. It is, however, a matter for very great satisfaction to all members of both Houses that this question is at last set at rest, and not likely to be revived. We may, therefore, join in His Excellency's hope that the decision "will be found to be a satisfactory determination of a much-vexed question." The third paragraph in the Address refers to British New Guinea, and expresses regret that the administration of that part of the British Empire is still unsettled. We may well regret that the administration of British New Guinea is yet an unsettled and an open question; but if hon. members will consider well the papers which have been, or are to be, laid on the table of the House, they will see that there is some reason to hope that this question will soon be among the other settled questions. Certain proposals have been made by the Premier of this colony, and approved by representatives of the other colonies, and forwarded home for ratification. If they are sanctioned by the Imperial Government, we have good reason to believe that the future administration of New Guinea will be soon and satisfactorily settled. The government of an uncivilised race by a civilised race in such a way that the uncivilised people shall not be unduly governed, or completely governed out of existence, is an old and very difficult question. We have to remember that New Guinea came to us in quite a different way from that in which Fiji came to be a part of the British Empire. We got Fiji by cession, or the will of the natives, who again and again expressed their desire to be governed by our Sovereign. In quite another way did we obtain possession of British New Guinea—by settlement, as the official documents tell us. But the difficulty is really a very serious one, and it is to be hoped that our proposals which have been laid before the home authorities will be sanctioned by them, and that the Government of New Guinea will soon be a settled matter. Attention is next directed, in this Address, to the matter of the agreement between the Governments of Great Britain and France for the independence of the New Hebrides. This seems to me a matter which very closely concerns us in Queensland—more closely, indeed, than it can possibly concern any other colony in the Australasian group. It is well known to hon. members that an agreement exists, as between France and

Great Britain, which provides for the independence of the New Hebrides, and that that agreement has been now upheld for some years. The time has, however, now come when France insists that this agreement shall be no longer acknowledged, but that they shall be allowed to take possession of this group of islands, and that in return they should give to the British Government some island called Rapa, which is supposed to have some value, probably as a calling place or coaling station for mail steamers. It is very important that this agreement should be upheld in its integrity, and that no concession whatever should be made by the British Government to that of France which would abrogate it. Certainly, the French authorities tell us that if this agreement be abrogated, and the French Government take possession of this group of islands, they will secure facilities for commerce and absolute religious freedom. But when we remember the history of the guarantors we may be pardoned if we hesitate to accept those guarantees, which are of a somewhat gauzy character. The better and safer plan will be to insist that the agreement be strictly upheld. If any hon. members desire any support in upholding it they may find it in a minute, which is referred to in the official papers, by Mr. Thurston, the present Administrator of the Government of Fiji—a gentleman who is, perhaps, better acquainted with Polynesian matters than any man now living. I know Mr. Thurston very well; for the last twenty-five years he has been living in Polynesia, and he has a fuller and completer knowledge, I take it, of those Polynesian affairs, and is more entitled to speak upon them, than any man I know. It is to be hoped that this agreement will be upheld by the authorities at home. Reference is next made to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition at present being held in London, and I am really glad to see that there is a recognition of the services which have been rendered towards that exhibition by the resident commissioners of this colony. Any hon. member who has seen the catalogue of the exhibits forwarded to that exhibition will see that we shall make and do make a very creditable show there; but no such creditable appearance could have been made if it had not been for the very energetic endeavours of the local commissioners. I have been a constant witness of their work, and I have seen how energetically and continuously they have attended to the duties which they took upon themselves, or which were put upon them; and I think it a very graceful thing that in this Speech of His Excellency their labours should be thus specially acknowledged. It may be, as it often is, that men who do the work get the least honour and glory; but the fact will still remain, as a consolation for these gentlemen, that they have done for their country good and abiding work. Reference is then made to the consequences of the long-continued and disastrous drought with which the Australian continent has been afflicted. The effect of this drought on business I have been in a position pretty accurately to understand; and I can assure hon. members that those effects have been very serious indeed—so serious that, setting aside the huge amount of animal suffering entailed, it is impossible to estimate the amount of commercial wreck it has caused. Even those commercial men who have escaped actual wreck have been taxed to their utmost to avoid the rocks. But this drought, long-continued and disastrous as it has been, will not be without its good results, if it brings right home to every man in the colony, whether in town or in country, that it is a fact that the colony is one;—that is to say, if it leads every man, whether in town or in country, to understand most clearly that no part of the

colony can suffer without other parts of the colony suffering with it; that drought on the stations means difficulties in the cities; that the ruin of the squatter means the wreck of the merchant. If it brings this fact right home to the mind of every man in the colony, this drought will have done good. I am glad to find, further on, that our attention is to be invited to the consideration of means for lessening the severity of the effects of these droughts when they may occur in the future, in a Bill to provide for the storage and conservation of water. That Bill, if I mistake not, has been mentioned year after year. It is not a new bringing forth of the matter. Again and again, as far as my researches in *Hansard* have shown me, it has been brought forward; and if it is now really brought to the front, in the exigencies of our present situation, it will provide some means of lessening the severity of those visitations; and the drought, long-continued and disastrous as it has been, will be productive of good results. Reference is made to the unusually late period at which Parliament has been called together, but if we had met in an earlier part of the year we should have met with very different feelings from those which animate us to-day. We are certainly later in meeting than usual, but in the interval between the date when some think we should have met, and this day's date when we actually have met, the rain has fallen, and we meet together with much more cheerful feelings than we could possibly have done two months ago. It is said that it will be necessary to exercise the most rigid economy. I am a very convinced and persistent believer in economy, always and in every direction; but I am not forgetful of the fact that by enforcing general economy too rigidly, injustice may be done to individuals. But that may come to the front more fully when the Estimates are under consideration. Passing on to another matter—that is, to the Bill relating to justices of the peace—as a justice of the peace I must say that it gives me some consolation to believe that this Bill has some chance this session of being passed into an Act. It is necessary that we should have some compact statement of the duties and functions of justices of the peace; and if hon. members will look at the schedule which contains the list of Acts which are repealed by this Bill, they will be able to form some idea of the great advantages which will accrue to laymen from it. I come now to some of the Bills which are to be laid before us as occasion offers. Amongst these the first is a Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly. That, I believe, is not a new Bill. Indeed, if I am not mistaken, it has a history—a sort of tale hangs thereby. Then we have a Bill to constitute a tribunal for the trial of election petitions. It remains to be seen whether, in going further, we fare better or worse than under the old provisions. Then there is a Bill to amend the laws relating to quarantine. It strikes me, Mr. Speaker, that here we have room for some good and careful legislation, especially on one point. I hold, sir, that if a man or woman, for the safety and good of the colony in general, is subjected to loss or inconvenience, they ought to be compensated for it—that the colony has no right, in order to protect itself, to subject anyone to loss or inconvenience without compensating them in some way for it. I am pleased, as the representative of a constituency consisting largely of working men, to find that there is to be some endeavour made “to extend and regulate the liability of employers to make compensation for any personal injuries suffered by workmen in their service.” Shortly, it is always known as the Employers Liability

Act. That some provision in this direction is needed, I think all hon. members who have attended to the matter will admit. I do not mean to say that the question has no difficulties. Indeed, it is surrounded with difficulties, as many subjects are. The Imperial Parliament, some three or four years ago, passed an Act of this sort, but only for a limited period. I think it expires at the end of 1887 or of 1886. They did this because they knew the matter was liable to abuse; but I think hon. members will admit at once that any man in the service of another who suffers injury through the heedlessness or parsimony of his employer ought to be compensated—that the employer ought to be made to pay for it. This seems to me to be the principal point, and although I have not seen the Bill, I assume that it is in this direction principally that it proposes to move. Then there is a Bill for the protection of oysters, and the encouragement of oyster fisheries. A very important matter this, opening up possibilities of employment and wealth to a great many. Our foreshores and rivers are well fitted for the cultivation of the oyster, and it is very necessary that some provision should be made for the protection and encouragement of oyster fisheries. Then there is some reference made to placing restrictions upon the sale of opium. This, I am given to understand, Mr. Speaker, has no reference whatever to Chinamen, but it refers to the fact—the unfortunate fact, and as it seems to me the disgraceful fact—that opium is given in some districts of this colony to aboriginals as payment for work done. A few minutes before I came to this House a friend called upon me and said that when travelling in the Rockhampton district he saw the same thing being done along the railway lines—that aboriginals were paid in opium, not in the same state exactly as it is used by the Chinese, but cinders—the refuse of it, which, however, still retained enough harm in it to be harmful to them. It was given to them as wages, and even if money were given to them they would go at once to some man on the spot and purchase this opium from him. It is a very good thing, indeed, that it is intended to introduce a Bill this session putting restrictions upon the sale of opium in that direction. Then we are to be “invited to sanction the construction of several lines of railway.” That this is an important matter every hon. member will admit. I have no doubt that every hon. member has in his mind some line of railway which he feels it is most important should be constructed—which he feels, indeed, the welfare of the colony depends upon. I plead guilty to having in my mind something of that sort. Next, we have a matter to which I should have referred earlier—a Bill to amend the criminal law so far as regards the punishment of persons convicted of first offences. It seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that a Bill in this direction affords scope for the full exercise of the brain and heart of every member of this House. I think myself that not only the philanthropist—not only the man who claims to be a lover of his fellow-men—but every man out of whom selfishness has not squeezed all his humanness, must see that in this direction there is much to be done. Indeed, sir, our present method seems to be a splendid method for making criminals—a magnificent means for making a man bad instead of trying to make him good or better. Hon. members will know, probably, the plan known as “the Boston plan,” recommended by Mr. Howard Vincent—I forget his title—Chief Criminal Investigator, I think—who very recently visited Queensland and the rest of the Australian colonies, and probably they have read the book entitled “Forty Thousand Miles over Land

and Water," written by Mrs. Vincent. The Boston plan seems to be working well so far as the reports concerning it show. A youth, say, is convicted of a first offence, and instead of being sentenced to three or six months' imprisonment, and thrown right into the heart of a lot of old offenders to receive further education in crime, he is allowed to go at liberty on certain conditions—that if he offends again he must expect to be punished. Another method I have met with is propounded by a judge of the Supreme Court in Mauritius, to which probably reference may be made when this Bill comes before us for consideration. We may look upon this matter, sir, as one touching our pocket, for I take it that if a Bill like this is passed, for the purpose of relieving our gaols of first offenders, we shall need far less gaol-room. The cost of punitive justice will be very much lessened, and if we can make a considerable reduction in the amount required for the punishment of wrong-doers in the colony, I think we shall do well by passing such a Bill as this, and seeing whether we cannot do something towards preventing those men from getting into our gaols—men whom it is pitiful to see there—and putting them into the way of becoming better men. I think too, sir, we should not neglect those who have gone beyond the first offence. I think the Government and the House would do well to show sympathy with any organisation that aims at saving men from going to worse and worse. There are such organisations in operation—Discharged Prisoners' Aid Societies, for instance—and every man who loves his fellow-man will be glad of any help or sympathy that may be given to such organisations. His Excellency invites our most careful attention to the various matters that will be brought before us, and says:—

"I trust that under the blessing of Divine Providence your labours may tend to the permanent advancement and prosperity of the colony."

This Providence I assume to mean the helpful oversight and care of God. In our religious beliefs we differ, or, as some say, in our religious disbeliefs; but I think all hon. members of this House will join in the opinion that the permanent advancement and prosperity of our colony is dependent ultimately upon the goodness of the Highest; and I am certain that all hon. members are minded as one man to labour here for the permanent advancement and prosperity of this colony of Queensland. I beg to move that the Address in Reply be adopted.

Mr. BULCOCK said: Mr. Speaker,—As one of the junior members it appears to have fallen to my duty to second the Address in Reply. Why this custom should have ever existed I do not know. I could never understand why a man without any experience either as a legislator or, as in some cases, as a public speaker, should be called upon to perform a duty of this kind. In reading through the Speech I notice a great many matters that call for comment in one sense. The hon. gentleman who has proposed the adoption of the Address has noticed many of them, but there are some that seem like old acquaintances. I refer more particularly to the Act passed about twenty years ago for the introduction of labourers from British India. This is an old acquaintance. I remember its being first brought before the Parliament of Queensland. I did not think then, nor do I think now, that it is exactly a friend, and I shall be very glad if, this session, we can manage to be the witnesses of its decapitation; and if it so happens, I for one shall sincerely say "peace to its ashes." One reason why I am most anxious at present that the Act should be repealed is, because at the last general election

candidates brought some great points before the constituencies for their decision, and one was whether coloured labour, or labour from British India, should be introduced into the colony of Queensland. The answer to this question was a most emphatic "no." This, I remember, was several times acknowledged by the late leader of the Opposition, Sir T. McIlwraith, and was a fact; and as members of this Chamber are supposed to be representatives of the community, as members it is our duty to carry out the wishes of the community, and at once and for ever wipe out this Act from the Statute-book, at least until the colony has had another opportunity of expressing its opinion upon the subject. Another matter mentioned in His Excellency's Speech is the Divisional Boards Act. All will allow that the system of local government for the colony is in itself good, and has produced a great deal of good, and as far as we can see at present is the only system likely to work satisfactorily in a colony of this kind. But it has many defects. I remember it was passed during a time of great political excitement, and it is no doubt very fragmentary and incomplete. Several things have opened the way to corrupt practices, although they may not have suggested them, and, in addition to that, there has been no provision made for the punishment of parties guilty of such practices, except through long and tedious and expensive processes. This, I hope, will be remedied during this session, and then we shall have an Act which will be a great deal more easily worked. The United Municipalities Act has, I am informed, been proved by those who have been members of the board to be a complete tangle of unworkable clauses. That this is really the case I do not know; but we hope to have a Bill brought in that will make the system more easily worked and successful. There can be no doubt as to the importance of railway communication in a colony like this. We all know, and on both sides of the House it has been repeatedly said, that a cheap and rapid means of transit is one of the best means of settling permanently and closely the different parts of the colony. During a time like the one we have just passed through—a long severe drought—we must see also that, if we do not make some provision for the conservation and distribution of water, the probability is that the receipts from our railways will fall away at intervals. The losses there have been lately, which have been referred to by the mover of the Address—losses in sheep—

Mr. STEVENSON: I should like to know, Mr. Speaker, whether the hon. gentleman can read a speech in this House? If he had been a new member I should have said nothing; but, being an old member, I must object.

Mr. BULCOCK: I am not reading my speech. Unfortunately, I am not like my friend: I cannot get up and talk by the hour without any notes at all. I have some notes which I wrote to help me to say what I want to say, so as not to ramble, as some hon. gentlemen do, all over the country.

Mr. STEVENSON: Mr. Speaker, I want your ruling in the matter.

The SPEAKER: The Standing Orders are very clear upon the point. An hon. member cannot read his speech, but the hon. member for Enoggera having denied that he was reading his speech, the hon. member for Normanby must accept his disclaimer.

Mr. BROOKES: I rise to a point of order. I will ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether there are not circumstances under which a member may read his speech?

Mr. BULCOCK: I hope the hon. member for Normanby will be satisfied when I tell him that I am not reading my speech. I think if he had kept his eyes fixed upon me he would have seen it.

Mr. STEVENSON: I was; and that was why I spoke.

Mr. BULCOCK: I was saying that there have been very severe losses by the pastoralists in sheep and in cattle, and consequently there has been a large falling-off in the quantity of wool, and, as a further consequence, a falling-off in the railway receipts. These losses would probably, in a great measure, have been prevented if we had had a system of storage and distribution of water. I have been informed by gentlemen who have travelled in different parts of the colony that there has often been rain that caused the grass to grow, but not sufficient to replenish the waterholes that were dry. I maintain that our railways, as I said before, will be of comparatively little use unless some system of storing and distributing water is introduced, not for the pastoralists merely, but for the agriculturists in the coastal districts. The question then arises, how shall we conserve the water? Those gentlemen who have read the very interesting reports made by Hon. A. Deakin, of Victoria, and by C. W. Darley, Esq., C.E., of New South Wales, will have noticed the kind of conservation of water there is in the western districts of America. It is said that there by the construction of cheap canals the effect has been marvellous. One portion of America was said to have been a dry and arid desert before they commenced drawing water from the rivers by constructing canals. Afterwards they endeavoured, and succeeded in finding undercurrents of water, and have made that part of California a really splendid country which before was perfectly useless. Such being the case, the question arises, are we in a similar position? Are there the same facilities for conserving water in this colony as there are in some parts of America? Of course in some parts of America there are large rivers that are fed by the snows from the mountains. Here our rivers run dry, so that there is a different condition altogether. Whether there are undercurrents of water in this colony is a question that has never been thoroughly tested; there are evidently in some parts. I remember, some years ago, reading an account by Professor W. Boyd Dawkins, R.A., of his visit to the caves of Somersetshire, and he mentioned that at the bottom of one of those caves, about 220 feet from the surface, there was a large stream of water. In some of the highest mountains in Lancashire and Yorkshire, 1,600 feet and 1,800 feet high, there were springs that never failed. As we know, water will only rise to its own level; so that those springs must be forced through some kind of tubes or channels from some other part of the world up to where they are found gushing from the tops of these mountains. We know that the water is below us, and if by the borer we can find it we can then convey it by rudely constructed canals to the different parts of the country where it may be wanted. If we can do this we shall have performed a work that will completely change the whole face of the country, not only in appearance but in value, and which will also change our whole chances of being able to withstand the periodical droughts from which we now suffer. I had intended reading quotations from Professor Dawkins's report, but I think that is not now necessary. The conservation of water might be effected in this colony by damming-up rivers and water-courses at intervals, by forming reservoirs where the nature of the country will admit

of them, and by boring and searching for these under-currents and reservoirs of water which, I believe, do exist below the surface of the earth. If we can find these under-currents it will do away, to some extent, with the necessity for making reservoirs so large and damming rivers in many places, because these places can be supplied by the undercurrents which, I believe, exist in this colony. My reason for making this statement is, that a short time ago I saw a report by the Acting Engineer, sent in to the Commissioner for Railways, announcing the discovery of an artesian well in dry country. It was stated that at Back Creek, 324 miles west of Rockhampton, brackish water was found 56 feet below the surface, and fresh water was met with 94 feet below the surface, the supply, however, in both cases being very small; but a good supply was got at 160 feet below the surface, and it rose 12 feet above the surface when the bore reached it. That, I think, proves that there is a current of water at a great depth that will be sufficient to change the whole face of that country if the supply is anything like what was expected by the engineer. Whether the geological formation of this country will admit of many reservoirs of this kind being made it is not for me to say, but I was hoping that we might be enabled to find large currents coming from Mount Stanley in New Guinea; and if such was the case, and we had large rivers flowing under this colony right through the western parts, we would then be able to preserve our flocks and herds, and we would be in a position to materially assist in settling the agricultural population of our colony. The quarterly and annual Treasury returns are not so good as we would like them, yet we may be satisfied considering the very great loss there has been in the colony, and the great deficit in the railway receipts on account of the losses in stock, the smaller quantity of wool brought down and the smaller quantity of stores taken up, the increased cost of telegraphic extension, and the increase—and there was a very large increase last year—in the cost of our colonial defences. Taking all things into account, and that depression has been general all over the colonies, we may be satisfied that our losses have not been greater; and if, as His Excellency says in his Speech, we exercise rigid economy, the colony in a short time will be able to recoup itself, and we shall be able to go on with increased success. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—If the hon. gentlemen who have just now moved and seconded the adoption of the Address in Reply are able on all occasions to speak with the same freedom and ease as they have done to-day it will not be necessary for them often to crave the indulgence of the House. With regard to the hon. gentleman who moved the adoption of the Address, and who spoke for the first time in this House, I think I may congratulate him upon having made one of the best speeches I have ever heard made by a new member since I have had the honour of a seat in the House. I congratulate the hon. member, not only upon the manner in which he spoke, but upon the sound sense which characterised his arguments. I do not profess to agree with the whole of the remarks the hon. gentleman made, and perhaps he will not be surprised at that. I must say I have formed very different conclusions to those which the hon. members who have spoken appear to have formed, with regard to the Speech. It appears to me that there are many matters of importance to the colony to which no reference has been made in the Speech. There are great questions agitating the country at this time, and of sufficient importance to lead one to expect a reference to

them in the Speech, but instead of that they are either slighted altogether or the reference to them is of so slight a character that it is almost impossible to recognise them. However, I will say a few words with regard to the different matters mentioned in the Speech itself. In the first place I might express surprise—I would like to be able to express surprise—at the House being called together at so late a period of the year, but I cannot express surprise, because I am not surprised at it at all. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, when he occupied a place on this side of the House, was accustomed year after year to twit the then leader of the Government with having postponed the meeting of the House as long as possible. Then, sir, it was said to be unconstitutional to postpone the meeting of the House until the financial year had ended, but now, since the hon. gentleman has come into office, he has also found it convenient to postpone the meeting of Parliament until the beginning of July. The present, I believe, is the latest occasion on which the House was ever called together. The hon. member, changing from one side of the House to the other, seems to have changed his opinions in an equally marked manner. Now the reason given for not having called Parliament together at an earlier date is the “absences of some of my Ministers from the capital upon public business of urgent importance.” Well, sir, we can form our own opinion as to the importance of the business. I know it was the intention of the Premier and his colleague the Colonial Treasurer to visit the northern portions of the colony at an earlier date than they did; but, under circumstances which they can themselves explain, the visit seems to have been postponed. The absences of those two gentlemen to which reference is particularly made, are, I suppose, the visit to Tasmania in connection with the Federal Council and the late visit to the Northern district. Now, as far as the Federal Council is concerned, the statement made in the Speech comes to us as rather stale news. We have heard it all before, and, therefore, there is not a great deal to be said about it. At the same time, I think the colony is indebted to the Premier and the Colonial Treasurer for the great interest they have taken in the matter, particularly when it is remembered, as some hon. gentlemen here can remember, that there was a time when the Premier was not very warmly attached to this particular scheme.

The PREMIER: When was that?

Mr. NORTON: When the matter was brought forward by my hon. friend the late leader of the Opposition.

The PREMIER: It is beyond my recollection.

Mr. NORTON: No doubt it is. The hon. gentleman's recollection is a very shaky one. I do not mean to say that the hon. gentleman took no interest in the matter whatever, but the manner in which he received it when it was brought forward in this House—

The PREMIER: I do not remember it being brought forward.

Mr. NORTON: I am sorry the hon. gentleman's memory should be so treacherous. The matter has been referred to on several occasions in this House, and I believe the first occasion on which it was referred to—I do not mean that there was a motion made with regard to it—was when it was brought forward by my hon. friend the late leader of the Opposition. If my memory is not treacherous, the hon. gentleman had rather a cold shoulder for it. However, sir, under the circumstances, I think he is to be congratulated on the manner in which he has taken up the

matter, which I think he will admit Sir Thomas McLlwraith did his best to further while he was in office. Sir Thomas McLlwraith was the one who really laid the foundation of the proceedings in which the hon. member has taken such an important part. In connection with that Federal Council, there is only one thing, I think, to regret—that is that other colonies besides those that took part were not induced to co-operate. I am afraid my hon. friend the Colonial Treasurer did not do his duty in that respect. I am quite sure that if he had introduced a Bill on one subject that he understands perfectly he would have been able to secure the co-operation of New South Wales and South Australia—I mean a Bill for the prevention of deficits in public accounts. My hon. friend is an adept at that sort of work, and it is the very thing they want in New South Wales and South Australia; so that if he could only help them in that matter I am sure their co-operation would be secured at once. I shall have to refer to that matter again presently. With regard to the next matter mentioned, I do not think anybody is particularly surprised at the decision which has been come to with respect to the dispute between the two Houses. For my part, I only regret that it became necessary to refer such a dispute to England at all. And now, sir, in respect to New Guinea, I think the Government are also to be congratulated on the active steps taken by the Premier, who is evidently desirous to bring the matter to an issue as early as possible. I might point out that this is another question to which he did not lean very favourably some few years ago. There was a time when he sat on this side of the House, and also since he removed to the other side, when the hon. gentleman did not take such a warm interest in pushing forward the annexation of New Guinea. As events have proved, Sir Thomas McLlwraith saw much further ahead in this particular matter than many other people. The action for which he was specially responsible was not only slighted by the Imperial Government, and received with coolness by the gentlemen who now sit on the other side of the House, but the matter was so delayed, and so many obstacles were put in the way, that we are now placed in the position of having a neighbour whom we would prefer to see a little further off, and who has taken a great slice out of that country which might have been ours. Events have proved that the course taken by Sir Thomas McLlwraith was the right one, and the stone which the Imperial Government rejected has now become the foundation stone of their annexation policy, and not only theirs but of the annexation policy of other European nations as well. The next question touched upon in the Speech refers to the New Hebrides; and I think it is generally admitted throughout the colony that the action taken by the individual colonies represented at the Federal Council is a right and proper one. For my part I entirely agree with all that the Government has done. I concur entirely in the action taken by the Premier with regard to the despatch he wrote a short time ago in answer to a despatch from the Colonial Office; but there is one portion of that despatch—I refer to the sixth paragraph—in which I think the hon. member rather forgot the real circumstances. I doubt very much whether the words in Mr. Bramston's despatch could be construed to have the meaning the Premier put upon them—that is, that the object of the French Government in annexing the New Hebrides was to secure a supply of labour from those islands by enslaving the natives. The hon. gentleman, in his reply, says:—

“It may be admitted that the Australasian colonies have no immediate need of additional territory; but while they certainly desire a guarantee against the

introduction of foreign criminals, I confess that I should be very unwilling to be a party to securing such indemnity by consenting to the enslavement of any native race, and especially one which has been to a great extent civilised by British missionaries, the independence of which has hitherto been assured by an understanding between Great Britain and France, and which is well known to entertain the utmost reluctance to being subjected to the French Government. I confess that I would prefer that this colony should remain subject to the danger of the influx of foreign criminals, and should take such honourable means to protect itself against that danger as the Constitution allows."

Now, sir, I think that the Premier in writing that paragraph took a great deal upon himself that he ought not to have assumed. Was it not like taking a point to put that construction upon the words of Mr. Bramston's despatch? Do we for one moment believe that the English nation will consent to the annexation of the New Hebrides with the knowledge that the islanders will be enslaved? Has the hon. gentleman forgotten what the British nation has done to prevent the enslavement of nations? The despatch written by the Premier, although nominally addressed to the Colonial Office, was in point of fact addressed to the nation of Britons—a nation that would never under any circumstances consent to an arrangement being made with any foreign Government by which the inhabitants of a country might be enslaved. It is an insult to the British people to suggest the possibility of any such scheme being carried out. I think that those who know the circumstances in connection with the New Hebrides question cannot for one moment fail to see the position of affairs under which the proposal for annexation was made by France. The very moment the Government of France proposed to annex the islands, England began to give way and look about for excuses to allow France to take the New Hebrides. Every telegram that came to this colony in connection with the subject pointed to this one conclusion—that when France made the demand for the New Hebrides, England began to seek for some excuse for consenting to it. What is the result of this policy? France has made some excuse—a paltry and unreasonable one to put forward for the position she has taken up in regard to the islands—and England has been looking about for other excuses for agreeing to her proposals. At the same time, I am quite certain, and I believe every hon. member will agree with me, that if any British Government, from whatever party it might be formed, was to consent to the annexation of the New Hebrides for the purpose of France enslaving the islanders, the British people would at once turn that Government out of office without even allowing them an opportunity of defending themselves. For that reason I regret that the hon. gentleman should have used the words he has employed in the paragraph to which I have referred. So far as that portion of the Speech relating to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition in London is concerned, I think every reasonable person in the colony will be prepared to agree to the statement, or rather to the suggestion, that credit is due to the commissioner in this colony. There is no doubt that in all these cases, wherever they arise, the men who do the work are not those who get a proper acknowledgment of their services. I am of opinion that the commissioners in the colony who carried out their work with zealous care are deserving of great credit for their labours, which have done very much to advance the interests of the colony. I think it is but right and proper that they should have some recognition of their services. So far as titles are concerned I do not think much of them, and I believe that as long as their services are recognised here by the people of the colony the commissioners will be quite satisfied. I will now

say a word or two in regard to that paragraph in the Speech referring to the compensation paid to the employers of the natives of New Guinea who were returned to their homes by order of the Government. There is this to be said on that subject—that we are indebted very much to the Royal Commission who were appointed to investigate and report on the matter in the first instance for having to pay a considerable portion of the amounts awarded. I believe that if the Royal Commission had done their plain duty the country would not have been called upon to pay anything like the sum which it has been called upon to pay. When that Commission sat they absolutely refused to hear any white man's evidence. No matter how much a white man was concerned in those inquiries, no matter how his interests might be affected, no matter how his character might be blackened, even though he had done no wrong—he was not allowed to give one word of evidence with regard to the islanders who have since been returned to New Guinea. We had, as hon. members know, every reason to believe that a number of those islanders came to the colony fully understanding that they were to remain for the term mentioned in their engagements. With reference to the paragraph in the Speech about the Land Act I fancy it is one that will be read with a great deal of surprise throughout the colony. The paragraph says, "I am glad to be assured that its provisions are already conducing in a large degree to a beneficial settlement upon the lands of the colony." Already! After two and a-half years!

The PREMIER: Two and a-half years? When do you reckon from? The Act has only been in operation a year and a quarter.

Mr. NORTON: Well, we will say a year and a quarter. This is the measure that was to provide for the payment of the interest on the ten-million loan. Where is the interest? Compare the revenue under this Act with the revenue of two years ago under the previous Land Act. Why, in spite of all the efforts of the Government, in spite of all the sales of land in every town, and every newly invented suburb, there is an immense deficiency in the land revenue. Why? The Government blame the drought. They say "the drought has prevented the people from taking up land." But there is a great deal more than drought about it—the drought is not sufficient to account for the deficiency. If, however, this argument were allowed, it must be remembered that at the time the Act was passed—at the time the Government framed their Estimates—the drought prevailed. Why, then, did Ministers not give that circumstance full consideration in framing their Estimates? Is it not a ludicrous thing that the estimated revenue under the selection portion of the Act two years ago amounted to £10,000, while it only brought in £700; and that where the income was estimated at £30,000 last year, it was only £3,700? I think everybody in the colony who reads the paragraph about the working of the Land Act will wonder what was the matter with the Minister when he wrote it—whether he wrote it in his sleep or in his ordinary frame of mind? But more important even than this paragraph is that which refers to the finances of the colony. "The finances," it is stated, "are in a sound condition." But I would ask the Colonial Treasurer whether the public accounts are in a sound condition? Do the public accounts represent the truth?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The perfect truth.

Mr. NORTON: They do not; the hon. gentleman knows they do not. The hon. gentleman knows that instead of a credit there is a debit balance. The hon. gentleman knows it perfectly well. He knows that a large sum of money which should have appeared on those accounts does not appear, and that thereby a false representation is made of our actual financial position. I see in a paper which has been put on the table this afternoon, and which I regret was not put before us earlier, that the Auditor-General refers to this particular matter, and points out that if the system had been followed which was always followed till a few years ago, instead of a credit of £55,164 the account would have been overdrawn by the sum of £44,860.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is twelve months ago.

Mr. NORTON: Yes; but it is a great deal worse now. The Auditor-General, in his report for 1884, specially refers to this arrangement of accounts which the Colonial Treasurer has adopted. He says, in the 12th paragraph:—

“During the last session of Parliament the sum of £310,000, being a portion then standing to the consolidated revenue, was set apart, under a special clause in the Appropriation Act, for the following works and services.”

I need not read the details of those works and services, but I may say that this £310,000 was the surplus which had accumulated under the reign of the late Government. The Auditor-General goes on to say:—

“These sums were submitted to Parliament as usual in a special supplementary estimate and designated in the Appropriation Act of 1883-4 as ‘Surplus Revenue.’ In the absence of any intimation to the contrary, it was no doubt understood by honourable members that, in accordance with former practice, the total sum appropriated would be transferred from the consolidated revenue to the credit of a special trust—i.e., ‘surplus revenue’—account. This, however, was not done, but with a view to be enabled to temporarily exhibit a larger revenue balance than would have appeared if the ordinary course had been followed, the above special appropriations have been treated as ordinary revenue vote, so that the amount from time to time remaining unexpended appears in the Treasury Statements as a portion of the available revenue balance.”

The COLONIAL TREASURER: So it is.

Mr. NORTON: The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that it is not. The Auditor-General continues:—

“I respectfully submit that the result of this alteration is unsatisfactory. A well-considered system of dealing with an important Parliamentary appropriation has been departed from; the Treasury revenue balance as now shown is apt to mislead, and the usefulness of the published statements for purposes of comparison is impaired. In support of the foregoing, I would refer to the Treasury Accounts recently published (*vide Government Gazette*, page 1214). The expenditure for the quarter ended 30th September, 1884, is therein set down as £529,473 11 2
And for the corresponding quarter of 1883 as 497,072 17 5

Showing an apparent increase of expenditure on Consolidated Revenue Account during the former quarter of ... £122,400 13 9

Whereas the actual increase was only £13,898 5s. 3d., the Treasury having included in the expenditure for the quarter just ended the sum of £78,502 ss. 6d. paid on account of surplus revenue. Again, in the same statement, the balance to the credit of the consolidated revenue on the 30th September, 1884, is shown as £634,597 8 3

Whereas the liability on account of surplus revenue appropriations being 153,090 15 3

The actual available balance on the above date was only £481,506 13 0”

It is a question between the Colonial Treasurer and the Auditor-General; the former says it is

available and the latter says it is not, and I think that under circumstances such as these we are bound to accept the Auditor-General's statement. The full effect of the arrangement adopted was pointed out in order to put the House on its guard. Having introduced this new system, by which the actual financial position of the colony is obscured, the Colonial Treasurer shows a surplus, on the 30th June, 1885, of £267,104. When those returns were published, the hon. gentleman had not quite forgotten the correction which he had received from the Auditor-General, and he put a foot-note at the bottom showing that on that date the unexpended balance of special revenue appropriation was £100,043, but he forgot to continue that in the return published the other day. There was no foot-note showing the unexpended balance of surplus revenue, nor did the account show that £30,000 had been paid in interest on the £1,500,000 loan borrowed a short time back. We all know perfectly well that the interest on borrowed money is part of the annual expenditure. How has the hon. gentleman arranged to pay this portion of the annual expenditure without giving an account of it in his returns? I presume we shall have some reason given for it, and that we shall have some official statement in regard to it. I am sorry it has been omitted, both for the country's sake and the Colonial Treasurer's. I think it is fully shown that if the system had been followed which the Auditor-General thinks is the right one, instead of having an apparent balance;—by the way, that term “apparent balance” reminds me that the Colonial Treasurer spoke of that which the late Government left in the Treasury when they retired as an apparent balance; but it has managed to keep the present Government going, apparent as it was; and, bad as their present position is, it would have been far worse but for it. Certainly, the balance shown by the hon. gentleman in his last returns is an apparent balance, and only an apparent balance, because if the accounts had been properly kept under the old system, and the £30,000 paid in interest had been added to it, there would have been a deficit shown of £31,676.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: What benefit would that have been?

Mr. NORTON: The benefit would have been that the country would then have known the truth; and not only the country, but the money-lenders in England, to whom we go for our loans, would have known the truth.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The country can now see its present actual condition.

Mr. NORTON: The country does not see the present actual position. It is concealed, unless the hon. the Treasurer can show that a large amount of the money which is already appropriated is included in the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I leave the Treasurer to make whatever explanation he likes with regard to that £30,000. What we would particularly like to know is whether we are paying interest out of loan or out of revenue, because we all know perfectly well, although we do not pretend to have the same financial knowledge as the hon. gentleman, that the money received for debentures, whether it be more or less, is the proceeds of loan; and we know that the interest is paid half-yearly or yearly—we know all that—but I think we should have a full explanation with regard to the particular subject to which I have referred. I am sorry this one matter has been omitted from the Speech.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It could not be explained in the Governor's Speech.

Mr. NORTON: Then we are told—

"The recent rains with which nearly all parts of Queensland have been blessed, and the improving prospects of many of our industries, give good ground for confident anticipations of future prosperity."

Where are those improving prospects to be found? What prospect is there of the present Land Act, which has been and is still on its trial, giving a good return to the country? At the present time are there not hundreds of men walking about the country looking for work and unable to find it? Do we not hear of public meetings in different parts of the colony condemning, and very properly condemning, that Act? I am not one of those who say it is solely responsible for the present depression, because I know that that depression has been largely caused by the depreciation of wool and other produce.

The PREMIER: It is the first time I have heard that admitted.

Mr. NORTON: Well, I admit it. The hon. gentleman will always find me prepared to admit anything I can admit; but I say that although the present depression has not been caused by the existing Land Act, it is continued by the operation of that Act. I am not one of those who cry out for longer leases for the pastoral tenants. I think they have a fair length of lease, but their tenure is such that under no circumstances can they risk making improvements, because they do not know what rent they may be called upon to pay when the rents are re-assessed. That is really the great cause of complaint in the bush districts, and so long as that portion of the Act is continued in operation, so long, I say, will depression be felt to a greater or less extent, and so long shall we have the same complaints made. Then we are told—

"It will, however, be necessary for the present to exercise the most rigid economy in expenditure."

Why, sir, everybody on this side of the House knew last year that the rate of expenditure going on could not be continued, but the hon. the Treasurer, in his sanguine way, would not admit it. We were led to believe that the drought, bad as it was, and other circumstances, bad as they were, could have no effect on the Treasury so long as he was in charge of it, but now the Government are going in for a policy of economy of expenditure. They are now obliged to admit that the policy they have pursued with regard to expenditure has been a wrong one, and therefore they place this paragraph in the Speech. I am exceedingly glad that this policy of rigid economy is to be adopted, because money has been wasted—disgracefully wasted, I say—simply that the Government might make themselves popular. Appointments have been made which ought not to have been made. Public officers have been increased beyond any necessity, and in all directions the expenditure has been greater than there has been any real cause for.

The PREMIER: Which department is that in?

Mr. NORTON: I do not mention any particular department. I refer to the statement made by the hon. the Treasurer when we commenced to discuss the Estimates last year. He then said that if hon. members considered the Estimates too high let them point out where they could be altered or reduced, and I now offer him the same advice. Let him examine them carefully and find out for himself where reductions can be made. We have only to look at the return of estimated expenditure and revenue and the actual return to see the extraordinary effect of this policy. The actual revenue last year was £183,955 below the estimate; but, sir, the expenditure was only £1,030

below the estimate. How is it possible, when the expenditure is so much larger than the receipts, for things to go on as they are? If we go back two years we find the increase of revenue since 1884 was £301,936, while the increase of expenditure was £603,481, so that in two years the increase in expenditure has doubled the increase in revenue. I say, sir, it is utterly inexcusable that that excess of expenditure should have taken place when the Government must have known that the revenue was not increasing as they expected. We have a long list of Bills in the Speech, but there are only one or two to which I shall refer at all. I should not think it necessary to refer to them generally, but really law-making seems to be one of the weaknesses of the Government. Some of their supporters, in addressing their constituencies, recently said one of the things in favour of the Government was that they had succeeded in passing sixty or eighty Acts; but I would ask those hon. members how many of those Acts they could count on their fingers at the present time? They could point, no doubt, to the Land Act, but I believe many of them now think it would have been better if that Act had never been passed at all. Then there is the Immigration Act, which was supposed to be for the purpose of supplying labour for the agricultural districts, and more particularly for the sugar-growers; but what has been the result of that Act? It has been a worse failure than the Land Act. No immigrants have come out for the plantations that I have heard of. The great bulk of those Acts have been very little remembered. With regard to the Local Government Act, the members of the present Government were not particularly anxious that it should be passed in the first instance, and they have been obliged to admit that in that they were wrong. They have been obliged to admit the advantages conferred on the public by that system, and in passing the proposed Consolidating Bill and making improvements in the present law I only hope the new Act will be made so simple that people who are not accustomed to Acts of Parliament, generally speaking, will be as able to understand it as they were the old one. I hope this new one will work half as well as the old one has done. In the end of the Speech there is a paragraph which I take to refer to what was called the "Separation Question"—as if that question was of so little importance that it should be stuffed away in a far corner at the tail-end of it, and referred to in such terms that it is hardly possible to know what is meant:—

"Complaints have occasionally arisen of delay in the administration of public business in the more remote parts of Queensland, and sometimes of apparent inattention to local requirements. I hope that time will allow of your dealing with this subject, and of adopting such measures as may lead to the removal of any grounds of similar complaint in the future."

Is that the way to treat Northern Queensland? Because, if it is, I think hon. gentlemen opposite do the North an injustice. The hon. Premier has been up there, and has seen a great deal of correspondence, and I hoped that some scheme would be foreshadowed in this Speech by which a satisfactory solution of the question could be arrived at. It is not a difficulty of a slight character, but one which will grow until either territorial separation takes place, or some provision is made almost as satisfactory. Whether such a Bill will be introduced or not I am not prepared to say; but we shall hear what the reasons of the Northern members are, and what are the opinions and wishes of the people they represent. I think the hon. gentleman will find the position exceedingly hard to deal with. With regard to the Northern trip—I must refer

to that, because it appears to me that the Premier and the Colonial Treasurer started out on a voyage of discovery — they went to discover the North, in fact. I can quite believe that there was a great deal of correspondence in the different Government departments with regard to the grievances of the Northern people, and those gentlemen had to go and find out for themselves what they were. One of the most remarkable things about it was this — that all the wants which had been introduced and represented for months, and some for years, without any satisfactory result, were now discovered to be urgent. The first place where they were able to effect a landing was in my own district. There is a good jetty there which has been kept locked up since last June, and the consequence was that when the party reached there the place was not in a fit condition for them to land at. I hope that the hon. gentlemen will not blame the people there for that, because, as the Government had deliberately locked up the wharf for nearly twelve months, I think they are entirely to blame for it. At any rate they managed to effect a landing with some difficulty, and having done so they fraternised with the people and had a sort of picnic. I hope something will come of it, but I am not certain. I trust that as the people have expressed their wants in their own language some greater regard will be paid to them. Upon whatever point of the coast the Ministers landed, there was always something for them to discover which everybody appeared to have known before, and all those wants now appeared to be urgent. I believe the Premier — the Chief Secretary, I believe I ought to call him — showed a great deal of wisdom in the manner in which he conducted his campaign. He visited the Northern ports on the Eastern seaboard, and was particularly friendly with the people he met. But when he rounded the Cape and reached Normanton the garb of peace disappeared and he came out as a budding Minister for War. He carried the war into the country and attacked them in the rear. He entered into a friendly alliance by which they were to do all the fighting, and he would give them advice, accompanied by the Treasurer, who said he had fired off some £600,000 amongst them, and which pleased the people very much, no doubt. But the question they naturally asked was — If all this money has been spent in the North, where are the works? That is the question which has been agitating them ever since. It is all very well to bring out a long list of figures to show what has been done, and say "the North has actually had more than the South"; but where are the works? They have been delayed until occasions when it will be more convenient to carry them out. I have already referred to the unfortunate state the colony is in, and the failure of the Land Act to meet the interest on loans, and also the bad state the railways are in just now. For years people in the western districts have been compelled to pay the very high rates charged for bringing down produce. They complained long before the present Minister for Works came into office. They complained when I was Minister for Works. The hon. gentleman may say he thinks they ought to have been reduced by me, and I think if I had been as long in office as he has, they would have been reduced in some particulars. There is this to be remembered: at the time I was in office there was no drought, and a fair price was realised for wool, while at the same time the New South Wales railways were a greater distance from the border than they are now. Since those railways have been pushed nearer our borders, produce which usually came to Brisbane has been taken to New South Wales. The hon. gentleman made a

slight reduction the other day; but what was the effect? Did it bring any more produce here than came before? Not in the least. Produce that came here before still comes, and produce that went to New South Wales still goes to New South Wales. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman wishes to damage the "Colorado beetles," as he once called squatters; I can only say that under the present conditions of the country he is driving large quantities of produce to New South Wales, and bringing large quantities of stores from New South Wales instead of their going from here, and is enriching the New South Wales merchants at the expense of those of this colony. I have no more to say. I think I have said enough already. This is the first occasion upon which I have occupied the important position of leader of the Opposition, and if I have spoken too long I hope hon. members will think I have been trying to make myself clear, and that I have succeeded in doing so.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker, — I desire, first of all, to add my congratulations to those of the hon. member who has just sat down, to the hon. members who moved and seconded the Address in Reply. I am sure the hon. member for Fortitude Valley will prove a very valuable acquisition to the debating power of the House, and I anticipate very much assistance from him in the future. I desire in the next place to take this opportunity — the first accorded to me, in accordance with parliamentary practice — to express my great regret at the absence from the House of the late leader of the Opposition. Personally, I feel his absence as a very great loss, because I, for one, like the measures brought up by the Government to be criticised by a powerful hand. His criticism was always very valuable, because of its ability, and we could always rely upon him for chivalrous criticism upon matters upon which both sides of the House could not agree, and for fairly giving us credit when he thought we deserved it. I hope the hon. gentleman who succeeds him will follow him in that respect. I accept the hon. gentleman's offer of assistance, and I hope that much important business may be done with his aid during the session. We expected that some criticism would be directed to the late meeting of the House this year, and indeed invited it. Strangely enough, last year no one asked when the Government proposed to meet the House this session. If the question had been asked, I should have answered, without the slightest hesitation, that we intended to meet at the end of May or the beginning of June, and I have not in the slightest changed my opinion that that is the proper time for meeting. But we cannot be in two places at once. Almost immediately after the prorogation last year, my colleague and myself had to go to Hobart to the Federal Council. That was no holiday at all. That occupied six weeks, and we did not get back until the end of February. After that, I had occasion again to visit Sydney, to confer with Mr. Gillies and Sir Patrick Jennings upon important matters relating to the colonies generally. That business did not take so long, but immediately I returned I went with my colleague the Colonial Treasurer to the Gulf, from which we returned six weeks ago. So that, practically, the whole time we had for preparing the business of the session has been during the last six weeks. I, for one, did not think we should meet the House without the business being properly prepared, so as to avoid the unnecessary amendments and delays occasioned by incompleteness of preparation. Those are the plain facts; we could not meet the House sooner, and I do not think, under the circumstances, that we can be very much blamed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: You used to blame others very much.

The PREMIER: I regret the late meeting of the House, but if the hon. member had worked as hard as I have during the recess, he would, I think, as I do, regard the meeting of the House as an opportunity for recreation rather than work, as compared with the work I have had to do during the recess. The hon. gentleman opposite has not, I think, begun well in his opening comments. The hon. gentleman is so accustomed to find fault with the Government, and particularly with the head of it, that from the proposition "All the Government do is wrong" he has deducted this: "Everything that is wrong the Government are sure to do." The hon. gentleman has unconsciously applied that rule to his examination of my action, or what he imagines to be my action, in various matters. He told us that on a previous occasion I opposed federation in this House. But the hon. gentleman reasons this way: "Federation is a good thing. Being a good thing, Griffith must necessarily have opposed it." That is the process of reasoning which evidently went on in the hon. member's mind, and it has led him to believe that I opposed federation. I challenge the hon. member to point to a single instance in which, either in this House or out of it, I have done anything in opposition to, or in which I have not cordially supported, Australian federation. It is not sufficient for the hon. member to reason, as he has done, *à priori*, that all I do is wrong, or rather that everything that is wrong I do, which is going very much further. The hon. gentleman was equally unfortunate with respect to the New Guinea business.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The PREMIER: Yes, he was. What I have said from the first is this: That the action taken by the late Government was not the best way to bring about the result they desired. I always cordially supported the object they had in view, and, long before they took it in hand, the Government of which I was a member had taken it in hand. I always expressed the opinion, which I still hold, that the action taken by the late Government in sending Mr. Chester to New Guinea was unfortunate. To that extent we differ from the policy of our predecessors in thinking that an unwise act. That is the only difference I have ever expressed, as the hon. member will find. He has said so often that I have taken a different course that he has at last come to believe it. But those are the facts on that matter. With respect to federation, supposing I had done as he says I did, he might be pleased, at least, to see me turn from the error of my ways; but I have never had any error to turn from in that respect. Speaking seriously, I do not believe, as the hon. member does, that there is no reason for hoping that the other colonies will come in. I think there are very strong reasons indeed for hoping that they will come in, and I hope every man who has any opportunity for exercising any influence in that direction will do so. The work done in Hobart was not very showy work. It was not considered desirable that anything should be done that might alarm the other colonies, but it was thought important work could be transacted, and we endeavoured to lay down the rules of procedure and settle matters, which must arise at every session, and at the same time facilitate the future action of the Council in the way of legislation. One measure passed was a very important step in the union of the colonies. That was allowing the process of the courts of justice to run from one colony to another. That I consider of very great advantage. Further than that we might have gone; and I take this opportunity of

referring to the measure which was introduced dealing with the status of corporations, a question upon which there is much difference of opinion as to the existing law, and which many of the colonies regard with much anxiety. This was a matter which might have been dealt with, but it was not thought desirable to deal with it without giving the other colonies an opportunity of seeing what the consequences would be. It is not desirable at present to do anything that will cause any irritation, or increase any feelings of irritation or disunion that at present exist. Unfortunately, there is still too much difficulty in getting the colonies to work together. In this connection I may remark that lately, having occasion, as Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Federal Council, to send a telegram in the joint name of the federated colonies, it took a whole fortnight before I could get them to agree to the particular form of words of the telegram which was of not more than a few lines. That shows how even at the present time those who are working together have a tendency now and then to differ on very minor points. By the time the telegram was sent it was almost too late to send it at all. But the feeling of union, I am glad to think, is spreading. The colony of New South Wales is the one that has up to the present time stood most aloof—it has to a most unfortunate extent stood aloof; but I am glad to see indications of a change in their minds in that particular. I know that many of their leading men are coming to think it is a pity to stand aloof, and will be only too glad to join with the other colonies when they see their way to do so. I have had more occasions than one since the last sitting of this House of conversing with them on the subject, and I am glad to see indications of a change in that particular direction. With respect to the question of New Guinea I think the communication sent by this Government, which was published in the Press, and with which hon. members are familiar, ought to reach London about this time. It was delayed about three weeks owing to certain verbal alterations proposed by one of the colonies, on which, of course, the others had to be consulted. But for that delay I daresay we should have had an answer before this; but till the answer arrives I do not think it convenient to discuss the question. I can only say—as I always have said—that I regret we have lost part of New Guinea. The more important part, however, will still remain attached to the British Empire, and I have no doubt the best way of dealing with it will be to make Queensland primarily responsible for its good government. To that the other colonies, I think, are all disposed to agree. The correspondence will be laid on the table to-morrow; it was not laid on the table to-day because some of the later answers only reached me this morning. The hon. member referred to the question of the New Hebrides, and even there the hon. member cannot agree with anything we do. Of course the duty of an Opposition is to oppose and criticise, but I think we might have credit for doing right now and then. The purport of the hon. member's criticism is that, in a despatch written in reply to one by Mr. Bramston, we have taken the reason given by the French Government as the real reason. Well, sir, that criticism amounts to this: Here is a solemn State document sent by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, enclosing a despatch from the French ambassador giving the reason they wanted the New Hebrides, and the hon. member takes objection to our answer, because, when the French Government gave their reason, we took it for granted that it was their reason. The hon. member thinks we should have treated it as a frivolous reason. How can you

deal with arguments like that? They say, "We want the New Hebrides for a particular purpose," and we say, "That is not a sufficient reason why these colonies should assent to it." The hon. member says it is an insult to the British nation that I should have suggested the possibility of the Imperial Government acceding to such arguments. I am disposed to think that if there was any insult to the British nation it did not come from me. I felt ashamed that such an argument should have been addressed by the representative of Her Majesty to the colonies as a reason why they should accede to the cession of the New Hebrides to France, and if I have spoken warmly on the subject I am not ashamed of having done it. The hon. member, in his reference to the passage in the Speech with regard to the return of the New Guinea islanders, says that the necessity for paying compensation at all arose from the action of the Commission. We have heard all that before. We know very well that some hon. members think there should have been no compensation; that the islanders should never have been sent back. However, they have gone back, fortunately, and it is too late to recall them. So far as justice could be done in that unfortunate matter it has been done, and, as far as I am able to discover, the general consensus of opinion everywhere is that in that matter the colony did its duty. We did not expect that the hon. member would concur in the expression of opinion contained in the last paragraph of the first part of the Speech with respect to the Land Act. We know the hon. member thinks the Land Act bad from beginning to end. His ideas on land legislation are diametrically opposed to ours, and a land system that is totally and entirely condemned by him is, in the opinion of a large number of people in this colony, likely to be a very good one. The hon. gentleman tells us to compare the land revenue now with what it was two years ago. Certainly he, for the first time in this House, admits that possibly the weather may have had something to do with the diminution of settlement the last year or two. It is something to get a concession of that kind. We have been told so often that it is all the fault of the Government that it is refreshing to know that the hon. member does not hold us responsible for everything that goes wrong. I am often reminded of a rhyme that was much in vogue in the time of Buonaparte:—
 "Who makes the price of beef and mutton rise?
 Who fills the butchers' shops with large blue flies?"

And so on. The refrain was always "Boney." The hon. member is always reminding me of those rhymes. We are quite satisfied with the land revenue now, as compared with the land revenue two years ago—not as to the amount of it, but as to the sources from which it is derived. We are no longer squandering our inheritance. Had we not returned that £70,000 or £80,000 for pre-emptive purchases which we found in the Treasury, we should have been so many thousand pounds to the better at the present time; but would the country have been so much better off? I think not. We should have had the money, but the land would have been no longer ours. I am not at all sure that the purchasers whose money we returned are not glad enough that they got it back. The principles we hold with regard to land legislation and land administration are so essentially different from those of some hon. members that what they regard as unfortunate we regard as fortunate. We do not see such large quantities of land being alienated, and we do not see such a large revenue coming in just now; but we do see certainly in the future—a more distant future in consequence of the extraordinary seasons we have had—a continually increasing land revenue. Of that there is no

doubt whatever. Of course we are told every year—I suppose we shall be told every week this session—that the land revenue is very slow in coming in. We all know that. We were told last session, when the Act had been in force three months, that no revenue was coming from it. Now we shall be told that it has been in force a year and three months, and that it is not returning so large a revenue as we anticipated. We admit that. The seasons have not been what we anticipated, and the effect of requiring survey before selection has been greater than we anticipated. These facts have disturbed our calculations, but as the land is surveyed and thrown open to selection we find that, considering the extraordinary adverseness of the seasons, the amount of demand for the land is very considerable indeed. I have not the slightest reason to entertain any doubt as to the wisdom of the policy we adopted in the Act of 1884, and I believe that as we go on from year to year the wisdom of that policy will become more generally recognised. The hon. member spoke at length of the mode of keeping the public accounts; but I do not think it is desirable, nor is it usual at this period of the session, to have a financial discussion. I fail to see, any more than I saw on previous occasions, the force of his criticism, that the balance in hand at the end of any given period or at the end of the financial year should represent anything but the funds actually in hand—it is to my mind a most extraordinary absurdity. What does it matter whether the liabilities are liabilities for current salaries or for works not completed, and for which the whole amounts have not been paid, or whether they are amounts to be paid from surplus revenue? The hon. member called them liabilities of the country. I find that the accounts at the end of the year have always omitted to state the liabilities, and have given only the assets we have in hand. We merely show the cash balance of the account irrespective of what liabilities may be against it. That is what the accounts purport to show, and that is what they do show. To my mind, it is a well-considered mode of keeping the accounts, and seems to me to be consistent with the actual state of the facts, as in my opinion the accounts ought to be; but my hon. colleague the Colonial Treasurer will say more on this subject. The hon. member was good enough to express a general approval—a qualified approval—of our proposals with regard to the Divisional Boards Acts. There, again, as usual, he has mistaken opposition in Parliament for opposition to everything proposed by the other side of the House, and he repeated the old story, that I was one of the strongest opponents of the measure when it was introduced. That accusation is so well known throughout the colony to have no foundation that I need not trouble myself to refute it. But I venture to say this, Mr. Speaker: that there is as much the mark of my hand upon the Local Government Acts of this colony as of any other man's, and I have always been one of the warmest advocates of local government, although I did not think seven years ago that the remoter parts of the interior were then fit for local government. Things have changed since then. But even now there are districts in the colony in which local government has actually never been put in force except in name; although the boards have been nominally constituted, they have never worked. I hope the House will—I am sure it will—devote itself to the amendment of these laws. There is a great deal to be done, and the one object we ought to have in view should be to make the laws as simple and workable as possible. That is the object the Government have had in view in framing the Bills we propose to introduce, and I hope the

same spirit will be shown by the House in considering the measures. The hon. gentleman said at the commencement of his speech that there were some omissions in the Speech to which he would call attention. The only one he mentioned, as far as I noticed, was the absence of any reference to the separation question. I do not think that the separation question as such has arrived at the stage at which it calls for mention in a Speech from the Throne. The hon. gentleman referred, in connection with that subject, to the visit of my hon. friend the Colonial Treasurer and myself to the northern portions of the colony, and said he was pleased to see us going on a voyage of discovery. We went on no voyage of discovery. What we did was to keep a long-standing promise to visit the Gulf country, a part little known—little known in this House, and to which no Minister had ever been—a part which is also as little known in some other parts of the colony where people call themselves the North. We had long intended to go to that part of the colony—and we kept our promise as soon as the seasons would allow us; to attempt to travel in those parts when the seasons are unpropitious would be absurd. I for one feel that I have profited a great deal by my visit. I have learned a great deal about a very large district of the colony which has a great future before it. As to the sudden discoveries referred to by the hon. member, I may say, as I have had occasion to remark elsewhere, that Ministers are supposed to be acquainted with the wants of the different parts of the country. In the smallest country no ministers can know what is wanted in every part of the country without being told. All they can be expected to do is to meet the requirements as far as they are able of the different districts as they are brought under their notice, and I think we may lay claim to have done that. But with all their willingness and desire to do justice to all parts of the country, there is nothing like personal observation. A person can learn far more about a place from personal observation than from anything that he may hear or read about it, and I hope that every member of this House, when he has the opportunity, will visit the same places that were visited by the Colonial Treasurer and myself. With respect to the separation question, I am not going to discuss it simply as a question of separation. I have expressed my opinions pretty strongly on some aspects of this question already, and nothing that I saw in my visit from Townsville back to Townsville again round by the Gulf has changed my opinions in the slightest degree as to the sentiments there in favour of separation, or as to the objects mainly in view by those who desire it. From all I could observe, so far from there being a strong feeling in favour of separation throughout what is commonly called the northern portion of the colony, I have formed the opinion that there is not by any means such a feeling. That in one or two localities in the North there is a strong feeling—almost unanimous—in favour of separation, for various reasons, I admit. The localities I refer to are Townsville, Hughenden, and Mackay. I admit that in these places, and perhaps in Bowen, there is a desire for separation. So far as I have been able to observe—and I think I have had a pretty good opportunity of judging—the people are very nearly divided at Charters Towers, and those who are in favour of separation there would much rather remain as they are than be in a Northern colony, with Townsville as the capital. And that, so far as I can discover, is the feeling of those who are in favour of separation in other places. In other parts of the colony, so far as my judgment went, most of the people looked upon

separation with the most lukewarm feelings, feelings either of opposition or of contemptuous indifference. I know that there are grounds of complaint in the very distant parts of the colony. I am free to admit that, and I do not attribute any more blame to previous Governments than to this; but that there have been grounds for complaint in one sense I am free to admit. It could scarcely be that such grounds should not exist. The colony has been rapidly developing. The circumstances of the northern parts of the country have been continually changing, and however well-intentioned Governments may be it is impossible for them to immediately supply the wants of the different places in the country. It takes a little time; and where things change so rapidly people are apt to grow impatient. A want occurs to someone to-day, the next day it is an urgent want, and the day after that it is a scandalous neglect on the part of the Government that it has not already been supplied. When I say a day, of course I do not exactly mean a day of twenty-four hours.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Is it a day of a thousand years?

THE PREMIER: That same thought occurred to me when I said "a day." I think much may be done to improve the condition of things in the North, and I think it may be done without having recourse to separation. The hon. gentleman suggested that the Speech should have contained some reference to this subject, and some defined proposals for dealing with it. I do not think we can discover from his speech whether he is in favour of territorial separation or not. I have never disguised my opinion upon the subject. I think it is undesirable for many reasons that there should be territorial separation, but at the same time I think much may be done by Parliament to improve the present condition of things. I believe there has been too much centralisation at the capital, but that is not peculiar to Queensland. I know that in the small island of Tasmania there is also a complaint of too much centralisation at Hobart, although Launceston is not far away. There is also some complaint in New South Wales and Victoria.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: And great reason for it.

THE PREMIER: I admit that there is. It is the fault of our system of government, and the remedy appears to me to be to improve our system of government. That does not seem to me to be beyond the reach of human ingenuity. I am not prepared at the present moment to say in detail what plans the Government will propose—for they intend to propose some—to deal with the matter. But I am prepared to go as far as this: to say I believe it is quite possible and practicable to arrange for a great part of the departmental work which does not come under the immediate notice of the Minister—and every hon. member who has held office, and many others, know that is a very large extent of business—to be done in suitable localities in the different districts under the direction of local officers—you may call them assistant under secretaries, or Government residents, or whatever name you think proper—with more frequent visits by Ministers to supervise the officers. This would very likely involve the appointment of an additional Minister. I believe, further, that branches of the Real Property Office might be established in different districts with advantage. It would take a great deal of trouble to start it, and it would cost some money; but I believe it can be done. I believe also that branches of the Treasury might be established in different districts, and I think it would not be difficult to adopt a system under which the accounts of the different

districts might be kept separate. And here let me express my regret that the system introduced in 1877 by the Government, of which my hon. colleague Mr. Dickson and myself were members, for keeping the accounts of the different districts of the colony separately in the Treasury, was discontinued by our successors. I regret it, because there is a gap in those accounts, and it makes it more difficult to ascertain exactly what the relative financial position of the different districts is. It is, of course, only a matter of figures and of time to make them up; the materials are all there. I recognise the bigness of this colony, and the difficulty of governing it from one centre. At the same time, I believe it would be better governed, so far as important legislation is concerned, from one centre than from more than one, for reasons which I do not propose to discuss now. But I believe that, so far as administrative matters are concerned, great advantage would be derived by distributing the administrative arrangements.

Mr. DONALDSON: Also by the better distribution of representation.

The PREMIER: As to the readjustment of representation, it is well known that the census has lately been taken, and it has been taken with the fullest regard to all possible readjustments of the boundaries of different districts. Almost every possible boundary that can be suggested has been used, so that materials will be before the House next session for arranging almost any possible combination of electorates. That is understood to be the principal work of next session, whatever Government may be in power. But that is by the way. I believe that, in addition to increased administrative facilities and keeping the accounts separately, a further step may be taken, and I would be prepared, for myself, to give largely increased powers to local authorities in different parts of the colony. When I speak of different parts of the colony I do not wish it to be understood that I am speaking only of what is sometimes called the North, or which arrogates to itself the title of the North—that is, the north-eastern seaboard. That is not the only part to be considered. I believe the Gulf country—perhaps not yet, but before long—will be just as much entitled to separate administrative arrangements as the north-eastern seaboard; and the Central district now has, I think, quite as much to complain of as what is called particularly the North. I do not think that, considering the history of this colony, any portion of it really has very much to complain about; but I think it may be fairly said that the departmental arrangements may be very materially improved. I think that is so with respect to all the parts of the colony. I do not say, cut it up into a number of small districts, for that is the local government we have under the divisional boards; I believe all parties in the House will be glad to assist in endeavouring to work out a scheme of that sort. I say I am not prepared at the present moment to lay down a complete scheme of the kind, for it is one which requires long consideration. One of the main objects which my hon. colleague, Mr. Dickson, and I had in visiting the North was that we might more fully and completely understand the matter. Since then I have not had much opportunity for reflection upon it, but such as I have had has led me about as far as I have endeavoured to indicate. I trust that before very long—during the present session, I hope—we shall be in a position to submit to the House, either in the form of a Bill or in the form often adopted in dealing with great matters in the Imperial Parliament—the form of resolutions defining the lines a Bill should take—a scheme

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which will have the effect of consolidating and not disintegrating this great colony. I do not think it necessary to say more on the subject now, nor do I think it necessary to say more with respect to the speech of the hon. member opposite. I hope the business of the session will be conducted—as I have every reason to believe it will—with the desire, on both sides of the House, to pass the best laws we can. If hon. members think we are having too much legislation, let them see that the legislation they do pass is good, and so enable us to pass the best laws we can in the interest of the community.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—The last portion of the speech of the hon. gentleman who has just sat down was, like the last portion of the Governor's Speech, the most important part of it. The last paragraph of the Governor's Speech deals with the very subject which the hon. gentleman says he did not consider of such importance as to warrant its appearing there. It says:—

“Complaints have occasionally arisen of delay in the administration of public business in the more remote parts of Queensland,”

That, of course, refers to the northern parts of the colony which the hon. gentleman has lately visited; and by complaints he means the complaints which have led to the demand for separation.

“and sometimes of apparent inattention to local requirements.”

There are two distinct things there. The Speech goes on to say:—

“I hope that time will allow of your dealing with this subject, and of adopting such measures as may lead to the removal of any similar grounds of complaint in the future.”

The hon. gentleman evidently considered the subject an important one, or he would not have introduced it into the Governor's Speech; and I say that that last paragraph of the Governor's Speech is more important to Queensland than all the rest of the Speech put together; and so is the latter portion of the speech of the hon. gentleman himself. I would like to ask, before leaving that paragraph, on which of the two subjects does he mean to legislate? I am not going to discuss the separation question now; still I have a few words to say upon it, being a Northern member, and being also a separationist, and having also taken a very leading part in this House years ago in introducing a scheme which would have averted the cry for territorial separation which has now arisen. For several sessions I did my best to bring about a measure of financial separation, which was finally introduced by the Government of which the hon. member, the Colonial Treasurer, and, I believe, Mr. Miles were members; and I am sorry to say that I believe they had no intention to pass it—at all events they were very lukewarm over it. Those who sat on this side of the House at that time were Northern and Central members, and they were strongly in favour of it; but, because it did not please the Southern members who sat opposite and supported that Government, the Bill was withdrawn. Sir, I warned the Government then in existence that the withdrawal of that Bill would lead to what has arisen, a demand for territorial separation; and it is no use the hon. gentleman telling us, after having made a five weeks' trip to Northern Queensland, that he found the people there were very lukewarm in their desire for separation. I say that the desire is anything but lukewarm, and his very friends—the gentlemen at Charters Towers—whom he speaks of as being fairly divided on the question—his own admirers—are actually the strongest separationists now.

Mr. SMYTH: No, no!

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : And I will tell the hon. gentleman why. Through the legislation of his hon. colleague, the Treasurer. I was at Charters Towers as well as he since last session. I met friends of mine and friends of his there whom I knew to be anti-separationists previously, and, to my astonishment, I found they were the most red-hot separationists I met in Charters Towers. I asked them the reason why they had turned round, and they said, "Because we are convinced that the people of Brisbane do not know how to legislate for our requirements. They imposed a tax upon machinery by which we live, the effect of which they have no conception of down south, and we see that the best chance we have now is to try and legislate for ourselves." It is a great pity that things have come to the pitch that they have come to, but it is no use the hon. gentleman trying to lead this House astray by saying the feeling in favour of separation does not exist, because it does exist. It exists in every part of the North. He said the feeling was pretty well divided in the North, but it must be remembered that Townsville and Charters Towers and the country west represent nearly the whole of Northern Queensland.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : Oh, no !

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : As far as population is concerned they certainly do. There are not 3,000—I may say 1,000—persons north of Townsville who are not separationists. The people of Cairns are separationists.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government Benches : No, no !

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : I say yes, in spite of the telegrams received from Cairns lately, and in spite of the gentleman who professes to represent Cairns and really does not. Did not the hon. the Premier find the separation idea very strong in Cairns when he was there ?

The PREMIER : No.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : Was it not exhibited at the banquet to which he was invited ?

The PREMIER : No.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : Well, all I can say is that the newspapers have not represented the matter correctly, nor the gentleman who attended the banquet.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL : Do they ever ?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : The hon. the Premier went up north opposed to separation. As a Minister occupying the position he does, we do not expect him to be at all inclined to separation. He would be false to his position if he was in the least degree a separationist. Who ever heard of a Government willing to cut off any portion of its territory for any reason whatever ? Governments have always tried to compel people to remain within the domain of their jurisdiction. He went up north opposed to separation, and he came back in the same mind. He saw nothing in the whole of his journey to alter his belief in it, because—

"Convince a man against his will,
He's of the same opinion still."

No matter what proof could be brought before the hon. gentleman, he would be of the same opinion still—that separation is undesirable. No one blames him for that, but I can assure him that so far from the desire of the people of the North for separation being lukewarm, it is all the other way, and in proof of that I would point out that there is not a single member in this House who represents a Northern constituency, with the exception of the hon. the Attorney-General,

who is three parts a separationist I believe—with the exception of that hon. gentleman, every Northern member is a separationist. Could there be any stronger proof than that ? Why, no one but a separationist will be elected for the North.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : What about the hon. member for Cook ?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : Which hon. member for Cook ?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : Mr. Hill.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : He is a separationist. I say there is only one Northern member, the Attorney-General, who is not, and if he went for election now he would have to declare himself a separationist or he would not be returned. There is strong feeling, I admit, in the minds of many of those who are determined to get separation, against Townsville being the capital, and that feeling in me is just as strong as in anyone in the North. I do not believe Townsville should be the capital, and I am perfectly convinced that it will not be the capital. And, better than that, the people of Townsville do not desire it to be the capital.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side : Oh ! oh !

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : I think I know the minds of the people of Townsville better than hon. gentlemen opposite, who simply went there and left again immediately. I know that if the intention was to make Townsville the capital half the people who signed the Separation Petition would probably never have signed it. They have no desire or intention to ask that Townsville should be the capital, and if, when separation does come—as I have not the slightest doubt it will come, in spite of any legislation the hon. gentleman may introduce—if after it does come the capital should be fixed there by the act of separation, it will be the first duty of the Northern members to remove the capital to a more central position. The hon. gentleman may take it for granted that that will be the first work to be done. Whether Townsville likes it or not it must be done, or else probably, as the hon. gentleman has pointed out, agitations would arise in some other part of the North for separation also. The hon. gentleman hopes that by increasing the authority of local bodies and by decentralising the different departments it will avert the demand for separation. These are very good objects in themselves, but none of them will be sufficient to avert the demand for separation. I shall give the hon. gentleman all the help I can in decentralising as far as he pleases the government of Queensland, with the exception of removing the capital. I would never be a party to that, but I will give him all the other help I can, not with the hope that it will avert separation, but with the hope that it will be a benefit to the remaining portion of Queensland, and that we also, when we get separation, will be able to take advantage of that legislation ; because I believe that in forming a new colony we should decentralise as much as possible, as well as having the capital in a new place entirely. I shall say no more about separation, Mr. Speaker. I think I have said quite enough to disabuse the hon. gentleman's mind of any fear which he may be in of Townsville being the capital of the new colony. There are enough members and enough people in the North to prevent that calamity from arising. It would have been very well for Queensland had there been the same number of members in it at the time of separation to have prevented the capital from being fixed at Brisbane. So far from working from a common centre, as the hon. gentleman said, governing from Brisbane cannot

be called working from a common centre, because it is in one corner of the colony. It is not in the centre at all. Had it been in the centre, I believe there would not have been the demand for separation which has now arisen. But I do not regard separation as a calamity either for the North or for the South. The colony as it stands is certainly too large. The very fact of the hon. gentleman having taken five weeks to go round a portion of the North, which he says was never visited by a Minister before, and which he could never have visited had he not been assisted by steam both on sea and land—I say what greater proof could we have than that, that the colony is too large to be governed from one corner of it. Why, the northern portion of the colony, if separated, would be 254,000 square miles in extent, four times larger than the average size of the different States that form the Union in America. The largest State in the Union—that is Texas—is not so large as the Northern territory will be. The next one to that is only about 100,000 odd square miles, and from that they average about 60,000 or 70,000 square miles, and it is found that the smaller territory is better managed and the government of it better administered than in the larger ones. I think that is a fact which the hon. gentleman himself will not deny. Having said so much for separation, I will now say a word or two in regard to what fell from the hon. gentleman in reply to my friend the leader of the Opposition. He told us in the beginning of his speech that had he been asked at the end of last session when he intended to call the House together he would have told us in May or June. I think, fortunately for him, we did not test his veracity in that respect. It was just the same question of veracity as when he used to ask the late leader of the Opposition, when he was leading the Government; and when the House did not meet at that particular time the Constitution was brought under discussion. I could turn up the hon. gentleman's words, in *Hansard*, where he pronounced it as most unconstitutional; and I say it is wrong.

The PREMIER: It is wrong.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is wrong not to call the House together until the financial year has expired. It is simply a question of the "devil being sick"—nothing else than that. When the hon. gentleman gets on this side of the House he will be sick again. Now he is well, and if he cannot be a saint he will be a sinner, and will remain so until he becomes sick. He will always have some excuse for not calling the House together—Governments always do find some reason.

The PREMIER: I hope not.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: But, nevertheless, against all hope it always happens. Then he tells us that he had only six weeks after the return from his Northern trip to get through the work of preparation for meeting the House. Surely he left members of the Government enough behind him. He left the Attorney-General—the lawyer of the Government, the legal adviser of the Government. He left those three other gentlemen behind him, and were not they able to carry on the work of preparation? What would happen to the House or the country if by some unfortunate accident the "Lucinda" had gone to look for lighthouses the same as the "Ly-ee-Moon"? We would not have been able to get on at all. I hope nothing of the sort will happen; but I do not think it is a very good excuse for him to say that he had only six weeks' preparation. I attach very much more importance to those other members of the Government than he seems to have done in making such a statement as that. Certainly each one should be

able to perform the work of his own department so far as the legislation is concerned. The Premier found fault with the leader of the Opposition for criticising, but he knows well enough that the work of an Opposition is to criticise. I will ask him conscientiously how much credit did he ever give to the McIlwraith Government for anything that they did?

The PREMIER: A great deal; you will find it in *Hansard*; all that they deserved, and sometimes more.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am certain I never heard of it. I never received the slightest credit for anything that I did, and really I was not disappointed. I think that unfair criticism tells upon the person who uses it more than upon the person who is criticised, and it would be perhaps better if in criticising we should give credit to Governments for work they do well, and I am inclined to give the hon. gentleman credit for what he has done well, more especially in regard to the Federal Council. I am not prepared to say, as my hon. friend did, that the Premier was opposed to federation. I do not remember his being opposed to federation. I remember his being very lukewarm in the matter of New Guinea—far more lukewarm than the Northern people are about separation. I am very glad he has changed his mind even upon that subject. I think there is no one in this House who will give him more credit than I do, not only for his action in the Federal Council, but for his action as Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Federal Council, in his different communications to the various Governments and to the Imperial Government, and I hope he will continue in the same course. So long as he does, he will receive full support from this side of the House—of that I am certain. I will say a little about the Speech now. But, first, there is a question which appears to me to be a very important one of administration, and I am not certain whether it has been carried out or not. It is in the Department of the Minister for Works. We are all aware that the Government of New South Wales and the Government of this colony are making railways to meet at the border. I have read in the Press that the Government of New South Wales and the people of Tenterfield wish the extension of the narrow gauge to be carried to Tenterfield, and I am under the impression that the Government of this colony are favourable to it.

The PREMIER: No!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am exceedingly sorry that the hon. gentleman says no, as it is an opportunity which they have of adding to the prosperity of Brisbane which they will not have again. There is nothing can be more certain, to my mind, than this. If they had carried the narrow gauge into Tenterfield, we would have had the New England trade for fifty miles beyond Tenterfield to Brisbane. There would have been no second handling of the goods; they would have gone to Tenterfield, and have been carried right to Brisbane, whereas now it will not beso. I think it is a mistake, and I am sorry for it. I was inclined to think that the Government had consented, and I was prepared to give them credit for doing so; but I am sorry that I cannot give them that credit. I have nothing to say in regard to the hon. gentleman's action about the New Hebrides. What he said in regard to that question, I hope he will do, and that he will continue to din in the ears of the Imperial Government our demand, not only with regard to the New Hebrides, but every other island within a reasonable distance of Australia that might be pounced upon and settled by what might turn out to be a very

quarrelsome neighbour. There are many islands besides the New Hebrides, some probably of more importance. I think he should try, without advocating the Monroe doctrine, as it is called, for the Western Pacific, to keep foreign powers as far away from our shores as he possibly can. The further away the better it will be for us if England should happen some day to be at war with some other maritime power. I do not regard the question of the deportation of convicts to these islands as of so much importance compared with that of the establishment of armed ports where cruisers might be kept to prey upon our commerce. The few convicts that can possibly make their escape can be dealt with by the Australian people when they come here; but unless we are strong enough to protect ourselves, the other is the greater danger. I must take exception, as well as the leader of the Opposition, to this funny paragraph about the operation of the Crown Lands Act of 1884. I really think there is a little bit of sarcasm here. The Governor is made to say—though I suppose he really did not know what he was saying when he read it—

"Notwithstanding the adverse seasons, considerable steps have been taken to bring into operation the provisions of the Crown Lands Act of 1884; and I am glad to be assured that its provisions are already conducing in a large degree to a beneficial settlement upon the lands of the colony."

I have queried here, "Is it?" I wonder is it? Can the hon. gentleman tell us, or can anyone on that side of the House give us a fair and accurate statement of the number of people really settled upon the land by this Act of 1884? I suppose revenue and settlement always bear a certain proportion to each other, and if settlement is to be regarded as a question bearing upon revenue, the published returns prove distinctly that there is no settlement, or scarcely any, going on; I do not allude to pre-emptives, or taking the revenue derived from pre-emptives two or three years ago, but just comparing the Act of 1876, independent of the pre-emptives, with the Act of 1884, and looking at the loss of revenue which the hon. gentleman admitted was to be anticipated, but which was not anticipated two years ago when the Bill was introduced. That is certain. There was no anticipation of a loss of revenue then. It was to be a revenue-producing Act—it was to produce enough revenue to pay the whole of the interest on the ten-million loan. I suppose the hon. gentleman will tell us now that it is to be a revenue-producing Act. Yes, but when? Are we to wait until the Greek Kalends for it? Perhaps the Colonial Treasurer will tell us still it is to be a revenue-producing Act. I will tell the hon. gentleman what revenue we have lost by it, and let him tell us what settlement we have gained to set against that loss of revenue. The decrease on the rents of homestead and conditional selections in 1884-5, as compared with the previous year, was £10,048. That was at the end of June, 1885. The decrease under the same heading on the 30th of last June was £38,000, a decrease that must go on increasing until at the end of a few years it will be £100,000. That is the very statement made by myself sitting here two years ago, and which the hon. gentleman at the head of the Treasury Department challenged; but here it is now in his own returns. Then the decrease on selections other than homesteads under this Act is £9,000. That is nearly £60,000. And what has been derived under the Act of 1884?—From rents, £695 in 1885; in 1886, £3,707. Now, where is the settlement to justify the paragraph I have read from the Speech? I say there is no settlement, comparatively speaking, going on, and it is useless for the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government to say it is because there has been a drought. The drought, no doubt, kept back settlement, but not to that degree.

Far from it. Is the Act working well in other directions? Is it giving us an increase in rents from pastoral properties as was promised? I do not think so. Or is it being administered as honestly and fairly as it can be? If my information is correct it is not being administered fairly. If my information is correct, it is being administered by the Minister for Lands more as a political engine than as an Act of Parliament. It is an easy matter for hon. members to laugh, but it is a very serious matter to laugh at if the information is correct. I will give the hon. gentleman the information, and he can set me right and my informers right if we are wrong. Is it or is it not a fact that he sometimes, in dealing with the division of runs;—which I contend he has no right to do, all his powers being defined on that question by clause 29 of the Act, which gives him power to appoint commissioners, or some other proper persons to do certain work—that is, to divide the runs and value the divisions equally, and after those commissioners make their reports to him;—he has to send the reports on to the board? Is that done invariably, I ask? If it is, then my information is wrong; but if it is not—Has it not been the case that he, instead of sending this report to the board, as he ought to do, has actually altered the commissioner's division? After the commissioner took all pains possible to ascertain a proper division of the land, the Minister suggests another division and sends it back to the commissioner for a fresh report, and actually, after that fresh report is sent in, he sends a fresh division to the board. Instead of the commissioner's division, he sends his own division to the board. If the Act is administered in that way, is that the intention of the Act? I myself understood when this Act was being passed that the one object in appointing a Land Board was that the Act should be administered free from all political influence. Is that being done, or is the information I have given correct? Let the hon. gentleman answer. I believe that has been done, and in more cases than one. Whether it has been done from political influence or not, of course I cannot say; but it certainly has not been done in accordance with the spirit of the Act. The Act bears badly and hardly enough upon the pastoral tenants at present, considering the losses they have suffered from the drought; but to make their hardship any greater by administration of this kind is cruelty; and besides being an injury to the pastoral tenants, it is an injury to the country. I think a spirit of fair play should be shown by any Minister administering the Act, no matter what class of people the Act was intended to deal with, independent of any personal predilections whatever. I am told also that the commissioners formerly, on being sent to work out the divisions of runs, used to go to the lessees and argue with them to find out which was the most profitable division for them and for the country, and then to divide the country, as far as they could, according to the requirements of the Act. But, since then instructions have been given to the commissioners to have no correspondence whatever with the lessees; they are to go to the run and make the division and send in their report without acquainting the lessees in any respect with what has been done, and if the report and division made by the commissioner are adopted by the board, that moment the lessee has no claim, and no option but to accept it, or to appeal to the Governor in Council to grant a rehearing in Brisbane. I say if that is the case it is against the spirit of the Act. I hope it is not so. The hon. gentleman will have an opportunity before the debate closes to vindicate himself, and to set me right if the information I have given is wrong.

I shall be very much pleased to hear that it is wrong, as although I have never approved of the Act, and there are many things in it with which I find fault, still I would like to see it fairly administered by the Minister for Lands. Now, there is a measure foreshadowed here which will be one of great importance when it is introduced:—

“You will also be asked to consider a measure having for its object to define and declare the rights to natural water, and to provide for the storage and distribution of water by local authorities constituted for the purpose.”

There are two things intended, and I think, at the present stage of our knowledge of that subject of water storage, they should be kept separate. I think it is quite sufficient at present for us to define and declare the rights to natural water, leaving the storage and distribution of water by local authorities as subjects for inquiry. We do not know enough yet of that subject to deal with it in any way that would be beneficial to the country; but I do think we know enough about the rights to natural water to legislate upon the subject. Certainly we shall not be able to learn much more by inquiry in this colony, because our action in the declaration of natural rights to water will be based very much upon the action of other countries under similar circumstances, or under circumstances that we can adapt to our own circumstances. But I think we should first appoint a commission to inquire into the best means of storing water before we begin to legislate on the subject, and more especially before we begin to legislate upon giving local authorities the power to store water and distribute it. It is a very great power, and the subject is a great one that in a colony like this, of such large extent, should be very carefully considered before it is undertaken. I think the Government will do well to divide the matter of this paragraph into two subjects, and leave one to be inquired into by a Royal commission or any such body they choose to appoint. I see there is to be a Bill to amend the laws relating to quarantine. I believe the Premier thinks that is a very important measure, and I daresay it is; but I have a few words to say about his action in regard to the quarantining of the “Dorunda.” I think he made a serious mistake there. I believe the mistake was unintentional, and that the hon. member’s action was taken with the best intentions, but I think the “Dorunda” should certainly have been quarantined at Townsville—where the disease was discovered—in spite of the rain. It is useless to talk about the rain. It was not going to rain there or anywhere else for ever, and what the people wanted was fresh air and plenty of it. They wanted to be taken from the place where the disease was, and divided, and nothing would have suited them better than living in tents on Magnetic Island. It is no use saying the quarantine buildings were not ready. If there were not a single building up, tents could have been erected at once. There were sufficient sails on board the “Dorunda” to do it, I am sure, even if Townsville could not have supplied their wants. Instead of being kept five days on board, they should have been landed at once, and before the five days were up there would not have been a single death. I believe the people who took ill on the way from Townsville would have escaped the disease entirely.

The PREMIER: There would have been frightful mortality.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: That is the opinion of the hon. gentleman. It is not mine, nor that of the people of Australia generally.

The PREMIER: It has been confirmed by the inquiry.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It has been confirmed, I believe, by a committee of doctors, who actually whitewashed the Premier without inquest. Had there been any blame attached to him they would have washed it off. They would have been quite willing to do so had the fault been ten times greater. I do not say for a single moment that the hon. gentleman wished it, or asked them to do so. I think that in the report they went beyond their instructions. I feel confident that the passengers would have preferred being put ashore at Townsville.

The PREMIER: I believe not. I believe their spirits went up immediately when they knew they were to come on.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Did the hon. gentleman himself not intend to quarantine them there when he sent the last telegram to Dr. Ridgley? I think the doctor who went aboard and came back again should have been quarantined, and, more than that, removed from his office. Of course he says he came ashore and burnt his clothes, but how many people did he come in contact with before he burnt his clothes? There is a little Bill spoken of here which is an old acquaintance—“A Bill to repeal the Acts relating to the introduction of labourers from British India.” Does the hon. member wish to put it in the power of any autocratic tyrannical Government that may succeed him to get the planters to make up amongst themselves the salary of an agent to go to British India, and to make arrangements with the Government of British India to ship as many coolies as they like into the colony during the three years they are in office?

The PREMIER: It is to prevent that sort of thing.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am afraid it will act the other way. This is a fair criticism as far as I am concerned. The hon. gentleman may not think so, but I really believe that is the real intention of this Bill. I would sooner see the matter under the control of Parliament than under regulations, which would leave it to any Government without consulting Parliament. If there is no Bill the Government can do what I have pointed out, provided they are strong enough. The hon. gentleman could do it if he and his supporters wished, because they are strong enough to do it if this Bill were not in existence. He need not ask Parliament for the salary of this agent; the planters could subscribe the salary amongst themselves. There are many ways of doing wrong besides the apparent way, and this is one of them. Well, we shall see the Bill when it comes in, and shall be able to discuss it better then. The other Bills, of course, it is no use discussing until we see them. I hope they will all be very useful if they do pass; at all events I am sure the hon. gentleman may depend on all the assistance that can be given him by this side of the House. I am sure the hon. leader of the Opposition has pledged himself to no more than he and we will carry out. Of course we shall subject every Bill to a strict criticism, and shall express our ideas upon it as strongly and dispassionately as we can, giving hon. gentlemen full credit for trying to do their best for the country. At the same time we hope to get reciprocity in that respect. Even if we do differ—we have often differed before, and I suppose we shall continue to differ as long as we remain in this House—we can be kind enough to allow each his own opinion, and to believe that each is acting according to his own opinion; and with that the hon. gentleman may rest quite satisfied. I hope we shall have no more complaints

about being found fault with, because he will never be found fault with by me unless I think he has done wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall only address myself to that part of the speech of the hon. gentleman in which he referred to the operation of the Land Act, and to my administration of it. Before proceeding, I must congratulate the hon. gentleman on having assumed the rôle of advocate-general for the squatters, and I must also congratulate the squatters on the enthusiastic advocate of their interests and unjust and undue privileges. If the hon. gentleman wishes to quiet the old state of feeling, as he said, I do not think his utterance just now was very creditable. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that I stick to the squatters in anything they can fairly claim from the State or the Government; but when they put forward any claim inconsistent with justice or the interests of the colony they will not find a more determined opponent than myself. I will commence with the last part of the remarks of the hon. gentleman. Like some newspapers in Brisbane, he gets hold of some cock-and-bull yarn about the operation or administration of the Land Act, and assumes it as something absolutely true, and then criticises it. That is a discreditable and very unreasonable thing to do. He assumes first that what he has heard is correct, and then begins a tirade, almost of abuse, against myself for having administered the law in an improper way—or something very like it. Why did not the hon. gentleman state the charges simply without any colouring instead of assuming what is absolutely untrue? Had he wished, he could have had an explanation from me. He says that I have myself altered the reports the commissioners sent in for the division of runs, and sent them back with the alterations made by me to the Land Board for their decision. That is absolutely untrue.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Sent them back to the commissioners.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The commissioners are under my instructions, and I am responsible for the proper discharge of their duties, as far as I am able to judge of them from their reports to me. I may explain to the House that I require the commissioners to furnish a report on each block on a run which is proposed to be divided; and, where the block is not indicated on the map, I ask for a minute description. The report any commissioner may make is simply his opinion as to the character and quality of the country. I must say that in some of these reports the description of the country and the recommendation for division have not agreed. In cases of that kind, I have sent the report back for reconsideration, pointing out where the description of country was inconsistent with the recommendation for division; and I think it is my duty to do that. If the commissioner is not capable—or at least if he does not understand his duties sufficiently clearly to give a proper recommendation for division in accordance with the description which he furnishes—the report had better be sent back to him for his reconsideration.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Get another commissioner, if he cannot do that. He can certainly do it better than you who have never visited the country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not require an alteration in the report, but simply point out where the inconsistency is, and ask the commissioner if he can make any other recommendation or amendment. If he cannot do so, I send the report to the Land Board, and

point out where I think the commissioner has erred in his recommendations, and the board deal with the matter as they choose. I believe it is my bounden duty to do that. Then, again, the hon. gentleman says that I have given distinct and positive instructions to the commissioners not to divulge to the lessees what their recommendation would be with regard to the division of runs. That was not done in the first instance, but I afterwards found that it was desirable to relieve the commissioner from the peculiar position in which he was placed, in having to inform the lessee what division he intended to recommend. Now, all a commissioner has to do is to go over the country and send in his report without informing the lessee what his recommendation will be. It is true that the lessee, if dissatisfied, has no power to make himself heard in the matter, except by appeal to the Supreme Court, or by obtaining a rehearing of the case, and it was never intended by the Act that he should, otherwise there would be no end to any case. I have, I think, disposed of the charges against myself with respect to the administration of the Act. I will now refer to the working of the Act itself. Of course I cannot do otherwise than admit that for revenue purposes the Act so far has been a failure, or a partial failure, but I am very far from admitting that it has been a failure so far as settlement is concerned. There has been more real settlement during the last three months under the new Act than there was in twelve months under the Act of 1876. There was little or no settlement under the Act of 1876, and no one in this House knows that better than the hon. member for Townsville. Under the latter statute, land got into the hands of speculators who never intend to settle on it, and nowhere has this been seen more clearly than in the North. Look at Cairns, at Townsville, at Bowen! What do we find there? Are the owners the occupants of the territories taken up? Do the gentlemen who got the land reside on it? No! all they use it for is to graze cattle. Is that the sort of settlement the country requires? I do not think that is the kind of settlement the hon. gentleman really desires. If he does desire such settlement I am very much deceived in him, and can only believe that he holds that opinion because he feels the necessity of backing up the opinions of the party to which he belongs. I believe his opinions are very different indeed, and that he would rather see one *bonâ fide* settler on a hundred acres than a dozen selectors such as those to whom I have referred holding large tracts of country. Did not the late Government allow 1,280 acres almost within the municipality of Cairns to be taken up by one man, which land is now in the same condition as when it was taken up—covered with primitive forest? After performing his conditions he waits for the settlement of the country to give value to the land, and I say if we never get a revenue out of the Act, it would be far better that it should be so than that the land should drift into the hands of a few people to deal with in that way. Look at the condition of things in my native colony of New South Wales, and if any man wishes to see that repeated in this colony I say he is a bad citizen, and would be a still worse Australian. The hon. gentleman made a great point of one thing, which he said was reiterated again and again at the time of the passing of the Act—namely, that the Act was going to provide a revenue to meet all the interest on the ten-million loan. I do not think any member of this House, or any member of the Government, except perhaps the Minister for Works, ever said such a thing. Who ever supposed for a moment that any large revenue would be immediately derived from the

Act? The object of the Act was to prevent the accumulation of land in the hands of a few persons, and my hon. colleague then pointed out that some years hence, when the Act had been in operation for some time and was in thorough working order, sufficient rent would be derived to meet all possible requirements—not only to meet the interest on the ten-million loan, but to meet the requirements of the general administration of the Government. I never went so far as to say that at the time the Act was passing, nor did I speak of the possibility of revenue being immediately derived from it. I had one object in view and one only, and that was to see the lands retained for those who would keep them, and not allow speculators to come here and grab them up, and make the people pay tenfold for them, as has been done again and again throughout the whole of Australia. Now, I believe the people of the colony would be better satisfied to put their hands into their pockets and meet the expenses of Government for many years to come, rather than see the chances of their families cut away from their feet by a few speculators and land-grabbers. For my own part I would, most decidedly. I look forward to this country being a home for my children as it is for me, and I should like to see them settled on the land, but if the old state of affairs had been allowed to go on much longer I could see no chance for them except by acquiring fortunes before attaching themselves to the land.

Mr. NORTON: How many townships are you selling?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member says I am selling all the townships. He knows what the law is. I cannot help the state of the law. I do not mean to say the law is in accordance with my own notions. I say distinctly it is not; but you cannot go so far as you would wish all at once, and you must take things by instalments. The country lands may be retained, and that, I take it, is a step in the right direction, but the time will come when this state of affairs will be rectified, and I trust and believe that the time is not far distant. I do not think I have any more to say just now in answer to the hon. member or the leader of the Opposition, as I should only travel over the same ground with them again; but I should like to say something upon a subject which has engaged some attention of late, particularly in the western portions of the country. No doubt the subject will be alluded to to-night. I refer to the meetings that have been held, and the petitions which it is said are being prepared for this House, in reference to difficulties under which lessees of Crown lands are labouring in the western districts and the scarcity of employment for labouring men in those districts, which state of affairs is said to be due wholly and solely to the Land Act. I do not suppose any member of this House, no matter how obtuse or how easily deluded by specious arguments, can doubt that the lessees have started this movement. They have got the storekeepers and publicans to back them up, and they have got the working men who are suffering from bad times which are almost inevitable, when prices are down to nothing, and when bad seasons have crippled the chief industry of the colony—I say they have got these people to back them up, and say that the Land Act is at fault. That is what may reasonably be expected. The labouring men are not being treated as liberally as heretofore, and when a man asks now for labour on a station the lessee says, "I cannot employ you because the Land Act is against me." Why, it was only the other day, when I was up at my place, a man came to me and

asked for employment. He said, "I have been to three or four stations, and they tell me they cannot employ me because the Land Act is against them."

Mr. DONALDSON: And what did you say?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is the story, and these unfortunate men believe it. They are not 'cute enough to inquire the why and the wherefore. The only thing that surprises me is that with their experience the storekeepers should allow themselves to be dragged into this sort of thing. Of course, if the ordinary labourer does not earn big wages, the publican and storekeeper do not get as much out of him as formerly, and that is the way I account for it. How much is due to the actual fall in the price of produce? How much are the losses occasioned by the drought? Wool had until recently fallen 50 per cent. in value, and that within the last twelve months, and it naturally follows that the men carrying on this business will refuse to employ men to carry out improvements; and then they say, of course, "It is the Land Act." They say, moreover, that because they have not sufficient security to offer they cannot borrow money to carry out improvements. There is no man who does not know that if he goes to a bank or loan company to borrow they will not lend him money unless he can profitably employ it; and can a man employ money profitably under the present condition of things? With the prices ruling, I do not believe any man can carry out improvements in a profitable way. At some of the meetings that have been held, lessees have expressed their opinion that they cannot carry out improvements even when they have got the money, because they have no security for the improvements. I maintain that the squatters have greater security now than they had under any previous tenure, but what they have not got is that they cannot pick out pieces of their runs to secure them as freeholds, and as a means by which they can raise money. That is not the policy of the Government, but it was intended that the law should allow them to carry out their legitimate work of grazing. Another thing that astonishes me is that the squatters do not seem to recognise the independent political position that this Act has put them in. The squatting party has hitherto been hangers-on of the Government that happened to be in power; they have occupied the most humiliating and subservient position towards the governing party of the day. Under the old tenure it was decidedly so. The Government could do as they liked with them. They could do almost anything, and could go so far as to coerce them into obedience. I say that men living under such conditions are bad citizens, and a disgrace to themselves. Now the squatting party can assert their political independence, and that is a position that every man ought to be in, and a position in which I can safely assert they have never been in before. A great many men do not value that, but I attach inestimable value to it. Men of the class of whom I speak were afraid previously to give expression to their opinions even when they had opinions that were not in accordance with the prevailing opinions of the day. But now, I maintain, they are in a different position altogether. Some men care for nothing but making money, and will sacrifice anything to enable them to do so. I do not know that there is any other question with reference to the Land Act which I have not answered, and I think I have answered fairly all the objections that have been raised by the gentlemen who have spoken.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I object exceedingly to the tone taken by the

Minister for Lands with regard to the squatters, and to be told that they were dependents upon the Government of the day, and afraid to speak their minds. Was I ever afraid to speak my mind in this House, whether I supported the late Government or the present Government? I was not. I wish it to be distinctly understood that I am a staunch supporter of the present Government. I believe they are far the best Government that could be formed out of the materials that are on hand, and certainly could not be improved by any admixture from the Opposition. I believe them to be thoroughly honest. I do not believe that the Minister for Works is engaged in railway contracting, nor that the Minister for Lands is guilty of any great amount of land-jobbing. I give him credit for honestly administering his department according to his lights; but I differ from him entirely. The complaint constantly made to me by my constituents in the Cook district was that whilst the late Government were, in the way of land, very kind at least to their friends, the present blank Government was no good at all to anybody. They could not deal with it. I know the Minister for Lands will not let any man have his deeds for land if he can possibly help it. He will not give them up. He has taken up with the theory of Henry George, that it is a bad thing to sell freehold land, and, therefore, that nobody should have any deeds at all. He thinks that while we have the land we can tax it, but that once it is sold it is of no more use to the country for revenue purposes; and he is satisfied to keep the land locked up in the hands of the Government for the sake of posterity. Who are posterity going to be, I should like to know? Probably our own descendants or those of our next-of-kin. If we do get possession of the land, we cannot take it away with us when we die. It will be left behind and divided, I fancy, among what happens to be posterity in future generations. As long as this method of dealing with land exists, so long are we saddling posterity with an enormous debt. With regard to the position of the squatters—and I am not to be caught by the chaff of the hon. member for Townsville, who is now posing as the squatters' benefactor—I have been a squatter in this colony for twenty-two or twenty-three years. If I believed all I have heard in this House and all I have read in the newspapers about the squatter, I should consider him an animal whose interests were inimical and entirely hostile to those of every other individual in the community, and that he should be crushed out of it. But I do not believe anything of the kind; I know the contrary from my own experience, and I was glad to hear the mover of the Address in Reply throw a sudden light on the question and show the House that when the pastoral industry is depressed the reaction is felt in the towns. Out of evil has come good, in that way. In the West, formerly, if you wanted any opposition to a pastoral nominee or representative, you would find it in the townships. They believed invariably that the squatting interest upon which they were living was hostile and inimical to themselves, and were always ready to oppose a squatter at an election. Now I see a change has come over the spirit of their dream. They have discovered that the squatters are their best friends, and are clamouring now that additional facilities should be given to them. The Minister for Lands says it is a trick of the wily squatter who is suffering from the low price of wool, and cannot get any more advances because he has no security, and who has therefore told them it is all owing to the Land Act. I have seen these seasons before, and the very same concurrence of evils which have so lately befallen the squatter. Between 1866 and 1870 I went through the same

tribulation myself, and was as hard pushed as any man could be. I had bad seasons, and low prices for wool, and tight money. But we had not to contend with hostile legislation at that time. In fact, a Bill was brought in for the relief of the pastoral tenant; and I had hoped that in the Speech from the Crown on the present occasion something of that kind would have been mentioned. I do not want to initiate a long debate on the land question, but I will put the position of the squatter before the House as to the unjust and undue privileges just spoken of by the Minister for Lands. What are the facts? The Government had a certain amount of waste land which nobody occupied, and which they could get nobody to occupy. They offered certain inducements to take people out to those western lands, and get them populated; and they were wise in doing so. They were offered a twenty-one years' lease, rising from seven years at a fixed rate. The Government of the day also undertook to give them a pre-emptive right to so many acres of land for every block of country they occupied in virtue of the improvements they erected. Although the lease was for twenty-one years, there was a clause in it to the effect that any land they had might be resumed if wanted for public purposes, at six months' notice; and we interpreted that to mean if wanted for town or agricultural land, or anything else. What does the present Government do? It takes away one-third of the land, or one-half, as the case may be; it deprives the holders entirely of the pre-emptive right, and as far as it has gone the rents have been raised 100 per cent. upon what is left to them; and, sir, they were then told by the Minister for Lands, when he introduced the Bill—I was not in the House at the time but I watched the passing of it very carefully, and I noticed that he told them from the Treasury benches that if they did not come under it he would make them. A pistol was put to their heads, sir, and they were threatened with wholesale resumption if they did not come under the Act.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: No!

MR. LUMLEY HILL: The consequence was that they came under it. They wished to be law-abiding people, but it was just as if you offered me eighteenpence as change for half-a-crown, and told me you would blow my brains out if I did not take it. If I have half-a-crown I want two-and-six change for it. If I get two-and-eightpence, so much the better, but I must have two-and-sixpence. As a substitute for the twenty-one years' lease that we had, of which in many cases half had not expired, we were offered a lease for fifteen years, which was assessable every five years by any Government which might happen to be in, or by the Land Board, who no doubt will act under instructions from the Government.

THE PREMIER: No, no!

MR. LUMLEY HILL: To a certain extent the lease is assessable, and I appeal to the Treasurer and to the Chairman of Committees, as to business men, who know something about leases, if they could let a city allotment on a building lease for fifteen years and get any business man to take it on the condition that the landlord had power to raise the rent every five years. If the hon. the Treasurer thinks he can do business of that kind, I will give him a job to-morrow in his own line of business. The Minister for Lands and the Ministry must think that not only the squatters, but the men behind them also, are fools if they are to be taken in with such an offer as that—with such a pretence of a lease as that. I hold that it is simply a five years' lease, and under it no improvements will be made in the country; it

will hinder and stop the progress of the colony entirely. No doubt the main idea as to the State being the landlord is very good in theory, but here we have to deal with people as they are and not as they ought to be. We have to deal with people in whom the love of possessing a freehold has been engrafted from generation to generation. They came here for nothing else than to get a piece of land of their own; and I maintain that every man here who has striven to acquire land for himself and to make a stake in the colony is the best colonist we can have, and the most useful member of the State—far more useful than those who go about declaiming against those who have acquired land for themselves, and thus provided for their old age, or for their families, when they are dead. Men who have done this have had contumely and hatred heaped upon them in this House; but, sir, I respect every man who has gone in for acquiring land; and I am perfectly certain that the sooner the country divests itself of the whole of its land, the better it will be for the people in it. I am satisfied that if, at the present moment, the whole of the colony could be surveyed and title-deeds distributed amongst the people who are at present in it, posterity would be none the worse, and the present and succeeding generations would be very much better off. Freehold security means cheap money. A man who has got his deeds can raise money on credit and put that money into the land. The land is worthless to the colony unless a man has money to work it with. Land here I do not look upon with any of that anxiety with which it is viewed in the old country, because there they have the law of entail and primogeniture, and estates are kept together; but here it is treated as a chattel, and if it is found unsuitable for one purpose it is put to another. In fact people deal with it as they do with cutting up a bullock or making up tons of flour or sugar into marketable parcels. It is dealt with in that way, and anybody who has money or credit can acquire land; and I wish the leaders of the people, the representatives of public opinion, would urge upon every man in this colony to do his best to acquire land, and make provision in that way for his old age, and for his wife or family, if he has one, instead of, as many of them do, spending the best years of their lives in qualifying themselves for Dunwich or Woogaroo, or some other of the charitable institutions of the colony. I myself, Mr. Speaker, have seen a contemporary of my own in this House afterwards an inmate of Dunwich. And these are the agitators who do the harm—who come forward professing to be the representatives of the people and of public opinion, and holding up to contempt men who are industrious and earning a living for themselves and their families. I do not wish to legislate in any way against the interests of the small man. I want to see the small man get a big man, and the big man get a bigger man, and the whole colony go ahead. It is no pleasure to me, and never was, as an employer of labour, to see wages down to starvation point, and men wandering about the country for months seeking for work and food. I say it is no pleasure to me to see that sort of thing. On the other hand I like to see everything thriving and going ahead, a ready demand for every spare hand, and good wages, because I always knew that when I was paying good wages I was making good profits. If I could not make good profits I could not pay good wages. That, sir, is the result that has been brought about by this Act in the western districts. I have no hesitation in saying it. I have gone through precisely the same experience before with the exception of this new legislation. We have had

drought and low prices before. Now the drought is pretty fairly over; prices have risen, and the markets look more promising, but we have still this law, which has the effect of disturbing our security and absolutely impedes any monetary transactions whatever in stations. You, Mr. Speaker, and many members of this House who have not been far in the interior, would be surprised at the amount of money that has been expended out there by the pastoral lessees upon the faith of the promises which they have got from the Crown, and these we are told now amount to "unjust and undue privileges." The Minister for Lands, I have no doubt, is perfectly honest in his conception of what is good, but his lights and mine are entirely different. I have had a thorough experience for twenty-two years of the western country, and when the proper time comes I shall have a good deal more to say about the Land Act; but I could not sit here quietly and hear aspersions cast upon a class of men with whom I have always been associated, and whom I look upon as part, at all events, of the backbone of the colony. I repeat, sir, that when I heard aspersions cast upon these men I could not sit in my place and keep quiet.

Mr. STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it is a very fortunate thing for members of this House, and for listeners, that the hon. gentleman who has just sat down told us at the commencement of his speech that he was astonished at the action of the Government. No one would have known it from the speech he had made. Hon. gentlemen opposite do not think it is necessary to say anything in reply to it, and I therefore rise to say a few words. The hon. member for Cook has, I think, put the matter pretty fairly so far as the Minister for Lands is concerned, although I should certainly like to have something to say about this wonderful clause which was well termed by the hon. member for Townsville a piece of sarcasm on the part of the Premier in regard to the Minister for Lands. I was afraid that the proposer and seconder of the Address in Reply, and other gentlemen who have spoken, would not say anything about this clause at all. Both passed over it without saying a word in relation to it. I am glad that at last people have woke up to the fact that there is such a clause in the Act. I do not think there can be any two opinions even entertained by hon. members on the other side of the House in regard to the Land Act, and the hon. member for Cook has pulled it to pieces pretty well and condemned it *in toto*, notwithstanding that he is a strong supporter of the Government. The most important part of the policy of last session he condemns entirely. I should like to say something with regard to the reply of the Minister for Lands in regard to the charges made against him, or, rather the information given by the hon. member for Townsville concerning the working of the Act. That hon. gentleman said he had been informed that the Minister, instead of sending the commissioners' reports to the members of the Land Board as he received them, had perused them and altered them, and sent them back to the commissioners to be reconsidered. I think that was the statement made by the hon. member for Townsville. The hon. Minister for Lands got up, and very indignantly told the hon. gentleman that he had indulged in abuse against him, and then went on to say that the statement was entirely untrue; and to explain it, he said that he had detained reports from these commissioners, and where he did not find that the wind-up was in accordance with the details he had given, he had sent them back for reconsideration. As far as I can see that is what the hon. member for Townsville said. I do not see that the Minister for Lands

has disproved anything at all, and I think, as the hon. member for Townsville interjected, that if the Minister had not confidence in his commissioners in cases like that, he ought to have changed the commissioners instead of sending back the reports for reconsideration. In regard to the other part of the statement, that the commissioners have received instructions that they are not to give any information to lessees in regard to the report that they are sending down to the Minister, I do not see that he had any right to get angry about the matter. In fact he has quite admitted in every particular what the hon. member for Townsville said, so far as I can see, as to the clauses of the wonderful Land Act. I was very glad to hear the hon. mover of the Address in Reply state, notwithstanding what was said by the Minister for Lands, that the agitation outside had been got up by storekeepers, and the working men appeared to be the dupes in the matter, that when the pastoralists suffered all classes suffered. I am satisfied that there is not a member of the House who does not know perfectly well that the working men of this colony at the present time are in a deplorable state. We know that they are wandering about not only in the country but in Brisbane, and do not know where to get work. I have had dozens of men coming to me week after week begging for two or three days' work to keep them from starvation, and I know from letters from the country that things are far worse there. The Minister for Lands says this is owing to the drought and low prices. I agree with him in that, and I think it was the leader of the Opposition who first admitted it, and the Premier congratulated him upon his admission. There is a great deal of truth in that statement; but, at the same time, I am perfectly satisfied that the country would not have been in the state it is had it not been for this unfortunate Land Act. It has far more to do with the present depressed state of the colony than either the drought or the low price of wool. As the member for Cook has said, we have gone through these latter before, and never despaired. There was always something to hang on to, and to offer as security. Now, if a squatter goes to a capitalist to ask for money, he is simply asked, "Where is your security?" The squatter simply says, "I have none." I have only five years' security, which is the real fact of the case. The leader of the Opposition said he was not one of those who were agitating for the extension of the lease. That may be so. I say we really have not a fifteen years' lease—we have only a five years' lease. As the hon. member for Cook put it, what would the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Fraser, say, or the Colonial Treasurer, if they had to ask a man to take a lease of fifteen years of a house and property, if the lease was to be raised every five years without any definiteness at all? It is simply a five years' lease, and there is no capitalist of any intelligence at all who would be likely to lend money upon such security. That is the real trouble now about this Land Act, and it is that which has put the colony into the depressed state in which we find it at present; and unless the squatters get an extension of lease to a much longer period with a fixity of rent on a sliding scale, as the hon. member for Cook said, we shall never regain the confidence we had not only of southern, but of English capitalists. We must have an extension of leases and fixity of rents on a sliding scale before we can hope to get back to the sound position we held before this Act was passed—an Act for which there never was any need at all. We were getting on very well as we were. The Minister for Lands, after he has seen the evils that have followed in

the train of this Land Act, gets up to-night and boasts that the squatters have not now their pre-emptives to borrow money on as they had before. Is that any boast? The Minister for Lands, I think, should rather be ashamed to get up here or elsewhere and boast that the squatters have no longer any security upon which to borrow money. As an hon. member put it, security means cheap money, and if the squatters cannot give the capitalist good security he must pay very dear for his money. The hon. gentleman, talking about the financial position of the colony, alluded to pre-emptives, and talked about having returned £70,000 or £80,000 for pre-emptives; and he tried to make it out a benefit to the country, because he admitted the squatters were very glad to get it back. I do not think that a proof that it is a good thing for the country. I never knew a single squatter yet who, if he could possibly retain his land on leasehold, would care to pay for it. How could it be good for the country to pay the money for the pre-emptives? Would not the Government receive a greater rent from the leasehold than the interest upon the pre-emptives at 10s. per acre? Alluding again to the statement of the Minister for Lands that the agitation against the Act was got up by the squatters, I say it is nothing of the sort, but that it is really an agitation on the part of the working men, because they have suffered from the action of the present Government with respect to this Land Act. I think it a good lesson for the working man to have learnt, that he must suffer when the pastoralist suffers. This is true, not only of the working men, but of the people in Brisbane and the other towns of the colony—storekeepers and others. There are very important industries in the colony besides the pastoral industry, I admit; but at the stage we have reached yet the pastoral industry is the principal industry of the colony, and when those engaged in it suffer the whole colony suffers with them. I certainly did not expect to find this paragraph in the Speech, and I was rather astonished myself that the Acting Governor, whom I have known for many years as a very truthful man, should have given utterance to those words, although they were put into his mouth. Instead of this paragraph I was inclined to believe that we would have had some proposal to amend the Land Act by way of relieving the squatters from their present depressed state. I hope that something will be done during this session in the way of an amendment to the Land Act, and that it will take the form of an extension of leases and the fixing of the rents definitely upon some sliding scale. I am perfectly satisfied that we shall never get capital into this colony whilst the rents are left in their present very uncertain state, or until we can know definitely what the rent is to be. I do not wish to say much with regard to the other parts of the Speech. They have been alluded to by other hon. members, and I shall not detain the House in dealing with them. Although there has been no notice taken of the failure of the Land Act in the Speech, it has proved a failure notwithstanding all that has been said with regard to the financial position of the colony. It has not produced revenue, and it was introduced as a revenue Act. We were told over and over again by Ministers that it would be a revenue-producing Act; and it was in fact rammed down the throats of hon. members on the other side that it was to produce the revenue to defray the interest on the ten-million loan, and that the passing of that loan depended upon their agreeing to the passing of the Land Act. They know that as well as I do, and they must now admit that it has proved a failure so far as it has gone, and I think it has

had a very fair trial. I am satisfied that the longer it is tried the worse it will prove. I hope the Premier will, even at this stage, advise his Land Minister—whom he must certainly be sorry he ever saw, and whom he must wish now in kingdom-come or somewhere else before he passed this Act—to bring in some amendment to this Act, giving relief to—I won't say the squatters, but to the country. It is not a matter particularly affecting the squatters, but it affects everyone in the country. It has been a failure so far as regards revenue, and it has been a failure as far as regards settlement. There has been plenty of land thrown open for selection as homesteads and as grazing farms, and every facility given to settle on them, and yet not a single application has been made for them. The Government have not been able to get any money at all from the Land Act to pay the interest on the loan; and we know that even between this town and Moreton Bay townships have been laid off and square miles of country put up for sale, but not all sold. People would not even buy land so close to Brisbane, and yet, notwithstanding all that has been said about not selling land, townships have been laid off, and the Government have tried in that way to get revenue. That has also proved a failure, simply because of disturbing influences that have come in, as I consider, entirely through the passing of this unfortunate Land Act, which has brought depression all over the colony.

Mr. PALMER: I rise to move the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—If hon. members wish to adjourn, the Government will not offer any opposition. I express a hope that it will be possible to close the debate to-morrow evening—not, of course, that the Government wish to prevent in any way the fullest discussion.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I believe it is the desire of all members on this side of the House to close the discussion to-morrow evening.

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

The House adjourned at thirteen minutes past 9 o'clock.