

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 15 JULY 1886

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 15 July, 1886.

Motion for Adjournment.—Formal Motions.—Joint Committees.—Members Expenses Bill.—Joint Action of Local Authorities Bill.—Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Act Amendment Bill.—Pearl-shell and Bécho-de-mer Fishery Act Amendment Bill.—Justices Bill.—Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881 Continuation Bill.—Address in Reply—resumption of debate.—Motion for Adjournment.—Adjournment.

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

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. ISAMBERT said: I rise to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of referring to certain words in my speech which are not correctly reported in *Hansard*. In the second column I am reported to have said that "it is capital against labour that is what the North is suffering from." Now, what I said was that it is capital and labour—capital when it is combined with slavery—and therefore it is capital and labour which the North is suffering from, and not from true wealth. Then again,

further on I am reported to have said that "the capitalists who employ these men employ them for a wrongful purpose, and we would be perfectly justified in taxing every employer in the land by putting £1,000 upon him for every cheap labourer he employs." That is not sense. What I mean is that the employer of cheap labour should be taxed—that a license should be put upon him for employing cheap labour—and the difference would then be found between a black labourer and a European who has to meet the just demands of civilised life. I further explained in what way these labourers were used for a "wrongful purpose"—namely, for the exploitation of white labour—and the object of the capitalist up north when combining capital with such labour is to have someone to fleece and someone to exploit. Then again, instead of a quotation which I said would be found in a book written by Mr. Sedgwick, the reporter quotes a few lines which are said to come from "Emerson." It is not "wool" to weave, but "web" to weave, and not "kings" are in the saddle, but "things" are in the saddle, because the autocratic power of "kings" is long ago disposed of. Again, I am misreported in my remarks about education. I said our military was increasing in expenditure, and before we go much further in increasing it as a purely military organisation we ought to expend money in a way that would ensure greater success—namely, by establishing a teachers' college, and so give them an efficient training, in order that youths might be taught one uniform system. I did not refer to their teaching themselves in schools, but it has been reported that many of the teachers adopt the old-fashioned drill.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I rise to a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Is the time of the House to be taken up with the repetition of the hon. member for Rosewood's speech? I should say that once was quite sufficient. If the hon. member has been misreported, why does he not correct his proofs privately and send them up to the gallery, as other hon. members have to do? When he complains about being misreported, I can commiserate with the reporters, because I can hardly understand what he says where I sit; and for him to deliver a speech last night and repeat it this afternoon is a little too much for human patience and endurance.

The SPEAKER: It is entirely a question of good taste for the hon. member himself to decide whether he troubles the House with these observations or not, but as a matter of parliamentary practice, however, on a motion for the adjournment of the House, the hon. member may traverse any subject he pleases; so that he is perfectly in order.

Mr. ISAMBERT: There is only one other point on which I will touch, and I consider this very important. I quoted the wages paid to Javanese, and am reported to have applied the remark to the Germans. I expect the junior member for Cook took exception to my remarks because he is a capitalist employing labour. I make this explanation not by way of finding fault with the reporters, for anyone who is acquainted with the acoustics of the reporters' gallery must wonder how they are able to report so well as they do. In many instances, particularly in the case of those who speak near the gallery, it is only by catching a few words that they are able to make out a sentence; and by the time that is clear to them the speaker has gone on to something else. I do not see why we should not adopt the plan they have in the Legislative Council, and provide some room on the floor of the House for the reporters, so that they would not have to do any more of this guess-work, or

strain their ears, but have a fair chance of doing their work. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that you will do what you can in the way of carrying out my suggestion. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think it right that the whole of the blame should be thrown on the reporters, but I do think that what would meet the requirements of the hon. member would be that we should have German reporters. I can only say that, sitting on this side of the House, I cannot complain of the acoustic qualities of this Chamber, but it is utterly impossible, in the language in which the hon. member has been educated, for hon. members on this side to understand what he says. Luckily for myself, however, I am familiar with the language the hon. gentleman was educated in, and therefore am able to ascertain what it is that the hon. gentleman wishes to convey to this House; but I am quite sure that anyone of the ordinary educational attainments of Englishmen will find it absolutely impossible to follow his remarks. The hon. gentleman quoted yesterday a piece of poetry. Well, I thought he was quoting German, and, as such, I understood him; but to my astonishment I found this morning that it was reported in the English language. I forget to whom he attributed the piece of poetry, but I took it at the time to be something from Schiller or Goethe. Time should not be taken up in complaining of the inaccuracies of the reporters when the fault lies with hon. members themselves.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: I have not the same advantage as the hon. member for Mackay, because I never learned the German language enough to understand it, and therefore do not understand it. No doubt my education was neglected in that respect; still I don't care to hear German speeches repeated twice over in this Chamber.

Mr. ISAMBERT, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not complain against the reporters. And though I may speak in a somewhat foreign accent, I believe I talk as good English as some of those who pride themselves on their education in this House. I admit that I cannot talk in the whisper of the hon. junior member for Cook—a sample of whose whisper we had yesterday. As I said before, I rose to explain what I said last night, and not to find fault with the reporters, who do their work remarkably well. I could, if I chose, mention several hon. members who do not talk as distinctly as I do.

Question put and negatived.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. ANNEAR—

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

1. Copies of certificates for work done by Fraser, McDonald, and Co., Section 1, Clermont Railway, for November, 1881.
2. For December, 1881.
3. For January, 1882.
4. For February, 1882.
5. For March, 1882.
6. Copy of certificate showing total payments made to Fraser, McDonald, and Co. for building Section 1, Clermont Railway, including all claims and extra work.
7. Copy of schedule of quantities, Section 6, Central Railway.
8. Copy of schedule of quantities, Section 2, Northern Railway.

By Mr. ISAMBERT—

That there be laid on the table of the House, copy of Memorandum *re* railway construction by private enterprise on the guaranteed principle, addressed by the mover to the Honourable the Minister for Works, dated 22nd March, 1886.

By Mr. ISAMBERT—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, copy of Memorandum *re* amendment of the homestead clause (74) of the Land Act of 1881, addressed by the mover to the Honourable the Chief Secretary, dated 6th May, 1886.

By Mr. ISAMBERT—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing—

1. Number of persons brought up for drunkenness before the various police courts within the colony of Queensland, from 1st July, 1885, to 1st January, 1886; giving also the number of males and females.
2. Number of persons brought before police courts for repeated offences of drunkenness within the time mentioned.
3. Number of prohibitions issued prohibiting the sale of fermented and spirituous liquors to habitual drunkards.

By Mr. ISAMBERT—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing—

1. The amount of excise duty collected on colonial beer till 1st July, 1886.
2. The number of revenue officers engaged in the supervision and collection of the said excise duty on colonial beer, and the expense or cost of the said collection.

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The PREMIER said: I beg to move—

1. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Library Committee, namely:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Brookes, and Mr. Norton.
2. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management of the Refreshment Rooms, namely:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Aland, and Mr. Black.
3. That the following members of the House be appointed members of the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings, namely:—The Hon. the Speaker, Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Mellor.
4. That these appointments be communicated to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form, in reply to their message of yesterday's date.

These members are the same as during last session with the exception of Mr. Stevens, whose name has been substituted on the Joint Committee for the management and superintendence of the Parliamentary Buildings for that of Mr. Ferguson, who is not now in the colony.

Question put and passed.

MEMBERS EXPENSES BILL.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that you do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament. I have to inform the House that I have it in command from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government to communicate to the House that His Excellency, having been made acquainted with the provisions of this Bill, recommends to the House the necessary appropriation to give effect to it.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to provide for the payment of the expenses incurred by members of the Legislative Assembly in attending Parliament.

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

JOINT ACTION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to make better provision for the joint action of local authorities in matters relating to the common interests of the districts in which they have jurisdiction.

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday week.

PATENTS, DESIGNS, AND TRADE MARKS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Act of 1884.

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

PEARL-SHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson), it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Pearl-shell and Beche-de-mer Fishery Act of 1881.

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

JUSTICES BILL.

On motion of the ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge), it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to justices of the peace and their powers and authorities.

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

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT OF 1881 CONTINUATION BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirability of introducing a Bill to continue the operations of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have to inform the House that I have it in command from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government to intimate to the House that His Excellency, having been made acquainted with the provisions of this Bill, recommends to the House the necessary appropriation to give effect to it.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, it was affirmed in Committee of the Whole that it was desirable to introduce a Bill to continue the operation of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881.

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

ADDRESS IN REPLY—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of adjourned debate on Mr. S. W. Brooks's motion,

“That the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, as read by the Clerk, be now adopted by the House,” being read—

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—I moved the adjournment of this debate last evening, as hon. members opposite

desired that I should give some expression of opinion concerning the finances of the colony, without which they contended that the debate on this Opening Speech would be incomplete. Hon. gentlemen opposite have evinced a considerable amount of anxiety, I might say despondency, concerning the condition of the finances of the colony at the present time. I do not think that feeling is a general one; I do not think the feeling is one which is general out of doors, and I believe that the opinions expressed by those hon. members are the opinions which have inspired that section of the Press which has lately dealt with this subject in a similar way, and which deals invariably in the same unfavourable manner with any matter connected with the Government that can be laid hold of as a cause of complaint or as a public grievance. I have no doubt that I shall be able to satisfy, before I sit down, the majority of hon. members in this House, that the assertion made in the Opening Speech is quite correct—that the finances of the colony are in a thoroughly sound condition, and that, too, notwithstanding the temporary depression which has visited the colony, and which I trust is now rapidly passing away. I intended, I will admit, to have spoken earlier in the debate, but the consideration of the Land Bill and the administration of the Lands Department crossed the consideration of finance, and my hon. colleague, the Minister for Lands, addressed the House at the time when, under ordinary circumstances, I should have replied to the strictures of the leader of the Opposition in connection with the finances. I do not, however, regret my delay in rising to address the House if it has been the cause, as was stated last evening, of the hon. member for Mackay favouring us with his speech—an able and interesting one from his point of view—as it affords me an opportunity, not only of vindicating the finances of the colony, but also of showing the hon. gentleman that he deceives himself—possibly unintentionally—in regard to certain figures which he has recently placed before the public with the desire of showing the injustice the North has sustained during the administration of the present Government. I was glad to hear the hon. member's speech. It was a good speech, and was the first of any length that I have heard him deliver in this House in which he has entirely dismissed from his consideration the sugar industry and black labour. The hon. gentleman has divorced his old sweethearts for a time, and has taken to his heart the fair damsel of separation instead. I shall have something to say further on about the question of Separation. Before addressing myself to the finances of the colony, I would like to make a few remarks upon some other subjects which have been dealt with, and I intend to be as brief in my observations as possible. I give the hon. member for Mackay credit for the manner in which he dealt with the question of federation. I am gratified to see that he has devoted a considerable amount of attention to the deliberations of the Federal Council. A mere eulogium on the action of the Federal Council is not all that ought to be expected from the respective Parliaments of those colonies represented in the Federal Council. It is a most important tribunal, and a most important court of legislation. Although at the present time composed of only a few members, it is invested with very large powers—powers which perhaps are not fully recognised by all hon. members in this House. And the Council is a growing power which will ultimately assert itself in an authoritative manner, to an extent at present possibly not fully estimated. And in this light alone its actions should periodically come under the review of the Parliaments of those colonies represented in the Federal Council. I was glad,

therefore, to see that the hon. gentleman referred more in detail than other speakers to the action of the Council. The hon. gentleman also paid a very proper compliment to my hon. friend the Premier and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Federal Council of Australasia. The leader of the Opposition charged my hon. colleague with apathy in dealing with federation matters. I cannot see on what grounds that charge can be sustained. I am sure the Premier has always evinced the greatest earnestness in promoting the cause of federation, and I may say, without any extravagance of expression, that he has clothed the theory of federation with the garments of practical legislation in the first session of the Federal Parliament in Tasmania, and that without his aid the foundations of the Federal Council would not have been laid in anything like the able and sound manner in which they have been accomplished. I do not share in the despondency of the hon. member for Mackay that the other colonies will not come into the Federal Council. I am sure they will come in time, and I think that in a comparatively short time the Federal Council will comprise representatives of all the colonies of Australasia, and speak with one united voice, and a voice of authority. I regard it as a matter of congratulation to those colonies represented in the Federal Council at the present time that they have looked beyond their domestic concerns and have attempted to shape the future destiny of United Australia. I have no doubt that the work accomplished in this year—1886—small as it appears, will, in after ages, be regarded with great satisfaction, as having laid the foundations of a court of legislature which will maintain the unity of Australasia, and assert its importance in the councils of the British Empire. The leader of the Opposition subsequently admitted that he did not do justice to the Premier in connection with the Federal Council; but he said there was no mistake about his inactivity with regard to New Guinea; and he further said that the Premier and the Government, through their non-endorsement of the action of Sir Thomas McLlwraith in endeavouring to annex New Guinea, were responsible for the present complications which have arisen in connection with that island. There seems to me to be a serious misconception on the part of some hon. members as to the actual position in which New Guinea is regarded by the Federal Council. The action of the late Government was one which no man, having any regard for the constitutional powers of the colonies, could for a moment endorse. It was the attempt of one colony to annex a foreign country; and if such annexation were assented to or legalised by the sanction of the Imperial Cabinet, the world itself would be all too small for the acquisitiveness of certain of our colonies. I say, therefore, that the attempt at annexation by the late Government was a grievous error, and I assert that it has led, or has, at least, furnished a handle to the Imperial Cabinet to delay the establishment of a protectorate over New Guinea which ought to have been done long before this. I wish the House to understand that the subject of annexation, whether of New Guinea or of the New Hebrides, is altogether outside the consideration of the Federal Council; nor has annexation ever been countenanced by that body. The geographical position of New Guinea is such, lying as it does within 100 miles of our own territory, that it is incumbent upon us, for our own protection, to see that a British protectorate is established on the island, so that it may not fall into the hands of a foreign power. For present convenience it is deemed advisable that the administration of its affairs should emanate from

Queensland, on account of our very close vicinity. It is also deemed advisable that such should be the case until the Imperial Government has thoroughly established itself in the shape of a protectorate of the island. It is with this view that certain of the other colonies have agreed to contribute to the expense of administering New Guinea for a limited period, and I trust that long before that limited period expires the Imperial Cabinet will have taken proper action and openly have assumed the government of New Guinea, so that when the time arrives for the periodical contributions of the colonies to cease, a government will have been established over the British territory of the island which will relieve Queensland of the responsibility of dealing with it in any further shape whatever. Hon. members who have accused the Premier of apathy in connection with New Guinea have done so without discrimination. They think he ought to have advocated and supported annexation to Queensland, which, as I have pointed out, is unconstitutional and could not be deliberately approved of or supported by any man who regarded the question in a proper light. We deem it best at present, as I have said, that the affairs of New Guinea should be managed from Queensland, at the joint cost of certain of the Australian colonies; and as one of those colonies is the mother-colony of New South Wales, I have every hope that it is significant of the intention of that important and influential portion of Australia to place herself shortly within the scope of the Federal Council. The question of the New Hebrides is one which is at present exercising the mind of the whole of Australasia, and is of the greatest importance to the future of these colonies. But it is not desired by the Federal Council that the New Hebrides should be annexed either to New South Wales or to any other part of Australia. In my opinion these islands should be made a distinct colony of the British dominions, and should furnish a home for thousands of our fellow-countrymen and be peopled by them. They would then, instead of being a menace to Australia, as these islands must become if held by a foreign power, be a source of strength to this important part of Her Majesty's Empire, and hold identity of interest and sympathy with the large dominion of Australia. But let it not be understood that the Federal Council has countenanced the idea of annexation by any of the colonies. It has been advocated in some of the Southern papers that the New Hebrides should be annexed to some part of the Australian continent; it is well that it should be distinctly known such idea of annexation has not received, and is not likely to receive, countenance from the Federal Council. But they firmly hold the opinion that Great Britain must possess them, and not a foreign power. I now come to deal with the matters which more particularly induced me to rise to address the House on this occasion. In dealing with the Governor's Speech, the felicitations concerning the working of the Land Act have not met with the assent of hon. gentlemen opposite. They seem to think that the statement therein made is unwarranted, but there again they fail to discriminate between the action of the measure in inducing settlement and in furnishing revenue. I am free to admit that as a revenue measure it has not come up to my expectations. There is no use denying that, for the Estimates disclose it. But hon. gentlemen must bear in mind that what revenue we have derived from the Land Act is rent. No part of it is capital; and as we have not sold our property we still have our estate to fall back upon. If we were to proceed on the principle that revenue must be derived from the land at all hazards, then, of course, we could make it an

annual source of supply, as has been done in the past by forced auction sales; but that has never yet been admitted as the chief principle of any Land Act, and more especially is ignored by the Land Act of 1884. I may say here that when the Land Bill was under discussion, and the hon. member for Townsville went very minutely into figures to show what revenue could be derived from it, I to a certain extent accepted his views in regard to an immediate diminution of revenue. The hon. gentleman shakes his head. I admitted that it was impossible to forecast the result of the Bill, and I made a statement, which is in *Hansard*, which exposed me to the reproach of certain members opposite. I stated that, even if a temporary falling-off of revenue did ensue, we should be quite justified in issuing Treasury bills to meet the deficiency, in order to allow the system of leasing to have a fair trial. I am not, therefore, surprised at the condition of the land revenue under this Act, especially when we remember what severe seasons we have passed through since the Act has come into operation. Up to the last month or so, there has not been the slightest inducement to men to settle on the land, either for cultivation or for pastoral pursuits, in the absence of the ordinary rainfall. I believe, sir, that when the Land Act is availed of more largely—and I am still of opinion that it will be availed of very largely as soon as the seasons become propitious—it will furnish a revenue immediately approaching to something like reasonable expectations. At the same time I confess that it cannot be made the means of supplying the necessities of the Treasury by selling land as has been done under previous Acts. It is for hon. members to say whether this is matter for congratulation or matter to be deplored. I am of opinion that it is well to be brought face to face with the necessity of looking otherwise than merely to the land to supply temporary deficiencies of revenue. Sales of land must eventually terminate. We have seen the unfortunate position in which the Treasurer of the day has been placed in New South Wales through the cessation of large sales of land, and sooner or later the same position must arrive here. I am not going to debate over again the principles of the Land Act, but I contend that it is only right that it should have a fair trial, and wish to say that I am not disappointed with its results, seeing the conditions of the seasons under which we have passed ever since it has been in operation. It cannot be said to have been in operation more than fifteen months, and during the whole of that time the seasons have been unpropitious and unfavourable. The measure was, no doubt, rendered less immediately beneficial to the Treasury by the surprise motion of my hon. friend the member for Darling Downs in insisting upon survey before selection.

Mr. NORTON: It was no surprise motion.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I think that amendment of my hon. friend was accepted too readily, without due consideration. I take my share of blame as Treasurer for not having foreseen the restriction that it would at once impose upon territorial revenue, and not only delay settlement on the lands, but also immediately increase the very heavy expenses of survey, which last year amounted to over £62,000. We have, therefore, not only been debarred of revenue through the amendment, but we have also had thrown upon us, in the first instance, the preliminary expenses of placing the lands before the public.

Mr. DONALDSON: It will be paid back by-and-by.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes; but it does not come into this year's receipts; the expenditure is immediate, and in that way it has very largely diminished the credit balance which the Treasury accounts exhibit. No doubt in the long run the amendment will lead to permanently good results, in preventing "peacocking" and other nefarious modes of picking the eyes out of the country. I quite see and fully recognise its merits in that respect, and having regard to the administration of the public lands solely with the view of doing what is best for territorial estate in the future, we must be content to suffer a deprivation of revenue at the present time. We cannot both eat our cake and have it, and if we want to preserve our territory as a means of future revenue we must certainly be content with less revenue at present than has been produced under the ordinary modes of land sales. I have already stated that I admit the Land Act has disappointed my estimate of its productiveness, but I believe with the return of prosperous seasons it will be very largely availed of. I have found from personal observation, sir, that a great many people objected to the Land Act from their ignorance of its provisions, and the more they become familiarised with it the better they like it. I am now speaking of a class of yeomen whom I have made it my business to converse with and interview, and I repeat that the more they become acquainted with its provisions the better they like it. It is gradually creeping into public favour.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There are some provisions in it relating to pastoral tenure which possibly are open to discussion, and, I will go so far as to say, objection. It might be to the pastoral tenant a convenience to know what the maximum rent of his holding would be at each successive term of appraisal. I admit that there is something in that which deserves our consideration. At the same time I say that, amongst the agricultural classes, the sudden change from freehold to leasehold tenure is rapidly creeping into favour, and I am satisfied that, with improving seasons, our expectations—moderate expectations—of a fair return under the Act will be fully realised. But, sir, it would not surprise me if the Act had been almost a failure. I have always looked upon it as one of the most important pieces of legislation that has been dealt with by this House, and what assistance, I would ask, did we receive from hon. gentlemen on the other side to make it a complete and perfect measure? None, sir. It was forced through the House by Government with their supporters without receiving the advantage of fair and straightforward criticism or support from the members of the Opposition. It is a public accusation against those hon. members that they did not give the Government that aid—that valuable aid and support—in dealing with the measure that they should have done. They withheld, sir, the exercise of their legitimate functions as an Opposition. I hold the legitimate functions of an Opposition to be not only to point out weak spots in the Government policy, but also to try and improve the measures they introduce. I say hon. gentlemen opposite abrogated their functions as an Opposition on that occasion, and did not in any way endeavour to improve the Bill, but rather seized every opportunity of emasculating it and rendering it as defective as possible.

Mr. NORTON: That is not true.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. gentleman says it is not true, but the records of *Hansard* will show it to be perfectly

true; and I am sure every hon. member who was present when the Bill was going through will agree with me that the assistance which might have been obtained from the Opposition, in order to make the measure as beneficial as possible to the whole colony, was not vouchsafed by them. Their whole aim and object was to try and make the Bill an abortion and a failure.

Mr. NORTON: You refused to take our amendments.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The amendments were of such a nature that they could not be accepted.

Mr. BLACK: You admitted that it was your own side damned the Bill by the survey clause.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: In connection with this matter, the hon. member for Mackay referred last night to the increased cost of surveys under the present Act as compared with the cost under the preceding Acts. Well, sir, my hon. colleague the Minister for Lands informs me that the charge now made for surveys is the exact cost to the department. Under the old system there was a scale by which in the remoter parts of the colony there frequently resulted a loss of from 50 to 100 per cent. in the amount recouped to the Treasury. That will explain the apparent increase, which weighs so heavily upon the North. The hon. gentleman invariably regards Northern matters as the more important cause of complaint, and this will explain the apparent increase to which he referred. Having said so much, Mr. Speaker, on the Land Act, I will not at the present time give my estimate of land revenue, nor indeed make a financial statement, but will now turn to the Treasury statements which have been commented on by hon. members opposite. The first charge made is in the words of the hon. the leader of the Opposition—that the finances were falsified and were not true—and other harsh expressions directed at the Treasurer, which I have borne with equanimity. I have not the slightest doubt that the hon. gentleman is at last giving expression to what has long lain latent in his own bosom, concerning the manner in which Treasurers on his side of the House have dealt with the finances of the colony, and he thinks that what was done during the administration which he supported is likely to be continued under the present administration.

Mr. NORTON: What is that?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I will explain myself more fully by giving an instance further on. I can tell the hon. gentleman that the expression in the Opening Speech, that the finances of the colony are in a sound condition, is strictly true with regard to the statements which have been exhibited. Every voucher in the Treasury, up to the last hour on the 30th June, has been satisfied, and had there been any intention on the part of the Treasury to present a more glowing condition of the country at the present time, I need not tell the leader of the Opposition it could have been done by delaying payment of vouchers then in the Treasury. That, however, has not been done. Every outstanding liability was duly paid up to the 30th of June, and, therefore, the accounts are presented in their true light. The position is this—but let me premise by saying, as all hon. gentlemen know, that the Treasury returns deal with the actual moneys received and paid up to a certain period. We do not recognise outstanding dependencies either of revenue or disbursement. On the evening of the 30th June the financial accounts close, and they exhibit the actual transactions of the Treasury up to that time. Therefore I deal with the actual figures—the actual receipts and dis-

bursements for the year then terminated. On the 30th June the actual credit balance of the consolidated revenue, as shown in the *Gazette*, amounted to £45,238 16s. 9d. Hon. members are aware that during the last three sessions there were special surplus revenue appropriations, one for £310,000 and one for £100,000. That is to say that the total permanent appropriations out of the consolidated revenue amounted to £410,000. Out of this all that remained unexpended on the 30th June was £55,733 out of the appropriation of £310,000, and £91,160 out of the appropriation of £100,000. In all, the balance of the two appropriations remaining unexpended was £146,913; so that if we deduct the £45,238 of the revenue balance on the 30th June from this outstanding liability, we would, had all these sums been paid on that date, have shown a debit balance of £101,674. I ask is that a position to fill us with alarm or panic? What, therefore, is all this present outcry about? Even supposing the whole Parliamentary appropriation had been met, which it will not be for the next six months, and possibly not wholly met this year, our whole debtor balance would have been £101,000, and what is that contrasted with the resources of this country?

Mr. NORTON: £30,000 per year for interest.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am dealing with actual figures connected with the consolidated revenue returns; the hon. gentleman desires to introduce foreign elements.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: He does so with a view to make the position appear worse and to obscure the true perception of my statement. Even supposing that the whole of this £101,000 had been paid, which was an impossibility—it will not be paid this year, very likely—but supposing it had been we would only be £100,000 overdrawn; and what is there in that to terrify us after all? Can anyone say our finances are in an unsound condition, or that we are on the verge of insolvency, because the sum of £100,000 would be shown as deficient in our revenue if certain events which cannot occur, did occur. The sum of £100,000 is but paltry when compared with the magnificent revenue which the colony furnishes from year to year. Those pessimists who indulge in such despondency have no just conception of the powers of the colony, the extent of its resources, its means of recovery, or the expedition with which it will recover from the great depression which it has unfortunately undergone. The position is before the House in its worst light, and I have placed the returns before the public, not that I desire to make a bad appearance, but with a desire not to conceal matters. The whole attack has been directed against me on account of the special system of bookkeeping which I introduced into the Treasury in connection with special Parliamentary appropriations.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am glad that I need not occupy the time of the House by going into that matter. It is well known to old members of the House, and I feel further justified in the course I have pursued, because, Mr. Speaker, since that policy of maintaining, at the credit of the revenue, the special appropriations, was adopted, we have disposed of no less than £263,000 out of special appropriation, without showing at any time a debtor balance in revenue. At the present time why should we have this £140,000 lying to a separate account? The consolidated revenue has to provide the money for all these special appropriations. The money has to be found by the

consolidated revenue to pay all these trust accounts, and would it have been advisable to show one account with £146,000 credit, and the other with £101,000 debit? I say that the position which has been taken up in the Treasury with regard to these accounts is one that maintains our credit, and truly represents the financial condition of the colony. We do not charge our ordinary revenue appropriation at one fell swoop to the Treasury, but pay all claims under such appropriations as demand is made. I am justified, therefore, in the action that I have taken in this matter, and I am surprised that I should be blamed by hon. gentlemen opposite, who have shown no such delicacy in dealing with trust funds, to a much larger extent than I have done in this case. The hon. leader of the Opposition must perfectly well remember how his late Government dealt with the Railway Reserves Fund, which was a special fund formed, not to be touched by the consolidated revenue requirements, but to be set apart for the construction of railways in the Southern and Western districts of the colony; and yet the hon. gentleman's Government not only withdrew from that fund because the exigencies of the Treasury demanded it—

Mr. NORTON: Why?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: They not only withdrew from that fund £129,821, but also filled up the gap in the Treasury accounts, on account of moneys which had been long previously expended, by issuing Treasury bills to the extent of £252,000, which Treasury bills were subsequently retired by loan. Therefore, the Treasurer of his Government, instead of paying £30,000 for a half-year's interest, on the forestalment of loan, credited the revenue with £252,000, virtually loan moneys, in addition to the £129,821 before stated, which enabled the hon. gentleman's Government to pose before the country when expelled from office with a balance of £311,000, and say, "Look at our able administration of finance," never admitting that nearly half-a-million had been abstracted—I was almost tempted to say "feloniously," from trust funds and from loan moneys in such a way that no Treasurer who has any regard for honest administration of finance would ever have attempted; and this justifies me in my first accusation that Treasurers from the hon. gentleman's side of the House have managed the financial affairs of the colony in such a manner that suspicion is for ever after directed towards all subsequent administration of the Treasury. Now, a second charge has been made concerning the sale of the second instalment of our loan known as the ten-million loan, and instead of hearing, as I expected, expressions of satisfaction at the price obtained for our stock, we have been charged with having unduly provided for the first half-year's interest on loan without saddling the consolidated revenue with that sum. I do not for a moment imagine that anything I may say will satisfy hon. gentlemen opposite, but the statement I make, I am sure, will satisfy the majority of hon. members in this House, and thereby will satisfy the majority of the people in the colony. That is the auditory whose approval I desire to obtain, rather than endeavour to convince gentlemen against their will—gentlemen who, however able the arguments might be, would be of the same opinion still. I shall explain to hon. members how it was that the £30,000 of accrued interest for the first half-year's interest on the sale of our last stock has been dealt with. Now, this is not a new matter, and I am surprised that the leader of the Opposition has not traced its origin, and been more conversant with circumstances under which

it has previously appeared before the House. I would refer hon. members to the Auditor-General's report for 1879, volume i. of "Votes and Proceedings" for 1880. This is part of a letter which was addressed by the Auditor-General to the Colonial Treasurer on the 5th November, 1879. Sir T. McIlwraith was then Treasurer, absent in England, and his place was temporarily filled by Mr. Buzacott. The first paragraph of the letter deals with the issue of debentures which were about to be sent to England, and the Auditor-General proceeds to say—

"Another important matter in connection with these debentures is that interest is not to commence until 1st July, 1880, or some months after the probable date of their sale. I am aware that this is in accordance with the practice of the Government when dealing with former loans; but, as I had the honour to point out to Mr. McIlwraith some months since, it places the debentures of this colony at a serious disadvantage as compared with the debentures of the southern colonies, which always carry interest from the date of sale, and not unfrequently from the 1st January or 1st July preceding the sale.

"I am, of course, aware that the question raised is one entirely within the province and discretion of the Executive, and now only bring it to your notice, as I understood Mr. McIlwraith to entirely concur in the views expressed by me to him, and it may not be too late, should his attention be drawn to the subject, to arrange that interest from the date of sale to the 30th June next shall be allowed to the purchaser, and deducted from the gross proceeds of the debentures."

Now, Sir T. McIlwraith being absent at that time, his place was, as I have said, filled by Mr. Buzacott, who appears not to have seen the force of the suggestions contained in the letter; and his reply is contained in the letter which followed, which he directed the Under Secretary to address to the Auditor-General. I might here say that the then Acting Treasurer's views are now reproduced apparently in that portion of the Press under his present management. But the Auditor-General, in answering, says:—

"With respect to my suggestion as to the inadvisability of not allowing interest on the bonds to be offered for sale in February or March next, until the 1st day of July following, I do not think that my proposal would affect the charge upon the consolidated revenue, as stated by you, inasmuch as the accrued interest to the 1st July would, I presume, with us as with the other colonies, be a charge upon the Loan Fund, and not upon the ordinary receipts of the year.

"That the Queensland system is faulty may, I think, be gathered from the following facts:—

1. It is not followed by any of the other Colonial Governments, and consequently our debentures are sold at a disadvantage as compared with the debentures of those Governments.
2. It prejudicially affects holders of Queensland debentures of previous issues by needlessly reducing the quotation for Queensland Government stock.
3. It contracts the circle of investors, as many guardians and others naturally hesitate to invest trust moneys in securities on which interest does not commence to accrue for some months after the date of the purchase."

Now, from these letters which I have read, it will be seen that the position was fully considered as far back as 1879, and that the custom of selling debentures, with interest to accrue at a future date, was one which was regarded by the Auditor-General, and other very competent authorities, as being likely to prejudicially affect the sale of our securities. If we place on the market stock which is not to bear interest for four or five months thereafter, the price of that stock must be less than the price quoted for stock which is bearing interest, and investors must regard such fresh investment with less favour; and not only has it a bad effect on the nominal value of the securities offered, but it has an injurious influence upon the investments of existing holders, inasmuch as the quotations for the new issue regulate the price for all similar

stock, and on some of this stock in the possession of existing bondholders interest may have accrued for two or three months. I gave the matter full consideration, and the Cabinet endorsed my action, that the new instalment of loan should be placed before the public with accrued interest from the 1st of January preceding. The stock was sold on the 11th March, and up to that time 15s. 1d. had accrued for interest, while no money whatever had accrued to the Treasury from the sale of stock. And here I would point out that, if on the 11th March the whole £1,500,000 had been paid in a lump sum, the contention of the leader of the Opposition would have been fortified, for I am free to admit that had we enjoyed the use of the money from date of sale it might reasonably have been expected that the interest accruing therefrom should have gone to pay the interest due to the investor. But, sir, such was not the case. As I said before, the loan was offered on the 11th March, 1886; and on the following conditions:—5 per cent. on allotment, 10 per cent. a month afterwards, 20 per cent. two months afterwards, 20 per cent. three months afterwards, 20 per cent. five months afterwards, and 25 per cent. six months afterwards. None of these instalments bore interest. The loan was therefore placed on deferred payments without any interest accruing to the Treasury on such deferred payments. I would further point out that the whole of the purchasers had the right of paying up at any time and getting a rebate of 3 per cent. per annum. Further, on the 30th June, the end of the financial year, we had only received 55 per cent. of the total amount of the loan, and that the other 45 per cent. would not accrue until the present month and the ensuing month of August. I cannot understand how hon. gentlemen can insist that the interest on moneys which we had not received should be provided for out of current revenue. Had the whole of the money been received on the 11th March there would have been some ground for complaint; but, as I have pointed out, only 55 per cent. was received up to the 30th June. I may say that I regard the whole arrangement as one which tended to produce a better price than we should have received otherwise for the stock. Can any hon. gentleman assert that if the loan had been offered with deferred interest, as previously done, to accrue from the 1st July, it would have brought £105 7s. 9d.? We have made a large premium on that loan, amounting to £80,850, and surely we are justified in charging against it the expenses of sale and the interest we had to pay as an inducement for buyers to offer such a premium. I look upon the transaction as a legitimate commission or brokerage paid to obtain the splendid premium which was paid; and I can only express the hope that, when the hon. gentleman opposite has loans to sell, the same good fortune which has attended us—we do not claim any merit ourselves in the matter—may also attend him in obtaining a similarly good price, even though it may be attended with the drawback of having to pay a half year's interest for money which he has not received. I think I have vindicated the position of the Treasury, both in its commercial and in its moral aspect, for in this transaction I assert there is not the slightest breach of integrity with the public creditor. I wish to be as brief as I can, but I cannot resume my seat without dealing with another matter, and that is the question of separation, which has been introduced into this House in connection with financial considerations—and not only into this House, but also into the public Press of the colony, by the hon. member for Mackay, and in such a manner

that, while I believe the hon. gentleman attempted to convey information to those who read the papers, his figures are misleading—not intentionally, possibly, but misleading through his want of fuller information concerning facts connected with the expenditure of public money in the northern and southern districts of the colony. I very much regret to see that some hon. gentlemen appear in this House as delegates connected with the separation question, and not as members of Parliament who on both sides should concur in impartially considering the bearing of this most important question, and endeavour as fully as possible to redress any substantial grievance under which the North may suffer. I think the overtures made by the Government, in the Opening Speech, and put more fully into shape by the Premier when last addressing the House, should of themselves induce hon. members to lend a ready acquiescence and join with the Government in endeavouring to give to the North a fuller consideration, if they deserve it, and redress any wrongs or grievances to which they may be subject; but we are now told that nothing will satisfy the North but separation pure and simple; and although the hon. member for Townsville has said he will assist us in dealing with this question, what does his assistance amount to? Simply that he will take all he can get and make it a platform for demanding still further concessions. That is all we can expect from the hon. member for Townsville.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I said we want no concessions.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. gentleman may substitute "rights." He says he is willing to meet the Government, but he says also that in accepting a fair share of local administration for the North he is convinced that nothing will satisfy the North but separation pure and simple.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Perhaps the hon. gentleman will allow me to explain. What I said was this: I was willing to give the Premier all the assistance I possibly could in bringing decentralisation and local government into existence all over Queensland, in the North as well as in the South. At the same time I did not believe it would avert separation. I said we would assist him in perfecting whatever might be of advantage to the new colony when it sprang into existence; but I said we want no concessions; we want separation.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I thank the hon. gentleman for his explanation. He has, in a very concise speech, fortified my statement that nothing but separation will satisfy the hon. gentlemen who represent Northern constituencies. And he talks of a new colony. The mere expression "new colony" at once indicates what his thoughts are. He is willing to accept what the Government will give towards decentralisation, but I take it, from his own statement, that he will accept that as a platform for demanding still further rights, as he may call them, for the North. I regret that hon. members in this House should show such a slavish submission to what may be a popular delusion. It is the duty of hon. members to form, guide, and direct public opinion, to amend and redress grievances. But when hon. members meet here and take up a defiant position, and say, "Separation and nothing else will satisfy us; if we do not obtain that, we will not be returned by our constituencies"—I am sure no practical good will be the outcome of councils held by councillors in such a frame of mind.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: You are responsible,

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The hon. gentleman may charge me with the responsibility or not, as he thinks proper.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do, distinctly.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I could retort, if I chose, and blame the hon. gentleman for not dealing with the question of financial separation, which was a hobby of his before he was in power. The financial separation accounts were kept separately for a time, up to the end of 1877, but were discontinued when he came into power, and I might therefore say that its discontinuance has led to the demands of the North culminating in the cry for separation, and now he looks to us to redress the wrongs his own negligence has occasioned. I do not intend to make any unnecessary accusation in the matter—we will debate it in due time, fairly and fully; but I must express my regret that all those representing Northern constituencies, who have spoken, commenced by saying that nothing but actual separation will satisfy the North. I say that actual separation is to be deprecated and deplored by both portions of the colony, for I consider it will be a most disastrous occasion when territorial division of this fine magnificent country takes place. It will be a serious loss to both portions of the colony, and the northern part of the colony need not at all imagine that by establishing local autonomy in their midst, and by having all the expenses of an independent government to provide for, they are going to enjoy a financial millennium. I know some hon. gentlemen opposite represent certain communities where the people have a strong aspiration to be the capital of the new colony. That is denied, but I take the denial for what it is worth. I know the mock humility with which the people of Townsville declare that they have not the slightest interest in the matter, and do not want Townsville to be the capital; and I know, still further, that there is a large portion of the North that does not want Townsville to be the capital. I know that the Gulf ports would far sooner be governed from Brisbane than from Townsville.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I assert it. They look to the line from Normanston to Cloncurry to be a through line subsequently to the South, and if so it will be a line antagonistic to Townsville interests. Their mutual interests are between the Gulf and the South rather than between the Gulf and the north-eastern seaboard. I say again, that at Hughenden they believe that its fine climate and good position will ensure it being fixed upon as the capital of the colony, and that is the chief interest they take in the separation movement; and the same may be said of Charters Towers and of other towns in the North. If these towns did not believe that they would each be chosen as the seat of the new Government their interest in the separation movement would speedily die out. The hon. member for Mackay sketched out last night some Utopian capital—a piece of land to be selected and laid out as a large city and public edifices to be erected upon it, the whole to be apart from all local or political parties, prejudices, and rivalries. But the hon. gentleman has not yet located this metropolis of the new colony; and depend upon it, whenever the locality is fixed, the ardour of many places in the North for separation will die out, and complaints against the selected capital will be equally as loud as against the much-hated Brisbane. As to the mock humility of Townsville on the subject of the capital, I assert that should separation be

granted to the North, Townsville should be the capital. The advantages of its position, its connection with the back country and the great goldfields of that district and its harbour improvements, will make it the capital—the political and commercial capital. It is all nonsense to say that Townsville will not be the capital. It has a right to be the capital, and if I were representing Townsville I would insist that it should be the capital.

Mr. BLACK: Even that would be better than Brisbane.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Now, after all, what are the substantial grievances of the North? The hon. member for Mackay has asserted that the North has not received its fair share of expenditure, and he has dealt with this in that political manifesto of his published in the *Courier*, and taken from one of the Mackay papers. He has stated that not only has there been a reduced share of loan money apportioned to the North, but also that expenditure there has not been kept up concurrently with that in the southern division of the colony.

Mr. BLACK: Hear, hear!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I am glad to hear the hon. gentleman's "Hear, hear" because now I can meet him upon a basis with which he expresses himself satisfied, and which he admits is correct. The hon. gentleman cannot have consulted the returns for the years ending 1882-3, 1883-4, 1884-5, and the present, or he would have seen that the expenditure out of revenue in connection with the North has been gradually increasing until the present time; and during last year I can assert that the North received—and I will lay the papers on the table of the House to prove it—more than its fair share of the expenditure out of public revenue, assuming the claim of the North to be represented by one-sixth of the population of the colony. I am prepared to submit figures to prove that to the House, and I say again that during the years 1884-5 and 1885-6—in fact, during the whole time the present Government have been in office—the expenditure in the North out of revenue has been gradually increasing, and at the present time it exceeds the due proportion which the North should receive on such a population basis. In regard to loan moneys, I may say that the apportionment to the North has been very largely in excess of their fair share.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The "apportionment?" Yes.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is admitted then that the loan apportionment to the North is more than their share, but it is stated that the expenditure does not keep pace with the apportionment. Well, I say that anyone looking at the difficulties of construction to be met with in the North will not wonder at that. Look at the difficulties of railway construction in the North—for instance, the line from Herberton to the coast, and in other places also. Anyone who considers the difficulties of railway construction in the North will not wonder at the delay which must take place when these works are not proceeded with at an equal rate of progress to what similar works are in the more thickly populated districts of the colony.

Mr. BLACK: What about Bowen?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: There are also very great difficulties there, as has been explained by my hon. friend and colleague the Minister for Works. Again, even on the magnificent stretch of country between Normanston and Cloncurry, although presenting few engineering difficulties apparently, yet the very richness of the soil and the character of that

country leave no question but that the construction of a railway in that locality must receive careful consideration from the Government, though it may have to be carried out upon different principles of construction to those adopted in other parts of the colony. There has been no attempt to withdraw its fair share of appropriation from loan moneys from the North, and I could show this if there were time to go fully into the figures. The hon. member for Mackay, in his manifesto, deals with the whole of the receipts of the colony, and asserts that the North furnishes a larger amount of revenue per head of the population than any portion of the South—that is, taking the whole of the receipts from Customs and all. I admit that, as a matter of fact, in mining districts and other settlements in the North—in new settlements where life is more exciting—the consumption of dutiable articles per head of the population is more than in the more sober and staid settlement of the South; but it must not be forgotten that the expenses of administration are likewise greater. The hon. gentleman has carefully excluded from that manifesto what the expenditure for administration in the North has been during the last three years, and if he had published that we would see that the North has received far more out of revenue as well as out of loan—considerably more than their share per head of the population out of revenue—than they have supplied. One part of the hon. gentleman's address I cannot pass over. The hon. gentleman says:—

“The South has spent all her share of the £16,000,000 loan, and £700,076 12s. 3d. out of her share of the £10,000,000 loan.”

“The North has still unexpended £239,681 7s. 1d. out of the £16,000,000 loan, and has not drawn any of her share of the £10,000,000.”

Now, sir, I refer to this statement because it just shows how hon. gentlemen may deceive themselves by not fully considering the whole aspect of the Treasury figures; and I think I shall be able to show that there is very little of this £239,000 remaining to the credit of the North. The hon. member forgets that out of the £16,000,000 of loan—I am not speaking of the last £10,000,000, but of all up to the date of that—there has been a deficit on the sales amounting in all to about £1,240,000. Now, if we charge to the North one-sixth of that deficiency, there would be very little left of the £239,000 which he complains has not been expended on public works in the North. I do not think the hon. gentleman has taken that into his calculations; I presume he does not intend that the North should be relieved of its fair share of the deficiency which arose in the sale of stock, and which forms an important item in loan appropriations. In the hon. gentleman's eagerness to make the best of his case, and show the great injustice which the North has suffered from the affairs of the colony being administered in Brisbane, he has omitted to take into account this not inconsiderable item of £200,000, and has represented that we in the South are living upon the moneys which properly belong to the northern districts. The hon. gentleman last night said that I had “misquoted figures, but kept just enough semblance of truth in them to make them still more misleading.” I think I may retort that, though the hon. gentleman may not intentionally have misquoted figures, yet by his partial recognition of the expenditure and other matters connected with the finances of the colony he has obscured the true perception of the facts, and has not placed them even before his own constituents in what we may call a thoroughly exact light.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I think the hon. member has also made a mistake unintentionally.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I should be glad to know what it is.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. member speaks of the £1,200,000 deficiency in the loans as if it were all one lump sum. Now, every deficiency in a loan is made up in the following one, and the only deficiency the hon. member can deal with is the deficiency on the last instalment of the £16,000,000 loan, whatever it may be. For example: suppose there is a certain deficiency in the first loan, the next loan is increased beyond the appropriations for public works to make up for that deficiency, and so on up to the last of the £16,000,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The deficiency still remains; and the appropriations on the Loan Estimates to provide for these deficiencies keep continuously increasing.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The deficiency remains, but it is made up along with the other loans.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: But the deficiency still remains, and when the loans are paid off these deficiencies will have to be paid off also, along with the appropriation for other Loan services. The hon. gentleman also made some peculiar threats about taxation. But for them I should not have mentioned the subject of taxation. I am not going to make a Financial Statement to-night, nor indicate in any way the financial policy of the Government; but I cannot help expressing surprise at the threat he used, and his demand that if taxation were imposed it should be of such a character that the northern parts of the colony should not bear their share. I do not think any Treasurer could accept dictation of that sort, and introduce a scheme of differential taxes for the North and South. Does the hon. member mean to say that because the North may be larger consumers of dutiable articles, the duty on those articles should be reduced in proportion to the consumption? I am surprised that the hon. gentleman, who usually speaks in such a manner as to command the attention of the House, should make such an absurd proposition. I have now vindicated, I think, the position of the Treasury—at any rate in the minds of hon. gentlemen who have favoured me with their attention on this side of the House. I think I have cleared the Treasurer from the charge of having falsified his accounts, and the colony from the imputation of being in an unsound financial condition. I have great confidence in the early revival of prosperity in this colony; and I am glad to hope that this Parliament will be careful to promote that prosperity by a hearty desire to meet the Government in such a way as will relieve the finances of the colony. That prosperity will be largely retarded if hon. gentlemen come to the consideration of public questions with minds bent on territorial division in this great colony of Queensland, and I trust that further consideration will enable them to see that their duty to the colony lies in not carrying out the hasty ill-considered wishes of their constituents in the North. I hope that, instead of attempting to gain a little temporary popularity by pressing such an ill-advised and injudicious measure upon the country, they will do all in their power to cement the colony as a whole, and will assist the Government in their endeavour to promote decentralisation, and otherwise reasonably relieve the North of any disabilities of which it can justly complain at the present time.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—The Colonial Treasurer has accused the members from the North of being mere delegates in the cause of separation. Now, most of those members have undertaken the cause of separation

since their election. Very few of them have as yet expressed themselves regarding separation, and therefore I think he is slightly prejudging the case. At the same time the hon. member involuntarily gave evidence that the Premier's statement as to the feeling of the North regarding separation was incorrect, when he said that the Northern members were in favour of separation, because if they did not go for it they would not be returned by their constituents. That shows that his opinion differs from that of the Premier, who said that most of the residents in the North looked upon separation with contemptuous indifference. The manner in which the separation question is referred to in the Governor's Speech is very refreshing, and is another proof of the utter indifference shown by the present Government to the requirements of the northern portions of Queensland. They first state certain measures which they intend to introduce, relating to gas, opium, and the protection of oysters, and then hope there will be time to deal with complaints that have come from remote parts of Queensland. They are going to make regulations regarding the manufacture of gas and the fattening of oysters, and if that is done in good time, then they may attend to the wants of the remote parts of Queensland. The Premier stated the other evening that he had recently visited Hughenden, Townsville, and Mackay, and that these were the only places he found in his Northern trip in favour of separation. To use the hon. gentleman's own words, he said, "In other parts of the colony, so far as my judgment went, most of the people looked upon separation with the most lukewarm feelings, either of opposition or of the most contemptuous indifference." When the hon. member for Townsville asked him how the matter was treated at Cairns, the hon. gentleman said the people there were not separationists. The hon. member for Townsville asked:—

"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."

If I had not been at Cairns I should probably have regarded the statement as correct; and as I think it is wrong that the country and this House should be deceived as to what are the opinions of the North regarding separation, I shall give my testimony on the subject. It is not right to close one's eyes as to the feeling exhibited by the people on this question. I may say that I have slowly come to the conclusion that separation is necessary. I have found that it is necessary on account of the indifferent manner in which our wants are treated by a Ministry whose interests and sympathies are entirely centered in the South. I went to Cairns shortly after the Premier visited it, and remained there a week or two subsequent to the banquet. I know nearly every person who was present at the banquet, and personally interviewed nearly every one of them, and their testimony was that the only speech that was received with enthusiasm was the speech of the hon. member for Mackay when he spoke on separation. I only met one person in Cairns who was against the separation movement. I found that, not only in Cairns but in every other place throughout my electorate, the separation movement was enthusiastically received. The Premier has stated that the separation question was initiated by the planters in consequence of what had been done in connection with black labour. That is simply nonsense. We all know that the hon. gentleman poses as one who has prevented black labour from coming into the country, and yet at the present time Javanese

are coming here in as large quantities as the planters require. Therefore, how can the black labour question be the cause of the separation agitation? How can it be the cause of the agitation at Herberton and Thornborough, and of the various places which are centres of the mining industry? That is not the reason. The movement has arisen on account of the utter indifference shown by this Ministry to the wants of the North. I shall instance several matters in proof of this assertion. Look at the Cairns Railway. That has been dragging its slow length along for the last four years, and it is only a few months since tenders were called for a paltry section of eight miles, and they would probably not have been called had it not been that an election was going on in the district. That line will be one of the best-paying lines in the colony, as it will develop not only rich agricultural country but also a rich mineral district. In one place that I know of, about ninety miles from Herberton, there is a mine turning out about twenty tons of tin ore a week, the carriage of that to Cairns would cost £160 per week; whereas if the railway were constructed, and freights were the same as on the Stanthorpe line, it would only amount to £20 per week, which means an annual saving to that one mine of £7,000. The construction of this line has been delayed on account of the utter indifference of Ministers regarding the wants of the North. At the same time railways have been constructed in the South which are an actual loss to the State. The engineer for the Cairns Railway has not had a proper staff, and until recently the surveyors have had to make their plans in a tent, rushing out every now and then for a breath of fresh air, as the perspiration was dropping from them on to their plans. I think the action of the Government in regard to this matter is scandalous. Again, look at the dredge. Before the Ministry came into power, they promised at the general election that Cairns would have a dredge without delay. Years have elapsed since then, and we have still no dredge, nor any chance of getting one.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Was there ever a dredge in the North until this Ministry came into power?

Mr. HAMILTON: Yes.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Where?

Mr. HAMILTON: The hon. member can get the information for himself. He has never troubled himself about getting one for Cairns. The Colonial Treasurer told me about a year ago that possibly we might have the dredge which was going to Normanton, and which will be finished next April. But I notice that at Normanton, the other day, he told the people there that they would have their dredge directly it was finished, so that our chance of that has now disappeared. At Cairns the people have to pay 7s. for every ton of produce which goes by lighters from the ships to the wharves. That tax would be removed if a dredge were allowed to work there for six months, and the largest coasting vessels travelling backwards and forwards would have access to the port at any time. Two and a-half years have elapsed since the Ministry made the promise that that place should have a dredge, and the promise has not yet been fulfilled. The presence of the hon. member for Bowen reminds me of the manner in which the Bowen people have been treated with regard to their promised railway. They were promised a line to a coalfield instead of the Houghton Gap line, and then the Minister decided to send a diamond drill to discover the existence of the coalfield. Mr. Jack, the geologist, reported that it would be necessary to bore

1,200 feet to prove those beds. The Government sent up a drill capable of boring 500 feet only, and when the manager appointed to look after the drill arrived at the place he telegraphed to the Minister, explaining that the coal was 1,200 feet from the surface. He, however, got no satisfaction; and when a couple of thousand pounds had been spent putting down the drill 400 feet or 500 feet at the place marked by Mr. Jack, the drill was taken away and sent to Cooktown. And how have we been treated in regard to mining? Last year the sum of £10,000 was voted on the Estimates for prospecting for gold by deep sinking, and now the financial year has passed by and not one single penny of that amount has been spent in the North. About £1,150 has been expended at Gympie and Cawarral, but not one penny in the North, where the greater portion of the revenue from the tax on machinery is obtained. Although the southern portion of this colony has a geologist of its own, our geologist, Mr. Jack, whose salary is charged to us, was taken away from the North to report on the gold-mines of the South. A portion of the prospecting vote, £1,150, was expended on those mines, and the vote now lapses, the financial year for which it was voted having closed, and not one penny of the £10,000 has been expended in developing the gold-mines of the North. With regard to the Land Act, there are only three classes of persons who object to it—namely, the pastoral tenant, the grazier, and the selector; and the only persons who have no fault to find with it are those who have nothing whatever to do with land. The hon. member for Maryborough, last night, said the Colonial Treasurer told the House last year that he did not expect any revenue from the Land Act for two or three years; but the hon. member was in error, for it was the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, who made that statement. The Colonial Treasurer, as a matter of fact, estimated that the amount of rent during the first year of the operation of the Act would be £10,000, instead of which he did not get quite £700; and during last year he estimated that £30,000 would be obtained from rents from land taken up, instead of which he has not received £4,000. It is rather amusing to find that the Minister for Lands, who so strongly objects in theory to the selling of land, on the ground that the unearned increment therein should be kept for the State, has been actually selling the very land on which the greatest increment takes place—namely, town lands; and the excuse he offers is that the law allows him to do it. He made that law. Regarding surveys, I can thoroughly endorse the statement of the hon. member for Mackay, that settlement is discouraged in the North while it is encouraged in the South. In the South persons are allowed to select land before survey, with the result that on the Darling Downs an intending selector has simply to put a peg into the ground, make his description starting from that peg, apply to the board, and the land is immediately granted, in the absence of any valid reason against it. In the North, after a person has discovered the land, he has to send in his application, with the description, to the local acting commissioner; the commissioner sends it to the board in Brisbane, and the board, after three or four months' delay, perhaps, decides whether the land shall be thrown open or not. If they decide that it shall be, they advertise in the *Gazette* for some weeks that at the end of a certain time it will be open for selection to the first applicant. Probably a dozen persons will apply for it, and it will most likely happen that the man who first applied to have it thrown open, and who has waited five or six months for

it, will not get the land after all. In some instances land has been surveyed in the North as in the South, but even then the North is placed at a disadvantage. I have looked through the proclamations in the *Gazette* to-day, and compared the manner in which the two portions of the colony are treated in regard to this surveyed land. At Mourilyan the land is surveyed in such small blocks that if a selector wishes to take up the maximum of 1,280 acres he will have to pay £305 in survey fees; whereas, in the neighbourhood of Gympie, he can take up the same amount of land by the payment of only £35 for survey fees. At Cooktown, to take up the maximum of 1,280 acres would cost the selector £178 for survey fees, whereas at Nanango the fees for taking up the same extent of land would be only £40. At Cairns, to take up the maximum of 1,280 acres would cost the selector £200 for survey fees; whereas at Toowoomba the cost would be only £50. I was somewhat amused to hear the Minister for Lands denouncing the squatters in the way he did. However, no man is better able to form an opinion about them than that hon. gentleman, because the present is the strongest squatting Ministry we have ever had. Of the seven Ministers four are squatters—Messrs. Moreton, Dutton, Miles, and Macdonald-Paterson—the last, although he is the head of a legal firm in town, is, as is well known, a shareholder in station property.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Who are the four?

Mr. HAMILTON: Mr. Dutton, Mr. Miles, Mr. Moreton, and Mr. Macdonald-Paterson, and Mr. Hill would like to be a fifth squatting Minister.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: On behalf of Mr. Miles, I can contradict that.

Mr. HAMILTON: The hon. member for Townsville made some remarks as to the want of judgment displayed by the Premier with regard to the affair of the "Dorunda," and the Premier attempted to justify his action by saying that the board which inquired into the matter exonerated him. He also said he was not aware that any public bodies had expressed themselves unfavourably regarding his action. When one appoints his own judges, he can have a very good idea of the verdict that will be given. The Premier appointed that board. We know that at Townsville an indignation meeting was held regarding his conduct in this matter; that in Brisbane an influential deputation of citizens strongly censured his conduct; that the New South Wales Board of Health condemned the course he adopted; and that the "Australian Medical Journal" expressed itself in the following terms:—

"We cannot too severely express our condemnation of the conduct of the Hon. S. W. Griffith throughout this outbreak. In the first place, with the utmost want of consideration, if not inhumanity, he ordered the "Dorunda" to make a passage of three days from Townsville to Brisbane instead of directing the landing of the passengers and crew at Magnetic Island, where the sick might have been separated from the healthy four days before it was done, the fourth being consequent on the want of promptitude on the vessel arriving at Peel Island. How far he is responsible for the seven deaths which occurred after leaving Cleveland Bay before the landing at Peel Island, and the five which followed there, we must leave his conscience to decide."

Of course no one will accuse the hon. gentleman of want of humanity in the matter, but he has certainly been accused by competent authorities, such as the "Australian Medical Journal" and the New South Wales Board of Health, of want of judgment. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer stated to-night that the annexation of New Guinea by Sir Thomas McIlwraith was a grievous error, thus

endorsing the opinion of the Premier, who, at the time it was done, said that Sir Thomas Mellwraith's action in that matter would be laughed at by the neighbouring colonies. Well, sir, I had an opportunity, when down south some time ago, of seeing how the action of Sir Thomas Mellwraith concerning that matter was regarded. I was at a meeting, one of the largest ever held in the Town Hall, in Melbourne, on the New Guinea question. Mr. Deakin, one of the present Ministers there, was one of the speakers, and he characterised the action of Sir Thomas Mellwraith as one of which we might all feel proud. He said it reminded him of the deeds of some of those great men of the olden time who secured to England some of her brightest jewels, and his remarks regarding Sir Thomas Mellwraith were received with the greatest enthusiasm—the whole crowd standing on their feet and cheering Sir Thomas Mellwraith. That is the ridicule his action received in the southern colonies. The hon. the Treasurer has knocked me down, sir, with the formidable array of figures he has produced. I am not good at figures. I feel somewhat similar to those people up north when the Premier told them they had been treated too well, and the Treasurer then, to prove it, read off an array of figures to show that such was the case. Then the recalcitrant separationists at the banquets used to collect round the Treasurer, and with tears in their eyes fall on his breast and request to be forgiven, because they never knew until he told them that they were so well treated. However, I shall now give some hon. members an opportunity of criticising those figures by moving the adjournment of the debate.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I regret exceedingly that the House should have been detained so long this evening. I think the hon. the Treasurer will do me the justice to say that, as far as I am concerned, I have tried my best to bring about the conclusion of the debate long before this. I pointed out to him last night that, as far as this side of the House was concerned, we were quite willing that the debate should finish last night; but at the same time I gave him to understand perfectly that whenever he spoke—whether he decided to deliver his speech last night or postponed it—we should claim the right to reply to whatever part we thought necessary. I did not say so in those words, but still I did say so, about 8 o'clock last evening when the hon. gentleman was cowering on the Treasury bench afraid to get up because the hon. member for Mackay had not spoken, and he knew that hon. member would follow him. I, therefore, must disclaim any blame, so far as this side of the House is concerned, for the delay that has taken place. The hon. the Treasurer referred in his opening remarks to the annexation of New Guinea by the Government of Sir Thomas Mellwraith, and gave as a reason why he and the members of the present Government looked so coldly upon that action, that they considered it unconstitutional—that they did not approve of it being done in that way. I can quite understand their taking that view of the case, but the question was not whether it should be done in one particular way or another, but whether we should have the benefit of England annexing New Guinea, or whether it should be left open to someone else to do so. I believe, sir, that if the Premier and his colleagues had at that time given their support to Sir Thomas Mellwraith, there is not the slightest doubt that New Guinea would have been annexed at once by the British Government. As far as the constitutional question goes, did the hon. gentleman never hear of any other colony being annexed in the same way, without authority from the British Government? Does

he know how New Zealand was annexed—that the gentleman who annexed it had no authority for taking the action he did, and that it was annexed for the very same reason that Sir Thomas Mellwraith and the Government under him sent Mr. Chester to New Guinea—because it was known or believed that some other power was going to annex the country? Why, sir, at the time New Zealand was annexed, a French squadron was coming out to annex it and settle it, and some of the descendants of those people are there to this day. The British Government did not look upon that annexation as unconstitutional, or refuse to carry it out. There are other cases which might be mentioned if it were necessary to do so. Did the hon. gentleman never hear of certain French officers being entertained at a banquet, and the fact was discovered that they intended to annex some particular territory, and were to start for that purpose on the following day; that as soon as that information was known, a British ship was sent off in the night while they were sitting at their banquet, arrived at the place, and annexed it the day before they got there? I refer to the island of Perim, at the entrance of the Red Sea. Did the British Government not approve of that?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It was not done by a colony.

Mr. NORTON: It was done by a lesser authority than the Governor of a colony.

Mr. FOXTON: It was done by an Imperial officer.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: So was New Guinea by Mr. Chester. New Zealand was annexed by the authority of the Governor of New South Wales.

Mr. NORTON: Yes, and when Sydney was a very small place indeed. It is a mere quibble, sir. The hon. gentlemen want to get out of the coldness they displayed on that occasion, and the result of their coldness, by raising the constitutional question. At the time when it was decided by the Government of Sir Thomas Mellwraith to annex New Guinea, there were very strong reasons for believing that another power intended to annex it, and those reasons were borne out by subsequent events. That is all I have to say on the subject. As to the annexation of the New Hebrides, it was never urged by this side of the House that the New Hebrides should be annexed by the British Government. Members on this side of the House recognise the fact—at least some of them do, those whom I have heard speak on the subject—that neither England nor France, under the treaty between those two Powers, has any right whatever to annex the New Hebrides. England has no more right than France. She has just such right as France had to annex Raiatea. It was under protest from England that France was allowed to remain there in spite of treaty rights, England not enforcing the removal of the French flag from that island. With regard to the Land Act of 1884, I wish to make some remarks respecting it. The hon. the Colonial Treasurer said that this side of the House ought to have taken care to help the Government to improve that Bill, and weed out what we considered its defects. Now, sir, let me remind the hon. member of what fell from his colleague, the Minister for Lands. Does he remember how that hon. gentleman—in his speech on the second reading of the Bill, I believe—said that every amendment proposed by members of this side of the House would be received with the greatest suspicion? Does he remember that? I remember it, and every member on this side of

the House remembers it; and we remember also that every amendment of any importance proposed by us was rejected.

The PREMIER: Because they were all bad.

Mr. NORTON: Because they were all bad? No, but because they were not in accordance with the views of the gentlemen who sat on that side of the House, and now they wish to shirk the responsibility.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. NORTON: I am glad the Premier says that, because his colleague, the Colonial Treasurer, was blaming this side of the House for not making the Act better. At any rate, I am glad the Premier takes the responsibility. I must remind the Colonial Treasurer of another matter. When we did succeed in getting amendments, in accordance with our views, they were put through a member of the House who sat on the Government side, and that is the only way in which they were done. I will remind hon. gentlemen of one important event, at any rate, which I called attention to on the second reading of the Bill. I was the second member on this side of the House who spoke on the second reading, and I would remind hon. members now, who are so anxious to claim that selectors can purchase land under this Act, that the homestead clauses, such as they are—very bad ones—were omitted altogether from the Bill—that the original Bill contained no power to enable selectors to purchase land under the homestead clauses, as they were called; and in speaking on the second reading I pointed out the omission. The homestead selectors had been spoken of in the most disparaging way by the Minister, and when the omission was referred to there was a round of applause from every member who supported the Government. It was because their own side of the House insisted upon the homestead clauses being inserted in the Bill that they were put in at all.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That was our opinion in the first place. I myself referred to it.

Mr. NORTON: Then why did the hon. the Minister for Lands speak in the tone he did when the homestead selectors were referred to? So far as he was concerned, everything was intentional. Did he not quote from a report made by Commissioner Hume to show that the great bulk of the homestead selections were taken up by dummies? We have not forgotten those facts, and it is no use the Treasurer trying to get out of the false position in which he then placed himself in the way he is now trying. Then, with regard to the financial effects which followed, what was said from the Government side of the House as to the financial loss which must ensue upon the passing of that Act until the facts were brought forward by my hon. friend Mr. Macrossan? And what was the action of the Colonial Treasurer when Mr. Macrossan took the figures supplied to him from the Treasurer's own department to show beyond a shadow of a doubt that there must be a financial loss year after year; what was the Treasurer's action then? He took his time to think it over, and came here, I think in the following week, and contended that my hon. friend's statements were all incorrect. After that the hon. member for Townsville took the hon. gentleman's own figures and proved that the statement he made in the first instance was not incorrect, and it was not until after that hon. gentleman had again spoken and proved he was right, that the Treasurer spoke about the possibility of having to float Treasury bills in case of a deficiency in revenue. Then it was he spoke, and not until then.

I do not believe that one member of the Government took into consideration the financial results which would follow. As soon as that Bill was passed, all they looked to was the fact that they were going to extract from the "Colorado beetles"—as my hon. friend, the Minister for Works, called the squatters—and from the selectors a very high rent, thinking that if they got so much more rent for the country there would be a splendid revenue coming in. They never took into consideration for one moment what they were losing until my hon. friend pointed it out, and as to the question of settlement against the question of revenue, the hon. gentleman certainly did speak of the settlement which was to take place. We have waited a long while for that settlement, and we know perfectly well that out of the selections taken up a great number have been taken up by gentlemen who held selections or freeholds under previous Acts. We know that; so that the selections which have been taken up under the Act of 1884 do not represent the settlement which has taken place. But it is useless to contend that the hon. gentleman made that the first reason for passing the Act, until driven to admit that as a revenue Act it must result in a loss for some years. Then, when it was proved that the Treasury must sustain a serious loss, the Government began to say that their chief object was to settle people upon the land. As to the objection to the land being sold, I do not like to say what I think. More town and suburban land has been sold under this Act in the one year just passed than has ever been sold in any year before. The hon. gentleman knows that sales have been forced wherever they could be forced.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Not to anything like the extent that your Government did.

Mr. NORTON: The Government of which I was for a short time a member never did force sales of town land. When they did force sales of country land, what was the reason? Because the Government of which the hon. Treasurer was a member, when they went out of office, left the affairs of the colony in such a deplorable condition that the Government which followed them scarcely knew what to do to find revenue to meet the actual requirements.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: What about the £40,000 received for pre-emptives in one month?

Mr. NORTON: I will tell the hon. gentleman more about that directly. The late Government and every previous Government acknowledged that Crown lessees had a pre-emptive right, and, believing that they had that right, they allowed them to exercise it. I think that is a sufficient answer. There is one more thing I will say with regard to those pre-emptives, and with regard to the whole of the country lands sold by the late Government. I say that the whole of the money received from the sale of country lands during the whole time that the late Government were in office was afterwards, partly before and partly after they left office—and in fact a greater sum than they had received—appropriated for reproductive works. Does the hon. gentleman forget that? Does he forget that before the late Government left office a large sum of money was appropriated, under special appropriation—and that when they left office there was a balance left by the late Government? Nobody else forgets it. I am ashamed to listen to the hon. gentleman when he talks such claptrap as he did this afternoon. Nobody who looks at the figures can be deceived for one moment by the hon. gentleman's statement. I have now to approach

another subject, which I do with exceeding regret, and that is the hon. gentleman's reference to the action of the late Government with regard to the money which was supposed to have been accumulated from land sold under the Railway Reserves Act. I am really sorry that the hon. gentleman has brought that forward.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is to be deplored.

Mr. NORTON: Yes; but the reason is much more to be deplored. Who spent the money? Does the hon. gentleman not know that he was Treasurer when the money was spent, and it had gone before the late Government came into power?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It was left in the Treasury.

Mr. NORTON: It was taken by those hon. gentlemen and spent by them. There was a deficit in the public account representing more than that sum, and in order to legalise the illegal action of the previous Government, that Act was passed by the late Government.

The PREMIER: Read up your history.

Mr. NORTON: I have done so, and know every word is true, and the hon. gentleman knows it too. There is no use trying to get away from it. He will quibble as a lawyer can quibble, and as he can quibble, and say that the particular sum which was received for those particular lands was not used. I do not care how he puts it. The whole of the money that was derived from the sale of those lands was spent, over and above the revenue the former Government had received. In order to make up that deficit, an Act was passed by the late Government to legalise the illegal action their predecessors had already taken. Now, that is why I regret the hon. member brought this matter forward. I think that he, being one of those who consented to that money being spent illegally, ought to be the very last to bring a charge against the late Government of having balanced accounts by passing that Act and by issuing Treasury bills. Now, I have to speak again with regard to that loan; I think that is all I have to say. In defence of the action that the Treasurer has taken, he refers to what took place at the time the late Government proposed to float a loan in 1879. He referred to the Auditor-General's report in connection with that subject, and I think, as he attaches so much importance to the Auditor-General's advice, he ought to have been more particular to accept the advice given in the preliminary report of 1884. The hon. gentleman is very ready to bring forward the Auditor-General's statement when it suits him, but when it does not suit him he is very much inclined to let it pass unnoticed. In 1879 the position was this: The Government of the day intended to float a loan, and before floating it the arrangement which they came to was, that interest should not accrue till the 1st June or January subsequent to the floating of the loan. That was the action that they took, and the Auditor-General's suggestion was that interest should accrue from the day on which the sale was made. Well, the Government did not accept the suggestion, neither did they accept the further suggestion which the hon. gentleman has just read from the report. Therefore I think he should do them the justice of saying that they were perfectly clear in what they did, although they differed from the recommendation of the Auditor-General.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is not perfectly clear that the price of the loan was not affected by it.

Mr. NORTON: It is not perfectly clear that the price of the loan was affected, but it is perfectly clear that the price of the loan was affected by the maladministration of the previous Government; that is abundantly proved. If the hon. gentleman had left a surplus in the Treasury when he went out of office, then the loan would have been very much benefited. Indeed, I do not know how it can be expected that if you sell debentures now, which are not to bear interest until January, that they will bring the same price as if they were to bear interest from last July; I fail to see in what particulars the two transactions are similar. The floating of the loan which has taken place lately is on this condition: that liability attaches to the debentures from the 1st last January. There was not the same liability attaching to the others when they were floated; but in this case there was a liability, and that liability is included in every Treasurer's statement I have hitherto seen—included in the accounts due for the payment of interest on loans. Now, this money was not included, and I do not care what excuses the hon. gentleman makes. In doing so it is he who has to bear the responsibility of it, and not the Auditor-General. Is it not an absurd thing? I do not care to be guided by any Auditor-General; and I say it is absurd that interest on debentures should be charged as the cost of floating them. Why, it is paying interest out of loan. The proceeds of the debentures are the proceeds of the loan, and it has a right to be debited to loan money and accounted for properly, as it always is accounted for. So far as the statement of the hon. gentleman goes, that all the charges he knew of before the end of July were included in the Treasury returns, I say he knew perfectly well that that £30,000 interest was payable on the 1st July, and it did not matter whether the debentures were paid for by instalments—it did not matter whether they were paid in a lump sum or whether not a shilling was paid for twelve months—the liability for interest accrued from the 1st of last January. I will call the Colonial Treasurer's attention once more to the quotation I made from the Auditor-General's report in 1884, in which he stated that the object of leaving that supplementary appropriation money in the current revenue was "with a view to be enabled to temporarily exhibit a larger revenue balance than would have appeared if the ordinary course had been followed." Now, I do not believe that there is an hon. member on this side of the House who did not believe that the reason that money was not taken out of the consolidated revenue and put to a special fund, was the one object of concealing the actual state of accounts at the end of the year. All the time the hon. gentleman has been in office before, and the whole time the previous Liberal Government were in office, in almost every year the expenditure was in excess of the revenue. In the case of the previous Liberal Government it was exactly the same. They came in, and from the time they came in, every year until they went out of office, the revenue was less than the actual expenditure. Well, what was the consequence? As soon as they went out of office the Palmer Ministry came in, and from the time they came in the finances began to improve, and when they went out there was a large surplus in the Treasury.

The PREMIER: We are sick of that.

Mr. NORTON: No doubt the hon. gentleman is sick of it; and because he is so very sick of it I like to rub in the salt. Of course, it is "Boney" again. Well, now, the Palmer Ministry went out leaving a large surplus in the Treasury; the Ministry of which the present

Colonial Treasurer was Treasurer came in, squandered the surplus, and left a very large deficit, which had to be made up by the transfer of the railway money. That is the whole thing. From the time they went out of office the finances began to improve again until the McIlwraith Government went out, leaving a larger surplus than there had ever been before. Now, it is perfectly amazing that the hon. gentleman who has so grossly mismanaged the affairs of the Treasury should defend himself as he has done to-night. Why, who believes that that supplementary appropriation has not been put to a trust account except for the purpose of hiding the real facts? There is no previous record of any money being allowed to remain in the consolidated revenue account which has been appropriated, and in view of the Auditor-General's statement that the object of not placing these votes to a special account was to conceal the state of accounts, can we for a moment doubt that the object of omitting that £30,000 interest from the accounts was exactly the same? Of course, whatever the object may have been, no one who knows the state of the public accounts would believe that there was actually a surplus of £45,000. The Treasurer has admitted that if these supplementary votes, or the balance of them, had been placed, as hitherto, to special account, instead of a surplus of £45,000, there would be a deficit of more than £100,000. Add to that the £30,000 for interest, and he gets the same figures that I gave on Tuesday night to show what the deficit was. I really regret that the hon. gentleman has taken a course which will have the effect of bringing discredit on the colony. I did not make one remark intended to cast a doubt on the soundness of the finances of the colony. What I did say was, "What about the soundness of the public accounts?" The public accounts are not sound. They are kept in such a way as to conceal the truth, and will have the effect of misleading people who ought to be made acquainted with the actual facts. The Governor's Speech spoke of the high state of the credit of the colony at home; but how will it stand when financiers who understand these matters look at the accounts and find that there has been misrepresentation amounting to nearly £200,000? That is where the hon. gentleman does wrong both to himself and to the colony; and I deeply regret that it falls to my lot, the first time I have had to take a prominent part in the criticism of the policy of the Government, to criticise in so unfavourable a manner the action of a gentleman whom I hold in such high regard as the Colonial Treasurer. I shall say no more now.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Hear, hear!

Mr. NORTON: I think that if the hon. member for Cook had not occupied so much time yesterday in a long tirade, the business before the House would have been completed before now, and when I confine my remarks to matters of public business I object to being interrupted by a gentleman who wastes time in bringing forward matters affecting only private persons or private companies.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have been a member of this House for fourteen years. I have heard debates on the Address in Reply more than fourteen times, and I have some experience of parliamentary practice in this and in other Parliaments, but I never before this session have seen what we have seen this evening—that is, a gentleman occupying the honourable position of leader of the Opposition endeavouring to subvert the laws of debate altogether; after the debate has closed, claiming for himself the right

of making a second speech; at the close of the debate making a speech which it was his duty to have made at the beginning, and which, I suppose, he did make at the beginning, for he made a speech on Tuesday evening which was intended to open the debate; and at the close he actually puts up one of his own supporters to move the adjournment of the debate, so that, under cover of the forms of the House, he may have the last word. I did not rise for the purpose of answering the hon. member. I decline to follow his example. His only excuse is his inexperience, for he has been guilty of a most unpardonable breach of parliamentary politeness and propriety. I say his only excuse is inexperience. Under those circumstances I decline to answer the hon. member. If this sort of thing were to be allowed a debate would never terminate. The hon. member originates a debate, and when it is about to close he thinks he would like to begin again. In the same way I might follow him, the hon. member for Townsville might follow me, and somebody else might follow him, and the debate might go on for ever. That is not the way parliamentary debates are usually conducted; and I trust that after the hon. gentleman has had longer experience he will see that the fashion followed for so many years in so many places is the one which should still be followed, and that there is little use in saying over and over again the same thing. So far from gathering weight from repetition arguments lose weight. I have no more to say except that I hope the motion for the adjournment of the debate will be negatived before any more speeches are made on the main question.

Mr. GRIMES said: Mr. Speaker,—In speaking to the motion for the adjournment of the debate, I wish to say that I intended to have said something the same as the Premier. I wish to protest against the irregular way in which the hon. member has taken advantage of the Standing Orders. I have been patiently waiting from the commencement of the debate to give utterance to a few thoughts that occurred to me, and I am now prevented from doing so. It was arranged that this debate should close to-night, and had the hon. member been content with the very long speech which he made during the course of the debate I should have had time to say what I intended to say. Those who have not spoken have reason to complain of the leader of the Opposition. He certainly has not set a good example, and if it is to be followed up it will not lead to the despatch of the business of this House.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not intend to take part in this debate, but one or two questions have been brought prominently forward on which I have opinions, and on these I wish to make a very few remarks. The Land Act appears to be likely to prove a bone of contention during this session. I am ready to advocate any amendment that progress and experience may show to be necessary. But are the people so far behind the spirit of the times, or are the Government so far in advance of public opinion, as to retrogress in the lines indicated by the hon. member for Darling Downs? When the Land Act became law I formed a very strong opinion of it, and that opinion has been strengthened greatly by the efforts made by the hon. members opposite to throw it into discredit and get the public to condemn it. With all their ability they are unable to find any fault in the Act to hold up for public condemnation, and so they conjure up something of their own and hold it up to the public, saying, "This is the Land Act, with all its errors," but they have never

held up the Land Act to the public gaze yet. Allusion has been made to the meetings in the West, and those poor men will have to thank their friend the hon. member for Townsville for making it impossible for the Government, in my estimation, to grant what they request. That hon. gentleman in his speech enlarged on the evils of compensation to the squatters, and public opinion of the party supporting the Opposition I have found to be guided almost entirely by that hon. gentleman.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Nonsense! I wish it was so.

Mr. WHITE: I have never failed since that Act became law, when I have heard either friend or foe, stranger or acquaintance, speak disparagingly of it, to give them a challenge. When I would put it to them, "What is wrong in the Bill?" I found, without exception, that the first objection made was that "It is not a poor man's Bill." I would root them out of that hold-fast, and the next position they would take up would be, "That it is a squatters' Bill"; and then they would refer to the fact that because of the compensation to be granted to the squatters the land would never be got back from them—that they would improve the land beyond the reach of anyone to get it again, and it would be simply giving half the land over to the squatters. That was their contention. We might easily leave the question to be decided between the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Cook. I would like to hear how the hon. member for Townsville would face that question when it came to be debated. With regard to this agitation in the North, I feel very much like the hon. member for Rosewood in respect to it. I know the fine quality of that northern country, and I feel very anxious that nothing should open the door for its exploitation any further than it has gone. There is a great amount of splendid land yet unalienated there, and there are capitalists I am aware of thirsting to get a chance at it. Previous to this separation cry, when the planters had lost all hope of inducing the Government to grant coloured labour, the bank managers laid their heads together, and said, "Our only hope is in separation; but we have no chance to get separation unless we produce depression by lowering the wages of the white men, and by discharging as many of them as possible and blame the Government for it." The fates were with them in the fall in the price of sugar, and they succeeded in getting a depression in a way they did not bargain for. They then hired an agitator to arouse the North to a sense of their real and imaginary grievances, and also to the imaginary benefits that would accrue from separation. Who can wonder at the hon. member for Mackay throwing his whole heart and soul into the movement? As an admirer of that hon. gentleman's ability, I sympathise with him in sitting over on that cold side of the House, without any hope of getting back to this cosy side of the House. If a new Parliament is required for the North, he and some of his colleagues are Ministers ready-made for the purpose. But are the people in the North prepared to protect the interests of a new colony? I say emphatically, "No." Apart from the large landowners who are principally non-resident, the small holders have no importance, few of them being rooted to the soil, and the great bulk of the population being a floating one. It is composed, I may say, of three classes of people—the traders, the miners, and the wage-earners. The traders are not so anxious about the future of the colony as about their own immediate gains. The miners are striving to strike a patch, when they mean to clear out, and if they do not strike it they will

go for fresh fields and pastures new. And the wage-earners are ready for anything that may promise them better wages. I grant that there are many men who possess an intelligent knowledge of their responsibility in all these classes of men; but there is another view to take of this question. The party that has been pushing this movement is the present Opposition party, and we know from our experience of the last general election how unscrupulous members of that party are in the means they employ to accomplish their purpose, believing, as they do, that the end justifies the means. Is it any wonder that we question the names on that great list they blow so much about? I was in conversation with a commercial traveller, who said: "It is of no account—that petition. I signed it in every town in the North. I was obliged to do it. I was bailed up in the street in Townsville by a man, with a bundle of papers under his arm and a separation band round his hat, who went on most volubly to declare his great success as a canvasser when in his past experience he had been employed in that way. He seemed to be determined to talk me out of my signature. A shopkeeper came out and said, 'Come in, and I will sign.' I believed that to be a ruse to draw me on, and as they went in I got an opportunity to go my own way, pretty sure that the shopkeeper had signed before that." Well, sir, suppose that separation is obtained, what would be the probable result? The Opposition party will go into power; one of their first Acts will be a Land Act to meet the wishes of the land monopolists; they will see a general scramble for the fine lands in the North, and then in view of the evils of land monopoly in all the colonies, and in view of the misery and revolutions that have taken place in the old countries of the world through land monopoly, and in the face of the democratic wave that is passing over the earth, the North will sink into historical degradation.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, it was ordered that the Speech of His Excellency the Administrator of the Government be taken into consideration at the next meeting of the House.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: I intend, sir, to take this, the first opportunity I have had since the House opened, to make a statement concerning my personal integrity. I think every member of this House is concerned in the honour and integrity of every other hon. member of the House, more especially when that other member has been a Minister of the Crown. I shall not detain the House any longer than I can help, as I know some hon. gentlemen want to get away; nevertheless, I must at the same time leave nothing unsaid that I think ought to be said. You, sir, know that, a few months ago, during the recess, a trial took place in the Supreme Court—*McSharry v. O'Rourke*—over which the Chief Justice presided. It was a case between two men who were formerly partners as railway contractors. My name was mentioned once during the trial, and in delivering his judgment the Chief Justice mentioned it again in a manner which I considered derogatory to me, and unfair at the same time. I was absent from the colony when the trial took place; but I had returned before the judgment was delivered, and I waited some time in Brisbane thinking it would be delivered. But I had important business in the North, and the judgment was delivered during the time I was in the Townsville district. I returned immediately I saw by the

papers that the judgment had been delivered, and I arrived in Brisbane on the morning of the 30th of April. On the same day I wrote a letter to the Chief Justice through the editor of the *Brisbane Courier*, sending with it a letter addressed to the editor himself. That letter I wrote to the Chief Justice I think it my duty to read to the House, and after I have read it I shall make what comments on it I think necessary. My friend, the hon. member for Port Curtis, reminds me that I should state the reason why the letter did not appear. I am not at liberty—in fact, I have not asked permission—to read the letter which I got from the managing proprietor of the *Courier*, returning my manuscript; but I may state that in a conversation with me afterwards that gentleman told me that he had refused publication to the letter for fear of the consequences, as I had accused the Chief Justice of malice. My answer was that I could not do anything else than accuse him of malice; for I could not accuse him of want of ability, and I must do one or the other. I know there is no want of ability about the Chief Justice, therefore I could not alter the letter in any respect so as not to accuse the Chief Justice of malice. That is the reason it did not appear. The editor and proprietor were afraid of the consequences, though I told them distinctly that as my name was attached to the letter, and I was prepared to take any consequences, I thought that was sufficient warrant. Still, with a very unwholesome dread, as I think, of the power of the Judges, as is sometimes shown in Brisbane, the Editor refused to publish the letter. This is the letter:—

“*Per facour of the Editor of the Brisbane Courier.*”

“To Sir Charles Lillie, Knight,

“Chief Justice of Queensland.

“Sir,—Having just returned from the North, I take the earliest opportunity of challenging certain statements made by you about me during the hearing and in the judgment delivered by you in the case of *McSharry v. O'Rourke*, which was tried before you in the Supreme Court without a jury.

“The report of the trial in the *Courier* of the 1st of April, which I presume to be correct, contains a portion of Mr. Real's address to the Bench after the evidence of all the witnesses had been heard. Mr. Real was counsel for the plaintiff. The following conversation in reference to the over-returns of work took place:—

“‘Mr. Real: They found that one man deliberately made false over-returns—it was admitted on all hands that the ballast was over-returned—and that man was taken into partnership with Mr. O'Rourke in the next section. He alluded to Mackenzie. He was the man who made deliberate false over-returns.’

“‘His Honour: They seem to have carried off Government officials on both sides. One side carried off the Minister for Works (Mr. Macrossan), and the other carried off the engineer.’

“‘Mr. Real: Yes; but the two cases are not analogous. The Minister for Works had nothing to do with giving over-returns or making false certificates.’

“‘The Chief Justice: So far as the Minister for Works is concerned, we don't know what he did.’

“‘Mr. Real: He went into partnership with the other partner, who knew nothing of this.’

“‘The Chief Justice: He seems to have been a partner in a very profitable contract in another colony.’

“‘Mr. Real: You cannot draw the inference from that that you would in the other case, where it is clear a Government official who had been deliberately making over-returns was taken into partnership with the man who was benefiting by them.’

“‘His Honour: If I draw any inference, I draw it from the facts. If I am to come to the conclusion that O'Rourke was cognisant of these over-returns, and that therefore there was collusion, what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. In saying this I am not imputing anything to either gentleman.’

“In that statement you place the Minister for Works, against whom there was not a particle of evidence to connect him with the transaction under discussion, on the same level as the officer who knowingly made the over-returns.

“There can be no question as to the accusation contained in Mr. Real's remarks about Mr. Mackenzie, and there can be as little question as to the insinuations contained in yours about the Minister, of whose actions you admitted yourself to be ignorant. Further on I will make a proposal to you, which, if you are honest enough to accept, you will not be able to plead ignorance on that point again.

“I now come to the day on which you delivered judgment in the case, and I find the same uncalled-for, groundless imputations so often repeated on every occasion on which you saw fit to drag my name into your deliverance that I am inclined to believe that you forgot you were sitting on the judicial bench, and imagined yourself by some hallucination of the brain to be in one of the moods of your earlier days, addressing Mr. Speaker under the influence of some great political or other excitement. Mr. McSharry and Mr. O'Rourke were so contradictory and confused in their evidence that I could not reasonably be bound by anything which passed between them, or between them and others. You certainly say you had no ‘intention to judge persons who have had no opportunity of being heard.’ These, however, were mere words which the shallowest intellect can see were only hypocritical homage which vice pays to virtue. Your judgment of me went on just the same. I had two separate and distinct offers of partnership made me by Mr. McSharry—the first in relation to Queensland contracts which I distinctly refused; the second, in relation to the contracts in New South Wales, which, after some consideration, I accepted, and for which I paid the sum mentioned in the deed of partnership, and not the amount which you assume to have been paid. I believed then it was full market value for such a concern, but from experience I know it was more than value. The second offer was made about two months before I resigned office.

“A period of several months elapsed between the two offers, but during the whole of that time there was no negotiation or communication passed between me and Mr. McSharry on the subject. I simply refused the first offer, and there was an end of it. Your statement, therefore, about ‘dangling a valuable partnership in the eyes of the Minister for Works,’ and so forth, is defamatory and without foundation. Members of Parliament and of the legal profession sometimes forget themselves, and turn the privilege of speech which they possess into license; but fortunately it is an unknown thing in modern times for a gentleman occupying such an exalted position as you occupy to go so far out of his way as you have done to take advantage of his privilege to defame an absent man unheard, especially when it was in no way necessary to the elucidation of the facts of the case being tried. Roscoe, *nisi prius*, fourteenth edition, p. 502, *Scott v. Stansfield*, on privileged communications in regard to libels, says: ‘There is absolute privilege where the words are spoken in the course of a legal proceeding. Thus words used by a Judge of a Court of Record, in his judicial capacity, are not actionable, although they were irrelevant to the matter before him, and were uttered maliciously and not *bonâ fide*.’ Now, sir, although I believe your words were irrelevant and malicious, yet I have no remedy.”

That is the part the editor took exception to.

“When you uttered them you knew I had no remedy. Did that knowledge inspire your courage? I cannot enter your court and challenge you to the proof of your statements. Neither have I any wish to use my privilege in Parliament to defend myself or attack you, vulnerable as you are; but I invite you to come from behind the shelter of the bench and make a fairly actionable statement, when I promise you will soon have an opportunity of knowing ‘what the Minister for Works did.’ I will even assist you by asking the present Premier and Minister for Works to place the records of the Works Office at your disposal—a request I am sure they will not refuse for the purpose of screening a political opponent.

“I have the honour to be, Sir,

“Yours, &c.,

“JOHN M. MACROSSAN.

“Brisbane, 30th April, 1886.”

Now, sir, that letter was written by me with the express intention of avoiding an explanation or reference to the matter in the House. I wished to have the matter tested in a court of justice, in the same place as the imputations and insinuations were made, and I thought that probably His Honour the Chief Justice might be induced, in the interest of truth and fair play, to do what

I challenge him to do in the latter part of the letter I have just read to the House—namely, to make a fairly actionable statement, and I would then sue him for libel. The action, as far as I am concerned, would not be with the intention of getting damages, but of vindicating myself without in any way bringing myself before Parliament. The letter, however, was not published. Therefore I am obliged on the present occasion to do what I had no intention of doing. And I am obliged also in the explanation to make statements which I should have been prepared to make in the court had I been able to do so. In the first place, this trial, as most hon. members are aware, was instituted by one of the partners, McSharry, against the other, because, when the partnership was dissolved, certain works which were supposed and understood by McSharry to have been done were not done; consequently when he took over the contract he had to do the work for which he had already paid his partner the full amount. Then there was a certain number of sleepers—I believe they amounted to some thousands; a certain quantity of ballast—some thousands of yards; and also a certain number of yards of earthwork done, which had been over-returned by Mr. Mackenzie, the inspector of material on the Central line under Mr. Ballard. McSharry knew nothing of this, of course, nor did his partner. If he did he would not have given so high a price for the contract. The very fact of his bringing the case afterwards into court to get reparation for the loss which he suffered was a proof that he did not know anything at all about it. The disadvantage is that the other partner knew nothing of it either. At any rate, the man Mackenzie, who made the over-returns, had actually left the Government service several months before any overture was made to me by McSharry to enter into the New South Wales contract. I believe he left about August or September—I think August—as I have ascertained since. Even supposing that the statement made by McSharry was correct, and he had made the proposition to me in October, even in that case there could be nothing gained by taking me into partnership with him to purchase the over-returns which were already made. Those over-returns were already made by Mr. Mackenzie, and he had left the Government service. But the fact is that no overture was made to me until the beginning of January; so a greater number of months elapsed between the event of that man leaving the Government service and McSharry asking me to join him, thus he could have had no object in asking me to be his partner in connection with these over-returns, even if he had known anything about them, which was not the case. In trying the question of his over-returns, it was not necessary that I should be brought into the case at all. As far as I can see, the bringing of me into the case was quite irrelevant, and I say so in this letter, because no witness said that I had any connection with the over-returns, nor could they say so. It is utterly impossible for a Minister to have any connection with anything of the kind, more especially in that case where the Acting Chief Engineer himself made oath that he knew nothing of it. The only person who could have known anything about the over-returns—that is, allowing that O'Rourke knew nothing about them—was Mackenzie. I may say that in all that was said concerning me by the Chief Justice there was no statement or charge made; it was simply an insinuation. He speaks of the dangling of the partnership, which he insinuates was a bribe for me to join McSharry. I consider that instead of McSharry bribing me, McSharry was favoured by me joining him,

because he got what I know, and what experts in railway contracts know, to be far too high a price for entering into a contract of the kind. Even although the Chief Justice says there were probable profits of £20,000, every man who knows anything about railway contracting knows the risks that railway contractors run—that a probable profit of £20,000 often turns out to be a positive loss of £10,000 or £20,000. To pay £3,500 to enter into a contract with a supposed profit of £20,000, and afterwards have to pay several thousands of pounds to purchase plant to carry on that contract, and then only to take the probable profit of £10,000—the half of the £20,000—is, I think, too high a price. But there is another point. The Chief Justice says:—

“It is hardly in human nature to believe that the plaintiff did not expect some advantage from the Minister for Works, before whose eyes he kept the prospect of a splendid partnership dangling from October to January.”

I have already stated that there was no such dangling from October to January. McSharry made the mistake of confounding the two offers. He alludes to the offer he made of Queensland contracts, which I refused to have anything to do with, for the reason that I should have to resign my seat, and because they were contracts let by me. Those two reasons were enough to prevent my joining him. He makes no distinction between the two offers, and that is where the confusion comes in in his mind. He was also confused in his mind when he was asked what amount I paid. He quite forgot, and said £4,500; though the deed of partnership which was put into his hands immediately afterwards showed that he had made a mistake, and that it was £3,500. Strange to say, the judge and the counsel on both sides, including my hon. and learned friend the member for Bowen, were as inaccurate in their statements as he was in his. They spoke afterwards of £4,500 as being the half of £8,500. Any child knows that £3,500 is not the double of £4,500. The amount was £4,250, £3,500 of which I gave McSharry for going into the partnership, and the rest of the money he borrowed. There was no mistake about that, though the Chief Justice tries to make a point about it as something strange that the sum I gave McSharry was exactly the same sum that he gave his partner. But it was not. The sum he gave his partner for half of the amount agreed on was £4,250, out of which I gave him £3,500 for my share of the contract. But the point which the Chief Justice makes is that this was dangled in my eyes, and that McSharry expected some profit. He said it was not in human nature not to expect some advantage from it. I do not believe he could expect any advantage, for this reason: When he proposed to me to join him in the New South Wales contract, I said, “Yes, but I must resign my position as Minister for Works”; so that if he expected any advantage he knew I was actually leaving the place where I could be of any advantage to him, if I wished to be of any advantage to him. He knew, and the Chief Justice could have known if he had asked McSharry the question; and I think, being in the place of a jury as well as judge, which he was in that particular case, he should have taken the trouble to have asked a few more questions than it seems he did. I hope I make myself plain, that when I agreed to join McSharry in the New South Wales contract I gave him to understand at once that I would resign my position, therefore he could expect no advantage from my joining him further than the advantage that he would get by taking a good partner—no more advantage than that. Then he went away

north to look after his other contracts, and from that until three weeks after I resigned I did not see him again, and had never had any communication with him. I knew he was up north doing his own business, and I never saw him afterwards until the beginning of April; I resigned some time early in March, about the 12th or 13th, so that there could be no advantage taken on either side. Of course the Chief Justice's insinuation is that the transaction was in the form of a bribe. Now, the man bribing must expect something, and the man who is bribed must have something to give in return. Well, as I have stated, McSharry could expect nothing from me, as I was leaving office. I had nothing to give him, as I was leaving office—that is, had there been any intention of wrong on either side. It has been said that I should have resigned immediately, but before coming to that point I must make another correction of a statement of the counsel on the plaintiff's side, which seemed to have been taken for granted. Mr. Real, as I have said in this letter, makes the insinuation that Mackenzie, the man who made the over-returns, joined O'Rourke in partnership immediately after he had done so. He did nothing of the sort. He left the Government service and went into that of some other firm—I think, Fraser and McDonald—at any rate it was another firm on the Central line. He went into their service, and remained in it for a considerable time—over twelve months, I believe—before he and O'Rourke went into partnership. Therefore the insinuation of Mr. Real against Mackenzie falls to the ground, just as much as the insinuation made by the Chief Justice against myself. Mackenzie did not leave the Government service to enter into partnership with O'Rourke; he left to become an employé of Fraser and McDonald, and when his work was done, as I understand, he joined O'Rourke afterwards in some contract in the North. As to not resigning immediately in the beginning of January, when I told McSharry that I would join him in the New South Wales contract I told Sir Thomas McIlwraith that I was going to join him, and that I was going to resign my position. He said, "There is no need to resign to go into a contract in New South Wales." I said—"Yes. I know that there is no reason to resign my position; but remember McSharry has contracts in Queensland, and it is quite possible that at the same time if I remain in office some of these contracts might come before me in some form or other for adjudication, and then I probably would be suspected of unfairness—of unfair play; therefore it is better for me to resign my position as Minister for Works." He agreed with that, but said, "Take your own time; do not be in a hurry." Now, there is no law, either written or unwritten, which prevents a member of this House from being a contractor under the Government of another colony, and if there is no law for a member it is just the same with regard to a Minister. A Minister has no more disadvantages than a member of the House; but to prevent suspicion I resigned my position as Minister for Works, and held it only for the purpose of finishing the work in the office, and allowing Sir Thomas McIlwraith to make arrangements for my successor. But, as I said before, from the time I told McSharry I would join him and he went away north, I never saw him again until three weeks after I had resigned. I believe the fact of my holding my position has been challenged as being wrong, but I am not aware that it was in any way wrong. Had McSharry not been a contractor in Queensland I need not have resigned my

position as Minister for Works at all, but he being a contractor in Queensland, I thought it was better to do so; so did Sir Thomas McIlwraith, and I resigned. Now, it was no secret. Sir T. McIlwraith told all my colleagues that I was going to resign; I believe, with the exception of the hon. member for Bowen. I ascertained the other day that he had not been told, but all my other colleagues knew I was going to resign; so that there was no secret. I had conversations with them on the subject, and I knew they were of the same opinion as Sir Thomas McIlwraith. I must say a word about these over-returns. I do not know what action the Government has taken in the matter, any further than I believe Mr. Ballard was allowed to resign; but I must say this much before referring to the over-returns: that had I been in the least degree aware of the matters which came to my knowledge shortly before the trial took place here, of the relations existing between O'Rourke and McSharry and Ballard, I certainly should not have been his partner; and had I been aware of those relations I should have made a short shrift of Mr. Ballard. Now, about these over-returns, I merely say this, not in connection with myself, but rather to allay what I consider an honest distrust which exists, I believe, in the public mind. I do not think that Mackenzie, in making these over-returns, was actuated by dishonesty. One of the inspectors on that line—a young man named Donaldson, whom I know to be a thoroughly good and honest man—joined us in New South Wales a long time after I had joined Mr. McSharry. I have questioned him strictly as to Mackenzie's honesty and capacity for measuring, and his statement was this: He had often been with Mackenzie, and he always found him to be an extremely honest man in measuring—honest to the Government, and fair to the contractor—but he did not think he was of sufficient engineering ability to measure the earthworks on the Drummond Ranges. They are the most difficult earthworks to measure of any in Northern Queensland as yet. I have myself seen the earthworks; I suppose members of the present Government have seen them also, and they must admit they are most difficult to measure. He said he believed Mackenzie knew perfectly well what he was doing when he made the over-returns in ballast and sleepers; but he thought he could be hardly responsible for the over-returns in the earthworks, as he considered they were too difficult. Mackenzie's motive, I believe, was this: It is known to the Minister for Works and to hon. members that there is a large amount of money lying in the hands of the Government—what is called "retention money"—and contractors have always a large amount of plant on the ground for carrying on their work. I do not know how many thousands of pounds they might have had here, but I know that we have at least £18,000 of plant in New South Wales. Now, all that plant is actually the property of the Government if the contractor makes any default; and I believe that Mackenzie made the over-return to favour the firm simply with the intention of saving the interest on an overdraft. There would, perhaps, be £3,000 or £4,000 over-returns in ballast and sleepers, and that would be taken off the overdraft in the bank, and so the interest would be saved. I do not believe there was any further intention than that. I know it is an unusual thing for over-returns to be made, and it shows great laxity in supervision that they should have been made without the knowledge of the Chief Engineer. That is the worst part of it; they were made without the knowledge of the Chief Engineer. No

doubt the Chief Engineer believed greatly in Mackenzie, and never examined the certificates. So far as the return not being any proof of dishonesty, or any proof that the Government are likely to be defrauded, I may say that I know of one case in New South Wales which has happened to myself since I went there, where over £1,000 worth of over-returns have been taken off. The final measurement settles everything. It does not matter how accurately the measurements may have been made by the engineer or by the inspectors during the progress of the works, everything has to be measured over again, and measured accurately, and that final measurement rectifies any mistakes made before; and as it happened in this particular case, all the over-returns were taken off, and the Government lost nothing by it. I do not know whether I have made my position clear or not. I do not want to say any more than I have to say—only this, that I had no knowledge of over-returns; I could have no knowledge whatever of them. The only way in which a Minister can know it is by a conspiracy with the Chief Engineer. All the Minister's correspondence with the engineer for the central districts, whom he never sees, unless he goes up there, or the engineer comes to Brisbane, is done through the Commissioner; so that there would have to be three in the conspiracy, and there would have been others below the Chief Engineer again. Then, as to anything else, I do not think I need say anything. I think I have stated enough to show that there could have been no hope of any advantage by taking me into partnership with McSharry further than being his partner, and I had no advantage further than to make profits out of the contract. As to resigning my position as Minister for Works two months after having told him I was going to join him, I think that it is sufficiently clear that I was under no compulsion, further than moral rectitude required, to place myself beyond suspicion, to resign, and I did so. I have been a member of the House ever since, and had it been wrong I could not have remained in the House, because, as I said before, a Minister has no more and no less privilege than any private member. But as there was nothing wrong in the position of being a contractor under another Government, I remained a member, and I hope to remain one for a long time. I beg to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of allowing any members of the House to make any comments they think necessary, and if I have omitted anything I shall understand by those comments where the omission is.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have a few words to say with respect to the speech this hon. gentleman has just made. We all take very great interest in the honour of members of the House and I am sure that every hon. member who has heard his statement will have heard it with very great satisfaction. I think it has not been suggested that the hon. member has been mixed up in any contracts in this colony. He himself has laid his finger with accuracy upon the point which has given rise to doubt—that is, his being associated in partnership with a person who was himself engaged in contracts with the Government of Queensland. That position, his sense of right showed him, was inconsistent with his retaining office as a member of a Government who might have to deal directly with that person. I do not think the hon. gentleman need trouble himself about any suspicion that his personal honour is involved in the matter. He was bound to resign when he did, and I am glad he did so for that reason only. I think I ought to say, however, in respect to what I may call

his attack upon the Chief Justice, that he has scarcely done himself justice in what he said upon that subject.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I wrote the letter very hurriedly.

The PREMIER: As I listened to it I thought the hon. member had said some things in his letter which he would not have said if he had thought a little longer. With respect to the particulars of the case of McSharry and O'Rourke, I know very little. I was counsel for the defendant, but when I was in court on the first day, and heard from the opening speech by the plaintiff's counsel that he intended to establish the fact that officers of the Government had been systematically defrauding the Government, I saw it was quite possible that disclosures in that case would necessitate some action being taken by the Government, and I immediately withdrew from the case, and I did not read the evidence published, except such as was brought under my notice afterwards with respect to Mr. Ballard; so that I do not know any details of the case, except as the hon. member has stated them. But this is where I think the hon. gentleman has done the learned judge an injustice: The hon. gentleman knows the facts to which he was a party with perfect accuracy; but the Chief Justice only knew those facts as they were disclosed in the evidence, and it appears from what the hon. member has said that in many particulars the witnesses made mistakes, especially with regard to the time the negotiations began between the hon. member for Townsville and Mr. McSharry. The hon. member himself was not examined, and I regret that he was not examined as a witness. It would have been a very good thing if he had been, because some of the witnesses may have made mistakes with respect to him. The matter of the hon. member's connection with McSharry had very little to do with the case, so that very likely no particular attention was paid to it by the counsel. The dispute did not refer to the hon. member for Townsville, and the evidence relating to him might not have been quite correct. Again, I think, the hon. gentleman has done the learned judge an injustice, and that is in respect to what he said when he challenged him to make a statement outside the court, upon which he could found an action for libel. The hon. member, upon consideration, will see that it such a thing is impossible. A judge sitting on the judgment seat is obliged to deal with the evidence that comes before him. It may be quite inaccurate so far as it relates to persons who are not there, but he can only act upon the evidence. In order to make his judgment intelligible it may be necessary to reflect upon an absent man, but that is done merely so far as it is absolutely necessary to make the judgment intelligible. I do not think that the hon. member has any just ground for complaint, although I can quite understand a man, affected by a judge's remarks, smarting very much under them, and feeling that he has been unjustly dealt with. At the same time he should put himself in the position of the learned judge, who has to view things as they present themselves to him, and then he will see there is another side to the question. I do not see any ground that the hon. gentleman has for charging the learned judge with malice. As I said, I did not read the evidence, but I read the judgment, and I think the hon. gentleman has nothing to complain of. I do not think his reputation is hurt at all. But I speak as a member of the public. People said it was a curious thing, and so it was, that in this case there should have been such a course of imprope

transactions between the two partners and Mr. Ballard, the Chief Engineer, and that in the same case one of the partners should have gone into partnership with the gentleman who was Minister for Works. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying I have always believed that there was no connection whatever between the two things. But it was because of the two things happening to occur in the same case that people talked about them. I think the hon. member may be quite happy so far as his reputation is concerned. I am glad he has taken the opportunity to explain the matter in the House. I have listened to him with great pleasure, and I think that he may be quite at ease as to his reputation, and he may also be sure that no attack was intended to be made upon him from the bench.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker.—I regret, what I think every member of this House must regret, that this very painful question should come before us at all. I regret that the hon. gentleman who has brought the matter forward should have felt it incumbent upon himself in defence of his own honour to make such an explanation, and I rise for the purpose of bearing out part of the statement made by the hon. gentleman, because I think it is well that although the Premier has taken such a proper part in what he has said, yet for the satisfaction of some other people the statement should be borne out with regard to the hon. gentleman resigning office. About Christmas time in 1882 I was in Sydney. I received a telegram from Sir T. McIlwraith saying he was coming to Sydney, and asking me to meet him. When he arrived I called upon him, and he told me the object of his telegraphing for me was that Mr. Macrossan had determined to resign, because he had entered into a partnership with a gentleman who had a contract in New South Wales, and who at the same time was a contractor to the Queensland Government. At that interview Sir Thomas McIlwraith informed me that the matter was known to all, or nearly all, his colleagues. With regard to the hon. gentleman's action in bringing this matter before the House, I can only say that he discussed it with me on several occasions before he decided to do so. He had the greatest repugnance to bringing it before Parliament at all, and he said that if there was any other way he could find of justifying himself in the eyes of the public, he would very gladly do that rather than bring a matter of that kind before Parliament. He told me also the result of his having sent a letter to the Press—namely, that he could not get it published, and, in fact, he could not in any way defend himself, except either by sending a letter to some newspaper in one of the other colonies or by taking the course he has taken. I know the matter concerned him very deeply, and I think it desirable that, so far as I can, I ought to bear out what the hon. gentleman has informed us of to-night. At the same time I would point out that it is not altogether the opinions which might be formed here by people who have heard the trial that the hon. gentleman should care for, but papers in the other colonies who had seen the report of the trial were commenting in a most unpleasant manner on the hon. gentleman's conduct—not commenting merely on the statements made at the trial, but making very gross insinuations indeed as to the hon. gentleman's connection with McSharry. One of these references I happened to see myself, when the hon. gentleman was in Townsville. As soon as he returned I pointed it out to him, and that, I daresay, was one of the reasons why he wrote the letter to the Chief Justice. I think a man, no matter what position he holds or what privilege he may have, should be most guarded

in making any reference to a gentleman who occupies the position of the learned Chief Justice. It is a very dangerous thing to give a privilege to anybody to refer to the actions, while on the bench, of a gentleman occupying such a position; but at the same time there is no doubt that if a judge in whom we had no confidence happened to be on the bench, whatever he might do or whatever he might say, however malignantly, against any individual, that individual would have no opportunity of defending himself in any way whatever. Now, I think, in regard to this case, those who feel any disposition to blame the hon. member for Townsville for having spoken so very strongly to the Chief Justice should place themselves in his position. He had to bear for weeks the imputation which has been made against him by people who had read that judgment, who had formed their own conclusions, and who had misconstrued the intention of the learned Chief Justice. I believe the Chief Justice would be the last man in the country willing to say anything whatever in his position as a judge which would have the effect of doing harm to any private individual. I only refer to this matter to point out the very unpleasant position in which the hon. member for Townsville felt he was placed, and to ask those who feel any disposition to think he has acted at all hastily to try and place themselves in his position and see how they would feel under the circumstances.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said: I am sure it is a matter for extreme gratification to every member of this House to have heard the explanation made by the hon. member for Townsville to establish his own integrity—an explanation which, I am sure, was quite unnecessary to many persons. It has struck me, however, that there was one serious blemish in the hon. gentleman's very satisfactory explanation to-night, and that is that he reproduced in this House the letter which he wrote in haste with the desire of having it inserted in the *Courier*, but which was very properly refused insertion in its columns. The hon. gentleman spoiled his case by introducing into the explanation he has given to-night the letter which he wrote then. I think it was not necessary, in order to the thorough establishment of his full integrity in connection with the case, to have read the letter at all. I am sorry the hon. gentleman felt called upon to read it, because, as the leader of the Opposition has said, it is a most dangerous thing to assail the integrity of an occupant of the bench, and to positively charge a gentleman occupying the high position of Chief Justice with entertaining malice. In doing so, the hon. gentleman did a very serious wrong, not only to the Chief Justice, but to himself. I am sure nothing could have given me more pleasure than to have heard the very temperate and clear manner in which the hon. gentleman has given an account of his connection with McSharry in this matter, and the only thing I do regret is that he should have thought it necessary to have read that letter in connection with his very satisfactory explanation.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker.—I have in my lifetime written a great many foolish letters, had many accepted, and others rejected, and have come now to a state of callousness on the point. I differ entirely from the Attorney-General. I do not see why we should regard any human being, wherever he is placed, as being beyond the reach of mistake. A person may by mistake, not being actuated by malice, say something which in law amounts to malice. I sympathise very much with the hon. member for Townsville in writing that

letter. I do not blame him; I call it a very mild letter; and if I had been at his elbow I should have put a little more cayenne pepper into it. To come now to a serious matter, to which I direct the attention of the Attorney-General. I want to know why the Chief Justice of the colony should be an official of whom we should be afraid.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I never suggested anything of the kind.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You would be afraid of him if you had to plead before him.

Mr. BROOKES: None know so well as the legal gentlemen of this House that the history of England shows many instances in which good would have been done and evil averted if a little timely common sense had been addressed to some of the judges. In this colony we are apt to overdo it as far as regards the high and solemn office of Chief Justice. No person can venerate that office more than I do, but still I can separate the occupant from the office. Having said this, I may say further that I agree with the Premier and the Attorney-General in considering that the Chief Justice never intended anything of the kind which the hon. member for Townsville thinks he did. The main object I had in rising was to say that we should not get into any superstition about Chief Justices. Let us hold our minds open and allow the light to come in, and let us have the moral sense to say what we think. Another reason why I rose was to express my personal satisfaction with the explanation given by the hon. member for Townsville. I am only one of many, but what I think many may think, and I did consider that the hon. member for Townsville was under a cloud. I think we ought to be extremely jealous, not only of the purity and unassailability of the character of the judges, but also of the Ministers of the Crown in Queensland. It should not become usual or possible, or a matter of common talk, that these gentlemen are not invulnerable to partnerships and forms of money in one shape or another. Of course, we do not call them bribes. It is ridiculous to suppose that anybody takes a bribe nowadays, but somehow or other money gets into wrong pockets. It is of immense importance that Ministers of the Crown in Queensland should be above suspicion. That is all I want; I don't want them to be angels. I am glad to express my entire satisfaction with the explanation given by the hon. member for Townsville, and I believe when it is read by the public the satisfaction I now experience will be shared by everyone who reads it. It is not my nature to like to have much to do with people who, I think, are under a cloud; and, though I always had a kind of idea that there was some mistake, yet I can tell the hon. member for Townsville now to his face that he has risen in my estimation. Whether that matters to him or not, I do not know, but it is an easement to me, and I can now regard him with respect I could not before he made his explanation. I think he has risen to his proper place in the estimation of the public and the world, and I repeat that I approve thoroughly of the explanation he has given to-night.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ADJOURNMENT.

The COLONIAL TREASURER, in rising to move the adjournment of the House, said: I may state, in the absence of the Premier, that His Excellency the Administrator of the Government will be prepared to receive the Address in Reply on Tuesday next at half-past 3 o'clock. I therefore beg to move that the House do now adjourn till Tuesday

1886—g

next, at 3 o'clock, to proceed to Government House, there, at half-past 3 o'clock, to present to His Excellency the Administrator of the Government the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Opening Speech. It is intended on that day to take the following business:—The constitution of Committee of Supply, the second reading of the Members Expenses Bill, the Pearl-shell and Bêche-de-mer Act Amendment Bill, the Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks Act Amendment Bill; and, if time allow, the second reading of the Bill to repeal the Acts relating to the introduction of labourers from British India.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 9 o'clock.