Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 14 SEPTEMBER 1886

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 14 *September*, 1886.

Message from his Excellency the Administrator of the Government.—Assent to Bills.—Motion for Adjournment—Victoria Park Rifle Range—Depositing Refuse in Public Parks—Unauthorised Advertising for Emigrants.—Gold Fields Act Amendment Bill—committee.—Mineral Lands (Coal Mining) Bill—committee.—Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

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

MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE ADMINISTRATOR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received the following message from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government :—

"In accordance with the provisions of the 60th section of the Federal Council (Adopting) Act of 1885 (Queensland), His Excellency the Administrator of the Government informs the Legislative Assembly that His Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, was on the 2nd day of January last pleased to appoint

The Hon. SAMUEL WALKER GRIFFITH, Q.C., Vice-President of the Executive Council, Colonial Secretary, and a member of the Legislative Assembly, and

The Hon. JAMES ROBERT DICKSON, Esquire, Colonial Treasurer and a member of the Legislative Assembly,

to be representatives of the Colony of Queensland in the Federal Council of Australasia.

"Government House, Brisbane,
"14th September, 1886."

ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER also announced the receipt of messages from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government, conveying the Royal assent to the following Bills :—

A Bill to amend the Immigration Act of 1882, and

A Bill to constitute a tribunal for the trial of Election Petitions.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

VICTORIA PARK RIFLE RANGE—DEPOSITING REFUSE IN PUBLIC PARKS—UNAUTHORISED ADVERTISING FOR EMIGRANTS.

Mr. W. BROOKES said : Mr. Speaker,—I propose to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling attention to a subject of—well, not a little importance. A letter appeared in last night's *Telegraph* and also in this morning's *Courier*, from the staff of the Sick Children's Hospital, which I will read :—

"SIR,—We, the undersigned, as the staff of the Sick Children's Hospital, beg to protest, in the interests of our little patients, against the continuation of the rifle range in its present position. We consider that the noise of the rifle-shots not only militates against the recovery of many of our patients, but also that it would be sufficient to cause the death of patients for whose recovery perfect quiet is essential.

"In the neighbourhood of houses where there are cases of serious illness, it is not uncommon to put straw or tan down in the streets, in order to deaden the noise of ordinary traffic. And next some hospitals —for instance, the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary—the streets are all specially paved with wood for the same purpose. Yet our patients are subjected to this most harassing noise of rifle-shots, which for the past week has gone on from morning till night.

"We call upon you as the Press to help us to do away with this worse than nuisance, as the authorities seem quite passive in the matter.

"We are, sir, etc.,
"E. MATTHEWS OWENS.
"JAMES HILL, M.D.
"J. LOCKHART GIBSON, M.D.
"WILTON LOVE, M.B."

Now, sir, I do not wish to say a single word that may seem too strong or unnecessary ; but I was very grieved to see those letters, and that there should be occasion for them to appear is somewhat of the nature of a scandal.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) : If they had made inquiries at the office they would have found that there was no necessity to publish them.

Mr. BROOKES : The Premier says if the authorities had made inquiries at the office—at his office, I presume—there would have been no necessity to publish these letters. That is a statement, sir, which is quite beyond my comprehension. The letter says that the noise of these rifle-shots has gone on for the past week, from morning till night. What remedy would calling upon the Premier have been for that? The thing was past and gone. But there is more in this than there appears on the surface. It is now some time since a public meeting was held for the purpose of doing away with this rifle range, and at that meeting a very singular circumstance occurred. Our head military man, under His Excellency the Governor, interrupted that meeting, and tried to turn it upside down. It was a very orderly and constitutional meeting, and that gentleman with a party of his own did his best to upset that meeting. Of course he failed ; but nevertheless there remains in the recollection of all who were present at that meeting a very lively feeling towards this head military man. My opinion is that we shall have some trouble with him, and that it will be necessary to keep a very vigilant weather eye upon him. He must know what he did upon that occasion, and I am willing to believe that he regrets now what he did. But that meeting was not all. There was afterwards a very influential deputation to the Premier upon this very matter. This is some time ago, and we were given to understand that the Government would take very prompt steps to remove the rifle range altogether from that neighbourhood ; and not only so, but I am given to understand that the chairman of the trustees of the Victoria Park has received a letter, in which he is informed that the Government have it in contemplation to resume some portion or part of the Victoria Park, which is set apart for a Government domain, and asking him to assent to some little portion of Victoria Park being also resumed for this purpose. Now, I think it is as well that I should say what I think, and I think these things ought to be stopped. All round Victoria Park there is now a continually increasing population, and the right-of-way across that park in either direction, from or to Brisbane, is considerably interfered with ; the lives and limbs of the people are in danger, and the lives of the animals in the park are also in danger by the continuance of this rifle range. These are very good and substantial reasons ; but when we come to these two hospitals—the Government Hospital and the Children's Hospital—we come upon a much more serious matter. I do not think that the public should be subjected to this worse than nuisance—this continual danger. I do not know that it is necessary for me to say any more. I am very pleased to see this letter, and I think the medical officers have shown considerable moral courage in publishing it, and expressing their views in the way they have. In reference to the General Hospital, we know the opinions of the surgeons of the institution and of the committee of the institution on this subject. We have had the opinion of the chairman of that committee expressed many times, and the subject is getting rather monotonous. It is high time, I think, with all respect

to the present Government, that this nuisance was put a stop to, for it is, after all, upon these little things that their popularity greatly depends.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. BROOKES: I mean exactly what I say. I mean to say that more Ministries have fallen through inattention to these little points of courtesy than from grave political faults. I say now that if this is to be continued there will arise in the minds of the citizens of Brisbane and its suburbs a thought which at last may harden into conviction that the present Government do not care so much for their health and welfare as they might reasonably be expected to do. I need not say any more, but in sitting down I may say that I am sorry to have had occasion to allude to this subject at all. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. SMYTH said: Mr. Speaker,—I have a word or two to say about this. I was out at the rifle range a good deal last week during the annual competition for prizes, and I may say that there was a good deal of popping going on there all the time, and I have seen a good deal in the newspapers about the nuisance arising from the rifle-shooting. However, there are greater nuisances there than the rifle-shooting. I do not wish for one moment to defend the persons carrying on the rifle-shooting at that place. I believe the authorities intend to shift the range, and there is therefore no occasion for me to defend it, but I say that if persons will look around they will see greater nuisances than the rifle-shooting there. If they look at the filth deposited in the Victoria Park, I believe, with the sanction of the corporation——

The PREMIER: No; the trustees.

Mr. SMYTH: Well, with the sanction of the trustees. You will see it filtering under the railway line and into the creek in the middle of the rifle range. It is one of the filthiest spots around Brisbane. The medical men don't see that, or won't see it. There is also a greater nuisance than that to the hospitals: About twenty-two sanitary vans go rattling past the Children's Hospital and the General Hospital every day. A short time ago, a judge of the Supreme Court thought fit to stop the traffic in the streets outside the court, and here we have people dying and receiving medical attendance, and apparently nothing is thought of it. I have seen twenty of these vans in a string passing the hospitals, and nothing is said of it. The medical men seem to have some "down" upon the rifle-shooting. I have been at the hospital during the time the rifle-shooting has been going on, and I must say I did not notice any annoyance caused by it, as the shots do not sound very distinctly up there. I think the persons writing these letters should have their attention drawn to the other matters I have referred to, and it would be far better if they would look after them. As the adjournment of the House has been moved, I wish to take advantage of it to read an extract from a newspaper I have had sent to me by some person whom I do not know. It is a copy of the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, and I wish to draw the attention of the Premier to an advertisement in it, as I wish to know who are the persons who insert it. The advertisement is as follows:—

"IMPORTANT NOTICE. — WANTED, 10,000 navvies, general labourers, quarrymen, platelayers, and miners, for railway works in Queensland. Specially conducted party sails each month. Also, a number of female domestic servants, and farm labourers, who are in great demand. Immediate employment on arrival at highest wages. Assisted passages granted at low rates. Passengers booked for America, £3 16s.; Canada, £3 only; New Zealand, £13 13s.; and to all parts of the world at lowest rates by all lines of steamers and sailing ships. Prompt application to T. O. Smedley, Secretary, North of England Emigration Company, 32, Blackett street, opposite Monument, Newcastle."

I wish to know if these persons who are advertising in this way are in receipt of any bonus for procuring immigrants, and whether it is with the sanction of the Agent-General of Queensland that these persons are advertising for 10,000 persons — navvies, quarrymen, labourers, and others—who are not at present required in the colony at all? I will therefore hand over the paper to the Premier and let him find out who the advertisers are.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the Government ought to be congratulated in having a champion in the hon. member for Gympie, to defend their action in allowing the rifle butts to remain in Victoria Park.

Mr. SMYTH: I did not defend it.

Mr. McMASTER: That is what I understood the hon. gentleman to do.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not wish to interrupt the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, and I have no doubt he will be allowed to speak afterwards, but I desire to answer the remarks of my hon. colleague the member for North Brisbane with respect to the rifle range. First of all I will say a word with respect to the advertisement to which the hon. member for Gympie has called my attention. I never saw the advertisement before, and I am quite sure it was not inserted on the authority of the Agent-General. I think it is evident from the description of the person who signs it "Secretary to the North of England Emigration Company," that it must be some speculative person who is desirous of making money by deluding intending emigrants. However, I will see that the attention of the Agent-General is called to it, and, if necessary, steps wlil be taken to see that it is made known that those advertisements are not inserted with the authority of the Government. With respect to the Victoria Park rifle range, I am sorry that my hon. colleague did not first ask what steps the Government were taking to remove it; I should have been able to tell him if he had done so. As hon. members are aware, last week the annual meeting of the Queensland Rifle Association was held. Of course, we might have stopped that altogether and thrown out all the rifle companies and associations for the year. We might have done that. There was no other rifle range to go to. But we did not think it desirable to do so, nor indeed was that suggested by anyone, even by those who have objected most strongly to the rifle range in Victoria Park. Great objection has been taken to the existence of the rifle range in Victoria Park, and I assured a deputation some time since that no time would be lost in removing it. I am of opinion, as the hon. member for Gympie says, that the popping of the rifles is not the greatest nuisance in that neighbourhood. I am quite sure the continuous rattle of the trains going past the hospital is quite as disturbing, and more disturbing than the noise of the rifle-shooting; but some gentlemen have possessed themselves with the idea that the rifle-shooting is injurious to the patients in the hospitals. I told the deputation that no time would be lost in removing the rifle range, but you cannot make a new rifle range in a day, Mr. Speaker. The first thing to do is to find a site. There are not so many sites around Brisbane suitable for a rifle range. I caused inquiries to be made for sites around Brisbane, within a radius of a few miles, that offered suitable facilities for a rifle range, and we might have bought one or two at a cost of £5,000 or £10,000. I fancy I see the

expression of hon. members, some of whom object to rifle ranges altogether, on being asked to pay £5,000 or £10,000 for a range. However, I have inspected a place that is perfectly suitable, and which is a part of what is called the Government Domain. It is an almost disused part of Victoria Park, which is not under the control of the trustees; a portion of it is vacant Crown land, and has a gully of considerable length, which, I think, will be found very suitable indeed for a rifle range. It is perfectly safe, unless any person chooses to stand in front of the rifles, and it is out of the way of people in the ordinary course of things. As soon as that place was discovered to be suitable, instructions were given to prepare it for the rifle butts, and to remove them from the other site, and that work, I presume, is being proceeded with. It, of course, consists in putting up the butts, and throwing up mounds to prevent any danger from bullets flying off projections of rock, and so on. The hon. member for North Brisbane said he understood that a letter had been written to the trustees of the park, telling them it was proposed to resume a large portion of that park. Whoever gave the hon. gentleman that information gave him inaccurate information. The range is to be made in a part of the park which is not under the control of the trustees, about 550 yards in length. Another 50 or 100 yards will make a very good range of it, by taking in a bit of land which is absolutely worthless to anyone. I instructed a letter to be sent to the trustees, asking for the temporary enclosure of that piece of land, and I hope they will agree to it. It will not be within earshot of any hospital, nor near any line of traffic across the park, and it is as suitable a place as can be found. A great deal has been said about the danger arising from bullets, and I have taken pains to inquire into that matter. We have heard of bullets being picked up in all sorts of places, and I quite believe they have been; but they came there, not out of the mouths of the rifles, but through being carried there. It is a very easy thing to carry a bullet; children pick them up on the range, and, after carrying them awhile, drop them. I heard of a very remarkable instance the other day—in fact, a claim was made in connection with it upon the Government—of a valuable horse being killed by a rifle-shot. On investigation it was found that the animal had three revolver bullets in its skull, and no rifle-bullet at all; and it was not a valuable animal either. However, in this matter I have kept my word. I said I would take the most immediate measures I could to remove the range, and the necessary steps have been taken. In a few weeks, I suppose, it will be completely removed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: How far will the riflemen have to walk?

The PREMIER: They will not have to walk much farther than at present; it is easily accessible. It will not be a long range, for that we could get nothing nearer than Lytton; but up to 600 yards it will do very well for a good many years to come, provided the trustees will comply with the very reasonable request to give up about 50 or 100 yards—a little strip of land of no use to anyone.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I was going to make a few remarks in reply to the hon. member for Gympie. I was going to congratulate the Government on having such a champion to defend them and this rifle butt. The hon. member has been spending some of his leisure hours there, and he found no annoyance from the popping of the guns. But the hon. member was not a sick patient; he was not lying on the broad of his back in the hospital, perhaps not likely to recover, or given up by the doctors; he was walking about in his ordinary health, and it is not likely he would find it a nuisance. He also informed us that there was a greater nuisance caused by the burying of some material in Victoria Park. Well, anybody that knows anything about the subject will know that if that material is properly deposited it will be the making of Victoria Park. I do not think the hon. member has seen that nuisance; it is not likely he went smelling about there; he was too much engaged finding out who were the successful parties at the rifle butts. However, I do not know that this Government is much worse than other Governments in the matter of destroying the Victoria Park. A previous Government partly spoilt it by taking through it a railway which ought to have gone through the Valley. I have no doubt that is a great nuisance as well as the rifle-shots, but the shots give sudden shocks to individuals laid on a sick bed, whereas a train comes gradually. A fortnight ago a gentleman living on Gregory terrace called my attention to the fact that his wife was lying very ill, and the popping at the rifle butts had so annoyed her that he was afraid for her life. Now, we have had the promise of the Premier, and we have been waiting patiently for the removal of the rifle butts; but it seems we are not going to get rid of them altogether. They will still be an annoyance in the upper end of Victoria Park. As a matter of fact, the trustees have received a letter asking for twenty-five acres; the Chief Secretary tells us that is only a small slip of land; but I am assured by the chairman of the trustees and another trustee that the letter asks for twenty-five acres, and does not say where.

The PREMIER: That is not the letter I directed to be written; and I do not believe it was written.

Mr. McMASTER: Both gentlemen are gentlemen whose word I would take. The Chief Secretary may be deceived, as I am quite convinced he has been deceived in other matters. He has been deceived about those bullets: is it likely that any person would carry them there and tell a wilful falsehood?

The PREMIER: I did not say so; I said that other people found them there.

Mr. McMASTER: The Premier said they were dropped there.

The PREMIER: Dropped by children, and found by others.

Mr. McMASTER: I believe they were dropped from the rifle butts. I know an hon. member in this House who found at Sandgate a bullet that had swerved off from a rock at right angles, and went through the spouting of the church.

Mr. SMYTH: From Victoria Park?

Mr. McMASTER: No. The hon. member for Gympie is taken up with the rifle butts; there is no doubt about that; but the citizens of Brisbane, and the patients in the hospital, are not so much taken up with them. I am convinced that the citizens of Brisbane will protest against any more encroachments on Victoria Park, and I hope the Chief Secretary will see his way to getting the butts away from the vicinity altogether.

The PREMIER: And take them where?

Mr. McMASTER: I noticed in the Press some time ago that a very excellent place was found near Norman Creek.

The PREMIER: The riflemen would have to stand in a swamp; and it would cost £10,000.

Mr. McMASTER: The Press, as a rule, tells the truth, and I thought an excellent site had been found. I was pleased that the Chief

Secretary had gone into the matter so thoroughly, and I thought we were going to get rid of the rifle butts. I promise the Government that the citizens of Brisbane, and we in the Valley, will protest against any further encroachment on Victoria Park. I would like to see the butts away from there altogether, and the railway too.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—I happen to be one who took part in the rifle-shooting last week, and I can vouch most fully for the accuracy of what has been said by the hon. member for Gympie. I can assure hon. members that the stench arising from the refuse deposited there by the municipality of Brisbane is something abominable. The object, no doubt, is to improve the park, but in my opinion they are making it a hotbed of fever. I heard the expression made use of several times on the ground, that "if the Government did not intend to remove the rifle range, the municipality evidently intended to stink the riflemen out of the park." I am certain that many men who shot there last week would not care to shoot there again as long as that nuisance exists. The stench, I assure hon. members again, is really most abominable. The hon. member who moved the adjournment made two rather contradictory statements. First, he said he was sorry that the letter had been written, and then he said he was very glad to see it. I can hardly make out what he means. With reference to the public meeting at which, according to the hon. member, Colonel French made himself offensive, I am sorry to find that some people think that because a citizen chooses to join the Defence Force he therefore loses his citizenship—for that is what it amounts to. Colonel French, I consider, took part in that meeting as a citizen, not as a member of the Defence Force; and the other members of the Defence Force who were there were also there as citizens, and not as members of the Defence Force. I was very sorry to hear the hon. member mention that matter, as I think it had better have been kept out of the question.

Mr. FRASER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am glad to hear that the rifle range is to be removed; but I rise more particularly now to refer to the most objectionable practice of depositing refuse on such places as the Victoria Park. It may be very true that in the long run that system may have the effect of beautifying the Victoria Park and other localities where the refuse is deposited; but if the hon. member for Fortitude Valley will go with me over the river as far as Musgrave Park, where refuse has been deposited for the last eighteen months or two years, he will see that if it were properly intended to manufacture a hotbed of fever and other diseases, no better and more successful steps could have been taken. The ridge round that park is one of the most pleasant and healthy places in the neighbourhood, and yet, notwithstanding, during the past year there were several cases of typhoid fever in that locality. In the hot summer months that are coming on I am quite sure that if something is not done to check the nuisance the health of the neighbourhood will greatly suffer. It is high time the authorities stepped in and stopped the depositing of this refuse, which in Musgrave Park oozes out of every pore in the ground. The hon. member for Gympie did good service in calling attention to this condition of things in connection with Victoria Park; and I have felt it my duty also to call attention to it in connection with the South Brisbane park, situated as it is in the centre of a very large and dense population.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I have walked over both the Victoria Park and the Musgrave Park, and I can conscientiously say that I look upon them both as a disgrace to the city. No effort—no judicious effort—seems to have been made to beautify and adorn those wildernesses, although they could be easily made of great value to the public. I do not know who the trustees are, so that I can have no personal motive in expressing myself in this way; and I say that both the parks were far more beautiful in their wild forest state than they are now. With regard to these deposits of manure, I must confess I did not find them so very bad—not nearly so bad as I had expected. As a matter of fact there are nuisances in both parks, but the least portion of the nuisance in the Victoria Park is the rifle range.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—This discussion has brought out two different views with regard to the range. It reminds me of the boy cracking a stockwhip: it is awful fun for the boy. Rifle-shooting at the range is awful fun for those who shoot, but those who are compelled to listen to the noise do not like it at all. That is the general experience wherever you go. With regard to the shooting in the Victoria Park being a nuisance, I can only say that, although I live at Milton, I can hear it distinctly; and yet there are hon. members who argue that it is not a nuisance to the patients in the hospitals close by—patients suffering from serious diseases, and whose nerves suffer from the slightest shock. We have the evidence of nearly all the medical men connected with those institutions that it is very objectionable that the shooting should take place so near.

The PREMIER: I think they are rather divided in their opinions on the subject.

Mr. NORTON: Some are not so strong in their opinions as others, I know; but I am certain that the majority of them are of that opinion. The sick suffer far more from sudden noises like the crack of a rifle than from noises which come and go gradually like the passing of a railway train. It will be a very good thing when that rifle range is removed. At the same time, if a rifle range is to be used, it must be either near the town or near the railway, otherwise the men will not go out to practice. With regard to the practice of depositing manure in these places, it is most objectionable. I have noticed most offensive smells in the parks. The evil is especially observable in the Victoris Park, which has a clay bottom, which effectually prevents absorption into the soil. It may be all right in a loamy soil, but there it is radically bad, and no greater mistake could be made. I do not know whether it has anything to do with it, but I noticed in the statistics that the death, from typhoid in Queensland are greater than in any of the other colonies. Hon. members will recollect that only a short time ago there were very numerous deaths here from typhoid, many of them, I believe, in these neighbourhoods, on the hills near the places where that stuff is buried.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I think myself that some advantage should be taken of the numerous railway lines which are now being constructed, and that the shooters should be taken a considerable distance from the city, say, for instance, somewhere on the Gympie line. I think some very good places might be found along that railway, where the riflemen could shoot out of harm's way and without annoying any sick people. I have frequently gone round the hill at the side of the hospitals, and it has always struck me that the shooting must be very trying to the patients in those institutions. The noise seems to be intensified on the hill; the shooting seems to make really more noise there than it does down at the butts. On one occasion when the shooting was going on I asked a patient in the hospital—a strong man—whether the noise

did not annoy him, and he surprised me very much by saying that it did not; he had got used to it and rather liked it. But to sick persons, children especially, I cannot imagine anything more trying. As to what the aldermanic member said about fertilising the park at the expense of the health of individuals living around it, that is a way of considering posterity which I would never think of encouraging. I certainly think that rubbish ought not be shot there.

Mr. McMASTER: It is not shot there; it is buried.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I think it ought not to be buried in the park. It is a very dangerous thing to bury such rubbish in the park, and the practice should be put a stop to.

Mr. W. BROOKES, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I have the impression that my object in bringing this matter before the House has been rather lost sight of in some other matters. I did not say anything about depositing rubbish in the park. That might very well form the subject of another discussion. My point was, and is yet, whether rifle-shooting is to be continued at the present range? That is the only thing I have to do with just now, and I represent a very great number of people when I say that this rifle range ought to be removed—that it ought to be removed from every part of the park—from anywhere about the park. Of course, I speak with the greatest diffidence—almost trembling—when I attempt to answer the arguments of the Premier, but I say that some of his arguments did not lay hold of me. There is some obscurity about the piece of land which is asked for by the Government from the trustees of the park as a supplement for the new rifle range which it is proposed to form. Perhaps we will get more information on the subject some day, but at present I object to the rifle range being in any part of the park, and I fancy that is what nine people out of ten will say. It is all very well in talking about this matter to say that there is a division of opinion among the medical men attending the hospital as to the effect of the shooting at the rifle butts on sick children and adults. But the question whether it is unfavourable to either can only be settled in one way, and that is by taking the opinion of the majority of the doctors, which is that the noise from the firing at the rifle range is injurious to sick children and sick adults.

The PREMIER: We are going to take it away.

Mr. W. BROOKES: I am not quite sure that it will be to a sufficient distance to remove the nuisance from the hospital.

The PREMIER: The new range will be out of earshot.

Mr. W. BROOKES: If it is out of earshot it will not be in the park at all, because the leader of the Opposition distinctly stated that at Milton he can hear the popping of the rifles when shooting is going on at the present range.

Mr. NORTON: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. BROOKES: How, then, can the new range be out of earshot of the patients? Surely the question admits of a common-sense solution. I have seen some promise made on the part of the Government in connection with this matter, but we are not satisfied with that. We are not satisfied with it on many grounds—not merely on the ground of health, but also on the ground of danger to the life and health of human beings. I was not very well pleased with the Premier seeking to make little of this danger. It is a continuing danger, and, as was stated to the Premier by the deputation which waited upon him some time ago, one old gentleman could not allow his two daughters, who had to pass through the park in order to attend to their daily duties, to come into town that way on account of the danger.

The PREMIER: We have promised that it is going to be removed.

Mr. W. BROOKES: It appears that it will be a long while before that promise will be fulfilled. Then I was rather surprised to hear the Premier ask the senior member for South Brisbane the same question that he put to the deputation in reference to the rifle range. The hon. gentleman asked us, "Where would you like the rifle range to be?" I said then, and I repeat it now, that that is not a question for us to answer. It is a matter for the Government to decide. We are busy minding our own business and attending to our private affairs the best way we can, and it is not for us to roam all over the country looking for a site for a rifle range. It is the duty of the Government to find a site. I am very glad to know that the Premier has personally travelled the country to find one. The hon. gentleman wants to know if there is any we can suggest. We cannot suggest one, nor do I believe we ever shall be able to find a site. This is a matter which, I think, properly devolves upon the Government. They should protect the health, and life, and limbs of the people. The member for Wide Bay has referred to the public meeting which was held in the Town Hall, but the hon. member does not understand anything about it. He knows absolutely nothing but what was represented in the Press, and, of course, the report was a hurried one. If the hon. member had been at that meeting he would have been better acquainted with the circumstances. The fact is, the proceedings there strengthened the prejudice against the rifle range. Colonel French attended the meeting, and brought his men with him for a distinct purpose. There can be no doubt about that. There was not only Colonel French there, but a lieutenant also; and when Colonel French was not allowed to speak his lieutenant got up and tried, and there was considerable turmoil, difficulty, and trouble. It cannot be denied by anybody who was present that it was a deliberate attempt on the part of Colonel French and some of his men to turn the meeting upside down. There is another matter on which the hon. member for Wide Bay wants a little explanation. He said he was surprised that I said I was glad and sorry that the letter did appear. I am both. I am sorry that there was any occasion for the letter, and I am very glad that when there was an occasion for it the letter did appear. With the permission of the House I will withdraw my motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

GOLD FIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles), the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into committee to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

Clause 1—"Short title"—put and passed.

On clause 2, as follows:—

"In this Act, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the several meanings set opposite to them respectively, that is to say:—

'The principal Act'—The Gold Fields Act of 1874;

'Minister'—The Minister charged with the administration of the principal Act;

'Reserve'—Any street or road, or any lands upon a goldfield which are for the time being set apart as a reserve for public purposes, or which for

the time being are vested in the Secretary for Public Instruction in Queensland, or vested in any other corporation or person upon trust for public purposes, or which are for the time being excepted from occupation for mining purposes under the provisions of the twenty-sixth or twenty-seventh section of the principal Act or otherwise;

'Gold Mining Lease'—A lease under the principal Act for gold-mining purposes."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that during the discussion on the second reading of the Bill several amendments were suggested, and the Government had endeavoured to meet the views of hon. members as far as possible by preparing several amendments which he would introduce. He moved the insertion of the following words after the paragraph defining "reserve":—

"Residence Area"—A portion of Crown land upon a goldfield occupied for the purpose of residence by the holder of a miner's right;

"Business Area"—A portion of Crown land upon a goldfield occupied by the holder of a business license.

Mr. MELLOR asked for information regarding reserves for public purposes. He supposed schools of arts reserves were vested for public purposes.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MELLOR said that in Gympie there was a school of arts standing on a piece of ground which had been purchased and transferred to the trustees. Was that included in reserves for public purposes?

The PREMIER said that was not a reserve for public purposes. If the trustees of a school of arts bought land from anybody else, and got it transferred to them, that was not land granted to trustees for public purposes within the meaning of the Crown Lands Act.

Mr. NORTON said some grants had been made for those purposes, which by leave of Parliament had been sold, and the money devoted to the purchase of other sites. None of those would come under the operation of the Act, he took it. Those pieces of land were not granted by the Crown, although the original grant might have been made by the Crown; they were purchased with the money obtained by the sale of the original grant.

The PREMIER said he did not think it was easy to distinguish between those cases and other freeholds. He did not see how they could be distinguished. It would not be safe to say, "Land possessed by any person or corporation, and occupied for purposes for which money is annually voted by Parliament." That would cover too much ground, but it would be the nearest thing to including the cases mentioned by the hon. member.

Mr. LISSNER said he thought homestead reserves ought to be included as well as "residence areas." It was well known to the Minister that some miners were very much troubled about not being able to get under homestead reserves, and he would like to be sure that they would be included.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Bill only proposed to deal with mining under the surface. It did not propose to interfere with the surface of reserves. A Bill had been prepared which the Government hoped to be able to introduce shortly, dealing with homestead leases. The Bill under consideration had been introduced simply with the object of giving facilities for mining under reserves, and not to disturb the surface.

Mr. LISSNER said if the definition included residence areas it might just as well include homestead areas. Residence areas were no more reserves than homesteads.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said, as the law stood at present, miners had full liberty to mine on homestead areas by giving compensation—he meant, to mine on goldfields homesteads by paying compensation for whatever surface damage they did. What the hon. gentleman was thinking of was a case that had occurred in Charters Towers that was within the knowledge of the Minister for Works. The difficulty there was about a machine site. There was some doubt about it, but the Minister himself could settle that. It was not necessary to make a law for the purpose.

Mr. SMYTH said in the Gold Fields Homestead Act provision was made for resuming land for any other purpose but mining. The gentleman who drafted that Act had a homestead of his own, and he was very careful to draft it to suit himself. A person might resume for all purposes except mining, by making compensation, but there was no provision in the clause for resumption for mining purposes, although it was intended when the Bill was brought in that it should give an entry to the miner. In one instance, at Gympie, in the case of a mine in which he was interested, it had cost them over £80 to mine on a homestead. They had been imposed upon right and left, but he had been given to understand that it was intended to bring in a Bill dealing with homesteads altogether, and that provision would be made in the Bill for mining on homesteads.

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 3, as follows:—

"A gold-mining lease may be granted under the principal Act of any land comprised in a reserve, and a lease of any such land may be applied for in accordance with the regulations, subject to the conditions following, that is to say—

(1) The lease shall, so far as regards any land comprised in a reserve, be deemed to be of the minerals under such land only and not of the surface of the land.

(2) The lessee shall not be entitled to disturb the surface of the reserve, or to do any act which will affect or disturb the beneficial enjoyment of the surface.

(3) No such lease shall be granted unless it also comprises some land not within a reserve, and from which sufficient and convenient access can be obtained to the minerals under the surface of the land comprised within the reserve, or unless the applicant is entitled to possession of some land from which such access can be obtained to the minerals.

(4) If the lessee does any injury to the surface of the reserve, or does any act affecting or disturbing the beneficial enjoyment of such surface, he shall make compensation to the person entitled to the surface, or charged with the care and management thereof for all such damage."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that on line 2, after the word "reserve," the following words be inserted: "residence area or business area."

Amendment agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that in line 6, after the word "reserves," the following words be inserted: "residence area or business area."

Amendment agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that after the word "under," on line 6, the words "or on" be inserted.

Mr. NORTON said he would point out before the amendment was put that the word "mineral" was used in the clause. That word was not used in the Gold Fields Act. The word "gold" was always used, and as that was a Bill for the

amendment of the Gold Fields Act of 1874, it applied only to the working of gold. Gold was defined by the principal Act to be—

"As well any gold as any earth containing gold or having gold mixed in the substance thereof or set apart for the purpose of extracting gold therefrom."

That would include all gold-bearing stone or gold-bearing mineral—pyrites bearing gold, for instance. He thought line 17 should be amended by omitting the word "mineral," with the view of inserting "gold."

The PREMIER said that "mineral" was the ordinary legal term used in speaking of a lease of minerals under the surface of the land.

Mr. NORTON said it might be confused with the Mineral Lands Act.

The PREMIER did not think it was likely to be. It seemed absurd to talk of a lease being of gold. It was not a lease of gold but of everything below the surface, and the right to get the gold out of it.

Mr. NORTON said that the definition of the word "gold" in the principal Act not merely applied to gold itself, but to the substances that contained gold. Therefore, it referred to everything under the surface. The use of the word "mineral" was rather too confusing, and was apt to lead to the mixing up of the Gold Mining Act with the Mineral Lands Act. He did not think the word "mineral" was used in one other instance in the Gold Fields Acts.

The PREMIER: You don't take a lease of the gold.

Mr. NORTON: No; but for gold-mining. If the object of the Bill was to enable miners to work all classes of minerals then the word "mineral" would be appropriate. But the title of the Bill would have to be different.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: "Mineral" would include "gold."

Mr. NORTON: But "gold" includes "mineral." "Mineral" has no definition in the principal Act.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no particular love for "mineral."

The PREMIER said that "mines" would be a better word. It seemed to look absurd to talk of a lease as a lease of gold. It was not a lease of gold at all. That would be using a word in an entirely non-natural sense. "Mines" was the word used in the principal Act, and that would be better. It would include anything from which gold was got.

Question—That the word "mineral" be omitted—put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the word "mines" be inserted.

Amendment agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that in line 20 the words "the reserve" be omitted with the view of inserting "a residence area or business area, or of a reserve which is a street or road."

Mr. MELLOR said he did not know whether it would be acceptable altogether to the people generally interested in reserves, but he would like to see something in the clause besides what was there. He referred to cemeteries and hospitals. They ought to make an exception of these reserves. It would, he thought, be very inconvenient to allow mining to go on under an hospital reserve, or near an hospital. And it would be very disagreeable and unpleasant, and not acceptable to the miners themselves, to allow mining to go on under cemetery reserves.

The PREMIER said that the next amendment provided that they could not disturb the surface of a reserve except with the permission of the Minister. Would not that be sufficient?

Mr. NORTON said it would be most objectionable to allow mining under cemeteries. If allowed at all the bodies ought to be removed.

The PREMIER: Suppose that the mine was 1,000 feet deep?

Mr. NORTON said the objection was that it would not be 1,000 feet deep. There was something very unpleasant in the idea of mining under a cemetery anywhere. All cemeteries ought to be excluded.

Amendment put and agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that subsection 3 be omitted, with a view of inserting the following:—

(3) In the case of a reserve which is not a street or road, the lessee shall not be entitled to disturb the surface of the reserve or to do any act which will affect or disturb the beneficial enjoyment of the surface, except in either case with the permission of the Minister, and then only upon such part of the reserve and under such conditions as he may prescribe.

Mr. MELLOR said he thought that was the subsection which should say something about cemetery and hospital reserves. He did not for one moment wish to place any obstacle in the way of mining. They should give every facility possible to miners; but still they ought to preserve intact, as far as they possibly could, cemeteries and hospital reserves.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: They are reserves, and the Minister has power to deal with them.

Mr. MELLOR said the Minister had power, but he thought it ought to be mentioned in the Bill. There should be some restriction about going too near the surface, say not less than 100 feet. He would not like them to go nearer than that to the surface. It would be much better if they made that secure, and the people knew it was so, than to allow miners to go nearer. If they were following a lead they would probably go right up to the surface, which would be very disagreeable.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Wide Bay ought to be satisfied that no Minister administering the Act would for a moment give authority to mine under hospitals or cemeteries, if it were likely to have any ill effect whatever. The public would not permit it. If the reefs were at a sufficient depth, and not likely so disturb either one or the other, why should not miners have an opportunity of obtaining the gold? The hon. member for Wide Bay need be under no misapprehension on that score. He thought no Minister administering the Act would attempt to give permission to do anything injurious to hospitals or cemeteries.

Amendment agreed to.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the following subsection be inserted after subsection 4:—

(5) Any claim for compensation must be made within three months after the right to make the claim has accrued.

Amendment agreed to.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. SMYTH proposed the following new clause to follow clause 3, as passed:—

The Minister may, by notice in the *Gazette*, declare that the whole or any part of the land comprised in a reserve, and not being a street or road, shall be open to be taken up as claims under miners' rights.

On and after the day appointed in that behalf by the notice the land shall be open to be so taken up accordingly.

In any such case the conditions of the last preceding section relating to leases shall, so far as they are applicable, apply to any claim so taken up, and for that purpose shall be read as if the words "claim" and "claimholder" were used therein instead of the words "lease" and "lessee" respectively.

The reason why he wished the clause inserted was to give miners a chance to take up an ordinary claim. If they took up portions of a reserve as leases they would have to pay, in the first place, one guinea for a rough plan, then £5 for a survey, and £1 per acre, which would amount to a great supplementary expense. He did not suppose many gold-mines would be taken up under the clause; but it would give men the option of taking up ground as an ordinary claim or as a lease.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not see any great objection to the clause. It could not do any harm.

Mr. MELLOR said he did not know that he felt altogether sure about allowing mining by miners' rights. Certainly, everything was left in the hands of the Minister, whether he should allow it or not. A person might go into a cemetery reserve and peg it out by getting the permission of the Minister.

The PREMIER: They must not disturb the surface.

Mr. MELLOR: Not without the consent of the Minister; but they might bring pressure to bear upon him, so that he would allow them to sink upon those reserves. They might be able to get his consent.

New clause put and passed.

On clause 4, as follows:—

"The following provisions shall have effect for the period of twelve months after the passing of this Act:—

(1) Before any reserve shall be open to be applied for to be held under a gold-mining lease, a notice shall be published by the Minister in the *Gazette* and in some newspaper generally circulating on the goldfield, notifying a day, not being less than two months after the last publication of such notice, on which the reserve will be so open, and the reserve shall be so open on that day accordingly.

(2) If two or more applications are lodged for the same land on that day within one hour after the opening of the warden's office, they shall be deemed to be lodged at the same time.

(3) When two or more applications are lodged at the same time, the applicants shall within the two days next following lodge with the warden sealed tenders, specifying the rent per acre which they are willing to pay for the land comprised in the application. Such tenders shall be opened by the warden in open court on the next day in which he sits in open court, and the highest tenderer shall be deemed to be the first applicant, and the rent tendered by him, not being less than one pound per acre, shall be the rent to be reserved by the lease.

(4) When two or more applications lodged at the same time comprise part only of the same land, the warden shall, if practicable, allot the land fairly between them; but if such allotment is not practicable, all the applications shall be rejected.

(5) The land shall not be again open to application until a day to be appointed by the warden, being not less than four weeks from the date of such rejection, and to be notified by the warden in open court at the time of such rejection.

(6) The preceding provisions of this section shall then be applicable as if the day so appointed had been the day originally notified by the Minister, and so on from time to time."

Mr. SMYTH said there was one alteration he would like to see made in the 2nd line of the clause. He would like the time to be stated at two months instead of twelve. These were only temporary provisions, and the sooner this was settled the better, so that they might take up the ground by lease or by claim, and get a title to it at once without those provisions at all. He moved the omission of the word "twelve," with a view of inserting the word "two."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought two months too short a period. If the hon. gentleman would accept six months, he thought that would be more reasonable. It was simply a temporary provision, and only applied to reserves. Two months was too short a time to allow.

Mr. SMYTH said he would accept the hon. gentleman's suggestion, and move that the word "twelve" be omitted with a view of inserting the word "six."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. MELLOR said that as they had shortened the time in one case they should do it in the other, and he therefore moved that the words "two months" in the 7th line of the clause be omitted, with a view of inserting the words "one month."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. SMYTH said he proposed to make an alteration in subsection 3. He proposed to omit that subsection altogether, with the view of inserting the following new subsection:—

The warden shall, on a day appointed by him and notified to the applicants, cause the land to be offered at auction at an annual rent to the several applicants and to no other persons; and that one of the applicants who makes the highest bid and forthwith pays the amount of the first year's rent shall be declared the successful applicant. And the rent so offered by him shall be the annual rent to be reserved by the lease.

The reason he gave for the amendment was that he thought it far better to have open competition than tenders. He had suffered considerably from the tender system himself. Wardens were like any other class of people, and there were black sheep among them. He did not wish to say anything disparaging the wardens of the colony, as they were as good as any other class of Civil servants they had; but he was himself one of a company who had lost about £20,000 through the misdeeds of one warden. He therefore thought the matter should not be left in the hands of any warden or any other officer, but should be left to open competition amongst the applicants only.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said his reason for making provision for continuing the tender system was simply this: that some time ago when a reserve was put up at Gympie, and a notification published in the local papers to the effect that the land was to be put up to public competition, the whole of the Press there were furious about putting up that reserve to auction. It was said that it was blackmailing the miner, and he had to withdraw it. The Government had to withdraw the notification, because the indignation of the miners was such that it was utterly impossible to go on with it, and they therefore proposed to substitute tender for auction. If the reserves were put up to auction, only the wealthy miners could compete for it, and the working miners had no chance at all. He thought that the miners would have a much better chance by tendering than by public competition. No doubt if the Colonial Treasurer was present he would say that he preferred the auction system because it was much more likely to assist the Treasury. When there was public competition, people got excited, and those who had a long purse and good credit might be inclined to give an extreme price. The question to decide was, which system was most desirable? The Government were not particularly wedded to either, and he was himself very much inclined to take the opinion of those members who represented mining localities, because he thought that

after all they were perhaps better able to judge which system was best than himself. If the majority of members representing mining interests thought it advisable to adopt the system of competition, the Government would have no objection to do so.

Mr. NORTON said the plan of tendering was certainly not in the interest of the working miner, because a man who could outbid him at auction was not likely to underbid him by tender. For his part he believed the fairest plan was that of ballot. Of course, the objection to that was that one man would put in a number of applications; but if that could be avoided, it would certainly be the fairest way. He very much preferred auction to sealed tenders, because auction was at any rate a fair way, and he did not believe the working man would have a bit better chance by sealed tenders. There was one thing he would like to point out—that the Minister could put what price he liked on the land, and he ought not to want to get more. The object was not to extract as much money out of the miners as possible, but to get what was a fair thing.

The PREMIER said £1 was fixed by the gold-mining regulations.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that of the two systems—sealed tenders and auction—he preferred the auction system. The Minister had invited members who represented mining constituencies to express an opinion on those two plans, but he had not given them the option of suggesting any other.

Mr. MELLOR said that so far as he understood the clause it was not intended to provide for general competition, but to confine it to the first applicants. There were, no doubt, a great many difficulties in the way of settling the matter, but he thought the fairest way was that suggested by the amendment.

Mr. LISSNER said he thought it was wrong in principle for the Government to sell Crown lands for mining purposes. He believed the Bill was brought in chiefly in consequence of certain disputes or difficulties that had taken place at Charters Towers. Well, so far as the land there was concerned, a poor man would have no chance of utilising it unless he was backed up by someone with money. The Government could raise a revenue from the reserves; he knew the Government had been offered large sums for them; in fact he had been authorised to offer a good deal of money himself. Within his knowledge £3,000 had been offered for the school lands, the only condition being that the money should go for the benefit of the Charters Towers school, and not into the consolidated revenue. He thought those particular reserves ought to be dealt with on their merits; the Government might accept the offers that had been made without interfering with the rights of the poor miner. The Bill would disturb the rights of the poor miner in the future on other reserves. What they wanted was to protect the mining industry, and they would never reach that point by selling Crown lands for mining purposes. If the Government would settle the reserves at Charters Towers on their merits, they could bring forward a far more equitable Bill for the future; and he would advise them to withdraw this Bill for the present.

Mr. SMYTH said that in framing the amendment he had consulted several hon. members, and that seemed the best way of dealing with the matter. He knew there was a difficulty at Charters Towers; the miners there were very loth to have land put up by auction. He would certainly withdraw his amendment if any hon. member could suggest anything better; he did not like the idea himself, but he could not see any better way out of the difficulty.

Mr. MELLOR said he would like to know what would be the position of the trustees of reserves who had already made other arrangements.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Bill was intended to give the right to mine under the reserves, not to disturb the surface. There was no law at present authorising any man to mine under a reserve, and the Bill had been brought in to provide for it.

Mr. LISSNER said there was no occasion to bring in a Bill of that kind merely to settle the question of the Charters Towers reserves.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that when the Bill was introduced it had all the appearance of being a Bill simply for Charters Towers, but a wider scope had been given to it now by the amendments of the Minister for Works and the hon. member for Gympie. It was a question with him whether the auction system—which was at any rate better than the sealed tender system—was applicable to all the reserves of the colony or not. Seeing the great value put on the land on the two reserves at Charters Towers—for the right to mine under which thousands of pounds had been offered—it would be better perhaps to let the miners have the land on paying a substantial sum for it. But there were many other reserves in the colony under which miners might want to mine, where it would be very hard to ask them to pay more for the permission than they would have to pay elsewhere, excepting of course paying for the surface damage they might do.

The PREMIER: But this clause only applies for six months.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The Minister for Works might easily have settled the matter with the people of Charters Towers, who would willingly enough have given sufficient money to pay all expenses connected with the removal of the school. The reef there is 1,000 feet deep, and beyond the power of any poor man to mine it. It could not even be done by a rich man, but only by a combination of rich men. The hon. gentleman said he could not do it without the Bill, but he could have done it easily by proclamation. That was how it was done in Victoria in the early days, when miners were allowed to mine upon the reserves.

The PREMIER: But with whom was the arrangement, in fairness, to be made? There were quite a lot of applicants for the Charters Towers reserves.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Settle it by lot.

The PREMIER said it was exceedingly difficult to say who was entitled to priority. The thing had been going on for years, and to settle it there must be competition of some kind, otherwise the Ministry, whatever they did, would be open to the charge of favouritism.

Mr. LISSNER said that was all right, but a Bill should not have been brought in to deal with those two reserves and then bind the whole country to it. In other places it would come frightfully hard on the miners. The Charters Towers reserves formed quite an exceptional case.

The PREMIER said the hon. member did not quite see the object of the clause. The Bill was a Bill of general application, but the particular clause under discussion was only to be in operation for six months. It would practically, therefore, only apply to those reserves which were now applied for; it made special provision for them without naming them.

Mr. ISAMBERT said it seemed to him that the auction system was rather calculated to favour the capitalist, and would be of little benefit to the miner. Even if it did benefit the miner, it was not right to extract so much money from parties prospecting for gold. It would be far better to make them pay by results.

Mr. SMYTH said that that would never do. When a mine was worked at various levels one portion only might be under the reserve, and the remainder on leased land. It would be very easy for mine-owners to say that all the good stone came off their own land, and all the bad from the reserve.

Amendment put and agreed to.

Mr. NORTON said that during the second reading of the Bill he called attention to the 4th paragraph of the clause, which provided that—

"When two or more applications lodged at the same time comprise part only of the same land, the warden shall, if practicable, allot the land fairly between them; but, if such allotment is not practicable, all the applications shall be rejected."

That seemed an unfair provision. The best way to deal with a question of that kind would be for the warden to divide the land in accordance with the number of applicants, as far as was practicable, and let each of the applicants draw numbered lots for it, or else take them in the order in which the applications were made. It ought not to be thrown open to the public, and the best way would be to leave the matter, as he had suggested, in the hands of the warden, who would decide it to the best advantage.

The PREMIER said if there were half-a-dozen applications lodged at the same time, and there was one part of the land common to all the applications, that piece could not be divided among all the applicants.

Mr. NORTON : That would not be done.

The PREMIER said they must understand that if six applications were made for one piece of land, and that piece was divided into six parts, it would not be of any value to any one of the applicants. Suppose three acres were included in six applications, and the land was divided into six parts, what value would half-an-acre be to anybody? He thought the other alternative was to strike out this provision altogether, and let the applicants go to auction. If there were two or more applicants for part of the same land, the part in common might be put up to auction, but each part applied for in several applications could not be put up separately. Should it be found quite impracticable to do anything with all the applications, then let the applicants start afresh, and by that time they would probably come to some arrangement among themselves.

Mr. SMYTH said he did not think it would often occur that there would be more than one applicant for part of the same ground. According to the first amendment which had been passed, the first thing a man would do would be to peg the ground on a miner's right, because, under the regulations, pegging gave him priority. He could then, if he thought fit, apply for a license.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved the omission of the words "four weeks," in subsection 5, with the view of inserting the words "fourteen days."

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 5, as follows :—

"Any damages sustained by any person in respect of injury done to the surface of any reserve, and which the lessee is liable to pay, may be recovered in the warden's court."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the words "residence area or business area" be inserted after the word "reserve."

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 6, as follows :—

"In all other respects the provisions of the principal Act shall apply to gold-mining leases of land comprised in reserves."

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that there be added at the end of the clause the words "residence areas and business areas."

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended put and passed,

Preamble passed as printed.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with amendments. The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MINERAL LANDS (COAL MINING) BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On this Order of the Day being read, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into committee further to consider the Bill in detail.

Mr. MELLOR said that when the Bill was last under consideration he introduced an amendment, to which there was some objection; and he withdrew it with the intention of substituting an amendment more in accord with the views of hon. members. His object was to encourage prospecting for coal, and he thought the clause he was about to propose would give great encouragement to parties to prospect for coal, and also to endeavour to obtain coal by deep sinking. It would also give them some facilities in working the land, and some encouragement in providing larger areas as well as in the way of reduced royalties. Perhaps the new clause ought to come after clause 6, which dealt with the question of royalties.

On clause 6, as follows :—

"The yearly rent of land leased for the purpose of mining for coal shall be at the rate of sixpence per acre, and there shall also be reserved in the lease a royalty at the rate of threepence for every ton of coal raised from the land during the first ten years of the term of the lease, and at the rate of sixpence for every ton raised during the remainder of the term.

"The times and mode of ascertaining the amount of any royalty so payable and the time for payment thereof shall be prescribed by the lease.

"If the land leased for the purpose of mining for coal is used for the purpose of mining for any other mineral, rent shall become payable in respect thereof at the rate of ten shillings per acre in addition to the royalty, if any, payable in respect of coal raised therefrom."

Mr. NORTON moved the insertion, after the words "for coal shall," of the words, "except as hereinafter provided." The object of the amendment was to enable men who took out licenses to either take up land under the provisions of the Bill when it became law or under the Mineral Lands Act. At the present time men could lease land for mining purposes under the Mineral Lands Act on payment of 10s. an acre per annum; but the payment proposed by the Bill was in the shape of a royalty. He believed a great many miners would prefer to take up land under the principal Act after ascertaining that coal existed in a certain area, which they could do under the provisions of the Bill before the Committee.

The PREMIER said, of course, there were more questions than one involved in the amendment—whether it was desirable to have simply a fixed rent or whether it should be at the option of the lessee to pay a royalty. The clause had

originally been drawn in the way suggested by the hon. member, but upon further consideration it was brought in in its present form. The hon. member meant that the lessee should say which form of payment he preferred, but it was a question whether it was desirable, in the case of coal lands, to put a fixed rent of 10s. an acre on the land or reserve the rent by way of royalty. In the case of a very poor lease the fixed rent would be hard on the lessee, but in the case of a very rich one it would amount to nothing at all. But if payment were made in the form of royalty it would be fair in all cases. Then if a man got a small return of coal he would make a small return to the Government, and in the same way the owner of a rich mine would pay in proportion to the output. £160 a year would be a very heavy rent indeed in the case of a small output, and more than the royalty would amount to. These were considerations which commended themselves to himself and his colleagues, and that was the reason why the Bill was brought in in its present form.

Mr. NORTON said the amendment which he proposed was one which did not at all interfere with the principle of the Bill. Of course, the object of the Bill was to protect prospectors for coal. When a man was prospecting for coal, and had taken his lease under the new Bill, he got his 320 acres as a lease. Well, under that lease he had to pay a royalty on the coal he got out, but at the same time anyone might take up the adjacent land under the present Act.

The PREMIER : Oh, no ! This applies to all leases.

Mr. NORTON said the Bill did not repeal the present Act. The provisions of the present Act remained in force still. He took it that the object was merely to protect prospectors during the time they were prospecting, and if they found there was coal they could take the half of the 640 acres.

The PREMIER : That is one of the objects ; but the 6th and 7th sections amend the law relating to coal-mining leases altogether—deal with all coal-mining leases.

Mr. NORTON said under the principal Act all mineral lands were charged 10s. an acre. He thought the option should be given to lessees to take up the land under the Bill by paying royalty, or, under the principal Act, at 10s. an acre. He proposed that amendment because he believed it would give a great deal more satisfaction to those engaged in mining, and he thought they were entitled to that. If the sole object of the Bill was to get as much as possible out of the lessees, why not put a tax on coal? But that would not be a desirable thing to do. He believed the only fair way to treat prospectors was to allow them to take up land under the Bill and pay a royalty, or allow them to pay 10s. an acre under the principal Act. That was the object of his amendment. He would accept the amendment of the Chief Secretary if he would agree to that.

The PREMIER : Putting in the words "at the option of the lessee"?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL : Is this a private conversation, Mr. Fraser?

Mr. NORTON said, with the permission of the Committee, he would withdraw his amendment with the object of inserting instead the words "at the option of the lessee."

Amendment withdrawn.

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

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the amendment introduced by the hon. member for Port Curtis was a very important one, and one which deserved a great deal of consideration. He thought it was highly desirable to offer every encouragement to prospect for coal, and that the tax which was to be imposed should not press heavily on anyone, especially on those who were commencing such an important industry. But he thought that when the industry was fairly established and a profitable stratum of coal had been struck, it was fair to expect that some contribution should be made to the public revenue. He saw clearly that if the wealthy companies had the alternative of paying 10s. an acre per annum as rent instead of a royalty they would choose that alternative. But there was no doubt that a rich mine would yield to the public revenue a much larger contribution if a royalty was demanded than if the owners only paid 10s. per acre per annum. He thought there could be no objection taken to the position that where a poor man was working a poor deposit of coal, from which there was a very small output, he ought to pay accordingly, the wealthy companies paying also according to their means ; but he did not think they would be justified in allowing a wealthy proprietary to escape the royalty by paying the very much smaller contribution of 10s. per acre per annum. He was informed that in the adjoining colony of New South Wales some coal companies were making a very large contribution indeed to the public revenue—a great deal more than 10s. an acre upon 640 acres. The industry at the present time might be a small one in this colony, but they must regard its future dimensions. He had no doubt it would develop into a very important industry, and as such ought to contribute something to the revenue. He thought the hon. member would see, on further consideration, that all classes should contribute upon the same basis according to their means ; that was, according to the output of coal.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he thought that the Bill was not only intended to protect prospectors but also to encourage the working of coal-mines, and he took the same view as the Colonial Treasurer did. He could not hear all of the private conversation which appeared to be going on a few minutes ago, and he therefore did not exactly know what the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition was. The hon. member spoke in such a subdued tone of voice that he could not gather what he said. He (Mr. Hill) took the same view as the Colonial Treasurer, as he had said before, though he intended to go in afterwards and reduce the royalty from 3d. to 1d., which he thought would be quite sufficient on Crown lands. At present he really did not understand the position they were in, or what amendment they were discussing.

The CHAIRMAN said : I may inform the hon. member that the question before the Committee is the 6th clause. The hon. member for Port Curtis, the leader of the Opposition, has moved, as an amendment, the insertion of the words "at the option of the lessee" after the word "shall" in the 2nd line of the clause, and that amendment is now before the Committee.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the effect of the amendment proposed would be that anyone taking up a selection to search for coal and finding a valuable seam would elect to work it under the provisions of the principal Act, and thereby avoid the payment of royalty, which would be considerable. Take the case of a mine which turned out 1,000 tons of coal per week—by no means a large output. That would be, roughly speaking, 50,000 tons of coal in the year, and the royalty would amount to £2,500 a year. Even if the output were reduced to 500 tons or 250 tons per week, it would be a much

smaller sum to pay by 10s. per acre than to pay by royalty. Now, a man who was not so successful would continue to pay the royalty till he worked up the mine to a paying concern, and then he would find his position was very inferior to that of a man who came under the principal Act. He would be paying double as much as the man under the principal Act. To make such a difference between the two would not be wise, nor would it be in the interests of the lessees. If the system of royalty was a good one, it should be made applicable to all leaseholders. A man who had struck a specially rich mine should not be allowed to select to go under the principal Act, and pay 10s. per acre. Of course, under such circumstances, the conditions could be made more stringent than they might be under the royalty system; but if a man had got a good mine he should not object to pay a royalty.

Mr. BAILEY said he objected to the system of royalty because it introduced a species of landlord and tenant system—the Government being the landlord and the mine-owner being the tenant. While that system might sound very well in theory, it had not been found to work very well in practice. It placed the two parties in a position of antagonism. That was why he did not like very much this royalty business. He would far rather that the Government should prospect their own coal lands and sell them for what they were worth. They would by that means derive a far larger revenue, and the number of people brought on to the land would be larger than under a royalty system. He thought it was the duty of the Government to encourage prospecting for coal-mining purposes or any other industry, and not to discourage prospectors or place any tax on them which would tend to lessen prospecting. The more work was provided the more people would be employed, and the more people employed the larger the Customs revenue would be derived from them. In that way the country would derive a far larger general revenue than by any system of royalties. He would support any amendment proposed by the hon. member for Cook, or by anybody, which would lower the royalty, especially in districts where no coal-mines existed. The difficulty was in finding out a seam of payable coal. He thought many hon. members hardly appreciated that more than twenty years ago numerous prospecting parties—men of small capital but strong arms—willing men too—had worked for years in trying to develop coal-seams on the Mary and had failed. The country was too disturbed and the coal-seams full of faults. These men lost money and time, and many of them were ruined. He did not think he was overstating the matter when he said that in the Wide Bay district, including the Burrum, hundreds of men lost their all during the last twenty years in prospecting for coal. He thought it was wrong to discourage such men if they had enterprise and pluck to devote their energies in trying to develop a new industry. They should have, on the contrary, every encouragement, and not the least thing placed in their way. In the Burrum district they knew how many small companies of men had been ruined in trying to develop the coal industry, and those who had partially succeeded had been hampered and doubly taxed in relation to railway freights. He would support any motion that would be brought forward in committee to give those men more encouragement, and tend to take away any hindrance, no matter how small it might be, that might be placed in their way.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said they had got to choose one way or other between the amendments. If he had heard what reasons the hon. member for Port Curtis had given for his amendment he might have been able to form some opinion on them. But he did not hear the reasons he had advanced in speaking to his amendment. Therefore he was unable, from his own point of view, to see that the amendment of the hon. member for Port Curtis would be of the slightest use at all. Anything that would enlarge the Bill he would be glad to support in order to encourage people to prospect and work coal-seams, more especially in districts where they were not developed at all. He would be happy to give his cordial support to any such thing, but he did not see it would really do any good to insert the words "at the option of the lessee."

Mr. NORTON said that shortly before they adjourned for tea the House was almost empty, and he believed many hon. members now present did not know what the proposal now before the Committee was. Under the existing Act any man could take up land for coal-mining under the Mineral Lands Act, and might get a lease of 160 acres at 10s. rent per acre per annum. The object of introducing this Bill was to encourage prospecting for coal. Under the present Act there was no encouragement to prospectors. This Bill proposed to give prospectors a license to prospect the land and protect them over an area of 640 acres. If they succeeded in finding coal within two years, they could then select up to a half of that quantity—320 acres—paying 6d. per acre per annum rent, and in addition a royalty of 3d. per ton on the coal they took out of the mine. As the object was to induce people to prospect for coal, he said it was desirable that they should give them the option of working the lands under the present system or under the proposed new system. That was to say, give them a license to prospect for coal over 640 acres, and if they succeeded in finding coal, they should be equally entitled to take 320 acres or any smaller portion at the rent provided for in the present Act—10s. per acre per annum—or, if they preferred it, to take it under the present Bill and pay 6d. per acre per annum rent, and a royalty on the coal. The Minister for Lands spoke as though the sole object of the Government was to get all the royalty possible out of the people, forgetting that this was a Bill to induce people to look for coal, and open up new fields. Bearing in mind that this was a Bill for that purpose, he said if they gave licenses to take up 640 acres of land to prospectors, and if they succeeded in finding coal, then they ought either to allow them to take up 320 acres or a smaller area under the provisions proposed in the Bill, or under the provisions of the present Act. The objection he (Mr. Norton) had to these provisions was that they would be harassing to those who worked the mines. Men who were working a coalfield or employed in any other work—he did not care what it was—objected to a Government inspector always prowling about. Under the Bill they would have to show what coal they put out of their mines—what quantity—and in the event of the Government not being satisfied that the returns were correct, the coal would have to be weighed, or they would have to show their books or something of the kind, all of which was very annoying and harassing. He wished to obviate that, and therefore he proposed by his amendment—there were only a few words to be inserted now; but there would be an after amendment—to give the licensee, if he found coal, the option of taking up the land he wished for, either at 10s. per acre or else at 3d. per ton royalty. That was the object he had in view, and he hoped hon. members would bear in mind that his motion was to induce people to search for coal, and, when they had found it, to work it whatever way they thought most favourable.

The PREMIER said he believed there was no case of a coal lease being taken up under the present Mineral Lands Act. The Act had been found unworkable in that respect, so there was no reason for adopting the fixed rental of 10s. per acre.

Mr. NORTON: They are not protected now.

The PREMIER: It was a purely arbitrary price, and he saw no reason why they should fix it at 10s. per acre.

Mr. NORTON: Why not fix it at 3d. royalty?

The PREMIER said there was certainly a rational argument in favour of the payment of a royalty, because the lessee would pay in proportion to the profit he received from what was at present a portion of the public estate. That was a sound reason; and he was disposed to think, as he said just before, that a provision of the kind suggested would operate very hardly in the case of a man who had a poor coal lease, and very beneficially in that of a man who had a rich one; because a man who had a poor one would be always paying £160 per annum, which would be a very high rent indeed in such cases, whereas, to a man with a valuable property, that sum would be a very small rent.

Mr. NORTON: He could forfeit his lease.

The PREMIER said of course he could do that, but that would be very poor satisfaction. He was disposed to think that, on the whole, the payment of a royalty would be the fairest, as men would pay in proportion to the advantage they received. The larger the output the less heavily the rent would fall upon the lessee.

Mr. NORTON: You might just as well charge a royalty upon other minerals.

The PREMIER said he was not sure that it would not be a very good thing. It would be a very rational principle, at any rate, to adopt, although they did not propose to do it.

Mr, NORTON: Is this the thin end of the wedge?

The PREMIER said he thought there was something to be said in favour of both views. His opinion had fluctuated a good deal; but he had come to the conclusion that the royalty should be paid, and if a man were unable to work his mine he should only pay a nominal rent. If he adopted the other plan, he would have to pay 10s. per acre. There were no leases under the present Act, and it was a question which was the best principle to lay down.

Mr. FOXTON said that if the hon. member for Port Curtis went into figures he would see that there was very little in his amendment at all. It was only the men who were raising 12,800 tons of coal in the year whom it would pay to elect to pay the rent instead of the royalty. 320 acres at 10s. per acre would be £160.

Mr. NORTON said 12,160 tons was the amount. The hon. gentleman would have to deduct 6d. per acre.

Mr. FOXTON said that if a man only raised by the royalty enough coal to bring in to the Government anything less than £160 per annum, he would certainly elect to pay the royalty rather than the rent. What he meant to say was this: that in deciding which he would elect to come under, a man would certainly elect to pay the royalty unless that royalty would amount to over £160 per annum. He did not know whether he made himself clear to the hon. gentleman, but in order to pay £160 per annum he would have to raise something like 12,800 tons of coal per annum.

Mr. NORTON: 12,160. About 1,000 a month. You must deduct 6d. per acre.

Mr. FOXTON said it was really only the wealthy coal proprietor who would elect to come under the hon. gentleman's amendment, and he certainly was one who could afford to pay the increased amount by way of royalty, therefore he thought that the royalty was decidedly the best and fairest way. As to the hon. member's objection, that men would take exception to the Government inspector prowling about, there was not the slightest necessity for that at all. The thing was done every day in coal districts by coal proprietors who received a royalty. There was no reason why it could not be done without oppressing the men who were actually working on the ground under the Government. It could be done just as easily by him as by a man who was working a coal property leased from a private individual. The men who had actually hewn the coal were paid so much per ton themselves, and nothing could be more simple than to furnish a return, as was done in other industries by a wages sheet, to show exactly the amount of coal raised from the mine.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that from what the Premier had said just previously his mind seemed to be fluctuating as to whether he was in favour of the amendment or the original Bill. He must bear in mind that the rent of 10s. an acre was a very large sum. He (Mr. Macrossan) stated, when the Bill was at its second reading, that it was intended by the late Government, which passed the Mineral Lands Act, that it should not be applicable to coal-mines. Their intention was to bring in a Bill specially dealing with coal, and therefore, so far as the sum mentioned per acre was concerned, they could easily put that on one side.

The PREMIER: It is purely arbitrary.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman said there had been no leases under the principal Act yet.

The PREMIER: Coal leases.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There were none, because such a large amount of private freehold land was coal land; therefore there had been no inducement under that Act, which was never intended to be an inducement to coal-mining, the same as it was to other minerals, to take up lands, because there had been plenty of private lands to operate upon. In dealing with the Bill, which might be taken as a new departure, they should treat it in the light of encouraging coal-mining without any reference to the arbitrary sum of 10s. per acre. If that was too much in the principal Act they could reduce it. He thought they ought to give as much encouragement as they possibly could to miners. He believed they all appreciated the value of coal-mining. There was scarcely any other industry under which the State lands carried such a large population in proportion to the amount of land taken up and used by them. One square mile of coal property would very likely, if used properly, give employment to ten times as many men as 1,000 or even 10,000 square miles of pastoral property; therefere, it was of very great importance to them, in dealing with a Bill of that sort, to deal with it fairly, and offer encouragement to coal-miners. He thought that 10s. an acre was too high, and that 3d. per ton royalty was too high. He did not see why they should charge a royalty at all to make a revenue out of it. Their aim should be to encourage men to work coal-mines, and find coal. They all knew how unfortunate they had been hitherto in finding coal to compete with the coal found outside the colony. Therefore they should not handicap their coal industry in any way. It would be enough for

them to do that when they found their miners producing coal able to compete with the coal produced in Newcastle and elsewhere. It would be time enough to put a royalty on then. He would be for foregoing the royalty altogether so long as they could get the land taken up and mined for coal. Then afterwards, if they found it could bear a royalty, they might put it on; but at present he said they should have no royalty, and should reduce the price paid for permission to work the land as much as possible. He thought the price named in the principal Act—10s. per acre—too much. They did not usually charge so much in the case of other industries for permission to work. When they considered the small value of a ton of coal compared to the value of other minerals, the land in which the other minerals were got being paid for at the same price—10s. per acre—he thought hon. members would agree that it was rather too high a price to charge for coal lands. He would say that 2s. 6d. an acre would be quite high enough to charge for coal lands when they compared the value of coal land with the value of tin, copper, and silver lands, for which 10s. an acre only was paid all over the colony under the principal Act. Therefore he thought that in considering the amendment they should leave out of view the 10s. per acre altogether, or reduce the amount.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: The Bill says that 6d. an acre is charged.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said it provided for the payment of 6d. an acre with a royalty. The sum of 10s. per acre was the sum charged in the principal Act without any royalty. They should keep in view that the amendment would give the prospector who found coal the option of coming under this Bill or under the principal Act, by paying a royalty under the Bill, or by paying half-a-crown an acre, or whatever sum might be imposed, under the principal Act—because they could amend the sum in the principal Act just as easily as they could amend anything else. Hon. members should consider that the Bill was a new Bill dealing with coal lands.

The PREMIER: That is exactly what I said.

Mr. NORTON said the objection that had been raised to the amendment, so far as he could understand, was that it would give an advantage to wealthy companies that poorer companies would not have—that wealthy companies would prefer to pay £160 a year for the land rather than pay the royalty. One thing should not be lost sight of—and that was, that the object of the Bill was not only to encourage prospecting for coal, but also to encourage the working of it when it was found. He would ask hon. members whether a rich company or a poor one was the more likely to go on with prospecting for coal, and working it after it was found? A rich company, in taking up land under a license, was the more likely to go to some expense in prospecting it in the hope that if they found coal they would be able to work it immediately afterwards. There was no object in discouraging rich companies, because they were the very people who had the best chance of finding coal. Another answer to the objection which had been raised was, that although a rich company might take up land under the provisions he proposed, they were much more likely to intend to work it, at any rate, than if they took it up under the provisions of the Bill. Under the provisions of the Bill they must work it, but they could keep a few men fiddling away with it until they had an opportunity of forming a syndicate and selling it to them. Was it not preferable that they should encourage a rich company to take up 320 acres at 10s. an acre, and work it themselves, than to offer an inducement to them to take it up merely for the purpose of subsequently selling the property to a syndicate? He thought it advisable to give the option of either one or the other. He thought that all they did to induce rich companies to prospect for coal would be helping the development of the coalfields of the colony, and he was quite satisfied that if they did prospect they would be more likely to go on with the work so long as they had a chance of finding good seams. In the event of their finding them they would soon find the means to work them. This, he thought, would not be in the least unfair to the poorer class of miners, who, if they found coal, would be enabled to work it as slowly as their means would permit them to do it. Why should they not encourage both? The object of the Bill was not, he took it, for revenue purposes at all; and they should bear in mind, in considering the matter, that they were dealing simply with prospecting, the object being to open up new coalfields in districts where coal had not yet been found, and every encouragement should be given to people to do it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the hon. member for Port Curtis was running a false scent. The objection pointed out to the hon. gentleman's amendment was not that they should throw obstacles in the way of wealthy companies, but that if a claim turned out excessively rich those people who were fortunate enough to get that claim would be put in a better position than those who had got poorer claims.

Mr. NORTON: Why shouldn't they, if they opened up new fields?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Yes; but the hon. gentleman's amendment would give an additional advantage that was not given in the Bill itself. He was really more in favour of the royalty system, because it was, after all, payment by results, which was the best and fairest way in which they could levy any sort of taxation. At the same time he should endeavour to reduce the payment. If the hon. member's amendment came to a division he should vote against it, because he thought it only complicated the clause, and would not be really conducive to either of the classes they expected would find the coal.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member for Port Curtis seemed to put very little value on coal land, and he was supported in that view by the hon. member for Townsville. They thought 10s. per acre too much to give, and were of opinion that 2s. 6d. per acre would be quite sufficient. Those hon. gentlemen spoke very well when speaking of a goldfield, but when they came to talk about coalfields they were altogether out in the cold. The value of coal lands was far in excess of the value of gold lands.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: What about Mount Morgan—have you got anything like that in Ipswich?

Mr. MACFARLANE said he had been asked if they had in Ipswich anything equal to Mount Morgan. He believed they had. He believed there was a good deal of blow about Mount Morgan. The value of coal lands had been going on increasing very satisfactorily around Ipswich, and the hon. member seemed to think that 10s. an acre was too much to pay for them.

Mr. NORTON: It is only a lease.

Mr. MACFARLANE said some of the coal lands in his district were owned by men who had paid £40 an acre for them, and they were going to be put in opposition to other men who only paid 6d. an acre. The Government were far too liberal, and they continually

brought themselves into difficulties by allowing speculators and others to make money out of them where they ought to be making money themselves. They proposed to give away lands that could be sold for £10, £20, £30, or £40 an acre—to give them away for 6d. an acre, with 3d. royalty for the first ten years, and 6d. for the next ten years. It was actually making a gift of the rich coal lands of the country. When coal lands were found it was proposed to give prospectors an area of 640 acres, and if they found coal within that area to choose 320 acres in any part of it and keep it on payment of a mere tithe—it was no rent at all. If the land was poor it would not be worth working at all; if it was rich they were giving a monopoly which should not be put in the hands of any private company; the Government should receive the benefit. It would make a very material difference, as he had said, to those who had freehold coal lands. He knew a coal property at the present time of about eighty acres, which cost £40,000; and they were going to put a freehold proprietor like that in opposition to a leaseholder paying 3d. per ton royalty for coal. No wonder they had deficits in the Treasury every year! He was not a coal proprietor, and he had no share in any coal-mine; but on behalf of those who were coal proprietors he said it would be unfair to give away the coal lands of the colony at a mere tithe—almost nothing.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was afraid the hon. member, while trying to remove the mote from the eyes of the hon. member for Port Curtis and himself, forgot the beam that was in his own eye. Was it not ridiculous to hear the hon. member talking about the relative value of coal lands and gold lands? Of course, the eighty acres the hon. member had spoken of as being worth £40,000 was a very valuable property, but there were twenty-five acres on Charters Towers sold the other day for ten times as much; and that was not a freehold, but was held under lease. The hon. member would do away with that monopoly; he would resume the land and make the Government a gold-mining proprietary. Now, the people who found those things deserved all they got for finding them. They spent money and time in prospecting; he knew some men in the House and many outside of it who had spent their lifetime up to the present, and had got nothing. It was rather too much to hear the hon. member talk of giving away the land. The 10s. an acre the hon. gentleman spoke of was not paid for the fee-simple of the land; it was a rent which had to be paid for ever as long as the land was worked. If a man worked 320 acres for twenty years, he would have paid £10 per acre at the end of that time. That was not giving away the land; it was charging too much for it—because there was only one "Day Dawn" at Charters Towers and probably only one coal property of eighty acres worth £40,000. They could not reckon the value of coal and gold lands by those exceptional cases; they must take them as they found them. They knew that many coal-mines were working which did not pay very much to the proprietors, and they knew scores of gold-mines which paid nothing at all. They had to legislate for the average, and he thought that 10s. an acre was too much to pay for ordinary coal-lands. The land the hon. gentleman spoke of, which was sold for £40 an acre, was probably sold by the Crown for £1 an acre; what comparison was there between that and 10s. an acre rent? Two years' rent would be equal to the selling price of the land the hon. gentleman spoke of. He did not intend to say much more on the question, but he would rather that the encouragement offered by the Bill should be such as to encourage people to prospect for coal and work it, than that the Government should look for a revenue out of it. The number of people employed by the coal proprietors would bring in a large revenue; the increase of population and of the area of employment was far more important than the paltry 6d. a ton or 10s. an acre that the Treasurer would get at the end of the year from 2,000 or 3,000 acres of coal land. That would increase his revenue far more than if he increased it from royalty or from the yearly rent. On the small area of Gympie there must be 8,000 or 10,000 people living by mining; and it would be far better for the country if they could increase those areas in number than if they were to exact a high rent or royalty, and so deter people from trying to find what was beneath the surface. He did not know whether the Government were willing to take the hon. gentleman's amendment in any shape or not; if not, it was no use discussing the question, and they might as well come to the question of royalty at once.

Mr. KELLETT said he thought the system of royalty a very fair one, and did not consider that 3d. a ton was by any means too heavy. He knew a property which had been let by the Government at double that, and the proprietor was glad to get it at that, and would have paid twice as much if it had been asked. The amendment of the hon. member for Port Curtis simply meant that no more than £160 was to be paid for any mine; when the royalty reached that amount no more was to be paid. The hon. member was in favour of giving every advantage to the big men, and giving no chance to the poor men who were really working up-hill with little means. The real meaning of the amendment was that the maximum that could be taken out of a mine by the Government would be £160. Anyone who got a show of coal would not be stopped from developing it by a royalty of 3d. or 6d. a ton. Considering the very high prices that had been paid for coal properties and that they were increasing in value every day, any man who found coal on the terms offered by the Bill would certainly not object to those terms. He should be very sorry to see the Government agree to a less royalty than 3d. a ton.

Mr. HAMILTON said he failed to see what objection there could be to the amendment. It simply gave coal-miners the option of either taking up land under a previous Act passed by the present Government or under the provisions of the Bill now under discussion. It was said by the Government that the provisions of the present Bill were more liberal than those of their previous Act. If so, why should they object to miners choosing, if they thought fit, to come under the more illiberal provisions of the previous Act? It was amusing to hear hon. members on the other side talking against the provision proposed by the leader of the Opposition, when it was the very same provision they voted for when proposed formerly by the Government. If the Government intended to get every penny they could out of the miners, they would not, of course, accept the amendment, but, as the hon. member for Townsville had pointed out, 10s. per acre was far too high a price to pay.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he saw no special hardship in the proposal of the Government. It would operate fairly and equitably on all classes, and as to the amount of royalty it was almost absurdly, ridiculously low. He knew of an estate in the Ipswich district, held on a ten years' lease, and a royalty of 1s. a ton was paid on all the coal raised upon it. In that Bill the Government only asked for a royalty of 3d. a ton, and a rent of 6d. an acre. Th

seemed to him a fair and equitable way of dealing with the matter, and he should support the provisions of the Bill as they stood.

Mr. NELSON said that no doubt, if the object of the Bill was to gain a revenue, a royalty might be as fair a way of getting it as any other; but as he understood the Bill it was not so much a Bill for the raising of revenue as to encourage prospectors to search for coal. But the imposition of a royalty did not take into account any variation that might take place in the price of coal. Coal might now be worth 5s. or 6s. a ton at the pit's mouth, and perhaps in a year or two it might not be worth half that price. The proposed royalty might not be felt by the people of Bundanba or other places near ports of shipment; but it might be felt as a heavy tax by the people of the Darling Downs. The tax, in fact, was anything but an equitable one. With regard to the amendment, it was very important to a man to know beforehand exactly what he had got to pay. If he took up land at a certain price per acre, knowing that that was the full amount he would have to pay, it would be a great incentive to him to set to work and discover the coal, and if he had the prospect of making a very large profit out of it hereafter it would still further induce him to develop the mine. The hon. member for Carnarvon objected that nobody would pay the royalty if the amendment was passed. That was quite possible, but a man could not change from one system to the other after he had once decided which he would take up the land under. On the whole, he thought the amendment might be allowed to go. Hon. members must remember that the Bill would apply not to land near the coast only but to the entire colony, and bearing that in mind it would be seen that the amendment would hold out a great inducement to people to search for coal.

Mr. ALAND said the amendment was also open to the objection raised by the hon. member for Northern Downs. If a fixed royalty would press hardly upon certain people, so would a fixed rent. He failed to see where the hon. member's argument came in. The royalty system seemed to be about the fairest that could be adopted, and he should support it.

Mr. NORTON said he did not wish to discuss the matter further, but he would point out that the Bill was a Bill for the encouragement of prospecting, and did not alter any portion of the existing Act. Even if the Bill were passed in its existing form, he thought—although he might be wrong—that leases for coal-mines might be taken up under the Mineral Lands Act.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. NORTON said he did not see anything to prevent it. Hon. members would persist in referring to the Ipswich lands, which were known to be coal lands, and were in proximity to both land and water carriage, and also to a market, and where a man knew he had only to sink a shaft in order to take out coal. A man there knew what he was doing. What he wanted to do was to encourage men who had money to take out a license under that Bill, and prospect in places where coal was not known to exist.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They will not do that.

Mr. NORTON said he believed they would. If the sole object of the Bill was to induce men of small capital only to prospect for coal, then there would not be much chance of finding it. He would take his own district as an illustration of his argument. He knew that coal existed in that district, and that in two or three portions coal had been found. The object he had in view was to induce men with money to find the coal there and work it, and he believed capitalists would be induced to go there for that purpose if they knew exactly what they would have to pay when they discovered coal. He believed also that they would rather pay 10s. an acre than a royalty, and that was a matter which ought to be considered. Persons going there might take up half-a-dozen different blocks of land before they found coal, and they would be placed at a disadvantage with the men who came afterwards, as they would have to bear all the cost of finding the coal deposit. The object should, of course, be to induce men to spend their money in that way, and, as he had stated before, rich syndicates were much more likely to do that than poor ones, simply from the fact that small companies, if they tried one place and failed to find coal, would give up the search, whereas a rich syndicate would start operations with the knowledge that they might have to try half-a-dozen places before they succeeded, and that even after all their efforts might be fruitless. He contended that men who prospected in that way were entitled to some consideration, and it was far better to let them have 320 acres at a rent of £160 a year than impose a royalty of 3d. per ton on the coal they obtained.

Mr. FOOTE said he did not regard the Bill as one for prospecting for coal in the same sense as the term "prospecting" was used in connection with gold-mining. As he understood the measure, it was intended to develop the coal industry. Prospecting for coal was very different to prospecting for gold and other minerals. Persons who were acquainted with coal-mining, and who were capable of finding seams of coal, could easily trace those seams from the surface; they could even make their calculations most accurately as to whether a seam dipped in a certain direction or not. They could tell by the compass the bend in which the coal ran, and, by sinking a few yards, could ascertain the dip of the coal, and the depth to which they would have to go. It was not very likely that persons of capital, as the hon. member for Port Curtis suggested, would be induced to go into the matter in the manner in which the hon. member anticipated they would; they were not going to sink shafts in order to ascertain where coal was to be found. If capitalists wanted to prospect Crown lands for coal they would seek out practical men who understood their business, and would put down bores, not shafts. There was not the same difficulty in ascertaining where the seams were in coal lands as there was in connection with other minerals. He thought the remarks of the hon. member for Port Curtis were somewhat beside the question. The hon. member must be associating coal deposits with mineral deposits, and thought they should be treated in a similar way. He (Mr. Foote) knew of his own knowledge that parties who would be likely to take up land under the Bill would be thoroughly practical miners, who would be able to ascertain in a very short time, probably in a few weeks, the amount of coal they would get within a certain distance of the earth's surface and over a certain area.

Mr. NORTON: What distance?

Mr. FOOTE said it depended upon the dip of the coal and how many seams there were. There were some lands in which there were twenty seams, and others in which there were not so many; but the seams could easily be traced. If the dip went down in one place it rose in another, and the most inexperienced miner could ascertain its direction with a little practical working. The Bill seemed to him to be a very fair measure, and he thought it was calculated to accomplish the object the Government had in view in introducing it. He did not expect that

large capitalists were going to enter into the matter at the beginning. When a few practical men took up the lands and opened them up, that was the time capitalists would come in and either buy out the prospectors or take shares in and develop the mines. The hon. member for Northern Downs had referred to coal having been found inland, and said he knew where there was coal which could be worked at the present time without any royalty. No doubt that was the case; but there was no market for that coal, and therefore no consumption. The cost in bringing it to market would be a great deal more than the coal was worth. Consequently, all the lands that would be taken up under the Bill would be near a market, near tidal water, or railway carriage to a port. The Bill would not, for many years to come, be brought into operation in the interior to any great extent. He would support the clause as it stood.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Premier had stated just now that if the Bill became law it would be impossible for anyone to take up coal lands under the principal Act. He (Mr. Macrossan) did not think there was any provision in the Bill which would prevent anyone making application for such land under the principal Act.

The PREMIER said a person would have to take it up under the principal Act as modified by the provisions of that Bill. If there was any doubt about that a few words could be inserted to remove that doubt; but he did not think there was any doubt at all in the matter.

Mr. NORTON: I think there is a great deal of doubt.

The PREMIER said that under the provisions of the principal Act a person would have to pay 10s. an acre, but the Bill before the Committee provided that the yearly rental of land leased for the purpose of mining for coal should be at the rate of 6d. per acre with a royalty of 3d. per ton.

Mr. NORTON said they were dealing with prospecting for coal, and when a man by prospecting had found coal then he took up the land under the Bill, and would have to pay 6d. per acre for rent, and 3d. per ton royalty; but there was nothing in the Bill to prevent anyone applying for a lease of the land under the principal Act.

The PREMIER said he would have to apply for the land under the principal Act. It was only under that Act that a lease could be obtained. The amount to be paid for the land was fixed by the clause at 6d. per acre with 3d. per ton royalty on the coal. If the hon. member had any doubt on the subject he could propose an amendment.

Mr. ANNEAR said the Premier had stated just now that the Bill was a modification of the principal Act. He would like to know whether, about two years ago, an area of land known as the Bundanba racecourse was leased to a company at a rental of 6d. per acre per annum without any royalty, because if it was, that was very different from the provision in that Bill?

Mr. KELLETT: That is all wrong.

Mr. FOXTON said he happened to know something about that. It was a royalty of 6d. per ton, so that the boot was on the other leg.

Mr. FOOTE asked who received the 6d. a ton—the Government or the trustees of the racecourse?

Question put.

Mr. FOOTE said he had asked a question which had not been answered.

The CHAIRMAN said that if the hon. member gave notice his question would, no doubt, be answered.

Mr. STEVENSON said the Chairman need not be in a hurry to put the question. The hon. member for Bundanba had asked the Minister a certain question, and the Committee should have an answer. He (Mr. Stevenson) wanted an answer; and he supposed the Minister would give the information if it were in his possession.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said there was a reserve at Bundanba—he did not know whether it was a racecourse reserve or not. A coal-mining company had a shaft there, and had the right of taking coal from under the reserve on paying a royalty of 6d. per ton to the Crown. In the event of the output not producing a royalty of £50 a year, the company had to pay that amount in cash.

Mr. SHERIDAN asked whether there was any rent paid in addition to the royalty?

The PREMIER said that £50 was the minimum amount to be paid by the company to the Government.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL moved that the word "threepence" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "one penny." He hoped the bunch who had the monopoly of the coal-mining districts would divest themselves of the habit of considering their own vested rights for the benefit of the colony at large. There was no doubt that coal-mining at Ipswich, where it was an established fact, was a very much easier operation than it would be at Cooktown or anywhere north. Not only was there a market at hand, with communication by rail and river, but also factories and foundries where anything could be quickly repaired or obtained at a moment's notice. The labour market also was cheaper; and in the Ipswich district they were under every advantage compared with the people in districts further from the centres of civilisation. It was in view of the immense importance that it would be to the colony if coal were discovered at Cooktown and other places in the north that he was anxious that the Bill should be made as liberal as possible, and that it should offer every inducement to people not only to prospect, but also to work the land after they had discovered coal.

The PREMIER moved the insertion, after the word "shall," of the words "instead of being at the rate of 10s. per acre as provided by the principal Act." That would probably remove the doubt felt by the hon. member for Port Curtis.

Mr. STEVENSON asked which amendment came first—that moved by the hon. member for Cook or the one just moved by the Premier?

The CHAIRMAN said the amendment just moved by the Premier came first. He had not put the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. STEVENSON said the Chairman might have had the courtesy to allow the hon. member for Cook to withdraw his amendment before putting the other.

The CHAIRMAN said there was no necessity to do so as it had not been put from the chair.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL again moved his amendment substituting the words "one penny" for the word "threepence." He would only add that he would feel perfectly certain of the support of the hon. members for Ipswich and Bundanba if he had moved the substitution of the words "one shilling" for the word "threepence."

Mr. FOOTE: No, no!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he hoped the hon. member for Cook would withdraw his amendment. It was evident that the object he had in view was to let the people in the North know what he was doing for them. The Government meant to adhere to the Bill as it stood.

Mr. HAMILTON said Ministers did not seem to appreciate the importance of the mining industry. When they recollected the immense benefit that would accrue from the development of the coal-mining industry, it must be apparent that the policy of the Government was a very short-sighted one. Instead of calculating whether more could be obtained from the miners by charging 10s. an acre or 3d. a ton royalty, they should take a more statesmanlike view of the question. At present they appeared to regard the miners as milch cows, and in every possible way endeavoured to tax them, and whenever any mining representative got up to express his views he was taunted with having made a speech to his constituents. He certainly considered that the amendment proposed by his colleague (Mr. Hill) was a very reasonable one, and he for one should be very happy to support it.

Mr. ANNEAR said he considered also that the amendment moved by the hon. member for Cook was very reasonable and fair. Whatever the Minister for Works might say about hon. members talking to their constituents, he would not deter him (Mr. Annear) from taking a course which he thought right and proper in the interests of those who sent him to the House, and in the interests of the colony at large. He quite agreed with every word that had fallen from the hon. member for Townsville. He thought that they made too much of the paltry 3d. a ton that the Government were to get as a royalty from coal.

Mr. BULCOCK : Hear, hear!

Mr. ANNEAR said he was not speaking to the junior member for Enoggera at all. If that hon. gentleman wished to have anything to say he could reply when he (Mr. Annear) had done. He had never interrupted the hon. member, and would not be interrupted by him while he had a seat in the House. He took it to be of far more advantage to the colony to support a population of coal-miners than that a paltry 3d. a ton which might be received by the Government, but which, in his opinion, would not be received at all, because the coal properties of the colony would not be developed under such a system. It was all very well for the hon. members for Ipswich to talk about the value of their lands. There had been no trouble in prospecting on them. Sandstone had only to be quarried, and wherever that was found there was found a seam of coal, with a roof which rendered the working of it perfectly safe. But that was not so in other parts of the colony. He had done work for one company, and before ever they got a ton of coal to market it cost them £15,000 ; and what were they doing now? They had developed their property, and last week they got fifty more coal-miners from Newcastle. That was the wealth of the colony, but that the great freetraders could not see. All they could see was the paltry 3d. a ton, which, in his opinion, the Government would never get. He had made the statement before, and would repeat again that he was sure it would be beneficial to the colony if the Government, after having imposed certain labour conditions, would hand over these coal lands to companies for nothing. He should vote with the member for Cook if he proposed that the royalty be reduced to ½d. a ton, and he would vote for nothing a ton so long as labour conditions were enforced upon those who took up the land. There was no doubt the Ipswich properties were very valuable, but Ipswich was not the whole colony. No company could go and prospect for coal at the Burrum unless prepared to expend £5,000 or £6,000. In answer to a remark of the leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Works said people would not prospect for coal where coal was not known to exist, but what were the Isis Company doing now? No coal had been found there. No one knew that coal measures existed there, and he considered that coal measures were not so easily traceable on the surface of the ground as gold measures were, by any means. He should vote with the hon. member for Cook, and he hoped that other hon. gentlemen would do their duty and take a broad view of the question, and not the view of some hon. members who thought they could see a source of revenue from that 3d. a ton royalty. All parts of the colony should be treated alike, for what did they see in his district? The coal proprietors were now paying 100 per cent. more for the carriage of their coal than the coal proprietors of Ipswich.

The PREMIER said he had in his hand a telegram from a coal-owner not far from the town of Maryborough, protesting against the injustice that would be done if the Government were going to accept less than 6d. a ton royalty. He could understand the difference of opinion that existed. Those who had coal properties at the present time, and who had probably paid a good price for them, did not like to see a large amount of competition from persons paying a nominal rate. Of course, a great deal might be said in favour of the view that by giving away coal lands for nothing coal-mining would be encouraged. It might be to a certain extent, but the Government adopted the view that they had no right to give away the public lands for nothing. Hon. members, of course, who had no responsibility cast upon them said in effect, "Why not give away all the land to everybody ; why should the Government not do everything for the people? let the Government feed everybody, and clothe everybody ; let the Government find the money ;" but if they made any particular proposal to Parliament for finding it, they were met with the cry—"That will not do. The Government must do it without any money." That was the kind of proposition laid down by hon. members sometimes. Now the question was, what was a fair royalty to pay? An output of 12,000 tons a year would produce 10s. an acre on 320 acres. Well, that was not a very large rent. He did not think it was the intention of the Bill to reduce the rent.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN : It should have done.

The PREMIER said it was not the intention to reduce it to the extent demanded by some hon. members. If the royalty were reduced to 1d. a ton, the rent would then amount to about 3s. 4d. an acre on 12,000 tons a year as an output. Then the question to settle was—Is that a fair royalty to ask? Is that a fair rent to pay for lands so valuable as coal lands? The Government did not propose that coal or other mineral lands should be sold, but they wanted to fix a fair rent to be put upon them. If the proposed rent was compared with that paid to the owners of private coal lands it was a very moderate rent indeed—very much less than that charged in the neighbouring colonies or anywhere else that he knew of.

Mr. NORTON said the Chief Secretary seemed very much alarmed at the proposition of the hon. member for Maryborough to give away the land. But he (Mr. Norton) proposed to give it away for a *quid pro quo*. The Government proposed to give away the land to persons who came from home at their own expense. They got what

they considered their *quid pro quo*. The hon. member for Maryborough considered that the Government would derive more benefit from having the lands worked than by selling them, and he (Mr. Norton) believed he was right. He believed the hon. member's argument was perfectly sound—that if people could be induced to work those coal lands at a profit so that they would be encouraged to enlarge their work, the amount of population which they would bring to the district where the coal lands were situated would increase the revenue far more than any arrangements that were likely to be made under a Bill of that sort. What, after all, was this 3d. per ton royalty? It was not much, and if it had the effect which some hon. members thought—though he did not think it would have—of preventing the coal lands being worked so largely as they otherwise would be, then it would not be so favourable as giving away the lands and inducing people to settle on the land and work as proposed by the hon. member for Maryborough. It was all very well for the Premier to say—"Why should we give away our lands for nothing? We must remember we are trustees for the people." That was getting back to the Georgian theory. What did the hon. member propose to do by the new Land Act? He was actually going to give away the land—if they understood his promise to the member for South Brisbane—to people to induce people to come into the country, on condition that they paid their own passage and settled upon the land. It was exactly the same principle when it was proposed to give people coal land to induce them to utilise it and settle a large population upon the neighbourhood, so as to bring in more revenue through Customs and from taxation which they would have to pay.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that, with regard to the telegram which the Premier referred to, he should like to know from whom it came. The inference he drew was that it came from some freeholder——

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He said so.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: From someone who had acquired the freehold of the land at 5s. an acre, and who was very anxious to see every impediment put on any further development of coal on the lands yet belonging to the country and to the people of the country. He was just as anxious the other way—to see the coal that was under the ground of Crown property, and fresh fields and new pastures opened up.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he had listened with a great deal of attention to the reading of the telegram to the hon. the Premier, and he had no doubt that it came from a proprietor or landowner. Now, he happened to be an owner of a considerable quantity of coal land at Burrum, and notwithstanding that he was the owner, and knew that coal existed on that land, he still deemed it his duty to vote for the amendment of the hon. member for Cook, because he wanted to see people in the country and a large number of men employed. He looked upon the introduction of labour as the real wealth of the colony. It mattered very little what royalty was paid—it might be great or it might be small—so long as they got an abundance of labour in the colony.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, wanted the royalty reduced to ½d. per ton, or even to nothing. He was astonished that he did not say he would give the land away for nothing. Notwithstanding all that had been said, and especially what had been said by the leader of the Opposition when he was referring to the fact that there were more places than Ipswich in Queensland—they knew that there were other districts in the colony containing coal measures as well as Ipswich—but could any hon. member tell him that any speculator, or syndicate, or company would go to the Gulf of Carpentaria to look for coal?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why not?

Mr. MACFARLANE: Because it would not pay. No company was going to the outside districts to look for coal when they could lay their hands on coal lands without seeking for them at all. What would be the effect immediately this Bill passed even if 1s. per ton royalty were imposed? There would be speculators coming to the colony, and the reserves which were known to contain coal would be pounced upon at once by these speculators.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACFARLANE: And yet did they propose to give them away for 1d. royalty? The thing was preposterous. No company was going to the outside districts to look for coal, but simply to the districts near the coast, where they hoped to find a near market and a profit to the company. The greatest benefit ever done to those districts would be the passing of this Bill, because the coal lands would be developed immediately, and a revenue given to the Treasurer. The hon. member for Townsville had said it was preposterous to compare the coal lands of Ipswich with the goldfields of the North. But they should remember what it cost to raise the gold. If they raised £100,000 of gold from a mine, and if it took £99,000 to raise it, where was the profit? It was quite different with coal. They knew that more than 100 per cent. was paid on the cost of raising coal. He maintained that the coalfields of the colony would do far more good to the country than all the gold of the North. He hoped the amendment would not pass. In fact it would be defeated, and he would be very much inclined then to move that the 3d. royalty be erased, with the view of inserting 6d.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was afraid that the beam in the eye of the hon. gentleman, the member for Ipswich, was growing much bigger. He could not read the newspapers or he would not know so little about the goldfields. If he had only looked at the newspapers that morning he would have seen the amount of dividends paid compared with the amount of calls, and that the comparison was not ninety-nine out of a hundred, or anything like it. The hon. gentleman said that there were no coal lands worth working except those at Ipswich, and asked who would go to look for coal in Carpentaria? He (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) would, if he had the capital, and would find a very good market for it there. They knew that there were very rich copper deposits in Carpentaria, and they believed there was a great quantity of coal there and very little timber. The hon. gentleman did not know much about the North yet. Probably he would know more when separation came.

Mr. PALMER said he was just about to call attention to the very subject referred to by the hon. member for Townsville—namely, the rich deposits of coal and copper in the Gulf country. The same idea had also struck him, that the hon. gentleman seemed to think that Ipswich was all Queensland. This was another argument in favour of separation. They were continually being supplied with such arguments, and this was one right to their hand. There was not the slightest doubt that coal-seams had been traced between Winton and Cloncurry, and the opening up of those seams would be the means of

employing tens of thousands of men in the interior. So far as the royalty of 1d. per ton was concerned, it mattered very little. If they increased the royalty to 1s. per ton, as some members of the Committee were inclined to favour, who would pay that but the Government themselves, for the Government were the largest purchasers of coal in the colony. Considering that they were now the largest purchasers of coal in the southern part of the colony, they would have to pay it.

The PREMIER: It would reduce the price.

Mr. PALMER said the hon. member for Ipswich might have been right in days gone by, that Ipswich was the whole of Queensland; but it was not so now.

Mr. FOOTE said according to the hon. gentleman he had now discovered that Ipswich was Queensland. It used to be Brisbane; but it had been changed simply for convenience in discussing the Bill. By-and-by it might be Toowoomba, or Warwick, or Rockhampton.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Or Carpentaria.

Mr. FOOTE said it suited hon. members, to-night, that Ipswich should be the place. If they proposed to erect the Custom House and Government House, and some more of those magnificent buildings that were being built in Brisbane, up there, he would aid them. But he rose more particularly to refer to the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, in reference to coal lands, when he asked if hon. members thought there were no coal lands except those in the southern part of the colony? That was not the case; at any rate, it was not his view. He believed that there were coal lands all up the coast, and one of the objections he had to the amendment of the hon. member for Cook, who proposed to reduce the royalty to 1d., was that he did not intend to have their coal trade down here stopped. There were very good coal lands in the Cook district, which had all the Straits Settlements before it, and Batavia, China, and Hongkong, and other places where there were good markets for coal. The Cook district would be 1,000 miles nearer those places than they in the South, and if the hon. gentleman thought they had not an eye to business he was making a slight mistake. They did not intend to go to sleep. He had no idea of holding up Ipswich or any other place; but he intended to prevent a monopoly of the trade in the far North. They were not going to give them command of all those markets with a simple royalty of 1d. per ton when they paid a very large and even extensive price for their land down here. In the first place, those lands had not been taken up as coal lands; coal was not thought of. The Government parted with those lands many years ago in many cases, and although coal might have been known to have existed in them, they were not considered to be of any value at that time. But since the colony had advanced, persons had paid very large prices for them, and the Government should be careful to see that they were not wasted, as was proposed by the amendment of the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. SALKELD said he had not intended to have made any remarks upon the subject, but he would like to point out what would be the result if the amendment of the hon. member for Cook were carried. He might say that in some parts of the colony it would pay the Government to give large grants of land to persons who found coal where it was not known to exist. He understood that the Government geologists were now employed in prospecting for coal in places where it was not known to exist—as it was in Ipswich, West Moreton, and the Burrum—but in outside places. In cases where men went to look for coal in places where it was supposed, but not known, to exist, it was desirable that every encouragement should be offered, and large grants of land, or even money, given to persons who went to the expense and risk of prospecting. That was a different subject altogether. What would take place under the amendment would be that in places where coal was known to exist, almost to a certainty, the coal lands would be swooped upon and seized by persons who would make a good thing of it. He did not refer to Ipswich, nor did he take notice of the silly nonsense that hon. members talked about Ipswich. The hon. member for Burke talked about his district. They did not talk about what Burke would gain; they had more sense. That sort of nonsense should come to an end. Hon. members liked to have a fling at Ipswich, but Ipswich was always able to take care of itself. What would take place would be, that persons would go and get Government lands by paying a royalty of 1d. per ton, and compete with other persons who leased land from private owners, and paid 6d. or 9d. per ton; and in some cases a higher sum than that was being paid. There were Government lands where they could tell with certainty that coal would be found, and if the Government, or those sitting opposite, or the hon. member for Cook, really wanted to offer encouragement and assist persons to develop any land that was not developed, they should take some other plan; the one suggested by the hon. member for Cook would not develop anything. It would not assist at all, as speculators would come down and take up lands that really did not require prospecting, and he did not see the force of the Government handing over areas of coal lands for 1d. per ton on the coal raised. He thought it would be suicide. Even from the Treasurer's point of view they ought to refuse it. Anyone who knew anything about the coal industry knew perfectly well that, if coal were worth working at all, the men who worked it were able to pay 3d. per ton, especially in districts where coal was known to exist. He was not speaking of the Gulf of Carpentaria or of the northern parts of the colony, but he believed there were large beds of coal in the colony that had not been yet discovered, and some practical scheme should be adopted so that persons who really discovered coal, and went to the expense and risk of developing it where it had not been known to exist previously, should have the benefit. He would be quite willing to assist in giving his vote in a matter of that sort; but the present was not a case of that kind at all. It would play into the hands of people who had money, and who would swoop down upon those lands and make a good thing out of it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said, if what the hon. member for Ipswich had pointed out was the case, they could make a special reservation in the case of Ipswich, and let no lands be leased there under the Bill unless at a much higher rental. The hon. members for Ipswich objected to having themselves alluded to, but the argument they brought forward was, "We have a monopoly of the trade now, and we intend to stick to it, and will not allow any other place to have a share if we can possibly help it." The hon. member for Ipswich talked against the hon. member for Burke. What was the power of the hon. member for Burke, or any other members of the North? They had no power at all; but when they saw five or six votes going in a solid bunch in one interest it became conspicuous, and the hon. members for Ipswich need not take any great exception to it if it were alluded to in a playful sort of way. He dared say they could find some means of exempting themselves from the conditions of the

Bill and occupy the reserves of Government land there as long as they liked if it was a desirable thing in their opinion to do that; but he said that nothing like undue restriction should be placed on the development of the coal industry in other parts of the colony. The hon. members he referred to displayed a very great ignorance of the possibilities of the coal or even the utility of it if it was found in the North. Just fancy thinking that coal would be of no use in Carpentaria! Why, there were some of the most magnificent copper-mines in the world almost there, and they had to remain absolutely inoperative because there was no fuel to work them. Coal would be of the greatest use there, and the same in the district around Cooktown, and every facility should be given to discover and work it there.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said it seemed to him that the cutting down should have been a little further back. Hon. members were forgetting that the 3d. per ton was something levied upon a good thing in hand. The money was spent before during the license period, and it was there where the cutting down should have been done if it was to be done at all.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: It was cut down.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said during the licensing term they could have understood a reduction; but when the prospectors had found a good seam of coal worth working he was sure they would not object to paying 3d. a ton royalty for it at all.

Mr. KELLETT said the hon. member for Cook talked about the "Ipswich bunch," and he might say that they saw a very compact bunch the other night, and the "Northern bunch" was bigger than the "Ipswich bunch." There was one thing to be said of the Northern men, and that was that if they were not so solid on some subjects as on the separation question, he knew some of them made as much noise as all the other hon. members put together. It was absurd to say 3d. per ton was too high. He knew that for some time he was receiving 13d. per ton royalty from coal proprietors, and he did not think it good enough; he was glad to get it out of their hands and get it into his own. Threepence per ton was not at all too high.

Mr. ANNEAR said he did not wish to block the Bill or to delay the Committee, but he desired hon. members to be thoroughly clear as to the position he had taken up. He should answer some of the remarks of the hon. members for Ipswich. They said that if the 1d. a ton royalty was adopted the land would be all swooped up by speculators. He hoped it would. He said the labour conditions should be enforced, and then he hoped there would be sufficient speculators to swoop it up. If they took up land, and had to comply with the labour conditions, they would take it up with the intention of working it. They would not let it lie dormant. He said that the development of their coal resources would be the most beneficial thing for the colony by giving employment to a large number of men. They spent large sums of money in bringing immigrants from England, and those who would come from New South Wales did not cost the Government a shilling. Therefore he said the sooner those speculators got to work the better for the colony; and let them come in thousands if they would.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought it advisable that some agreement should have been come to between the members for Ipswich as to the arguments to be used against the Bill. One hon. member said there was nothing at all in the royalty, that it did not amoun tto anything, and that if it was reduced it would only encourage speculators, while the hon. member for Bundanba let the cat out of the bag, and said, "I do not wish you Northern people to be able to compete with us in the coal trade; that you will not be able to do if we raise the royalty, but you will if we reduce it." From them only came the opposition to a reduction of the royalty, with the exception, of course, of the occupants of the Treasury benches, with whom it was a question of revenue. The opposition to the reduction of the royalty was the opposition of Ipswich against the rest of the colony. The hon. gentleman said, "We did not get our lands from the Government, but from those who got them from the Government, and we had to pay a great deal for them. If we allow coal to be brought into the market at such a low rate you in the North will be able to compete with us, and will be able to supply China and other parts of the world through the Torres Straits at a cheaper rate than we can." That was the argument of the hon. member for Bundanba. He did not object to the hon. member's argument from an Ipswich point of view, but he did object to the selfishness of the argument, and he objected to it also from a Northern point of view. Hon. members who had spoken against the reduction of the royalty evidently did not know much about the coal lands of the North. The coal lands alluded to as existing in the district represented by the hon. member for Cook were a long way from the coast; in addition to the royalty they would have to pay for about eighty or ninety miles of land carriage by rail, and they could not compete with Ipswich on that account. Ipswich would be well protected even if they paid no royalty at all. The same thing might be said about the coal lands in the Central districts. They were nearly the same distance from the coast, and would have to pay about the same amount for land carriage to the port of Rockhampton—that was if they wished to export the coal. The only customers they would have, if they did not export the coal, would be the Government for the supply of the railways. He thought Ipswich might very properly give way in its selfishness on that point, seeing that the coal proprietors there were protected by being so near the port from which they exported the coal. When they began to export it — he did not think that they exported very much at present, but he hoped they would export a good deal before long—when they began to export it they would be protected to that extent against the Northern coalfields. He believed there was good coal in the district represented by the hon. member for Cook, but those who worked it would have to pay 7s. a ton for land carriage before they could export it, in addition to the royalty and the amount to be paid for acreage; so that they could not hope to compete with Ipswich. It was no use talking in that House about bunches. The bunch spoken of by the hon. member for Stanley as existing the other evening was a bunch upon one particular question, and upon which they would always exist—or he hoped so, at all events. They were united upon that particular question; they were, however, disunited upon other questions, but when they came to a question of Ipswich the Ipswich members were always united. That had been the case ever since he had been in the House; and the Ipswich people, as the hon. gentleman representing it said, kept their eyes well open, and could protect themselves; but they could do so only with the paternal assistance of the Government.

Mr. FOOTE said the hon. gentleman thought he had made a good "hit." His tactics now were to say that this was a question of the "Ipswich bunch" *versus* the royalty. That was the way he was pleased to put it.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: No; Ipswich *versus* the colony.

Mr. FOOTE said the hon. gentleman used those tactics in the hope that he would be able to get a few supporters for the vote about to come on. He said that Ipswich should forget its selfishness. Well, the Chairman had been a long time in the House, and had known the hon. gentleman ever since he had been in it, and if there was an hon. member more selfish from a local point of view than the hon. member for Townsville he (Mr. Foote) would like to see him. Did the hon. gentleman remember when he used to be sitting on the Opposition side of the House and talked about going up north and getting all the constituencies to vote as one man against the Government? He threatened the Government that no man should be returned to the House who would not vote under his dictum as leader. It was quite true when the hon. gentleman talked about selfishness that he should look to himself. Just now, in speaking of the hon. member for Ipswich, he asked him to take the beam out of his eye before he spoke of the mote in his own. Why, there was a bigger beam in the hon. member's eye than in that of any man he ever saw, in all matters where he himself, or the North, was concerned. He did not wish to put himself in any way against the North or any interest of the North. In every question that came before the House he looked at it in a proper spirit, and tried to consider its bearing upon the general interest of the country. The hon. gentleman had referred to the "Ipswich bunch." Now, the "Ipswich bunch" had not existed in this Parliament or in any other since he (Mr. Foote) had had a seat in the House. The bunch that did exist was under the old Ministry, when they succeeded in keeping the railway from being made from Brisbane to Ipswich for about five years. The records of the House would show that what was called the "Ipswich bunch" very seldom voted together, except upon some point of principle wherein the Government was involved. They supported that side, and nothing the hon. gentleman could say would move them from that point. He admitted that he did not know so much of the North as the hon. member did. The hon. member's interests were there, and he was first returned from the North; but the hon. member said the coal in the North was inland, and would cost 7s. a ton for freight to the seaboard. That remark applied to one place the hon. member knew; but was he sure there was no coal nearer than that—that there was no workable coal in many places besides Cooktown that would command the Northern trade? He (Mr. Foote) was quite prepared to meet the North or any other part of the world in fair and open competition, but he did not see why the North should be given an advantage at the expense of the revenue of the country.

Mr. SHERIDAN said that when he alluded to the gentleman who sent the telegram to the Premier, an hon. member behind him called out that he got his land at 5s. an acre. Now, if it was the gentleman he (Mr. Sheridan) suspected, he knew that the land cost him £2 an acre; and he deemed it his duty to say that that gentleman was a worthy citizen and an intelligent industrious man, who had done a great deal for the colony.

Mr. McMASTER said he did not belong to the "Ipswich bunch," but he intended to vote against the amendment. From the arguments of the hon. gentleman who had brought it in he imagined that if they got it reduced to 1d. the next thing they would want would be that the coal should be carried by rail, if not quite free, for a very small amount. He believed that the railway now was carrying it at an actual loss.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: At Ipswich.

Mr. McMASTER: And at Maryborough.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No.

Mr. McMASTER said he knew for a fact that coal was carried at Maryborough, he thought, three miles for 1s. 6d.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Sixpence a mile?

Mr. McMASTER said he was not sure what it was, but it was a ridiculously low price. He knew the Maryborough people had been levying blackmail on the Government, and yet the Ipswich people were almost prepared to compete with Maryborough. He believed Ipswich was nearly getting the contract for the supply of coal up north when tenders were called by the Government. He was confident that if anyone found a good coal-seam, and could not pay 3d. a ton royalty, it would not pay to work it at all. He hoped the Government would stand by their proposal, and not hand the State over to the syndicates altogether.

Mr. HAMILTON said he quite agreed with the hon. member for Maryborough, that if the Government allowed the coal to be taken for nothing they would not go far wrong. Looking at it from a revenue point of view, he thought an infinitely larger source of revenue would accrue from the settlement of population by the successful development of mines arising through the initiation of large and liberal measures introduced by the Government than by the imposition of petty taxes of that nature—taxes which went a very little way towards filling the Treasury coffers, and at the same time seriously interfered with progress. He had just been making a calculation as to what land would cost with a royalty of, say, 1d. per ton. Take a 4-feet seam in an acre of land—that was not a remarkably thick seam—the royalty on that at a 1d. a ton would amount to £20 for the acre. Frequently there were two or three seams running one under another; take three 4-feet seams, and at 1d. per ton that would amount to £60 per acre. The leader of the Ipswich contingent had urged as an argument against the amendment that very little expense was incurred in prospecting. The hon. gentleman as usual was simply arguing by his own Ipswich lights. There were many places in Northern Queensland where persons had gone to very great expense in prospecting for coal, and no result had yet been obtained. The Government knew that at Bowen £2,500 was expended in a few months for prospecting with the drill they had sent up there, and no successful results had yet accrued. In the neighbourhood of Townsville, prospecting had been carried on at considerable expense for two or three years, and nothing had yet been discovered; and in his own district—the Cook district—very large expense had already been incurred without as yet any beneficial results.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he wished to inform the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, as to the rate at which coal was carried; and he believed the hon. member as an honest and fair-minded man, when he knew the different charges made in the Ipswich and Maryborough districts, would vote for the reduction of the royalty. The charge, according to the answer given by the Minister for Works to Mr. Bailey, the member for Wide Bay, was 6d. per truck per mile in the Ipswich district, and 1s. per truck per mile in the Maryborough district.

The PREMIER: Under very different circumstances.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he should like to know what the different circumstances were. The trucks, he presumed, were of the same size, the gauge of the railway was the same, and he could not see where the different circumstances came in. If that was not favouring Ipswich, he did not know what favouring was. There might be some reason for it, outside the facts as they appeared in the answer given by the Minister for Works, but he was not aware of it. True, the carrying of coal by railway in any portion of Queensland did not pay. But it was not a question of paying; it was a question of charging more in one district than in another for the same work. Had the hon. member for Fortitude Valley been aware of that fact, he would probably vote for the amendment, instead of saying he would vote against it.

Mr. SALKELD said that exceptional circumstances very often happened in the carrying of goods by railway. On the Southern and Western Railway they at one time charged at the rate of 10d. per ton per mile for road metal, while they were carrying coal at less than one-fourth of that amount; the reason given for the difference being that coal was carried in large quantities, and road metal only occasionally. Although a reduction had since been made in the carriage of road metal, it was still far higher than coal.

Mr. MCMASTER said he had made a mistake in saying 6d. per ton instead of 6d. per truck, but he believed that in some instances coal was carried on the Maryborough line at 6d. per truck for three miles. He also understood that there was no station on that line, and that trains had often to wait a considerable time until the trucks got on to the main line—which was not the case on the Ipswich line. It should also be remembered that the Maryborough people were getting 2s. a ton more for their coal from the Government.

Mr. BAILEY said the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had better inquire a little further into the subject before he made any more confident assertions about it. He (Mr. Bailey) happened to know something about the facts, but there were many circumstances surrounding the case with which he was not yet perfectly acquainted; and until he was he should say nothing about them. It was a fact, as stated by the hon. member for Townsville, that the carriage of coal on a private line at Maryborough was double as much as that charged on the Ipswich line, but there were many circumstances surrounding the case with which, as he had before said, he was imperfectly acquainted, which might have something to do with the difference.

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

The Committee divided :—

AYES, 23.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Miles, Dickson, Dutton, Moreton, Isambert, Groom, Foxton, Jordan, Kellett, Bulcock, S. W. Brooks, Buckland, Wakefield, Foote, McMaster, W. Brookes, Kates, Higson, Midgley, White, Salkeld, and Macfarlane.

NOES, 20.

Messrs. Norton, Macrossan, Chubb, Nelson, Adams, Lalor, Campbell, Stevenson, Donaldson, Pattison, Hill, Palmer, Lissner, Annear, Sheridan, McWhannell, Philp, Hamilton, Murphy, and Mellor.

Pair : Mr. Aland, "Aye"; Mr. Bailey, "No."

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative, and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. MELLOR, in moving that the following new clause follow clause 5 :—

When a licensee under the provisions of this Act—

(1) Discovers payable coal at a distance of not less than ten miles from any payable coal then actually being worked; or,

(2) Discovers a payable seam of coal at a depth of not less than six hundred feet from the surface,

he shall be entitled to a lease of six hundred and forty acres of land, instead of three hundred and twenty acres as hereinbefore provided, and the royalty payable in respect of coal raised by the lessee shall in the first-mentioned case as to all coal, and in the second-mentioned case as to all coal raised from a depth of six hundred feet and upwards, be at the rate of one penny for every ton, instead of threepence as hereinbefore provided.

In this section the term "payable," applied to coal or to a seam of coal, means coal of such quality and thickness that it can, under ordinary circumstances, be worked with profit.

—said that when that subject was under discussion on a previous occasion he introduced a clause for the purpose of encouraging prospectors, but at that time it was not acceptable to the Committee, and he withdrew it. The amendment he now proposed was intended to encourage prospectors generally. A great deal had been said with reference to the coal lands about Ipswich, but those were not the lands they wanted to see prospected, nor perhaps even the lands about the Burrum. Along the coast of nearly the whole of the colony there were waste lands which were supposed to contain coal at a less or greater depth, and those were the lands they wished to have prospected. He believed some provision such as that he had now proposed would encourage proprietors. It had been suggested that there should be a maximum amount of royalty charged of 1d. per ton. If large quantities of coal were raised a royalty of that amount would produce a large revenue, but he could not support the principle, as he thought it was only fair that those who raised plenty of coal should pay a revenue to the State. He hoped the Government would accept his amendment.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government were not prepared to accept the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Wide Bay. He had, however, no objection to meet him half-way. If the hon. member would alter the distance from ten to twenty-five miles, and be content with 320 acres in lieu of 640, paying the same royalty as provided in the previous clause, he (the Minister for Works) would be inclined to accept the amendment.

Mr. BAILEY said the distance mentioned by the Minister for Works was excessive. If the hon. gentleman knew anything about coal-mining he would know that the dip varied very much in a few miles. He could take the hon. gentleman to a place in his own district where a coal-seam had been discovered, and a few miles from that place they would have to sink down a mile to get to the seam again, so much did the dip vary. To say, therefore, that a prospector must go twenty-five miles from where coal was found was absurd. Even at a distance of ten miles from payable coal the seam might be at an impossible depth. The Government should be a liberal Government, and deal liberally with those people who prospected for coal, and not harass them with stringent conditions by putting as many hurdles as they could in the way for people to jump over. In the Burrum district, near to the river, there were two coal-seams being worked, one on either side of the river, and at one time the dip there varied as much as 1 in 3. If they went twenty-five miles away from that they would probably not find any company in the world to prospect the land with any chance of finding coal. They might go down a great distance in some places and not find coal. What was desired was to encourage people to prospect Crown lands now lying idle. There were lands held by the Government which were not of the slightest use to anyone; no rent was paid for them, they were put to no use; they were, in short, doing no

good to anybody, and the object of the amendment was to induce persons to prospect some portions of those lands. If that was done and coal was discovered, the adjoining lands, which were also the property of the State, would have an enhanced value. Why should men have to go twenty-five miles from the Torbanlea Coal Field or from the Burrum Coal Field to prospect when even five miles away, let alone ten, it might be impossible to discover coal? If coal was found by prospectors, the property of the State would be increased in value; if prospectors were not successful they would lose their money. If the Government were not prepared to prospect the land the people in that or any other district were quite ready to do it themselves; but what they objected to was prospecting land where it was almost impossible to find coal. The Government should not play the dog in the manger, neither do it themselves nor let anybody else do it. People were quite willing to prospect where there was any reasonable probability of finding coal, but it was absurd to make them go twenty-five miles from a field which was being worked, as, if the dip continued, that would absolutely prohibit the finding of coal unless it rose again. He hoped the Government would accept the proposal of his colleague, which was a very reasonable one, and was introduced not only for the advancement of the district to which they belonged, but also for the encouragement of prospecting for coal in all districts of the colony.

The PREMIER said he understood the amendment to be intended to encourage prospecting for new coalfields, not prospecting where coal was already known to exist; he understood also that an additional reward was asked on behalf of men who incurred extra risk in trying to discover coal at a greater depth. But coal at a distance of ten miles from existing coal was not a new field; it was the same coalfield undoubtedly. On that same coalfield a man might find coal at a greater depth, and that was provided for by the 2nd paragraph of the clause. To give a man a large reward because he found coal ten miles from a coal-mine would be unreasonable, because such a man would not be a public benefactor. Where coal existed its general direction was known. If it dipped at a great angle the chances were that it would not be found ten miles off, but under ordinary circumstances it would be found at that distance unless there was an extraordinary change in the formation of the country. Hon. members would see that the distance of ten miles—which was only an arbitrary distance—was too small, and that the discovery of coal at that distance from an existing coal-mine could not be regarded as a *bonâ fide* discovery. He would say nothing now about the question of royalty. It appeared to him that the man who discovered coal at a great depth on an existing field and the man who discovered a new field were equally benefactors, and should be rewarded liberally. To that extent he was prepared to go with the hon. member.

Mr. BAILEY said it might be said that there was a proved coalfield from the sea-coast right across the Mary River, and even past the Miva Run.

The PREMIER: Not with payable coal.

Mr. BAILEY said that no one dared work it because the conditions were at present prohibitory. But the Bill was brought in to encourage people to prospect over that area. Of course they knew the coal was there, and in that sense it could not be said that they found it. He hoped that the distance of ten miles would not be exceeded, because if it were there would be great difficulty in developing that coalfield. He could not say anything about the Northern coalfields, because they were not prospected to the same extent as those in the Wide Bay district. Even in the vicinity of coal-mines in the Wide Bay district prospecting could only be carried on with great difficulty, great expense, and great risk.

Mr. FOXTON said he agreed with the suggested alteration to twenty-five miles, because, as the Chief Secretary said, the reward should be for the discovery of new fields, and coal discovered only ten miles from an existing mine would certainly not be a new field. The probability—almost the dead certainty—was that it would be the same field. There were certain verbal amendments necessary, he thought, in the clause. It spoke of a licensee under the provisions of the Act who discovered payable coal at a distance of not less than ten miles from any payable coal then actually worked. He thought that was capable of evasion, because if a man discovered coal within ten miles—or such other distance as might be decided—all he would have to do would be to cease working his colliery for a short period in order to bring himself within the letter of the law. He therefore suggested that some words be added so as to cover such cases. The addition of the words "payable coal previously worked" would probably be sufficient. Then in subsection 2 the expression "discovers" struck him as being a somewhat unhappy one, because a seam of coal might be discovered at the outcrop, and it might be calculated to a dead certainty where it could be found at a greater depth than 600 feet by sinking. He suggested that the words "opens up and works" should be substituted for the word "discovers."

The PREMIER: That would take too long.

Mr. FOXTON said he did not see how it would be a discovery if it could be calculated.

The PREMIER: It would be discovered by boring.

Mr. FOXTON said in that case it was not a discovery, because it was a matter of certainty that the seam would be there; it was not a newly discovered seam.

Mr. ANNEAR said he hoped the hon. member for Wide Bay would not accept the suggestions thrown out by the Minister for Works, but withdraw the clause altogether. He did not pretend to be a lawyer, but he thought everyone could understand the position. The clause was going to be smothered in legal technicalities, and, as was usual, when the hon. member asked for bread for his constituents, a stone was offered.

Mr. FOXTON: No. Coal!

Mr. ANNEAR said he trusted the hon. member for Wide Bay would withdraw the clause, and allow the responsibility to rest with the Government.

The PREMIER said he wished the hon. member would say what was the bread they were asking for. He understood that the clause was brought in to encourage *bonâ fide* prospectors. From what the hon. member said it seemed that it was not so. If a man discovered coal only ten miles from a coal-mine he could not be called a *bonâ fide* prospector.

Mr. ANNEAR said he had been over a large portion of the colony, but he did not know where anyone could go a distance of ten miles from any coalfield in Queensland and find coal.

The PREMIER: There are any number of places.

Mr. ANNEAR said he did not know of any. If a man went ten miles from Ipswich, or any other known coalfield in the colony, where there was no indication of a coal measure on the

surface, he might possibly find coal; but to go twenty-five miles the thing seemed ridiculous in the extreme. There was no use in discussing the matter. He was not in charge of the amendment, but he would suggest that the hon. member should withdraw it altogether.

Mr. FOXTON said he could furnish the hon. member with an instance in which coal existed, though it was not known for a time. The first coal discovery in the Ipswich district was in the neighbourhood of Waterstown. Since then valuable coal deposits had been discovered about Walloon and in the neighbourhood of Rosewood. That was all the same coal district, and at a distance of fourteen or fifteen miles from where the coal was originally discovered, and was successfully and profitably worked.

Mr. HAMILTON said he considered the amendment a very reasonable one, and he did not see why it should not be accepted by the Government. They wished to increase the distance from ten miles to twenty-five miles, and the only argument they gave in favour of the increase was that if coal was discovered within ten miles of a coalfield there was a probability of its being in the same field. There was just the same probability, however, if coal was discovered twenty-five or thirty miles away. In many instances coalfields extended over a greater area than that, therefore the same argument applied equally to a distance of twenty-five miles. The hon. member for Wide Bay very properly stated that he asked for bread and was given a stone; and the Premier asked "How was that?" They did not ask for bread, but they asked in the mining interests to be allowed to have their own bread, and that was denied them. They asked to be allowed to give inducements and encouragement to develop waste lands of the Crown which were lying idle, and that inducement was not given. A reward was given for a benefit conferred. The benefit conferred in the discovery of a coal-mine was equally as great if it was discovered at a distance of ten miles from another field as if it was discovered twenty or thirty miles away, and the expense of discovery was equally great. He therefore thought that the reward given should be equally great.

Mr. MELLOR said if ten miles was thought to be too short a distance he would propose fifteen miles. It must be remembered that the cost of carriage increased the further away coal was discovered. If coal was discovered along the coast where there were no accessible roads, the prospectors had to make a road, and the expense was very great. He thought ten miles was not too great, but if the Government thought the distance should be increased he would accept the compromise, and he hoped the remainder of the clause relating to royalty would not be objected to. The man who discovered a gold-mine was entitled to a reward from the Government, and the country was benefited almost to the same extent by the discovery of fresh coal-seams. Every industry sprang up in the localities where coal was found, and they should give every encouragement they could to prospectors.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government wished to give every facility for coal-seams being prospected, and he was therefore inclined to agree with the hon. member and make the distance fifteen miles, allowing the remainder of the clause to go.

Mr. MELLOR moved the omission of the word "ten" with a view of inserting the word "fifteen."

Amendment agreed to.

The PREMIER said, with reference to the suggestion of the hon. member for Carnarvon, there was a difficulty in relation to the words "then actually being worked." Perhaps the best expression would be, "from any payable coal previously known." It might be perfectly well known that there was payable coal in a certain locality, although it might not be then actually worked. There was no reason for making a man a present of 640 acres unless he had rendered some special service. One man might discover a splendid seam of coal and not work it. Another might discover coal alongside of that again, and not work it; and a third might discover some more and not work it until they had all got their 640 acres apiece.

Mr. BAILEY said the coal was not known to exist until it had been proved. The mere surface outcrop did not prove the existence of a seam of coal. It could only be proved by a succession of bores.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the more he looked into the clause the more danger he saw in it. Besides, he did not think it would do much good to the member for Wide Bay or to prospectors, because if they looked at the original amendment they found that while prospectors were allowed to prospect over 640 acres they were allowed to take up 320 acres. As a rule, they would not find more than 320 acres out of an area of 640 acres worth prospecting, and in any case it would be far better for a company prospecting to take the smaller quantity of land, because they could easily make a selection of the best part of the coalfield. He thought the hon. member for Wide Bay should take the advice of the hon. member for Maryborough and withdraw the amendment altogether.

The PREMIER moved the omission of the words "then actually being worked" with a view of inserting the words "previously discovered."

Amendment agreed to.

New clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 7 put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill to the House with amendments.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL.

COMMITTEE.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House go into Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill in detail.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker,—His Excellency the Administrator of the Government having been informed of the proposed amendments with respect to the destruction of flying-foxes, recommends the necessary appropriation for the consideration of the House.

Mr. NORTON: Might I suggest to the leader of the Government that sparrows be also included?

The PREMIER: I have no instructions.

Mr. NORTON: Perhaps you could get another message. I understand that in South Australia a Bill has been passed for the destruction of sparrows. Why not here?

The PREMIER: I have no instructions.

Question put, and the House went into committee.

On clause 1, as follows:—

"The Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881, as amended by the Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Act of 1885, shall remain in force until the thirty-first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven, and thenceforth until the end of the then next session of Parliament."

Mr. JORDAN said he wanted to propose an amendment on this clause to effect something further on. It was that after the word "shall" in the 3rd line there be added "be further amended, as hereinafter provided, and shall." When the Bill was before the Committee last session the Premier accepted some suggestions made during the second reading of the Bill on the part of hon. members on the other side of the House, and proposed himself two or three very important alterations of the Bill. It was suggested that payment for scalps should be made in the district, which all agreed was a very good alteration. Much more important was the power given to marsupial boards to raise the rewards for the scalps. The bonus for the scalps of larger animals was fixed in the principal Act at 8d., and for smaller animals at 4d. By alterations made in the Bill passed last session power was given to the boards, at their discretion, to raise the price as high as 1s. for the smaller animals and 2s. for larger ones. That was a very important concession. Then the hon. member for Warrego succeeded in squeezing the dingo into the Bill, but it was left to the boards whether they should pay for its destruction or not —a kind of local option. It must be remembered that hon. gentlemen on this side of the Committee who were generally interested in farming assisted the hon. member for Warrego in carrying his amendment. He was not going to complain, because he thought the arrangement for leaving it to the option of the board whether to include the dingo or not was a very fair one. They had now decided to continue the operation of the Bill, and it was contended by hon. members on this side who were interested in agriculture that it should be a fairer one to the farmers than it was at present. He might say that nothing was done for them in the Bill at present, and it had been very distinctly pointed out that they might be benefited in the direction of giving a bonus for the destruction of flying-foxes. The hon. member for Wide Bay spoke very strongly upon that point, and as he knew more on the subject than he (Mr. Jordan) did, he would read the few words in which that hon. gentleman expressed his opinion that flying-foxes should be included in the Bill :—

"But he would like to draw the attention of the Government to almost as real a plague which required to be stayed as that of marsupials, and that was the flying-foxes. Year after year different kinds of fruit were attacked by them, and in a very few years they would not have fruit of any kind that they could protect from the ravages of that plague, unless something was done to stay their increase."

The farmers had not been well served in the Marsupial Act at all. It was said that they had nothing to do with it. That remark had been made during the discussion last session, but he (Mr. Jordan) thought they had. The 10th clause of the principal Act provided that persons owning as many as twenty head of cattle were liable to pay the assessment under the Marsupials Destruction Act. That did not say "horned cattle," and therefore horses would be included, and, as the hon. member for Warrego had pointed out, the farmers were taxed without representation, as by the 5th clause of the principal Act no person could have a vote in the election of a member to serve on a marsupial board unless he had as many as 100 head of cattle, while on the other hand persons who had twenty head of cattle had to pay assessment, and there were very few farmers in the colony who had not as many as twenty head of cattle, including horses. It therefore was a question which concerned farmers, as they were assessed under that Act, and he thought they should have some consideration shown them now that they had decided to continue the operation of the Act, and had made important changes favourable to pastoral tenants He was going to propose that flying-foxes should be included, and that there should be a maximum bonus of 6d. per scalp, and a minimum of 2d. By the principal Act, on larger animals, kangaroos and wallaroos, a maximum of 8d. was paid, and a minimum of 4d. By the Continuation Act of last session the maximum was raised to 2s.; while on smaller animals the minimum was fixed at 4d., and the maximum at 1s. Then the bonus on dingoes was 5s. He was going to propose that clause 1 be amended by the insertion, after the word "shall" on the 6th line, of the words—"be further amended as hereinafter provided and shall." The next amendment was a new clause to follow clause 1, and was as follows :—

The funds standing to the credit of the account of the district shall be available in payment of a bonus for the destruction of flying-foxes as well as of marsupials.

He then proposed to substitute the following new clause for clause 3 :—

The rates of bonus payable in respect of scalps of marsupials, or of flying-foxes, killed within any district, shall be fixed by the board at their first meeting after the time appointed for the annual election of members; and in case no rates be fixed by the board, shall be the rates specified in Schedule B of the said Act, and for the scalp of every kangaroo rat, or flying-fox, twopence.

The rates so fixed shall continue to be the rates for the district for the twelve months next ensuing.

Provided that the rates so fixed shall not exceed two shillings for the scalp of a kangaroo or wallaroo, or one shilling for the scalp of a wallaby or paddamelon, or sixpence for the scalp of a kangaroo-rat or flying-fox; nor shall such rates be reduced below the rates specified in the said schedule, or twopence for the scalp of a kangaroo-rat or flying-fox, without the consent of the Minister.

Then, as the 4th clause, he intended to propose :—

The third section of the amended Act of one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five is hereby repealed.

When he got to that clause—and he hoped he should, as there was a very strong feeling on the part of the farmers that they had not been considered in passing those Acts, and it was quite time their interests were considered —when he got that far he proposed to leave out the word "amended," and insert the words, "Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Act." He begged to propose the first amendment of which he had given notice.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, of course, the simple amendment which the hon. member had moved in the 1st clause was the commencement of an attack upon the whole Bill. It sought to bring into it a new principle of taxation, because a new principle of taxation would be required to carry out what the hon. member suggested. The class of animals dealt with under the Bill was a class whose food was the native grasses of the colony, and the Bill was really introduced to prevent the destruction of those grasses which the Government leased to inhabitants of the colony for the purpose of depasturing stock. They therefore levied an assessment upon those who used the grass, and made them pay for saving it by the destruction of those animals that destroyed it. The hon. member wished to bring into the Bill a class of animals that did not live upon the grass, but upon the fruit of trees grown, in nearly every case, on freehold property. The Government wished to do everything they could for the farmers, but that was not the proper place in which to deal with the destruction of flying-foxes—in a Bill dealing with the destruction of marsupials, because they did not destroy the food used by other animals as the marsupials

did. To levy an assessment from which rates could be raised for the destruction of flying-foxes, they should levy it upon the trees which the flying-foxes destroyed. For that reason he thought they should not mix up in the Bill anything to do with the destruction of flying-foxes. He must oppose the amendments suggested by the hon. member.

Mr. WHITE said the Colonial Secretary told them that flying-foxes were not within the scope of the Bill at all. He said it was simply a Bill for protecting the grass of the country leased out to the people. The native dogs did not eat grass and they were in the Bill, and therefore he contended that they had as much right to claim that flying-foxes should be included in the Bill as native dogs. If they were simply to allow the owners of the fruit-trees to kill the flying-foxes themselves, the owners of cattle should be expected to kill the native dogs.

Mr. BAILEY said he was rather sorry to see the Bill introduced at this time, when they knew that the skins of wallabies and other marsupials had a great commercial value—a great deal more than ever they paid for their scalps. When they knew that their skins were being sold in large quantities, he thought it almost did away with the necessity for the Bill. With regard to the question of flying-foxes, the hon. member for South Brisbane, in his zealousness on behalf of the farmers, must be forgetting that the destruction of a few thousands of flying-foxes would hardly lessen the number at all. He might tell the hon. member that they flew by millions, and the only way to destroy them was not by offering a reward for a single scalp, or for 100 scalps, but by sending men out into the scrubs where they were to be found hanging, he might say in festoons, and blow them up with some of the dynamite now so much in fashion in America. That was the only way to deal with them; the idea of dealing with them singly or by hundreds was utterly absurd to a countryman, and he wondered that the hon. member had not been better informed. He (Mr. Bailey) knew that in passing through a scrub two men came upon a haunt of flying-foxes, and they were actually afraid that in going through the scrub something might happen, and the immense mass of those pests might fall and smother them. They were there in millions. He was not going to oppose the Bill, but he was sorry it had been introduced again, because he was sure that such was the value of the skins of those animals now that, if they just left the matter alone, it would almost pay men to breed wallabies and kangaroos, and it would be almost as profitable as sheep-farming during the drought. Several other animals were proposed to be introduced in the same way. There was great objection to the Bill in this way: He was speaking on behalf of his own constituents when he said that the settlers there who had a few head of cattle had to pay an annual tax, and had to travel many miles to pay it, and they found it cost them more money to pay the tax than the tax itself. They hardly knew when they had to pay it, and they were liable to serious trouble if they did not pay it. It was a cause of great trouble to them, and they had to go a distance of several miles and lose a day's work to pay a few shillings, and the tax was, in fact, becoming a nuisance that he hoped would soon be done away with.

Mr. FOXTON said he did not intend to discuss the question of flying-foxes, but he would take advantage of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for South Brisbane to move an amendment upon it with a view of meeting the objection raised by the hon. member for Wide Bay in consequence of the market value of marsupial skins at the present time. He did this at the request of the board that existed in his electorate. That board, with one exception, perhaps had more experience in the destruction of marsupials than any other board in the colony. He referred to the Inglewood Board, by whom the destruction of marsupials on a wholesale scale was first attempted. The amendment suggested by them was such as to enable boards, if they thought fit, to fix no rate in respect of the scalps of kangaroos and wallaroos; and the reason was that the skins of the larger marsupials were now so valuable that a man could make more out of the skins than he could out of the scalps. He would follow the sport of destroying the larger game and utterly neglect the smaller animals out of which he did not make such a profit, owing to the fact that their skins were not so valuable.

Mr. DONALDSON: The board need not impose the tax.

Mr. FOXTON: Yes, they must. The third new clause moved by the hon. member for South Brisbane was verbatim the same as the clause introduced last year, except that the flying-fox was added. The proviso read:—

"Provided that the rates so fixed shall not exceed two shillings for the scalp of a kangaroo or wallaroo, or one shilling for the scalp of a wallaby or paddamelon, or sixpence for the scalp of a kangaroo-rat or flying-fox; nor shall such rates be reduced below the rates specified in the said schedule, or twopence for the scalp of a kangaroo-rat or flying-fox, without the consent of the Minister."

That was to say the schedule of the principal Act of 1881 was made the minimum—8d. in respect of the scalps of kangaroos and wallaroos; 4d. in respect to wallabies and paddamelons. What he proposed to do was to strike out the words "the rates specified in the said schedule," and make it read "below 4d. for the scalp of a wallaby or paddamelon," and so on; also to add a proviso that the board should not be bound to fix any rate in respect of the scalps of kangaroos or wallaroos. He did not think there would be any objection to that, though possibly there might be some reasons against it in districts with which he was not acquainted. He knew that in the district round Inglewood the fact that scalp-hunters were paying much more attention to the larger game and neglecting the others had become an evil.

Amendment agreed to; and clause, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. JORDAN said the Colonial Secretary had objected to the new clause he was about to propose on the ground that it was the introduction of a new principle into the Bill—that the Act was passed for the destruction of marsupials because they destroyed the grass belonging to the Government lessees, and that the amendment introduced a description of animals which did nothing to the grass. The hon. member forgot that the dingo had been introduced last session, and that the House went very much out of its way to get the dingo introduced—a new recommendation had to be obtained from the Governor. The Bill, therefore, was no longer exclusively a marsupial Bill, and therefore no new principle was involved. The farmers were taxed for the destruction of marsupials; and it was time something should be done in the interests of the farmers, who had hitherto been taxed for the benefit of the pastoral tenants. The objection to the amendment which had been raised by the hon. member for Wide Bay (Mr. Bailey) was very inconsistent with the words he had used last session, when he urged that some arrangement should be made for including flying-foxes. Now the hon. member said it was impossible, because there were so many of them. He (Mr. Jordan)

could not see that that was an objection at all. They were expending a very large sum of money to keep out the rabbits, because there were so many of them, and he did not see why they should not destroy the flying-foxes on the same principle. He proposed the following new clause to follow clause 1 :—

The funds standing to the credit of the account of the district shall be available in payment of a bonus for the destruction of flying-foxes as well as of marsupials.

The PREMIER said the hon. member had just complained of the anomaly that farmers were taxed for the destruction of marsupials. That was so to a small extent, and perhaps to such an extent there might be some injustice done. But the remedy for that was not to tax other people for killing flying-foxes—people whose possessions were in no way injured by flying-foxes. There was a want of sequence between the two points of the argument. The remedy must be sought in some other direction.

Mr. BAILEY said the great objection to the tax was that the small farmer often had to travel fifteen or twenty miles to pay a tax of 1s. or 2s., and it costs him 8s. or 10s. to do so. He had known men go two or three times to pay the tax ; and they were liable to be prosecuted, and to pay lawyers' fees and court fees, and so on, if they did not pay a paltry shilling or two. If it was again necessary to bring in a Bill of that kind, it should have been framed so that the men who had 2,000 or 5,000 cattle should pay for the destruction of marsupials on their runs. To make the small selectors pay for that was very harsh, because it actually cost them ten times the amount of the tax. He supposed the Bill would pass, but he hoped the flying-foxes would come out. That was too awfully absurd. The Bill was bad enough without that, and he hoped they would never see it again.

Mr. PALMER asked where the money was to come from, supposing people chose to go into the scrubs and kill 8,000,000 to 10,000,000 of flying-foxes?

Mr. JORDAN said the amount would come out of the general fund in each district to which the farmers paid.

Mr. McMASTER said it was rather hard on the small selector that he should be made to pay the tax and have no voice in the matter. It was taxation without representation, and that was always unfair. Then the farmer derived no benefit from the tax for the destruction of marsupials which he paid, and nothing was to be done to assist him to destroy flying-foxes, from which he did suffer. The farmers had also to pay for killing native dogs, which were the squatters' best friends. Hon. members might laugh, but he believed that was the fact. If the Committee objected to assisting the farmers in the way suggested, relieve them from the marsupial tax, and they would be perfectly satisfied. They should be either assisted or exempted. If it were true, as stated by an hon. member, that the skins of the marsupials were worth as much as the Bill offered for the scalps, there was no necessity any longer for the Bill.

Mr. WHITE said it was to the interest, not only of the farmers, but of every individual in the colony, that flying-foxes should be killed off. For the health of the people it was urgently necessary that there should be an abundant and cheap supply of fruit, but there was no chance of that while flying-foxes were allowed to commit their depredations in orchards and gardens.

Mr. GROOM said that if the Committee were not inclined to agree with the amendment of the hon. member for South Brisbane he hoped that when the Divisional Boards Bill came under consideration power would be given to divisional boards to declare what were and what were not noxious animals that ought to be destroyed. In his own district the greatest pest they had to contend against was not the marsupials but the flying-foxes. He might appeal to the hon. member for Northern Downs (Mr. Nelson) and ask him whether he had not had them in his garden in thousands destroying fruit. On the Middle Ridge he had seen gardens almost entirely destroyed by those animals. Although a "Flying-fox Destruction Association" had been formed there, and a considerable amount of money had been spent in sending men with guns into the scrubs below the Main Range to kill them—and they had killed many thousands—yet every year, as fast as they were killed, they seemed to "increase and multiply and replenish the earth," as it were, to an enormous extent. That something would have to be done to destroy them was undoubted, for they were just as great a pest to farmers as marsupials were to squatters. In New South Wales, he observed, power was given to the local authorities, wherever any animal increased to such an extent as to become a nuisance, to declare it a noxious animal, and he did not see why the same power should not be given here. In his own district, as he had said, marsupials were not a pest—they had been nearly all destroyed—but the flying-foxes were undoubtedly, and every year hundreds of pounds' worth of fruit were entirely destroyed by them. He had been requested by the fruit-growers on the Middle Ridge and other parts of the electorate to support the amendment of the hon. member for South Brisbane, and he was sorry the Government could not see their way to accept it. Fruit-growers who were also stockowners had to contribute towards the marsupial fund, and it was only fair that they should receive some assistance in the destruction of that animal which was such a great nuisance to them. Their ravages were not confined to the Darling Downs. In one of the Ipswich papers he had read that flying-foxes came out of the Rosewood Scrub and had been making a raid on the gardens all round Ipswich. If the hon. member persisted in pressing his amendment upon the attention of the Committee, then, in justice to his constituents, he would vote for it. He was sure the time would come, if it had not arrived now, when the Committee would be bound to adopt legislation in regard to that pest, because the existence of fruit-growers almost depended upon its destruction.

Mr. NELSON said he could corroborate all that the hon. member for Toowoomba had said with regard to the pest of flying-foxes. At the same time he thought they were rather out of the scope of the Bill. He was in favour of a fresh measure being brought in dealing with noxious animals. It was quite true, as the Colonial Secretary had stated, that the only justification for taxing the people under the Marsupials Destruction Act was that the destruction of marsupials preserved the natural grasses for the pastoral tenants, but he could not see why freeholders who derived no benefit from the Act should also be taxed. He was not inclined to support the amendment as it now stood. He would agree to the Bill if it was to renew the Act for one year only.

The PREMIER : That is all that is proposed.

Mr. NELSON said he was not in favour of renewing it from year to year, as had been done hitherto.

Mr. NORTON said there was no doubt that animals were now included in the Act which were not marsupials, although they were called

marsupials in the Act. Native dogs were not marsupials, neither were flying-foxes. But there was this difficulty about the amendment: that a great number of men who would be benefited by it were those who had orchards, but did not keep stock. They might keep two or three horses, but that was all. The amendment really would not apply very much to farmers, because, as a rule, they had only a few fruit-trees and could manage to keep the flying-foxes away from them; but where a man had a large orchard he could not, of course, do that. It was those men who had orchards and who contributed nothing to the fund who would get the benefit of the amendment if it was adopted.

Mr. GROOM: Not in all cases.

Mr. NORTON said he agreed that it would not be so in all cases. At the same time, those who did contribute to the fund and would be benefited by having flying-foxes included in the measure contributed a very small amount, and they would draw the greater part of the fund in their district for the destruction of flying-foxes. He undertook to say that in any part of the country where flying-foxes existed in any numbers a man could, in a few days, if he found their camp, kill such a number as would exhaust the fund that had been collected. So far, then, the proposal was utterly impracticable. But, besides that, their camp could not always be found. They did not always camp in the same place, nor always in accessible places. Along the coast they frequently camped on the islands where they could not be disturbed, and they shifted their camping ground continually. He really thought that the hon. member would benefit very few farmers by his proposal.

Question—That the new clause stand part of the Bill—put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 9.

Messrs. Dutton, Groom, Isambert, Donaldson, Jordan, White, McMaster, S. W. Brooks, and Wakefield.

NOES, 18.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Norton, Hamilton, Moreton, Miles, Foxton, McWhannell, Bulcock, Sheridan, Lissner, Pattison, Bailey, Kellett, Lalor, Nelson, W. Brookes, Murphy, and Dickson.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr. FOXTON moved the following new clause:—

The board of a district may in any year reduce the rates of bonus payable in respect of scalps of kangaroos or wallaroos, below the rates specified in Schedule B of the Marsupials Destruction Act of 1881, or may direct that no bonus shall be payable in respect of such scalps.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had seen the telegram the hon. member had received in reference to the question of not paying bonuses on the scalps of kangaroos and wallaroos, also telegrams from several boards asking whether they could not do away with the bonuses in respect to those scalps. He was, therefore, willing to accept the amendment.

Mr. KELLETT said the amendment was lengthy and important, and as it was not in print he did not think that hon. members were in a position to discuss it at that late hour.

Mr. PATTISON said that though the amendment was lengthy it was very simple. It merely provided that boards should have the power to reduce the rates below those fixed by the Act.

New clause put and passed.

Clause 2—"Short title"—passed as printed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with an amendment.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: I move that this House do now adjourn. To-morrow, after the third readings, we propose to take the Divisional Boards Bill in committee.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at four minutes to 11 o'clock.