

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 18 AUGUST 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 18 August, 1887.

Adjournment—Return Ball to the Mayor.—Questions.—
Petition—Chinese Immigration.—Formal Motions.—
Adjournment—Public Holiday.—Newspaper Proprietors and Publishers Relief Bill—second reading.
—Ways and Means—resumption of committee.—
Adjournment.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

RETURN BALL TO THE MAYOR.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I desire to ask the Premier, without notice, if he has any objection to adjourn the House early this evening, say at 9 o'clock, on account of the return ball to his worship the Mayor.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—If it will suit the convenience of hon. members I have no objection on the part of the Government to adjourn at about 9 o'clock.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—If we are likely to adjourn at 9 o'clock we might as well adjourn at tea-time, because many hon. members have to travel some distance before they can get ready, and I do not see how they can manage it very well. I do not think much business can be done after tea.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—

The SPEAKER: I may inform the hon. member that there is no question before the House.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Works—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to invite tenders for the extension of the Central Railway from Barcardine Downs to the Thomson River?

2. At what date will tenders be invited?

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

1. The Government intend to invite tenders for a further extension of the Central Railway to Ilfracombe, about forty miles beyond Barcardine.

2. It is expected that the department will be in a position to invite tenders in about three months.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked the Minister for Works—

1. Have the claims of O'Rourke and McSharry in connection with,—

1st. The Brisbane Valley Railway,

2nd. The Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway, been finally settled?—if not, have any moneys been paid on account?

2. If so, what were the amounts so paid and the names of the parties who received the money?

3. If the claims have not been settled, what course do the Government intend to take with regard to them?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. The claims made by Messrs. O'Rourke and McSharry for the Brisbane Valley and Bundaberg to Mount Perry Railways have been settled by the award in each case of the Chief Engineer.

In regard to the Bundaberg to Mount Perry Railway the amount awarded, together with interest, making a total of £1,922 15s. 5d., less £661 19s. 1d., hire of engine supplied to the contractors, has been paid to Mr. Thynne, as solicitor for the plaintiffs, who received the amount under protest.

2. No further claim can be made in accordance with the conditions of the contracts.

Mr. ADAMS asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to erect police quarters at Bingera, for which it is stated money has been voted?

2. If so, when will tenders be invited?

The PREMIER said: Will the hon. gentleman repeat his question on Tuesday? My hon. colleague the Colonial Secretary is not here, and I have not seen him to-day.

PETITION.

CHINESE IMMIGRATION.

Mr. MACFARLANE presented a petition from the mayor of Ipswich on behalf of a public meeting held at that place, praying that the House will take immediate action with respect to Chinese immigration; and moved that it be read.

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

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

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By the Hon. G. THORN—

That there be laid upon the table of the House a Return of all papers and correspondence in connection with Selection No. 139, Ipswich land agent's district, selected under the Crown Lands Act of 1884.

By Mr. NORTON (for Mr. Jessop)—

That there be laid upon the table of the House a Return of all officers dismissed and resigned from all the principal gaols and penal establishments in the colony, including St. Helena, for the last twelve months, with the causes for such dismissals and resignations.

By the PREMIER—

1. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to divide the colony into districts for financial purposes, and to provide for the keeping of separate accounts of the general and local revenue and expenditure of the colony, and the expenditure within such districts of the revenue raised therein.

2. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make provision for the establishment of branches of the several Government departments in the Central and Northern districts of the colony.

3. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make provision for the establishment of branches of the office of the Registrar of Titles in the Central and Northern districts of the colony.

4. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide for the construction, maintenance, and management of works for the storage and distribution of water.

ADJOURNMENT.

PUBLIC HOLIDAY.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—Before the House passes to the consideration of the Orders of the Day, I think it desirable that we should decide to what time the House should adjourn at its rising this evening. I suppose no hon. member considers it desirable to sit to-morrow, and in the ordinary course we should have to adjourn the House to-day until Tuesday next. The difficulty is that Tuesday next is a public holiday also, and though I do not know that that necessarily is a sufficient ground for adjourning, I have endeavoured to consult the wishes of hon. members, and I understand a great many of them prefer to adjourn to Wednesday next. I feel some reluctance in proposing that, considering the importance of the business at present before the House. The sooner the motion before the House, in Committee of Ways and Means, is disposed of, the more satisfactory it will be to the Government. However, if hon. members desire to adjourn to Wednesday, I have no objection to propose it. I do not think that, under all the circumstances, the debate on Tuesday evening, if we met on that day, would be very satisfactory, as many members might not be present, and those who did attend would probably be tired from the exertions of the day. I make the proposition with reluctance, under the circumstances, but I believe I shall be consulting the convenience of hon. members by moving that this House at its rising adjourn until Wednesday next.

Question put and passed.

NEWSPAPER PROPRIETORS AND PUBLISHERS RELIEF BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—In rising to speak to this Bill I trust that you, sir, will not think that in some of the allusions I shall have to make I am generalising the Press, and harshly criticising a great number of very respectable journals, and very well-conducted and well-informed journals, which exist not only in this colony and the other colonies, but also all over the world, and to which I myself am most grateful for the instruction and information I have received from them. I have no wish that any harsh criticism I may have to make on the conduct of certain newspapers should be taken as applicable in any way to the Press as a whole, and to the honourable profession which I have all my life, or at all events up to the last few years, held in very considerable respect indeed. I regret to say that I have had reason, owing to the conduct of certain corrupt journals, to change my opinion and modify it very much, and I consider that in a democratic colony like this it is the duty of the Crown—that is, the people—to protect their public officers and their representatives, who are, after all, themselves, in the fearless and conscientious discharge of their duties. I hold this Assembly to be the supreme power, even over the judges of the Supreme Court. I, therefore, hold that it should have the supreme control over the Press too. The Press used to be contented with the position which was formerly assigned to it of the Fourth Estate. It is no longer contented with that; it wishes to be the First Estate. It aspires to that position now. I, for one, protest, not against the liberty of the Press—let it have the fullest freedom, let it indulge in free criticism, and so long as it criticises measures fairly I do not object—but I protest against the unbridled license and the unlicensed tyranny that is going on from day to day till it is hard to say what power can stop it or where it will all

end. Are we to govern ourselves entirely by the Press? Are we, who are the representatives of the people, to submit to the tyranny of the Press? I can see that the day is coming, and that it is not far distant, unless something is done to control the Press, when the position of any member of this House will become intolerable if he does not bow down and worship the edicts of the Press. And in the case of a public servant who fearlessly, independently, and justly discharges his duty, if the Press, or any section of the Press, chooses to take a down upon him and have a grudge against him, they can make it so hot and so unpleasant for him that he will have to get out of that. I am not going back to ancient history in this matter. It is the history of this year that I shall deal with. But if I were to go back into ancient history I could show that there is not on record a single case in which a conviction has been obtained under the criminal libel laws in this colony since its formation. There has not been one conviction. That is the only allusion I shall make to ancient history. Not once has the Press,—not the Press—I beg the Press's pardon,—but any newspaper proprietor been criminally punished for libel. I will take now a recent case which concerns myself, or rather my electorate, and therefore myself, as I am a representative of the people. The case to which I refer took place in Cairns. The vast majority of the people at Cairns, which, I take it, I represent, are a peaceful, law-abiding, orderly people, anxious to live quietly and at peace with their neighbours. But there is in that place, as there is in all other places, a section of the community quite the reverse of this, ever ready to make laws, and just as ready to break them. I am thankful to say that they are in a very small minority. Nevertheless they exist, and they are locally known as the "dynamite party." That is the sobriquet they have. They make a great noise and are a source of terror to the rest of the community. Of course any police magistrate ruling those people with a firm hand and keeping them in order throws himself open to their dislike and fear and contempt. The section of the community that I allude to, locally known as the "dynamite party," found it, in the course of their operations, advisable to start a newspaper on a limited liability scheme, with the object—the avowed object—of hunting the police magistrate out of the place. They started with that object; and soon after the company was formed into a limited liability company. I will here read to the House one of the scurrilous, and, I may say blasphemous, effusions, which appeared in this paper. It is headed "The Cairns Prayer, to be said morning and evening by the suffering residents of Cairns," and reads as follows:—

"We recommend the following prayer to the attention of the Cairns heathen, and trust they will continue to thump at it until it produces the desired effect:—

"O God, grant unto us, Thy servants, relief from our present sufferings. Grant them Thy favour, O Lord, in this one instance, and Thy servants will for ever follow in Thy path. O Omnipotent Being, we approach thee with fear and trembling—fear that thou shouldst turn a deaf ear to our supplications, and trembling as we think of the consequences attached to your failing to attend to our wants. O God, instil into the hearts of the Griffith Ministry to move one Henry M. Chester, once magistrate at Thursday Island, and now chief law-giver in our midst. O Heavenly Father, Thy servants are a long-suffering people, but the yoke that thou hast in Thy wisdom cast upon us is greater than we can bear. Turn the hearts of the Brisbane Administration so that they may listen to our grievances and remove from amongst us our present magistrate. O merciful Father, grant our request. Debar not Thy servants from justice. Help us to cast off our load, for verily we are heavily laden, yea like unto a camel carrying two tons weight over the mountains of Herberton. O Heavenly Father, turn not away from us, for thou in thy all-seeing wisdom hast surely noticed

the actions of the Police Magistrate. We, Thy servants, do not consider him competent to dispense Thy laws and precepts, and would fain have a change of administration. With lowly humble attitude we approach Thy footstool; O Lord, turn us not away. O God, we ask not to be revenged on Henry Chester. If thou shouldst see fit to discharge him from the service of the State, grant unto him a situation—even the situation of match and boot-lace seller to the Brisbane public. For this work, O Father, he is suited. O Heavenly Father, we now thank You for listening to our wailing, and knowing that You are quick to grant relief to all who approach Thy throne in an humble spirit, we reverently hope that the sufferings and miseries of Thy chosen ones of Cairns will soon cease to exist. O God, once more we ask, 'Move the Police Magistrate from Cairns.'

"This prayer may be concluded with the Lord's Prayer if considered advisable by the supplicant."

Now, I do not want to take up the time of the House by reading more of this, but there is a heap of it. There is one very edifying discourse, where Satan is supposed to have been visiting Cairns to interview some of his friends there, and he seems to have been very much at home with them, judging by the conversation they indulged in. I have looked at the petition against Mr. Chester, and I find it is signed by very few people whose names I know at all. Everybody knows how easily a petition can be got up about almost anything. Lots of people will sign a petition without knowing what they are signing. As against that petition, there was a letter sent down signed by magistrates in the immediate neighbourhood who had been in the habit of sitting on the bench with Mr. Chester, in which it was set forth that his decisions had invariably been fair and just; and they thoroughly upheld his conduct with regard to the case in dispute. That petition was not signed by three magistrates, their names being Mr. Draper, who was a brother of the publisher or editor of the paper—the man who was prosecuted for writing this libel; Mr. Kenny, who was the head-centre of the "dynamite section"; a man who is utterly unfit for his position; he was gazetted to the magistracy on the 10th October, 1883, with about eight other electioneering agents of the party which was lately in power. I do not know whether he was ever sworn in, but he was, with some more of his friends—I think the whole eight—struck off directly I returned from the Cook district. The third was lately a member of this House, Mr. Kingsford, who was on the bench also. Though Mr. Kingsford was a political opponent of mine, I still looked upon him as a respectable man, and I am certainly somewhat surprised to find him in such company. These are the three magistrates who went on the bench and insisted on this man's acquittal. The brother of the defendant in the case goes there and creates a most indecent scene on the bench, and he is backed up by the head-centre of the organisation, who, I believe, was a shareholder in the paper, and also by Mr. Kingsford, who, if I am rightly informed, was another shareholder in the paper. The consequence of this was that Mr. Draper was called upon by the Colonial Secretary to resign his appointment on the Commission of the Peace on the ground that he had sat in a case where he had no business to sit, when his brother was directly concerned. I have seen the papers, which I suppose any member of this House can see in the Colonial Secretary's Office. It is duly minuted by the Ministers that Mr. Draper really should resign, and there he is still, a very unfit ornament to the Commission of the Peace. In addition to the counter petition which was sent down by these seven other magistrates upholding the action of Mr. Chester, I have here a telegram from the orderly portion of the community, which unfortunately I did not receive at once, as I was away. I may mention that I had been watching this case all through. I

advised the Colonial Secretary before I left of the condition of things in Cairns, and the existence of this "dynamite party." This is the telegram:—

"Chester police magistrate got notice of removal Cloncurry. Can assure you this is against wish of all the respectable people of Cairns and would be a triumph for that scurrilous rag *Cairns Chronicle*. Will forward petition. Try and stay removal."

I will not read the signature. The sender of the telegram is a business man in Cairns; and, in view of an election which may be coming rather shortly, the dynamite party might make it rather hot for him—in fact, blow him up—if I gave his name. It would damage his business. Now, before this man, who was sent to be tried by a Townsville jury, was brought to trial—before the jury had an opportunity of expressing their opinion whether this was a criminal libel or not as against Mr. Chester—the Government practically condemned Mr. Chester by removing him to an obscure place like Cloncurry. So that even if in this case, when there might have been a hope—I do not believe there was much hope that the jury would convict a man for any slander, no matter how malicious—

Mr. NELSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to order. The hon. member is travelling a long way beyond the provisions contained in this Bill.

The SPEAKER: It is impossible for me to say what conclusions the hon. member intends to draw. The hon. member is moving the second reading of a Bill for the relief of newspaper proprietors and publishers. I suppose the instances he is quoting will lead up to the conclusions he is going to draw. If that is the hon. member's course of action, he is perfectly in order.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: That is the course of action I intend to take. I am illustrating the position. I do not know how the hon. member for Northern Downs can take exception to anything I have done. I have read that as a sample of some of the worst that can be published with impunity. I think even the hon. member for Northern Downs will agree with me that such publications should not be allowed to issue forth from any newspaper office unpunished. The object of this Bill is contained in the preamble. I wish to relieve the newspapers from any obligations that exist at present, and I wish also to relieve the public mind from any impression that may exist, that newspapers are liable to any penalty, or that public officers or the representatives of the people are protected in any way by the criminal laws of this country. When laws are of no use it is time to clear them off the Statute-book, and my object in bringing forward the Bill is to clear the track and pave the road for future legislation on the subject, and let the newspaper people thoroughly understand the position. It is of no use to begin fresh legislation before the old effete legislation is wiped off. That is my reason for beginning, perhaps, in the reverse direction, in order to attain the object I have in view; and I trust that explanation will be satisfactory to the hon. member for Northern Downs. I would point out that to protect any officer of the Crown, or any representative of the people even, from any scurrilous, slanderous, malicious, false attack, the only recourse he has is to institute civil proceedings against the paper, which is an expensive process, attended very often with a very uncertain result, and eventually no damages—or if any are awarded, he is not likely to get paid, especially when the paper is a bogus sort of arrangement disguised as a limited liability company. The line of defence very often taken, even in the worst cases, is—"Oh! how can that paper hurt Mr. Smith, whom we all know to be a respectable man? There is no doubt that he has been

maliciously slandered, but it has not hurt him. He has suffered no pecuniary loss, and you cannot award him pecuniary damages." And the representatives of the paper will perhaps plead the vileness of the paper itself, and the impossibility of its doing any harm, in extenuation of damages, or in order to get off altogether—and they are very often successful. I say that in a democratic country the representatives of the people ought not to have to go through any civil process in such cases, but should be protected. If they, in the fearless discharge of their duty, say things which do not please the Press, they should not be liable to be subjected to the whips of scorn, and have malicious falsehoods told about them—if the truth were told it would not matter—to be misquoted and misreported; to have false constructions put on their utterances and sentences given without the context; and have their words distorted in every possible way. That is simply what has been going on lately in connection with some journals of this colony. I would here point out that the newspapers enjoy very great privileges in this colony.

Mr. STEVENSON: Why do you want to give them any more?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I do not want to give them any more. The hon. member is so dense that he cannot see the explanation I have given. In the first place they are carried about post free. They are merely mercantile institutions. People need not labour under the idea that newspaper proprietors are philanthropists, who spend their lives in circulating the truth for the benefit of the people—they are working, as every other class of business men, for the benefit of their own pockets; and if it pays them better—some of the unscrupulous ones—to serve out lies than the naked truth they will do so. Lies are carried about at the same price—at the expense of the country. They further enjoy protection from the Government in the shape of £14,000 a year—that was the amount last year—for advertisements. Those huge limited liability newspaper companies are protected to the utmost extent, but if anyone ventures to speak about protecting other people and other industries they are down upon him at once and abuse him in every shape and form. With regard to the power of the Press, I do not think anyone will contradict me, or even interrupt me. Everyone will admit that the Press has a most enormous power already. Take an instance—the eve of a coming election. I was reproached with having won my seat at the last election for Cook by bribery. I had the misfortune to contest an electorate where there were nine newspapers, and when I went up first at the general election in 1883—

Mr. STEVENSON: Did you subsidise them all?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: No. They were the only persons who wanted to be bribed. The hon. member evidently has a meaner opinion of his constituents than I have of mine. In the face of the bribery laws it is almost impossible to bribe an elector, but you can bribe newspaper men.

Mr. STEVENSON: Is that the reason you are not going back for the Cook?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: No; it is on account of ill-health. They were all for sale, though a good many of them had been bought previously. Most of them were ready to sell themselves for cheap promises of abundant advertisements; that was one of the terms they exacted. They also demanded columns of bogus claptrap advertisements. I studiously declined to buy those papers, and merely inserted my address, which I

duly paid for. They were mean enough to do as I have said, and base enough to try and cheat me afterwards. They sent in bills for advertisements that had never—some of them—been ordered or sanctioned. Well, sir, I did not pay them. Notwithstanding their influence, or whatever influence they thought they had, I made a very good fight, and should, but for unforeseen circumstances—California Gully, to wit—probably have been returned. However, I went so near being returned, in spite of those circumstances, that I was quite pleased with myself for having done so well. I know that, newspapers notwithstanding, if I went back to the district to-morrow, I should not have the slightest difficulty in being returned.

Mr. HAMILTON: Yes; they would return you two minutes after you got ashore.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: With a charge of dynamite, perhaps. Newspapers exercise a great power in controlling men of sensitive feelings. There are plenty of men who would be a useful addition and an ornament to the House, who are restrained from coming forward to Parliament because of the constant abuse and harsh criticism they meet with from the Press. Another power they have beyond that, which is still worse, is the power they have of getting at men through the feelings of those who are near and dear to them. I allude to those who have wives and families, sisters, cousins, and aunts about. It is a most cowardly practice, which I know is indulged in by some newspapers. They have not got at me in that way, because, unfortunately, in one sense, I have not a relation of that kind nearer than 14,000 miles; but there are plenty of people who cannot be made to feel through themselves, but who are made to feel through the feelings of those who are near and dear to them. But though they cannot get at me there, they have made friends of mine suffer in the way I allude to. Having given an instance from the extreme North, I will now come a little nearer home and point out how the tremendous power wielded by a limited liability company is a source of very great danger in this city. It is an organ with three barrels, which is continually engaged in grinding out the grossest untruths without the slightest foundation. But I will give its own description of itself, which, I think, is rather good. This is with respect to the first barrel, the morning paper:—

"On the enlargement of the *Courier* to 8 pp., in September, 1882, the paper greatly increased its circulation, and it has since been admittedly the leading newspaper of the colony. Its politics are Liberal, but slightly tinged with Conservatism."

Rather a "wobbler," I think—

"one of its chief recommendations being its absolute independence of all political parties and cliques."

That is not bad—

"This quality, coupled with its moderate tone and scrupulous truthfulness, has secured for it the confidence of an ever-increasing constituency."

That is No. 1 barrel, to wrap up insidious, ingenious misrepresentations in nice polite language, to be served up fresh to the aristocratic portion of the community in the morning for breakfast, at 2d. per head. Later in the day comes the second barrel, which is generally in a coarser and more malignant form, highly spiced, and calculated to bring into contempt our authorities, leading men, and public officers; and it is sold rapidly to the multitude at 1d. I believe it has been an immense factor in increasing the amount of larrikinish and contempt for the legal authorities of this city. It instils into certain classes of the community disrespect and contempt for those who have to keep them under control and in order. The contents of these two are afterwards

ground up by the same limited newspaper company in a weekly journal which certainly has a monopoly of circulation as a weekly journal in the country. When I say "country," I mean districts far away. I believe *The Week* has a very good circulation in the agricultural districts in the immediate vicinity of Brisbane, but I very seldom see it in my constituency up north or in the western districts. This tremendous machine, which is conducted for the express purpose of making money—as the Jew said, "Honestly if you can; if not, dishonestly"—has an enormous power, and is a distinct and serious danger to the State. It has the control of the wires, not only in this colony but in the other colonies, and to Europe. It can publish what it likes, and keep back what it likes, and get whatever it thinks fit put into circulation. It enjoys facilities which no private individual or company, unless very wealthy, could enjoy, for distributing either truth or falsehood. In my opinion it serves out just what it thinks will pay it best and will suit its own ends and views. From the beginning the *Courier* has always been a source of complaint to the members of this House, in whose protection the country was put to the expense of publishing a *Hansard* at a cost of £7,000 or £8,000 a year, in order that there may be a correct record of what takes place in Parliament. The Brisbane Newspaper Company have had every facility for circulating the correct version of what takes place in this House, but they will not avail themselves of it. They prefer to keep an expensive staff in the gallery to invent and garble their own reports as to what hon. members have said. I have never shrunk from taking the responsibility of what I have said on the floor of this House; but I have shrunk from accepting the responsibility of what I have been reported in the *Courier* to have said, and many other members have done the same. However, they have it all their own way, and the only remedy I can see is to adopt the motion tabled by the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. W. Brookes, and distribute *Hansard* free to every elector in the colony. I shall support that when it comes on, although it will involve an enormous further outlay. It is a great pity that we have not a respectable journal which we can rely upon to give the real clear truth as to what takes place. I will now call the attention of hon. members to two instances of gross misrepresentation which have occurred within the last two months, and which are both within my own personal knowledge. The first occurred when I was in Melbourne. On my arrival there recently, which was about the time the Premier returned to this colony, I was waited upon—I do not like the word "interviewed"—by two gentlemen who were not unconnected with the Press of that city. One of them said to me—"Whatever has happened in Queensland? There must be a dissolution. The Liberal party is no longer popular, and the Premier on his arrival in Brisbane was received with hooting and groans." A telegram came down, and a letter followed the telegram. The telegram came down a few days before the letter, which appeared in due course from "our special correspondent" in one of the Melbourne daily papers. I was asked, "Is it true?" "True?" I said, "I have had no opportunity of knowing. I cannot tell you for a fact. I have had no opportunity of judging. I have not been there since the 1st March; but I know where you got your information perfectly well, and I am game to make a considerable wager that it is perfectly untrue." So I told them where the information came from—that it came from the Brisbane Newspaper Company, Limited. The first thing that happened was that the arch Ananias in-

structed his wire-man to wire off a telegram, and then instructed Sapphira to write a letter corroborating this mendacious telegram. Sapphira was the editor, generally known as Carl Feilberg. And that was the way that information was derived and circulated about. I remained in Melbourne two or three days afterwards, and then down came the news of the Warwick election. I went to my friends and said, "I was only hazarding a guess at the state of affairs the other day; but now I have had a practical proof that, whether for good or evil, the Premier and the party behind him have lost no popularity with the people of the colony if an unknown and untried man like Mr. Morgan can beat a man like Mr. William Allan, who is well known and has been tried and not found wanting." I said, "It is quite sufficient proof to me that that was a pack of lies that came down." It satisfied me. However, the next part of the business refers to myself directly, and it occurred in this way: I returned here on a Sunday from a long trip during which I had been all round Australia, and I was interviewed by a newspaper man, who came and wanted my opinion upon the Kimberley district and the goldfields. I said to the gentleman, who was a personal friend of mine—I am sorry that he should have occupied a position such as he did, and as he does, in such an office—I said, "Look here, Mr. So-and-so, if you want an opinion upon the Kimberley district and the prospects of it, I advise you to go there and form one for yourself. That is my advice; you will get nothing out of me." I said I did not want any cheap advertisements. He asked, "How many men are there on the field?" I replied, "I do not know—I did not count them; the pump won't draw, and you had better go away." So he went away. Next morning a paragraph appeared in the paper, in which it was stated that I had been to the Kimberley district and had visited the goldfield, which was falsehood No. 1; and I beg leave to state that I had never been within 100 miles of the goldfield, and I never told anybody I had been there. So that was utterly untrue. The paragraph said I gave very hopeful prospects of the diggings and supported my testimony by the production of nuggets. I expressed no opinion about the prospects of the diggings, and I have never showed to anyone but one small nugget, under three ounces, which I brought down as a curiosity, having bought it in Wyndham. So that was utterly false. The paragraph went on further to state that I had been suffering from fever, which was brought on through the want of Chinese to grow cheap vegetables for me. Mr. Speaker, the whole thing was ludicrous. I had not been suffering from fever. I had not had fever for fourteen or fifteen years before; but I had been ill, and very ill, and from the effects of that illness I am not recovered yet. I am speaking now with difficulty and in pain.

Mr. HAMILTON: We are listening, so, now.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I am very much afraid I shall not be able to do justice to my subject. I interviewed the supreme controller of this gigantic monopoly on the afternoon of the day that this false paragraph appeared, at the back door of the Speaker's private gallery. He is very often to be seen hanging about the back door of the gallery of this House since he was kicked out of the House, fortunately for the country. I told him that the paragraph was utterly untrue, and I told him exactly what had passed, and asked him to have it contradicted in his paper. He said the proper course was to write a letter to the paper. I said, "If I do write a letter to the paper you will not publish it; but only make more allusion to an offensive communication you had received from Mr. Hill,

the member for Cook, which you did not believe at all, or something of that sort." I asked him to contradict it; but no step was taken, and a wire had gone away to my constituency. I decline to be responsible for any statements made through the columns of that paper, for saying what I had no intention or idea of saying at all. Fortunately, my constituents did not believe the report. One newspaper published almost the identical paragraph, and the editor's comments upon it. They knew perfectly well what a perverter of the truth they had to deal with in their correspondent, and said they did not believe Mr. Hill had expressed that opinion, because I was not a practical miner. I take this opportunity, and it is the only one I have had, as I have not a newspaper at my command, to put it on record that I never expressed any opinion as to the prospects of the Kimberley diggings, and I should be sorry to say anything that would induce anyone to go to Kimberley, or to keep them away. It does not come within the functions of my public duty to do anything of the kind, and I would not like to be responsible. I believe myself, really, that a poor man has a very bad chance there. When machinery gets there, and the reefs are developed, I believe it will be a centre of considerable mining activity and industry; but at the present time I strongly advise miners, unless they are very well equipped and very well found, to stay away. At this critical time, Mr. Speaker, it may not suit hon. gentlemen to express their opinions in this matter; but I think they will readily acknowledge that this is a tremendous power to be placed without any control in the hands of unscrupulous men, backed up by an unlimited liability company; we do not know what they may do. One may engage in an expensive litigation against it when driven to one's wits' end by repeated attacks, and have to retain an expensive Bar. A man would have to fight, and after all he might find it was only a bladder he had been fighting against, even if he gained the case. There might be nothing in it; he might not be able to get any recompense. The career of the individual who conducts this journal, and holds people far above himself up to unlimited scorn and contempt, was rejected for Rockhampton in 1879. He had been a member of this House, and was, I then thought, unworthily rejected. But the people of Rockhampton knew him better than I did, and put him out. He then went to the Upper House as leader of the Government there—Postmaster-General. He relinquished that post to accept the more lucrative one of forging telegrams and letters from correspondents, and he immediately turned round upon the very Government of which he had been a member, and abused them. It seems to me that he will always abuse any Government that may be in power, unless they come to his terms, and do exactly what he tells them to do, or allows him to levy blackmail upon them. He has persistently abused the Government during the whole time they have been in office, and it is only at the eleventh hour, when he sees that there is a chance of their coming back, that his abuse and misrepresentation has had no effect; that he has derived no benefit from it; that he is beginning to be a little bit afraid, and tries to come within decent lines. Now, Mr. Speaker, I should really like, were it not at such a critical time as this, to test the feeling of this House whether it is safe for such a democratic country as this that such a power should exist without any check or curb. If I considered that this House was going to continue for any lengthy period—for any period at all—my course would be to wipe off the existing Acts, which are known to be ineffective, inoperative, and utterly

useless—clear them off from encumbering the Statute-book, and then commence a fresh course of legislation, introducing some law which would make it penal for a newspaper to tell an absolute untruth, and to make it easy for them to be punished by the criminal law without the necessity of the individual slandered, or misreported, or misrepresented being put to the cruel necessity—which he certainly should not be required to undertake—of instituting costly proceedings at civil law. I recognise fully that in the state the country is now in, and more especially the critical position of this House, some of the members of which would probably be very much afraid of offending these organs—and recognising the way in which the whip would be laid on those who are coming before their constituents again, and vote in any way for controlling the power of the Press—recognising that, as I do thoroughly, I intend to move when I sit down, that the Order of the Day be discharged from the paper. But I may say I believe the time will come when this House will recognise the necessity of introducing laws in the direction that I have pointed out. I have not spoken selfishly for myself. My public life will probably finish about this session. I am incapable, from physical health, to continue a member of the House, and I certainly could not, in my present condition, fight the Press or the newspapers of even my own district. It would probably shorten my life if I went up and contested the Cook election, but when I am well and strong again I shall come back, I expect, to this House. In the meantime I may possibly be relegated or translated into a higher sphere, and take an airing in another Chamber where I can cool down and recruit my health. I am never afraid of the Press myself; I am never afraid of encountering its criticism. If they annoy me I generally find some way of annoying them, and it is chiefly in the interest of men who are more highly organised than I am, and perhaps more sensitive, that I am speaking. I really trust that this House will think the matter that I have brought before it worthy of their careful consideration in the future, and also that the words I have spoken may have some effect upon the Press—that it may have the effect of warning them that if they will persist in their mendacious career they must ultimately arouse the supreme power of this country to put a stop to their lying and slandering—I can use no other terms. I now move, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill be discharged from the paper.

Mr. ALAND: Must not the consent of the seconder be got?

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not think the hon. member was serious in introducing this Bill, and I think he has done well by moving that it be discharged from the paper, because he has certainly made out no case in support of it. He has said a good deal about the Press generally, and some of his strictures are, I am bound to admit, not altogether unfounded. But he went a great deal further than I think he was justified in going. I think the Press of the colony generally is very well conducted, and that we have no reason to be ashamed of it. Of course there are black sheep in every flock. There are unscrupulous persons connected with the Press as there are in all other walks of life, but it is not fair to blame a class who deserve the respect of the whole community because there may be a few black sheep amongst them. I, sir, have had occasion to complain often of serious misrepresentation, to use a mild word. But I do not mind that much, Mr. Speaker, because I find that the truth gets abroad at last, and that the misrepresentations made produce this effect—that after a little

while any information or statement coming from the same source is not believed at all. That is generally the result. I myself have had to complain of misrepresentation—not much in Queensland of late years, because they have worked themselves out, as I have said, and are no longer believed—but in other places, in the neighbouring colonies. But I find now that they are beginning to disbelieve them there too. I have had occasion to say more than once that no man need be afraid of the Press who tries to make his reputation what it ought to be. I am sorry that the hon. gentleman went so far as he did in his attack upon the Press. I believe that with very few exceptions every man upon the Press tries to do his duty honestly. I do not believe what the hon. member says about the newspaper reports of the proceedings of this House. I believe it is almost unknown for any reporter for the Press to do other than give a perfectly fair report according to the best of his ability. That is the almost universal rule.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Why was *Hansard* started?

The PREMIER: I am speaking of the reporters, not of those who have the control of the papers. The reporters, I am sure, are fair, and always tell the truth so far as they can. It is not possible to report everybody at length, and somebody must exercise a discretion as to who is to be reported fully and who is to be cut down. The art of condensing is a very difficult one—much more difficult than reporting at length; so that under any system other than *Hansard* there must necessarily be complaints of unfairness. And the same complaints are made in England and elsewhere, but I do not agree that no reliance can be placed on newspaper reports. I do not think that such a statement is justified, although, for instance, I am made to talk the most absolute nonsense in this morning's *Courier* in the report of the reply I read to Mr. Macrossan. I did not talk any nonsense so far as I know, and as I see by the official report, but the *Courier* makes it nonsense. But I do not blame anyone for that. It is simply an accident. Now, the hon. member really said nothing about this Bill. I take this opportunity of saying that I think it is a very fortunate thing, and a circumstance upon which the colony may be congratulated, that in all its history there never has been a single conviction for criminal libel. I think, perhaps, there ought to have been once or twice. I have known one instance at least in which, I think, the jury might have found the publisher guilty; but juries are generally right, and there is no doubt that prosecution for criminal libel is fast falling out of use except in cases where the private characters of individuals are attacked—the reputation of a woman, or anything of that sort. I think that punishment ought to be inflicted in cases of that kind. In dealing with public men, unless the crime is very great, I do not believe it is desirable to institute prosecutions unless in exceptional circumstances. I do not think it is necessary to say any more, as the hon. member really did not address himself to the Bill; but he having said what he did, I thought it right that I ought to say a word or two with respect to the general character of the Press of Queensland, which he attacked, I think, without sufficient ground.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: It was not the general Press. I particularly guarded myself against that. I took two instances.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—My hon. colleague the member for Cook, Mr. Hill, in speaking on this matter stated that it was a pity Parliament had not power over the Press. Well, on one occasion Parliament, through the

present Government, did try to exercise power over the Press. The machinery of Parliament was put into execution in order to exercise control; but, fortunately for the colony and the privileges of the Press, the attempt failed. He stated in support of his contention that no instances of criminal prosecution had ever succeeded, and I think that is a very high compliment to the Press, because, unless we are prepared to say that trial by jury is a mistake, the fact that these trials have been dismissed is a high compliment to the Press. As for another statement made by him, that if a person is slandered by the Press and institutes a civil action he will not get damages, of course he must know that the Press is liable to be treated in the same way as individuals. If any person's character is slandered by an individual or by the Press, the plea set up may be that that individual's character is so high that it cannot be damaged, but it is not likely a jury will accept that plea. We know of numbers of instances where they have failed to accept it, and where the individuals or Press have been mulcted in heavy damages for slander. Now, this gentleman has done what he accuses the Press of doing. He attacks an individual under the shelter of his position in this House. He has attacked Mr. Kenny, one of the most respected men in the district; and what was the reason? Because he and one or two other magistrates failed to sign some petition. Whether they were right or wrong does not matter, but he has attacked their characters for that reason. I shall not go into the details of the case, which is a local squabble, and therefore would have no interest for the House; but I think, judging from what I have heard in this House, it would be far better if some Bill were passed to prevent members taking advantage of their positions in this House to slander the characters of individuals outside. There are individuals in this House—and fortunately they are few—who frequently take advantage of their positions to say things regarding persons outside which they would not dare to say elsewhere. They make false accusations and slander characters boldly under the shelter of the House, and they do so quietly behind the backs of persons outside, but never in any other way. Now, Mr. Hill has stated that there are nine papers in his district and that eight of them wanted him to bribe them. That certainly shows they are good judges of character in making him such a proposition. I know perfectly well that they never wanted me to bribe them. I could tell where the bribery came in, and it was not on my side, and I shall be most happy to state it to Mr. Hill outside of this House. I know this, also, that during the whole election they made Mr. Hill "pay through the nose." They charged him for horses and for scrutineers at thirty polling-places, but I was only charged three guineas for one scrutineer in one township, and the whole of the others never charged me one penny. They provided me with horses; they did not charge me for my rooms, for advertising, or anything else, with the exception of one paper. They said that they would see me through and would not let me go to any expense because they knew me of old. That is the kind of bribery that took place on my side. Now, I consider it was a most cowardly thing to attack individuals by name as he has done this evening. For instance, there were one or two gentlemen referred to connected with the *Courier* and *Queenslander*, but I think the large circulation of the last-named paper is the verdict of the people as to what weight they attach to it. Now, Mr. Hill has said—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must speak of his colleague as the member for Cook. It is against the rules of the House for one hon. member to speak of another by name.

Mr. HAMILTON: I was under the impression that I did speak of him as the member for Cook, but I very much regret having to speak of him as my colleague. Now, with regard to the Kimberley, my hon. colleague, Mr. Hill, gave one specific instance in proof of the unreliability of statements which appear in the *Courier*, and that instance was the manner in which he had been interviewed when he came from Kimberley. Before I heard his statement in the House, a friend of mine told me that my colleague had denied the truth of the *Courier's* statement; that he stated that when the reporter of the *Courier* called upon him he told him to clear out. When my friend stated that, I replied, "What a confounded lie!" I will not make that statement here, but I will be happy to repeat it outside, because I heard Mr. Lewis conversing with the junior member for Cook. He was conversing at the door of the Houses of Parliament, and I heard the hon. member telling him that he had been suffering from sickness during his trip. I subsequently spoke to the reporter and told him I heard the conversation, or a portion of it, and could verify his statement. I never heard about the nuggets, and I asked the reporter if he had told him about the nuggets. He said "No," but some time afterwards he was conversing with the Chinese General, when the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, was present, and when speaking about the Kimberley Gold Fields the hon. member took a nugget out of his pocket and exhibited it. So that the statements of the reporter were actually true, and were obtained from conversations overheard from the hon. member for Cook. I will not further take up the time of the House, as the Bill is to be withdrawn. I believe it was meant as a huge joke, and the only consequence of it is that the country has unfortunately been put to the cost of printing it, and the House has lost much valuable time in the discussion of it.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—The House will have to lose a few minutes more of its time. The hon. member in charge of this Bill expressed a hope that it would not be without result. It has produced one result already, but there is another result which it ought to induce this House to produce, and that is a motion compelling the hon. member in charge of the Bill to pay the cost of printing it. From the very first, I think, hon. members regarded it as a huge joke, or rather a very small joke; but it was something more than a joke. I, at any rate, thought from the first that the hon. gentleman simply introduced the Bill for the purpose of covering an attack upon the proprietors of the *Courier*, and it appears I was not very far wrong in my supposition. The hon. member stated that the Bill proposed to give relief to newspaper proprietors, but from his speech he has made it pretty clear that the object he wishes to achieve, but which he is not likely to achieve, is to increase their disabilities. He has no objection, he says, to a free Press, but he does not want to give them unbridled license, which he says they already have, and which he proposes to take away from them. I do not think the hon. gentleman knows very much of the subject on which he was talking. The hon. member talked of the free Press in these days, but I will undertake to say—and you, sir, will bear me out in what I say—that the Press 100 years ago, which we now consider almost as the dark ages, was very much freer than the Press of to-day. I have only to refer to the letters of "Junius" to prove my contention—letters addressed to the highest in the land, to the King, and to eminent statesmen very much above the level of the senior member for Cook, Mr. Hill. This man published in the leading paper of that time full and free opinions of those men. He was taken to task and brought before a jury of his countrymen, who

acquitted him. I ask anybody, if any paper in this colony to-day, with all the so-called freedom of the Press, published such letters as appeared over the anonymous signature of Sir Philip Francis in those days, what would be the result? Why, the paper would be cast in damages that would prove its lasting ruin. There is no question that the effect of this Bill would be not to grant relief to the proprietors of newspapers, but to increase their disabilities, which are much greater now than they were more than a century ago. The hon. member says that the papers are now in a position to make things so hot for a member of Parliament that his life becomes rather miserable. Possibly we may see in the approaching resignation of that gentleman an illustration of the fact he tries to enforce. We were told that Satan was called into requisition by the papers in Cairns, and his majesty has evidently been playing the very devil with the Cook electors. The hon. member wants to give a man who imagines his character attacked the power to take criminal, instead of civil, proceedings against a newspaper. I do not think any intelligent body of men would ever grant him that power. I do not think such a power ought to be granted, and I am perfectly certain that any Assembly that had a reputation for intelligence would forfeit that reputation by conceding any such power to individuals, corporations, or other bodies. I do not propose to follow the hon. gentleman through all his ramblings, it is hardly worth while to do so; but I think it only fair to say a word or two in reply to one or two of his references to the Press of this colony. They will go forth in *Hansard*, and if read outside may be taken to have some foundation in fact, whereas if they have any foundation at all it is a very shadowy one. The hon. member referred particularly to the journals published by the Brisbane Newspaper Company of this city—"The three-barrelled organ," he called them. I recall to mind the fact that one of those papers was called into existence as an organ of the Opposition party, then led by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, and was partly brought out by the gentleman who now denounces it. If I am not mistaken he was one of the original shareholders when that paper was started in this city to support the McIlwraith party. It did not prove a financial success. The time came when the hon. member for Cook thought it advisable, and perhaps thought it necessary to satisfy his conscience, to depart from the McIlwraithian tenets, and he did so. But because the paper did not do his bidding, and turn its coat as he has done, he now denounces it in this manner. It has at least been consistent, which is more than the hon. member can claim to have been. The hon. member also went out of his way to talk about the necessity of imposing a penny-postage rate upon newspapers, and I think it is only gentlemen of the hon. member's calibre that would talk about imposing a tax upon intelligence, for that is what it would mean. He could not make the newspaper proprietor pay the tax, the public would have to pay it, and they, I maintain, represent the bulk of the intelligence of the community. The hon. member would propose to do that for the simple reason that some twopenny-halfpenny newspaper in the colony has offended him. The hon. member contends, also, that because the newspaper proprietors get from the Government some £14,000 a year for the publication of Government advertisements, they ought to pay such a tax. I would point out in reference to this that the Government—and not only the Government, but the people of the colony—get full value for that £14,000. Let them strike it off and stop the advertising of Government business, and see what will be the result. The loss would be, not

£14,000 but £114,000. We have seen the proof of that a hundred times, and we have seen it especially in the cessation of advertisements from the Lands Department, and I make no doubt that that penny-wise action assisted very materially to create the deficit we have at present. I hope the Minister in charge of that department will see that himself, and will alter a course which was a mistaken one from the first. The hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, talked of the immense power of the Press. I hope I shall not be considered as indulging in what may be called "the puff oblique" when I say that power is generally used for the public good. I claim that, and I believe it is a claim open to demonstration as a fact. The hon. gentleman talked about going to his electorate, and having bribed nine newspapers.

The PREMIER: No, no!

Mr. MORGAN: Well, I will withdraw that; what I believe the hon. member said was that he had been invited to bribe them. His colleague told the House that when he went to the electorate his advertising was done for nothing. Possibly the explanation may be this: that the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, had to pay for his own advertising and his colleague's as well.

Mr. HAMILTON: He did not pay double.

Mr. MORGAN: However, to return to the question of bribing the newspapers. I scout the idea that he could bribe even the smallest paper of the smallest town in either the north or south of Queensland. I do not think, sir, that with all his wealth there is one paper in the colony that he could "buy" in the sense in which he uses the term; I do not think that he could complete the purchase if he threw himself body and soul in with his dollars. I said before that the hon. member expressed the hope that this debate will have some result. It will have some result. It has been brought about by his bitter dislike of the Fourth Estate, and that dislike is the outcome of some well-deserved attacks that have been made on the hon. member. Those attacks have produced the effect that already the hon. gentleman has been induced to write his political epitaph. I think that neither the House nor the country will deeply lament that the hon. gentleman is going back to his turnips. I, for one, will not be sorry if he remains there. But turning to his reference to the Brisbane Newspaper Company, I am not in the secrets of the manager of the *Courier*, and I may state that it has had a cut at me since I came into the House. It has charged me with having advocated protection as a means of immediately wiping out the deficit. I am very young and green as a politician, but I am not green enough to talk such rot as that. If I had thought it worth while to correct that statement, I should have gone or written to the proprietor, and I have no doubt that every consideration would have been shown to me, and that the proper means would have been placed at my disposal to put myself right with the country. With respect to the gentleman who controls the affairs of the Brisbane Newspaper Company, and who appears to be the peculiar object of the hatred of the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, I think the hon. member has not made out his case. He has not proved that that gentleman, or those under him, are the arch sinners the hon. member wishes this House to believe they are. I do not believe for one moment that the smallest credence will be given to the assertion that the reports of the debates in this House are cooked in the papers of the Brisbane Newspaper Company. I do not think there is in the whole guild of pressmen in this colony a man who would descend to such

an unworthy contemptible practice as that. There may possibly be—I do not say there is not—a political bias given to the writings in those papers. Most papers are run on political party lines in this country, and are likely to continue on those lines until we have more population; but I do not believe that the smallest newspaper proprietor in the colony would descend to such a petty, mean, contemptible course as to purposely misrepresent and misconstrue what is said by members in this House.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: But they do.

Mr. MORGAN: I doubt it; but that is simply a matter of opinion. The hon. member also referred to the fact that lying telegrams have been sent from this city to southern cities, and he clearly indicated his belief that those telegrams emanated from the office of the Brisbane Newspaper Company, and that they were sent down to blacken the reputation of the party at present in power in the eyes of southern capitalists. I have not seen the telegrams, but I may say that it is part of the newspaper system of this colony that newspaper proprietors are obliged to rely upon one another for information; there is what is termed the "Press Association," and that system is not confined to the colonies but extends also to England. I believe that one special cable service sending messages to this colony has its head-quarters either in the *Standard* or *Times* office. It is a well-known fact that those cablegrams are tinged with the politics which find most favour in the office from which they emanate. I am under the impression that they come from the *Standard* office. Be that as it may, they are tinged with Tory politics; they are Conservative in their leanings, and for that reason are, I believe, more acceptable to the hon. member for Cook than they would be if they gave a fair and true statement of the case; and so it may be with the telegrams sent down south. Everybody knows that the *Courier* is Conservative. Though it claims in the extract read by the hon. member for Cook to be a Liberal journal, yet I believe it is looked upon by the majority of the people in the country as a Conservative one, and it is the most natural thing in the world that there should be a Conservative leaning given to the telegrams sent to the other colonies; and as the great papers of the southern cities are in the hands of large capitalists, and as capitalists are generally Conservatives, a further Conservative tinge is added there, which is of course very distasteful to true-blue Liberals. I will not prolong the discussion. I hope this Bill will meet with the fate it deserves, and that is an ignominious defeat; and—

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: It is withdrawn.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not know so much about that; the hon. member will first have to get the consent of the House. I am perfectly certain that my hope in that direction will be realised.

Question—That the Order of the Day be discharged from the paper—put and passed.

WAYS AND MEANS.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to further consider the Ways and Means for raising the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Question—

That towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty, there be levied in each year upon the owners of freehold land within the colony a tax at the rate of one penny in the pound of the unimproved value of such freehold land over and above the first £500 of such value—

on which it had been proposed as an amendment that all the words after the word "That" be omitted, with the view of inserting the words—

In the opinion of this Committee the financial position of the colony as disclosed in the Premier's statement does not warrant the impost of any fresh taxation on the people of Queensland.

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

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Fraser,—I am sure that every one of the late colleagues of the hon. member for Enoggera shares with him the regret he has expressed at the differences which have arisen between them, followed as they have been by the retirement of the hon. member and the hon. the Postmaster-General from the Government of the colony. I, for one, desire cordially to reciprocate the kindly sentiments which were expressed by the hon. gentleman yesterday in making reference to his former colleagues, and, as he has done me the honour to specially refer to myself, I feel I could not be just to myself or fair to him if I were not to declare my sense of obligation to him for the kind manner in which, now he is free from office, he has thought fit to express his views regarding the manner in which I, for one, have striven to discharge the duties of my position. However, much as we regret the retirement of the hon. gentleman, and much as we regret the loss of strength which his continuance in the Government would have secured to it, we have to face the fact that he is no longer a member of the Government. It is the more to be regretted that the hon. gentleman has seen fit to retire from office on a question of such vital importance to the position and credit of the Government as its financial policy. It is impossible to exaggerate the amount of injury to the Government as a whole which must follow from the secession of so important a member of the Government as the Colonial Treasurer, on a subject in which the whole colony is so deeply interested, and upon which the prosperity of the whole of the colony so largely depends. But although I myself have always been ready to do honour to the hon. gentleman's large experience, and to the ability with which he has always conducted the affairs of the Treasury, I am not prepared to admit that my hon. friend is, even in financial matters, infallible. The hon. member told us that he is not prepared to idolise the Premier, who has secured for himself the universal admiration of the people of this colony; and I, on the other hand, am not prepared to idolise the financial ability or far-sightedness of my hon. friend the member for Enoggera. I believe, notwithstanding the hon. member's great ability as a financier, and his high standing as a member of the community and of this House, that it is quite possible for the hon. member to be mistaken in his views of what the policy of the country should be, in order to promote the best interests of the country. Of course, by far the most convenient policy for the country, if it could be done, would be to have no taxation at all. If it were not a necessity incumbent on this House to find ways and means for carrying on the government of the country, it would be very pleasant indeed to occupy the position of Treasurer, who is not obliged to cast about for ways and means; but since means have to be raised in some way or other, it becomes absolutely necessary to consider intelligently and very dispassionately what are the best means of raising revenue. Now, the hon. gentleman has criticised very severely the administration of the Lands Department by my hon. friend the

Minister for Lands, and indirectly, if not directly, attributes to that gentleman's unwillingness to sell more land the crisis which has now arisen. Now, I do not deem it a part of my duty to go out of my way to make a special defence of the policy of my hon. colleague the Minister for Lands; but I do admire the courage of a man who can maintain unflinchingly the position which he has maintained, being true to his principles in the face of all the severe opposition, not to say opprobrium, which he has met with inside this House and out of it. But hon. members will do well to guard themselves against the belief that the condition of things we so much deplore has arisen in the Government by reason of the obstinacy of the Minister for Lands or by reason of the undue tenacity with which he clings to what he believes to be the right principle. It is well known that the hon. gentleman believes, as a great many believe, that as a matter of principle no land at all should be alienated. But I have always found in my intercourse with the hon. Minister for Lands that, like a reasonable man, while he holds that principle he believes it to be a principle applicable to an ideal condition of affairs, and not to the actual condition of affairs we find around us, and that he is, therefore, ready to apply the principle in which he so firmly believes in so elastic a manner as to make it conformable to the exigencies of government in this colony. He is not prepared to allow his principles to render him so impracticable as to prevent him from selling to a reasonable extent such public lands as there may be a market for, and I think the fact that he has during his tenure of office contrived, in the face of a good deal of opposition and criticism from the other side of the House, to sell a large quantity of public lands, shows that he is not a faddist who is determined at all hazards to carry out his own pet theories. Now, I wish to point out a very amusing circumstance. My hon. friend the member for Enoggera—of whom I shall always speak in terms of respect, and for whom, whether he is associated with me or not in any public capacity, I shall always cherish feelings of the deepest friendship—has attributed to the alleged obstinacy of the Minister for Lands in not disposing of areas of land which, under the existing law, he might legitimately dispose of, the difficulties in which the Government has found itself suddenly plunged; and while the hon. gentleman is denouncing the Minister for Lands for not having got rid of more town lands—for not having turned into revenue large portions of valuable city and town and suburban lands—we find hon. members on the other side denouncing the Minister for Lands for having so far yielded to the influence of the Treasurer as to sell some city and suburban lands that he recently brought into the market. While we find, on the one hand, the hon. member for Enoggera saying the Minister for Lands should have gone further than he has gone in the disposal of those areas which the Government has yet under its control, we find the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, denouncing the Minister for Lands and saying that if he had done his duty he would not have sold a single acre of land at all. Now, between these opposite views, what is the Minister for Lands to do? I think he has done well to pursue the course that he has all along pursued, and is doing well to continue to dispose of such town and suburban lands as ought to be disposed of, and as there is a market for, and not for the mere sake of raising revenue under the influence of a panic to rush land into the market all over the country, in the hope—I think it would be a vain and delusive hope—of raising the amount of revenue that is required to cover

our deficit. How are we, under the existing land law, to raise an increased revenue? The only lands that can be disposed of are town lands in small allotments, and lands in the country to the extent of forty acres in each block. And where, in the name of reason, can those areas be found for which purchasers can be discovered? Where are these persons hankering to become purchasers of only forty-acre blocks?

Mr. HAMILTON: Amend the land laws.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Amend the land laws—undoubtedly. That is what hon. gentlemen opposite, if they have not said so, suggested as a way out of the difficulty. They wish to amend the law so as to enable the Government to sell large tracts of land. I say this Government, having laid down the principles contained in the Land Act of 1884, and after having promulgated the theory that in respect of country lands in the colony there ought to be as little alienation as possible except by selection and only in connection with close settlement—I say, that for this Government to reverse this policy merely because they are under the pressure of a little temporary difficulty, would be to hold themselves up to the contempt of all right-thinking men, not only in this colony, but in every other colony of the Australian group. We maintain the opinion that the time has come when we should cease in that downward career which the colony of New South Wales has pursued with such fatal effect, and which we also were fast pursuing. We believe this, and now, because there is a temporary deficit, against which the colony has to contend, are we to put a law on our Statute-book that would continue to operate when there would be no necessity for replenishing a depleted Treasury, and put into the hands of this, or any succeeding Government, the power to go on selling country lands just as was done under the old *régime*? This Government could not with self-respect continue to occupy the position they do if they were for one moment to allow themselves to depart from their principles in this respect. It has been suggested, with regard to the Minister for Lands, and was stated in plain terms by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, that the hon. gentleman has such a horror of alienating land as to regard a man who becomes the purchaser of a 640-acre block as a land-thief. I thought the hon. gentleman was indulging in a little bit of rhodomontade when he talked in that manner, and if I did not feel perfectly sure that he was not absolutely serious, and did not mean all he said, I should be disposed to come to the conclusion that the hon. gentleman was influenced by all that audacity, and a great deal more than all that audacity, which he charged the Premier with exhibiting last night when he made the observations he did, and which, I am sure, did not bear the construction the hon. gentleman put upon them. The hon. gentleman charged the Minister for Lands with having such a horror of the alienation of land as to regard a man that became the owner of 640 acres as a land-thief. But what are the facts? The Minister for Lands is a gentleman who has engineered a measure through this House by which a man may obtain the fee-simple of 1,280 acres of land. How does that fact consist with the accusation made by the hon. member for Townsville that the Minister for Lands regards with horror the acquisition of freehold by every man? I like to see every man get fair play; but in all the criticisms addressed to the policy of the Government regarding these matters the Minister for Lands has not met with fair play. I am perfectly satisfied, however, that the time will come, and that not long hence, when those who now combine to denounce the

Minister for Lands as being a faddist, and a man who has only one idea in his head about land, will recognise the services the hon. gentleman has rendered to this colony in arresting what certainly was a downward course—a course which would have landed the colony in financial destruction.

Mr. MURPHY: He borrowed the only idea he has.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I know the hon. gentleman has incurred the dislike of a great many people of the colony, but I do not find that those who regard the hon. gentleman with this amount of ill-feeling are what we are accustomed to term the bone and sinew of the country. And the great bulk of the artisans and working men of this colony recognise the distinguished services the hon. gentleman has rendered in putting a complete stop to the acquisition of large tracts of land in the interior by gentlemen who put them to no better use than to graze sheep and cattle.

Mr. NORTON: It was said last night that there was no land left there fit for agriculture.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That statement was not made in the unqualified manner the hon. gentleman supposes. What was said was that there was very little land suitable for agricultural settlement that was at present accessible, and for which there would be a market. It is all very well for the hon. member for Townsville to say there is any amount of agricultural land beyond the high ranges at the back of Cardwell. Have we not all heard over and over again of the inaccessibility of those lands beyond the high ranges of Cardwell, and that it is almost impossible to find a practicable route?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What do you know about it?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I only know by report; I was never there—perhaps the hon. gentleman never was—but I have been in this House years enough to know that is the opinion held by those most competent to form an opinion. And I do not agree with hon. members who think that unless a man can come here and speak from personal observation of this, that, and the other, therefore he is not qualified to have or express an opinion. I say that we may, if we choose, derive the information on which we base our opinions from authentic sources other than observation. The man who derives his impressions from other men who have travelled, and from other men who have written books, and from others who have given the result of their investigations to the public through the newspaper Press—that man has a right to form an opinion. And those are sources of information much more reliable than the sources of information which are provided in the case of those persons who gallop here and there through a part of the country; or people who, because they have travelled over one little section of a district, along a road from which they probably never diverged, say, “We can speak with authority on the character of the country because we have been there.”

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Where did you get your information?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: From the statements of others.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: In what book?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What I say has been said here by members of Parliament over and over again; and the hon. gentleman knows very well that what I say is true. Now, I should like the hon. gentleman, who is so very

anxious that I should verify my statements, to tell me whether he has been over the range at Cardwell.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not believe he has been in the particular locality to which I referred. He has been over a greater part of the Northern districts than I have, I know. I have been over part of them.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: As far as Charters Towers, haven't you?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. gentleman knows very well, as was said last night, that there is comparatively very little land suitable for settlement at present accessible—in fact, very little land that would find a ready market. Besides, I ask the hon. gentleman—who is not above talking a great deal of nonsense when it suits his purpose—where he would find purchasers of forty-acre blocks over the Cardwell ranges. The late Colonial Treasurer was not dealing in his statements with a condition of things that might be brought about by fresh legislation; the hon. gentleman said we should raise the requisite amount of revenue by operating on the public lands of the colony by means of sales by auction under the existing law.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I said no such thing.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I know the hon. gentleman did not; but the hon. member for Enoggera did. The hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, raises a mere cry which he thinks will go down with certain people outside, and he does not distinguish between the position he occupies and that occupied by the late Colonial Treasurer and others who have criticised the Minister for Lands.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: He was not talking about the Cardwell ranges.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The whole scope of the late Treasurer's argument is that it would be possible to find purchasers for a large quantity of land in forty-acre blocks.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not on the Cardwell ranges.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not now talking about the Cardwell ranges, but about the operation of the principle of the existing law. The Colonial Treasurer has relinquished his position in the Government, partly from the conviction that it is possible to find purchasers for forty-acre blocks of country land in such quantities as to replenish the Treasury to the extent necessary to meet the exigencies of the present time.

Mr. DICKSON: And under the conditions of Part VI. of the principal Act likewise.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Hon. members opposite are talking of the sale of land in large quantities, which the law as it stands will not allow; and unless the hon. member for Townsville wishes to occupy a very ridiculous position indeed, he will not quote the land beyond the Cardwell ranges as being some of the land for which purchasers could be found, and the proceeds of the sale of which would result in the replenishment of the Treasury. The hon. member, last night, when combating the statement of the Premier with regard to the comparatively small quantities of land left fit for close settlement, and for which purchasers could be found, cited the case of land in the rear of Cardwell. The thing only needs to be mentioned to show how ridiculous his argument is.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: But you have made a new township on Magnetic Island, where there is not a single soul.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Minister for Lands cannot be accused of having failed to give reasonable aid to the replenishment of the Treasury from the sale of public lands, because in the Estimates now before us he has actually put down the amount derivable from that source in town lots and forty-acre blocks at £60,000. In order to meet the amount of the deficit—if it is to be met from this source alone, as the hon. member for Enoggera seems to think it ought to be—it will be absolutely necessary for the Minister for Lands to sell land of the value of about £120,000; and I should like to know in what part of the colony the Government would be able to find purchasers of land of these restricted areas to the extent of £120,000 in one year. Hon. gentlemen who speak of the ease with which money can be raised by the sale of land forget that the condition of the law is different now from what it was when the Act of 1876 was in force. Even if the law were altered, which the Government would never consent to do—I speak with diffidence on this subject, because there are hon. members who are better authorities upon it than I can possibly claim to be—even if the law were altered, there are not the same inducements now for pastoral tenants of the Crown to lay out their money in purchasing freeholds that there were some years ago. Under the old system, when the pastoral lessee was liable to have the whole of his run resumed, it became absolutely necessary for him to protect himself by some means or other against prospective close settlement, and the only way in which he could protect himself against the selector was by himself becoming the purchaser of a large freehold. The inducement to the pastoral tenant to spend his money in purchasing freehold has now ceased. Having an indefeasible lease for one-half of his run, he is no longer under the dread of settlement, and, like a wise man, will prefer to spend his money in developing his run, of which he has a twenty-one years' indefeasible lease, rather than indulge in the sentimental luxury of becoming the owner of a large freehold estate.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: That is not the reason.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Even if the law were altered to meet the case of these gentlemen, and the Government were, under temporary pressure, to alter the law so as to enable them to sell large areas of land, there would be the greatest difficulty in finding purchasers for them. I will give a case in point. I heard the other day of a gentleman who was desirous of disposing of a very considerable freehold property, in one of the most favoured of the outside districts of the colony, at a very reasonable figure indeed. But he found it impossible, up to the time I had the matter mentioned to me, to find a purchaser for it; and he used very strong language about the Land Act, saying that since it had come into operation it was impossible to find a purchaser for a freehold. I consider this one of the highest testimonies that could possibly be borne to the usefulness of the measure which is now upon the Statute-book—one of the strongest testimonies that could possibly be borne to the value of our present land legislation; and, at the same time, it goes to corroborate the statement I made a while ago that, even if the Government were to be such fools as to go back to the old vicious principle of selling land by public auction in large blocks, they would only have their labour for their pains, and would render themselves contemptible in the estimation of all right-thinking men, because not only would they be false to the principles on which they came into office, but, after having become false to their principles, they would fail to accomplish

the object for which they had bartered their political probity. Even if the law were altered, it seems to me, it would be impossible to find purchasers for land to the extent that would be necessary to meet the present deficit. The hon. member for Townsville, last night, went very extensively into figures.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not extensively.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes, very extensively, in order to show what was his prescription for the present condition of the body politic. The hon. gentleman said that the remedy he proposed for the present condition of affairs was to get back to the old system of expenditure which prevailed when he left office, and he referred us to the "Votes and Proceedings" of those years for a number of figures upon which he proceeded to base the calculations he had made, and by means of which he sought to demonstrate the propriety of the remedy which he prescribed. The hon. gentleman told us that if we were to consult the "Votes and Proceedings" we should find that during the last year of the McIlwraith Government's tenure of office, the expenditure—the ordinary expenditure, exclusive of interest—amounted to £1,560,000. The hon. gentleman then went on to the next year's Estimates as published in the "Votes and Proceedings," and told us that during the next year—the year 1883-4—the ordinary cost of government, as shown by the Estimates and Supplementary Estimates, was £1,846,638, being an increase in one year, he said, of £286,629. Now, the hon. gentleman did this: He went to the Estimates, as published in "Votes and Proceedings," and from the front page he took the amount which is always placed in the summary column there as voted for the previous year, and added to that the amount of the Supplementary Estimates, also voted that year, and the hon. gentleman, deducting from that total the total of the amounts voted for the previous year—the last year of the tenure of office of the McIlwraith Government—arrives at these figures and says there was an increase in the expenditure for ordinary purposes of government in the first year of the tenure of office of this Government of no less a sum than £286,629. Now, I think when the hon. gentleman comes down here in order to establish the position which he has taken up by means of figures taken from the public records he ought to take care that those figures have been used in a manner that will bear investigation.

Mr. NORTON: What year was that?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The first year's expenditure of this Government was in the year 1883-4. Now, the hon. gentleman took good care to keep dark upon this point: that although there was this discrepancy between the amount voted for the last year of the McIlwraith Government and that voted for the first year of the Griffith Government, there was at the termination of the first year's occupancy of office by this Government no less a sum than £90,000, nearly £100,000, that lapsed. The hon. gentleman did not deduct the amount of money that lapsed that year from the total amount voted for the purposes of government during that period. He assumes because the amount was voted therefore there was that amount actually expended.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Ask the new Colonial Treasurer about that.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I take the hon. gentleman's own figures. He directs me to go to the "Votes and Proceedings," where he got his figures which I have checked, and to the "Votes and Proceedings" I go. The position I take up the hon. gentleman or

any hon. gentlemen can establish by reference to the "Votes and Proceedings." The hon. gentleman then took us to the following year. He took us to the year 1884-5, the second year of the tenure of office by this Government, and he said this: that on the same basis—that is, taking the amount voted for the year upon the Estimates, and adding to that the total amount voted on the Supplementary Estimates—we get as the expenditure without reckoning the interest for the year 1884-5, the sum of £2,126,254. This, as he told us with a flourish, was an increase of £279,000 on the expenditure of the previous year. But the hon. gentleman omitted at the same time to inform the Committee that on that year's operations the Government lapsed no less a sum than £120,000. The hon. gentleman would have found that a fact if he had taken the trouble to look at the Treasurer's tables that were published along with the Estimates. He takes the amount voted per year, and assumes because the amount was appropriated that it was spent.

Mr. NELSON: How much was carried forward against that? There are always votes carried forward.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Estimates from which the hon. gentleman quoted show nothing carried forward; I am taking the hon. gentleman's figures as they appear on the first page of the Estimates published year by year, and I ask any hon. gentleman who wishes to criticise the figures to look at the first page of the Estimates from which the hon. gentleman has taken his figures, and he will find there the headings, "Schedules," "Executive and Legislative," "Colonial Secretary," "Administration of Justice," "Public Instruction," "Colonial Treasurer," "Department of Public Lands," "Department of Public Works and Mines," "Department for Railways," "Postmaster-General," "Auditor-General." These are the several headings as they are put down, and the total amount as there put down under these heads is the total amount, added to the Supplementary Estimates, that the hon. gentleman says was spent in that year. The hon. gentleman then went on to say, in regard to the next year—that was the year 1885-6, reckoning on the two sources of information, and I have gone on those sources of information—that the total amount spent was £2,362,615, being an increase of £236,000 for that year.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: On the amount appropriated?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes; but I say that although there was £236,000 more appropriated for that year than there was for the year preceding, that amount was not spent by £115,000.

Mr. NORTON: We know what was spent.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. gentleman was dealing with figures, and I may not be so strictly accurate as the Colonial Treasurer might deem it necessary to be in making the Financial Statement, and I do not know how these figures will tally with the figures which he may present to the Committee later on. But I am taking the figures that were quoted by the hon. member for Townsville last night with an object. The hon. gentleman wants to accuse the Government of the most reckless extravagance, and of increasing the amount of expenditure by over £200,000 each year. Then he told us, with a great flourish, that in the course of a little over three years we had increased the annual expenditure by over £800,000. I want to boil down that statement of the hon. gentleman to show how far—taking his own sources of information—those sources of

information will bear out the figures he gave to this Committee. The hon. gentleman gave us figures for those three years, and the next year there was a further lapse of a very large sum of money. The hon. gentleman, however, found it convenient, when he got to the end of the third year, to say nothing at all about the year succeeding. He found it convenient not to draw the attention of the Committee to the state of the figures as they will be found published in the "Votes and Proceedings" for last year. Now, if the hon. gentleman had been fair enough to have gone on another year and to have told us what the figures were for last year, he would have told us this: that so far from the amount voted for the year 1886 being an increase on the expenditure voted for the year before that, there was a decrease in the expenditure as voted of £164,746. On reference to Table I accompanying the Treasurer's Statement, made the other day, it will be found that the Colonial Treasurer estimates that no less than £110,000 of that amount will lapse; so that if we deduct the £110,000 that is to lapse from the total amount voted for last year for total expenditure, we shall find the amount is £2,087,869. As I have already said, the hon. member for Townsville took his figures from "Votes and Proceedings"—from the Estimates as published; and he invited hon. members to verify his figures by reference to "Votes and Proceedings." I am not saying that my method of ascertaining the actual expenditure is a proper or scientific one; I do not contend that for a single moment. I say that it is no more unscientific than the method adopted by the hon. member for Townsville. But if, under that unscientific method of his, he makes the figures come out one way, I have a perfect right, following in his footsteps, to show, by that very same unscientific method, that the figures do not come out that way. I do not wish it to be understood for one moment that I am attempting anything like criticism on the great subject of finance. I am not an expert in figures. I do not set myself up, and never did, as having particular facility in the management, or understanding, or marshalling of figures, or in offering criticism upon a financial statement. But I say the hon. gentleman has, for a certain purpose, in order to discredit the Government in the eyes of the people of this colony, taken figures from the Estimates as published in "Votes and Proceedings," and as the result of a comparison of one year with another, he says the annual expenditure of this Government is, or was twelve months ago—he did not include last year—was at the end of 1886, £800,000 more than the annual expenditure of the McIlwraith Government. Now, I say, taking that method for what it is worth—I do not say that it is an accurate means of ascertaining the actual expenditure, or that these figures should go forth as correct—taking the hon. gentleman's method for what it is worth, and applying to the source of information to which he has directed us, I say the figures as I have given them are correct. Because although lapsed votes may be carried forward, they are not included in the statement of the amount voted on the Estimates year after year, and there is no account taken in the Estimates themselves of the lapsed votes of the last year; so that I have a perfect right, when the hon. gentleman directs me to a table in the Estimates, and points to a column showing the amount voted, and says "That is the amount spent"—I maintain I have a perfect right to say, "It is perfectly true, that is the amount voted, but there was an amount of £110,000, or £115,000, or £120,000, as the case may be, which lapsed, that was not spent." Adopting, therefore, this method, I have endeavoured to show the hon. gentleman that if

we take the amount voted for last year, which was much less than that voted for 1885-6, we arrive at this: That deducting the amount estimated to lapse from last year's operations we get a net sum of £2,087,869 as the actual expenditure, not reckoning the expenditure for interest. The hon. gentleman quoted figures from the same source as showing the amount expended during the last year of the McIlwraith Government's tenure of office, which he put down at £1,560,000; but he did not do himself the justice to credit the amount voted for that year with a lapse of £50,000. I am not going to disguise the fact that the McIlwraith Government had a lapse on that year's operations of £50,000, although I would say in passing that during the four years of their tenure of office they never lapsed more, on an average, than £48,000, while this Government has invariably lapsed more on an average than £100,000. Therefore, if we deduct from the £1,560,000 that was voted for the expenditure during the last year of office of the McIlwraith Government the sum of £50,000 which lapsed on that year's operations, we have this: that whereas in that year the expenditure was £1,510,000 exclusive of interest, the expenditure for the year ending on the 30th June last, exclusive of interest, was £2,087,869, showing a difference in the rate of annual expenditure of rather more than £577,000. Therefore the annual increase according to the method, whether scientific or unscientific, adopted by the hon. member for Townsville—the actual annual increase, except for interest—has risen to £577,000, which is a very different amount from £802,000. The hon. gentleman wants to tell the country, through this Committee, that adopting his rough-and-ready method of getting at the expenditure, in three years the actual expenditure had jumped up under the present Administration £800,000 a year more than it was when the McIlwraith Government left office. I want to point out, sir, that after the experience of four years, the actual increase, including everything except interest, is no more than £577,000.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was it at the end of 1886?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have already stated what it was at the end of 1886—that it was as stated by the hon. gentleman himself. But he took no note of the fact that that amount was not spent by £115,000. I am giving the hon. gentleman credit for the lapsed votes during the last year of the McIlwraith Government's existence, which amounted to only £50,000. Deducting that from the total of £1,560,000, which he said last night was the actual expenditure, I find that the actual increase in the cost of government between the years 1882-3 and 1886-7 is, in round numbers, £577,000.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I asked what was it in 1886.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have just told the hon. gentleman what it was—that between those two years 1882-3 and 1886-7 the actual increase is not £802,000 but £577,000.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was it at the end of 1886?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. gentleman is very expert in his arrangement of figures. He wants to bind me down to 1886; but I say that this Government has existed since 1886, and that we have a right, therefore, to take credit for the operations of this year, which show that the expenditure last year was considerably less than it was for the year before. The hon. gentleman does not want to give any information at all favourable to the administration of

affairs by the Government. He wants to limit the consideration of the question to a period ending with the third year, forgetting that, by including the fourth year, you make the figures ever so much better, and show that the country is going in the right direction and not in a wrong one. The hon. gentleman must not forget that, or, if he does, it is a matter of great importance that the public outside should not lose sight of it. The hon. gentleman points out that that increase is an increase in the cost of government, and so it is; but he so broadly states the case as to create the impression on the minds of the outside public that this is all expenditure over which the Government actually have control. He disguises the fact that a considerable proportion of that £577,000 is money over which the Government have no control whatever. The amount that was expended under the head of "Schedules," which, as hon. gentlemen very well know, is a matter which the Government cannot regulate—

Mr. NORTON: We all know that.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: We all know it, sir, but it is important that the public outside should know it; I say it for their benefit. The amount put down under the head of "Schedules" is a sum expended in pursuance of the law, and the Government cannot modify that amount without the authority of the law. When the McIlwraith Government left office there was an amount appropriated under that head—as shown by the "Votes and Proceedings," from which the hon. member has quoted—of £172,000, and during last year, ending on the 30th June last, there was an actual appropriation under the same head of £264,000, making a difference between the compulsory expenditure for 1886-7 and the compulsory expenditure during the last year the McIlwraith Government were in office of nearly £100,000. Now, if you take that £100,000 from the £577,000 which included it, you have this gross increase over which the Government have control—namely, £477,000. Now, that is a different way of putting the figures from that which was adopted by the hon. member last night. He told the country through this Committee that this Government was going on in the most grossly reckless and extravagant manner—that they jumped by kangaroo leaps and bounds of £200,000 a year; and without carrying his investigations beyond three years he showed that we jumped up to £800,000, and then put forward the idea that all we had to do was to knock off a considerable portion of the £200,000 each year, and reduce the annual £800,000 to something like reasonable limits, and thus do away with additional taxation. But I now point out that the actual increased expenditure which the Government can control is, for a period of nearly five years, something like £480,000. That is the total increase, and not £800,000, and I hope the hon. gentleman will not lose sight of that. Before passing from that, however, I desire to point out another fault of the hon. gentleman in quoting figures. He is probably a better man at figures than I am, but he can also use the figures to suit his own purposes in a way that I cannot tolerate, and which I will expose. The hon. gentleman told us that at the same time we were increasing expenditure at this considerable rate the population of the colony had only increased by 35,000. Now the hon. gentleman ought to look at the tables accompanying the Treasurer's Statement, and he will then ascertain that the increase in the population was 55,000, and not 35,000. The hon. gentleman ought to have consulted those tables.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Since when?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I know since when. The hon. gentleman will persist in limiting the expenditure to the end of 1886, but the Government are as responsible for the expenditure last year as for the year before, and the hon. gentleman knows well that there were special reasons for an increased expenditure some years ago. What added to the expenditure was having to send back all those natives that were stolen from their islands. That was one cause—that was one of the mischiefs left behind by the preceding Government which the present Government have had to undo, and in doing so they have had to expend money in this special way; and that is one reason why the expenditure would be abnormally higher year by year.

Mr. NELSON: Will you tell us what the expenditure last year was?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I gave the hon. gentleman the expenditure according to the methods laid down by the member for Townsville. I will repeat it for the hon. gentleman. The amount voted on the Estimates for 1886-7 was £2,197,869; from that you deduct the amount which the Treasurer estimates in the tables will lapse—namely, £110,000—which cannot be called part of the expenditure of last year, and that reduces the expenditure to £2,087,869.

Mr. NELSON: Add the deficit.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have deducted that, and get the total for this year which has just terminated—I have deducted the total for the last year during which the McIlwraith Government held office.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What is the Supplementary Estimate for last year?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I apprehend that the Treasurer's Statement takes account of the probable amount of the Supplementary Estimate. The hon. gentleman, in making his calculations, added to the amount voted on the Estimates the amount of the Supplementary Estimates.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have done the same.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was it last year?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I apprehend that the Treasurer took account of that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: You do not add the Supplementary Estimates of last year.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Now, the hon. gentleman said that population had only increased by 35,000, but, as a matter of fact, it has increased by 55,000.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Since when?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Up to the end of the last financial year. I have a perfect right to consider that. I will not be tied down to the year 1886, and leave off where the hon. gentleman wants me to leave off. I am carrying it as far as we have got a record, and dealing with the figures as they are, and not as the hon. gentleman wishes them to be. I say this: that with an annual increase of over £500,000 in the expenditure you have got an increase of 55,000 in the population, and you have got an increase in the number of miles of railway open of about 400 miles. There were only 1,100 miles open in 1883, when the last Government left office, and there are now over 1,600 miles of railway open for traffic. There is a mileage of about one-third

more open now, and yet, with 55,000 people more in the colony, most of them adults—because of the people who come here as immigrants, the majority are full-grown men and women—I say with that increased population and one-third more railways open for traffic the hon. gentleman calls out, and says the country is going to destruction because an annual increase of less than £500,000 in the annual expenditure has grown up during the past five years. Why, surely the hon. gentleman cannot pretend that we are going to maintain and work our railways without any extra expense; and I do not myself see how he can demur to a very considerably increased expenditure under the circumstances I have indicated. The thing is inevitable. It must not be forgotten that among other things Parliament in its wisdom decided, when the Land Act came into operation, that there should be survey before selection, and all the outlay necessary to carry out surveys in order to promote settlement has, of course, swelled the annual expenditure. It certainly would not be increasing in the same way if, instead of having survey before selection, we had, under the system which prevailed under the Act of 1876, selection before survey. I am sorry I did not get the figures until too late—but I hope they will be used before the close of the debate—figures which point out exactly the departments in which the annual expenditure has increased, and the necessary objects upon which that increased expenditure has been bestowed.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : That means all departments.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : The hon. gentleman ought to know that five years means a very considerable period in the history of a young colony like this. Why, the colony is not very much more than five times five years old altogether. Counting from, say, January, 1860, up to the present time, it is only a little over twenty-seven years old, and I say if the expenditure could jump up for the previous period from the trifle it was when the colony began its existence to a million and a-half when the McIlwraith Government ceased to hold office, surely the present rate of expenditure is not so great, considering that the greater part of a quinquennial period has nearly elapsed since then. It is impossible for the expenditure to keep on at the same rate year after year, and if the colony grows, and if the colony is to be settled, and the public interest properly considered and looked after, it is absolutely indispensable that there should be a reasonable increase in the ordinary rate of expenditure. The hon. member went on to refer to the terrible rate at which the people of the colony were taxed. He made a speech last night which was really an appeal, not to the members of the Committee—I say it with all deference, and the hon. member had a perfect right to make use of his opportunity, and I do not say I would not have done the same thing myself—but his speech was an appeal not so much to the members of this Committee as to the people outside, who have not the same opportunities of criticising his figures or estimating the value of the arguments based upon those figures. The hon. gentleman went on to refer to the terrible condition of taxation, and when the Premier interjected that nearly half of it went in spirits he ridiculed the idea. Now, as a matter of fact, of the total revenue raised in this way up to the end of last financial year from taxation no less an amount than about half-a-million consisted of duties on spirits, wine, ale, porter, tobacco, snuff, cigars, and some vinegar. The hon. gentleman, in order to show how heavily the people were taxed, spoke about a man with a wife and five children,

Well, out of the whole number of those who would pay towards taxation in that family, it will be seen at once that only the father of that family would contribute anything under the head of "Spirits."

Mr. NORTON : Who takes the snuff ?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : Somebody must take it, but it is not the children or the women. I suppose it is the single men, who have no wives to keep them from that dirty habit, and some married men may indulge in that way. At all events the payment of duty in respect of those articles is not contributed by children. The total amount of taxation revenue from all sources was £1,206,000, and of that amount nearly half-a-million was contributed for tobacco, cigars, wines, spirits, and beers ; so that what the Premier said was true, and the hon. gentleman's argument, about the working man being taxed so heavily for his family, because of the heavy tax per head of the population, goes for little. The hon. gentleman must have forgotten that with the increase of population there has come a necessary increase of expenditure under the head of "Education." By representing the working man as paying £3 per head for all his children the hon. member used a perfectly fallacious argument, and the hon. gentleman knew it very well. The hon. member found the figures there, and as it was not his business to analyse them he lumped them, and said a man paid so much for himself and so much for each of his children, without showing that about one-half of the tax was derived from the consumption of articles which children never use. I say that one of the items of expenditure, and one of the items which went to make such a large increase in the expenditure for the present year as compared with the last year during which the hon. gentleman and his party occupied these benches, is due to the necessarily increased expenditure in making provision for the education of the children of the people of this colony. The hon. gentleman talks about the growing taxation in this colony, but he must not lose sight of the fact that if the working man had to pay for the education of his children out of his own pocket he would be in a much worse position than he is at present.

Mr. NELSON : It would be a good deal cheaper for him.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL : The rate of taxation per head might possibly be less, but if the man had to pay for the education of his children out of his own pocket it would be a much more serious matter for him, so that what the Premier said about the great taxation of the people being a "parrot cry" was perfectly correct. All the hon. member could say in reply to it was that it was not a "parrot cry," and that he would give facts. The hon. member gave his facts, as I have stated, to show how the working man and his family were taxed, and I have shown that, though it appears, according to the inexorable law of fixing an average when we have got a whole community to deal with, that there is apparently a very large amount of taxation which a man has to pay per head for his children, it is not in reality anything like so large an amount. The hon. gentleman went on to speak of the land tax, of which I shall say a few words before I close. We come now to the hon. gentleman's prescription for meeting the difficulty which the State is in at the present time, and it is certainly not worthy of the hon. gentleman's political reputation or of his capacity—I am quite sure of that. It is a very easy thing to say, "Oh! there is really nothing the matter. Do not spend so much, and it will come all right." It is very easy for a man when he has not got the responsibility of carrying on a

concern—a concern which has attained a certain magnitude—to say, “I will show you how to run this concern. Only spend so much in the maintenance of the affairs of the concern. It will run just as well—the thing will go on just as well—if you spend, say, one-fifth or one-tenth less than you are spending.” It is very easy for a man to give a cheap prescription as to how a difficulty of this kind is to be got over; but if the hon. gentleman was sitting here as Treasurer, and he had devolving upon him the difficult task of providing for the necessary expenditure in order to keep up the Government in this country, and make the country go along on the lines of prosperity, he would not be quite so ready either to offer or to accept from anybody else such a prescription. The hon. gentleman’s prescription would have been worth something if he had taken the Estimates and gone over them page by page, and pointed out this or that or the other item voted there, and said, “This can be done without, and the other can be done without,” and had shown according to the Estimates that those were items we really could afford to dispense with. He did not do this. It is very easy to indulge in generalities, and say, “You should not spend so much”; but the Government has got to keep the country going, and I will defy anybody to show in regard to the manning of the several Government departments—I will confine the investigation to that for the present—I will defy anyone to point out in any department where there is any appreciable number of men in excess of the actual number required to carry on the affairs of the country. The Government department of which I am the head is not one of the large spending departments, but it is a revenue-making department. Financially speaking, it may be a little department, but its importance cannot be judged by the amount of money it spends. Little as it is, it is a revenue-producing department, and it partly pays for itself. I speak with reference to that department because it is the only one which I am competent to speak about from personal knowledge and experience, but I suppose my hon. colleagues can say the same of their departments, and I say there is not a superfluous officer employed in that department—not one. It would be impossible for anyone to guide that department or to secure the proper performance of the duties to the State which that department is supposed to perform in the interests of the country with one single officer less than is at present employed. I believe from what I know of my hon. friends who sit here with me that they are the last men who would tolerate “Tite Barnacles” or any other useless encumbrances who are simply in the public service for the purpose of drawing salaries. I believe that the Civil servants are thoroughly employed, and that they earn the money they receive. I say this—and I say it for the last as well as the present Government—that there never has obtained in this colony a system in any way resembling the system that has obtained in New South Wales, where men have been billeted upon the public service, in large numbers, simply to oblige members of Parliament, and to find situations for men for whose employment in the service there was no necessity. That system has never prevailed in this colony; and even if a commission was appointed to inquire into the condition of the Civil Service, I am quite satisfied that the commissioners would not come to the conclusion that the country is being burdened to the least appreciable extent by the employment of men whose services are not required. Such a commission could do no harm, and it might probably do some good by securing a little redistribution in the service. Now, with reference to the

deficit, about which so much has been said, the Minister for Lands is willing—although he is taunted with being averse to selling any part of the public estate—I say he is willing to sell land to the extent of £60,000 during the ensuing year, and that is a very respectable income indeed from that source.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: It is too much.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Probably it is too much. But the hon. gentleman is so little of a theorist, so little of a faddist, that he is perfectly agreeable to raise that amount of revenue from the sale of parts of the public estate. But even when that sum is reckoned it is found that there is still a deficit of £50,000. How is that to be met? Hon. members must look at this question fairly. It means something more than merely bridging over the gap between the estimated revenue and the estimated expenditure. In order to carry on the government properly and provide for every unforeseen emergency that may arise, it is necessary to make provision for additional revenue, not to the extent of £50,000 only but double £50,000. I ask hon. members who have had any experience in the matter, and hon. members who have given it their careful consideration, whether it would be a proper thing in any one year to raise £150,000 by the sale of lands, by selling, mark you, town lands in allotments sixteen perches in area, and country lands forty acres in area. Would, I ask, any Minister for Lands under the circumstances—and I ask it with great respect for the opinion of the hon. member for Enoggera—be considered worthy to continue to hold office, with such a land law as we have, if he adopted such a course? Hon. members must face the fact that taxation is necessary. From what source, then, is that taxation to come? I say it ought not to come out of the pockets of the working man. The working man is contributing as much at present as he ought to be called upon to pay to the expenses of government, but there is a class of people in the colony who have always escaped their just share of the burdens of the country. We know very well that three-fourths of the men who have got rich in this colony have got rich by their speculation in land; they have got rich by means of the increase in the value of their land without any effort being put forth on their own part to make the land more valuable. I appeal to hon. members whether that is not the case? I have myself got more land than I wish I had just now, considering the state of the market and the reaction that has followed the late “boom,” as it was called. Money, however, is not so tight now as it was, and I believe there will, before very long, be as much honest healthy speculation in land as there ought to be. But I ask every man who bought land a few years ago whether he can, with a clear conscience, say that any efforts of his have caused that land to become as valuable as it is now in comparison with what it was when he made his purchase? What is called the unearned increment goes on from year to year whether a man does anything to the land or neglects to do anything, and there is no man in the colony who has had his wits about him for the past few years whose financial position is not vastly improved by reason of his having purchased land, and I ask why should not all such men contribute something more than they do towards the necessities of the State? The working man, who has probably not even a sixteen-perch allotment, goes on from day to day and from year to year simply earning wages, and his remuneration scarcely undergoes any material change. He goes on until perhaps he wears himself out earning so many shillings a day; while the man who has speculated in land is enriched. I ask, then, why should not the man

who has grown wealthy in that way, and whose financial circumstances have so greatly improved, contribute something substantial to the expenses of government, and bear his just proportion of the burdens of the country? He has become rich in more ways than one by the expenditure of public money; in the first by the expenditure of public money in improving the means of communication between the various parts of the colony; if he be a resident of the city of Brisbane, by the improvement of the means of communication with the interior. The expenditure of public money on immigration has also contributed to it, as people who have been brought here require homes to live in, and land has therefore been cut up and sold, thus highly increasing the value of the unsold blocks. And by the expenditure of public money in various other ways, these people have been benefited. Take the case of the Darling Downs as an illustration. Is it not a standing reproach to us that such a vast area of land, eminently suitable for settlement, should be lying idle there? Every visitor who comes to the colony stares in blank amazement as the train hurries him along through that large tract of unutilised land. "How is it possible," he asks, "that land of that character, which was intended to support a large agricultural population, is lying there a perfect wilderness, only supporting a few sheep?" I say if this land tax did nothing more than make those persons who have secured that land, and other persons who hold land under similar conditions, contribute something to the State in proportion to the amount of benefit they have derived from the making of railways through their land, it would be a good thing for the country. I am perfectly well aware also that there are many absentee proprietors who have large tracts of land in the colony, from which they derive princely incomes, which they are spending not here but in England. A tax imposed on those absentees would yield a considerable return to the revenue, and I contend that they should be called upon to bear a considerable share of the strain of taxation. Some hon. members would not object to a land tax if it were a tax on area, but, as the Minister for Lands has pointed out, such a tax would be most objectionable. To say that a man who owns an acre of land worth £5 shall pay as much as the man who owns an acre of land in Queen street, or near it, would be manifestly unjust. I contend that, if one thing more than another will redeem the Government from the imputation that has always been undeservedly hurled at it of being a "Queen-street Government," it will be the imposition of a tax like this. I have been met in the northern part of the colony with this objection, "Oh, you are a Queen-street Ministry, and everything you do is for the aggrandisement of Queen street." It has become a byword in the colony, the extent to which Governments have been influenced by Queen street. I have nothing to say against Queen street as Queen street—I would give Queen street the same fair play that I would give any other part of the colony; but I say that if we are to rid ourselves of the reproach of being nothing more than a Queen-street Government we must have nothing to do with this proposal, which is endeavoured to be forced upon us from many quarters, of imposing a tax upon land on the basis of area. Hon. members opposite have said, during the adjournment for dinner, that I was helping them when I showed in the earlier part of my address that the acquisition of freehold was not going on with great rapidity. I wish hon. members not to be too precipitate in coming to a conclusion as to the extent in which my remarks are applicable in that direction. When I spoke of the difficulty that was some-

times met with in selling freehold since the Land Act came into operation, I referred to land occupied for pastoral purposes, the great bulk of which was freehold and was not situated so favourably for the purchaser as land that men would take up for freehold, particularly in the East Moreton district and the district about Ipswich. In the case to which I made allusion, the difficulty of finding a purchaser for a large freehold out away west for pastoral purposes was attributed to the fact that the Land Act provides facilities for obtaining large areas for grazing purposes without the necessity of sinking capital in the shape of purchase money. I say there is no need for hon. members to pretend that the land tax will be unproductive because fewer people will buy land for pastoral purposes in the future than has been the case in the past, because with the increase of settlement in the interior under the Land Act the lands nearer the coast will become more and more valuable; and not only will it be the case that the more valuable they become the more will the owners be enriched, but for the sake of an ever-increasing value the more will men desire to obtain freeholds; and at the same time they will be taxed upon the unimproved value, and I say they ought to be. I cannot conceive of any fairer tax than that. If an income tax were proposed—hon. members know what an objection there is to that kind of tax in the old countries of the world—how inquisitorial and unsatisfactory such a tax is—it would require the most elaborate machinery in order to collect it, and could not be utilised at present.

Mr. NORTON: We will have that next year.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The principle of limiting the operation of the tax so as not to affect men who have holdings less than £500 in value is a sound principle; and men with small holdings, whether they are in the colony already or are attracted by the land-orders offered to induce them to come and settle on the land, need have no fear that the operation of a tax like this will in any way prejudiciously affect them. It is idle for hon. members to try and raise a "bogy" by talking about getting in "the thin end of the wedge." The same argument applied in other directions would absolutely retard all improvement whatever; it would absolutely destroy the spirit of enterprise. If we are going to be frightened from doing a good thing merely because by-and-by some ill-disposed person may turn it to bad account, we shall have no good thing introduced in any future period of the country's history. I say that an argument based upon the possibility that it may be abused by-and-by is an argument that ought not to count for anything in the opinions of the members of this Committee. I hope, Mr. Fraser, that when hon. gentlemen come to consider the proposals of the Government in all their bearings they will arrive at the conclusion that the Government in making these proposals are doing the best thing, not only in the interests of the colony at the present time, but in the interests of its advancement for all time.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Fraser,—I believe it is the wish of hon. members generally to adjourn. If that is so, though I am quite prepared to go on, I think it would be advisable not to do so.

The PREMIER: I am very reluctant to move the adjournment; we have not done much work this week. But if it is the desire of hon. members to adjourn, and I believe it is, I will move that you leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for Wednesday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. On Wednesday, after the introduction of the Bills which stand at the top of the paper, we shall proceed with the debate in Committee of Ways and Means.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at three minutes to 8 o'clock.