

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 25 AUGUST 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 25 August, 1887.

Question.—Petition—Establishment of a University.—
 Vacant Seat.—Motion for Adjournment.—Northern
 Grievances—Post Office at Bundaberg—Safety Pre-
 cautions at Music Halls.—Australian Joint Stock
 Bank Act Amendment Bill—second reading.—Finan-
 cial Districts Bill—first reading—Local Administra-
 tion Bill—first reading.—Real Property (Local Regis-
 tries Bill—first reading.—Water Authorities Bill—
 first reading.—Ways and Means—resumption of com-
 mittee.—Telegraphic Communication with Thurs-
 day Island.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION.

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 COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B.
 Moreton) replied—

Bingera is, I understand, identical with South Kolan.
 Plans are being prepared, and tenders will be called for
 at an early date.

PETITION.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIVERSITY.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) presented a petition from the Torres Divisional Board, and said that it was in the same form as others presented to the House, praying for the establishment of a university. He moved that the petition be received.

Question put and passed.

VACANT SEAT.

The PREMIER moved —

That the seat of the Hon. William Miles, Esq., hath become and is now vacant by reason of the death of the said Hon. William Miles, Esq., since his election and return to serve as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Darling Downs.

Question put and passed.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

NORTHERN GRIEVANCES. — POST OFFICE AT BUNDABERG. — SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AT MUSIC HALLS.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I will put myself right with the House by concluding my remarks with the usual motion for adjournment. I take this opportunity—the first I have had—of doing what I consider to be a duty I owe to the most distantly removed constituency of Queensland—namely, calling the attention of this House and the Government once again to a number of grievances which remain unredressed in the constituency which I represent. This is the only course open to me, although not an unusual one, considering the urgency of the occasion; and I am more particularly impelled thereto by some words that fell from the hon. the Premier in the speech which he made on the Address in Reply. I suppose I may be allowed to quote the words from memory in which he said that he challenged any member of this Assembly to show that the Government had failed in any instance to deal out every justice to the North; and further on he said that, so far from there being any grievances, the North had been better served than the South. Now, Mr. Speaker, I beg to accept his challenge, and I will show in as short a way as I possibly can that there are grievances unredressed in the North, and that had those grievances been in the South they would long before now have been redressed, if they ever had remained as grievances. He said that it has been justly treated while the present Government have been in office, and further that it was the more distant parts of the colony that were best attended to. Now, Mr. Speaker, the audacity of that last statement can only be equalled by its untruthfulness, and I have figures with me which will show that. When this Parliament was in its first session I moved for a return, which was laid on the table of the House, showing that the receipts from three items alone in that district for twenty years amounted to £233,000. Those three items were pastoral rents, miners' rights, and customs. The expenditure out of the consolidated revenue for those years for the district was but £17,000. Considering that many vessels cleared from the Customs in Brisbane with goods consumed in that district, that amount is but a very modest share of the receipts. That shows that three years ago my district had a very large balance to its credit, and the receipts have been increasing since under every head and from every source of revenue. The Customs receipts for the last month were £4,000, and I have the word of a merchant in Normanton having experience in buying goods that at least 50 per cent. more could be added for goods for which duty was paid here at Brisbane, and consumed in that district, making an amount equal to £6,000 per month. The port of Normanton now stands fourth on the list of Queensland ports. Brisbane is first, Townsville second, Rockhampton third, and Normanton fourth. The Government have therefore a right to recognise its claims, and an additional reason for recognition in the increasing receipt from the district from telegraph and all other sources of revenue. The increase of trade there is a matter of very great importance to Brisbane also, for on looking over the manifests of two of the largest steamers that have cleared lately from Brisbane for the North, I find that, of £1,200 paid for freight by the "Roma," nearly £900 was paid for goods loaded from Brisbane at the port of Normanton, and by the "Rockton" nearly £1,000 was paid for freight on goods consumed in the district, showing that this is a

matter of concern not only for the Government but for the people of Brisbane. This trade should be encouraged in every possible way instead of being discouraged. The *Mercantile Gazette*, a publication in Brisbane, stated that the depression of trade had now passed away, and that the return of vitality had been caused by the increase of business from Brisbane to Croydon and Normanton. That is a reason why the Brisbane trade with Normanton should be encouraged. This all tends to show that the first duty of the Government to that port is to open it up by dredging. The Government promised a dredge for Normanton a very long time ago, and so far as I can see there is no reason why that promise should not have been carried out. I know the gentleman who was Colonial Treasurer made many promises about it while in office, but he failed to carry them out.

Mr. DICKSON: I broke no promise.

Mr. PALMER: The hon. gentleman did not keep them.

Mr. DICKSON: I made no promise which I did not keep.

Mr. PALMER: Coming up the river here I saw a dredge called the "Hydra," supposed to belong to the Normanton trade, lying idle in the river. I find she has recently been tested satisfactorily; and why such an important place as Normanton should be without a dredge for so long a time, when all the other ports of the colony are well served, I leave the heads of the Government to explain. I am myself quite in the dark about it, and the only conclusion I can come to is that it is intentional. I suppose it is because we are too far away and the absent are always in the wrong. The importance of the matter lies in the fact that large vessels like the "Roma" and "Rockton," and vessels of that stamp, have, as the Premier well knows, to lie a long distance out while unloading, and if a swell rises on an open sea like that the lighters have to be removed away from the vessels, and when the time fixed for their departure arrives they are obliged to take a large portion of their cargo back to Thursday Island, and land it there. This has occurred several times recently, and some hundreds of tons of cargo have had to be taken back to Thursday Island, and left there for a fortnight, or over a month in some instances, for the return steamer. In the meantime the people of Croydon are waiting for rations and machinery, because the Government will not take the trouble to carry out what is their evident duty and open up this port for navigation. Here is a sad instance of the result of this want of care or encouragement of trade: Two vessels from England, loaded with several thousand tons of rails each, arrived there, and I can assure hon. members that they took as long in unloading the rails as they took in the passage out. They were three or four months in unloading those rails. I wonder if two vessels unloading rails at Brisbane would suffer waiting three or four months, and paying men all that time, in unloading them. I am only surprised that my constituents have suffered so patiently for so long. However, they are now really determined that something shall be done to allay this grievance under which they have laboured. The work of opening up the port of Normanton is of vital importance to the whole of the Gulf district. We have sufficient dredge plant for the purpose, and that there is some difficulty in taking a dredge up there, is no reason why the work should not have been taken in hand sooner. I will not dwell further on the dredge business, though I could adduce figures to show how trade is being lost there through want of facilities in the

way of opening up that port. There is a railway in contemplation there, and it affords another reason why a dredge should be sent up to afford facilities for larger steamers coming in. It is well known that once you get inside the bar there is floating capacity in the Norman River for the whole British navy. They could steam for twenty miles up the river, which is without doubt the best river in Australia. This all shows how important it is that the bar should be removed. When the Loan Estimates were passed last year a sum was included for the Gulf railway. I see railways are being carried on in the South for which the money was voted at the same time, and which have not nearly as just a claim, and still the Gulf line is in abeyance. Are the Government going to put any energy into their expressed desire to carry out this line? I see tenders have been called, and I suppose will be accepted in a day or two, for the Fortitude Valley railway, and yet I do not think anyone can conscientiously recommend that as a necessary line. The people there have every facility in the way of trains, trams, and good roads, and there are other parts of the colony where there are no roads or trams or anything else, and they are debarred from having a railway. I could enumerate instances of this by the dozen which must be patent to every member of this House. All the Southern lines are being gone on with, and by-and-by when the Gulf line is started we shall be told that the funds are required to finish lines in other parts of the colony, and that line will have to go bare—that is my belief. I do not know why the distinction is made, but I suppose the Premier will explain it. I call upon the Premier to give relief to this district, which he evidently can by calling for tenders at once for the first section of that railway. The next matter I have to call attention to is the neglect which the Government have shown, or the want of appreciation of their duties, with regard to the encouragement of newly started mining communities. From the first, Croydon has been, I may say, a neglected and ill-used part of the digging community. The first action of the Government was to send a mining registrar there without any books or memoranda. I believe from all accounts that he was not a very competent man. But, however that may be, the state of things was this: that he had to make notes on the backs of telegram forms and all sorts of things, and to this day there is nothing but chaos with regard to the first applications received on that mining field. I have no doubt that a plentiful crop of fees for the lawyers will arise in future in connection with those applications, through the neglect of the Government. The first applications are not recorded properly, and they are consequently in a state of confusion. Since then matters have not improved very much. One warden has been sent there for a few days, and his decisions have been reversed by another who followed him for a few days, and sometimes there has been no warden on the field. While I was there, for a period of ten days, there was no warden there, and men had to walk fifteen or twenty miles over rugged country to attend as witnesses and then walk back again. It is not fair that the miners should be subjected to such inconveniences. It is neither fair nor just to those men who earn their living so hardly that they should be handicapped so heavily, and I certainly sympathise with them in that. In fact the work seems to have got beyond the warden, and there are no less than 500 prospecting areas not laid off. And other matters might be cited showing that the various departments have continuously neglected to carry out their

duties with respect to Croydon. For instance, there is the case of the Telegraph Department. There were no doubt good reasons why the contractor for the construction of the telegraph line should have an extension of time to complete the work on account of the flooded state of the country; and the time was extended for six months to carry out a contract for twenty-three or twenty-four miles. One would have thought that that extension would have given ample time to the department to make all necessary arrangements for opening the office and carrying on business. But when the line was finished to Croydon the instruments were not on the ground; they happened to be at Normanton. Then, to make the thing expeditious, the authorities put them on a bullock dray, and the bullock-driver, as usual in such cases, lost his bullocks, and for weeks after the line was completed there was no sign of the bullock-dray near Croydon. At the same time the Telegraph Department was receiving hundreds of pounds a week for telegrams which had to be sent in a three-bushel bag to Spring Creek, a station twenty-five miles away. I do not know whether any better state of things has been prevailing in the warden's office since the time to which I have alluded. I hope matters have improved. But really the miners are suffering very great hardship through there not being proper care in the carrying out of the duties of the warden. I do not reflect in any way upon the wardens; but they are not there, and I think the Government should endeavour in some way to remedy the grievances that exist; they should consider the extent of that field. I will presently quote some figures to show the revenue they are receiving from Croydon, which will show that it is only fair and just that the Government should in some measure help the people either by causing a permanent survey of the railway to be made or by assisting them in forming their roads. I know that the divisional board was refused assistance the other day when they were opening up some important roads. I will now quote some figures showing what an important place that field has become in the short space of eighteen months by the individual energy of the miners themselves. From an official return, the quantity of stone sent from Croydon Gold Field to Georgetown, a distance of 130 or 140 miles, to be crushed during the year 1886 was 80 tons, and the average yield of gold was 13 oz. 12 dwt. 21 grs. That is a high average for the quantity of stone. In the month of February, 1887, the quantity was 1,010 tons, and the average yield was 3 oz. 6 dwt. 12 grs.

THE PREMIER: Was that sent to Georgetown?

MR. PALMER: No. In the month of March there were 667 tons, which averaged 1 oz. 17 dwt. 8 grs.; that was during the wet season when the floods were on. From the 1st to the 31st January this year there were crushed 803 tons, which averaged 3 oz. 12 dwt. 6 grs. The revenue from the goldfield was £2,354; the miners' rights issued were 2,041, and the number of business licenses 111, and these within eighteen months from the starting of that field, which shows, I think, that it is of a very progressive nature, and that it is necessary for the Government to take some steps to assist the miners in their endeavours to settle that part of the country. My attention was called, on passing Thursday Island, to the necessity of having a jetty there, which is another matter of very great concern to the interests of the North, particularly of that port. That is the first port where vessels coming from Europe arrive at, and I suppose that visitors must be very much astonished at the Government of the colony when they find that they

have to be carried ashore on the back of a Malay, or somebody else, for that is the only way of getting ashore there. The money for the jetty at that place has been voted for several years, still the port remains as it is, and tenders have not yet been called for the erection of the jetty. There are eighty or ninety Europeans there who are not on any electoral roll in the colony, which is regarded as another grievance. The people naturally resent the treatment they have received. The sum of £14,000 is, I believe, annually received as revenue from Thursday Island, and yet the people are neglected, as I have shown, and their claims and just rights are set at naught. I have been told that one reason why the dredge has not been sent to the Norman bar is that the Government are waiting for the report of Sir John Coode. There are two courses which might be followed there. The one course is a long one, and the other a short cut across the bar, and I think that the decision of Mr. Nisbet—who ought to be, if he is not, thoroughly qualified and competent to determine a matter of that kind—should be quite sufficient to warrant the Government going on with the work of dredging the bar. Sir John Coode's report can only decide one way or the other, and I think Mr. Nisbet should be able to undertake the responsibility of deciding such a question as that. It is part of his duty and part of the work we expect him to do for his salary. The one course is only a little longer than the other, and the question which should be adopted should be settled without delay. These are the matters to which I have felt compelled to call the attention of the Government and this House over and over again. Often and often enough I have spoken to the different departments of the manner in which these wants have remained unredressed; but the invariable reply was that the Government were considering the matter, or that they would attend to it in time. Well, time is passing on, and will pass on, but we want to see the work done. I want to see it started, at all events, before my time is done, which may not be long. There are also many other grievances. Some of them are connected with the Lands Department, but I will take a further opportunity of acquainting the Minister for Lands with them. At an important meeting of my constituents in Normanton they requested me to call attention to these three requirements—namely, the dredging of the river bar, the construction of the first section of the railway, and a permanent railway survey to the Croydon Gold Field, eventually to be carried on to the Etheridge, and possibly to Herberton. These requirements are very urgent ones, and in the interests of my constituents I would urge the Government to take them in hand at once, as it is their bounden duty to do. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member has just come from amongst his constituents, and of course he thinks it his duty to put before the House all the complaints that were poured into his willing ear with respect to the grievances up there. But I do not think the majority of his constituents share his views with regard to some of the complaints he has made to the House. Now, sir, I shall deal with the several matters, as far as I can. Of course there are many matters of departmental detail, of which no member of the Government can be expected to give an explanation at a moment's notice; but about which I am sure the hon. member will get full information by inquiring at the departments, or by giving proper notice here. With regard to the dredge, my hon. friend the member for Enoggera, when he was Colonial Treasurer, informed the people of Normanton that the dredge then under contract was intended for the Gulf. That dredge is not

yet finished, or at any rate is not in the hands of the Government. As hon. members must know, after a dredge has been built it must remain some time on trial before it can be sent away on work of that kind; and a dredge is not complete by itself—there must be the working plant to accompany it. As a matter of fact the dredge and plant are not finished yet. That is one reason it has not been sent to Normanton. Another very good reason is that it is a very doubtful question what is the proper thing to do with the Norman bar. It is a very long bar—I do not remember the exact length. I intended to have gone to the Treasury to-day if I had had time especially to go into the whole question of the Norman bar, not knowing that the hon. member was going to bring the matter forward, but because I wanted to know all about it myself. It is a bar of very considerable extent, and it is a doubtful question which is the proper way to make a cutting across it, having regard to the configuration of the country. By adopting one course, the cutting would be shorter but more exposed to the north-westerly winds; the other would make a longer cutting, but it would be safe at all times of the year. That being a very difficult matter, the Government some time ago engaged the services of Sir John Coode to visit and report on the place; and we have not yet received his report. Of course the Government cannot be expected to say in a moment what is the proper thing to do. Sir John Coode has not yet made up his mind on the subject—that is to say, we have not received his report; but if I remember rightly, it is on the way. I know communications have been received from the Agent-General on the subject of the report—either that it has been sent, or naming a day when it would be sent. That is a matter which cannot be decided in a day, and when the work is begun it will probably take some years to complete. It is not a grievance which can be remedied in a day, as the hon. member would have this House to believe. I am sure that his constituents, who, so far as I have had opportunities of observing, are reasonable people, will be quite satisfied with that reasonable explanation. With respect to the hon. member's complaints about the delay that has taken place in the construction of a railway to Cloncurry, though the money was voted nearly three years ago, it was a very moot point which was the best place in the Gulf to start the railway from. Careful surveys were made, and the Government were not a week after receiving the report on the surveys before they made up their mind that Normanton was the proper place. As soon as they had done that the sanction of the House was obtained to the construction of the first section. Then the question arose as to the mode of construction. The Government were very much impressed with the proposal to use steel sleepers on the line, and last session the House was informed that the Government intended to try an experiment with that view. The experiment has been tried—it took some time to try it—and it has been entirely successful; but the Government were not in a position to say that it had been successful until, at any rate, some time last month. Two or three days after my arrival from England I went myself with my late colleague, Mr. Miles, to see the way in which these sleepers worked, and we were so far satisfied with the trial we saw that an order was immediately sent to England for the steel plates to construct the sleepers of. Since then there has been a still more severe test of these sleepers, which has proved their usefulness and suitability for the work most conclusively. Tenders were invited in England and have been accepted, and the plates will come here as fast as they can be shipped. The hon.

gentleman wants to know why we do not call for tenders for the construction of the line. The hon. gentleman has been away, and he does not seem to know the method of using these sleepers. All that has to be done is to put them in position and ram them with earth at each end; there is nothing to construct—the sleepers are put on the ground. A great many of the rails are there already. The work on that railway will be simply plate-laying—start from the station yard and lay the railway straight along. There is no clearing to be done except in one or two small patches. The only work to be done until the sleepers are there, is the construction of the station building and station yards. There has been no delay in that matter. The tenders for making the plates into sleepers will be in two or three days, so that the manufacturers may have time to prepare the moulds for pressing the plates into proper form. Although this may perhaps cause a delay of a few months in starting the line, we shall gain as many years in the completion of it as we lose months in the commencement, which will be at once an economy to the country and an advantage to the district. With regard to Croydon, I am not prepared to answer at once all the matters of detail that the hon. member has referred to. He referred to the question of the survey of a railway to Croydon. I think the Government cannot be blamed for not having already commenced the survey of a railway to Croydon. I do not think that is a reasonable complaint. The Government cannot do everything they are asked to do. The Government have to conduct the business of the country so far as they can with the means at their disposal, and the sooner we understand that—the sooner we come to a more realising sense of that—the better. All we can do is to do what we can with the means at our disposal. As to the warden at Croydon, I believe there is no complaint about the warden there now. He is not an old man, but he is an experienced warden, and a thoroughly competent one. There is also one of the oldest and most experienced police magistrates in the colony there, and I think there is no complaint on that ground. I am sure the Government are only too glad to attend to any reasonable complaints. The first mining registrar who was sent up turned out very unsatisfactory, I believe; I do not know anything about him myself, except that I saw him once. The hon. member referred to the jetty at Thursday Island. I am not in a position to say what has caused delay there. The site has been fixed, soundings made and plans prepared, and, I believe, tenders have been called for, unless some delay has occurred of which I know nothing. If the hon. member had given notice of a question on that subject I could have given him the information at once. The hon. member has talked also about the revenue derived from that part of the colony. I shall be very glad when we have decided to adopt the system that the revenue derived from the several districts shall be expended in those districts; it will save all parts of the colony a great deal of trouble. I hope this afternoon to introduce a Bill to lay down the principle. I can assure the hon. member that the Government has just as much desire to attend to the wants of the Gulf country as of any other part of the colony, and I do not think there is any reasonable ground of complaint for what they have done in that respect up to the present.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—We have heard just now the same old story from the Government benches which we have heard for the last three years—that it is the desire of the Government to do everything fair and just for the more distant parts of the colony. Is this desire to be always a desire? Is it never

to fructify? I heard the hon. gentleman talk that way in 1884, when the £10,000,000 loan, which has been the bane of the country, was passed. Now he tells us that the Government can only do that which the resources at their command allow them to do. But why did he saddle the colony with the £10,000,000 loan, and prevent the Government from having resources to apply to distant places, or to new places, when they arise? The country is committed to a *via recta*, a Fortitude Valley, and other political railways, which will not pay for the grease of the wheels; but a railway to Croydon that would have paid from the very start—any man who knows the country and the habits of gold diggers, anyone who knows what Charters Towers has been, must admit that a railway from Croydon to Normanton would have paid from the start—that must wait till we have exhausted our £10,000,000 loan in building the *via recta*, the Valley, and other railways. That is the state of things the country has been placed in by the hon. gentleman's wise statesmanship. The hon. gentleman might very well have left out his remarks in reference to the constituents of the hon. member for Burke, who is the best judge of what his constituents think; he might very well have left that gentleman to his constituents. The hon. gentleman has been with his constituents more recently than the Premier, and knows a great deal more about them; and I am confident that he speaks the mind of his constituents, and that the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government does not. I have nothing to say in particular about the dredge further than that I think if a similar promise had been made to a Southern port it would have been fulfilled long ago. All this tends to show the impracticability of trying to govern an immense colony from one corner of it. If it proves nothing else, it proves that. It proves that it is utterly impossible for any Government, even with the best intentions, to govern the whole colony well. The gentlemen opposite have good intentions, strong desires to do what is right, yet they cannot do it, because the more distant parts of the colony are too far from them—too far for good government, and too much is left in the hands of Government officials. As to the present state of Croydon, I do not think the hon. gentleman need take to himself the credit of thinking that Croydon is in such a happy position at present with regard to wardens. If he understands the statement of the hon. member for Burke, about 500 prospecting claims not being laid off, he must understand that the field is in a very bad state indeed, and that the seed is being sown for a plentiful crop of lawsuits which will spring up by-and-by when these claims acquire more value. Instead of one warden on a goldfield like Croydon, which is scattered over thirty or forty miles, there should be two or three wardens to do the work; and there should be two or three mining surveyors to lay off the claims properly so that there would be no chance of lawsuits springing up afterwards. If that is not done the miners upon Croydon will be in the same position as the miners at other places: neglected in the beginning, they will have to engage in litigation, and their claims will be rendered valueless on account of the fees paid to lawyers to secure them. I do not think the answer given by the Premier is at all creditable to him as a statesman, or to his Government.

BUNDEBERG POST OFFICE.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—I will take advantage of the motion for adjournment to bring a small grievance of my own before the Government. I asked the Colonial Secretary a

question just now, and the answer I got was, "Tenders will be invited at an early date." Last year I asked a similar question about the post-office in Bundaberg, where it was thought absolutely necessary three years ago that a post-office should be built to facilitate business. At the present time the post-office there is a mere pigeon-hole compared with the private buildings which surround it, and the postmaster has to do all the business connected with the office, even savings bank business, over the counter in the front room. It was thought advisable to erect a post-office there, and £1,500 was voted on the Estimates for that purpose; but thinking it possible that the vote might lapse, I asked when tenders would be invited for the erection of the building, and the answer I got was that tenders would be invited at an early date. It is just possible, Mr. Speaker, that the answer I have just received may be something similar. After I got that answer I went to the Postmaster-General of the day about the matter, and he said he hoped I would not urge the matter just then, as he wished to place a larger sum of money on the Estimates in order to put up a building equal to the times, and in keeping with the buildings erected by private enterprise in the vicinity. I agreed with that, and asked him to give me some idea when the post-office would be built. He assured me he would make a point of visiting Bundaberg before the end of the session, so as to ascertain how much money would be required for the building. Well, the same thing went on day after day and week after week, and the answer was always the same. At last I was informed that the moment the House rose the Postmaster-General would assuredly visit Bundaberg. Well, sir, the session ended, and it was some considerable time before he made his appearance in Bundaberg; but when he did come he said he considered it a disgrace to the department to have such a building there, and he assured not only myself, but several of my constituents also, that money would be placed on the Estimates at once and tenders invited for a suitable building. Now, after all those promises, I can only assume, being a new member, I have been the object of a little flattery, but I can assure you that flattery goes a very little way with me; I would rather see them fulfilled than have the flattery. After coming down here to my duties this year, I went to the Postmaster-General again, and his reply was, "Wait till the Estimates are framed, and then you will see." Three or four different times I had this reply, and when the Estimates were laid before us, to my great surprise not one cent was put down for a post-office at Bundaberg, but the £1,500 previously voted was taken off. Now, I would like to know what is the intention of the Government in this matter. I might take it, perhaps, this way—that they consider Bundaberg part of the North. I have no complaint against the members of the Government as far as promises go; I can get any amount of promises, but can get no good out of them, and I would like to know whether promises thus made are ever intended to be fulfilled. I trust that the Premier will be able to give me some satisfaction as to whether there is to be anything placed on the Estimates for this necessary building; if not, I shall feel it my duty—though I do not wish to do that—to move that a sum of money be placed on the Supplementary Estimates for the purpose. I think that, when private enterprise shows such spirit in trying to push the colony ahead, the interests of the people ought to be looked after by the Government; and that when a sum of money is placed on the Estimates, whether supplemented or not, the work ought to be carried out.

Mr. PALMER, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker, —Without wishing to occupy the time of the House unnecessarily, I will say that the answer I have received from the Premier is exactly the kind of answer I expected to receive from him. The hon. gentleman says the Government are desirous to do all they possibly can for the North, and I can only trust that he will carry out those reforms as soon as possible. I can hardly accept his explanation about the dredge. That is a matter of the most vital concern in connection with the Northern trade, considering that there is a population of between 7,000 and 8,000 people dependent upon that port, and that that port is dependent upon the bar being dredged at once. Goods to the extent of 1,500 or 2,000 tons a month are coming to that river by steamer alone, to say nothing of the large quantity coming by small coasting vessels. The miners of Croydon are dependent upon that river for their supplies, and there is no doubt that, in the event of another wet season happening, there will be a famine there for want of facilities for carrying food to the people. The Premier's answer is not the one which I ought to have received, nor is it the one I should have received if I had been representing a Southern constituency. It is more than nine months ago that I was told by the Minister for Works in this House that as soon as a survey party was available they would carry out the survey to the Croydon field. There are many survey parties scattered all over the southern part of the colony carrying out surveys to quite unimportant places, and there is no reason why this should not be carried out. It is not for want of survey parties, because they are in abundance, and there must be plenty of them now available from railways in course of construction. If the Government really desired to meet the wants and wishes of the people in that part of the colony, and fully appreciated their duties regarding the encouraging and fostering such an important place as Croydon, they would have dealt with them much more fairly than they have done. I do not want to carp at or find fault with the Government at the present moment; indeed, I rather sympathise with them in their unfortunate position, although a good deal of it is of their own making. However, I considered it my duty to call attention to these grievances, and so far from falling out with my constituents for having done so I am quite satisfied that it will meet with their views, and am prepared to take the consequences. I have lately been in nearly every important place in this vast northern district, covering an area of 124,000 square miles, and I was urged not only to bring these matters under the notice of the Government, but to keep on bringing them forward until some of them at least were redressed. With regard to the dredge I must again say that I am not satisfied with the Premier's explanation. I see the dredge is floating in the river here now; why should she not be tested in the Gulf?

The PREMIER: Suppose she turned out not finished?

Mr. PALMER: She will have to be repaired when she goes up there; that will have to be provided for. There are two dredges continually at work in the Brisbane, one in the Mary, and others at ports along the coast which—excepting Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville—can bear no comparison in importance to Normanton. Normanton will continue to increase, while perhaps those other ports will remain as they are or increase at a much lower rate. I do think that more even-handed justice should have been dealt out to that port than has been the case.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I really must say a word with reference to what has fallen from the hon. member for Burke with regard to the testing of the dredge in the Gulf. It seems to me perfectly absurd. I consider the explanation given by the Premier as to that particular business very satisfactory indeed. I, as representing a Northern constituency, am anxious to see the North get a fair share of the expenditure in every way; but I think it would be rank folly to send a dredge up to the Gulf, which has not been thoroughly tested and proved capable of doing satisfactory work. What a tremendous mess there would be if, when she got there, it was found there was some defect in her, and that it was necessary to bring her all the way back again to Brisbane! And what a loss of time there would be! Perhaps a better plan would be to send up one of the dredges already at work—even one of those at work in the Brisbane—because I recognise the necessity, as much as anyone, of the Northern port being thoroughly opened and facilities for traffic being given there. I cannot sit down without referring to the eloquent manner in which the hon. member for Townsville has denounced the Government for what they have not done for the North. As a Northern representative, I must say that I am fairly grateful to the Government for what they have done in my electorate. I know the sort of cry which is now being got up in a certain quarter is precisely the same as that which was got up on a former occasion when a certain gentleman was at the head of the Northern combination, and I know what was the result of it. The result of that Northern combination, so far as the hon. member for Townsville was concerned, was to get himself into the Works Office, where he had a very comfortable situation, and where he could be good to his friends. And the North was not at all grateful to a great many of them, for it was found out as soon as they got into office they had got all they wanted, and did not care a bit about the North. So far as the electorate of Cook is concerned, they are perfectly satisfied with what the present Government have done for them, and I feel certain that when they appeal to the country they will have a fair amount of support from the people of the North, who are not at all unreasonable. I believe that the people of the North—a great majority of them—I am certain as to my own constituents—are very well satisfied with the action of the Government towards the North. The North, speaking generally, has had a fair share of the Government expenditure, and of the loan vote allotted to it.

Mr. HAMILTON: On paper!

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Time will show about that, and I only hope that if the other party get into power at any future time they will show that enormous consideration towards the North which they now so warmly profess to advocate.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AT CONCERT HALLS.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—I will take advantage of this motion for adjournment to bring another matter under the notice of the House and of the Government. It is not a grievance of any kind, but a matter concerning the lives and limbs, not only of the people of Brisbane, but, I may say, of the whole colony. In order to explain the matter I refer to I will simply describe the circumstances under which it came to my knowledge. I attended a concert given by the Fisk Jubilee Singers, in a room in the *Courier* office the other night. Before the audience retired from that room there were about 1,400 people present, and the manager—Mr. Loudin, I think, is his name—warned them that they should be very careful in

going out of the building, as, if they were not, a very serious accident might happen. Now, sir, if it were necessary for this gentleman to warn the audience when there was no panic—when they were merely going to walk out of the room quietly, that they should do so without crushing in any way for fear of a serious accident, what would happen supposing that somebody called out “Fire,” or that there was actually an alarm of fire? I venture to say that not one person out of that 1,400 would have escaped. They would all have been smothered to a certainty. A few of the first at the bottom of the stairs might get out; but none of the others could do so. We know what has happened lately in Europe, in the theatres and places of amusement constructed specially by the very best architects, provided with fire escapes and more than one means of exit, and yet we see the frightful accidents that have happened. Here is a room in which concerts are allowed to take place in this city, with only one means of exit, and that one so small that it is necessary to warn people, even when there is no panic, to be very careful that they do not crush on the stairs in going out. I wish to call the attention of the Colonial Secretary especially to this matter, because I think it should be dealt with at once. I am not commencing a crusade against newspapers like my hon. friend the member for Cook, Mr. Hill. I do not wish to do that at all, and I am quite sure that the *Courier* people will look at this matter, when it is brought under their notice, in the same way that I do. I was present that night with a large party of ladies, and the matter was brought so prominently under my notice that I think the blood that may be shed in that building would be upon my head if I did not bring it under the notice of the House, and their blood will also be upon the leader of the Government, or whoever has this matter in his hands, if he does not see that no entertainments are allowed to be held in that building unless proper means of escape are provided.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House I will withdraw my motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn accordingly.

AUSTRALIAN JOINT STOCK BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—I have, in support of my motion for the second reading of this Bill, to go into some details. I might give my own personal opinion, but I do not feel inclined to do that, and I am going instead to quote from the evidence given before a Royal Commission in Victoria, bearing upon the subject-matter of this Bill. This Bill opens a question which is undoubtedly interesting, not merely to bankers, but to every business man in the colony. But if I should be trespassing upon the patience of hon. members too much, I shall take a friendly hint, and cease to do so. It might be as well for me to mention that among the witnesses called in was Sir George Frederick Verdon, Inspector and general manager in Australia of the English, Scottish, and Australian Chartered Bank. He was distinctly in favour of removing the restriction which is sought to be removed from the Australian Joint Stock Bank in the Bill before the House, and he gave a very distinct opinion, too. One question put to him was:—

“I understand your charter absolutely prohibits advances by the bank on real property, and on several specified kinds of chattels and property?”

The answer was:—

“It would appear so from the terms of the charter, but the lawyers differ as to the interpretation of those expressions.”

The next question was:—

"As a matter of fact (I will not press the question) do you carry out those conditions?"

The answer was:—

"We are most careful to observe all the conditions of the charter."

"Assuming the conditions of the charter to prohibit advances by the bank on real property?"

That is the next question. The answer is:—

"I do not think the terms are quite as general as that. To secure, I think, the existing advance."

Then there is another question:—

"You have restrictions? Yes; we have restrictions in all the charters, and we endeavour to observe the conditions of the charter to the best of our ability. I may say that it involves great difficulties sometimes."

The next witness is Mr. McMullen, general manager of the Union Bank of Australasia, which I may say does not lie under the restriction which is sought to be removed by the Bill, and he is if anything more emphatic and distinct in his opinion on the subject. The question put to him is:—

"I understand from your original deed of settlement that you are specially authorised to make advances on land, and every other form of security you may elect to take? We are not restricted in any way as to business—we may advance on anything or nothing."

The next witness is a most important one, a gentleman who was unfortunately killed in the late railway accident in Victoria, Mr. E. S. Parkes, superintendent of the Bank of Australasia. His opinion is in the same direction, decidedly in favour of the removal of this restriction upon banks being able to make advances. The question put to him is:—

"What powers have you with reference to advances on land? We are permitted to take a mortgage for any moneys actually due or for which properties may have rendered themselves liable, and we are permitted to hold the property for such reasonable time only after the corporation shall have acquired the absolute interest therein as shall be necessary for selling or disposing of the same or converting the same into money."

The next question is:—

"Your charter then absolutely prohibits direct advances on real property in the first place, does it not? It does; but I need not say, from the way in which this is drawn, that it is easily—I do not like to use the word 'evaded'—but an advance can be made on the same indirectly."

The next question is:—

"That is, it can be done, and often is done, in other cases in an indirect way, what perhaps be done in a direct?"

That is a very important question, and the answer is equally important:—

"For instance, we can advance the money to-day, and take the security to-morrow."

Now, the object of this Bill is to enable the Australian Joint Stock Bank to do their business without having the necessity to have recourse to anything in the nature of evasion. They want that to be made legal for them which is legal now for other banks. I may say that the chief manager of the National Bank of Australasia, Mr. F. G. Smith, was examined; as was also Mr. Moule, solicitor to the Bank of Victoria, the Colonial Bank, and the English, Scottish, and Australian Chartered Bank. The evidence of these gentlemen is in the same direction as that of the other witnesses I have mentioned. The Vice-President of the Chamber of Commerce was examined; so was the President. The Vice-President seems to be somehow connected with a mortgage company, such as we have a few of in this town, and he does not say that we ought to enable banks to

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make advances on leasehold and freehold altogether. But still, as his is a dissenting opinion to some extent, I will read it:—

"In your opinion, would there be enough scope for the banks if this power was taken away from them? I think so. I think the rates of interest in this part of the world, as compared with any other, per annum, prove to you that money is always in strong demand here, and there is plenty of scope for legitimate industries."

"Would you take away the rights from the banks at present in this way, or would you not extend them? I would not extend them; I would rather curtail them."

"Is it satisfactory that some banks should have unfettered power and others should only accomplish it by a roundabout process? No; I cannot say that it is."

"Are you aware that the restrictions in some of the charters would apply to simply an equitable mortgage? Yes, I believe so."

Then there is the President of the Chamber of Commerce, who is distinctly in favour of sweeping away this restriction altogether. Next we have the solicitor of the Bank of New South Wales in Victoria, who is of the same opinion; and I may say that only last year, I think, the Bank of New South Wales had a similar Bill to this before the Parliament of that colony, which was passed, so that that institution does not now suffer under the restriction. Next we have the evidence of Mr. Curtayne, who was formerly, for twenty-three years, manager and acting manager of the Union Bank, and I should just like to read some of his answers. He appears to be out of banking business just now:—

"Have you paid any attention to the evidence that has been given in reference to the securities that banks take upon land and other property? I have."

"Will you give us the result of your opinion? I think the present obstacles that banks have to meet in taking securities for advances at the time of making a loan are most demoralising. The Act specially specifies a certain thing, and the ingenuity of the lawyers gets over that in a way that is beneficial to the public; and that is only right to the banks lending money. I think every bank lending money should take security at the time it gives the money, and not have recourse to any ingenious methods of going outside the Act."

"Then, in your opinion, is the present mode of lending money upon landed property in contravention of the Act? I think it is contrary to the intention of the Act."

After that we have Mr. Greenlaw, manager of the Colonial Bank of Australasia, who is asked:—

"Have you anything to say in reference to giving banks *carte blanche* to lend money upon mortgages. Do you think they should have it? I think they ought. I think banks should be totally unrestricted upon the lending side. It is a matter entirely within the province of the directors and the executive officers, who have sufficient responsibility to shareholders, and also their own reputation, to see that the moneys are fairly and judiciously lent. With regard to lending money upon mortgages, I endorse what Mr. Curtayne and many other gentlemen stated—namely, that there is no necessity to interfere with the particular function of a bank, for a bank would not, on the one hand, nor would borrowers on the other, enter into an agreement to take money for a long period of time, for the rate the banks charge is so much in excess of what a person can mortgage his real estate for for a long period of time that no one would voluntarily do it. The exigency does not arise; any borrowing upon land by the customers of a bank is temporary. It is a temporary advance associated with security. He prefers doing that for a short time, and would rather pay the extra rate for the short time than have the expense of a mortgage and registration, and so on, as between mortgagor and mortgagee. The relation between a bank and a customer is totally different, according to my mind, from the dry position of a mortgagor and mortgagee."

"Do you agree with the evidence of Mr. Curtayne and others here upon the mode in which moneys loaned by banks, in their opinion, have been an evasion of the law? There are two ways of approaching that. If you approach it from a strict, dry, legal point, no doubt, in the statute, that would be so; but I do not think there is a positive evasion of the law. The lawyers certainly have an ingenuity in getting over a difficulty existing, and it might be well to remove that difficulty."

"Do not you think the difficulty should rather be removed than allowed to remain, as the law is, in your opinion, strained as it is? Certainly. That would be much better."

I will now, with the permission of the House, read the whole of the report under the heading of "Mortgages on Land," given in by the gentlemen who sat on the commission:—

"MORTGAGES ON LAND.

"All banks incorporated under the provisions of the Companies Statute, 1864, have full power to lend upon the security of freehold property without restriction, except in so far as they may by their own articles otherwise provide. On the other hand, all the chartered banks, and some of the banks under special Acts, are forbidden to lend money on mortgage in anticipation of a debt to be incurred, though they are allowed to take mortgages as security for debts already existing. This restriction was probably inserted in English charters chiefly to prevent the undue locking up of a bank's capital. In England, the provision might be a prudent one. But here a landed estate is always marketable, subject only to the rise and fall in value. It is improbable, therefore, that a bank administered with ordinary prudence could so lock up its money in land that it would become seriously involved. Banks take care to have a margin of safety, and experience shows that there are no better securities than those effected on land. The temptation to accumulate the possession of land by banks does not exist. Borrowers for extended periods on freehold property can generally get the funds they require at rates below those charged by the banks. There is, therefore, a freedom from the danger the framers of English charters have endeavoured to guard against. Land in this colony is practically a chattel property. It would not be sound to argue that, because the chartered banks have ignored this provision of their charters with respect to lending money on land, such a provision should be abrogated. If such a condition were necessary, machinery should be devised for enforcing it in all cases—on the banks that are now unrestricted as well as in those cases where the provision has a dead-letter existence. But the evidence taken, and our own knowledge of the subject, convince us that the restriction is unnecessary, and we recommend that it should be removed so far as concerns banks incorporated by any Act of the Victorian Legislature."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I do not think it necessary for me to say anything more. I think hon. members will see what the opinions of experienced and expert bankers and lawyers are, and it will be obvious to anyone after the most cursory examination, and with a moment's reflection, if this restriction is taken away from the Australian Joint Stock Bank and they are enabled to do their business fairly, squarely, and honestly, without any evasion or any doubt, the second reading of this Bill may safely be submitted to the House. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think myself that there is any great objection to the removal of this restriction in the case of the Australian Joint Stock Bank. In the case of banks formed under the Companies Act no such restriction exists, and I do not know that there is any reason to perpetuate a restriction introduced a great many years ago under the impression, drawn from English experience and circumstances, that it was dangerous to allow funds to be locked up on mortgage of real estate. I believe the circumstances of the colony are so different from what they were then in England that there is now no reason for perpetuating this rule, and I for one shall, therefore, offer no objection to the second reading of this Bill.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I quite approve of the Bill introduced by the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, and if there were wanted any further reason for its passing it is the fact that three of the principal institutions at the present time are perfectly unrestricted, and I see, therefore, no reason why the Australian Joint Stock Bank, or any other bank which

is working under a charter whereby they cannot accept securities of real estate, should not be relieved of the disability. After all it is a matter of administration. If banks desire to enter into that class of business, making advances on the security of real estate, they will do so, and the charter of the Australian Joint Stock Bank does not actually preclude them from doing so. It simply states that the transaction must first be entered into before the security is incurred. Therefore I say that if the bank wishes largely to enter into the matter of dealing with real estate it can do so under its present charter, but not in the straightforward way it can do when this disability is removed. No doubt it is a sound principle of banking that it is extremely undesirable that banks should have long-standing transactions or overdrafts of a permanent character on the security of real estate. It is contrary to the principles of banking that any such long-winded transactions should continue, and that is the danger—that monetary institutions may unduly extend their business by such transactions, whereby they might lock up their capital to the disadvantage of the trading and mercantile community. But such is purely a matter of administration, and seeing that the banking companies registered under the Companies Act of Queensland can enter upon these transactions, perfectly unrestricted and untrammelled, I can see no objection whatever to the Australian Joint Stock Bank being relieved of the disability in the manner proposed, so as to enable them to extend their transactions without any of the present restrictions.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

On the motion of Mr. W. BROOKES, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

FINANCIAL DISTRICTS BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House went into committee 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.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That a Bill be introduced 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—

said: I propose to very briefly explain the nature of the provisions of the Bill, so far as to assist hon. members in reading it afterwards. It is proposed to distinguish with respect to loan moneys between local works and what we may call "general purposes." I need not specify them now, but what are "loans for local purposes" and "general loans" there will be no difficulty about. It is proposed with respect to revenue to distinguish between "general" and "local" revenue, and to declare that the following shall be the sources of local revenue: Customs; excise, including export duties, licenses, pilotage; land revenue, including rents of Crown lands, fees for miners' rights and mineral licenses, rents of mineral land, railway receipts, sales of Government property. All other revenue is to be deemed general revenue. With respect to the difficulty that Customs revenue is often not paid in the part of the colony where the dutiable goods are

consumed for which that revenue is received, it is proposed to meet that difficulty by this provision, which is section 9 of the Bill:—

"When any goods upon which duties of Customs or excise have been paid in one district are carried coastwise under a transire from that district to another district the amount of duty paid upon such goods in the first-named district shall be credited to the account of the district to which such goods are so carried, and shall be deemed to be part of the local revenue of such district, and shall be deducted from the local revenue of the district in which the duties were paid.

"The Treasurer shall cause proper accounts to be kept, for the purpose of giving effect to the provisions of this section."

Then it is proposed to declare that the general and local revenue shall be applicable in the first instance respectively to defray the general expenditure and the local expenditure of the districts from which the revenue is derived. If the general revenue is more than sufficient to defray the general expenditure—which is not likely to happen from the proposed division of the revenue—the surplus is to be distributed amongst the several districts in proportion to the amounts contributed by them; and if the general revenue is insufficient to meet the general expenditure the deficiency is to be made up by the several districts in the same way in proportion to the amounts contributed by them. For the purpose of determining what amounts are contributed by them it is proposed to take the whole local revenue, and a portion of the general revenue proportionate to the population of the district as compared with that of the colony, and add them together. That seems to be an extremely fair manner of arriving at the amount. The details of the provisions for keeping separate accounts I need not trouble the Committee with now, as I only wish to give a general idea of the nature of the Bill. There is another clause, which it is important I should mention, which provides that, for the purpose of raising money for defraying local expenditure, a differential tax may be imposed where the expenditure in one district is more than in another. A great deal may be said on this subject, but this is not the time to say it, as I am merely following a practice sometimes followed in this House, and making a few preliminary observations in connection with the Bill. I beg to move that it is desirable to introduce the Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution.

FIRST READING.

The PREMIER moved that the Bill be now read a first time.

Question put and passed; the second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION BILL.

The PREMIER moved that the House 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.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill to make provision for the establishment of branches of the several Government departments in the Central and Northern districts of the colony—

said: The nature of this Bill is explained by its title. It provides for the establishment at Rock-

hampton in the Central district, and at Townsville in the Northern district, of branches of such departments of the Government as it may be convenient to establish there, and for the conduct of business there directly without the present necessary reference to the metropolis. In this Bill, as in the others, it is proposed to divide the colony into three districts—Southern, Central, and Northern. I hope to lay on the table to-morrow a map showing the proposed divisions of the colony.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution.

FIRST READING.

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

REAL PROPERTY (LOCAL REGISTRIES) BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House in Committee of the Whole affirmed the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make provision for the establishment of branches of the Registrar of Titles' Office in the Central and Northern districts of the colony.

FIRST READING.

The PREMIER presented the Bill, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

WATER AUTHORITIES BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House affirmed in Committee of the Whole the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide for the construction, maintenance, and management of works for the storage and distribution of water.

FIRST READING.

The PREMIER presented the Bill, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

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.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Fraser,—After the very eloquent speech which was made by the Attorney-General in connection with this subject on the last day we sat, I feel quite reluctant to

have to follow in the discussion of the important matter now before the Committee. I shall not follow the course adopted by the hon. gentleman, for I am not possessed of his eloquence and flow of language, but I shall have recourse to as plain a statement as I can possibly make of the arguments and circumstances to which I shall have to refer. The figures made use of in a discussion of such great importance as that which is now before us may be used in such a way as to be very misleading, and because the use of figures to a large extent leads to a great deal of confusion I shall endeavour to avoid employing them more than is absolutely necessary. And because of that it is quite possible that I may omit to refer to some circumstances that ought to be taken notice of, but I have no doubt that anything I may omit to allude to in the discussion will be taken up by others who are quite as capable, and much more capable, of dealing with the matter than I am. Before reverting to what fell from the hon. the Attorney-General, I may say that I listened with attention to the speech which was delivered by the Chief Secretary. I give the hon. gentleman very great credit for the manner in which he put the facts with which he had to deal before us—not only the facts, but also the circumstances, which, I think, were intended to somewhat cloud the facts, which we, as representatives of the country, should fully understand. Now, sir, in the first place I was somewhat struck by a remark which fell from the Chief Secretary, to the effect that the country was now entering on a new era of prosperity. What that era of prosperity is, I think I may explain by the figures used by himself. The actual receipts for the year 1886-7, he told us, were £2,808,000; the actual disbursements were £3,176,000; the expenditure over revenue for that year was £368,000. The deficit at the end of June, as shown by the Treasury returns, was £410,000, but, as is pointed out by the Auditor-General, that amount should have been not merely £410,000 but £469,000; and I may add, Mr. Fraser, that if the interest on the loan which was raised at the beginning of this year had been paid from consolidated revenue, as it ought to have been, and if the first payment of interest on the loan which was raised last year had been made from the consolidated revenue, as it ought to have been, then that £469,000 would have been increased by nearly £59,000 more. So that we have an absolute expenditure over revenue for the year which ended on the 30th June of £368,000; and we have an actual deficit at the present time of more than £500,000. Not only that, but at the end of the present year, by the hon. gentleman's own showing, he expects that the deficit, according to his way of calculating it, will be £530,000. Now, sir, that is entering on a new era of prosperity. The hon. gentleman assures us that the prospects of the country were probably never brighter.

The PREMIER: Otherwise it would have been a great deal worse.

Mr. NORTON: Perhaps it would have been worse. I think, Mr. Fraser, it is quite bad enough.

The PREMIER: So do I.

Mr. NORTON: I do not at all agree with the hon. gentleman's idea that the prospects of the colony were never brighter. They are so exceedingly bright that the first thing the hon. gentleman proposes to do is to let the Marsupial Act die out in order to avoid the payment of endowments by the Government—some £12,000 I think. The next thing he proposes to do is to cut short the endowment which is paid to the divisional boards. He also proposes to charge to the

squatters the cost of the rabbit fence—to place it on the same footing as the central sugar-mills—and he also proposes to levy a tax of 1d. in the £1 on the value of unimproved freehold land.

The PREMIER: Unimproved value.

Mr. NORTON: I beg the hon. gentleman's pardon—the unimproved value of freehold land. Now, sir, the prospects of the colony must be exceedingly bright if it is necessary to make all these proposals. So far as the Marsupial Act is concerned, I daresay there are a great many who do not care whether it is continued or not. I am sure there are a great many in the colony who care neither one way nor the other whether it is continued or abolished, and there are a great many, too, who would much rather that it was abolished. Therefore, although I believe the Act has done a great deal of good, I still think that its being allowed to die out will not cause a very great amount of regret throughout the colony. But, with regard to the endowment to divisional boards, I would point out that it should not be regarded, as the hon. member chooses to regard it, as a merely temporary arrangement with the boards. The £2 to £1 endowment would have expired in the course of four years from the time when the original Act was passed; but the hon. gentleman himself, in 1884, brought in a Bill and got it passed through this House, by which he deliberately ensured to the divisional boards the payment of the £2 to £1—not for five years but for five years more—ten years. Now, sir, surely when the hon. member passed that Act he should have foreseen the difficulties that might arise, and which he now points out have arisen. Whether he foresaw them or not, having passed the Act, and given the divisional boards a legal right to that £2 endowment for every £1 received, he is bound, in all fairness, to see that the right given by the Act is carried out in its integrity. It is not a mere arrangement between the Government and the boards; it is a distinct legal right given by law—a law which was passed by the hon. gentleman himself, and which cannot be evaded under any circumstances whatever. These divisional boards have borrowed money which they look forward to repay partly by the endowment which they are to receive from the Government. Of course the money is borrowed from the Government, but those who have borrowed it are bound to return the capital within a certain time, and they are bound to pay the interest every year, and so much towards the reduction of the debt, which many of them would never have thought of incurring except for that Act, passed by the hon. gentleman himself, securing to them the endowment of £2 to £1 for ten years. Now, sir, after having passed that Act, the hon. gentleman wishes to repeal it, I presume—to commit as great a breach of faith with the divisional boards as any Government could commit. With regard to the rabbit-proof fences, the hon. member points out with a certain degree of plausibility that they ought to be paid for in the same way that the central sugar-mills have been paid for. Now, if the rabbit-proof fences had been put up for the protection of one class of the community alone there would be some justice in his argument that they ought to be treated in the same way as the sugar-mills. But, sir, there is a marked difference between the two. When the vote for the central sugar-mills was passed it was distinctly understood that if anyone wished to avail himself of that money he could do so on one condition only—that the money advanced was to be treated as a loan, and that those who got the benefit of that loan were to repay it in the course of time

to the Government. But there was no such condition about the rabbit-proof fence. That was not considered as a class question at the time the money was voted; it was regarded as a necessity from a national point of view. It was not merely to save the squatters, but also to save the agricultural and grazing selectors, and, I may add, to save the revenue; because if the rabbits were admitted into the colony their destructiveness would certainly be none the less on agricultural lands than on large squattages; and if they came in large numbers and took possession of the pastoral lands, then, as hon. members are well aware, it would be simply impossible for the tenants to continue paying the same rents they are paying now. The holders of many of the runs would cease to derive any profit from them at all. Therefore, I say, the proposal to make the squatters pay an assessment for the rabbit-proof fence ought to have been made when the question was first submitted to Parliament. It is quite possible that hon. members voted the £50,000 simply because they looked upon it as a national question and never thought of the money being refunded, and it is a breach of faith now the money is expended to say to one class of the community, "The money was voted for your benefit only, therefore you must pay." I do not intend to dwell any longer on that subject, but will refer now more particularly to the proposed land tax. It seems a somewhat extraordinary time to propose a land tax, when the Attorney-General told us the other night that by the passing of the Land Act of 1884 it had become almost impossible to sell freehold land. The hon. gentleman did not mean that as applied to all freehold land, but as applied to country land, and that being so he was correct. Since the passing of the Act of 1884 it has become much more difficult to sell country freehold lands than before. They have deteriorated in value, and I believe they have done so because that Act was passed. Now, I will ask hon. members whether the tax is a fair one. In the first place, directly a man has purchased his land from the Government at a fixed price, which is supposed to be the value—or even before he has completed the purchase, if he is paying for it in instalments—he will be called upon, if the proposed Bill pass, to pay a land tax immediately on the top of the purchase money. I do not think any hon. member will say that is fair. Then with regard to the position of freehold land and the position of leasehold land I have something to say, because I think the Land Board, which has been deciding the value of the runs and the rent to be paid for selections, would be guided by the return which might be expected to be derived from the freehold land in the neighbourhood, and would not fix the rents of leasehold lands higher than the income the owner of freehold land in the same locality would obtain from his freehold land. Naturally they would not fix it higher; they would probably fix the rent of the leasehold land at less than the interest or the profit which the owner or occupant of freehold land in the same locality might derive from it. And if that is the case, why should not leaseholds be taxed as well as freeholds? Of course the hon. gentleman opposite is thinking of the unearned increment; but, setting that on one side, I say that leasehold lands ought to be taxed at the same rate as freeholds, because the productiveness of one is as great as that of the other, and the object of fixing a land tax at so much in the £1 is to make each occupant of land pay according to the income derived from the land. Therefore so far as the question of land being freehold or leasehold is concerned the occupant in one case ought in all right, and in all equity, to pay the tax as well as the other.

With regard to the unearned increment, I do not know what it means always. I see the Minister for Lands smiles, but I will point out a case, and perhaps the hon. gentleman will explain whether I am right in the view I take. Take the case of a property in this neighbourhood. Across the street a large and expensive hotel has been recently erected; the next corner in George street is vacant and the adjoining corner in Alice street is also vacant. The fact of so much money being expended on the Belle Vue Hotel will give an additional value to the unoccupied land adjoining, and I presume the unearned increment of those two vacant blocks will be the additional value given to the land by the great improvements effected by the owner of the Belle Vue. That, I presume, the hon. gentleman would call the unearned increment. Am I right?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not entirely.

Mr. NORTON: Then what is the unearned increment?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You have to explain that.

Mr. NORTON: I should like the hon. gentleman to explain it, because I should like to know what he calls the unearned increment before I am in a position to debate the subject. I think the case I have stated shows the manner in which it is viewed by most people—that the unimproved land in a particular neighbourhood acquires an additional value from the fact that the lands about it are highly improved. All through the town the vacant lands are increased in value, not perhaps by the immediate blocks, but by the blocks in the neighbourhood on which there are improvements. Of course, where lands are occupied, improvements and trade give additional value to the unoccupied land in the locality. Are we to regard that as unearned increment—the additional value caused by the improvements made on lands in the locality?

The PREMIER: That is part of the cause of the unearned increment.

Mr. NORTON: The hon. gentleman is very careful. I think it is wholly the cause. I think the fact of the occupation of all the land about Brisbane which is occupied, and the improvements thereon, and the trade caused by occupation and improvements—I think that gives an additional value to the unimproved properties.

The PREMIER: What is the cause of occupation? Public works to a very great extent.

Mr. NORTON: I do not think it possible to go so far back as that.

The PREMIER: Oh, yes; it is.

Mr. NORTON: However, there is the fact that occupation, improvements, and trade give additional value to the lands occupied, and that is what I call unearned increment. In valuing lands to ascertain what this tax will be, we have first to arrive at the value of the land on which the improvements are, apart from the improvements themselves; and the manner in which this is done I think I can explain. Take the case of the Belle Vue Hotel. It would be difficult to ascertain its value without considering the value of the unoccupied land in its vicinity. We know pretty well the value of the unoccupied land adjacent, and if we take the value of that and assess the Belle Vue block at the same value—that is, the land on which the hotel stands—at the same value as the property not built upon, I presume we shall arrive at the unimproved value of the land.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. NORTON: The hon. gentleman admits that. I have already shown that the building of the hotel has given additional value to the unoccupied land next to it.

The PREMIER: So has the building of these Houses of Parliament.

Mr. NORTON: No doubt; I shall come to that by-and-by: at present I am dealing with private buildings. We have the admission that improvements on a piece of land give additional value to the unimproved lot next to it. To get at the value of the land on which the improvement is we take the unoccupied lot, which has an additional value given to it by the improvement on the land adjoining it, and we tax the land on which the improvement is, higher, because of the very improvements that have been put upon it. We improve one piece of land, thereby giving additional value to another, and to arrive at the value of that on which the improvement is we take the additional value given to the other land by that improvement, and tax the improved land accordingly.

The PREMIER: If it were all unimproved it would not be worth taxing at all.

Mr. NORTON: That is not the way in which the people of the colony generally look at it. I am quite prepared to admit that a great deal of the value of unimproved land, and also of improved land, is derived from Government expenditure. But what is Government expenditure? It is only the expenditure of the people, and, at the very best, the additional value given by the Government expenditure over and above that given by private expenditure—the unearned increment, if we may call it so—should be treated as the unearned increment. That is the only improved value which ought to be taken into consideration if we are looking to the unearned increment of private land. In order to do that we have to ascertain, first, what was the value of the improvements of the private owners themselves, and then, what was the value of the improvements put up by the Government; and to give for the benefit of the private holders all the additional value made by themselves, and tax them only on the balance of value which has been given by the Government improvements. But to do anything like that we should have to go into all sorts of intricate accounts, which would be almost impossible to reckon. But I do say that if we are to take the value of the land without the buildings, then we ought not to assess that land by the value which the buildings have given to it, and to the unimproved land beside it. The hon. gentleman had something to say about what he called the “parrot cry” of over-taxation. I do not think it is a parrot cry. If the hon. gentleman does not feel it, there are others who do; and I venture to say that the bulk of the people of this colony would feel at the present time, as they felt particularly during the last two years, any additional taxation very much. The hon. gentleman referred to the Savings Bank returns to show, I presume, that the condition of the colony was tolerably prosperous. But the bank returns unfortunately, just now, are not reliable for that purpose. In times of depression those who accumulate small savings deposit them in the Savings Bank because they have no other means of investment. The tendency, therefore, is really to increase the balance in the Savings Bank in times of depression. Before that time savings had been largely invested in town and suburban lands, and in other ways; and the people who invested in such lands had afterwards to draw the money from the bank in order to pay the deposits as they fell due. Others again, in the country, had to draw to enable them to tide over the time during which the depression

lasted. It is rather difficult to say how far these causes have affected the balance in the Savings Bank during the last year, but there is no doubt they have interfered with it very materially. The Colonial Secretary must also know—for he is, I believe, the chairman of one of them—that banks of deposit and of advances have lately been established, which borrow money from those who have it to lend at higher rates of interest than the Savings Bank pays; and the tendency of that is, of course, to induce people to withdraw their money from the Savings Bank and put it into banks of deposit. All these things affect the condition of the Savings Bank so much that I confess I have given up all hope of arriving at any knowledge of the condition of the country through the Savings Bank alone. Then the hon. gentleman referred to the taxation *per capita* of the colony, and showed that during a number of years taxation had not varied so very much. That is quite true, and the taxation of last year was not, perhaps, so high as it has been. But that is not an argument from his point of view; or, if it was, it was spoiled by the Attorney-General, who, in his speech, showed us that the Customs revenue was derived very largely from spirits, tobacco, and other things which ought to be called luxuries. The reason for that was that the great bulk of the working classes of the colony were not in a position to buy taxable goods as they had been before. When the working classes are poor, the wealthy classes naturally pay the greater amount of the taxation which is derived from Customs, simply because they can afford it, and the working classes cannot. The Chief Secretary spoke as if there had been no want, and no difficulty in getting employment in this colony. I know as a fact that great numbers of tradesmen could not get work at their own employment, and were obliged to take whatever work they could in consequence; and many of them were making very poor wages. I know that in some cases, for weeks together, the wages of the head of the family were so low that his children had to go without milk, and they had to do without many other things which they would have had under ordinary conditions. I say that the condition of the working classes was not prosperous. Many of them, no doubt, who had good wages and permanent work, were well off; but there were hundreds of men who could not get work at all at their own trades, or who, if they got an odd job lasting a few weeks or months, were idle for weeks. It might not have been so conspicuous in Brisbane, although there were numbers of men standing about the street corners looking for employment, but it was very evident elsewhere. When in the country, during the last year or two, I have seen more men walking about carrying their swags, in search of work, than I ever saw at any time I have been in Queensland or in New South Wales, and I have been in the two all my life. At no time, although I have travelled thousands of miles in the two colonies, and in Victoria as well, have I ever seen one-tenth the number of men searching for employment that I saw during the last two or three times I have been in the country. Does that indicate a state of prosperity? The hon. gentleman must know that he has no sympathy whatever with the working classes; for I say that thousands of them are out of employment and others receive not one-half of the wages in the year—I am not speaking of the current rate of wages—that they received some four years ago. I say, Mr. Fraser, that to speak of the condition of the working classes of the colony as prosperous is simply an insult to them. I am sure if the Premier will take the trouble to look around—will take the trouble to look into the different circumstances—he must see that

the condition of the country during the last two or three years has been most unprosperous. Now, Mr. Fraser, I have something to say about the question of the sale of country lands. When the Premier spoke of that he intimated that some members on this side of the Committee were prepared if they came into office to sell country lands in very large blocks, as they have been sold on previous occasions. When I went round my own district some few months ago, I made a point of telling my constituents that if it came to be a question of extra taxation or the sale of country lands, I should most decidedly oppose taxation and vote for the sale of country lands. But it does not follow from that that we all wish to sell country lands in enormous blocks; I do not for one. I think if we had power to sell land in larger blocks than we have under the present Act—if we quadrupled the area set forth in the Act, making it 160 acres instead of 40 acres as a maximum—we should probably be able to sell all the country land it is necessary to sell; and I do not think it even desirable that all these blocks should be sold. For my part I should most strenuously oppose any alienation in large areas of country land, as has been done under former Governments. I believe the feeling throughout the country is that land should not be sold in that way. Country lands should be sold by auction just as readily as town lands should be sold by auction. It is not necessary that everyone who wants to purchase land at auction should buy it in town or in the suburbs. There is no reason why men should be allowed to buy freehold in suburbs at auction and not be able to do the same as regards country lands. Of course hon. gentlemen on the Government side may contend that the object is to settle an agricultural population on the land. The present Land Act does not settle an agricultural population on the land. The term "agricultural area" is the greatest sham under the sun. Why, there is not a man who takes up an agricultural area who is bound to cultivate one single acre of it. We all know that; we all know the way in which these agricultural areas are laid out. Some are laid out and called agricultural areas simply because they happen to be in the vicinity of towns where the lands have more value than they have in more distant places. They are not set apart because the lands are good for agriculture, but because they have a greater value than lands at greater distance from town. We know perfectly well that there is not one man who takes up a selection on an agricultural area who need cultivate one acre unless he chooses, and yet that is what is called settling an agricultural population on the land. An agricultural population is not settled on the land now any more than it was under the old Act of 1876, under which they were allowed to take up homesteads and do what they liked with them. There was as much temptation to take up land then as there is now, and there was just as much cultivation then as there is now. I maintain, as I have always maintained, that that definition, "agricultural land," is the greatest sham we have ever introduced into an Act of Parliament in this colony. Then we were told by the Premier that we have no land fit for sale. Well, we have 428,000,000 acres.

The PREMIER: I did not say that.

Mr. NORTON: No; the hon. gentleman said all the land around here was sold.

The PREMIER: All the land that is wanted for settlement.

Mr. NORTON: I think selling land in limited blocks would promote settlement. That is the idea I have always entertained, and I do not see why the alienation of 160-acre blocks by auction

should not promote settlement just as well as the alienation of 160-acre blocks in other ways. The probability is that most men who take up 160-acre blocks prefer to take them up under the present system, but at the same time men who live in town cannot go out and reside on the land, while they would be very glad to purchase a block of land a few miles from town to keep horses or cows on.

The PREMIER: You will not get much there.

Mr. NORTON: Perhaps not. The hon. gentleman has been selling so much land in other ways that there is no one just now to purchase, but at the same time I am sure that when this mania for sixteen-perch allotments is exhausted, many people will not only be able but willing to purchase country lands in small blocks, so that they may have country residences as well as town residences—little places where they can keep their cattle and horses. I do not intend to go further into that subject; but I do say that land in the country ought to be sold, and that there is a lot of land in places available for settlement which would be so bought, and which would be settled if it were sold by auction just as well as it can be settled by being sold under the present conditions. The present conditions only require people to live on their land; that is about the size of it. I now come to the question which is involved in an amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition. Is there any need for taxation at all? The Chief Secretary says "Yes." The hon. gentleman also told us that he felt exceedingly angry when he found that subordinate officers in the Civil Service were expending money without authority, trusting to receive the authority of the Minister afterwards for the expenditure they had taken upon themselves. But, when he got exceedingly angry, what did he do? He forgot all about it and let it go on, and now matters have come to be so very bad that he tells us he is going to put a stop to it. He is going to issue instructions which will entirely put a stop to that expenditure without authority by the Civil servants. It is like a good many more things the Government have had in hand. They have been going to do a great many things, and there are a great many that they have not done yet, and that they are going to do when they feel disposed. The hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, in speaking on this question, and following up the remarks of the Premier, who complained that the leader of the Opposition had not shown any particular reason why the land tax should not be imposed, went into tables extending over a certain number of years in order to show that the public expenditure of the colony was very much greater, year by year, under the present Government than under the preceding one. Now, the figures which he took were, perhaps, not strictly correct, and the Attorney-General who followed him took up the figures of the hon. member for Townsville and argued that they were not right—that some of each year's votes had lapsed, and therefore the hon. member's figures were not correct. The hon. member for Townsville knew well that votes had lapsed. The Premier in his speech told us that votes had lapsed year by year; but votes that lapsed one year were made up afterwards by expenditure in other ways. In fact, although some votes lapsed other expenses balanced them year by year. Why did not the Attorney-General, if he disputed the hon. member for Townsville's figures, tell us what were the correct figures? That would be the proper way to meet his arguments. Now, I maintain that the hon. member for Townsville's arguments and figures were correct.

I do not mean to say that the figures were strictly accurate, because they did not profess to be more than an approximation, but I say they were sufficiently correct to support his arguments; and the hon. Attorney-General, when he got up to meet those arguments, if not satisfied with the hon. member for Townsville's figures, instead of saying they were wrong ought to have shown the House where they were not correct. His failing to do so is, I think, sufficient evidence that they could not be refuted. I have to thank the hon. the Chief Secretary for supplying me with a copy of some tables which were laid upon the table yesterday. When the House adjourned he was kind enough to place those papers in my hand, and I have since had an opportunity of going carefully through them. They, of course, have been prepared by the Treasury, but I should like to know if they represent the actual expenditure for the year.

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. NORTON: I understood so, and am glad the hon. gentleman has put me right.

The PREMIER: That is what I asked for, and I presume is given.

Mr. NORTON: The expenditure for the year, not the financial year?

The PREMIER: No; the year.

Mr. NORTON: That is all right, because before I got those tables I had gone through the Treasury returns, which profess to give the actual expenditure for the year, and had tabulated the actual expenditure for the last nine years. I have not looked into the first two columns of these tables—1876-7-8—but, as I have said, before I got them I had myself tabulated the expenditure; and it is somewhat remarkable—very remarkable, I think—that although the first of these columns, the Schedules and No. 2—Executive and Legislative—tally with my own, the Colonial Secretary's Department varies—not only varies, but differs in the most extraordinary manner from the ordinary Treasury returns.

Mr. DICKSON: That may be occasioned by the transfer of "Colonial Stores."

Mr. NORTON: I do not know what it is occasioned by; what I do know is, that in the Treasury tables now submitted the figures of the Colonial Secretary's Department are entirely different from those published by the Treasury in the ordinary annual statement.

The PREMIER: The *Gazette* statement?

Mr. NORTON: Yes, the *Gazette* statement. I do not know why that should be so. They are not the same as the returns for the financial year; they are not the same as the returns of the Auditor-General; they are all different. I was so struck with this extraordinary discrepancy last night that I thought I must have made some mistake in making up my own tables from the Treasury returns, and, having a set of those returns at my own house, I went through every figure again and found they were quite correct. The totals in the Colonial Secretary's Department for every year, commencing with 1878-9, are widely different from the Treasury statements. The last one, for 1886-7, has a difference of only a few pounds, but in others it amounts to hundreds of pounds.

The PREMIER: How many hundreds?

Mr. NORTON: Over £100 in many instances. Then, again, in the Department of Public Instruction, the years 1878-9, 1879-80, and 1880-81, are all the same as the Treasury returns, and the three next years differ. In the Colonial Treasurer's Department the only year that is the same is last year.

The PREMIER: Do they differ to a serious extent?

Mr. NORTON: Yes, to a serious extent. I will give the hon. gentleman the figures if he wishes. In the Department of the Secretary for Lands, the year 1878-9 is different; in the Secretary for Works Department, the years 1878-9, 1881-2, 1882-3, and 1883-4, are all different from the Treasury returns—widely different.

The PREMIER: To the extent of hundreds or thousands?

Mr. NORTON: I will give the exact amount if the hon. gentleman likes.

The PREMIER: Is it to a large amount?

Mr. NORTON: I will take the Colonial Secretary's Department. The total for the year 1878-9 given in this table is £306,833, and in the Treasury returns £325,982.

Mr. MOREHEAD: About £19,000 difference.

Mr. NORTON: In the next year the table gives £273,262—the Treasury returns £292,308; and there are some discrepancies even wider than that. I cannot understand this, because we ought to be able to get from the Treasury some account that is right. If there is an account that is right we ought to have the right one. This may be right for what I know; but if it is, then the Treasury returns published every year are grossly incorrect.

Mr. MOREHEAD: And the Auditor-General's Report?

Mr. NORTON: Of course the Auditor-General's Report is supposed to be correct; I have taken his figures as well. But, sir, the discrepancies are so large that it is impossible to go into the details recorded in this table; it would be absolutely useless. I have always taken it for granted that the Treasury returns published annually—and I am sure they are got up with great care, as I feel certain the late Treasurer will testify—I have always taken it for granted that what is there represented as the annual expenditure that has taken place during the year is the actual expenditure. If it is, then the other is wrong. But notwithstanding the fact that the departments all differ so much from the Treasury returns, the totals for the whole year agree with the Treasury annual returns. Whether there has been some transfer or not I do not pretend to know, but I do hope that before to-morrow the hon. gentleman will be prepared with an explanation of the reason why these returns differ so much from those published in the *Government Gazette*. As there seemed to be some doubt, Mr. Fraser, about these returns which the hon. gentleman has furnished us with, I preferred to go to the Treasury returns. Then we know, at any rate, what we are doing. I have taken nine years, and show what the increase in expenditure has been during each of those nine years. In the year 1879-80 there was an absolute decrease of expenditure amounting to £4,936. The following year there was an increase of £83,000. In 1881-2 there was an increase of £126,000. In 1882-3 there was an increase of £188,000, and then, from that time, we began to increase very much more largely. In 1883-4 the increase was £360,000; in 1884-5, £254,000; in 1885-6, £349,000, and in 1886-7—the year ended 30th June last—£138,000. That is the actual expenditure that took place during each year. Of course the expenditure for the financial year somewhat differs from that; but I would point to the fact that during the four years beginning with 1879-80 there was an increase in expenditure which amounted to £394,000. That is equal to nearly 2½ per cent.

The increase in the four years which succeeded that—the four years ended with 30th June last—was £1,100,000, or an increase of nearly 53½ per cent. That expenditure, of course, includes interest on borrowed money. I do not see why it should not be included, because that has to be provided from revenue. At least it ought to be, although there have been two instances in which it has been taken from loan. Now, interest has been paid on the money that was borrowed at the beginning of the present year, a few months ago. If that had been paid from ordinary revenue, which was always the case before, then the expenditure for the year would have been increased by another £28,000 or £29,000, and the year before the expenditure would have been increased by £30,000. So that these two sums together, the £30,000 and £28,000 odd, amounting to nearly £60,000, ought really to be added to the increased expenditure which has taken place during the last four years. Now, I ask, Mr. Fraser, in the name of common sense, is there anything in the condition of the colony which has necessitated this enormous increased expenditure of £1,100,000 during the last four years? Can anyone with reason say there is the slightest excuse for such an increase? And yet the hon. the Chief Secretary tells us that it is impossible to reduce these Estimates without greatly impairing the efficiency of the service. Why, as I pointed out when the hon. gentleman was speaking the other evening, in all the colonies Ministers have declared the same thing before. No matter how extravagant the expenditure was the Ministry could not see their way to reduce it, but they have had to reduce it eventually; and we ought to reduce the expenditure before we get into the same wretched plight that the other colonies have been in, where they have cut down the salaries of the Civil servants; where they have cut off the endowments to municipalities and all local bodies; and cut down expenditure in every possible way, and of necessity caused a very great deal of hardship and a very great deal of distress. I say, before we come to that time, we ought to look round and see if some means cannot be devised for reducing this enormous expenditure which goes on from year to year. Of course we all know that necessarily, when we borrow money largely at home, the interest on that money must accumulate. We must pay a much larger sum every year for interest, but that is not sufficient to account for this enormous increase. It is nothing like sufficient to account for it. Now, in giving these figures, in which I have shown what the increase for the last four years has been, and the increase for the previous four years, I have purposely omitted the expenditure from what is called “special appropriation,” and for this reason: that the special appropriation as shown in these tables is grossly misleading. There is here for the year 1882-3 an amount debited to expenditure of £245,040. That money was not expended that year. We all know it was not spent, and why is it debited here to expenditure? During the last year the McIlwraith Government were in power they were debited with this expenditure, which was not spent at all. Part of it may have been spent, but there are some who know the reason it is put there. The money was appropriated by Act of Parliament for particular purposes, and it was withdrawn from the consolidated revenue and placed to a separate account, but the money was in the Treasury, and here it is absolutely represented in these tables as though it were part of the expenditure for that year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is not all spent yet.

Mr. NORTON: No, it is not. £59,000 of that is still in hand. During the years which have passed since then there has been other money voted in the same way. Sums are put down which do not appear to have been spent, but what has been done with the money I do not know. I cannot make out, because the money was left to the credit of the consolidated revenue by a new arrangement, and it is impossible for any private member of the House to trace what the expenditure is, or what balance is left. Of course, by going to the Treasury we might possibly find out, but I do say that the figures which are represented here in the year 1882-3 are grossly misleading. Not only that, but in fact they are untrue. That money was never spent at all. The £78,000 which was debited next year to “special appropriation” was spent I do not know how. I do not know what vote that came from. I believe it was from that £245,000 set apart for special appropriation by the McIlwraith Government, and part of the £310,000 set apart by the Griffith Government, and part from the £100,000 set apart for rabbit fences. But what comes from each? What amount of each is still in hand nobody can tell from any returns that are published, or any that I have come across at any rate. Now, I would point out that hon. members on this side, if not on the other, have objected over and over again to this style of keeping accounts in the Treasury. It is simply impossible for anyone to find out what the expenditure for the year is.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is why they are kept that way.

Mr. NORTON: The Treasury returns are supposed to be correct, and they profess to give us the actual expenditure for the year. We then turn to another table and we find something different, and yet a third statement somewhere else. Now, how on earth is it possible for any member of the House, however he may strive to ascertain the true position of affairs, to do so when all these different accounts are given as they are? I say it is a disgrace to the Treasury, and to any Government, that this style of book-keeping should be allowed to exist. There is not the slightest reason why the accounts should not be kept in the same way as they are in a bank or in a merchant's office. But now we can tell absolutely nothing. If we think we have found the real state of affairs we come upon something else which shows that we were all wrong, and yet each of the accounts are supposed to be correct. Well, I think that part of my argument—that the actual expenditure of the departments not including supplementary appropriations—that the actual expenditure of the departments increased during four years of the McIlwraith Government by £394,000, and the four years of the Griffith Government by £1,100,000—I think that alone is sufficient indication that the expenditure of the country is much larger and has increased very much more quickly during the last four years than there is any excuse for.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: More than £1,100,000. There is three months yet to be counted.

Mr. NORTON: I am referring to the actual expenditure for the year 1886-7. I would ask hon. members to consider how all this enormous expenditure has come about. What has led to such an enormous increase in so short a time? I attribute it very largely to the failure of the Land Act as a revenue-producing Act. I attribute it also to the known extravagance of the Liberal Government. Let me give one instance. I noticed in a telegram from Adelaide that the Premier of South Australia charged his colony with the sum of £374 as his expenses in attending the Imperial Conference. Do hon. members

know what our Premier has charged this colony? £1,400. The hon. gentleman did not go home as a representative of the people; he went home as a K.C.M.G. He stated that he liked to enjoy himself as well as other people. He must have enjoyed himself properly, if his expenditure as compared with that of the Premier of South Australia is any indication. I merely point out that to show the extravagant way in which the Government is managed. The head of the South Australian Government spent £574 for the same purpose for which our Premier spent £1,400. I have said I attribute the enormous increase in the expenditure largely to the failure of the Land Act of 1884 as a revenue Act. There is not the slightest doubt hon. members opposite did expect at the time that Bill was brought in that we were going to derive an enormous revenue from it. It is all very well for the Premier, when speaking upon this subject, to refer to what was done at the time the Act of 1876 was passed. We do not care to know how much revenue was derived from that Act at first. That is not a question before us at present, and in referring to it the Premier was simply drawing a herring across the track to divert attention from the failure of his own Act. Let us see what was the professed object in introducing that Act of 1884. One great matter was to make it an Act from which the Treasurer was to derive an enormous revenue. The interest on the £10,000,000 loan was to be derived from it, but it has not come. We know what was expected of it from the statements made by some of the Ministers in this House. We have the evidence of those expectations endorsed by the Colonial Treasurer's Estimates for the year. For the first year he estimated the receipts from that Act at something like £20,000, and he only received some few hundreds. In the next year he estimated the receipts at £30,000, and he received less than £4,000; and for last year he estimated the receipts at £20,000, and he only received a few thousand pounds. Those figures alone supply sufficient evidence that the Government did expect, when they brought in that Bill, that they would receive an enormous revenue from the lands of the colony under it, which revenue was to meet the interest of future loans and prevent the necessity for any further taxation. We all know it did not meet that interest, and we have had further taxation every year; but there was another object in the introduction of the Act of 1884, and that was to get rid of the homestead selectors—to blot them out altogether. The Government wanted to derive a large rent from the lands, and they did not want homestead selectors to take up those lands at 2s. 6d. an acre; what they wanted was to be rid of them, and to be done with the lot of them. They would allow a man to take up land as a homestead if he liked, but he would have to pay rent for it until he had paid 20s. an acre for it. That this is the case is shown by the statement of the Minister for Lands in this House on moving the second reading of the Land Bill of 1884. He told us plainly then what he thought of the homestead selectors. I do not intend to read many extracts, but in volume xliii. of *Hansard* it will be found that the Minister for Lands, in referring to the Act of 1876, said:—

"Indeed in some respects it was a great deal more defective than the Act unenacted, and one of the real defects was the introduction of the homestead clause; these homestead clauses having been taken from the American Act, which could not apply to the condition of things which existed here, and they were the greatest failure in the whole of the Act."

That was the opinion of the Minister in charge of the Bill at the time he moved its second reading. Then he went on to say:—

"There may be some districts in which those clauses have not proved failures, but I am speaking of the colony as a whole. I am not limiting my remarks

to any particular district. They have been successful in some districts, and are still applicable, but taken as a whole they are a failure because they enable men to get land at the least possible rate—2s. 6d. an acre—those men at the same time being in many cases in the employ of some large property-holder. These men receive wages, keep those homesteads, and then turn them over to the large landed proprietor at £1, £1 10s., and sometimes more per acre. That has been the operation of the homestead clauses in this country, and they are still in operation in many portions of the colony.

A little later on he says:—

"I can only conceive the purpose of some hon. gentlemen in this House, who must have known that 160 acres was not enough for a man to live and rear a family upon. Some may, from ignorance of the interior, have thought it was enough; but there were many who knew better, and who can only have affected to believe it because it secured to them the possession of their leaseholds or freeholds without interference. If I thought those gentlemen could have believed it I should have pitied their ignorance; but I believe they knew perfectly well that limiting a man to 160 acres as a homestead would be the most successful way of debarring him from the successful occupation of the land, and that letting him get it at 2s. 6d. an acre was the surest means of having it turned over to the large freeholders by a process they only too well understand."

That was the Minister's idea of homestead selectors in 1884. We all know that the hon. the late Minister for Works—whose death we all, I am sure, very much regret—we all know that he was always regarded as a friend of the working people of this colony, and he had been persuaded to take this view of the homestead selectors. In his reference to the subject he was compelled, with regret, to accept the view of the Minister for Lands, who wished to get rid of the homestead selectors. In the same volume, at page 322, I find he says:—

"Then again we are told that the Bill is going to do a great deal of harm by abolishing the homestead clauses. Now, I am not going to say that the homestead clauses have not done some good. I was a party to endeavouring to get these clauses passed, for I have been always ready to accept the smallest donation in the shape of reform of the land laws; and I thought that it would be a means of settling the people on the land, and that if we did that we got a good price for the land. But what have we done? We gave away the land and did not get the settlement; and the Minister for Lands was perfectly justified in saying that these homestead leases were demoralising. You know yourself, sir, and every member of this House knows, that parents have brought up their young children to make false declarations, and magistrates have actually taken the declarations of children a little over thirteen years of age. Ought we to encourage such immorality as that children of tender years should be brought up to make declarations that they are taking up land 'for their own use and benefit'? I say this is a good reason why these clauses should be repealed."

There is a tone of regret in those remarks of the late Minister for Works which I think every member will recognise. I think they will all agree with me when I say that in consenting to the repeal of the homestead clauses and forcing whoever took up land to pay £1 an acre for it, the hon. gentleman was making a sacrifice of his principles which he must have very deeply regretted. There is one other proof which I think entirely substantiates my argument that it was intended by all means to get rid of the homestead selector, and that is the fact that the homestead clauses or anything in the shape of the homestead provisions in the then existing law were omitted from the Land Bill of 1884 as introduced into this House. It was not until the debate took place on the second reading, and objections were raised by members on both sides of the House to the omission of those clauses, that the Government showed any symptom of consenting to those provisions being introduced into the Bill as they existed in the old Act. When they saw what was the feeling of the House in the matter, then the Premier said he would recommend his colleague

the Minister for Lands to insert clauses similar to those in the old Act. The Premier, as we all know, is a very careful draftsman, and he would not have omitted the homestead clauses when he drafted the Bill if it were not intended by the Government that those clauses should be abolished altogether. Therefore I think there is force in the argument that the Government fully intended to get rid of homestead selectors. Whether they did not want that class to settle on the land or whether they simply wished to get a greater revenue from the land, it is not for me to say, but at all events there is evidence that they wanted to get rid of selectors. I would point out that the only men who help to keep the Act going, now it is passed, are men who take up these homesteads. Since that time—since the Government changed their policy in this respect—they cannot do too much for the homestead selectors. What are called the homestead clauses in the present Act are in many respects more favourable and more liberal than the provisions of the old Act. Of course, a man cannot take up land anywhere; he can only take up land in what are called agricultural areas, but the conditions of purchase are really easier than the conditions under the Act of 1876; and these are the men whom the Government, when they introduced their Bill in 1884, intended to get rid of. I do not know that it is necessary for me to refer to that Land Act any further. I can only say that I regret the Colonial Treasurer, for his own sake, did not show more strength, and leave the Ministry earlier. I am sure, from his remarks when speaking to the House, that he was quite certain that an enormous revenue was to be derived from the lands of the colony after that Bill became law, and he urged that as a justification for the extension of a vigorous works policy. I need not make any quotations from *Hansard*; but his great argument in favour of the passing of that Bill was that if it became law the revenue which would be derived from land would be so great that it would justify the Government in going in for their proposed loan and works policy. What the operation of that Act has been is shown by the last report of the Lands Department. There we find that for the two years, ended the 31st December last, the selectors of agricultural farms were 1,399, yielding a revenue of £5,055, and that there were seventy-six grazing farms taken up, yielding £1,322, which is all the Treasury has received under those heads. In addition to this extraordinary extravagance in connection with the consolidated revenue, I would point out that the same thing has been going on in other departments of expenditure. The Government have not contented themselves with the £10,000,000 loan, large as the amount is, and expended the sums included in that on the works which were proposed to be provided for. Only last year we passed a Bill to authorise the issue of Treasury bills amounting to £123,000, because the amount of loan floated had been overdrawn for some works. Since that time, according to the Auditor-General's Report, there has been an unauthorised expenditure of over £313,000. £361,000 was, I think, the amount authorised by Executive minute to be expended, but the unauthorised expenditure, up to the end of June last, of loan money, in addition to that £123,000, was £313,000. Then the cost of floating the portion of the loan already floated, according to the Auditor-General, is over £128,000. These three sums together amount to £564,000 of loan money which has already been expended, and which must be provided for in future loans. Of course the money spent is money that has been borrowed, and must be replaced at some future time; and the next loan, therefore, is already debited to the amount of £564,000. I point to this because it is simply a continuation

of loan expenditure at the same extravagant rate which has been carried out in the expenditure under consolidated revenue. It is all in keeping. The present Government seem to have no more idea than the last Liberal Government had of limiting their expenditure to their means, and because they cannot reduce their expenditure—or think they cannot—below their income, fresh taxation proposals are introduced every year. There is one item on the Estimates I must now refer to. The present Government have lately professed to be most anxious to serve the agricultural occupants of the land, and their desire to do so has taken shape in the appointment of what they call an agricultural department. I am one of those who believe that an agricultural department may be a very great boon, and that the farmers may be very largely benefited by the establishment of such a department if properly worked. I believe that new comers who wish to take up land and settle down to agriculture will be largely benefited also. But, sir, what is this agricultural department we have got? It consists of one man—an under secretary—that is what we call an agricultural department. If we turn to the Estimates, we then find that the Agricultural Department consists of Mr. Peter McLean and the Colonial Botanist—who is in just the same position as he was before—with a contingency vote of £1,000. Now, sir, how in the name of fortune is a department like that to be of any use to the farmers or to anyone else? It makes, I daresay, a comfortable provision for a late supporter of the hon. gentlemen who now occupy the Treasury benches. I say nothing against him personally, because I believe he is a most estimable man; but I do not believe it is possible for any one man alone to form what would come up to any practical man's idea of an agricultural department. The thing is worse than a farce: it would have been far better to blot the item out of the Estimates altogether and go on as we have hitherto. The first thing done since his appointment has been to send him to find out elsewhere what his work is to be; he does not even seem to know what he is to do. It seems he can go gallivanting through the colonies just as he pleases or the Minister directs. I defy any man alone to render the slightest service to the farmers of the colony. All he can do is to gather a little information and give them the benefit of that, but they want more than that. The farmers are practical men who know what an agricultural department means; most of the farmers in this colony know what is being done in the other colonies by the agricultural departments there, and when they learn that on the Estimates is provision for one man to be called an agricultural department, with £1,000 a year for his expenses, they will turn with disgust from the proposition. I do not think there is any necessity to go into the question of protection raised by the Chief Secretary the other night. I think that is a thing that can well stand over until some future occasion. I do not see what was the use of introducing it into the Financial Speech at all. When the time arrives, I shall be prepared to oppose protection in every possible way. Now, there is only one thing I wish to say in regard to it. The Chief Secretary has said that there is not really a free-trader in the colony. I say there is not really a thorough protectionist in the colony.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear! The names are both misnomers.

Mr. NORTON: If there is no free-trader in the colony there is not a thorough protectionist in the colony; the one counterbalances the other; and everyone who has gone into the subject knows that perfectly well. We all know

that certain industries may be helped; the question is how they are to be helped. We have hitherto for years given them assistance in one way; the Government, in calling for tenders for public works, have given the advantage to colonial tenderers. They have done that to a very large extent, and I think they may very properly continue to do so. If there is an industry in the colony which requires help, I should be quite ready to give it help, but the help would be payment by results, and not what is ordinarily called protection. What is generally spoken of as protection is merely the imposition of a tax, which may lead to good results and which may lead to none at all. But I think it will be time to discuss this matter when it comes up. I shall always do what I can to benefit any desirable industry in the colony, but I shall set my face and give my vote on every occasion against what is commonly spoken of as protection, which is merely robbing the people generally for the sake of a few.

The PREMIER: You pretend to be a free-trader like the rest of them.

Mr. NORTON: I am just as much a free-trader as any man in the colony, and I am just as much a free-trader as the hon. member is a protectionist. The hon. member is one who shakes off his coat like a snake. His political principles come off very easily; he does not even wait from one year to another to slip from one to the other.

The PREMIER: Point out any instance of inconsistency if you can.

Mr. NORTON: There are three or four in the land laws already. We could show numberless instances where the hon. gentleman has changed his political coat. I have no doubt he will do it on every occasion it suits him to do so—whenever he thinks he will gain by doing so. However, Mr. Fraser, I have said quite enough about this subject. I think I have shown pretty good reasons for supporting the amendment of the hon. leader of the Opposition. There is no occasion for further taxation; what we want is reduction of expenditure, and the reduction of expenditure can be made to so large an extent that I believe it will be quite possible to do not only without extra taxation, but without the sale of country lands, which some people seem to object to so strongly. I have shown where the increases have taken place in the expenditure, and I think there is sufficient evidence that the Premier, if he will, can cut it down very much further than he has done. We may just as well look the matter in the face at once. It is no use talking about parrot cries against taxation; there is no parrot cry about it. The people do not like being taxed, and we shall have to do here what they do in other parts of the world. The time comes when people will not submit to be taxed any further; I think that time has come now. The hon. gentleman, rather than mend his extravagant ways, prefers to lose his late Colonial Treasurer and stick to his Minister for Lands with his extraordinary land policy. We remember how the hon. member came into the House riding on the back of the nigger; and I might say that he will ride out on the back of his Minister for Lands. He rode in on the back of a coolie, and I believe he will ride out on Henry George and the Minister for Lands. I do not blame the hon. gentleman for sticking to his Land Act, because it is the foundation of the Government policy, and I do not think even the hon. gentleman would be brave enough to cut adrift from the measure on which his whole policy rests. I say the hon. member for Townsville has shown good reasons in support of the contention of the hon. leader of

the Opposition—that there is no cause for further taxation. The hon. the Attorney-General has only said “Your figures are not right”; he has not shown what they should be. The true figures of expenditure, as shown by the Treasury returns, prove beyond all question that the expenditure of the colony has gone up by leaps and bounds, as pointed out by the hon. member for Townsville, and is wholly unjustifiable in a country where the population is so small as it is here. I hope, sir, that hon. members will not view this in the nature of a party question. The people have to be considered as well as party; and I am sure that, however strong the desire of some hon. members on the other side may be to support the Government, they must feel that the proposal of a tax of this kind at the present time—a tax on, say, 11,500,000 acres, when the Government themselves hold over 416,000,000 acres—a tax of that kind is one which it is a disgrace to any Government to propose.

The HON. G. THORN said: Mr. Fraser,—It was not my intention to have said anything to-night, and I shall be as brief as possible, though perhaps on a future occasion I shall be more discursive. The hon. member for Port Curtis said that under the present Land Act homestead selectors are in a better position than they were under the old.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The HON. G. THORN: The hon. member said so in substance; but I can tell him that under the present Act they are not so well off. In the first place their choice is restricted; in the next place there is no priority of application as under the old Act, but selections are allotted by ballot; so that homestead selectors are not so well off now. I have given this question some consideration, Mr. Fraser—mature consideration—and I have come to the conclusion that I cannot support the proposal of the Premier that there should be additional taxation on the people, and that if I were to vote for increased taxation I should be voting for the stoppage of public works in this colony; because if this tax is enforced it is not likely that there will be any more railway construction. Consequently, I cannot view the proposal in any other light than that the Premier wants to stop railway construction all at once.

The PREMIER: How can we carry it on without money?

The HON. G. THORN: By revising the whole of the land policy of the Government, and that can only be brought about by an appeal to the country; there is no use in raising side-issues or drawing herrings across the scent. I can tell the Premier that at the present time throughout the length and breadth of the country he has hardly a single supporter on the Land Act of 1884; but on the question of free-trade and protection he will have a large majority in the country districts. I do not know how it will be in the towns.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The HON. G. THORN: I am certain he will be largely supported in the country, especially by the agricultural population, who are rank protectionists. During my recent canvass I did nothing else but talk protection, and I convinced them that protection was the right thing. I am very glad to see that the Premier has come round to protection. But if he aspires to become the leader of the protectionist party in this colony; if he intends to assume the rôle of a pure democrat, he will have to drop the tinsel and gold lace of a K.C.M.G.-ship. True democrats in the Australian colonies—in fact, in all the British colonies—do not go in for such honours; and I may

point out that Mr. Service, the late Mr. Francis, and Mr. Deakin would not accept them. I believe the Premier went home to get a still higher title—though I admit he did very good service there; he expected the title Mr. Dalley got, or a G.C.M.G.-ship. I believe that was his motive in going to England the other day. Some people think that is a great ambition, but, as I said before, he must drop all that tinsel if he wishes to assume the rôle of democratic leader in this colony. With regard to the question before the Committee, as hon. members know very well, the Land Act of 1884 has brought all the trouble on the colony; that is the sole cause.

Mr. FOOTE: No.

The Hon. G. THORN: It is all very well for hon. members to say "No," but I predicted the whole of it. I wrote no end of articles in the Press throughout the colony on the subject, and my predictions have come true; in fact, more than true, for I never expected the Land Act of 1884 would have been administered so badly as it has been. Not that I wish to say a word which will reflect on the Minister for Lands or on the Land Board; they are all honourable gentlemen, but not capable men—not the men to administer the Land Act, otherwise we should be in a different position to-day. I predicted that the Act would end in a complete *fiasco*, and it has done so.

Mr. NORTON: We all knew that.

The Hon. G. THORN: It has been a failure in every respect. On one occasion I even had the temerity to oppose a Minister of the Crown, the present Colonial Secretary, to show how averse I was to the Act. I did nothing then but talk against the Land Act, and I was defeated. Pastoral lessees in that district thought they were going to have glorious times, but before long they will find out their mistake, because in that district the land has been grossly mismanaged, as I will show at a subsequent stage of the debate. I may state, Mr. Fraser, that in the Burnett district the lands are all agricultural lands, from Boonbyjan to Nanango. For a distance of fifty miles the land is of first-class quality—none of it is inferior to Blackfellow's Creek, and it is equal to Normanby and to the Laidley Plains. The whole of that land is in the rain belt, and when there are droughts at Brisbane, Ipswich, Fassifern, and the Rosewood Scrub, in the Upper Burnett there is no drought, and no drought has ever been known there. That is my experience, and that of others who have lived in the district; and when maize and other crops have failed about Brisbane and Ipswich, there has been no failure. In April two or three years ago, when I was in that district, there was a drought about Brisbane and Ipswich, and maize was only about eighteen inches or two feet high, and with hardly a cob upon it. In the Burnett I found maize with four cobs upon it, and potatoes—the most magnificent potatoes I ever saw—were selling at £2 per ton, because there were no means of getting them to market. This is the land which the Minister for Lands and the Land Board are now throwing into big grazing farms. They are locking it up for thirty years under that most vicious system—the leasing system. The men who take up that land will make no improvements upon it; they will stick to it in the hope, at some future period, of getting a high rental for it. This magnificent land is offered at the same price as the greatest rubbish in the country—a little over 1d. an acre; and it would have brought 1s. an acre rental just as readily as country about St. George will bring a farthing. The other day I was told of a person who would have paid 5s. an acre for it. This is how the people's patrimony is going. Country

like this is tied up for thirty years, and we are to be taxed for it. That is really what we are asked to do. We are asked to tax ourselves to make railways for posterity, and at the same time the Government lock up the best land in the country from agricultural settlement, which I contend is the backbone of the colony. By this taxation we are driving people from the land into the towns and cities. I can see the depopulation going on every day through the taxation since the Land Act of 1884 was passed. So far as I know, in the southern part of the colony, there has been really no agricultural land open for selection except a few isolated paltry selections. All the best land is put into grazing farms. Take the West Moreton district: All the best land in that district—the cream of the Upper Brisbane—is put into grazing farms. The Minister for Lands and the Land Board, and the great commissioner, Mr. McLean, seem to think that because land is a little ridgy it is not fit for agricultural enterprise. I can tell the Minister for Lands that the best land in West Moreton is on the tops of ridges. The person who for two years running has won the first prize for maize at the Rosewood and Brisbane shows, grew his maize on the tops of ridges, where the crop is something like seventy or eighty bushels to the acre. The hon. gentleman must not suppose that this ridgy land is not fit for agricultural settlement. As to Mr. McLean, if there is one person more than another who is unsuited for the position of Secretary for Agriculture, it is Mr. McLean. I do not say anything against a department for agriculture, but I do say that the Government have made a mistake in appointing Mr. McLean to that position. Having pointed out how the Land Act is being maladministered in those two districts, I may also refer to the Darling Downs, more especially to the Northern Downs, where the very best land—the pick of the Downs—is offered at the very same price as the worst land in the colony. And what is the result? It is gobbled up at once, as has been the case with the Burnett and the Upper Brisbane lands, by a few people, and the rubbishy land is not taken up, and never will be at the price put upon it by the Land Board or the Minister for Lands. There is another complaint I have to make with regard to the administration of the agricultural portion of the Land Act. The Minister or the board limits the selection to 1,280 acres. It is an easy thing to make big estates, and a very hard thing to burst them up. Even the heavy land tax in Victoria has not had that effect, the tendency there being to increase the estates rather than to diminish them. There is no bursting up of the big estates, nor is there likely to be. I contend that the Minister for Lands, in putting these 1,280-acre farms at 3d. an acre, has caused already no end of dummyming in the colony. It is not my place to give names, but men have told me so themselves, that land has been taken up on these terms and will be sold to Germans and others. In a short time, under this system, there will be no good land left for *bonâ fide* agricultural settlement by small people, and the result is that all the really good agricultural land is gobbled up at once by capitalists and monopolists, to the detriment of the small settler, and more especially to the detriment of that most valuable colonist the German selector. There will be no land for them in the colony at all. That is how the Land Act is being administered in my district and in other districts of the colony. My opinion about the Land Act has been consistent from the first. I said then, as I find it in the *Queensland Times*, that there was no occasion for a new Land Act

if the Act of 1876 was properly administered, and that if the proposed Bill was passed it would be destructive to the prosperous settlement of the country and be a constant embarrassment to the Treasury. Now, Mr. Fraser, have not my words come true? Every year since that Act was passed the Treasury has been short of money and there has been some fresh scheme of taxation. I am not going into details to-night as to figures, but the hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, proved conclusively to my mind the other night that the Land Act of 1884 was the sole cause of the Treasury embarrassments. So much for the Land Act and its administration. In regard to the tax, who will be affected by it? I contend that almost every agriculturist in the colony will be affected by it, as well as nearly every man in town who has put by a little property. Take Rosewood, for instance: put there every 160 acres selected will come, to a certain extent, under the tax; I value the land there, at the lowest calculation, at £5 per acre. I have heard that the £500 value is to be reduced; but this tax will be an intolerable burden upon each little holder in the Rosewood Scrub. In addition to that the Government propose to take away the endowments to the divisional board by a Bill, although I believe there are seven or eight years of the endowment under the present Act to run yet.

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. G. THORN: The Act provides for five years, and there was a promise of an extension of five years. At any rate, it will cut both ways. There is no one that the tax will hurt more than the small selectors, especially where the lands are closely settled, as they are in the Rosewood Scrub. The tax will be a very great hardship to them. I will give another case to show the iniquity of the land tax. Take the case of an estate sold near Ipswich lately for £22 per acre. Taking off \$1 per acre for improvements, the proprietor or proprietors will have to pay 1s. 9d. per acre land tax. Taking another piece of land on the Darling Downs, where land is cheaper now than ever it was: you can buy the best pastoral land for 25s. and 30s. per acre, with all improvements. I am going to cite this case in opposition to the land sold at Bundamba the other day. I do not know whether the sale has been effected yet, but if it has not, it very soon will be. That land on the Darling Downs was sold at 18s. per acre, and consisted of black-soil plains, box forest, and a little myall. The improvements on that land would amount to 7s. or 8s. per acre. In the case of the land at Bundamba a man would have to pay 1s. 9d. per acre per annum, while the other would pay about one halfpenny per acre, so that on large estates the tax will hardly be a tax at all, as some people who know very little are under the impression it will be. But it touches the thrifty person who has accumulated property in Brisbane or Ipswich. Here I would observe that some people are under the impression that railways and lavish expenditure are the cause of the unearned increment. The Premier, I think, said so. But I can tell the Premier that the real reason of the increased value of the land is population. Population has given more value to the land than public works have. What has given the increased value to the land at Rosewood, or to any of the pastoral districts? Is it the railways? It is population, and more especially the frugal and hardy class of inhabitants. They give the value to the land. Railways went there, but the land did not increase in value on that account; so that I contend that the Premier and the hon. member for Port Curtis were far astray in talking about unearned increment. The unearned increment is caused by increased population. I remember, about thirty odd years

ago, when the whole of Brisbane could have been bought for the present price of a full-sized allotment—66-feet frontage. There were allotments selling then at £40 apiece, with 66-feet frontages. It seems only like yesterday. At that time land in Ipswich was worth £50 per foot. In those days land in Ipswich was dearer than in Brisbane. Of course, the increased value in Brisbane was caused partly by the seat of Government being here. In the suburbs the increased value of the land is owing entirely to the large population that is located around Brisbane. Now, I am coming to another matter, and that is the question of freetrade *versus* protection. Hon. members on both sides of the Committee boast of being friends of the agriculturists. I may, at a later period of the debate, Mr. Fraser, propose an alternative scheme to that of the Premier if I receive any support; I want to put hon. gentlemen to the test to see if they are really friends to the agriculturists or not. We hear a great deal said in the Committee about hon. gentlemen being friends of the agriculturists; but their industry at the present time is greatly depressed in consequence of the rubbish brought to the ports on our eastern seaboard from foreign places. In fact, I may say the products of our own settlers are completely shut out of the market. It costs them more to bring their agricultural produce to Brisbane than it can be bought for in the other colonies or even in America. The result is that they do not care about sending produce here. I notice an hon. member of this Committee has a motion upon the paper in reference to the Government putting up large sheds in Brisbane for agricultural produce. But I do not think sheds will be of as much value as nice little protective duties on agricultural produce. I can assure the hon. Premier that the tariff I am going to suggest will give a great stimulus to farming and will be the means of lots of people going in for land, and will raise the revenue by some £200,000 or £300,000. I think the Premier will acknowledge that I am correct, although he may not approve of my bringing it forward at this time. It may be an inopportune time. First of all I would suggest to him, in lieu of this tax of his, that he should place a duty upon butter. What we get now is only cart-wheel grease, and there is a fixed duty on it of 2d. per pound. I suggest to the Premier the propriety of raising that duty to 4d. I am putting fixed duties, not *ad valorem* duties. I will come to the lawyers presently; I will not let the lawyers escape. A fair thing is a fair thing; I think that will increase our revenue by about £5,000. I may state that there will be no increase in the local supply of butter for some time. It will come in all the same from abroad, so that we shall get revenue at the very time we want it, and that is at the present time. After a while the farmers will send their butter in here, and there will be such an increased competition amongst them that butter will be really no dearer than it is now when cart-wheel grease came to the colony. I would suggest next that we increase the duty upon cheese from 2d. to 4d. Last year we imported 1,212,179 lbs. of cheese, and received a duty of, I think, £10,001. If we raise that duty we will receive £20,002. I now come to bacon and hams. Last year, sir, we imported 885,774 lbs. of this particular kind of farm produce, on which we received duty to between £7,000 and £8,000. By increasing the duty on those articles to 4d. per lb. we shall get nearly double what we do at present. I would also suggest the propriety of increasing the duty on bran and pollard to 4d. instead of 2d.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Good!

The HON. G. THORN: By this means we should get an additional £4,000. On barley and oats I would suggest an increase to 1s. per

bushel. By this we should get about £6,000 additional. Maize I would also increase from 6d. to 1s. a bushel, by which we should get about £2,500 more than we do at present. Malt I would also propose to increase to 1s. a bushel in lieu of 6d., by which we should receive about £3,500 additional. Hay and chaff I would increase from 10s. to £1 per ton, which would give about £2,000 additional. Potatoes and onions I would increase from 10s. to £1 per ton, and by that means get nearly £8,000 additional. I would further propose to increase the duty on bottled beer from 1s. to 1s. 6d. per gallon.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Two shillings.

THE HON. G. THORN: No; I would not go so far as that, but I would also suggest raising the duty upon bulk beer 33 per cent., from 9d. to 1s. per gallon. I am sure every member of this Committee will agree with me that the imposition of such duties would not cause a single glass of beer less to be consumed in the colony, because if we do not get the imported article we shall get supplied from the local breweries. It will be of assistance to them, and we can catch them under the excise duty. By this means—from beer alone—we shall get nearly £20,000 additional, and I am sure such a duty would give great satisfaction to the country, because a good deal of the beer that comes here with English labels on is made in the other colonies, and New Zealand, and America. Having the English label on it goes down with the people; but if the duty I propose is imposed, very little of this inferior brummagem beer will be imported from those places. The increased duty will also give our brewers a chance, and, as I have said, we can catch them under the excise duty. Last year we got from excise duty something like £26,000, and, as I said before, with the increased duties I propose, we shall get about £40,000 additional—almost enough, sir, to wipe off the deficit—out of beer alone.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh! Oh!

THE HON. G. THORN: Then, sir, I would propose also to do away with the Defence Force and the Volunteer Force. I shall be prepared to vote for that. We cannot go on playing at soldiers for ever, which I maintain we are doing at the present time, and are asked to tax ourselves to the extent of about £50,000 a year for a force which is not as skilled or as efficient as the volunteer force of the early days was under a few drill sergeants, who were the only paid officers. I say let us go back to the good old days, when we had a large force under popular officers instead of a small force under unpopular officers. I am certain that the Volunteer Force would give much greater satisfaction, and be much stronger and more efficient, under the old *régime* than it is under the new. I would also propose to put a tax upon all barristers and Queen's Counsel of 200 guineas each per annum.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh! Oh!

THE HON. G. THORN: Legal practitioners I would also put down at 150 or 200 guineas. This might prevent a good many lawyers from becoming Queen's Counsel who are not fitted for it. We have about 30 practising barristers in the colony, and these at 200 guineas per annum would give us 6,000 guineas. We have about 140 solicitors and proctors of the Supreme Court, and these at 100 guineas each would give us about £14,000, so that altogether out of lawyers we should get about 20,000 guineas. Now, sir, lawyers have rights; the Premier will no doubt tell us that they have also duties to perform; but I do not think they perform those duties. At any rate, property has its duties as well as its rights, and I do not see why lawyers should be

exempt. They have prescriptive rights, more rights than any other class in the community; they are a protected class, sir, and they should pay for their protection.

THE PREMIER: How?

THE HON. G. THORN: By putting a tax of 100 guineas upon the legal practitioners, and 200 guineas upon Queen's Counsel. I think, sir, that tax would be very popular in the country. I also propose to reduce the rates for produce on the railway lines of the colony; in fact, to alter the classification. We have now got two good men in the Railway Department, Mr. Thallon and Mr. Curnow, who are well able to do it; and if they are not, I could make a classification, sir, in about two or three hours myself, and it would take members of this Committee some time to discover where the increase was. That, sir, would give us an additional £70,000.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

THE HON. G. THORN: I can assure the Premier that we have lost considerably through the last classification already. I also propose to make increased rates for produce going up the line as far as Mitchell. From Mitchell to Charleville—which will be opened shortly—I would propose a differential rate, also to reduce the price of produce coming down from Charleville. By that means I hope to catch the traffic of the west and south-west portions of Queensland, which is now going to New South Wales. I can tell the Premier that last year the station upon which the town of Charleville stands sent all its produce to New South Wales, and their supplies also came from that colony. I contend that the producers of the west and south-west of Queensland are not able to pay more than they are paying at the present time for the carriage of their produce while it continues at its present price in the market. I do not say that this is the sole cause of the present financial embarrassment, but I contend that the low prices generally of the great staple produce of the colony is one of the great causes of the present depression throughout Queensland, aggravated no doubt by the passing of the Land Act and its subsequent bad administration, and aggravated also by the great taxation which the people have placed upon them under the Divisional Boards Act and other Acts, which taxation the Government now propose to increase upon property holders. That is the cause of the great depression throughout the colony. I have digressed somewhat from the subject, sir, but I propose also to reduce the rates on agricultural produce from Warwick and that part of the country and to put them on a par with the rates from Toowoomba. Warwick is a better farming district than Toowoomba. We have heard a great deal in the House from time to time about Toowoomba, but so far as farming is concerned I do not know that it has produced anything extensive in the way of crops. I know that for one crop of wheat grown there five or six have been grown at Warwick.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

THE HON. G. THORN: I am speaking of what I know to be facts. I know that during the last five or six years the wheat crop about Toowoomba has been a failure, but it has not been a failure about Warwick, and I would at least put the people there on a par with the agriculturists about Toowoomba. Why should they have to pay to go all round Toowoomba to bring their produce to market? The fact is that at present they are shut out from the market completely and are obliged to let their produce lie and rot because the price of carriage is so high. I say it is unfair that a large would-be prosperous class should be treated in

that way. I have now pretty well finished my taxation proposals, sir. Perhaps some day I may propose them as an amendment on the Premier's. I think they would go down at least just as well as his with the country.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about Mount Morgan?

The HON. G. THORN: Well, I think Mount Morgan should be made to contribute something. The poor timber-getters have to pay a royalty, and I do not see why the wealthy proprietors of Mount Morgan should not be made responsible for something. I think also an export duty might be charged upon alluvial gold. Alluvial gold is got almost entirely by the Chinese at the present time.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No, no!

The HON. G. THORN: Such a tax would be no hardship whatever. I remember in the early days of the colony, when we were pretty hard up, but not so hard up as we are now, the duty on gold came in very handy. I do not think it would be amiss if we put a little duty on gold, if even only for statistical purposes, but it would bring in besides a good round sum. There is one other matter I was almost forgetting. We might have a duty of 3s. per 100 feet upon sawn timber. Our ports are now flooded with timber, and the price is no lower in consequence, but it has this effect: that mills about Ipswich, Fassifern, and Brisbane are, if not altogether at a standstill, at all events only working half-time, and in some cases many hands have been discharged. If we put this 3s. per 100 feet on sawn timber we should get a nice little revenue, and it would be no unnecessary burden on the people. Instead of using imported timber we should then use a great deal more of our own timber. The timber-getters all over the colony have to pay a royalty on their timber, and yet we afford them no protection whatever. I hope the Premier will see his way to modify his taxation proposals and adopt some of mine. I can assure him that they will be more popular with the country than his will be, and altogether my proposals, if carried out, would bring in about a quarter of a million a year. We should have an increase to that extent without placing any burdens on the people. It is all nonsense to talk about freetrade and protection. I am not going into that question to-night, Mr. Fraser, but I can assure the Committee that I would not make these suggestions if I thought that by carrying them out they would prove burdensome to the people. I am certain my proposals will help us out of our difficulties when we most want help, and would be a very great boon to the people of this colony. I remember nearly twenty years ago I assisted the hon. member for Drayton and Toowoomba in putting a duty on farm produce, and the other day when I was going through my electorate the people remembered that and told me that it was the imposition of such a duty that induced them to settle on the land. I am not going into the Ways and Means estimate of the Premier. I believe his anticipations will be realised. That is my opinion, and I believe they will be more than realised if the improvement in our staple products goes on. With regard to the expenditure, the only exception I take to it is the one item of Under Secretary for Agriculture. He ought to be a scientific man; he should know something about soils and rainfalls: in fact, he ought to know everything. He ought to know a great deal to occupy that position, and although I hope Mr. McLean will turn out a good man, I am afraid, from what I know of him, he is the wrong man in that particular place. There is one other matter to which

I wish to refer—the decentralisation scheme of the Premier. I have had to do with financial separation before in this House. I know very well what the financial scheme will be. I know this: that the North will be no more satisfied with the decentralisation scheme than the Home Rulers in Ireland will be with anything short of parliamentary government. What they want up north is parliamentary government, and nothing less will they have, and nothing more do they want. With regard to the establishment of courts and real property offices at Rockhampton and Townsville, I can tell the Premier that Maryborough will want the same privileges, and Ipswich will make the same application. Then the people of Normanton will require an extension of the principles to their district, and I certainly think there would be some excuse for their getting it; I have no doubt the hon. member for Burke will require an extension of this lavish expenditure to his constituency. I have finished now; but, as I said at the beginning of my speech, I shall be very discursive at another time on the question of the tariff, and if I get the least support in endeavouring to put my proposals into force I shall not support the Premier in his land taxation proposals, because I do not think I can, and I really do not understand what motive he can have in bringing them forward. The only reason I can think of is that he has made so many promises which he cannot fulfil that he wants to slide out of office. There is no doubt that if the hon. gentleman's proposal is carried the tax will run up from 1d. to 2d. and 3d. in the £1, and there is no knowing where it will end. I shall certainly vote against the proposal of the Premier.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sorry I cannot follow the hon. gentleman who has just sat down in the great and good advice that he has tendered to the present Ministry, and I do not think that they require that advice. I think they know quite enough about electioneering without being advised by the hon. gentleman; but I must say that neither in this House nor on any public platform have I ever heard better electioneering speeches than those which emanated from the Premier and Attorney-General. Now, I would like to refer to something which fell from the Premier. I find the hon. gentleman said, when delivering his Financial Statement:—

"But before doing that I wish to say a word with respect to a matter always brought in, like King Charles's head, in every debate on the financial policy of the present Government. That is, when we came into office there was what was called a credit balance of over £300,000. And in accordance with the practice of previous Governments, and in exact accordance with the proposals of our predecessors, we dealt with that £300,000 as a sort of unexpected 'plum'."

There is no doubt it was an unexpected plum, and it is a plum that has been made very good use of indeed—

"to be disposed of by extraordinary means, and we appropriated it, as our predecessors had intended."

I represent one of those constituencies in which a portion of that money was proposed to be spent, and I happen to know that something like £30,000 was intended to be appropriated for a bridge across the Burnett. As the hon. gentleman said, it was an "unexpected plum," and the hon. gentleman at the head of the present Government said, when the previous Government brought up their Estimates—

"No useful purpose can be served by allowing this advertisement!"—

That meant the surplus which was then shown to be in the Treasury—

"to be printed and circulated, and for these reasons I move that the words 'printed and' be omitted. I point out that no discourtesy is offered to His Excellency,

because I do not know how many increases the Government may be going to propose, or how they are going to distribute their largesse of £500,000 or £600,000. I make this motion so that it cannot be a record of this House how they propose to use."

It was not likely that the gentleman who at present occupies the Treasury benches would have the courage to let those Estimates be published so that they might be recorded in *Hansard* for future ages. I think we have to look very carefully into what is termed the land tax. What are the Government going to do? On this side of the Committee it is contended, and the hon. member for Townsville has clearly shown, that there is at present no necessity for fresh taxation. When the Attorney-General was speaking he held up the tables and Estimates to hon. members and to the gallery, and asked hon. gentlemen on this side to point out line by line where any of the proposed expenditure could be dispensed with. I was standing near the hon. member for Townsville, and I fancied I could hear him say, "Don't you wish we may!" It is not likely that gentlemen on this side of the Committee are going over to teach the gentlemen on the other side "how to run the concern," to use the expression made use of by the Attorney-General. It is not the duty of hon. members on this side to go across and show how the concern should be run. Hon. gentlemen opposite have not only the power but the emoluments of the position, and therefore they ought to do it themselves, and take credit for what they do. I come from an agricultural district, and I have been an agriculturist in this colony for twenty years, and I am perfectly persuaded that, notwithstanding the colouring put on it by the Premier, the land tax will be felt far more by the small selector and farmer than by the large landed proprietor. In all small communities where there is a settled and thick population, it is a fact, as pointed out by the hon. member for Fassifern, that the people congregating together and improving the land is what makes that land valuable. There is not the slightest doubt that is the reason why the land becomes valuable. When this proposal was brought in, the hon. leader of the Government, in his Financial Statement, distinctly stated this was a tax on unimproved lands.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no!

MR. ADAMS: He distinctly stated in his remarks in this Committee that the tax was to be on unimproved lands.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: No.

MR. ADAMS: I maintain I am perfectly correct. He said "unimproved lands" distinctly, and he afterwards qualified it by saying "unimproved value of that land." The hon. gentleman has quoted Tasmania to us, and stated that Tasmania at the present time has a law something similar to our Local Government Act, by which they impose a tax of 6d. in the £1. I think it would have been wiser for him to have gone a little further and shown what his tax was going to be. I find by the *Tasmanian* of the 23rd July that a tax has been for some considerable time reduced on several articles since 1884, and one of those articles was tea. At the present time a duty of 6d. per lb. is paid here on tea, but in Tasmania only 3d. per lb. is imposed. I could not put my hand upon it just now, but I have got statistics showing that in Tasmania in 1884 they were released from taxation to the extent of £20,000 by the removal of a portion of the tax upon tea and some other dutiable articles. I think it would have been

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wiser for the Premier to have made a clean breast of the whole thing, and told us what was the intention of the Government with reference to this land tax—whether it will be enforced on country lands or town lands, or whether on large or small estates only. I think it would have been far wiser to have taken the same steps as were taken by the Colonial Treasurer of Tasmania, and breasted the whole thing. The Colonial Treasurer of Tasmania, in the same paper as I have already mentioned, says:—

"Very much misapprehension appears to exist as to the question of taxing land without improvements. It seems by some to be apprehended that by the unimproved capital value of land is meant the value of the land as it was when the white men first saw it; by others it is thought to be the value it had when the white men first became possessed of it; and by others, still, it is thought to be the price originally put upon it when it was sold by the Crown to its present or former owners."

Those are the words of the Colonial Treasurer for Tasmania, and he goes on—

"None of those definitions are ours. What is understood to be the unimproved capital value—as that phrase is used by Ministers, and as it is used in South Australia, where a tax upon the unimproved capital value of land has been levied now for several years—and where everybody easily understands it—is the capital amount which the land would sell for without any improvements on it at the time it is assessed."

It is quite plain, from the remarks of the Treasurer of Tasmania, that the very same difficulties existed in the minds of the people there as exist in the minds of the people of this country at the present time with regard to the land tax proposed by the Government. Some say the tax will operate in one way, some that it will be imposed on one kind of land, and others that it will be imposed on another kind, and no one can determine how it will really work. Here, in the speech I have quoted, the Treasurer of Tasmania tells the people exactly what they may expect, and, to my mind, he exactly describes what we may expect in Queensland. I am perfectly convinced that that is really what is the intention of the Government. Now, I think I have shown that this tax, which we on this side of the Committee declare is unnecessary, will fall heavier on the working man and small farmer than on the capitalist. We have heard a great deal about the land towards the Darling Downs and Warwick, through which the leader of the Government has passed on a railroad trip. And we have been told of the large blocks of land lying idle on both sides of the railway. What is land like that taken up for? It is taken up for speculative purposes, and as long as the country is going ahead and prospering the owners will hold the land until they see a good prospect of disposing of it at its full value. But the man who uses his land and makes it more valuable will be more heavily taxed than such persons. It has been stated in the course of the debate that people owning land should pay something more than they do towards the making and maintenance of railways. There is not the slightest doubt that they would like to pay for the making of railways, but under the proposal now submitted to us people who have no proper access to their lands, and who have no facilities for taking their produce to market, will have to pay for the maintenance of railways built by the present Government which do not pay for the grease on the wheels. I had intended to say a great deal more on this subject, but on account of the decease of an hon. gentleman for whom I have a great respect, I will not do so on the present occasion. I will now just mention one instance to show how a small farmer is likely to feel this proposed land tax. Only the other

day I got a letter from one of my constituents, a man who has a large family, and who has worked hard on his land for the past five years, and what he says I will give to the Committee in his own words. He writes as follows :—

"I have been continuously residing on the land for the last five years, and during that time I have had 100 acres of it cleared and under cultivation, besides buildings, farming and other improvements amounting to £732 10s. Owing to bad seasons and bad crops I have got heavy into debt; and my storekeeper and other creditors have been keeping me going for the last twelve months, expecting that I would have the deeds this year."

I may mention, so that hon. members will understand the letter, that this man is writing to me to hurry on the issue of his deeds, if possible, in order that he may preserve his credit and keep his family in food. He goes on to say that—

"If I am refused my certificate next month it simply means ruin to me. I have a large family to provide for; I have worked and struggled very hard through drought and flood, and if I do not get my deeds I cannot carry on any longer, as my credit will be stopped; therefore the land will be useless to me."

Now, that is a man whom I myself know perfectly well. He is a man who, as I said before, has a large family, who is thrifty and industrious, and who has worked on his land continually, and has spent £700 and odd on it. He must, therefore, have made it more valuable, and every stump that he takes out of that land will be taxed under the proposals of the Government; for all land above the value of £500 will be taxed, and it is a very small farm that is not worth that sum. If a man intends to work his selection and has not capital, he will have to get money somewhere to keep him going; and yet after years of labour spent upon this land—not only his labour, but also the whole of his time, as well as that of his family, struggling along, in many instances, as I have seen them, almost naked—he will be taxed under this scheme of the Government. His time must be worth something; his labour must be worth something, and they must improve his land very considerably. What is the use of a man's farm to him if he has not got it fenced and a house to live in? What is the use of the land if it is not cleared? The hon. gentleman may laugh, but if he had had to work the same as I have done as an agriculturist he would know something more about it himself and would know where the shoe pinches. He would know that many men are in the position of that person who has written to me, and these are the men it is proposed to tax. It may be that it is the value of the land on which the tax is to be imposed; but how has it been made valuable? It has been made valuable by the man's hard labour and by the expenditure on it of borrowed money. If a man has not borrowed money he has often got into debt for clothing and rations for himself and family. It is, as I have already stated, a very small farm, that in a populated district is not worth £300 if it is well tilled, and it is the holders of land like that who are to be taxed. But not only will he be taxed in that way—he will also be taxed in other ways. He may have borrowed money, and have to pay 10 or 12 or 14 per cent., as I have known to be done in some cases in my district. I must bring under the notice of hon. members that land is at the present time taxed almost to its full value. What is not taxed under the Local Government Act is taxed under the Divisional Boards Act. We are taxed under the Divisional Boards Act to the extent of 1s. in the £1, and the Government propose that we should be taxed to a further extent of 1d. in the £1. Now, Tasmania has been instanced as a place where a land tax is levied. But, sir, I hold a paper in my hand dated July 23rd,

and it was only the day before that that the Colonial Treasurer of that colony came into the House and distinctly stated that the Government intended to bring in a Bill on this very same subject. That, I am aware, they call a property tax, and no doubt it has been levied almost facetiously with our local government tax. This is a land tax all over the colony, and I hope I have pretty clearly shown that it is not the large land-owners but the small farmers who will suffer. What do they pay this tax for in Tasmania? I am under the impression that it is for the express purpose of making and maintaining their roads; and to show that is the case I have no less than three columns of figures here pointing out the appropriations to the different districts of the colony out of the consolidated revenue for making their roads. In Tasmania, when they sell the land, they not only put half the purchase money by to make their roads, but they put by a certain amount yearly for the maintenance of those roads. That is what that tax is for, and we are taxed for that already. Without agricultural pursuits the country can never thrive, and we ought to avoid anything which will retard progress in that direction. The hon. Minister for Lands is not here, or I should have taken a leaf out of the book of the hon. member for Farnham, and given him a little advice. If that hon. gentleman knew as well as I do the operation of the Land Act, he would come to the conclusion himself that the Act of 1884 is not a good Act. It is no use trying to stop people who have money from investing that money. If capitalists come here and want land, land they will have. If they come to a small selector with 160 acres after he has his deeds, and say, "My man, you are not doing very well on your selection; what will you take for it?" the man very likely will answer very quietly and quickly—"I will take so much." "All right, my man, here is the money." I remember some years ago, at a public meeting, saying that the then holders of land on the Mary River would not hold it long—it would be somebody with more money; and before many years my words came true. I do not believe that at the present day you will find twenty of the first selectors on the Mary River. Now, sir, I have a case in my eye of a man who came to the colony with the express purpose of selecting land;—I suppose I could mention fifty, but I will mention one in particular. He went all round the district looking for land, and spent £13 or £14 going round seeking information about several pieces that were up for selection, and he went seven times to the Land Board, but there were so many applicants for each piece of land that he lost each time, and the consequence was he lost his money until he became disgusted. Another case transpires almost every day throughout the colony. When a man is determined to get a piece of land, and four or five go up for it, I have known a man pay away £70 to others to stand out so that he would be able to take the land. I say the only way to get people to settle on the land is either to sell small farms or throw sufficient land open for everyone who wants to select—to select and select early. When I came down here this time to my public duties I went to the Minister for Lands to ask him if a man in my district could purchase thirty acres of land that were absolutely useless to anybody else. He could not tell me. He referred it to the Land Board, and they could not tell. They referred it to the commissioner for the district. Perhaps he will not be able to go for three or four months to see the value of the land; then I presume he will report to the Minister, and the Minister will send it to the Land Board, and the board will send it back again to the Minister, and

goodness knows where it will go before it comes out. I do not know what stage it is in now, but I have been there about five weeks and I have not seen the last of it yet. It is no use trying to settle people on the land, because they cannot get the land. The machinery is so clogged that there is no motion. I shall not take up any more time of the Committee. I have endeavoured to point out as plainly as I possibly can that in place of the large land-owners carrying the brunt of this burden, it will be the small farmers that will feel it the most. But there is another matter, Mr. Fraser, which I had almost forgotten, in reference to something that was said the other night by the Attorney-General. That hon. gentleman said the reason why the revenue was so deficient was partly on account of the demand for education votes, and he was so jubilant that he actually held up his hands to the people in the gallery and said, "The working men must remember that the Government educate their children free." I have not the slightest doubt that was a very good electioneering sop on the part of the Attorney-General, but I would like to know, if the Government educate the working men's children free, where the money comes from. I presume it comes from the Treasury, and that there is not a single man in the colony who does not pay towards the education of those children. I admit that many thousands of children in the colony do not go to the primary schools at all, and I candidly confess that many of their fathers and mothers would like to send them to the primary school but have not the means to do it. How is it, I would like to know, that the Government educate the working men's children free, when I brought down £140 in my pocket to hand to the department before I could get a school built for the children in one corner of my electorate? About thirty had to subscribe that and send it to the Treasury before anything could be done towards educating their children. I do not say that it is a hardship which they alone have to suffer, but I do say that in the country districts there should be some consideration shown to the working men, and if the present Government remain as they are very long, I shall table a motion in the very words of the Attorney-General, and see whether they will deal out even-handed justice to the children of the working men. Even the Premier has said that there are so many schools that they require a large number of teachers. But I daresay that in many cases there are several schools along the same line of railway, and if some of those schools were done away with and free railway passes given to the children to attend the nearest schools there would be a diminution in the vote for education. I am sure that the working classes generally, who push out into the wilds as pioneers, and who reduce the forest to a smiling garden, are the men who are taxed for the education not only of their own children but of other people's children also. Another thing: the people in the interior and the people who do not live near towns are as severely taxed as other people, but their children have not even the opportunity of going to school. Talk about the Government educating the working men's children free! It is not long since I made an application for a teacher in a place where there are about thirty-five children, after the inhabitants had not only gone to the expense of building, but also furnishing the school, and I was told that a teacher could not be sent because the school was not seven miles distant from other schools. This is the way the working men's children are educated, and this is the way the working men are taxed. I considered it my duty to mention this, because I did not wish it to go abroad that the Ministry put their hands

into their pockets and educated the children of the working men free when the money spent on their education comes out of the Treasury.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Fraser,—This debate will be memorable for several things. It will be memorable for the fact that the House and the country has lost a very worthy representative by the death of Mr. Miles. It will be memorable also for the fact that during the course of the debate, or immediately antecedent to it, the Government lost two of their members in the Treasurer and the Postmaster-General. And it will be further memorable for the fact that with the exception of the Ministers sitting on the Treasury bench there is not a single hon. member on the Ministerial side of the Committee who has been game to get up and say a single word in defence or in support of the proposals of the Government with regard to the finances of the colony—not one, sir, except the hon. member for Bundamba, Mr. Foote, who rose to speak at the same time as I did. I do not know what that hon. gentleman was going to say, therefore I cannot draw any conclusions; but, with that exception, the hon. gentlemen there sit, and have sat during the last few days, like a lot of dumb dogs, waiting to see which way the question is likely to go. I do not know whether we shall be able to prick some of them up to say a few words on the subject. I hope we shall. We are anxious to hear what they think, or to hear them express what they pretend to think on the subject. A good many of them talk very loudly outside the House, and we are anxious to hear whether they will express the same opinions inside the House that they have given utterance to outside. We are anxious on this side to know what they will say, and still more what they propose to do. Now, Mr. Fraser, the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government has assumed the character of Colonial Treasurer, and I certainly compliment him on the way he got through his first Budget Speech. But we must remember the fact, that while the hon. gentleman had to make a great many apologies for the financial muddle into which the Government had got the country, he seemed in a sort of way, by inference, to blame this side of the House, or the Parliament, or the country, for allowing the Government to get into the position they are in; and he was loud in his promises of good behaviour for the future. "Only forgive us this time," he said; "help us to raise our revenue as we propose, and in future you shall have no more extravagant expenditure, and we will show you what good boys we are going to be for the next two or three years." A Government is to be judged by its past actions, and not by its promises for the future. If its past actions are deserving of condemnation, you can put no faith in its promises of what it is going to do in the future. What promises did this Government make when they came into office? We were told, first of all, that there was to be a revolution of all things. The Augean stables were to be swept out; all the bad deeds of the late Government were to be brought to light; there was to be an entirely new order of things; a new Land Act; and with the aid of a £10,000,000 loan we were all going to float away on the stream of prosperity. What has happened? The answer can be summed up in two or three words. The present Government started with what the Chief Secretary has called "King Charles's head," that is the possession of a credit balance of £310,000, in 1883; and now, in 1887, he has not only lost that "King Charles's head," but a much larger one, for he has a deficit of £170,000, and he anticipates that by the end of the year the deficiency will be still further increased by sixty odd thousand pounds more. But it will be even larger than that. We must

remember that the hon. gentleman will have to go into the money market next year to borrow another portion of his £10,000,000 loan, on which there will be interest to pay amounting to £70,000 or £80,000. And we must not forget this fact: that the finances are not so well as they look, because the Government stole—I use the term advisedly—£60,000 out of loan money, which they applied to the reduction of a portion of the interest upon the loan, which properly ought to have come out of revenue. They made their finances look that much better by taking out of loan £60,000, which they used in paying a portion of the interest due. In addition to these liabilities there is a further liability *in prospectu* in connection with the Australian fleet. We are bound, or may be bound, to an expenditure of £14,000 or £15,000 in that direction. Then there is the contribution for New Guinea, which is put down at £1,300, but which may be more. All these items will add to the indebtedness of the colony, and must be taken into consideration. And yet, for all that, the Government say, “We will let the deficit alone: it will cure itself in time. The advancing prosperity and good seasons which are coming will enable us to wipe out that. All we propose now is a tax to meet the prospective deficit for the current year.” It seems to me that this taxation proposal of the Government is introduced in a very hurried manner, and has received very hurried consideration. It cannot have been under consideration for more than two or three weeks at the outside, because, if it had been, surely the House would have been informed of it before. In the Speech which was put into His Excellency’s mouth by the Government, at the opening of this session, there is not a single word about proposed taxation. Any one reading that Speech would come to the conclusion that quite the contrary was intended, because, with reference to the finances of the colony, this is what is said:—

“The public finances have, however, not escaped the natural consequences of the long-continued adverse seasons, but I see no reason to doubt that with careful administration they will shortly exhibit their usual satisfactory condition.”

We are told there that although the public finances have not escaped the consequences of adverse seasons, yet that in a short time they will exhibit their usual satisfactory condition. I do not know whether this was meant as a joke. The usual condition of the finances under the present Government is that of a deficit. That may be a “satisfactory condition” from their point of view, but I suppose they meant to say that the finances would exhibit such a condition that it would not be necessary to impose on the country any further burdens. However, there is the Speech, and we are not told in it that it was intended to ask the country to bear any fresh burden; yet within three weeks we are told that it is necessary to revise the whole of our finances. The proposals made are of three kinds. There is, first, an absolute tax on land; then we are told there must be a revision of the tariff in the future; and then, that the endowments to divisional boards will have to receive consideration. The hon. gentleman did not lay down any definite lines of dealing with endowments to divisional boards, but referred to them as matters which would require the serious attention of the Committee in order to keep their expenditure within due bounds.

The PREMIER: The proposed amendments with regard to divisional boards will be circulated to-morrow morning

Mr. CHUBB: Mr. Fraser,—I am not going to travel all through the figures in regard to the

Financial Statement which has been under discussion here. The Premier himself went through them, and they have been gone through by two hon. members on this side—the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Port Curtis—and I think those gentlemen very conclusively proved to any reasonable mind that during the past three or four years there has been great extravagance in the Government departments, and there seems to be ample room for a very large amount of saving. The Premier gave us as a quotation in that portion of his Speech in regard to the receipts and expenditure in connection with two departments—the Works Department and the Lands Department. He lumped them together and gave us the joint results. If we separate them, as I separate them now, hon. gentlemen will see that, although the figures are the same, the results are practically rather different. The Works Department last year cost £627,000, and the interest on railways was £528,000; giving us a total of £1,155,000 as expenditure. The return was £652,000, so that there was a loss in the Works Department alone of over £500,000. Now, that shows where an enormous expenditure of money has occurred. In one year the tables show that the expenditure of the Works Department increased by 50 per cent.—from £400,000 to £600,000 in that department. The Lands Department is not so bad, because the revenue received was £553,000, and the expenditure £111,000, which gave a profit of £442,000. Referring to the tables, we see that more than half of that yield came from pastoral rents. It did not come from the Land Act of 1884—the much-vaunted Land Act, which has been, as hon. members on this side, and as I also, consider to be one of the chief causes of the depressed state of the finances. Then, £50,000 has been realised from sales by auction, £30,000 under mining occupation, £157,000 under homestead conditional purchases under the Act of 1876, and £6,000 under the Act of 1884; and the great balance of £280,000 is from pastoral rents. It cost us to administer the Lands Department £111,000, and more than half the receipts were from pastoral rents. The expense of getting that £6,000 under the Act of 1884 must have been something enormous. We have no particulars of the administration of that Act, but the cost must have been very great. While on the subject of extravagance it was pointed out that there was cheeseparing economy practised in the Lands Department in regard to the way in which the lands of the colony were offered for sale. It was pointed out by the late Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Dickson, that the land sales were not conducted upon business principles, and that there was not sufficient notice given to the public, in consequence of which there was a great loss in price. While the Lands Department were so economic in that respect, the Colonial Secretary’s Department did not follow their example, for it wasted some £7,000 in advertising a lot of electoral lists in newspapers where they were not at all necessary. I point that out as an instance of bad administration by which several thousands of pounds were wasted on that one item alone. If that money had been judiciously expended by the Lands Department in advertising land sales, it would have been recouped to the Treasury, and not wasted as it was in the way I have said. Hon. gentlemen on this side have said, not only this session, but ever since the Land Act was passed and during the time it was going through, that the passing of that Act would bring the colony into financial difficulties. Surely no hon. member here forgets that that was pointed out by nearly every speaker upon this side, and particularly by the then leader of the Opposition, Sir Thomas McIlwraith,

who went to the length of moving an amendment upon the Land Bill. I will read a passage in his amendment:—

"The Bill materially affects the land revenue of the colony, and no intimations have been given by the Minister introducing it of the means by which the probable deficit will be met."

There, Mr. Fraser, the hon. gentleman who then led the members on this side of the Committee had the foresight, which has since been proved to be correct, to see that the introduction of that Bill would probably lead to a deficit. It has led to a deficit. That hon. gentleman proposed an amendment, and drew the attention of the House to the fact which has now become patent, that the introduction of that Bill would have a material effect upon the land revenue. It has produced a deficit, and the Minister introducing it gave no information as to the manner in which it was to be made good. The hon. gentleman who administers the Lands Department seems to have tried to shelter himself from criticism upon that point by the statement that he never said, privately or publicly, what revenue would be received from the Land Act. I do not remember whether he did or not in this House; but, surely, if he did not—if he never took the trouble to inquire into what revenue was likely to be produced by the Act—he was guilty of great dereliction of duty. It was his duty to have examined that question, and when he came to this House and proposed a new scheme—a new Land Bill which would revolutionise all the previous land administration of the colony—it was part of his duty to say, "This Act will destroy your land revenue, or will improve your land revenue to a certain extent; it will produce so much revenue this year and next year, or in a certain time." He should have been prepared with a proper statement of the manner in which the revenue would be affected by the introduction of that Bill, and not having done so I say that he was guilty of great want of attention to detail, and not to details only, but to a vital principle affecting the measure itself. But, sir, although the hon. gentleman himself did not tell the House or lead hon. members to infer that any revenue at all would be got from it, his colleagues—every one of them who spoke on the subject—went largely into that question. I am not going to repeat all that has been quoted before, which has been said by the late Minister for Works and by the Chief Secretary, but the hon. member for Enoggera I remember said that there were hundreds and thousands—that was the expression he used—of persons in Victoria, small capitalists, who were waiting for these grazing farms to be thrown open, and that they would come here and rush the country lands. Where did that hon. gentleman get his information from? It must have been from his colleague, the Minister for Lands, or the squatting members of the party, who are supposed to know something about land and the pastoral pursuits of the colony. The hon. gentleman is not a squatter, nor is he a farmer, and I do him the justice at once to say that I believe he must have got his information from responsible persons, probably his colleagues, or he would not have made a rash statement of that kind. But the hon. gentleman did make that statement, and I have no doubt induced hon. members opposite to believe it and vote for the passing of that Act. Of course, the pill was gilded by the £10,000,000 loan, and there was a railway promised in almost every electorate of the colony. I do not know one that was left out. That was the great charm which was dangled before the eyes of hon. members to induce them to pass that Land Bill. But while we were assured by Ministers that

the Land Act would in a very short time—almost immediately, some said—bring in such a revenue that we would not know what to do with the surplus, what has it given us? We know that it has landed us in our present financial difficulty, and, so far as one can see, it is not likely to help us out of the mire for many years to come. Neither will our railways, because, as has been shown by the tables circulated and stated by the Chief Secretary, and by myself before that, sir—for in the course of the debate upon the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech I pointed out that the railway revenue had been falling off for the last four years about 1 per cent. until it had come down to about 12s. per cent.—that there was no hope whatever of getting any increased revenue from the railway portion of the Works Department. And further than that, I believe that there will be no material revenue from that source for probably a considerable time, although we are told that the receipts are improving, and that the returns are greater than they were. The Chief Secretary told us that since he had had to do with the finances of the colony during the last two or three days he had learned a great deal. Well, sir, if he has, he is very much to blame for not having known it before, because, as head of the Government, it was his duty to know how the finances of the colony stood. But I do not credit him with so much ignorance as to the state of the finances. Possibly he has acquired greater knowledge of details during the last day or two, but surely it has been dinned into the ears of the Government during the last two or three years that there has been a serious falling-off in the revenue and a large increase of expenditure, and it was the duty of the Government, not excepting the Premier, to have ascertained before, if they did not know—although I think they must have known—the state of the finances long before this. The hon. gentleman said there had been considerable over-expenditure in all the departments, and that he could not understand how it was. I believe the actual amount of unauthorised expenditure last year was nearly £200,000, and the Chief Secretary's own department is one of the greatest sinners in that respect. His department alone is responsible for something like £60,000, and yet he tells us there has been over-expenditure in all the departments, and he cannot understand how it happens; although he is one of the chief, if not the chief, sinner in that respect. Therefore he cannot escape from the blame which attaches to the whole of the Government for the course of extravagant expenditure they have been pursuing during the last two or three years. I remember that before the present Government took office they were loud in their charges against the late Government on account of their alleged extravagant expenditure. It was stated that they had made a lot of unnecessary appointments. But what happened when the present Government took office? In one of the very first speeches made by the hon. the Chief Secretary himself he told us in this House that he had found the Government departments very much undermanned, and that, I believe, was true. I do not know that the present Government have made any more unnecessary appointments; I do not charge that against them; but I refer to that fact to show that the statements which were made before the present Government came into office about the extravagant expenditure of the former Government could not be accurate, as much as the hon. gentleman himself said he was surprised to find the departments so much undermanned when he took office. Then, Mr. Fraser, we are told that these Estimates will be realised, and that the

expenditure for this year will not be more than £59,000 or £60,000 above the estimate; and we are also told that there will be no Supplementary Estimates, or that we may expect that there will be none—that a strict hand will be kept over all the departments, and any officer who spends one shilling without the authority of the head of his department will be considered no longer fit to remain in the public service. Why, Mr. Fraser, it makes one laugh to hear such a statement made when at the very same time the Government come down with a new Audit Bill by which they ask for authority to spend £150,000 for unforeseen expenses. They have spent this year about £200,000 without authority. They say that it is always necessary to spend more than the amount voted; that the expenditure can never be kept absolutely within bounds; and at the very same time they say there will be no material excess in future, although they actually ask this House to pass an Act of Parliament to give them power to spend £150,000 that is not authorised, or that otherwise would be unauthorised, and for which they would have to come to this House afterwards to get sanctioned—which they would have to get sanction for in any case. Is not that recklessness? Is it not an indication of extravagance? Again, Mr. Fraser, we are told that the government must go on; that as the colony grows and gets more populous the cost of government will be larger, and that the expenditure of the departments cannot be kept at the same rate. Possibly that may be true, but it is true only in a limited sense. If due economy is exercised there need not be any great increase in the cost of government. But what has been the fact? The present Government, when they have been in opposition, have always said that further taxation was necessary, and they have always followed in the same lines when they have been in office. This is the third or fourth time since they have been in office on this occasion that they have asked the House to sanction further taxation proposals. When Sir Thomas McIlwraith took office in 1879, he informed the House that no new taxation would be necessary, and he was met at once by a direct attack on the part of hon. gentlemen on this side of the House who are now sitting on the Treasury benches, who said that his financial proposals were all wrong, and that it was necessary to impose immediately further taxation. Well, sir, that was resisted, and further taxation was not then imposed. Now, sir, contrast the conduct of the administration of that Government with the administration of this, who in their fourth year of office come down and say it is necessary to introduce not only further taxation—not merely to add to the existing taxation, but to make a new start—to get in the thin end of the wedge, and introduce an entirely new mode of taxation. Now, I will say at once that I am not opposed to a land tax. I believe, in theory, it is one of the best taxes we can have, but I say it is premature. Now is not the time to impose a tax of this kind. We have just passed through a period of considerable depression. Anyone who has bought land has probably mortgaged it for its full value. There are some people, no doubt, who hold the unearned increment, and those people it would be right to tax; but in getting at those people you are putting such a burden on others as to make the tax one of the most burdensome of its kind. Here is a case, for instance, which applies to myself—not that I object to paying a tax if everyone else has to pay it, but it is a case in point. Recently I purchased a small piece of land—within the last month. I paid the market price for it. I have paid the unearned increment to the seller. The seller of the land

holds a piece alongside, for which he paid, ten years ago, about one-twentieth the price that I paid him. You may fairly tax him, because he has made the unearned increment. I give that simply as an illustration, and there are thousands of cases of that kind.

The PREMIER: Do not tax me; tax someone else.

Mr. CHUBB: That is simply an illustration of how unfairly the tax will apply. Now, I know of a case where a man has bought a piece of land on credit, and mortgaged it to enable him to pay the price. He is not able even to put up buildings upon it, but still he will have to pay the tax if his land is above the minimum of £500. Take the case given by hon. members on this side. How are you going to arrive at the unimproved value of land unless you apply the rule which has been introduced into the Valuation Bill? The value of unimproved land is the value it bears, having regard to the improvement of the surrounding land. Take a five-story building, such as the *Courier* building for instance, and the next block to it, as unoccupied. You will have to ascertain to what extent it has been improved. Take off the improvements and you get the market value. Still it is by bringing in the value of the surrounding properties that you arrive at the unimproved value. Therefore you are indirectly taxing improvements. You are making the man who improves his property pay, but you do not get at the man who holds shares in a company. You do not get at a man who holds £100,000 worth of bank shares. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Lands Department ejaculated just now, "Have you any freehold land?" Yes, I have; but I do not believe the hon. gentleman has. He boasted once that he never was a freeholder and never intended to be one; so that the proposed tax sits lightly on his shoulders. There are one or two members on the Ministerial benches who may have to make some contribution to the tax, but so far as the Minister for Lands is concerned I doubt very much whether he will have much to pay in the shape of a land tax. Now, I repeat it is premature, because it has been proved conclusively by speakers on this side that further taxation is not necessary at the present time. Retrenchment is necessary, and moderate sales of land have also been advocated. I ask, can anybody point to a case where a land tax has been in force before the whole of the land owned by the Crown has been alienated? In Great Britain no land tax was introduced until nearly the end of the seventeenth century. I think it was in 1694 that the subject was first mooted. Originally the Crown owned all the land, and they gave the occupation of it to feudal tenants on the condition that they gave services in return or paid a small annual sum to the Crown. By degrees the Crown granted the land in fee-simple to the feudalists or afterwards sold it, but it is only of late years that a land tax has been put into operation. Of course we know that in Victoria and other colonies it has been introduced, but I say this: that it is comparatively a modern tax and it has never existed in any country until the land has been nearly all alienated. Now, what position is the land in here? We have about 11,000,000 acres alienated out of 430,000,000 acres. That is about 3 per cent., and the effect is this: that the moment you put this tax on, you at once depreciate the selling price of the balance of the land. It may be said that you will not depreciate it to a material degree, but the fact is the moment you put the land tax on you depreciate the selling value of the rest of the land; because, the land tax having been once established, whenever Crown lands are sold in

future they will bear the tax, and it will be such that it can easily be increased. This is a tax which could be increased without the slightest difficulty. Once you have the machinery established, as was well pointed out by the hon. member for Enoggera, if the exigencies or extravagancies of the Government require it they can increase the sum from 1d. to 2d. or 3d. in the £1, and so on. They simply increase the tax by Act of Parliament, and they have all the machinery for increasing it. But there is another objection to the tax as proposed by the Premier, and here let me say this, that he certainly introduced his proposal in an extremely bald manner. He said he would tell us the particulars of it before he sat down, but he did not, and hon. members are much at a loss in discussing the question, because they really do not know exactly what the proposals are. We understand that there is to be 1d. in the £1 collected on all improved land over the value of £500. Dealing with the question so far as we can understand it, I say there can be no reason whatever why there should be a minimum fixed. It cannot be justified by analogy to the income tax, because no man is bound to hold land. On the other hand a man must live, and the reason there is a limit to the income tax is that you must not tax small incomes, because you are then interfering materially with the quantity of the food the poor man has to eat. I hold that if a land tax is to be imposed every landholder should pay his share. If the land is only of the value of £500 then the share that man will have to pay is very small, but still he should pay his share. I will illustrate my argument in this way, and show the unfairness of letting land under the value of £500 go free. No doubt that minimum was fixed by the Premier; we will give him the credit of saying it was fixed so as not to oppress the small landholders. It will be very popular, no doubt, with the great majority of voters who have land under the value of £500 to shift the burden on to someone else, and they will no doubt say, "As long as I have not to pay it I will poll early and poll often for you." But say a man has a sixteen-perch allotment worth £100, and he puts up a house on it worth £150, making £250, he will not come within this tax; but say he invests another £250 in another sixteen-perch allotment and a house, from which he receives a yearly rent, he will still escape the tax, because his total holding is under the minimum. Is it fair that such a man, who occupies a small holding as a residence, and holds another for profit under the minimum, should escape the tax? It is not fair. It is said that if a man has five or six pieces of land in different parts of the colony, each holding being under the minimum of £500, he will escape; but I do not think he will, though he certainly will in the case I have pointed out. It is not fair that a person should escape paying the tax if he holds property for profit. I am acquainted with many cases of that kind, and I say that if the tax is to be imposed at all, anyone who holds land, of whatever value it may be, should pay the tax. Taxes are imposed for several purposes, and one is for public security and defence, and the small man requires to be defended just as much as the large landholder; and that is another reason why he should contribute to the tax if one is to be imposed at all. Some hon. members cling very fondly to the idea that a great many of the small farmers will escape. But the farmers in the Ipswich and Warwick districts, who have been homestead farmers, and who value their land at from £5 to £6 an acre, and some of them value their land at £10 an acre—will not every one of them be caught in this net? It is a very poor farm of 160 acres that is not worth £500, and if

these men think they are going to escape they are very much mistaken. The owners of small pieces of land with little houses on them may escape, but the bulk of the farmers, the men we are always trying to help, who are always in difficulties, owing to bad seasons, to want of assistance, want of communication or to competition, will not escape. I am quite certain many hon. members on the other side who represent agricultural constituencies will agree with what I say, that the great majority of these farmers will have to pay the tax. I think I have said enough on the question of the land tax. I say it is unpopular, it is not wanted, it is premature; the Government of the country can go on without it by retrenchment, and by moderate sales of land in the way I have pointed out; and there is no present necessity whatever for it. It has been suggested on this side of the Committee that by a small amendment of the Land Act provision might be made for selling country lands in larger blocks than are at present sold. The maximum at present is 40 acres, and that might be quadrupled and made 160 acres. I do not, and never could, see why the State should not sell these small blocks of land on deferred payments in the same way as a private speculator sells his land. Why should not the Government take advantage of the market and sell land in small blocks in that way? I believe they have adopted the principle to a certain extent by allowing payments to extend over twelve months. I see no reason why we should not sell land in small blocks on deferred payments, just as we sell homesteads on five years' payment. Why should we not sell small freeholds on the same principle? The Government boldly assert that they are true to their principles and have not sold land in any quantity. But they are doing it every day, ever since the Land Act came into force, by a subterfuge. They get their surveyors to lay out townships in the country districts where there is not a house, and survey the lands in town and suburban lands, and they sell country lands in that way wherever they can. It is easy to make country lands town and suburban lands in that way. The other day, on the 16th of this month, I think, a *Gazette* came out, in which lands were advertised for sale in all parts of the colony. These advertisements emanate from the office of the Minister for Lands, the gentleman who is adverse to all land sales, and who said he was persuaded to sell £90,000 worth of lands in one year, but would never be caught at that again. Yet, in that *Gazette*, there are the advertisements for the sale of £20,000 worth of land at one go. There is the new township laid out on Magnetic Island, and yet we are told they are not selling country lands. There are other places where the same kind of thing is being done, as anyone who takes the trouble to read that *Gazette* will see. The Government, wherever they can, are making new townships on paper, and are really selling country lands as town and suburban lands. They are simply eating their own words, and are making a screen behind which to hide what they are doing. If they can only get a sale for them, we shall no doubt see the country before long dotted all over with a large number of these townships on paper, and possibly they will be sold. Very probably the land will be sold if the townships are made in proper places, and the land is put up in reasonable areas. The hon. gentleman, during one part of his speech, as was said by a previous speaker, drew a red herring across the trail, to give the public something to talk about; he introduced the subject of protection, and said that none of us were either free-traders or protectionists. Abstractly speaking, we are perhaps none of us out-and-out protec

tionists or freetraders. This seems to me a subject we shall have to consider some time or another, though now is not the proper time for it. I believe our fiscal policy, having regard to this subject, will have to be based upon this principle—self-defence. I am not a freetrader out-and-out, nor am I an out-and-out protectionist. I believe protection has its advantages, and so has freetrade. Protection undoubtedly has the effect of tending to the aggregation of the people into large cities. It has undoubtedly had that effect in Victoria and America. The moment we introduce a protectionist policy we start large manufactures in the towns, and agriculture is neglected. What we want to encourage here is agriculture; we want to settle the people upon the land, and we do not want to start a lot of new industries to bring the people from the country into the towns, where they live upon one another, and do not send the country ahead. At the same time there may be some industries that require a little fostering, and those, perhaps, it will be wise to give assistance to if we can. The question of reciprocity with Victoria has been mentioned, and I ask will this reciprocity with Victoria tend to that federalism which is the great aim of the Premier? There was an article in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of last Tuesday, I think, showing that if reciprocity is carried out between Queensland and Victoria the trade relations between New South Wales and Queensland would be endangered. They speak of a loss of £110,000 per annum. I only notice this argument for the sake of showing that the unity of the colonies which the Premier is aiming at is not likely to be fostered by reciprocity between Queensland and Victoria alone. New South Wales might want to come in, and if she does what will be the result? You will have freetrade again between those three colonies. Once you get a number of colonies into the compact you will have to go back to freetrade again. It all comes to the same thing in the end. The question of protection or freetrade will depend upon what is necessary for the self-defence of this colony. If it is necessary that we should assist local industries we shall have to do it. On the other hand, we must not put the burden entirely on the consumer; we must not raise the cost of living without increasing the rate of wages. It has been glibly argued that a protection policy means at once high wages. But that has been denied, and denied most strongly, by very good authorities. Protection does not mean high wages, but it means an increase in the cost of living. That cannot be disproved; so that those gentlemen who run madly after protection will have to study the question very seriously before they commit themselves to a policy of that sort. I think I have now dealt with all the important subjects which have been raised in this debate. There are many others which were referred to incidentally, but which I do not propose to discuss now. There is the question of decentralisation. That will be dealt with in its proper place when we come to discuss the Bill. It has been stated by the hon. member for Townsville, who took up the same position as I did three weeks ago, that probably the opinion of the North would be against these proposals; that though the people may accept anything that is passed which would give them better government than they now have, they would never accept it as a substitute for territorial separation, which they consider themselves entitled to. I believe that is the case. We do not know what the decentralisation proposals of the Government are, but the hon. member for Enoggera, who is acquainted with them, has told us that he would rather have territorial separation than see the decentral-

isation scheme adopted. If that scheme is disadvantageous to the North, that is all the more reason why we should maintain the position we have taken up; but with regard to this question I would prefer to discuss it when the Bill comes before us for a second reading. I may say this, however: that I am firmly convinced that the proposals of the Government for introducing a land tax at this time do not meet with the approval of this Committee, nor do they meet with the approval of the country. A land tax is not necessary; what is really necessary is retrenchment, and to make the land bear its fair share of the public burden. It is shown by the tables that we have had placed before us, that when we have spent the ten-million loan we shall have expended something like seventeen millions of money in the construction of railways, and we have received from land sales about six millions; that is all we have got from that source. The rent revenue derived from lands rightly goes into the general exchequer for the expenses of management. When a man purchases an additional piece of property he is perfectly justified in selling something he has got, to pay for what he has bought. We have built a great many railways, and are building a great many more railways in this colony to open up settlement upon our land, and I say the land ought to pay the first cost of the railways. If it does that, the country may fairly be asked to pay the cost of working the railways if there is a deficiency. The land ought to pay for making railways by being sold in reasonable quantities. If we sell £100,000 worth of land and spend that £100,000 in building railways we still have the £100,000, but in a different shape; we have transferred so much land into so much railway; and I say that is a business-like and a rational way of dealing with our public estate. Of course it would be much nicer not to have to sell the land for that purpose if it were not necessary; but it is necessary, from that point of view, to make the land, which is one species of capital, pay for the railway, which is another species of capital of the same value. Therefore, I say, we are perfectly justified in putting upon the land the cost of the railway. It has been said that we must legislate for posterity. No doubt we have to consider posterity, but we must also consider those who are here now, and those who have been here for the last twenty or thirty years, many of whom have been here from the foundation of the colony, and by whose exertions the colony has arrived at its present position. Posterity has not made the colony, but posterity in time will inherit what we have made the colony; and, therefore, I think that although it is our duty to regard posterity, and not put too heavy a burden upon it, it is also our duty not to put such a burden upon those of us who are here now that we shall stagger under the load for the rest of our lives. Surely we are entitled to enjoy in a moderate degree the benefits we have created, and ought not to be called upon yet to bear a land tax, which may be followed in time by an income tax. We have millions of acres of land which we might sell with advantage in reasonable quantities so as to pay the cost of our railways, and that being so I shall vote for the amendment and against the proposals of the Government.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Fraser,—It is too late to proceed any further with the debate to-night, but I trust we may conclude it to-morrow, and I do not see any reason why we should not do so. Of course it is very undesirable that a debate of this kind should be unduly protracted. I beg to move that you do now leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Mr. MOREHEAD : There is no intention on this side to unduly protract the debate.

The PREMIER : I did not suggest that there was.

Mr. MOREHEAD : There are several members on this side who have not yet spoken, and I take it that the silence which has continued on the other side this evening will be broken by some hon. members to-morrow night.

The PREMIER : I expect so.

Question put and passed.

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

TELEGRAPHIC COMMUNICATION WITH THURSDAY ISLAND.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I take this opportunity of informing the House that I have received a telegram from the chairman of the Torres Divisional Board at Thursday Island congratulating the Government on the opening of the telegraph line to Thursday Island. I am very glad to congratulate the colony on the completion of that very important line.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 10 o'clock.