

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 30 AUGUST 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 30 August, 1887.

Resignation of Mr. J. R. Dickson.—Vacant Seat.—Questions.—Ministerial Changes.—Vacant Seat.—Formal Motions.—Australian Joint Stock Bank Act Amendment Bill—third reading.—Ministerial Statement.—Motion for Adjournment.—The Political Situation.—Divisional Boards Bill—committee.—Adjournment.

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

RESIGNATION OF MR. J. R. DICKSON.

The SPEAKER : I have to inform the House that I have received a letter from Mr. James Robert Dickson, resigning his seat as a member for the electoral district of Enoggera.

VACANT SEAT.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said : Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move—

That the seat of James Robert Dickson, Esq., hath become and is now vacant by reason of the resignation of the said James Robert Dickson, Esq., since his election and return to serve as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of Enoggera.

Question put and passed.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. NORTON asked the Colonial Secretary—

1. Has any report been received as to the working of the Patents Act?

2. If not, will the Colonial Secretary give instructions that such report be prepared for the information of Parliament?

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

1. No.

2. On account of the many reports the Registrar-General has had to compile, there has not been sufficient time for him to prepare the report on the Patents Act, but he will do so as soon as he has finished the Friendly Societies' Report.

Mr. PALMER asked the Minister for Works—

1. When will a survey party be available to carry out a survey for a railway from Normanton to Croydon?

2. If the Government are not prepared to construct a railway to Croydon, will they be inclined to entertain proposals for the construction of the line by a company?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) replied—

1. In one month.

2. The question of constructing a railway to Croydon will receive the immediate consideration of the Government.

MINISTERIAL CHANGES.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I have to inform the House that my friend the Hon. C. B. Dutton was this morning sworn in to the office of Minister for Works in the place of my lamented colleague the late Hon. W. Miles. I have also to inform the House that Mr. Jordan, one of the members for South Brisbane, has accepted the portfolio of Minister for Lands and has been sworn in to the office. I will take an opportunity after the formal business is disposed of to make the statement which I intimated on Friday I would make as to the course the Government intend to pursue in view of the divisions that took place on that evening.

VACANT SEAT.

The PREMIER moved—

That the seat of Henry Jordan, Esq., hath become and is now vacant by reason of his acceptance of the office of Secretary for Public Lands since his election and return to serve as a member of the Legislative Assembly for the electoral district of South Brisbane.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I would ask the hon. gentleman whether it is not usual to lay on the table the *Gazette* notifying the appointment?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I think so.

The PREMIER: I remember once taking that exception myself. In a case of acceptance of office by the late Mr. Justice Pring, I remarked the absence of the *Gazette*, and it was pointed out to me that it was not the invariable practice to lay the *Gazette* on the table of the House. The assurance of the head of the Government is always accepted as sufficient evidence of the appointment of a Minister. However, if I had the *Gazette* I would lay it on the table.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Is there any difficulty in getting a copy of the *Gazette*?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: As the hon. gentleman is of the same opinion as myself, I think it would be mutually advantageous if we had the *Gazette*.

The PREMIER: I will get a copy.

Question put and passed.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. JESSOP—

That there be laid on the table of the House copies of all the correspondence relative to the diamond drill lately removed from Dalby.

By Mr. ANNEAR—

That Mr. Rutledge be appointed to the Select Committee now sitting on the claim of Mr. E. B. Corser.

By Mr. BROWN—

That the House will, on Thursday next, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Chinese Immigration Regulation Act Amendment Act of 1884.

AUSTRALIAN JOINT STOCK BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of Mr. W. BROOKES, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—Although this House has no official intimation of the proceedings in Committee of Ways and Means last week, I am sure I shall be pardoned if I make reference to them for the purpose of the statement I am now about to make. We are all aware that, upon a motion made by myself affirming the desirability of raising a land tax at the rate of 1d. in the £1 of the unimproved value of freehold property over and above the first £500 of value, an amendment was moved by the hon. member who leads the Opposition affirming that in the opinion of the Committee no additional taxation was necessary. That amendment was negatived by a majority of 29 to 21, and upon the main question being subsequently put it was affirmed by a majority of 24 to 5—a large majority, no doubt. But, sir, in considering matters of that kind it is necessary not only to look at the numbers, but also to look at the proportion they bear to the total number of members in the House. And I infer this—I need not explain the reasons for drawing the inference I do draw—but I infer this: that a majority of

this House is not prepared during the present session, or during the present Parliament, to give effect to the Government proposals for establishing a land tax. At the same time I understand this from what has taken place—and I think it was very plainly shown—that a majority of the House have affirmed that they desire that the present Government should continue in office. That is an embarrassing position for the Government to be placed in—to be called upon to retain office by a Parliament which at the same time is evidently unwilling to give effect to a proposal which they regard as of considerable importance. But there is another element which the Government have to take into consideration under the circumstances, and that is the age of the present Parliament, and the fact that it is expected not only in the House but out of it that a Bill will be introduced, and ought to be introduced, during the present session for the purpose of re-arranging the electorates. I believe I do not mistake the general feeling of the House when I infer that it is the desire of the House that that Bill should be introduced, and passed, and that as soon as possible; and that the country should have an opportunity, without any future session of the present Parliament, of expressing its opinion of the Government, and upon their policy generally. I regard that as the actual position of affairs at the present time. The Government, under these circumstances, do not propose to proceed further with the land tax proposal during the present session, but it must be definitely understood that the Government by no means abandon this as a part of their policy. I regard the land tax as most important, not merely as a means of raising revenue, but as affirming a principle which I maintain is a most important one, that private ownership of land carries with it special responsibilities. I shall certainly whenever it becomes my fortune to have recourse to my own constituency, or to say anything to any other constituency—I shall certainly make that a very prominent part of what I have to say, and so I am sure will every member of the Government. Now, sir, I will inform the House what the Government propose to do under the circumstances. We propose to introduce a Redistribution Bill as early as possible. I hope to be able to introduce it by Tuesday next. It is simply a question of manual work at the present time—writing and printing. The Bill is all ready, that is to say the work required to be done by the Government is ready, with perhaps the exception of one or two small details, and I hope to be able to introduce it by Tuesday next, or, if not, some day next week. The Bill will necessarily take some time in passing, for some little time must elapse before the second reading to enable hon. members to thoroughly appreciate the proposed divisions, and to consider the statistics as to the population of the proposed electorates. For the rest the Government propose to ask the attention of the House to some matters of importance, and to some of somewhat minor importance relatively, but which it is still desirable to deal with at present. We propose to go on with the Divisional Boards Bill, and that, I am sure, every member of the House will consider should be done as soon as possible. We have to consider the question of endowments to local authorities and the extent to which the maximum endowment should go, and I shall be able to give good reasons for that when in committee that will, I think, commend themselves to everyone. But I will say this now: that the sooner Parliament gets control of that matter the better, for at present it is beyond our control. Then there is a question of importance to which both sides of the House are committed, which should be dealt with this session, and that is

the New Guinea Bill. We are awaiting the assent of New South Wales. I do not know how long we shall have to wait for it, but I know that all my efforts up to the present time have been unavailing to obtain an answer to the simple inquiry whether they intend to adhere or not to the promise they gave. There are two or three minor Bills which will probably be introduced and concerning which I need not now trouble the House, but which are necessary to correct some errors that at present exist. Then I pass to the decentralisation Bills, and I do not know whether the House will be disposed—I mean, of course, a considerable majority of the House will be disposed—to deal with them during the present session. I should be very glad if we could pass them; at any rate they ought to be discussed. One of them will probably take some time, but there are others on which, I think, not much difference of opinion exists, and which might be disposed of. We propose also to introduce a Bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments. This is a very proper time to do so, and I may say at once that most likely the House will be asked to fix four years as the time of their duration. The House will probably be also asked to deal with a question relating to the system of assisted immigration, with a view to increase the amount required to be paid for passages, which might certainly be raised now with advantage. If time will allow, the first of the Water Bills—the Water Law Bill—might fairly be dealt with. The attention of the House will also be invited, in accordance with promises that have already been made by the Government during the session, to the railway lines, Warwick to Thane's Creek, and the South Brisbane extension; and I hope also—though I am somewhat doubtful on the question—that we shall be able, during this session, to do something with respect to a railway from Normanton to Croydon. That, however, is a matter which the Government have not yet had an opportunity of considering, and will depend upon the time at their disposal. That, Mr. Speaker, is what the Government hope to be able to do during the present session. I propose, in the meantime, to go on with the Divisional Boards Bill this afternoon, for I think that hon. members on both sides of the House are of opinion that an immediate settlement of the questions involved in that measure is absolutely necessary.

Mr. NORTON: What about the naval question?

The PREMIER: If the naval question becomes ripe for dealing with, I shall be bound to introduce it, but at the present time I am waiting for answers from the other colonies as to the basis of contribution they are willing to agree to. Until I receive them it will be impossible to bring any proposition relating to the question before the House.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the Premier, in his statement, ought to have given us some explanation as to the sudden shifting of the heaven-born Minister for Lands from his position as the best Lands Minister in Australia to the position of Minister for Works. I, at any rate, gave credit to the new Minister for Works for one thing, and that was obstinacy of purpose, and I did not think he would have allowed himself to be removed to the Works Office, thereby showing that he himself admits that he is not capable of administering that wretched Act which he has fathered. He is succeeded by a gentleman whose views with regard to the alienation of land—certainly with regard to the settlement of people on the land—are entirely at variance with those of the late occupant of that office. I think we should have had some explanation on that point, but perhaps we shall get it from the Minister for Works

himself. The change of office may, however, have one good effect upon that hon. gentleman; it may induce him to treat those who are opposed to him with a little more suavity of manner than he has shown in the past. With respect to the Premier's statement, no doubt the hon. gentleman was very much surprised, and possibly annoyed, at the action taken by the Opposition the other night in declining to vote against the Government on this particular question.

The PREMIER: Not annoyed.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Opposition pursued that course for a very good and sufficient reason. They had no desire, as the hon. gentleman well knew, to play into the hands of the Government. We did not desire to place ourselves in a position in which it was not to our interests to be placed. We preferred to do what we have actually succeeded in doing—to defeat the land tax proposed by the Government; and the Government, as we now learn, have given way. According to the hon. gentleman's own admission, they have a majority of the House against them on that question. An admission of that kind is not often made by a Premier who still retains office. He confesses that he holds office until he is able, by a dissolution, to test the feeling of the country on a question, as he put it, of such vital importance as led to a severance between himself and one of his oldest and most trusted colleagues, and, indeed, almost led to a break-up of the Ministry. The Ministry as it now stands is, with one exception, wholly and solely a Brisbane Ministry; the one exception, which is not one of very great importance, being the Colonial Secretary, who does not trouble the House much with long speeches, nor does he—I say it with all due deference to him—occupy a very prominent position among his colleagues. Looking on the bench of Ministers, they are all, one may say, purely Brisbane men. The Attorney-General is a Brisbane barrister, although certainly, by some fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, he represents a Northern constituency. The Premier is a Brisbane man. The Minister for Works is the president of the Toowong Debating Society—a society which, I believe, is almost an infallible one—and as Toowong is a suburb of Brisbane, therefore he may be called a Brisbane man. The new Minister for Lands, Mr. Jordan, is certainly a Brisbane man; and if you go into "another place," you will find a Brisbane lawyer there. The Ministry has come now to be what we always said it would come to be, a purely Brisbane Ministry, not representing anything or anybody outside the town of Brisbane. With regard to what the Chief Secretary said as to the measures he proposes to introduce, we are told that one of them will be a Redistribution Bill, and he expresses a hope that the House will pass it. Surely the hon. gentleman does not expect us to commit ourselves to anything of the kind until we have seen the Bill.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

Mr. MOREHEAD: I believe the cloven hoof of the late Minister for Lands was clearly marked on the original draft of that measure, though I have since heard that that particular scheme has been thrown to the flames and consumed with fire. As to what the hon. gentleman intends to do with endowments to divisional boards, I suppose we shall have to wait until we get into committee on the Bill before we can discuss it. As to the New Guinea question there will not, I think, be any serious objection on the part of any hon. member on either side to that passing. The decentralisation Bills seem to be introduced in order that we may have a sort of debating-class discussion upon them.

The PREMIER: Not at all, with regard to two of them at any rate.

Mr. MOREHEAD: There is nothing definite to be done with regard to them. The hon. gentleman wishes to have them discussed.

The PREMIER: I hope to pass two, at least, of them, if we can.

Mr. MOREHEAD: If the hon. gentleman gets through his Estimates he may consider himself well satisfied. And that reminds me that in his statement he did not mention the Estimates, but I will take it for granted that he intends to bring them forward in the usual way. Then the Chief Secretary tells us he intends to introduce a Bill to shorten the duration of Parliaments. This seems rather absurd. A similar Bill was one of the first measures introduced into the present Parliament, and the Opposition were prepared to accept it on fair conditions—namely, that it should apply to the present Parliament. And it has been a most unfortunate thing that it did not apply to the present Parliament: it would have prevented all the extravagant expenditure and gross mismanagement of the public affairs which we have seen of late, and which the Premier himself, to a certain extent, admits. It would have been checked long ago. With regard to what the Chief Secretary said as to the Croydon railway, it seems scarcely to square with the answer previously given by the Minister for Works to the hon. member for Burke. I understood him to say that the survey would be started within a month.

The PREMIER: A survey party will be available in a month.

Mr. MOREHEAD: In answer to the second question—"If the Government are not prepared to construct a railway to Croydon, will they be inclined to entertain proposals for the construction of the line by a company?"—he said the matter would receive the Government's immediate attention. The statement made by the hon. the Chief Secretary seems decidedly at variance with what fell from the hon. the Minister for Works. As that hon. gentleman is a little green to his work and makes too definite promises, I think any answers given for a week or two by that Minister should be subjected to the toning influences of the hon. the Premier, so that they may not be so clear as to commit the Government too strongly. Well, sir, I think the Ministry have done a very wise thing, which it is a pity they did not do a week or two ago, in deciding to go to the country. I can assure the hon. member that this side of the House is perfectly willing to accept the challenge, meet the hon. the Premier and his friends in the different electorates, and accept the decision of the constituencies whatever it may be. I think myself that the country is getting a little bit tired of this one-man Government—this chessman who moves his pawns from one square to another, takes one away when he gets a little angry, puts a square peg into a round hole, moves them about the board, and sits in the middle a smiling dictator. I think myself that there could be no clearer proof of the power that gentleman has over his tail—not that I mean to compare him with anything that is supposed to reside below the surface of the earth—than was shown the other night by a considerable number of gentlemen on the other side who fully agreed with the amendment to the taxation proposals. The words went forth, "You may say anything you choose, but you must vote as you are told." They did say what they liked; they said they deeply sympathised with the views of the Opposition; but at the same time, at the crack of the whip of the hon. member for Wide Bay, they came up and voted to a man against the amendment, except two gentlemen whom I do not think have ever been called very servile followers. I do not think myself

that very many of the measures spoken of by the Premier are likely to become law, and I hope that, failing to get them through, he will finish the session as fast as he can, and let us go to the country. Let the country decide between the two sides of the House. I believe the country is heartily sick of the present Assembly, and the sooner they put in men they have more confidence in, the better it will be for this Assembly and for the colony.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to say a few words upon what fell from the Premier, and to put myself in order I shall move the adjournment of the House. The hon. leader of the Opposition has pointed out that the Premier made no remark about the Estimates. We have copies of the Estimates now in our possession, but if the Government are going in for retrenchment they should come down with a fresh set of Estimates framed according to their intended retrenchment proposals. That, I think, should be clearly understood. There is another matter upon which the hon. gentleman made no remark, and which I consider a very serious one. He talks about going to the country immediately this House has done its work; that, I suppose, means a general election. Does he then expect this House to vote twelve months' Supply? If he goes to the country at the end of this year surely he cannot expect us to give him twelve months' Supply, so that if he came back with a minority he could remain in office till the end of next June. If he intends to have a general election at the end of this year, this House should give him only a limited Supply, so as to bring the new Parliament back at the earliest possible period. That is a point the hon. gentleman seems to have entirely overlooked, but to my mind it is a very important one. I should like him to give us some definite explanation of what his intentions are upon those two points—whether he intends to give us a new set of Estimates, and whether he intends to ask twelve months' Supply, his intention being to have a general election at the end of this year. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I take advantage of the motion for adjournment moved by the hon. member for Townsville, to say a word or two with respect both to what has fallen from him, and to one or two observations which fell from the hon. leader of the Opposition. Of course it was an omission on my part to say nothing about the Estimates, but I do not think it was at all necessary, even had it occurred to me, to say anything on that subject, because we must have the Estimates; unless money is voted the Government cannot be carried on. I do not see any necessity for bringing down fresh Estimates; I do not know in what particulars retrenchment can be effected. This I may say, Mr. Speaker, that the Government will do all in their power to effect retrenchment, and that the very first duty which will be performed by my hon. colleague the Minister for Works will be to see in what particulars, if any, reductions can be made in that department. I have myself made inquiries during the past few weeks as to the expenditure of that department and as to the manner in which it is continually expanding in different items, which ordinary persons would suppose ought to show a continually diminishing expenditure per mile. I have arrived at certain results which I have handed over to my hon. colleague, and I hope that the result of his labours will be the discovery that considerable retrenchment can be effected there. As to any other department, I am not in possession of any more information than I was

when I last spoke on the subject. Before I pass from that I will say that the magnitude of the work in the Works Department, and the magnitude of the expenditure there, and the large increase that has taken place from year to year, were the main reasons why I asked my hon. friend Mr. Dutton to take charge of that department. In its present condition it certainly requires at its head, not only a strong man and a strong-willed man, but also a man of considerable administrative experience. I know that from what I have learnt of the department during the past few weeks, and I was very glad that my hon. friend accepted the office. With regard to the acceptance of office by Mr. Jordan, I do not think it necessary to say anything, because the earnest interest he takes in the settlement of land in the country is well known to everybody in the House. I believe that if any man is qualified to give effect to the views entertained by the Government and by this party collectively as to the actual settlement of people on the land, it is my new colleague. Now, sir, as to the question whether the Government intend to ask for twelve months' Supply. We do not intend to ask for any more Supply than will be necessary to carry us through the general election. I am not prepared to say when that will be; it will depend upon the time the Redistribution Bill takes to pass and the time necessary to get the rolls ready. That is a matter of detail. The Government will give any guarantee in their power to secure a meeting of the new Parliament at the earliest possible date. That is a constitutional principle which we have no intention of departing from.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I was rather surprised at some of the remarks which fell from the hon. gentleman. I do not wish to refer at all to the transfer from one office to another of the hon. Minister for Works; but I remember that when the hon. gentleman made his Financial Statement he told the Committee that it was impossible to reduce the Estimates without impairing the efficiency of the service. Well, sir, it is rather remarkable that after the proposal to impose a land tax for the purpose of providing sufficient funds to carry on the business of the country has been abandoned, no other proposal, so far as we know, is to be made to raise the revenue. The Estimates, it appears, are being reduced. During the last few days we have been informed upon, I believe, credible authority that ten officers of the Lands Department have received notice to go. Surely, sir, if that is the case the Minister in charge of the Lands Department at the time the Estimates were framed must have known that these officers might be dispensed with. But the Chief Secretary has told us that from what he has seen, in his short examination into the affairs of the Works Department, he has reason to believe that the expenditure there cannot be further reduced.

The PREMIER: It was an accident that these officers were retained on the Estimates.

Mr. NORTON: It is totally at variance with the hon. gentleman's statement the other day. That statement was as distinct as it could be, that it was impossible, in his opinion, to reduce the Estimates without impairing the efficiency of the service. Those are his own words, and now we have an entirely altered state of things, in consequence, I presume, of the action of this House in distinctly setting its face against the land tax. I think, sir, although I do not imagine for a moment that the hon. gentleman is prepared to bring down another set of Estimates, the House ought to be informed what further reductions are proposed to be made in the Civil Service before we come to the consideration of the Estimates in detail.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—With regard to the reductions referred to in the Lands Department, a number of draftsmen in the Survey Office appear on the Estimates through a note, which was made when the Estimates were being prepared, not having been attended to when they were printed. It has only been within the last two or three months that there has been an excessive number of draftsmen for the amount of work to be performed. These men were put on in the early stages of the operation of the Land Act, when an immense amount of drafting work had to be done. The Surveyor-General, as I daresay the hon. gentleman knows—being a professional man—regulates the number of draftsmen to be employed to get through his work; and upon a close examination of the Estimates which I made just about the time they were being prepared, I found that the services of ten of them could be dispensed with.

Mr. NORTON: Why did they not get notice then?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: They got notice as soon as it was clear that their services could be dispensed with. It was necessary to make a reduction amongst them, so that the best men should be kept on, and the least valuable should be allowed to go.

Mr. NORTON: They did not get notice until the land tax was disposed of.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: After all, that is not a serious reduction. We are looking into all the departments. As to further reduction in the Works Department, that is a matter that will require very serious investigation, and that, of course, I have not yet been able to make. The hon. gentleman knows that at the time such an investigation was necessary for the preparation of the Estimates, my late hon. friend Mr. Miles was not in a state of health to enable him to carry it out in such a manner as he would have done had his health been good enough to have permitted him to do so. However, I propose to make a careful and stringent investigation throughout every branch of the service as soon as I have time. It will take considerable time to make such an investigation. As far as we are able to judge at present from the reports of the heads of the different branches of the department, no further reduction can be made. Perhaps not; but when I come to investigate closely for myself and cross-question them as to the way things are conducted it may be possible. I found the same difficulty in the Lands Office. Of course the heads of the different branches of the service never admit that they can do with less men than they have got, but when each man does a fair amount of work you may ascertain that perhaps one-half or one-third may be dispensed with without detriment to the public service. Probably that may be done in the Works Office, as it has been done in the Lands Department.

Mr. STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I take advantage of the motion for adjournment to ask the Minister for Works a question. I believe there are two or three unemployed dividing commissioners going about Brisbane, I suppose, getting their £1,000 a year still, while these poor draftsmen have been discharged at once. I would like to know if these dividing commissioners are to be allowed to wander about for weeks as they have been doing, and if they are still getting paid £1,000 a year. If they are not wanted surely they ought to be discharged. Is there no work for them to go on with? Is the administration of the Lands Department outside finished? If so, very well; let these men go, instead of commencing to pare down by sacking a few unfor-

fortunate draftsmen in the Survey Office at very short notice. I should also like to ask the hon. gentleman if he can tell us if it is a fact that not only have ten draftsmen been discharged from the Survey Office, but that Mr. Carter has also been discharged?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, Mr. Carter has been called upon to resign. His state of health is such that it is impossible for him to carry out his duties. Other men are doing the work which should properly devolve upon him, and he is entitled to receive a pension for long service in the Government employ. He is physically unable to perform his duty, and I thought it was not fair that he should continue to draw the pay and hold office and that other men should do his work for him. Consequently I called upon him either to resign or his services would be dispensed with. As to the dividing commissioners, there is one—the hon. gentleman says two or three—there is one in Brisbane, and has been for the last week or ten days at the outside, and he has been kept here because I could not attend to that part of the business for which he was brought down to be consulted upon. As soon, however, as I shall be able to do so he will return to his work. Dividing commissioners are continually being brought down or come down here upon business they have to perform which cannot be done clearly and definitely by letter. I do not know that there is any good reason why they should not come down to perform duties of that kind. They are sometimes obliged to come down to consult the Land Board, or to give information which, perhaps, their report did not make sufficiently clear and distinct.

MR. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—As the subject of dividing commissioners is under notice, I should like to call attention to the case of a dividing commissioner in town whose services have been dispensed with. It is said that he rather “holds a rod in pickle” over the Government; that he has certain evidence which is necessary for the Land Board to get, but the Government, I understand, are not in a position to compel him to give evidence, and therefore I suppose he will get his £1,000 a year until his evidence is given. Or will it be payment by results?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The dividing commissioner referred to is not being paid by the Government, and it is not intended that he shall do any further work.

MR. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. the Premier has told us that he is going to introduce a Bill to alter the electorates of the colony, and at the same time he assured us that he would go on with the Financial Districts Bill and the other Bills he has on the paper, which I suppose we may take as his antidote to the separation cry in the North. Now, Mr. Speaker, I put this to you: Is it fair to introduce these measures in a House like this, which does not represent the colony of Queensland in any way whatever? You have only to look at the census returns to see that this House does not represent the population of the colony as now distributed; and I think the only fair way would be to postpone these measures which will deal with the important question of separation until we have a House that does represent the whole colony. Let them pronounce—let them give their voice as to what measures are to be passed. To show that what I say is a fact, I have only to refer to the census returns. Take the Leichhardt district, which returns the present Minister for Works. That electorate has only 786 adults and returns two members, whereas the district which I represent has, I believe, between 5,000 and 6,000, although the census returns only show about 4,000 adults

—that is, possible voters. There are large discrepancies in a very great many of the districts of the colony. In fact there are, in the northern portion of the colony, 18,000 possible voters, returning nine members; the same number of voters in the South returning twice as many members. So that really the House does not represent the colony, and such important measures as those I have referred to should be deferred until there is a Parliament that does represent the colony. I wish also to add that I am sorry the Government, which has been styled by the leader of the Opposition a “one-man” Government, has not been able to make up his or its mind upon the question of the Croydon railway, which I inquired about this afternoon. That it should take a month to send a survey party there I do not cavil at, considering the distance and the preparations that have to be made; but that the Government should not be able to make up their minds as to whether they are able to carry out a railway or whether they will allow a company to do so, only shows that they do not know their own minds on such an important question.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House, I will withdraw the motion.

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

COMMITTEE.

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

On clause 221, as follows:—

“On or before the thirty-first day of January in each year, every board shall cause to be prepared and transmitted to the Treasurer a detailed account, signed and certified by the chairman, of all sums of money actually raised in the division by general rates or special sewerage or drainage rates, whether separate or not, but not being special loan rates, during the year ending on the thirty-first of December then last past. And upon receipt of such account, the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Treasurer, direct him to pay from the consolidated revenue to the credit of the divisional fund by way of endowment, any sums of money equal to but not exceeding the following proportions, that is to say:—

In each of the first ten years after the first constitution of the division, a sum equal to but not exceeding twice the whole amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past.

And in every subsequent year a sum equal to but not exceeding the amount so raised in the year last past.

“In the event of the subsequent constitution of a division, or portion of a division, as a municipality, the endowment provided by the Local Government Act of 1878, or any Act amending or in substitution for that Act, to be payable to such municipality shall be deemed to have commenced from the date of the first constitution of the division.”

The PREMIER said he had taken the opportunity, when explaining the position of the finances of the colony, of calling attention to the extraordinary increase that had taken place in recent years in the amounts paid by way of endowment to local authorities. There might be some question whether, under the endowment clause in the Act as it now stood, which was practically repeated in the Bill now before the Committee, the Government were bound to pay the full amount of £2 for £1 to divisions. The section was quite open to the construction that the Government need not pay unless they chose, and at one time it was the practice to place the money on the Estimates and vote it, though it was not the practice to be bound by the precise amount on the Estimates; but it had been the practice to pay the full amount of £2 for £1, and the result had been a continual drain on the revenue, not

dependent on the will of Parliament, but on a number of subordinate bodies throughout the country who had thus the power to compel the taxation of the whole community.

Mr. NORTON: It does depend on Parliament.

The PREMIER: It did, but in the same sense hon. members might be said to elect themselves members of Parliament; but in the ordinary sense in which words were used, the amount of expenditure by way of endowment was under the control, not of Parliament, but of a number of other bodies to whom Parliament had delegated the power of taxation, the effect being that they had the power of taxing not only the local ratepayers, but the whole community. It could not be too often repeated at the present time, that all the revenue of the country, except that obtained from land and services, was derived from the pockets of the people; and when the Government were called upon to pay money for a particular purpose the people had to subscribe it. The Government were the custodians of a common fund contributed by the people, and when demands were made on that fund they must be accompanied by means for replenishing that fund. If expenditure went on increasing at the rate of £40,000 or £50,000 a year, they must increase the revenue by that amount more than they would otherwise require. He would again call attention to the extraordinary rapid increase in the amounts paid by way of endowments since the year 1878-9. In that year, when the last Government came into office, all they had to pay was £26,000; and the amount had in eight years increased to £245,000.

Mr. NELSON: That includes municipalities?

The PREMIER: Yes. In 1880-1, when divisions were first constituted, the amount payable to them was £46,000, at the rate of £2 for £1; and the municipalities received in the same year £31,000, a small increase on the amount of the previous year. The extent to which the general revenue was at first burdened by the divisional boards system was £46,000, as against the great relief to public works expenditure previously borne by the general revenue. In the following year, 1881-2, the amount paid to divisions increased to £75,000; in 1882-3, to £81,000; in 1883-4, to £99,000; in 1884-5, to £115,000; in 1885-6, to £138,000; and in 1886-7, to £163,000. That was an alarming increase to the drain on the Treasury.

Mr. DONALDSON: It showed the great prosperity of the country.

The PREMIER: Perhaps it did; but it also indicated that during the last four years the general body of the taxpayers had been called upon to contribute an extra £82,000 a year out of their pockets for the purpose of constructing local works.

Mr. DONALDSON: The ratepayers contributed it first.

The PREMIER: They contributed some of it.

Mr. DONALDSON: The whole of it.

The PREMIER: No. The contributions to general revenue through taxation by the inhabitants of municipalities were greater than those of the inhabitants of divisions. The increase in endowments paid to municipalities had also been very great, and had increased from £47,000, ten years ago, to £82,000 at the present time. Last year the increase was £20,000 on endowments to municipalities and £24,000 on those paid to divisional boards. They might go on increasing at the same rate, and next year instead of having to pay £245,000 the Government might have to pay £280,000 out of general revenue. So far as the endowments payable next January

were concerned, he was afraid they could not fairly help paying them. It was rather too late now to tell the divisional boards that their endowments would be cut down, and therefore the Government did not propose to do that, though, as a last resource, it might be justifiable to do so. The Government did not propose to deprive them of the amount ordinarily payable in January next; but it was essentially necessary that Parliament should take the matter into its immediate control, as was done in every other part of the world, and that they should give divisional boards as much money as they could afford, and no more. They could not pay money without first getting it. The hon. member for Port Curtis laughed; he had no doubt a method of paying money without getting it first.

Mr. NORTON: No, I have not.

The PREMIER said his resources at the Treasury did not extend so far. He recognised, and the Government as at present constituted recognised, that their duty was to find the money before they spent it.

Mr. MOREHEAD: That is a new departure.

The PREMIER said he was quite aware that during past years they had been open to reproach for not having done that.

Mr. NORTON: Eleventh-hour repentance.

The PREMIER said it might be so. At any rate, he intended that, so long as he was in the Treasury, which he hoped would not be very long, that rule should be carried out. The first thing was to get money, and after that to spend it. No money should be spent without reference to the Treasurer, so that the Treasurer might know exactly what was going on, what money was required to be spent, and what was spent from time to time. It would be possible to make such arrangements that the Treasurer should always be possessed of that knowledge. He had pointed out that it was necessary to have money before they spent it, and they could only do that by knowing how much they had to spend before the bills came in. As it now stood they did not know that. They only knew that in January many bills would come in from the different divisional boards and municipalities, the amounts of which they could not state, and the Treasurer had to draw cheques for those amounts. He maintained that that was a wrong system, and no one could justify that as being constitutionally right, or financially right, or right in any other reasonable sense. What they should do was to adopt the system adopted in other places, which was that in each year Parliament should give local authorities as much as could be afforded. He was sure Parliament would always be very liberally inclined towards them. It would, of course, be undesirable to go back to the system in use before the present admirable system was introduced, when there were continual demands made upon the Treasury. It would be a very unfortunate thing to have recourse to that. The first thing was to make both ends meet, and when it turned out that the money at the disposal of the Treasurer was not sufficient to make such payments as were required, he must bring down proposals for raising the money. What the Government now proposed to do was to give Parliament control over the matter, and to provide that, instead of the amount being in the absolute proportion of £2 for £1 in the cases of divisional boards, and £1 for £1 in those of municipalities, Parliament should only vote such a sum as the country could afford, which sum should be distributed amongst the divisions in proportion to the rates raised by each. He did not know what other

rule could be suggested but that of giving the money in proportion, as otherwise there would be applications from the poorer boards to this effect: "Give us £3 for £1, and give others which do not want the money so much, 10s. for £1."

Mr. NORTON: But they would know they are entitled by law to only £2 for £1.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had evidently not taken the trouble to listen to what he had been saying. He said that if any other system were introduced but that of giving the money in proportion, one board would say, "We are poor; give us £3 for £1, and as such and such a board are rich, and do not want any money at all, you need only give them 5s. for £1." Therefore, he thought the only convenient system was to treat them all alike; that was to say, that the amount available for divisional boards should be distributed in proportion to the amounts raised by boards in the shape of rates. The Bill, of course, did not deal with municipalities; but he would be very glad to bring in a Bill during the present session dealing with them upon the same terms. However, the amount of endowments paid to them did not increase so rapidly, although it had almost doubled in three years, and had more than doubled in four years. The proposal of the Government was, therefore, that each year Parliament should appropriate such a sum of money as was fairly available from the revenue, and that that amount should be distributed proportionally. He proposed to alter the concluding part of the paragraph of the clause after the words "December then last past," so as to read—

Upon receipt of such account the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Treasurer, direct him to pay to the credit of the divisional fund by way of endowment, out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, any sums of money not exceeding, in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of the division, a sum equal to twice the whole amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past; and not exceeding, in every subsequent year, a sum equal to the amount so raised in the year last past.

Then it was proposed to substitute clause 222 in the list of amendments circulated that afternoon for the 2nd paragraph of clause 221 in the Bill—

If the amount appropriated by Parliament in any year for the purpose of the endowment of divisions is insufficient for the payment of the full amounts hereinbefore limited, the amount so appropriated shall be divisible amongst the boards of the several divisions in proportion to the amount of the sums raised therein respectively by the rates aforesaid.

Provided that in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of a division the board thereof shall, for the purpose of making such distribution, be credited with double the amount of the rates aforesaid actually raised in the division, and the amount so appropriated shall be divisible in the same proportions as if such double amount had been actually so raised.

The new section 223 was to be substituted for the 3rd paragraph of clause 221 as it stood in the Bill, and it set forth what should happen in the case of there being a change by the constitution of a division, or part of a division, into a municipality, and then there was a saving clause proposed to be inserted as follows:—

Notwithstanding anything hereinbefore contained the endowment payable to divisional boards in the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight in respect of money raised in the several divisions by rates during the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven shall be computed and paid at the same rate as if this Act had not been passed.

That scheme would work without doing any injustice to any boards. Boards would receive in January the amounts, he presumed, they anticipated in making their rates at the beginning of the present year, taking into consideration that they thought they were entitled to an

endowment of £2 for £1. He presumed they had done that; consequently it would be hardly fair to deprive them of it next January. But if the Bill passed, they would know that for the next year the amount they would receive from Parliament would be uncertain, and they would make such rates as they considered reasonable. And they would have the next year, when making their rates in February, to consider what amounts they had received from the Government endowment that year. When in 1889 they came to make their rates for that year, they would know what amount was available of money voted by Parliament for the next year; so that for every year when making their rates they would know what the Government subsidy was for the year, and they would make rates sufficient to carry on their business. They would always know, six months before, what was the amount they would receive from Parliament for the current year. It would work no injustice to them and would relieve the Treasury, which was, after all, the country collectively, from what had become a serious source of embarrassment; and he thought no sound argument could be used for not adopting a plan of that kind. The hon. member for Warrego the other day said that in Victoria divisional boards were not willing to trust Parliament, and therefore they obtained a fixed sum by way of endowment. They would, of course, know what amount they would receive, but it seemed unreasonable. There might be a minimum fixed if the boards were afraid to trust Parliament; but to allow the vote to go on expanding and be beyond the control of Parliament would lead the Government into embarrassment; it was to prevent that that they were now endeavouring to amend the admirable system they already had in force. He would formally propose that clause 221 stand part of the Bill, and would then move the amendment.

Mr. NORTON said that before the question was put he wished to call attention to a matter of practice. The invariable practice of the Committee, since he had been a member of the House, when the consideration of a portion of a Bill had been postponed, was to go through the whole of the succeeding clauses and the whole of the schedules before going back to the postponed clauses. He thought that had been the invariable practice, and the least they could have expected under the circumstances was that the Premier, in proposing to go back to those clauses without first completing the Bill, should have told the Committee for what purpose he had adopted that course. He (Mr. Norton) therefore considered it necessary to ask the Chairman whether they were in order in departing from the invariable practice—invariable so far as he (Mr. Norton) was aware—and going back to the consideration of postponed clauses before dealing with the clauses which followed those that had been postponed.

The PREMIER said the hon. member had stated that he had a clear recollection that the course he had suggested was the universal practice in dealing with the postponed clauses of a Bill. That was not his (the Premier's) recollection. He did not recollect that there had been any rule or practice on the subject; and to adopt that course in the present instance would be very inconvenient. The very first schedule of the Bill proposed to repeal certain Acts. The clause now proposed might be rejected. If so it would be necessary to amend that schedule. It was not a matter of principle at all. The course he had adopted was certainly the more convenient. He had asked the Clerk what had been the previous practice, and he was of the opinion that the usual practice was that followed on the present occasion.

The CHAIRMAN said he thought it was simply a question as to which was the better course for the convenience of the Committee.

Mr. NORTON said his reason for raising the point of order was to call attention to the fact that he believed they were departing from what had been the universal practice since he had been a member of the House.

The PREMIER: I think you are wrong.

The CHAIRMAN said that in May's "Parliamentary Practice" it was stated that—

"Postponed clauses are considered after the other clauses of the Bill have been disposed of, and before any new clauses are brought up."

He found that in the "Parliamentary Handbook," compiled by the Clerk of the Legislative Council of Tasmania, showing the practice of the English House of Commons, there was a reference to that subject, and it was there stated that "new clauses are offered before the schedules are considered."

The PREMIER moved that all the words in clause 221, after the words "December then last past" in the 1st paragraph, be omitted, with the view of inserting the following:—

Upon receipt of such account, the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Treasurer, direct him to pay to the credit of the divisional fund by way of endowment, out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, any sums of money not exceeding, in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of the division, a sum equal to twice the whole amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past, and not exceeding, in every subsequent year, a sum equal to the amount so raised in the year last past.

Mr. NORTON said he could not say that he felt any surprise at the action taken by the leader of the Government in connection with that matter, because they had already been prepared for the proposals which had been brought forward, but the speech which the hon. gentleman made in introducing the subject to the Committee was one which had caused him a very considerable amount of surprise. On many occasions—on several occasions, at any rate—since the hon. gentleman had been at the head of the Government, Bills had been brought before the House, and on subsequent occasions it had been found necessary to introduce an amending Bill. But never on any occasion yet had the hon. gentleman, or any other Minister of the Crown, suggested a doubt as to the meaning of the words used in those Bills, as the Premier had done in the case of an Act which now stood on the Statute-book. He understood the hon. gentleman to tell the Committee that he was not quite clear that under the present Act the Government were compelled to pay £2 for £1 to divisional boards. That appeared to him (Mr. Norton) to be a sort of legal quibbling that was not only unjustifiable but really contemptible. He would ask the hon. gentleman what was intended when the Act of 1884 was passed? Did not the Committee then know perfectly well that the intention was to continue the £2 endowment for ten years instead of five?

The PREMIER: I said so.

Mr. NORTON: There was no doubt whatever as to what was their intention; it was to extend the time from five to ten years.

The PREMIER: No doubt whatever.

Mr. NORTON: Then why need the hon. gentleman quibble about the meaning of the words?

The PREMIER: Because I do doubt whether the Act actually says so.

Mr. NORTON said they all knew that the Act said the £2 endowment should be paid. The original Act intended that there should be £2

endowment for £1 raised by rates paid for five years, and there had never been any question raised in that Committee about it. He did not suppose that any hon. member who sat in the House at the time the Bill was discussed ever had the faintest impression that they were expressing anything else in the Bill than that £2 for £1 should be paid for the first five years under that Act. When the amending Act of 1884 was introduced, the intention of all hon. members was that the £2 endowment should continue to be paid for another five years after the first five had been completed, making the double endowment extend to ten instead of five years. Then why need the hon. gentlemen raise a doubt as to whether Parliament was bound to pay that? If there was any doubt in the expressions used in the Act, he (Mr. Norton) contended that Parliament was in honour bound to carry out their intention; and it was, to his mind, a most contemptible thing that a Minister of the Crown in that Committee should raise a doubt about the meaning of words embodied in the Act, when he knew perfectly well what was intended. He was sure the hon. gentleman knew it was intended to pay the double endowment.

The PREMIER: I said so.

Mr. NORTON: Then why should the hon. gentleman raise a doubt whether they were legally bound by the words in the Act? He (Mr. Norton) said they were bound—not only because it was the intention of Parliament to pay that endowment, but they were bound to do it for other reasons. At the present time a number of divisional boards had borrowed large sums of money, which they would have to repay to the Government. If they had known that there was any doubt about their getting the endowment of £2 to £1 for the ten years, they would probably not have borrowed the money at all, or would, at all events, have borrowed smaller sums. Their engagements were for a fixed period, and would remain whether they received the endowment or not, and the payments they had to make for borrowing money extended over a term of years. They must pay a certain sum every year, and therefore to alter the law now, and deny them the endowment upon their rates, upon the payment of which for the full ten years their engagements were made, appeared to him a monstrous thing.

The PREMIER: Have you ever read the present Act?

Mr. NORTON said he had read it hundreds of times, and he knew what was intended when it was passed.

The PREMIER: Have you read the clause following the endowment clause which was so carefully put in to prevent any vested right being conferred?

Mr. NORTON said he knew that perfectly well. At the same time he would say distinctly that if there ever had been a doubt about it, and if a proposal of that kind had been made at the time the Act was passed, it would have been rejected with scorn. The hon. gentleman talked a great deal about the duty of the Government to see that the money was there before it was spent. That was a poor sort of statement to come from the hon. gentleman whose Government had been over-expending their revenue for the last two years. The hon. gentleman knew that in an engagement of that kind he was in exactly the same position as he was in when he made an engagement with an officer of the Crown for a term of years. Many of them were engaged for a number of years, and the money was not provided to pay them for that term of years, still they had to be paid whether the revenue was sufficient or not. The

hon. gentleman's argument was really a very poor one from a Government who it was shown had so grossly increased the Government expenditure during the time they had been in office. One could almost laugh at the argument coming from the hon. gentleman. He was very glad the hon. gentleman thought it was a principle which should be adopted, and he hoped it would in future be carried out. He could not help laughing when the hon. gentleman talked of the necessity now of seeing that the money was received before it was spent. It would certainly be most unfair to the divisional boards to pass the clauses now proposed, which would take from them absolutely the right to the £2 to £1 endowment after next year. They had made their engagements in anticipation that the endowment would be continued, and they must meet those engagements whether the Government paid the endowment or not.

The PREMIER: The country must raise the money.

Mr. NORTON said he was perfectly well aware of that, and the Government knew that also at the time they passed the Act to continue the endowment for ten years. At that time the Government had an idea that the revenue would supply them with everything. But from their extraordinarily exaggerated expenditure since the time they had been in office they now found they were not able to pay, and they wanted to make a distinct repudiation of the contract—for it was a contract—made with the divisional boards of the colony. He would ask what the land tax was likely to be in the light of the present proposal? The Government had brought forward a scheme for a land tax of 1d. in the £1 on the unimproved value of freehold land, with exemptions on land of a less value than £500, but was it likely they would stick to that when they repudiated their contract with the divisional boards? How was the country to know what would be done when the Government brought in a measure to extend the payment of the endowment to divisional boards for ten years in one year, and in a year or two after brought in another measure to abolish the endowment because they could not find sufficient money to meet their engagements? How were the boards to understand what funds they would have for carrying out their works and making roads and bridges? They had to undertake extensive works the construction of which might extend over a considerable time, and how were they to know what to do when the Government might give them nothing from one year to another? They would not know whether they were to get 5s. or 20s. in the £1.

The PREMIER: Suppose the Government had nothing to give them?

Mr. NORTON said they had made arrangements to carry out what the law enabled them to carry out. How did the Government carry out their engagements with Government officers and clerks? They had to get their money and they did get it. If the Government had not sufficient funds to pay them, they got an overdraft at the bank, and when Parliament met some means were proposed and adopted to meet the difficulty. That was what had to be done in consequence of the extraordinary expenditure during the last few years. They knew that when a Government were in the position the present Government were reduced to and had not got sufficient money to meet their engagements they were bound to raise sufficient revenue in some way or another. He quite agreed with the hon. gentleman when he said it was a most inconvenient thing that they should have to pay those large sums. It

was most inconvenient and most undesirable that the Treasurer should be bound to pay certain sums of money over which Parliament had no control, but the hon. gentleman knew that perfectly well when he introduced the amending Bill in 1884. That Bill not only extended to divisional boards, but at the suggestion of the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, the hon. gentleman introduced a third clause which provided that when a portion of a division was included within a municipality the £2 to £1 endowment should be paid on that portion up to the end of ten years. Everything pointed to the fact that the House, at the time that amending Act passed, definitely understood that under any circumstances provision was to be made for paying the £2 to £1 endowment until the divisional boards had been constituted for the ten years; therefore to amend the law as was now proposed was a distinct act of repudiation.

The PREMIER said the hon. member's arguments struck at the root of all economy. Every argument the hon. member had used would prevent the discharge of any Government servant even if he was found to be incompetent. Every argument he had used would prevent the reduction of a single salary even if it was found there was no money to pay it. There was just as much obligation on the part of the Government to pay Government officers their salaries and continue those salaries at an un-reduced rate as there was to pay those endowments; in fact, there was a greater one.

Mr. NORTON: No.

The PREMIER said the hon. member's memory did not take him far enough back. In 1878 was the first time in Queensland that a provision was put on the Statute-book for paying those endowments in their present form; that was in the Local Government Act. That Act was put through the House by himself. The hon. member was not in the House at the time, but he remembered it very well.

Mr. NORTON: I was here when the Divisional Boards Act was passed.

The PREMIER: That was copied from it, but that clause was not allowed to be passed by the House without being followed by a proviso, which stood clause 222 of the present Bill, and which provided—

"Nothing herein contained shall be construed to confer upon any board any right or claim upon the repeal or alteration of the last preceding section."

Unless that had been put in probably it would not have been carried, for Parliament at that time was not disposed to give up its right to control the expenditure. The hon. member wanted to tell the Government, "You are extravagant; you cannot control expenditure;" and as soon as they attempted to do so he said, "If we let you control the expenditure we shall be proving ourselves false prophets. Let us force the Government to undue expenditure and then we shall be able to say, 'See what splendid prophets we are!'" The boards had always been warned from the first that they had no vested rights, and Parliament had never given up its right to control expenditure, and never would. In 1879, when the Divisional Boards Act was passed, and when the total for the first year's expenditure was put down at £46,000, no one ever dreamed that in six years from that time it would have increased to £163,000.

Mr. NORTON: In 1879 the £2 endowment was fixed for five years.

The PREMIER said he was perfectly aware of that, but supposing that during those five years the Government had found themselves unable to pay it? The clause was inserted with

the limitation formally expressing the reservation of the right of Parliament to interfere, so that the boards could be under no misapprehension. Parliament always retained to itself the right to reduce or to withdraw the endowment altogether if the finances of the country required it, unless the country preferred large additional taxation—and they must have either the one or the other. But the hon. member did not care about that. All he cared for was to get the Government into trouble—to make them spend more money than they ought to do.

Mr. NORTON: You have done that already.

The PREMIER said no doubt they had; but as soon as they attempted to retrace their steps, the hon. member wanted to make them spend still more than they could afford, so that he and his friends might be able to say, "Put us into office, and we will spend no more than we can afford." It was the duty of hon. members on both sides to assist the Government to control undue expenditure. He had never—as he had seen hon. members on that side do—endeavoured to embarrass an existing Government, not being their own, by forcing upon them expenditure which could not be met without increased taxation.

Mr. NORTON said he had often seen hon. members, now sitting on the Ministerial side, trying to force the then Government into expenditure of which they did not approve; and although those proposals were always brought forward by private members the hon. gentleman was always ready to lend his help to embarrass the Government.

The PREMIER: Can you point to a single instance?

Mr. NORTON said that no one on his side was trying to force the Government into expenditure of which they did not approve. All they were insisting upon was that it was the duty of the Government to carry out their engagements with the divisional boards, and he insisted upon that as distinctly now, after hearing the hon. gentleman's answer to him, as he did before. The Government did not want any forcing in the direction of large expenditure, as the taxpayers had found out long ago. The hon. gentleman had been spending lavishly for four years, and now he wanted to begin to retrench by breaking faith with the divisional boards. With regard to reductions in the Civil Service, he would point to those officers who were engaged for a term of years at a fixed salary.

The PREMIER: I did not speak of those.

Mr. NORTON said he did, and their case was the same as that of the divisional boards; the Government would have to pay them for the whole term whether they liked it or not.

The PREMIER: But to put the cases on the same footing, you must make it part of the bargain that they may be dismissed on three months' notice.

Mr. NORTON said he could not agree with the hon. gentleman in the view he took of their obligations. If the Government had attempted long ago to reduce expenditure in a legitimate way, there would have been no need to commit a breach of faith with the divisional boards such as was now proposed. Because they had been recklessly extravagant, and were driven into a corner, they wanted to make the divisional boards pay for it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had great sympathy with the position the Premier had taken up, and believed that Parliament ought to have the endowment of divisional boards and municipal councils under its own control. At present it was not under its control. But he had great doubts as to the justice of

withdrawing the endowment so suddenly from boards and municipalities, as, owing to the engagements they had entered into, they had become responsible for very heavy contracts for public works of different kinds, expecting to receive the full endowment to the end of the second five years. That was the only doubt he had, and the Premier was perfectly right in trying to get the control of the money into the hands of Parliament. When the last Act was passed there was plenty of money in the Treasury, and the Government, like any other spendthrift, were determined to make it fly; and they did. The hon. gentleman at the head of the Government required no urging into extravagance; it came as naturally to him as a duck took to the water. The hon. gentleman said he had never been a party to forcing expenditure on any Government in order to embarrass them. Did not the hon. gentleman remember the action of his party and of himself when the late Government, under similar circumstances to those which the present Government were placed in now—that was, an empty Treasury—with the difference that they were determined not to tax the people; did he not remember, when that Government tried to reduce the endowment to schools of arts, botanic gardens, and so forth, that he supported a private member of his party in a motion against the proposed reduction, and that it was carried against the Government, who were forced to pay the endowment as it was paid before? Was not that embarrassing the Government?

The PREMIER: I do not remember the circumstance.

Mr. NORTON: He has forgotten all about that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had not forgotten it; and that was how the hon. gentleman and his party tried to force the Government into additional expenditure. On the present question, while he agreed with the Premier, as he had said before, that Parliament should retain control of the expenditure, he doubted whether it would be fair and just to the boards to reduce the double endowment when they had entered into large engagements on the strength of it. According to the Act, the double endowment was to run until 1889. If the hon. gentleman would introduce a clause with his amendments, preventing the operation of clause 221 until the end of 1889, he (Mr. Macrossan) would be perfectly willing to agree with it; but he thought that under the circumstances they should not allow the boards to be put into the difficulty which they would be placed in by the endowment being withdrawn.

Mr. PATTISON said it appeared to him that it would be a gross injustice to withdraw the endowment from the boards. Many of the boards had entered into large contracts wholly relying on the endowment secured to them by the Act under which they were working. No doubt many of the boards—and it was to their credit—had levied the utmost rates they could for the purpose of having their roads put in order within the time that the £2 to £1 was allowed; and no doubt after the expiration of the ten years they would be fully prepared to accept the position they would be placed in. But, according to the proposition submitted by the Government, the endowment was to be an unknown quantity. The boards might not receive anything, and if that were the case, he thought it would have the effect of abolishing what the Chief Secretary admitted had been a most useful system. The roads of the colony now were in a most creditable condition compared with what they were when they were under the charge of the Government. Some assurance ought to be given to the boards as to what amount they were to receive—if it were £1 or less—so that there would be an amount they could

rely upon, and fix their rates accordingly. Why not let the present Act run for its full term? The Premier was disposed to allow the endowment to continue for one year—why not for two? There was no doubt that the increase in the amount was alarming, but that was to be expected as the natural outcome of the Divisional Boards Act. The first year the endowment was £46,000, and if it had now reached about £163,000, that might have been expected. The people had taxed themselves heavily to obtain from the Government the endowment of £2 for £1; if they had claimed it in any other way it would have been very improper, and he could have understood the Chief Secretary surrounding the endowment with the safeguard he now proposed. It was a very proper principle that Parliament should have control of the expenditure, but no sufficient reason had been shown why Parliament should get control of it by committing an act of repudiation. It was said that the boards taxed, not only the ratepayers, but the general public. Of course they did. Before the boards came into existence the general public paid for the roads; the general public got the benefit of the roads, and why should not the general public contribute something in the manner laid down by Parliament? A direct tax was first insisted upon, and it was cheerfully submitted to by the ratepayers on condition that the Government would further assist them out of the general revenue. He trusted that the Chief Secretary would see his way clear to carry out the Act as it stood, and after the year 1889 the boards would be prepared for the change. The boards should have timely notice. The Chief Secretary said they had had notice from the first upon the face of the Act, but that was a clause which was generally passed over and not thought of; it had always been treated as a matter of form. The hon. gentleman might accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville, and let the Act go on for the full term, and pay the endowment as heretofore.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was rather astonished to see the hon. the Chief Secretary assume indignation at charges of repudiation being made against the Government with regard to their action in this matter. Well, he considered that that was the only word in the English language which adequately described the action proposed to be taken by the Government. Let any hon. member read the debate that took place on the Bill of 1884, and see if one single word of warning was dropped by any Minister with regard to the possible stoppage of the endowment during the period of the proposed extension. The late Minister for Works, who introduced the Bill, said:—

“The Government therefore came to the conclusion that it was no use trying to meddle any further than this Bill proposes, and that is, to continue for five years the double endowment. When the Act was passed in 1879, one of the provisions was that the boards should receive £2 for every £1 of rates collected; and it will also be within the recollection of hon. members that £100,000 was set apart as a further endowment to be distributed according to the amount of rates collected. I have had some little experience of the working of divisional boards, and scarcely a day passes but there are applications from one board or another for assistance, on the ground that they cannot possibly carry out necessary works unless the Government assist them. Therefore the Government have come to the conclusion to recommend to the House that the endowment of two to one on the amount of rates collected shall continue for a further period of five years.”

There was not a word in the whole speech to indicate any doubt that the endowment would continue on those lines. The Premier stated, amongst other things:—

“The intention of the Government in bringing in the Bill was to give divisional boards an extension of the endowment; but it was pointed out in the course of

the debate last evening that, since divisional boards had been established, whole divisions or parts of divisions had changed their form of incorporation, and that those divisions were justly entitled to some consideration. The new clause introduced merely carried out the intention of the Government to continue the endowment under the Divisional Boards Act for ten years instead of five.”

What could be clearer than that? There was no hesitancy in the speech of either of the Ministers—nothing to indicate that there was any chance, no matter what change might arise, of the endowment being cut off. The Premier further said:—

“The Bill was a Bill brought in to amend the law relating to endowments on divisional boards, and not a Bill to amend the Divisional Boards Act generally.”

He said over and over again that it was brought in for that specific purpose, and no other purpose. The whole intention of the Bill was to continue the double endowment for a further period of five years, and, so far as he could discover, the only member who took any exception to it was himself. No Minister took the same line as he did. It was clearly a Bill introduced with the object—or one of its objects was to make the Ministry popular with the country. He took the opportunity of expressing the following opinion:—

“I may point out this—that the Divisional Boards Act wants a good deal more amendment than is contained in this Bill. There is no doubt this is a very popular move on the part of the Government.”

That that was correct was proved by the Bill now in their hands. The Bill originally consisted of one clause, and it was enlarged to suit the views of the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth. He went on—

“So long as they can tap the State to feed the divisional boards, the divisional boards will be satisfied.”

That was the conclusion the hon. the Premier now appeared to have arrived at; but it was an opinion the hon. gentleman did not share with him at that time—

“Here we are asked to-night to double the period, which is a long period in the history of a young State, for which we are to devote a sum of money for the sustenance of that condition of affairs.”

Those were the only expressions he could find from members on the other side in any way objecting to the extension. The Government deliberately brought it in with the full knowledge that the vote was increasing year by year. It had not increased since 1884 much more than it had previously; it had gone on very much in the same ratio. At any rate, whether it had or not, the Government were distinctly pledged, as far as men could be pledged, that the endowment should be £2 for £1 for the five years terminating in 1889, and if it was not given it would be a clear act of repudiation on the part of the Government and those who voted with them in favour of the amendment proposed by the Premier. The divisional boardmen, who, he believed, were in almost every instance leading men in their different districts, had been led to believe, and did believe, that they were trusting an honourable body of men when they trusted the Parliament of the colony, and so believing they acted upon the assumption that what Parliament promised it would perform. The hon. gentleman must bear in mind the enormous saving to the State that had been effected by the action of the divisional boards. Hon. members must recollect the enormous sums that used to be voted year after year for roads and bridges; and if they reduced the endowment as proposed by the amendment of the Premier, the result would be that in many districts the boards would not be able to carry on, and the same result would be brought about—they would have to fall back on the general revenue. Roads must be kept in order, bridges must be made, otherwise traffic would be suspended. But the

main point was that if the amendment of the Premier was carried it would be an act of absolute repudiation on the part of the Government and every member who voted for it who was in the House in 1884. He did not think language could be too strong in expressing an opinion as regarded the course proposed by the Government. If anything of the kind was proposed amongst people outside, very strong language indeed would be used, and very properly so. He hoped the Premier would reconsider the question, and let the endowment run, as promised, until the end of 1889. He (Mr. Morehead) was himself strongly of opinion that Parliament should hold control over the purse-strings of the State either with regard to divisional boards or anything else. If Parliament found the boards were running wild—drawing too much from the national exchequer—then the thing ought to be stopped, and perhaps a limit should be put to their powers; but he contended most distinctly that they should carry out their promise, whatever amendment might be made hereafter.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman, by his own admission, considered the proposition a right one, only it should not be carried out now. Of course to carry it out now would assist the Government in keeping control over the purse-strings. The hon. gentleman had made use of two principal arguments neither of which had the slightest foundation. He said the Government proposed to cripple the divisional boards by withdrawing the endowment. The Government proposed to do nothing of the kind, and the hon. gentleman knew it perfectly well. They did not propose to withdraw the endowment. What they did propose was that the boards should not be allowed to take as much endowment as they pleased, irrespective altogether of the voice of Parliament. Was that crippling them? The hon. gentleman knew perfectly well and admitted that the amendment was a right one, but he declined to vote for it. Why? Because at some future time it would be more convenient—because they should not cripple the divisional boards. The Government did not want to reduce the endowment to divisional boards, but they did not want it increased, as was being done at present, to an indefinite extent. That was a very different thing.

Mr. DONALDSON: Fix a sum.

The PREMIER said fixing the amount would be better, but as the law stood the endowments could be increased at the will or pleasure of the divisional boards all over the colony. Of course, the hon. gentleman had repeated the charge of repudiation. It was no more repudiation than dismissing a man who had been engaged for five years, subject to six months' notice at the end of any year. That was the same sort of bargain—that they must give six months' notice. What they proposed when the Bill passed originally in 1879, copied from the Bill of 1878, was this: They told the divisional boards: "We will give you so much a year for five years, subject to revision every year by Parliament." That was the bargain in the Act, and the Act would never have passed Parliament without that provision, which was as plain as possible. He remembered very well what took place in 1878. They did not report proceedings in committee then, but that was what it was. They made a bargain for five years, such as every constitutional lawyer and every person acquainted with constitutional practice would make, knowing that Parliament never surrendered its control over the public funds. They said, "We will give you endowment of £1 for £1, but in any year Parliament may review this arrangement." Of course, to do so without giving notice

would be unreasonable, and what the Government proposed to do was to give them twelve months'—more than twelve months'—notice, because it would not be until February, 1889, that the change would take effect. Until that time they would have the higher rate. To allow the thing to go on as it was at the present time would be absurd. He contended that there was nothing in the nature of repudiation in the proposal. Attention having been called pointedly to the position of affairs it was the duty of the Government to endeavour to make a change. The expenditure was increasing at an enormous rate. It was £24,000 more this year than last; perhaps it would be £24,000 more next year, another £24,000 the year after, even if it stopped at the present rate of increase. At any rate, he did not think it ought to be more than it was now, £163,000. If they fixed it at that amount and said, "During the first ten years we will give you a sum not exceeding twice the amount of your rates and not exceeding in the whole £163,000," it would have been a reasonable proposition, to which he would not offer any strong objection. The Government would then be in a proper position. They should know how they stood every year, but at present it was impossible for anybody to say what amount they might be called upon to pay. What they had to do was to put the law into proper form and at the same time to deal tenderly with any obligation that might have been incurred, even under a mistaken impression of the law. But he objected to the country being driven into extravagance to suit hon. members like the hon. member for Port Curtis, who apparently took great pleasure in seeing the Government act extravagantly. He believed that nothing gave that hon. member more distress at the present time than the fact that he could not help thinking the Government intended not to be led into extravagance.

Mr. NORTON said what he had predicted of the Government with regard to extravagance had been fulfilled long ago. The very thing that he had pointed out would happen, had happened—that the surplus they had upon entering office would be turned into a deficit. He did not want them to be extravagant, but they ought to get out of their extravagance in a legitimate way.

The PREMIER: We cannot look for your help.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman, in his argument, had pointed out that under the present Act the divisional boards had no claim. Then why introduce the amendment? If the hon. gentleman had power to withdraw or reduce the endowment given during the ten years under the Act, why did he not adopt that course instead of proposing the amendment? Now, he thought the hon. gentleman would see that he had carried his contention too far, because if he could show that he was right, that a provision was distinctly inserted in the Act to prevent divisional boards from getting the double endowment, then he showed that the amendments were wholly unnecessary. The Government had the power now, and they had the power in the Bill as it was originally introduced, and yet the Premier thought it necessary, in spite of his having that power, and after reviewing the position of the Treasury and the state of the finances as shown by the Treasury accounts, to bring in clauses to give the Government the power they had before. Why, that was simply arguing against himself, and he (Mr. Norton) was really surprised that the hon. gentleman should use such an argument, knowing, as he must do, that if the House had the power which it was contended it had, there was no necessity whatever for the amendments.

Mr. STEVENS said he could not say that the Premier drew special attention to the clause when he first introduced the Local Government Act of 1884, because, although he took considerable interest in the passing of the measure, he did not remember it. At any rate, if there was anything in that contention then there was no occasion for the amendments. If the Government had the power they now sought for under the previous Act, why did the hon. the Premier consider it necessary to introduce the amendments? Whatever the fact might be, the hon. gentleman would find that the divisional boards throughout the colony would consider that the Government had repudiated an agreement. Even if the boards had not the actual right to expect the £2 for £1 endowment, still they had been led to rest under that belief. There was not the slightest doubt that the passing of the amendments would have the effect of throwing the system of local government into a considerable amount of confusion. Numerous boards had arranged their rates under the expectation of the usual endowment, and had entered into large systems of expenditure, and now if the endowments were suddenly cut off, many works would come to a standstill. Many of the boards in the more distant districts had been accumulating funds for the purpose of laying them out on some special work, but if the endowment were reduced the money would simply have to lie in a bank for a considerable time longer. He thought it was a great pity, now that the local government system was in thorough working order, that it should be in any way disturbed. There was nothing, of course, in the amendment which dealt with the reduction of, or the amount of future control over, endowments to municipalities, but it would be manifestly unfair to deal with divisional boards and leave municipalities in their present position; and in the event of the amendments being assented to by the Committee, the Government should pledge itself to deal with the municipalities also during the present session.

The PREMIER: I said so.

Mr. STEVENS said, he thought, only in a doubtful way.

The PREMIER: I will try to.

Mr. STEVENS said the divisional boards received a great blow when they were informed that they would have to maintain the main roads, but the blow they would receive now would be infinitely greater. He maintained that in all fairness to the divisional boards, and with a view to good local government, no alteration of the kind proposed should be made at the present time.

Mr. GRIMES said he could not look upon the proposal of the Government with any degree of favour. Parliament had induced the public to take upon themselves the duty of taxing themselves to make their roads, with the assistance promised by the Government. They had said, "If you will tax yourselves, we will give you £2 to every £1 you raise." The divisional boards had entered into engagements, and he thought it would savour a good deal of repudiation if they were now told that the endowment could be no longer continued. As already stated by hon. members, there were numerous boards that were under the impression that the endowment would be continued for ten years, and they had acted upon that impression, and had entered into engagements which they would never have seen their way clear to enter into had they understood that the £2 for £1 would not be continued for at least ten years. It appeared to him that, if they allowed the amendments to be inserted, it was a matter of doubt whether boards would even get the £1 for £1 endowment,

as the amount to be voted would be entirely in the hands of Parliament. It was quite possible the boards might only get 10s. or even less than that. If the amendments were carried an extra burden would be put upon the country districts; and it seemed to him that they were getting at them with the land tax under another name or in another way. Parliament had said that the Treasury would bear two-thirds of the expense of making the roads, and now it was proposed to say that the boards should bear the whole expense. There was also another reason why he thought the amendments were unfair. Divisional boards had not only been forming roads and maintaining them, but they had also increased the value of the public estate by so doing. There was a great deal of unalienated Crown land bordering the roads which had been made by divisional boards, and considering that the expenditure of the boards improved the value of the public estate, and that the lands when sold would return a higher value, he thought it was only fair that the assistance to the boards should be continued. No doubt a large sum would be returned to the Treasury by the sale of those lands if the land laws were rightly managed. He certainly thought the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville was deserving of consideration. He hoped they would not legislate in any direction that would savour of repudiation, but let the boards have the sum which they were undoubtedly promised, and then at some future time they might start afresh.

Mr. KATES said whatever the hon. the Premier might think, the country would look upon amendments of that sort as nothing more nor less than repudiation. Last general election, when hon. members were before their constituents, the question was distinctly asked whether they would advocate the continuance of the endowment for another five years, and in a great many cases members were pledged to do that. If the amendments were carried, it was quite possible that the endowment would be reduced to 2s. 6d. in the £1, or perhaps less. He was sure that to interfere with the bargain would be a very unwise step on the part of the Government. It was a distinct bargain to continue the endowment up to the end of the year 1889, and the divisional boards would be satisfied with nothing less. He hoped the Premier would reconsider the matter, and see his way to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville.

Mr. FOXTON said he was unable to support the proposition as put before the Committee. He agreed with everything that had been said as to the advisableness of Parliament in every way controlling public expenditure; at the same time he could not disguise the fact that it was thoroughly understood when the Divisional Boards Act was amended in 1884 that the £2 endowment should be continued for another five years. He knew that several divisional boards had, on the strength of that understanding, as stated by the hon. member for Oxley, incurred responsibilities which they would not otherwise have thought of entering upon; but he did not think any of the boards had gone further than an estimate of the endowment at its present figure; and if the Premier would so far meet the hon. member for Townsville's proposition as to make the present system apply up to 1889 subject to a maximum equivalent to the sum which would be paid next year he would be happy to support the hon. gentleman. Further than that he could not go.

The PREMIER said there was a great deal in the suggestion not to reduce the amount already paid, but there could be no honest claim for an indefinite increase. It was a strange delusion that existed in the minds of some hon. members and, he was sorry to say, in the minds of a great

many people outside, that the Treasury was a sort of institution with which the people had nothing to do. They seemed to think the Treasury was a general fund provided by someone or other upon which they could draw at any time, and that if the Treasurer did not give them money when they asked for it it was simply from obstinacy or perversity.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Who taught them that?

The PREMIER said he did not know; but there was no doubt such a notion prevailed; and the great lesson to learn was that it was a delusion. The Treasurer was a servant; and in calling upon the Treasurer to pay money, people were calling upon him to pay it out of their own pockets. It was all very well for divisional boards and ratepayers to say, "You must give us this money"; but the Treasurer must get it from them first. It was only a question of taxing themselves; the Government did not get money from abroad—except by way of loan. They did not tax strangers; it was the people who supplied the revenue. One section of the people said to the whole community, "You promised to give us more money." They all promised to give one another more, but the only place to get the money was from their own pockets. That was the true view of the question, and that view would be forcibly impressed upon the people before very long, and when that was thoroughly understood they would get on a great deal better. The present principle was admittedly wrong, and it was for the Committee to decide what change should be made.

Mr. MURPHY said the Premier should be honest and go to the root of the matter. Why did he not reduce the endowments to municipalities as well as those paid to divisional boards?

The PREMIER: I cannot in this Bill.

Mr. MURPHY said that when challenged the hon. gentleman would not promise to do so, and it seemed as if he did not mean to do so. The proposal to reduce the endowments to divisional boards was simply part and parcel of the land tax, putting additional taxation on the country people. He was sure that the divisional boards would look upon the reduction as distinct repudiation, for no one expected that the endowment would be withdrawn until such time as the Act stated; in fact, both the Premier and the late Minister for Works led people to believe that it would not be withdrawn. Another thing, when those boards came to the Government for loans, were they ever warned that it was within the power of the Government or of Parliament at any time to reduce the endowment? He was sure they were not. The boards had borrowed large sums of money from the Government to be repaid gradually with interest, and now they found the endowment upon which they made their calculations was to be withdrawn. It would be most unpopular in the country.

The PREMIER: Very likely.

Mr. MURPHY: Not only unpopular, but unjust and unfair, and distinct repudiation; and he was quite sure the country districts would look upon the proposal as an injustice, and an attempt to force additional taxation upon them.

Mr. MELLOR said the hon. gentleman was slightly mistaken in regard to the calculations made by divisional boards when asking the Government for loans. They never contemplated the repayment of loans by means of the endowment received from the Government, because a special rate had to be made for the repayment of loans, and on that special rate there was no endowment. He agreed with hon. gentlemen,

however, that the divisional boards throughout the colony expected the double endowment for five years, and that if it was not given they would look upon it as a sort of repudiation. He agreed that Parliament should have control of all public expenditure; but he thought the increased expenditure under the divisional boards system was a matter of congratulation. It showed that the divisional boards throughout the colony were taking so well to the system that they were freely taxing themselves to make and maintain their roads, thereby enhancing the value of Crown property all over the colony. There was no doubt that the system had worked well, and had been the means of reducing expenditure from general revenue on public works. He believed the expenditure on roads and bridges in 1878-9 was about £110,000, which was an increase of about £14,000 or £15,000 on the year before; and if the old system had been followed till now the Government expenditure for 1886-7 would have been something like £260,000 instead of £163,000. The endowment of £163,000 to divisional boards represented local taxation to the extent of about £80,000. That amount was expended in the making of roads in the various districts. He was sure the divisional boards had deserved great credit wherever the principle of local government had been put into operation. Men were found willing to give their services and do their best to carry out the system of local government. He knew a great many instances in the country districts in which divisional boardsmen had very great difficulty in carrying out the works and improvements in their divisions with the endowment of £2 to £1 received from the Government, and he thought that to reduce that grant at the present time would be a great blow to the local government of the country. In reference to the endowment, they could call to mind that some time since they had passed a Valuation Act, which he thought would tend very considerably to decrease the rates that would be raised in the divisions, as the capital value only of the land had to be taken into consideration; in the past improvements were valued, and the Treasurer might, therefore, anticipate that in the future. For the next two or three years during which the Government endowment would be paid, there would be no increase in that respect. He trusted, therefore, that the Colonial Treasurer would see his way to continue the endowments as before.

Mr. MORGAN said he agreed with the hon. member for Wide Bay that local governments—perhaps more particularly divisional boards—had removed a large amount of expenditure from the central Government, and therefore they should be treated with every respect in the matter of endowment. He thought, however, that when the Government had put into operation an Act recently passed by them—he alluded to the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act—a considerable further saving would be effected annually. He was not aware whether that Act had been put in operation anywhere yet.

The PREMIER: Yes; in the metropolitan district.

Mr. MORGAN said the metropolitan district was not the whole colony, and he did not think the Act was intended to apply to only the metropolitan district. He knew that some time ago the Warwick Municipal Council called upon a neighbouring divisional board to enter into an agreement in the terms of that Act to contribute a portion of the cost of maintaining bridges on main roads leading from that division to the municipality of Warwick. They were bridges on main roads within the strict meaning of the Act. The board refused to enter into such an agreement, and the municipality appealed to

the Minister charged with the administration of the Act to apply the powers conferred upon him; but so far they had received no reply.

The PREMIER: That was owing to the illness of the late Mr. Miles.

Mr. MORGAN said that gentleman was not the Minister in charge. In reply to the hon. gentleman's interjection he might state that the council addressed the Minister for Works as the Minister whom they understood was in charge of the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act. They received an answer to the effect that the letter had been referred to the Colonial Secretary, who was charged with the administration of the Act.

The PREMIER: It never came into my hands, and I never had an opportunity of consulting him.

Mr. MORGAN said they had received no definite answer as to whether the Minister would exercise the powers conferred upon him by the measure, and the opinion was gaining ground that the Act was a Frankenstein of which the Ministry were afraid. If they did not put the Act in force the result would be that in years to come, when matters such as he referred to—the maintenance of costly bridges—had to be dealt with, the central Government would have to find the funds; that was, if they did not compel the local authorities to combine to do so. If the Ministry would not compel the local authorities to do their duty by combination, the whole State would have to bear the cost of such local works. In regard to the question before the Committee, he thought, with the Premier, that it was only fair that the Treasury should have some protection against the very great powers of taxation wielded at present by local authorities. They could raid the Treasury to a very great extent, and could help to materially increase the already rather formidable deficit. They had seen by the table placed before the House a few days ago, that the endowments paid to divisional authorities had increased from £46,000 in 1880-81 to £163,000 in the past year. He did not think the Committee would do right to allow that increase to go on, or allow the expenditure in that direction to increase at the rate it had done during the past eight years; and he did not think that to put a check upon it would be an act of repudiation. If they admitted that, they must admit that almost every measure passed by Parliament, which altered any existing state of affairs, was an act of repudiation. Many measures passed by Parliament created vested interests, and if it was afterwards found that it was necessary in the public interest to alter the law as it stood, could they be charged with an act of repudiation? He said, no. If it were found necessary in the interests of the public to check that expenditure in a reasonable way, Parliament would be well within its province in doing so. There had, however, been a tacit understanding between the Government and the country, as represented by the boards, that certain endowments should be paid for a given period, and upon that understanding boards had incurred responsibilities which would become very serious if the amount of the endowment was seriously curtailed. There might possibly be some cases in the colony—he did not know that there were—of municipalities and divisional boards having exercised their borrowing powers to such an extent that the whole endowment which they annually received, or should receive, from the central authority was eaten up in interest and redemption charges.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. MORGAN said it was possible. He did not know that it had occurred, but in any event there was only a difference of degree. It had, perhaps, not arrived at that stage

yet. He knew that such was the case in regard to some municipalities, but they were not dealing with them now; and he had no information that it was not so in the case of many boards. Many of them had exercised their borrowing powers on the understanding that the £2 for £1 subsidy would be continued until the end of a term of ten years from the establishment of the principle. To reduce that endowment suddenly to £1 would seriously embarrass those boards and place them in such a position that they might have to pay the bulk of their locally raised revenue into the Treasury in payment of interest on loans. Therefore he thought the idea of cutting down the endowment suddenly ought not to be entertained. He knew that under the Municipal Institutions Act of 1864 it was provided that the amount payable for the first period of five years should be £2 for every £1 locally raised, for the second period of five years £1 for every £1 locally raised, and for the third period 10s. for every £1 locally raised; but before the 10s. period arrived a measure was passed by which it was provided that the endowment should be continued at the rate of £1 for every £1. Now, that was an act of repudiation against the public. They could undertake to do a certain thing that might rather improve the position of local authorities who were prepared to receive 10s. by giving them twice as much as they expected, and if Parliament was at liberty to do that, they surely were at liberty to decrease the amount of endowment. But there was another view of the subject. He thought there ought to be a differential rate of endowment. Take the case of country boards, for instance. Some of them included areas of many hundreds of square miles of country, and there was some population at least spread over the whole of that country. Those boards had many hundred miles of roads to maintain, and property was not of any great value, perhaps £1 to £3 per acre, so that their rating powers were strictly limited by the value of the property. But, if they took the case of a metropolitan board, which included only a few hundred acres and was within a radius of a few miles from the city of Brisbane, which only had a few score miles of roadway to maintain, and had within its territory valuable properties on which valuable buildings were erected, and which had, therefore, power to raise a large sum of money in rates, and draw twice as large a sum annually from the Treasury—boards such as that had less responsibilities, and very much greater opportunities of meeting them, than country boards had. Therefore, there should be a differential rate, so that a metropolitan board ought not to receive more than one-half of what was paid to country boards. Of course, his hon. friends who represented metropolitan constituencies would not agree with that view, but he believed there was a good deal of truth in it, and that there was reason in it. It would, he thought, be nothing but justice if Parliament altered the law so as to make a differential rate, paying less endowment to suburban boards than was paid to country boards, who had much greater responsibilities and less opportunities of meeting them.

Mr. McMASTER: There is more traffic in suburban divisions.

Mr. MORGAN said there was, and there were also private companies to build tram lines which saved the roads. With reference to the proposal of the Government, he must say that he would not vote for any sudden cessation or material reduction in the endowment paid to local authorities. He thought the suggestion made by the hon. member for Townsville would meet the case. If he understood the hon. gentleman

rightly, what he proposed was that there should be a fixed sum voted by Parliament for endowments to divisional boards, say £165,000, the amount at which it now stood, and that that sum should be distributed amongst the boards proportionately to the rates raised in their respective divisions. That would meet the objection which had been raised to the boards having the power to annually increase their demand on the Treasury. He thought that sum might be fixed for the next two years, the remaining portion of the time fixed by Parliament for the endowment of £2 for £1, with the understanding that at the end of that period the whole question should be reviewed, and that Parliament should determine what it thought well at that time. That arrangement would not materially affect the boards, and yet it would protect the Treasury. He thought that the Premier might well accept such an amendment, and that if the hon. gentleman gave the Committee his assurance that he would, when the Estimates came on, consent to grant that amount, the clause might be allowed to pass.

Mr. ADAMS said he thought it was nothing but right that every member of the Committee should express an opinion on the matter under consideration. He remembered that some years ago, before the Divisional Boards Act was passed, the members who were most persistent in going to the office of Public Works, as a rule, got the lion's share of the money voted by Parliament. And the reason the Divisional Boards Act was introduced was to make provision whereby all districts should be treated alike. The hon. member for Warwick had stated that when the Act of 1879 was passed it was provided that a certain amount of endowment should be payable to divisional boards for a limited period—namely, five years, at the rate of £2 to £1. The members of the present Ministry knew perfectly well that the endowments were increasing, but he presumed that, in view of the beneficial effect they saw the Act was having upon the country—how it was enhancing the value, not only of private but also of public property—they thought it was advisable to extend the period during which the endowment of £2 for £1 should be paid from the original five to ten years. They had had five years' experience, and they certainly ought to have known nearly what the increase was likely to amount to. Therefore he could not see how the Government would be justified in taking away the double endowment until the additional five years had expired. It had been said by members on the other side of the Committee, that members on his side wished to force the Government into more expenditure. He did not think that members on his side of the Committee had attempted in any manner or form to embarrass the Government in that respect, or to make them expend any more money than what they were doing for endowment. All that they required was that the Government should keep their promise to the people of the colony. He believed that the divisional boards throughout the colony expected that the endowment of £2 for £1 would be continued; indeed he was sure they did so, for he had been a member of a divisional board himself, and he knew that the board took it for granted that they would receive the double endowment for the whole of the additional five years, and they were confirmed in that view by the fact that the present Government had had five years' experience before they introduced the amending Act. On the strength of that each and every board had entered into contracts, expecting that the £2 endowment would be continued, and he thought it would be very wrong indeed if the Committee were to give way and allow the endowment to be taken off until after the expiration

of the five years. It had also been said by members on the other side of the Committee that the boards not only taxed their own people, but taxed the people of the colony generally. He would like to know whether at the time they were making the roads in and about Brisbane the whole of the colony was not taxed for making and maintaining those roads. They were made before the Divisional Boards Act was brought into force—or a great number of them at any rate.

Mr. McMASTER: No.

Mr. ADAMS: Well, if not, they had attempted to make them. He must candidly confess that he had been in Brisbane backwards and forwards for about two years, and he always saw them mending their ways, but they had got no ways after all. If the general public had contributed towards the maintenance of the roads in the centres of population prior to that Act coming into force, the general public could not grumble now at contributing towards making the roads in the interior of the colony. There was another thing to be looked at in connection with that matter. The divisional boards were bound to take over all the roads in their districts, and not only so but if any accident occurred on those roads they were held responsible. He thought he would be able to show that the Government would not lose, but would be gainers, by continuing the endowment. Before doing that he would read a few words which fell from an hon. gentleman on the other side the other night. That hon. gentleman said:—

"He saw the employees of a board making roads in one district the other day, and they were breaking up metal much smaller than was used on a turnpike road in the old country. That cost 7s. 6d. a yard, and showed they were not by any means hard up and had plenty of money when they could spend it lavishly in that way."

It would have been better if that gentleman had told the Committee and the country where that was, and the country would have known exactly to what particular board he was alluding. He (Mr. Adams) happened to be the individual who drove the hon. member out and showed him the road that was being made. He had shown him the metal that was being broken and told him the amount that was paid for it. If the hon. member had been practical in road-making he would have seen perfectly well that the board in question were really practising economy. The usual practice throughout the colony for many years in forming a road first, especially where the ground was soft, was to put down large metal, 6 inches to 7 inches—what were called "pitchers"—in the first instance, and afterwards to put a coating of 2½-inch metal over that, and on the top of that again "blinding." If the hon. member had taken that into consideration, and had known that in that district the whole of the metal was in large blocks, and had to be broken up before they could work with it, he would have found that the board were really working economically. The board there had come to the conclusion that it was wiser for them to break up the metal to the 2½-inch gauge, as it was called, and put on 7 inches of that with blinding on top. That formation soon consolidated and made a first-class road. In the usual way of forming the roads the large metal used to work up through the small metal, and the consequence was that roads so formed were everlastingly in need of repair. When they took it into their heads to spread the 2½-inch metal over the road with the blinding on top they found it only cost two-thirds of what the roads cost formed in the other way, and besides it remained without needing repair for years. The statement he had quoted as made by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, the other night had been

used as an argument to show that the endowment might be easily reduced or stopped because the boards had plenty of money. To show hon. gentlemen that the board to which the hon. member for Maryborough had alluded had not too much money, he might say that although they were now making roads at about two-thirds of what they used to cost, that board had, through him, made application for £7,000 to continue their work. If the work was continued in that way it would be permanent work. What they wanted was to get sufficient money to carry out permanent work in that way, instead of getting a load of stones here, another load there, which never really made a good road at all; so that not only would it be justice to the divisional boards, but, he contended, it would also be economical to the Government to continue the endowment which enabled the boards to carry out permanent work, which did not cost one-third of the money for maintenance, and the consequence of which would be that, in place of having to levy a rate of 1s. in the £1, they would be able after a time to work with something like 4d. or 6d. in the £1. If the endowment were continued, therefore, for the present, the boards would be enabled to continue permanent work, and in a very short time the ratepayers and the Treasury would not be called upon to contribute nearly as much as they did at the present time. So far as his lights guided him, he had endeavoured to show that by the boards being enabled to do permanent work it was possible that the Government would not be necessitated to make any further payments, and there would not be so great a drain on the Treasury as there was at present.

Mr. STEVENSON said he did not see any necessity for making long speeches on that question. After what hon. members on the other side had said, he thought that by that time the Premier must see that he could not possibly carry the clause. The hon. gentleman must see perfectly well that it was not simply a matter of members having opinions of their own, but that in the face of the fact that they were on the eve of a general election, he must know that hon. members on his own side—even his staunchest supporters—were aware that it would be a most unpopular thing to go to the country with a proposal to do away with endowments to divisional boards. He thought, under the circumstances, it would be better for the Premier to withdraw the clause altogether, and accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville. He thought there was no use in talking on the subject, or he would have had a few words to say about it, because he represented several divisional boards—there were about three in his electorate, and very good boards too. They all knew that the divisional boards of the colony had done a great deal of good, and, as had been said that evening, they had very different roads now, since they had come under the management of the boards, from what they had had when they were under the management of the Government, and he could refer to his own constituency to prove it. He believed that the country, the ratepayers, and the boards would look upon the proposal to do away with the endowment, or to reduce it at the present time, as an act of repudiation, and therefore he thought that the Premier might save a great deal of time, when he saw how the division would go—because it must be apparent to everyone that he could not possibly carry the clause now—if he would withdraw it, and accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he thought it had been admitted by every speaker during the discussion

on the subject that the question of extending the endowment for five years was before the electorates at the last general election; and he believed that in every case the candidates were asked if they were in favour of the extension of the endowment for another period of five years. It was certainly so in his case, and he agreed that it was advisable. In fact he was certain that, after the expiration of the first period, unless some extension had been made, many of the divisional boards could not have carried on at all. He would ask the Premier what would be the effect of the proposed amendment on the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act passed last session? The 28th clause of that Act provided that—

"The proceeds of the rate so increased shall be deemed to be moneys upon which endowment is payable by the Treasurer under the laws in force for the time being relating to local authorities."

He asked the question because he knew of at least one case in which a local authority had been gazetted for the purpose of erecting a bridge, and he knew of another case in which matters were in progress, and a petition was about to be sent in to the Government, having the same object in view. He wished to be able to understand exactly what would be the effect on their endowment in the event of the amendment being carried. He fully concurred in the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville, and thought the Premier would do well to accept it. No one could deny the fact mentioned by the hon. member for Normanby that the Divisional Boards Act was one of the best ever introduced into the House with respect to local government; and no one who knew the condition of the roads of the colony previous to its introduction could question the fact that it was one of the best Acts ever placed on the Statute-book. He hoped the Premier would see his way to accept the hon. member for Townsville's suggestion.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he must also say that the reduction of the endowment would be looked upon with great disfavour by his constituents. But as he read the clause it did not propose any such thing as repudiation. Hon. members seemed to think it meant repudiation, but what it stated was, that if the Government had the money they would give as much as they had previously given. After what had fallen from hon. members the other night in opposing the land tax, and considering how many of them looked with horror at the idea of increased protection, it was perfectly unintelligible to him how they could oppose such a reasonable clause as the one now proposed. If the Treasury could afford the money the full endowment would be paid; that was how he understood it. If they had not the money, they simply could not pay it. He was of opinion that the endowment should not be reduced, and that they ought to submit to reasonable taxation. For, after all, what was the Government but the people? And they could not take a single shilling out of the people's pocket without putting it in again. The country was in a crisis—at a turning point. They were just commencing to look at things more reasonably.

The PREMIER: Quite right.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he was certain his constituents would be very wroth if the endowment were reduced; at the same time they knew very well that they were not living in a fool's paradise. The majority of his constituents would not object to a reasonable land tax so long as the endowment was not cut down, and they would have taxed themselves far heavier had the taxation through the divisional boards been on the land instead of on improvements; and in that respect he claimed that his constituents were, man for

man, more statesmanlike than the members collectively of that Committee. He wished to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that a very large amount of the money received by the divisional boards by rates and endowments was not spent so economically as it ought to be. Many boards could not afford to pay an engineer; and it might be advisable for the Government to make such arrangements that several boards might combine to engage a properly qualified engineer to lay out the works in a systematic and proper manner. If the proposition were put to the vote he would support it, feeling sure that if the Government could afford to give the £2 endowment they would certainly do so.

Mr. CHUBB said the hon. member for Rosewood seemed to think that the proposed clause did not attempt to cut down the endowment. It certainly did not in so many words; but the hon. member must have forgotten what the Chief Secretary said the other day when referring to that very matter. In his Financial Statement the hon. gentleman distinctly proposed to cut down the endowment. His words were—

“We do not propose to reduce the endowment for the current year; the boards have made their arrangements for the present year and have, no doubt, incurred responsibilities on the understanding that they should receive a certain amount of endowment in January next. I do not think it would be fair to interfere with that bargain. But I think that for the future we should adopt the same rule that is adopted in other communities—that is, that Parliament shall say each year how much they propose to give by way of endowment, and let the money so appropriated be divisible among the local authorities in proportion to the amount of rates.”

If that was the principle intended to be applied in the administration of the Act, it was undoubtedly the intention of the Government to cut down the endowment by proposing this year or next year, if the Bill became law, a lump sum to be divided *pro rata* amongst the divisional boards according to the amount of their rates. Of course, the section as it stood did not affect the question, except that if Parliament did not provide any funds there would be nothing to give. There was a difference between the proposed section and the corresponding section in the Bill. In the Bill it was said that a sum equal to, but not exceeding, twice the whole amount of the rates actually raised should be paid by warrant from the consolidated revenue. The proposed new clause stated that there should be paid, out of moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purpose—

“Any sums of money not exceeding, in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of the division, a sum equal to twice the whole amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past, and not exceeding, in every subsequent year, a sum equal to the amount so raised in the year last past.”

The suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville was not to bring that proposition into force as proposed by the section, but to postpone it until 1889, or until the termination of the second period of five years, which was decided upon by the House when it passed the Act of 1884. It had already been said, and ought not to be forgotten, that boards had incurred liabilities—had borrowed money from the Government, to be repaid, with interest, by instalments—on the understanding that they were to have the £2 endowment for the full period of ten years. Referring to Table O it would be found that the local bodies last year borrowed £93,000 from the Government; the year before, £119,000; in 1884-5, £66,000; and in 1883-4, £72,000. The local authorities had been taking advantage of their borrowing power to borrow very largely; and they were all more or less—some of them very

heavily—indebted to the Government. If the endowment were brought to an end at the close of this year, as proposed by the amendment—

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. CHUBB: Or as it might be by the amendment, they would certainly be able to say that faith had not been kept with them, and they would be entitled to consideration, either in the way of extension of the time for repayment, or some other equitable arrangement. Now, at the same time, while it was their duty to keep faith with the boards who had been encouraged to borrow heavily for the construction of public works of great magnitude, it was undeniable that the advances by way of endowment were increasing very rapidly. The endowments to municipalities and divisional boards amounted last year to over £244,000. It increased in that year £20,000 in regard to municipalities, and £30,000 in regard to divisional boards. In three years, if the increase went on at the same rate, the amount payable to local authorities by way of endowment would be £150,000 more than it was at present: that would be nearly half-a-million of money. If a lump sum were put in the Bill—say £100,000—to be divided amongst the local authorities next year, some of them would look at it in this way—that as there was £162,000 divided last year, they would have to take less this year; and they would proceed to rate up their properties so as to get the lion's share of the vote, and the consequence would be that there would be an intolerable burden on the ratepayer, and satisfaction would not be given to all the boards. The fairest thing to do would be to keep the bargain that had been made with the divisional boards—let it run to the end of its time—and by that time the boards would have had fair notice. Parliament might then say, “We will give you no endowment at all.” It would be much fairer to give the boards notice now that when the Act of 1884 ran out there would be no further endowments, than to divide specific sums as proposed, and then go on £1 for £1. It would be much more straightforward and much more in keeping with the bargain made in 1879, and renewed and ratified in 1884.

Mr. McMASTER said his sympathy was with the divisional boards, but yet he could not lose sight of the soundness of the argument that Parliament ought not to lose control of the money it had to pay. There was no doubt it was a very large sum that was being voted, and it had occurred to him whether it would not be advisable to fix some amount—let it go on to the end of 1889 with the understanding that the amount paid then should not be larger than the present—that would be a lump sum of £165,000. The boards would be in no worse position than they were at present, and the Government would be to some extent keeping faith with the divisional boards. There was a good deal said about repudiation of their own action, but that was done almost every session. The Health Act introduced in 1884 allowed the local authorities which came under its provisions to get £1 for £1 for the rates collected.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. McMASTER: Yes, yes. Then the House turned round last year and repudiated what they did in 1884.

Mr. DONALDSON: There was no proviso that it was to be carried on for several years.

Mr. McMASTER: There was no definite period, he admitted.

The PREMIER: Yes; it was to go on for ever.

Mr. McMASTER said he supposed it might have gone on for ever. The municipality of Brisbane and other local authorities collected the endowment for the Health Act, although he did not believe that the Legislature intended that there should be endowment paid on the rate. However, it was the law, and they were paid until the Act last year was amended. He did not think the endowments should suddenly be cut off, because the boards had entered into engagements, basing their calculations on the endowment to be paid till the end of 1889; but he did not think they could complain so long as they were not put in a worse position than they were in this year; and in that way the Parliament would avoid breaking faith with the boards. The hon. member for Warwick, Mr. Morgan, said that the endowment was swallowed up in paying the interest on the money borrowed from the Government. It might be so in Warwick, but it was not so, he was sure, in many local authorities; and he would remind the hon. member that if they had done so in Warwick they had acted illegally, inasmuch as the Government was not supposed to lend any local authority money unless that local authority struck a special rate for the repayment of the interest and sinking fund. They must first show that they were prepared to impose a special rate; and if they had not levied it in Warwick, all he could say was that they ought to do so. They might strike a rate and not collect it. He believed that had been done in many instances. There was no endowment on a special rate, therefore it was no hardship to any person, but it could be levied by a local authority at any time it was required to pay the interest, provided that it was enforced at the commencement. He thought that the money borrowed by local authorities from the Government was a very good investment for the Government, inasmuch as they were paid back with interest. They only lent money at an advanced rate of interest; and he certainly thought the divisional boards ought to be kept faith with as nearly as possible, and that nothing should be done that would in any way stop their improvements. A great many good improvements had been commenced by the boards, and he believed that very great hardships would result if the endowments were cut off suddenly, while, if the boards were not placed in a worse position than they were now in, the Committee would be dealing justly with them.

Mr. GROOM said, as the representative of a divisional board, he had read the clause very carefully, and he certainly was one of those who thought that the credit of that House was pledged to give £2 for £1 to the divisional boards up to the time specified in the Act of 1884. In fact, so far as his own division was concerned, he knew that if the £2 for £1 were suddenly abridged at this time it would be attended with very considerable financial disaster to the division. They had a very large number of selectors in the division, and during the late severe drought, roads had to be constructed—roads marked out by former surveyors, not in accordance with the contour of the country, but in the very worst places roads could possibly be taken—and the board was put to enormous expense in getting those roads put in a passable condition. Again, in consequence of there being no water—selectors having been driven to the hill-sides and tops of mountains to get selections—the board was put to very great expense in sinking wells and constructing reservoirs. In fact, the credit of the division had been pledged, he dared say, for the next eighteen months so far as revenue was concerned, so that a sudden abridgment of the endowment now would, as he had said, be attended with actual financial disaster so far

as that division was concerned. In fact, even with the £2 for £1 endowment, the division had been compelled to make application to the Government for a loan of £1,000 in order to carry out much needed repairs. It was in this position: One subdivision of the division had a very considerable amount to its credit, whereas the other had a very large debit balance, and they were drawing from the division in credit in order to carry out temporary repairs in the division. If, therefore, the £2 for £1 were stopped without warning it was impossible to say what would happen. He could not at all agree with the hon. member for Rosewood in the remark that a considerable amount of money in the hands of divisional boards was not spent economically. He ventured to say that throughout the colony it would be conceded that the divisional boards had been a very great and grand success. The report of the Auditor-General, on sending auditors round to inspect the accounts of the boards, showed that in almost every case the report had been of a highly satisfactory character. The defalcations had been very few, and it was gratifying to observe that visitors from the southern colonies who had travelled through portions of the colony, and seen our system of local self-government in operation, had gone away with feelings of admiration for it. Only a few days ago a prominent member of the New South Wales Parliament did him the honour to call upon him, and requested him to supply him with half-a-dozen copies of the Divisional Boards Bill now before Parliament. He said that he had looked through its clauses and was highly pleased with it, and thought it was well adapted to the circumstances of New South Wales, where a Local Government Bill was promised next session. He might also state that so impressed were the Government of that colony with the value of our divisional boards system that they had sent a special officer to Queensland to report on the practical working of the Act. That officer had visited Toowoomba, inspected the Jondaryan Divisional Board books, and had prepared an elaborate report, one highly creditable to the colony and to the colonists themselves, as showing their capabilities in the way of giving effect to local self-government. Speaking also as a member representing a country district, he might say that the very great success of the working of the divisional boards had been due to the endowment given by the Government. It had assisted the country districts to a very large extent in carrying out public works of considerable magnitude, and those works had been carried out at a minimum of cost. He could mention public works constructed by the Jondaryan, Wambo, and Rosalie Divisional Boards, which, if done by the "Government stroke," of which they used to hear so much in former days, would have cost the Government about three times the amount. Therefore, taking it in every respect, if they looked at the work the divisional boards throughout the country had done, no one could doubt for a moment that they had proved a source of immense good to the colony; and the grant which that House had made had very largely contributed to their success. He was one of those who thought that while it might be necessary for Parliament to exercise proper control over the expenditure of the country, at the same time they ought to consider that the good faith of the House was pledged to the divisional boards for five years from 1884. After that, of course, it would be a matter for consideration what course they should take. Then there was another thing to be considered. Did the Premier intend to extend the same principle to municipalities as he now proposed to adopt with regard to divisional boards? Because

he would draw the attention of the Committee to this fact, and he was sure that members representing the city of Brisbane would not think that any parochial ideas were floating through his mind at the present time. Anyone looking at the returns of the Auditor-General could not help being struck with the fact of how greatly the endowment to the city of Brisbane was increasing. Out of £58,000 paid to municipalities, according to the Auditor-General's Report, no less a sum than £28,000 had been paid to the city of Brisbane, and only £30,000 to the other nineteen municipalities scattered throughout Queensland.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Two-thirds.

Mr. GROOM: That raised a very important issue. If the House was prepared to do justice to the city of Brisbane, and granted them such a large endowment every year, surely they ought not to abridge the endowment for the country districts. Looking at the whole question and having considered the clauses very carefully indeed, he certainly thought that the good faith of the House was concerned in the matter. He could speak of the divisional boards of his own district and say that they had always regarded it as a fact that the endowment would be continued until 1889. Their works had been prepared on that basis; they had entered into contracts which might or might not extend for one or two years, in full expectation that the promise would be carried out. He did not know what the amendment of the hon. member for Townsville was, as he was not in the House at the time.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: It was only a suggestion.

Mr. GROOM: However, he himself was inclined to think that they ought to keep faith with the divisional boards to the extent given in the Act of 1884.

Mr. HAMILTON said it appeared that the measure which was renewed in 1884 had proved a severe tax upon the Exchequer, and if it had been realised at the time it was passed that it would prove such a drain probably it would not have been carried. But that was not the question before them. The question was that it was dishonest not to keep a bargain which had been fairly entered into. If an individual made a bargain, and subsequently found that it was a bad one, he would be extremely dishonest if he attempted to get out of it. And it would be just as dishonest on the part of Parliament as on the part of an individual. As the hon. member for Bulimba stated, when hon. members were before their constituents at the general election most of them made the impression that they would be in favour of the renewal of the endowment, and in consequence of the general desire and the impression they made, the endowment was renewed. The bargain having been made, it would be extremely dishonest to try and get out of it because they found it a bad one.

The PREMIER said he had listened to the debate with very great interest, and as far as he could see no valid argument had been attempted to be adduced why Parliament should not keep control of that as well as other expenditure. In fact it was an unheard-of thing that one Parliament should be bound to an expenditure which might have been considered desirable by a previous Parliament. No Parliament had ever been foolish enough to attempt to bind all future Parliaments, for when the so-called bargain was made it was subject to the condition that it might be revised in any future year by Parliament. That was an essential part of the bargain. Now, they were told that the

divisional boards had been led to expect £2 for £1 for the remainder of the five years, and he had not disputed that it was intended by Parliament that they should do so; but the power was kept in the hands of Parliament to revise the bargain if it saw fit. He must repeat that they were, after all, one community and not several. Hon. members argued as if the divisional boards had nothing whatever to do with the general commonwealth. The commonwealth had made a bargain with individuals, but the individuals composed the commonwealth. Was it possible to say that such a bargain should not be revised? He should be sorry to do anything to cause embarrassment to divisional boards. He did not think there was much in the arguments about the loans or contracts that had been incurred. As far as the loans were concerned the Treasury had protected itself by not lending more money to divisional boards than such amounts that the instalments upon them could be paid out of an endowment of £1 for £1. He knew that great care had been taken in that respect. With respect to contracts, it was said that they had been made extending over a number of years, but he was quite sure that no divisional board had any right to anticipate from year to year a larger endowment than it received the year before. They knew very well that it was the practice of local authorities to bring forward each year estimates of their requirements, and the contracts were let on that basis and in just the same way as was done by Parliament. He might instance the municipality of Brisbane. Every year their estimate was brought up of the probable revenue—the amount of the endowment for the year was then a known quantity—the contracts expected to be carried out, and the amounts required for them; but they did not accept contracts extending over several years as Government did, and he did not think any injustice would be done if they knew year by year what they were to get for the year. He was very much impressed with the argument that they should not suddenly reduce the endowment, and that divisional boards should be secured against an unexpected reduction. He had no objection to considering the matter on that basis, and he was prepared to propose or accept an amendment providing that the amount available for the next three years still remaining of the five years should not be less than the amount payable in respect of the endowment due on the rates raised last year. He did not think any board could ask for more than that, but if they did he was sure they would not get it, because Parliament would not give more. Parliament had the power it was now invited to exercise, and that power would be exercised in the future. The suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville could be carried out by adding to the amendment which he had moved a proviso to this effect: That in each of the next three financial years ending on the 30th day of June in the years 1888, 1889, and 1890 respectively, the sum of £165,000 should be available.

Mr. PATTISON: That is not what the hon. member for Townsville suggested.

The PREMIER said that substantially he understood the hon. member to suggest that the amount should not be reduced for the next three years below what it was last year. There was the other view that the £2 for £1 endowment should go on till 1889, and leave matters as they stood.

Mr. PATTISON: That is what he suggested.

The PREMIER said the former suggestion was also made, and he thought it was reasonable and might be accepted. By that means the expenditure would not be increased at any rate. He did not believe himself that the rates or the

endowment would be increased much during the year; but if the endowment became much larger, then the law, as it now stood, and accepting the interpretation that had generally been put upon it, would operate injuriously. The result of his proposal would be that Parliament would say from year to year how much money it could afford to give for endowments to divisional boards; that the amount should not exceed £2 for £1 for the first ten years, and £1 for £1 for the subsequent period, but that during the next three years the sum of £165,000 at least should be available for distribution amongst the divisional boards. Now, that would, at any rate, prevent a sudden demand on the Treasury for the next three years, and he was sure it would do no injustice to the boards. He should be prepared to propose that amendment if it was acceptable to the Committee.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought the amendment should not be accepted. He did not think when a principle was at stake that any compromise should be accepted. A bargain had been made, and it had been understood by divisional boards that they would get a certain endowment. The hon. gentleman made a great cry over that £165,000, but how much did they pay for roads and bridges in 1877? £100,000. In the year 1878 they paid £120,000, and he did not think that in a colony like this an increase from £120,000 to £165,000 was a very alarming one. It did not seem to him to be an excessive increase of taxation in the direction in which that taxation went, and he hoped hon. members would stick to what they did earlier in the existence of the present Parliament. They made a bargain, and he hoped for the sake of their good name they would not repudiate that bargain. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley, in quoting the Health Act, did not quote an analogous case at all, because it rested with Parliament to repeal that Act at any time.

The PREMIER: So it can this.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Yes; but it does not propose to do so.

Mr. McMASTER: The Health Act was only amended.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was only amended in such a way as to repeal the endowment; that was the only part that touched an alderman—the part that affected his pocket. He could not see that the Premier was justified in shifting his position; either he must hold to the position he first took up or let it go altogether. No doubt during the next three years the amount paid by way of endowment would materially increase, but that was a responsibility incurred by Parliament, and it ought to be met by honourable men. At the end of that period there must be a revision, because there must be some limitation. That limitation, however, should not be fixed until the bargain entered into had been completed, even if it was necessary, in order to keep faith with the divisional boards, that the general community should be taxed to a certain extent.

The PREMIER moved, as an amendment to the amendment before the Committee, the addition of the following words:—

Provided that in each of the years ending on the 30th day of June, in the years 1888, 1889, and 1890 respectively, the sum of £165,000 shall be available for such payment.

Mr. MELLOR said he should like to see the double endowment paid for the present year, because the boards had entered into contracts and pledged their credit and, in some instances, overdrawn their accounts with the banks. He

supposed the Valuation Bill would come into force next year, and then the revenue derived from rates would not be so great, and consequently the endowment paid by the Government would be less than had been paid in the past few years.

Mr. GROOM said he would instance a case for the consideration of the Premier in view of the amendment. He knew of a wealthy division whose last annual balance-sheet showed £10,000 to its credit, while the rate struck was only 4d. in the £1. Suppose next year the rate struck was 8d. or 1s. in the £1, what would be the effect of that on the sum voted for divisional boards? The present rate produced a revenue something like £3,000, upon which the endowment was £6,000; and if a rate of 8d. or 1s. in the £1 was struck next year and the following year, that division would swallow up a considerable proportion of the vote.

Mr. CHUBB said the hon. gentleman had in effect repeated what he (Mr. Chubb) said half-an-hour ago. If a fixed sum were voted there would be a scramble for the money, and some divisions would raise their rates and put a high value on their properties so as to get a big share.

Mr. McMASTER said he understood there was a law in force by which no divisional board that had a large sum to its credit could claim endowment.

The PREMIER said he wished there was. If hon. members would turn to section 190, which dealt with the making of rates, they would find the following proviso at the end of the clause:—

“Provided that if the board has at the beginning of any year, to the credit of the divisional fund, sufficient money to defray all the probable and reasonable expenses of the board for that year, the Governor in Council may excuse the board from making any such rate during that year, or may direct that the maximum amount of any rate to be made during that year shall not be more than an amount to be specified by the Governor in Council.”

He wished that proviso had become law last year. The fact was the matter had not become important till now, and did not attract attention, but now that its importance was seen it was the duty of hon. members as reasonable men to face the difficulty and deal with it in the most reasonable way.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that as long as the Government had plenty of money to spend it was not a matter of importance, but when they had none it was a matter of very great importance.

The PREMIER: Quite right.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought the scramble could be provided against if each board was limited to the amount of endowment received at the end of the present year. He looked at the matter from a practical point of view. He would like to see the double endowment paid up to the end of the term; but where was the money to come from? The Treasury was empty, and it would be emptier soon—at least the hole would be bigger—if increased endowments were paid. It was all very well to talk about repudiation, but one could not keep to a bargain if he had not the means of carrying the bargain out. If they voted £10 for £1, and the Treasurer had not got the money, he could not pay it. He sympathised very much with the boards; but he considered that, with the promise to give them the same amounts for the next three years that they had received for the last year, they had very little to complain of, considering the state

the country was in. He would certainly support the amendment of the Premier, simply because there was no other way of getting out of the difficulty. The Committee had refused the Government taxation which was expected to bring in £100,000 a year, and had urged upon them retrenchment in every direction. He thought retrenchment in that direction a very fair thing.

Mr. PALMER asked what about boards that might be created in future? He knew of a case where a petition was about to be presented to form a new board.

The PREMIER said there was no possibility of a new board except Torres, and that was provided for.

Mr. PALMER said the Croydon people were petitioning to have a board created there.

The PREMIER said there was an old board there.

Mr. DONALDSON said there were some boards that had only been two or three years in existence: how would they be provided for?

The PREMIER said new clause 222 provided for them.

Mr. DONALDSON said they should have the £2 for £1 from whenever they came into existence.

The PREMIER said that it was provided by section 225 of the Bill that a new board formed out of an old one started from its original formation. He did not think there was a place in the colony where a new board could be formed, except perhaps in Cape York Peninsula.

Mr. DONALDSON said if the Premier's amendment were carried those boards would only get the £2 for £1 endowment for three years.

The PREMIER said the Torres was the only board that remained to be formed.

Mr. DONALDSON said there was a board on the Diamantina which had only been formed during the last few years.

The PREMIER: It was formed in 1879, but would not work.

Mr. DONALDSON said he did not know that the board had been previously in existence, as he was not in the colony. He knew that for some time after he came back there was no board at all in the Diamantina district, and it was only within the last few years that one had been formed.

Mr. NELSON said he would like to have some assurance that the same principle should be applied to municipalities; they were entitled to that assurance. The arguments that had been applied to boards applied with greater force to municipalities. He noticed from the Auditor-General's Report that the rates actually raised in municipalities and shire councils last year exceeded those of the previous year by £22,000, whereas divisional board endowments had increased by £26,000. But municipalities only received £1 for £1 endowment, so that actually the rates in municipalities were increasing at a greater ratio than those in divisional boards.

The PREMIER said he would certainly undertake to bring in a Bill, and would give notice of it to-morrow. If the principle were adopted he should make it apply to municipalities as well.

Mr. MOREHEAD: There is no principle in it at all.

The PREMIER said they might call it "scheme." It was only a name. He supposed

"principle" meant rule of action. It might be a moral rule of action or a rule of expediency; the present was a question of financial expediency, and there was no moral rule at all about it.

Mr. MOREHEAD: None at all.

The PREMIER said if the principle were adopted he would give notice of a Bill to-morrow to make it apply to municipalities.

Mr. STEVENS said he had no intention of prolonging the debate, as he had expressed his opinion before. He was not prepared to accept any amendment at all which would interfere with the £2 for £1 endowment to the end of the present year. Whatever might be done in future, they had no right to interfere with the arrangements made by boards in the certainty of the present endowment being continued.

The PREMIER said he thought £165,000 was a very fair amount to allow divisional boards.

Mr. KATES said he thought there was a very great want of wisdom on the part of the Government in dealing with the matter. The present was the last session of the present Parliament, and why should they meddle with such things? It would make them very unpopular, and there was no necessity for it. The boards were to have the £2 for £1 endowment this year and the Government were going to decide what should be done in the year 1890. Let the next Parliament deal with that.

The PREMIER said in regard to what had fallen from the hon. member for Darling Downs and other members, he thought the lasting popularity of the Government would depend upon their showing a firm determination to do what was right.

Mr. KATES said they might possibly have an overflowing Treasury in 1890.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought it was not a question for future Parliaments. The present Government, with the consent of the present Parliament, had incurred a very heavy deficit, and they should do their best not to leave it as a legacy to future Parliaments. It was cowardly. They ought to meet financial responsibilities as they arose.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put and negatived.

The PREMIER said perhaps it would facilitate the discussion of the matter if he were to move the first printed amendment now, on the understanding that he should afterwards propose the proviso he had read just previously. He moved that the following words be inserted at the end of the clause as amended—namely, that—

Upon receipt of such account, the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Treasurer, direct him to pay to the credit of the divisional fund by way of endowment, out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, any sums of money not exceeding, in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of the division, a sum equal to twice the whole amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past, and not exceeding, in every subsequent year, a sum equal to the amount so raised in the year last past.

Amendment put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the following words be added after the amendment just passed:—

Provided that in each of the years ending on the 30th June in the years 1888, 1889, and 1890, respectively, the sum of £165,000 shall be available for such payment.

Mr. ALAND said he was certainly of opinion that for the present year, at all events, the boards should receive the endowment of £2 for £1, that was on the rates struck on the 1st January last, but according to the amendment now proposed that would not be the case. He was willing that the amount payable by the Treasury this year should be taken as the basis on which the endowment for other years should be framed. That would be perfectly fair.

The PREMIER said that was an unknown quantity. He did not know what that amount might be; it might be £200,000. They could not agree to an unknown quantity like that. He did not know that they could make an extra rate now, but whether or not the endowment for this year was at present unknown.

Mr. MOREHEAD: What about clause 224?

The PREMIER said that what he was proposing now was to put the matter entirely in the hands of Parliament for the next three years. It was proposed to fix a minimum sum of £165,000 for endowments to divisional boards during that period, but Parliament was not restricted to that amount. If more money was available they could vote a larger sum, but the amount must not be less than £165,000. Of course if that clause was carried he would not propose new clause 224.

Mr. GROOM said the point that his hon. colleague started was this: that as soon as the annual general elections in January were over, the clerks of divisional boards prepared estimates of ways and means for the current year, upon which their rates were struck, and contracts entered into; but according to the amendment the boards would not receive the full endowment of £2 for £1 for this year, and, consequently, would be astray in their calculations. There was no doubt about that. He represented a large subdivision in which there were a number of small selectors—eighty and forty acre men—who were the most pertinacious in their demands. And necessarily so, because they required the roads made, and used them more than the large selectors. The board of which he was a member would be entirely astray in their calculations if the endowment were reduced as proposed, and would be placed in a most awkward position. On the strength of the Act of 1884 they levied their rates, made contracts, and now, without any warning, they were suddenly deprived of the endowment—or rather, it was limited to a minimum amount. He could not conceive why the Premier should propose that the endowment of £2 for £1 should not be continued on the rates struck for the year 1887-8.

Mr. MACFARLANE said it appeared to him that the Government supporters were more anxious to see that the increased expenditure for endowment continued than members on the other side of the Committee. He was astonished that members did not fully recognise the present position of affairs. The Treasurer had not been able to make both ends meet. Was that the way to make ends meet—for hon. members to demand that the increased endowment to divisional boards should be continued? They were altering the laws of the colony, and they might just as well say that the Committee, because they made a certain law last year, had no right to alter it this year. They were continually altering the laws. It was a very easy way for them to get out of their difficulty to pay the divisional boards the same amount for the next three years as they had received for the last year; and none of them could grumble at that, because the amount paid would be very little less than was received last year.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if that was the hon. member's idea of commercial morality he was very sorry for him.

Mr. MELLOR said the hon. member for Ipswich seemed to think that they were trying to embarrass the Government, and asked whether it was right to do that? He (Mr. Mellor) would point out that the matter was one of very great importance to divisional boards, and one that affected them very seriously. Would it not be an act of repudiation, when they knew that divisional boards had in a great many instances pledged their credit on the strength of the endowment which they expected to receive, if the Committee were at once to reduce the amount without any notice whatever? The boards had made their estimates for the year on the strength of the endowment, and he thought that if the Premier could only see his way clear to continue the endowment at the same rate for the present year, that would meet the requirements of the case at present, and the future could be dealt with in a subsequent session. He did not know whether, under the proposal now before them, some divisional boards would be able to carry on their works, make roads, and maintain actions at law that might arise; they might have to borrow money to pay for those actions. There was no doubt that divisional boards throughout the colony had a grave responsibility resting upon them. Works which the Government had started in the shape of bridges were now tumbling down and the boards had not got the money to rebuild them. The boards had a very grave responsibility, and the Government should, during the current year at all events, continue the endowment of £2 to £1.

The PREMIER said he would suggest, if hon. members wished to test the opinion of the Committee upon the point, that they could most conveniently do so by moving the omission from the amendment of the words "eighteen hundred and eighty-eight," and if the amendment was carried, clause 224 could stand as it was. That would raise the question.

Mr. ALAND said he would move that the words "eighteen hundred and eighty-eight" be omitted. He would like to say before he sat down that he rather admired the remarks of the hon. member for Ipswich, who talked about their trying to embarrass the Government. They did not want to do anything of the kind. What they did want was that the Government should stick to the bargain the House had entered into, as far as they possibly could.

Mr. DONALDSON said that the hon. member for Toowoomba, by the amendment he proposed, was assisting the Government in trying to do away with the bargain made by the House. The other night, in speaking upon the question, he had advocated the necessity of putting on a fixed amount, and also an extension of the period over which it should be done. There was no use in fixing the amount now unless some compensation was given to the divisional boards who had expected the continuance of the endowment for the next couple of years. He was confident the divisional boards would not be satisfied with what was proposed. The Premier the other night expressed astonishment at his saying that he would not trust Parliament to vote a sufficient sum of money, but what had taken place confirmed his opinion. The speech of the hon. member for Ipswich had rather astonished him. He had thought the hon. member, as a commercial man, would have had more commercial morality than to have defended the action of the Government in trying to get out of the bargain made. If hon. members like the hon. member for Ipswich, who was looked

upon as a straightforward honest member, could hold such views, they might well think they were giving way too much if they left the matter in the hands of Parliament to decide how much should be given. It would be only a matter of counting heads, and the boards would certainly get off very badly if the amount had to be voted year by year by that House.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that two hon. members on the other side had expressed surprise at the commercial morality of the hon. member for Ipswich. The commercial morality of the hon. member for Ipswich would stand the test as well as that of either of those gentlemen. He was not the least bit afraid of his commercial morality or any other form of morality. He could not understand what hon. members meant by commercial morality, as applied to Acts of Parliament? What was an Act of Parliament. Was it not a decision of that Chamber, arrived at after discussion, and were not the opinions adopted this year very often reversed in the next? Was it commercial immorality to alter an Act of Parliament? He did not think the leader of the Opposition could maintain such a position, and if he did, then he was the grossest exhibition of commercial immorality that sat in that House.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he hardly understood the hon. gentleman. What he voted for one year he was prepared to vote against the next. He (Mr. Morehead) had never done so.

Mr. MACFARLANE: Yes, you have, often.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member was particularly unfortunate in the present instance, as he (Mr. Morehead) happened to be the only member of the Committee who really opposed the proposal to continue the endowment. The hon. member for Ipswich supported that proposal when it was before the House, and he was now assisting in an act of repudiation by the House. He considered that was as grave an act of repudiation as an act of repudiation by an individual; and an individual who would assist in it and support it would be just as likely to be guilty of an act of repudiation outside of the House.

Mr. FOXTON said the mistake the hon. member for Ipswich fell into was that he forgot that whenever Parliament repealed an Act it took care to conserve all rights and interests existing under it; but in the present case, if the hon. gentleman's views were carried out, existing rights would not be conserved. He did not agree with the hon. member for Warrego in his view of the amendment proposed by the hon. member for Toowoomba.

Mr. CHUBB said he did not think the proposal of the hon. member for Toowoomba would have the effect he desired. He proposed to omit the words "eighteen hundred and eighty-eight," but still Parliament might vote a less sum than would be required to pay the endowment of £2 to £1. As the law stood the Treasurer had to pay £2 for every £1 of rates raised, but if the proposed clause was passed, a sum "not exceeding" £2 to £1 might be paid, and that might be less than the endowment.

Mr. ALAND said if the amendment was carried clause 224 would stand, and it would provide for the endowment for the present year. That was the way he understood.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 14.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Isambert, S. W. Brooks, Bulcock, Wakefield, Bailey, Macfarlane, Sheridan, Moreton, Dutton, Rutledge, W. Brookes, Salkeld, and Morgan.

NOES, 27.

Messrs. Groom, Norton, Morehead, Nelson, Chubb, Aland, Black, Foote, Jessop, Buckland, Campbell, White, McMaster, Adams, Donaldson, Pattison, Mellor, Brown, Stevens, Stevenson, Foxton, Philp, Wallace, Ferguson, Grimes, Kates, and Murphy.

Question resolved in the negative.

Proviso, as amended, put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 24.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Rutledge, Dutton, Moreton, W. Brookes, Aland, Mellor, Isambert, White, Buckland, Salkeld, Bulcock, McMaster, Wakefield, S. W. Brooks, Campbell, Grimes, Bailey, Macfarlane, Foote, Nelson, Sheridan, Foxton, and Morgan.

NOES, 17.

Messrs. Stevens, Philp, Norton, Morehead, Chubb, Groom, Black, Jessop, Stevenson, Ferguson, Donaldson, Adams, Pattison, Murphy, Wallace, Kates, and Brown.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the clause was further amended by the addition of the following proviso:—

Provided also that the endowment payable to divisional boards in the year ended the thirtieth day of June, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight, in respect of money raised in the several divisions by rates during the year one thousand eight hundred and eighty-seven, shall be computed and paid at the same rate as if this Act had not been passed.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 222 and 223 passed as printed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the following new clauses were inserted after clause 223:—

If the amount available in any year for the purpose of the endowment of divisions is insufficient for the payment of the full amounts hereinbefore limited, the amount so available shall be divisible amongst the boards of the several divisions in proportion to the amount of the sums raised therein respectively by the rates aforesaid.

Provided that in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of a division the board thereof shall, for the purpose of making such distribution, be credited with double the amount of the rates aforesaid actually raised in the division, and the amount so available shall be divisible in the same proportions as if such double amount had been actually so raised.

In the event of the subsequent constitution of a division, or portion of a division, as a municipality, the endowment provided by the Local Government Act of 1876, or any Act amending or in substitution for that Act, to be payable to such municipality shall be deemed to have commenced from the date of the first constitution of the division.

The remaining clauses of the Bill, the schedules, and the preamble were passed as printed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the adoption of the report was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. To-morrow I propose to recommit the Divisional Boards Bill for the purpose of reconsidering the clauses of which I gave notice before. With respect to them I propose to ask the House to agree that in respect to mining under roads the boards may make by-laws, which of course they will be obliged to submit for the approval of the Governor in Council. The other clauses will remain in the same form as before. After that—which I hope will not take very long—I propose to take the second reading of the Financial Districts Bill, and, if time allows, the other two Bills dealing with decentralisation.

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