

Queensland



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Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 31 AUGUST 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 31 August, 1887.

Motion for Adjournment.—The Grace Jones Assault Case—Conduct of Police.—Warwick Railway Station.—Divisional Boards Bill—adoption of report—recommittal.—Financial Districts Bill—second reading.—Local Administration Bill—second reading.—Real Property (Local Registries) Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

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

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

THE GRACE JONES ASSAULT CASE.—CONDUCT OF POLICE.—WARWICK RAILWAY STATION.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to call the attention of hon. members to a certain paragraph relating to the honour and character of an hon. member of this House that appeared in the *Courier* of Monday the 29th August. I shall conclude with the usual motion for adjournment. On taking up the *Courier* on Monday morning I found this paragraph relating to an honourable and, I believe, a very highly respectable and much respected member of this House:—

"Grace Jones was taken to the hospital, where subsequently she told several contradictory stories about the assault upon her. Mr. Macfarlane, M.L.A., visited the hospital, and she pointed him out to the nurse as her assailant."

The article is a long one, and deals with a very abominable case, and I will not trouble the House with it; but the second paragraph I refer to reads thus:—

"Why was the only person Grace Jones identified as her assailant—namely, Mr. Macfarlane—not placed under arrest and charged with the offence?"

I draw attention to the matter to give the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, an opportunity of clearing his character, which I consider has been foully aspersed.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: You can take the words to mean nothing else. Hon. members may cry "Oh, oh!" and "No, no!" but I say that anyone reading that article can come to no other conclusion than that the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, was seriously accused, and lay under the serious imputation of having been the man who committed this brutal assault. Individuals who know him would not think it at all likely, but the characters of our public men are damaged if they are to be held up to public contempt and public odium by an unlicensed publication of this kind, sending forth the most malicious and slanderous statements in its leading articles as if they were honestly sending forth truth to the world. This bears out very strongly what I pointed out to this House when introducing the Bill which I was compelled to withdraw. It bears out my statement that we are utterly unprotected unless recourse is had to an expensive process of law. We are utterly unprotected from any abominable publication of this kind. We may be charged with rape, murders, assaults, or anything else, and held up to public odium and public scorn, through the publications of a paper of this kind. I think when the leading organ, newspaper, or whatever it calls itself, becomes so degraded and to such an extent as to publish such articles casting vile imputations, and more than imputations—direct charges—against the character of an hon. member of this House, the House will ultimately see the absolute necessity of protecting itself in some way. I certainly hope that the only

remedy the hon. member has will be availed of. I hope he will institute such proceedings as will compel this journal to make not only a full and ample apology, but also make some substantial recompense, whether it is in the form of a donation to the hospital or something else. I consider that they should be made to pay for this, and I shall be very happy to contribute my mite towards the funds for carrying on proceedings against this journal. I think they richly deserve to be punished for publishing such a slanderous, malicious, utterly untrue statement of this kind, reflecting upon the character of a member of this House. I move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think the hon. member need have taken the trouble to call attention to the article in question, so far as it concerns the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane. I am sure his reputation does not suffer in the least by the statement made in that leading article. I do not think his reputation will suffer in the least either in this House or in the country, although I certainly think that the manner in which the subject was introduced would lead anyone to assume that the police had been guilty of some serious neglect in not charging the hon. gentleman with what was obviously a ridiculous charge so far as he is concerned; but beyond that I do not know that it is necessary for us to take any action in the matter.

Mr. STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one thing in connection with the matter which I would like to bring before the House. I quite agree with the Premier when he says that the charge was obviously a ridiculous one so far as Mr. Macfarlane was concerned, but the man who was charged with the offence, Mr. Greetham, deserves the sympathy of this House as much as the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane. He was charged with this offence, and was treated, in my opinion, in the most disgraceful manner. It seems we cannot get the slightest redress. If the report of the *Courier* is correct he went to the Colonial Secretary and asked that steps should be taken to have an inquiry made to clear him completely of the charge, and he got but very scant courtesy indeed from that gentleman. Mr. Greetham appears to me to have been treated disgracefully by the police, and he cannot even get redress from the Colonial Secretary. Everyone in Ipswich who knows Mr. Greetham knows that he is as respectable a man as there is there, and that he is as innocent of the charge made against him as the child unborn. Yet when he goes to the Colonial Secretary to ask for an inquiry the matter is pooh-poohed, and he is scarcely treated with common courtesy.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) said: Mr. Speaker,—I may be allowed to make a few remarks upon what fell from the hon. member for Normanby, and I must at once deny the imputation of want of courtesy to Mr. Greetham. He came to the office and had a conversation with me on the matter. What he asked me for was not so much to clear his character as to have an inquiry into the conduct of the police. That is what he came to see me about, as he was acquitted, and therefore, publicly, his character was cleared.

Mr. STEVENSON: It was "not proven"; that was all.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The police magistrate said he left the court without a stain on his character. I went very carefully over the papers in the case, and I cannot see anything in them at all to show that the police did anything opposed to their duty

in the case. The girl swore most distinctly and positively in the hospital that Mr. Greetham was the person who assaulted her. I am satisfied that if there had been a poorer person concerned in the case we should not have heard a word upon a subject of this sort.

Mr. STEVENSON: I do not know anything about Mr. Greetham.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am speaking generally, and I say that if a poorer person were arrested on a similar charge there would have been no remarks made about it. I say the police acted in this case just as they would have done in the case of a poorer person charged with the assault. The girl positively swore to certain statements, and the police acting upon those statements arrested Mr. Greetham. A warrant was applied for, and I am told the police magistrate declined to issue a warrant for Mr. Greetham's arrest. Another magistrate did so, and Mr. Greetham was arrested and bailed out immediately. The case came on before the court, and it was certainly proved there that the girl said one thing one day and another the next, and what she swore to in the information she would not swear to in the court. On that ground the whole case failed, and Mr. Greetham left the court acquitted of the charge. Upon looking over all the papers in the case I can see nothing to necessitate an inquiry into the conduct of the police, who did nothing contrary in this case to what they have always done in similar cases. The usual course was followed to bring the matter before the court.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I know there is a very strong feeling about this case outside the House, and I also know that the general public are not satisfied at all with the action taken by the Colonial Secretary. If the case was clearly in favour of the police as he says, the best thing he can do is to lay the whole of the papers and depositions on the table of the House, to save the trouble of their being moved for. As regards the nonsense he talks about there being one mode of treating the poor and another the rich—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I never said there was.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I do not know what other inference this House can draw from the statements made by the Colonial Secretary. He says that if this man had been a poor man no trouble would be taken in the matter. I do not know Mr. Greetham, and never heard of him until this case came up. A poor man has just as much consideration and justice from this House as a rich man, and it never has been otherwise here. I do not think this House will ever be a respecter of persons. I sincerely hope the hon. gentleman will lay the depositions in this case upon the table, as the outside public have formed a very different conclusion from that arrived at by the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—There is a great deal more in this matter than the Colonial Secretary may see. It happens by some accident that I have just been reading a late home paper, and I find that this question of the conduct of the police has been primarily the cause of the defeat of the English Government. That was in connection with the Miss Cass case. Miss Cass was treated in pretty much the same way as Mr. Greetham has been treated, and the Home Secretary spoke of the matter in the House of Commons in pretty much the same way as the Colonial Secretary has spoken this afternoon. Indeed I see a very remarkable likeness between the two statements. I am satisfied the House will want to know

that the liberty of the subject is not likely to be interfered with by the police. Now, the conduct of Sergeant O'Driscoll, of the Ipswich force, was certainly very scandalous. We must all sympathise with a gentleman like Mr. Greetham, who finds himself brought before the court by the conduct of Sergeant O'Driscoll. The only satisfaction he could get was a rather left-handed one—that he was acquitted. If I had been Mr. Greetham I should not think that sufficient, and I should think I was entitled to have an inquiry made. This is a very serious question for this House to consider. There is a Bill dealing with the relations between men and women before us, and it is as well to remember that if women require to be protected from men, men also require to be protected from women. I do not want to take up the time of the House, but I will say that if I had been the Colonial Secretary, for the sake of peace and quietness I would have granted an inquiry; and I do not think that if an inquiry had been held Sergeant O'Driscoll would have been allowed to retire as he did. I think he ought to be told that if he is guilty of such conduct again he will be dismissed from the force.

Mr. SCOTT said: Mr. Speaker,—I would like to know if anything is to be done to punish the girl in this case for the false statements. It was upon her statements apparently the action was taken, and it is time this sort of thing was checked. I would like to know whether any steps will be made to punish her for her conduct.

Mr. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—I am quite in accord with what has fallen from the hon. member for Leichhardt. I think this girl should certainly be brought before the court and an investigation made to prove what no doubt will be proved, that she gave false evidence, and she should be punished as a caution to all other impostors of the same class. But, with regard to the action of the police in this matter, I think that if the sergeant had not taken the steps he did take there would have been a very much greater outcry than there has been. It would have been immediately said that this Mr. Greetham being a well-to-do man—I do not know him even by sight, but I infer he is well-to-do by the way he has been spoken of—could get off scot-free because he was not a poor man. I say that as far as we can judge the sergeant could have done nothing else than he has done. The girl positively swore that Mr. Greetham had assaulted her, and I consider that the sergeant was fully justified in doing what he did. If he had not taken immediate action he would have been very much more abused than he is now.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one feature in this case that I think ought not to have been overlooked. If the girl brought charges against more persons than one, then they ought to have been all treated alike. I think everyone will admit the justice of that. I do not think with the hon. gentleman who has just spoken that if the police had not taken the action they did take, public opinion would have been more strongly against them than it is now; I consider that their action was uncalled for. I quite agree with the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, that when Mr. Greetham asked for an inquiry he was entitled to have it. Every man is entitled to an inquiry in a case like that; to say that his being acquitted was enough is the greatest absurdity I ever heard. I wonder how the hon. the Colonial Secretary himself would feel if a charge like that were brought against him and he were simply acquitted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He did not ask me to acquit him of that.

Mr. NORTON: He asked for an inquiry into the conduct of the man who had taken action against him, and that he was entitled to. No man's character is safe if charges like that are listened to and acted upon by the police. In no case, however good a man may be or however bad he may be, ought the police to take such action as they took against Mr. Greetham. I do not know anything about Mr. Greetham, but I do think that, although he was acquitted, the result to him must have been very unpleasant. He is said to be a man of respectable position, and, of course, whether he is so or not, it must be a very great hardship to be treated in that way. I do hope that the Colonial Secretary will put on the table all the papers he has on this subject, without their being asked for by a formal motion.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I was very glad to hear the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Logan. I was going to say something of the same sort myself. I am satisfied that if the sergeant of police had not taken the action he did when this woman swore she had been assaulted, there would have been a howl of indignation. I happen to know this sergeant of police, and I believe him to be a worthy officer; I do not believe there is a better officer in the Police Force. I am sure he would not do anything without good cause. At the same time, as it has turned out that some mistake was made, I think that it is due to Mr. Greetham to grant him the inquiry he asks for. I cannot see why it should have been refused. I was also pleased to hear the remarks that fell from the hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, because I am sure that in many of these cases men want protection as much as women. Most of us know of cases which have come before the courts where women have brought such charges entirely without foundation. It is well known that many a man has been hanged for a grave offence that he never committed. I think, therefore, that an inquiry should be made, and, if necessary, this young woman should be put in the dock instead of the man she made the charge against.

Mr. FRASER said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one feature in this case that seems to have been overlooked, and that is that the gentleman actually got into this trouble by doing an act of kindness; so that anyone who is ready to lend a helping hand in case of necessity may be exposing his character to the vilest charges. I do not wish to make any reflection upon the police, but I think they should be more careful than they seem to have been in this case.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—We seem to be wandering rather away from the subject raised by the hon. member who moved the adjournment—that is, whether the newspaper press of this colony is justified in making the most unwarrantable and false statements in connection with the character of an hon. member of this House. I am informed by the hon. member for Ipswich himself that the charge made in that article is absolutely untrue—that he never visited the hospital, and was never identified by the girl as having committed this outrage. Now, sir, I think the time has arrived when some limit should be placed on the license allowed to the Press. I can understand newspaper writers giving a certain bias to their articles, but I do not think they are justified in inventing their facts, and in publishing such an article as this. However well the hon. gentleman alluded to is known in this House and in the immediate vicinity of Brisbane, he is, to a certain extent, a stranger to people inhabiting more distant parts of the colony, and we all know that if you give a lie a few hours' start no amount of

contradiction will eradicate the injury which has been done to a gentleman's character. Now, sir, the hon. the Colonial Secretary seems to be taking a most extraordinary view of this case. He seems to think that it is because this Mr. Greetham is a person of some position that hon. members have taken the matter up. I am not taking it up on that account; I am simply doing it because I consider that the Press in this case has acted in a most unwarrantable and unjustifiable manner. I certainly think that, assuming they know they committed an error in that article, the least they could have done was to apologise to the gentleman whose character they have most seriously maligned.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to say that I do not blame the *Courier* in the least for taking the part of this Mr. Greetham, who may be guilty or may be innocent. I know nothing about it. They call him a well-known gentleman in Ipswich. As to that, I am informed that he is a complete stranger.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Another of their facts.

Mr. MACFARLANE: He is so strange to the town that he is known by the name of the "Mystery," or the "Unknown." I have nothing at all to say about that; what I have to complain of is that, in trying to establish the character of a person they consider innocent, they should traduce the character of a public person whom they know very well, when they could easily have ascertained all the circumstances of the case by putting themselves to the least trouble. As remarked by the hon. member for Mackay, I did not see the girl in the hospital; I have not been to the hospital for the last eight or ten months. I do not know the girl and she did not know me—she did not even know my name; and how the *Courier* could have published such a garbled statement in regard to Mr. Macfarlane M.L.A. for Ipswich, is beyond my comprehension, and, I suppose, beyond the comprehension of every other hon. member. It has been well said—and I think I have the sympathy of every hon. member—

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACFARLANE: It has been well said that what is my case to-day may be any other hon. gentleman's case to-morrow. I look upon it as a foul slander—a foul libel.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I hope you will make them pay for it.

Mr. MACFARLANE: I am not of a vindictive turn of mind. Some hon. members might take a different course, but I am not careful to vindicate myself against such aspersions; I can afford to live down any insinuations made against me. My character has always been before the public, and I hope I shall always live in such a way as to merit the approbation of my fellow-creatures. How the thing originated I do not exactly know, further than this: A gentleman of the same name as myself in Ipswich—Mr. Macfarlane, J.P.—was sent for to go to the hospital to take the girl's depositions, with a view to the apprehension of Mr. Greetham. When the depositions were taken, the girl made a remark to this effect—"He is the man," meaning Greetham, for whom the warrant was drawn out. The nurse in the hospital, not understanding exactly what the girl meant, said, "You must be mistaken; that is Mr. Macfarlane," meaning the justice of the peace who took the depositions. And from that simple remark the whole thing has arisen. The lawyer who took up Greetham's case saw a fine opportunity of traducing the character of another man of the same name to try and clear his own client. There are honourable lawyers; but I say that any lawyer who

would try to clear his client at the expense of another man by traducing his good name is not only unworthy of the name of a lawyer, but unworthy of the name of a man.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House, I should like to state, in reply to the hon. member for Normanby, that I have no objection to placing the depositions and papers on the table; and I will do so to-morrow.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—After the explanation given by the hon. member for Ipswich I do not think the *Courier* is so much to blame. They ought to have taken care to ascertain which Mr. Macfarlane it was; but I do not think they stated anything wilfully or maliciously against the hon. member.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I notice that the plea set forth by the Chief Secretary is just the old legal plea—pleading the vileness of the paper as a defence—that it could do no harm to Mr. Macfarlane's character. In that he is right, I believe; but as I believe the girl ought to be punished for having told those lies, so I believe the *Courier* ought to be punished for having published those mendacious and slanderous statements affecting the character of a public man. There is no safety for any of us if newspapers are to be allowed to do this kind of thing with impunity—to publish a garbled report of a nurse or a lawyer or anything they may pick up anywhere in the gutters without ascertaining its truth. They can get anything from Tom, Dick, or Harry, and publish it throughout the length and breadth of the land without taking the slightest trouble to get it confirmed. They can say, "Oh! we have got it for Bill Smith. It will give him a 'nasty jar' and make it unpleasant for him. We have a down upon him; therefore we publish it. We have Tom Snooks's word for it, and that is quite enough." I am sorry the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, does not possess enough of what he is pleased to call vindictiveness—but what I call a desire to benefit my fellow-legislators and the community at large—to take proceedings against the paper, because it is perfectly obvious that they cannot be punished in any other way, and if not punished they will keep on doing the same kind of thing. There is another matter I may mention before I sit down; and that is the treatment received from the police by a very poor person—a poor black gin. Probably this will enlist the sympathies of the poor man's friend, the Colonial Secretary, and cause him to see that his police do not commit outrages of this kind. It seems that the police are taking the law into their own hands. I have in my hand an account, which I believe to be true, because I have had confirmation of it from another source, of a poor black gin who had the misfortune to be an albino, who was cruelly captured and run into Cooktown, and during the process received such injuries as to cause her death. I believe she died this morning. I think the Colonial Secretary should revise his police a little and keep them in a little better order. I beg to withdraw the motion.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I take this opportunity of bringing under the notice of the Minister for Works, as the only means of obtaining redress, a matter affecting the people of Warwick and perhaps in a less degree the whole of the travelling public. Three weeks ago the railway station there was totally destroyed by fire, and the traffic manager at once took the initiatory steps to provide a suitable temporary building till the new station is erected. I thought that in the ordinary course of departmental action, even with the "Government

stroke," something would have been done within a fortnight; but three weeks have passed and that place is in the same state as it was the morning after the fire. The Premier himself had an opportunity when in Warwick of seeing the inconvenience and possible loss to which passengers are subjected. Trains are often compelled to discharge goods and passengers in the rain; and very often goods and clothes get damaged; and this state of things still continues. I have gone frequently to the various heads of that many-headed department, trying to stir them to take action, but I have not, so far, succeeded. Some delay may have been caused from reasons which hon. members will understand—I allude to the illness and subsequent death of the late Minister for Works—but now that we have again a Minister in charge of that department, I take the opportunity of bringing the matter under his notice, and to express the hope that he will instruct his subordinates to see that this urgent want is supplied without further delay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: Mr. Speaker,—I am, of course, aware of the accident which destroyed the station buildings at Warwick, but I am unable to tell the hon. member what has been done towards providing a fresh building. There is a new station in course of erection some distance from the one destroyed, and perhaps it may have been thought that that would be completed in time to meet the wants of the public. However, I have no information on the subject at present, but I will tell the hon. member to-morrow what is being done.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

ADOPTION OF REPORT.

On the motion of the PREMIER, this Order of the Day was discharged from the paper.

RECOMMITTAL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was recommitted for the purpose of reconsidering clause 178, and the consideration of new clauses.

The PREMIER said that when the Bill was in committee certain clauses were brought forward, and after some little discussion were postponed for further consideration. He proposed now to ask the Committee again to consider the matter. The first to which he would invite attention was a new clause to follow clause 162 of the Bill, dealing with railways crossing roads. There were a good many railways—several, at all events in some districts—passing roads on level crossings, where the railways very seriously interfered with the traffic on the road. It certainly should be the duty of the railway proprietor to keep that part of the road in order. With this object in view, he moved that the following new clause follow clause 162 of the Bill:—

When a railway crosses a road on the level, the owner or other person in possession of the railway shall, at his own expense, at all times maintain in good condition and repair, in such manner as the board directs, and to the satisfaction of the board, so much of the road as lies between the rails and extends six feet beyond the rails on each side thereof.

He did not propose to say much on the matter. It seemed quite as fair that the proprietor of a private railway should keep the crossing in order as it was that the owners of a tramway should keep the tramway in order.

Mr. CHUBB said he had no objection to the clause, but he would point out that it might be necessary at some time to provide gates at crossings as the traffic increased; and why

should not the owner of the railway pay for them as well, seeing that he had the privilege of crossing the road?

The PREMIER said as far as Government railways were concerned they were controlled by Act of Parliament, which prescribed all the necessary precautions to be taken. There was, therefore, no necessity to deal with them in this instance. The clause referred to private railways running across a road with the license or permission of the board, and if the owners did not put up gates, he presumed the board would refuse them license or permission. By "license" he did not mean a formal license, but the leave of the board.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Did the Chief Secretary mean that these private railway owners should have to ask the board for license to cross a road?

The PREMIER: Unless they have an Act of Parliament.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that as far as he had known, railway owners had always come to that House for an Act of Parliament. When he was Minister for Works he had passed several Acts of Parliament for private railway owners, and he thought that in every case of the kind an Act of Parliament should be passed.

The PREMIER said so did he. Some private railways had Acts of Parliament, such as the Gulland Railway and Thomas'. Those he believed were the only two that had. He knew there were private railways in the West Moreton district that had no Acts of Parliament.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: How do they cross main roads?

The PREMIER said he did not know. He presumed by license of the divisional boards.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Who gave the boards authority?

The PREMIER said the boards had care of the roads, and certainly had power to authorise persons to lay down rails, provided the rails were not a nuisance. If they were a public nuisance, then the person who created the nuisance was liable to be dealt with accordingly, either by action or indictment. He thought there should be certainly an obligation on the person who laid a railway to keep the road in order.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, if the divisional boards had power or had taken upon themselves the power to allow railways to be made across roads, he thought they could take power to themselves, without the clause, to compel the owners to keep the roads in order. If they had the power to do the greater, surely they had the power to do the less, without providing for it in the shape of a clause.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he believed all railways in the colony came under the general Railway Act.

The PREMIER: No.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought so; and any railway made outside the provisions of that Act must have a special Act for its construction.

The PREMIER: They have not, as a matter of fact.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said then it was clear that the Government had been lax in its duty in allowing railways to be constructed without their authority. He thought the power proposed by the clause should not be given to divisional boards at all. That was a power that the Government should not delegate to anyone. It was all very well to say that the boards had the right to look after the roads, and to allow any

man to put down a rail if it was not a nuisance; but a railway was *prima facie* a nuisance unless it was provided against by proper safeguards. He thought that the suggestion made by the hon. member for Bowen was a very important one, to compel the owners of private railways to erect gates when they crossed main roads. The Government were compelled to erect gates when their lines crossed main roads, and why should not private owners be placed in the same position? There was just as much danger in a private railway as in a public one.

Mr. MOREHEAD: More.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said there was quite as much at any rate, and certainly the same precautions should be taken. His contention was that that authority should not be given to divisional boards at all—that it should be kept in the hands of the Government. The Government were responsible for the safety of the people; divisional boards were not.

Mr. SALKELD said he believed some tramways had been made before the divisional boards had come into existence. He did not know what authority they had, or whether they had any. Perhaps they took French leave, but he knew cases where tramways had been made and the boards did not feel justified in interfering with them, and therefore allowed them to remain.

Mr. NORTON said he thought it would be a mistake to pass the amendment, because it implied that divisional boards had a right to give authority for the construction of railways. If they had that right they had also the right to authorise the construction of a railway along a road, and if that were done it would become a source of danger. There was danger in railways crossing roads, and if they ran along roads used by the public they would be a source of great danger. He thought Parliament should reserve to itself the right to say whether or not a railway should be made in a particular place.

The PREMIER said undoubtedly Parliament alone could give authority for running a locomotive, except upon private property, but that was very different from laying down a rail on a road. They were not dealing with the question of railways running along high roads, but of railways being allowed to cross roads.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Upon which locomotives must run.

The PREMIER: Upon which locomotives might run. The traffic might be conducted with horses, or locomotives might be run. As a matter of fact they found the lines there, and the only way in which they could be stopped would be by the Government either indicting the railway proprietor for committing a nuisance or by action brought by some person in the name of the Attorney-General. It would then be necessary to prove that the railway was a nuisance; if that was not proved the action would fail. They did not want to prevent railways being made. He remembered an instance where a line was made from the Day Dawn mine to the Day Dawn machine. He did not know who authorised that; it was made some years ago.

Mr. NORTON: It was running in 1883.

The PREMIER said he thought it must have been the hon. member for Townsville who authorised it. They had no Act of Parliament for it; and there was no earthly reason why a railway like that should have gates at all. There was a great deal too much superstition about railway gates. Half the railways now running could be run with great safety and advantage without any such protection. But he did not think that question need be introduced.

The clause dealt with the dry question whether people who constructed railways should be compelled to keep the road in order, and he did not think they need involve with that the general question of running locomotives.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was inclined to agree with the Premier that there was no necessity for so many gates, but the Government were obliged to erect them, and why should not private owners do so also? He had always advocated that they should make railways as cheaply as possible, and one item of cheapness was the absence of gates and fences. In South Australia it was provided by statute that no fences need be erected in the interior, but the rule which he had instituted when in office had been subverted by his successor, and railways had been more expensively made. What he contended was that if they were to delegate the powers of Parliament to divisional boards they should safeguard themselves in such a way that the public would not suffer. They had safeguarded the people in regard to State railways and should now do so in regard to private lines. The reason for erecting gates at level crossings was to prevent cattle from straying on the line, but there was just as much danger in the case of private lines, and so long as the Government maintained gates on their lines why should not private owners do so? Moreover the divisional boards should not be allowed the privilege of granting authority to make railways without the power was delegated to them by Parliament, and if divisional boards had granted authority to make railways they had exceeded their powers.

The PREMIER said the divisional boards had no authority except such as was delegated to them by Parliament. They had the care and maintenance of the roads, and they could authorise a man to lay down rails or even pave a roadway with iron or anything else. The only limitation put upon them was that they had no power to authorise anyone which would be a nuisance. Laying down rails was not creating a nuisance.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: A railway is a nuisance.

The PREMIER said there was no distinction between laying rails which would be used for running locomotives and those which would be used with horse-power, or the wire-rope system, or in any other way. He had seen coal-trucks drawn on roads in the colony by horse-power. In this colony divisional boards had no power to authorise the running of locomotives, and if they did so, it would be at their own risk. The Bill before them was not a railway Bill, but it dealt with the manner in which the roads of the colony were to be kept in repair, and it was fair to say that when a railway crossed a road the owner of the line should be compelled to keep a certain portion of the roadway in order. He did not think anyone disputed that proposition.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said they should not commit themselves to what the divisional boards had done without authority.

The PREMIER: They have not exceeded their powers in laying down rails.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: We know they do not use horses, but steam power.

The PREMIER: I have seen them use horses.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the planters at Mackay were about to lay down railways, which would be used along the roads, and the locomotives would run upon the rails.

Mr. BLACK: No; only horses.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said if only horses were to run on the rails, of course there would be no nuisance, but he thought they should be careful not to delegate their powers to divisional boards.

The PREMIER said it was no more unlawful to run a locomotive on a road than a traction-engine. He thought the divisional boards, when they ran steam-rollers upon the streets, were undoubtedly committing a nuisance, and it was an unlawful act; but it was not thought necessary to legislate on the subject, and the present question was really just the same.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to ask the Chief Secretary if six feet was the distance of roadway that the State had to keep in order when crossing roads?

Mr. BUCKLAND: Under the Tramway Act that is the distance.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: No; only two feet.

The PREMIER said he proposed fifteen feet at first, but he thought it was too much.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: That would be the whole road in most cases.

The PREMIER said eighteen inches was the width of roadway kept in order by the tramway company. He thought if the road was kept in good order for six feet that would not be objected to.

Clause, as read, put and passed.

On clause 178, as follows:—

The PREMIER, in moving that the following new subsection be added to clause 178—

Prohibiting mining under the surface of roads without the license of the board, and prescribing the conditions as to license fees, royalties, or otherwise, on which such licenses may be granted—

said the question of allowing boards to grant licenses for mining under roads had been under consideration previously, but the clause then submitted dealt only with mining for coal. It was then pointed out that there was no reason why it should extend to coal only and not to other minerals. His answer to that had been that there was seldom any mining for gold which would cause a subsidence of the roadway. Now, there were two ways of dealing with the matter. He thought it would be better that a provision of that kind should be made by by-law which would be subject to the approval of the Governor in Council and could be rescinded if it turned out unworkable or injurious. He proposed now that the power to regulate mining under roads be conferred by by-law. Another question arose as to whether the boards should be allowed to make by-laws with respect to gold-mining. Gold-mining might interfere with the surface of the road, and the board ought to have some power over it, but on the other hand it might be said that mining for gold under the surface of the road would most likely be done under lease under the Act of last year, which contained the specific conditions under which the mining might be carried on. An answer to that again was probably, that if the board attempted to interfere with gold-mining under a road—although the board would not be likely to make the attempt—action would be promptly taken to have the by-law repealed. The matter was worthy of consideration, as it was only right that the boards should be allowed to prevent the continuance of operations that would interfere with or injure their roads. He moved that the following new paragraph be inserted after paragraph 56:—

Prohibiting mining under the surface of roads without the license of the board, and prescribing the conditions as to license fees, royalties, or otherwise, on which such licenses may be granted.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had no objection to giving the board power to prohibit mining under the surface of a road, as they were likely to be the best authority as to whether the mining under the surface of the road would injure it or not. But he did object to their being empowered to prescribe "the conditions as to license fees, royalties, or otherwise." That should be left entirely in the hands of the State. No Government had ever parted with the royalties. The board should have the power to prohibit mining under the surface of a road, as they were likely to know best whether it would injure the road or not, or they might prescribe the conditions under which that mining might be carried on; but he contended that the license fees and royalties should go into the Treasury.

Mr. MELLOR said he thought they could scarcely prohibit mining for gold under roads, because there were leases granted for gold-mining all over the colony including roads. He thought it would be better to include mining for coal only. Gold-mining did not hurt the roads, as it was generally carried on by a deep shaft and deep working, and, besides, it was already provided that where any damage was done to roads by gold-mining the wardens had the power to compel the parties engaged in mining to make good the roads.

Mr. FOOTE said the objection of the hon. member for Townsville was a very good one. Of course it was right that the local authority should have power to grant or refuse permission to persons to mine under the surface or across a road, but the other matters dealing with licenses and royalties should be dealt with by the Government. The boards should certainly have power to prevent persons mining under the surface of a road, or to compel persons to make good any injury done to a road.

The PREMIER said he was disposed to agree with the hon. member for Wide Bay that it was better to exclude gold altogether, because the question of mining for gold under roads was very fully dealt with last session. Persons mining for gold under a road were required to make good to the local authority any loss occasioned by subsidence. As to the license fees and royalties, he thought it better they should be omitted from the paragraph. He proposed to amend the new paragraph by inserting after the word "mining" the words "for minerals other than gold."

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the mining which the hon. member for Wide Bay was acquainted with was certainly deep mining, and he was under the impression that the hon. member was unacquainted with any other kind of mining for gold. It must be remembered, however, that there were other goldfields in the colony besides Gympie. There were many alluvial fields, and he hoped there would yet be many more discovered in the colony. In the case of alluvial mining for gold, the mining was from the grass downwards, and would, of course, be injurious to a road. He had known in one of the best fields in Queensland—Ravenswood—that a large portion of the mining was done there by shaking the sods of grass into a tin dish and washing the stuff that fell from the grass. That was a kind of mining with which the hon. member for Wide Bay was not acquainted, and it would certainly destroy the roads. The boards in such a case should have power to prescribe the conditions under which such mining should be carried on. If the Premier insisted upon excluding gold he would not divide the Committee on it, but he hoped he would see that the Government retained the license fees and royalties.

The PREMIER: I propose to strike those words out.

Amendment agreed to.

The PREMIER moved the omission of the words "as to license fees, royalties, or otherwise."

Amendment agreed to.

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

The PREMIER moved the following new clause, to follow clause 274:—

Every action against a board for the recovery of damages in respect of any injury alleged to have been sustained by reason of the negligence of the board in respect of any highway, road, bridge, culvert, ferry, wharf, jetty, or other public work under the control of the board, shall be brought in a district court.

A district court shall have jurisdiction to hear and determine any such action, whether the amount sought to be recovered does or does not exceed two hundred pounds.

Every such action shall be tried by a judge without a jury.

There was no doubt that the boards had been subjected to grievous hardship in many cases by actions being brought against them for negligence, and the expenses of those actions in many cases were very large. One case had been mentioned by the hon. member for Bulimba, Mr. Buckland. In cases of that sort, where the sympathies of the jury were, as a rule, undoubtedly with the plaintiffs and not with the boards, he thought they might fairly introduce, at least on trial, a system which they had adopted last year in the Employers Liability Act. No doubt the general rule of trying all cases by a jury was a good one; a jury was, as a general rule, a better tribunal than a judge on questions of fact; of that he was firmly convinced. Any proposal to substitute judges for juries to try questions of fact, as a general rule, would be a very bad one; but here there was a choice between two evils. They must remember that the board represented the ratepayers, and the money that was paid by the board must come out of the ratepayers' pockets.

Mr. BLACK said he had no doubt the Chief Secretary's intention was very good—to prevent the boards from being mulcted to too great an extent by juries; but his experience was that it was not so much the verdicts of the juries that the boards had to fear as the cost of the lawyers. If they could have a jury without the lawyers they would really get economy. He would instance a case brought against a board in his district, where a verdict given by the jury for only £50 carried costs on both sides—and the verdict, of course, carried costs—to the amount of £550.

The PREMIER: That was in the Supreme Court.

Mr. BLACK said it was. He would like to hear from other hon. members who had experience in municipal and divisional board matters, whether in their experience it was the verdict of the jury or the cost of the lawyers that they had to provide against. If they had trial without a jury, but with all the machinery of the law brought to bear as it was at present, the country would find that the expenses amounted to just as much as they did now. In the majority of cases the jury understood the facts very much better than the judge.

Mr. PATTISON said he had before spoken of a case where the board which he had the honour to represent was concerned. It was optional to have the case tried before a jury if they thought fit, but they treated it with an amount of indifference and left it to the judge. He was sure that a jury of sensible men would have given a very different verdict. He was quite

of opinion that there was no person so fit to try a case as a jury. They were acquainted with all the roads of the division, and nine out of ten such cases arose in connection with accidents on the roads. There was quite a crop of actions gathering now. He knew of three or four against the Gango Division that were coming on, encouraged by the decision of the district court judge to which he referred. He thought it should be left optional to the parties to say whether they would have a jury or not. As for the Chief Secretary's statement that the sympathies of juries were against the board, his recollection did not agree with that. If they were not satisfied with trial by jury, they would never be satisfied with trial by a judge. A judge came a stranger into a district, and whilst that gave an amount of independence to his decision, he could not possibly know whether the boards had taken reasonable trouble to maintain the roads. He did not agree with the hon. member for Mackay in wishing to do away with lawyers in those cases. He thought lawyers were a necessary evil, like a great many other evils. They had to submit to the evil because there was no means of arriving at a satisfactory conclusion without the aid of those gentlemen. He thought it would be unwise to strike a blow at trial by jury, and if the Committee passed the clause as it stood they would be doing so to a certain extent.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he agreed with the hon. member that people should have the option of trial before a jury, or before a judge without a jury, but he did not share the hon. gentleman's opinion as to the integrity of juries. The verdicts given in the Darra accident cases were enough to shake the confidence of anyone in the impartiality of juries. It was recognised by the greatest lawyers that the verdicts of juries went in the direction of slating corporations or companies. Lord Bramwell, he believed, expressed the opinion that the verdicts of juries were generally right, except in cases brought against corporations or companies, when the damages given were excessive. With regard to the statement of the hon. member for Blackall that the jury probably knew the roads in a division, and were therefore the most competent men to express an opinion—that might work the other way. Suppose an unfortunate man, who was not a ratepayer of the district, brought an action against a board for damages, and the jury were all ratepayers; they, knowing that if they gave a verdict for heavy damages against the board the ratepayers would have to pay, would be more than human if they went against the board.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he believed in trial by jury; he had not the slightest faith in trial by judges, and he did not think the judges themselves had any. He was certain the judges would not like to have the power placed in their hands.

The PREMIER: Some of them would.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Very few. A proposition was made not long since by the Imperial Government to give the Irish judges that power, but they were all against it. Though he believed in trial by jury, he believed the proposition of the hon. member for Blackall—to leave it to the plaintiff and defendant to agree as to whether the case should be tried before a jury or before a judge without a jury—was a very good compromise. He thought that, in suits brought against boards, juries were more likely to act fairly than a judge, because they had a local knowledge which the judge could not possibly have, and it was upon knowledge that people depended far more than upon integrity. As to the proposition to do away with lawyers altogether, he could not agree with that, but he would like to see the costs of suits lessened.

There must be advocates of some kind, but he did not see the necessity for the enormous costs piled up in cases that lasted perhaps only two or three days. Whatever way a case went the lawyers always got the best of it.

The PREMIER said the clause embodied two distinct propositions. One was that actions should be tried in the district court, which would have the effect of reducing the expenses very materially; and the other was that they should be tried by a judge without a jury, which was intended to meet the objection that juries always punished corporations and joint-stock companies. The proposition of the hon. member for Blackall could be met by leaving out the last line of the clause, and he was prepared to accept the amendment.

Mr. PATTISON moved the omission of the words "every such action shall be tried by a judge without a jury," at the end of the clause.

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

The PREMIER moved that the Chairman leave the chair, and report the Bill to the House with further amendments.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he wished to know what effect the alterations in the endowment clause would have in connection with the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act?

The PREMIER said the rates upon which endowment was to be paid which were raised in the different divisions—whether general rates or special rates entitled to endowment, or special rates under the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act—would all be added together to ascertain the amount on which endowment was to be paid to the divisions; and the total amount appropriated by Parliament would be distributed accordingly. The Act referred to by the hon. member would not make any difference.

Mr. BUCKLAND: The proportion will be the same?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. MELLOR said that in some instances it might have a great effect. It was supposed that the sum of £165,000 would be available as endowment to divisional boards, and if local authorities under the Joint Action Act could demand an endowment of £2 for £1 they might perhaps take the £65,000 or more, and leave a comparatively small amount for the divisional boards.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he did not think that the effect would be so serious as the hon. member for Wide Bay seemed to imagine. The maximum rating was 6d. in the £1, and in most cases that amount would not be required.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with further amendments.

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

FINANCIAL DISTRICTS BILL.

SECOND READING.

On this Order of the Day being read,

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I should like to say a word before the second reading of this Bill is moved. Having regard to the position of public affairs, as set forth by the Premier last night, I would ask him whether he is serious in going on with the decentralisation measures? There are two very good and sufficient reasons, to my mind, why we should not go on with them. In the first place, this Parliament is moribund. That is one reason, I think, why we should not discuss such very important

measures as these; because, after all, the discussion simply means beating the air. We can do nothing. It is not intended by the Government to press these measures even to the second reading, or, at all events, not to pass them through the committee stage.

The PREMIER: I will speak for myself, if you please.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I take it from the remarks that fell from the hon. gentleman last night, and I hold that the House is not in a position to deal with such an important measure as this. That is clearly proved, to my mind, by the Premier proposing to introduce next week a Redistribution Bill, thereby showing that the House at the present time does not represent the people of the colony. Therefore I think it is only a useless waste of time dealing with matters which cannot be brought to an issue, which cannot be considered this session, and the discussion on which can in no way bind those who come after us, or any of us who may be sent back to the House again. I hope the Premier will see his way to confine the work of Parliament to the passing, if possible—and I hope it will be passed—of a Redistribution Bill, and Supply. That is quite sufficient, although, certainly, if the New Guinea Bill comes up it is one which ought to pass. Beyond that, after what has taken place within the last few days, it will be worse than useless attempting further legislation, more especially legislation dealing with matters of such vital importance to the whole colony as are contained in the Bill which the hon. gentleman proposes to move the second reading of this afternoon.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have listened to what has fallen from the hon. member opposite, and I feel bound to move the second reading of this Bill; and shall take the opportunity, in doing so, to explain—what I know is expected to be explained—the position which the Government have taken up with respect to decentralisation. It is a very important matter—so important, indeed, that the oldest of my colleagues left the Government because of a difference of opinion on that point, which appeared to him to be insuperable. I certainly cannot accept the invitation of hon. members opposite to abandon this scheme, or to proceed no further with it, simply because on another matter the Government were unable to carry their proposals during the present session. I consider I should be false to my promises if I did not move the second reading of this Bill, and of the others, and invite Parliament to give effect to them. If Parliament will not give effect to them, I cannot help it. At any rate, some of these matters may be dealt with during the present Parliament, and I am sure the present Parliament is quite capable of dealing with them. It is a mistake to suppose that because an election is to take place shortly the Parliament is moribund. The Parliament that passed the Redistribution Act of 1878 passed, during the same session, some other important laws. So did the Parliament during the session of 1872; during that session, although a Redistribution Bill was passed, there were also many other laws of great importance passed. Of course, there is a difference in the present case, from the fact of the taxation proposals of the Government not having been carried. But that is a matter which may be regarded from different points of view. As was pointed out by the hon. member for Townsville last week, a Government are not necessarily bound to resign office because they cannot carry their taxation proposals; and on the present occasion, so far from the Government being defeated, they have received as distinct an order from the House to

retain office, and carry on business, as it was possible to receive. Moreover, I feel I am bound in honour, not only to the people of this colony, but to the Imperial Government, to bring forward these proposals—which were referred to in the closing speech of the Administrator of the Government last session, and in my despatch on the separation petition—at as early a date as possible. And even if they are not disposed of by the House, but are to be considered by the electors during the general election which must shortly take place, it is very desirable that the electors should understand what really are the Government proposals. It is very important that a matter of this kind should not be entered into without public opinion being thoroughly formed upon it, and certainly the facts concerning it cannot be as well known if we omit the present occasion for discussing the matter, as I hope hon. members on both sides will discuss it. Then, if a verdict has to be given by the electors upon it, they will know what the subject is on which they are giving their verdict. I cannot from memory describe quite accurately, I am afraid, the history of what was called the movement for financial separation—a term I always disliked—and which, I believe, like a good many other terms, such as “protection” and “freetrade,” which do not exactly describe the nature of the thing to which they are applied, rather do harm to the cause they are intended to serve. I prefer to call it “The Financial Districts Bill.”

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Much the same.

The PREMIER: Financial separation was the old term, and the word “separation” to some of us is not so attractive as it is to members who sit on the other side of the House. In 1874, I think—

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Are you moving the second reading of the Bill?

The PREMIER: Yes. I forget in which year the question was first brought forward, whether 1872 or 1874. I have not had time during the last two or three days to look into it, but I remember that a Bill dealing with the matter was brought forward by the Government of which I was a member and in which Mr. Dickson was Colonial Treasurer. That Bill was not passed, but a commission was appointed about that time to inquire into the matter. It being assumed—taken for granted—that the principle was right, the commission sat for the purpose of recommending the basis upon which the division of revenue and expenditure should be made.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: For the purpose of discovering it?

The PREMIER: Probably they would inquire before recommending. Afterwards, a Bill was brought forward by the Government of which the hon. member for Townsville was a member, but did not go through. First of all, sir, I wish to say a few words about the conditions of this colony, which differs from any of the other Australian colonies in this: We have more ports on our coast, and we have really three great centres of import to which our imports come at the present time. There may be more in the future, and probably will be; but the Gulf port can hardly be said to be a great centre now. Brisbane is the port through which all imports are made and from which all exports go for the southern part of the colony. It is connected with the interior, as we are all aware, by a long line of railway which carries nearly all the traffic. Rockhampton is another port occupying a very similar position with respect to what has been long called the Central division of the

colony; and Townsville, after some rivalry with Bowen, is now, I think, firmly established as the principal importing centre of what is called the Northern district of the colony. I leave out of consideration at present the Gulf country, of which Normanton is now the principal port, and which is fast becoming more and more important every day. In none of the other colonies does a similar state of things exist. These three divisions of the colony are for many purposes distinct; they have for many purposes distinct interests, although for other and higher purposes I maintain that all their interests are united. But there is this peculiarity about these divisions in that respect. Now, it has for a long time been said by the inhabitants of the Central and Northern divisions that undue preference has been shown to Southern interests in the distribution of public money. I do not know, sir, whether there has ever been any serious cause for that complaint. I do not believe there has. I certainly do not believe there has been any conscious or intentional injustice done by the representatives of the Southern division. I am sure none of us, representatives of the Southern division, desire to hold the Central and Northern divisions of the colony as tributaries from which to get money with which to increase the prosperity and to add to the improvement in values in this part of the colony. I say we do not desire that, and if anything of the kind has been done it has been done inadvertently. Certainly during the last two or three years there has been no ground for complaint on that score, as the actual statistics of revenue and expenditure clearly show. The country is large, as we are well aware, and at one time there was a movement for separation at Dawes Range—an agitation supported by very much the same arguments that have been used recently with respect to the separation of what is now called the northern portion of the colony, from Cape Palmerston northward. But when the Central district became more settled and more attention was paid to their requirements, and was able to be paid to their requirements, that agitation gradually died out. Since then we are all acquainted with the agitation in the northern part of the colony for separation. I do not propose to enter upon the subject of separation at the present time. It is not coming in the immediate future, and I think, Mr. Speaker, it will be a long time before it does come. What we have to deal with at present is the question of what is the best thing to do for the efficient government of all parts of the colony. I believe there is a good deal of force in the argument that when a country really consists of great provinces, as this does, as I have endeavoured to point out briefly, there should be some special relation between the revenue raised in them and the expenditure that takes place in them. At the same time there must, of course, be a general fund for the purposes of general expenditure. Various schemes have been proposed for dealing with this difficulty—a difficulty caused partly by distance and partly by the desire of the people to have some means of ascertaining that they are getting fair treatment, which they are afraid they cannot get while the number of members representing the southern part of the colony must necessarily so largely preponderate. I believe, sir, that the southern portion of the colony would be only too glad to give every assurance in their power to the North that they are being fairly treated. We have not the least desire to take anything from them by way of tribute. On the contrary, we desire to do what is fair to them as well as to ourselves. We do not want to be unduly generous, to make ourselves tributaries to them, nor do we want to make them tributaries to us.

Probably the best way to do that—I am dealing now simply with the question of money—will be to provide for keeping separate accounts of what revenue is raised in the different parts of the colony and of what is expended in them, and let each part of the colony contribute in proportion to its means to the expenses of the general government, which are not for the especial benefit of this part or that. But the question of revenue and expenditure is not the only one that has been raised of late. We have often heard of the evils of centralisation, and no doubt there are great evils in administering the government entirely from one place. Those evils will occur wherever that place is situated. For instance, if the capital were at Springsure or Barcaldine, which is a central position, the evils of centralisation would be just as great as they are now. The fact of the capital being in Brisbane is in no sense the cause of the evils connected with centralisation. The evil arises from the system, not from the place where that system is carried on. I do not think anybody can now be blamed for the system of centralisation we have. We cannot have capitals all over the country. At all events, we have commenced with one capital, and we must be content with it for a considerable time to come. Precisely the same difficulty has arisen in New South Wales and in Victoria, though I do not think they have the same facilities that we have for avoiding those evils. In each of those colonies there is only one real port. Sydney is the commercial capital of New South Wales.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Newcastle.

The PREMIER: Newcastle is only a dependency of Sydney. Melbourne is the commercial capital of the whole of Victoria.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: What about Geelong?

The PREMIER: An hon. member says, "What about Geelong?" You may just as well say, "What about South Brisbane?" in relation to Brisbane, although the distance in the former case is considerably more. Again, Adelaide is the commercial capital of South Australia, except the Northern Territory, which is dealt with as a separate dependency. Western Australia has not sufficiently advanced yet for any question of the kind to arise that has arisen here. But undoubtedly it will, and that before very long. In New Zealand, which in some respects does not differ apparently very much from Queensland, they introduced a system, which is another suggested remedy for the evils of centralisation now complained of—a system of provincial councils which were legislatures with limited powers, and which existed for a good many years. They were there found to be extremely expensive and cumbersome, and were swept away. It was found that in a population such as there was in New Zealand there was really no room for so many legislatures, and I do not think there is room here for more than one legislature at the present time. We have delegated a great many powers to local authorities. We have delegated a great many functions to them which used to be performed by the general Government, and I am not prepared to say that we cannot delegate a great many more; but I am not prepared at present to advocate the establishment of provincial councils. I think they would be very expensive, and there would be no sufficient advantage to be derived from them. These are matters, however, that must be dealt with from time to time as necessity arises; but the Government do not see their way to make any proposal of that kind now. I have digressed somewhat, but I was referring to the fact that the evil of centralisation did not arise from the situation of the capital, but from the

form of government. All the departments are located here, and the government has been carried on from them. Now, the remedy for that is the creation of local branches. The evils of centralisation are supposed to be these: that all matters that have to be dealt with by the Government have to come to the capital, and consequently much delay arises; while there are many matters that could be dealt with by an officer on the spot, with much less friction and much less delay. Great efforts have been made by the departments to get over that difficulty, and give replies as speedily as possible, and, as a matter of fact, a great part of the administration is now carried on by the telegraph, especially with regard to the more distant parts, as to which I do not think there is the same amount of delay now as often occurs in dealing with matters nearer home. I remember an instance of delay which was lately brought under my notice at Warwick, which, if it had happened in the North, would have been referred to as an instance of the unjust treatment by the Brisbane Government of that part of the colony. I found there a building which had been finished for four months ready for occupation and unoccupied, the building being badly wanted. I do not think that anything of that kind has occurred in the North.

Mr. PATTISON: Yes; at Rockhampton.

The PREMIER: I do remember now that we once discovered that a gaol had been ready for occupation for a long time, and no one had heard that it was finished. I do not think, however, that these cases are of frequent occurrence, and they are at most defects of administration. But I believe that there are some matters that could be carried on locally. A great part of the administration of the departments is done by the permanent heads of the departments without reference to the Minister, and at the present time all those matters have to be referred to the central bureau in Brisbane. Now, I am quite satisfied of this: that if competent men are obtained and placed in positions of authority in the two commercial centres—Rockhampton and Townsville, in the Central and Northern districts—with similar powers to those given to the heads of departments in Brisbane, that at least five-sixths of the administrative work of the Government relating to those districts will go on a great deal more quickly and more satisfactorily than it can when all the work is done here. It may be said that it will cost a great deal of money. I do not think so, because it is only work now done here that will be done there instead, and some of the officers now here will have to do their work elsewhere. Reference will be made to the Minister in such matters as require his authority. Most of the correspondence will be done by telegraph, and in cases where that cannot be done it will take no longer to send the papers down than if the Under Secretary in Brisbane had to receive them and take them from his room to the Minister. So that practically the establishment of branches will give a very great expedition in the administration of public business, and there will be the advantage of a more intimate knowledge by the local officers of what is really required. Of course a great deal will depend upon getting competent men to undertake the work, but I am quite sure there are many men in the Civil Service who can undertake it. Another change that may certainly be made with advantage is the establishment of branches of the Real Property Office, and that is a matter which is of considerable importance. We started originally with one registry only, but now I think the time has come when it is desirable to create local registries, and for that purpose also a Bill has been introduced which,

I think, may very properly be agreed to during the present year, especially as it will take a considerable time to put it into operation, because the registries cannot be started until copies have been made of all the different records that will have to be transferred. So that I should very much like to see that measure at any rate passed during the present session, and also the one authorising the establishment of branches of the departments. I may now pass on to say something of the three different districts into which it is proposed to divide the colony. At one time it was proposed to divide it into four districts—Wide Bay and Burnett being a separate district; but since that time the circumstances have changed. The Wide Bay and Burnett district is now being connected with the metropolis by railway. In a short time the railway will reach from Bundaberg to Gympie, and in a little longer time it will be connected right through to Brisbane, and I think it would be undesirable to treat that as being a distinct district. In fact it would be impracticable to carry out the system proposed if that was treated as a separate district. It is proposed, therefore, to divide the colony into three districts, as shown in the maps which I laid upon the table the other day. I think the divisions are tolerably familiar to hon. members, but perhaps it will be convenient if I describe them. I will begin with the Southern division. The boundary between the Southern and Central districts is proposed to start from the mouth of the Kolan River north of Bundaberg, which has always been taken as the division between the Wide Bay and Burnett and the Port Curtis districts; then it goes to the watershed of Dawes Range, and continues along that to the westward. Then it proceeds by what is known as the northern boundary of the Burnett district to the southern watershed of Cracow Creek; then it goes westward to the Dawson River, by that river downwards to Bigge's Range, and by that range westward to Carnarvon Range, and thence westward to the Great Dividing Range. That is practically leaving all the Dawson River in the Central district except the district about Taroom. At one time Taroom belonged to the Central district, but now all the traffic of that district south of Bigge's Range comes to the Southern and Western Railway. That is the most convenient boundary, and it is the divisional boards' boundary, and the boundary recommended by the Royal Commission that I have referred to. From there the boundary goes along to the northern watershed of the Warrego River and the watershed dividing the Warrego and Barcoo and Thomson Rivers, then it follows westerly the boundary between North and South Gregory pastoral districts, a well-known boundary. I may say here that the boundaries adopted in this Bill between the divisions of the colony will also be found to be adopted in connection with the Redistribution Bill. In all cases the boundaries here adopted will be found to be the boundaries also of electoral districts. I have now shown the line between the Central and Southern districts. The line between the Central and Southern districts begins at Cape Palmerston, and runs along the range west of Cape Palmerston to the Leichhardt Range, and follows that to the head of the Suttor River. The Suttor River is then taken as the boundary westwards to its confluence with the Belyando; then the southern watershed of the Cape River is taken westward to the Great Dividing Range. Then the boundary is the southern watershed of the Flinders River and its tributaries, and in fact the division that exists between the pastoral districts of Burke and North Gregory, and thence by the 21st parallel of latitude to the western boundary of the colony. I believe those divi-

sions represent the real divisions of interests and of trade. There may be one or two minor points in which the trade does not exactly follow those lines, but as nearly as possible they represent the lines from which the trade goes to the ports of Brisbane, Rockhampton, and Townsville, and Normanton respectively, the western trade of the Northern district going to Normanton now of course. Those are the proposed divisions of the colony. Then, for the purposes of keeping the accounts, it will be necessary that the population in each of these divisions should be known, and it is proposed that it should be made up by the Registrar-General each year. Then it is proposed with respect to each of these divisions to keep separate accounts of revenue and of expenditure. It is intended that the revenue of the colony should be divided as being "local revenue" or "general revenue," according to the source from which it is derived; and in like manner the expenditure of the colony is to be classified as being "local expenditure"—that is, expenditure for the special benefit of some part of the colony, or to use the words of the 7th section, "expenditure incurred in respect of any service, the primary and immediate effect whereof extends only to the district where the money is expended"—and "general expenditure" for purposes of general government, as to which we cannot say of it that its primary and immediate effect extends only to a particular district. So far, I believe, all who are in favour of the principle of financial districts will agree with the provisions of the Bill. The difficulty will mainly come in in the application of the principles, and in determining precisely what shall be the items of local revenue, and what the items of local expenditure. The Bill proposes to deal with them by defining what are items of local revenue, and what the items of local expenditure, leaving all the rest as general revenue and expenditure. First of all, loans are proposed to be dealt with and they are scheduled in the Bill; that is to say, the amount of money authorised to be borrowed up to the present time is divided according to the purposes for which it has been borrowed or authorised to be borrowed. These schedules include the total amounts of the present authorised loans whether they have been spent or not, and it is proposed that the interest upon the money actually borrowed shall be charged either to the general account of the whole colony or to the district accounts of the separate districts according to the purposes for which it has been expended. Provisions are contained for what may be called a "Suspense Account," in cases where the money borrowed is not actually spent, and it is provided that it shall be afterwards adjusted. The items of what may be called the "Local Debt"—that is, items of money raised by way of loan and expended upon local purposes—are defined in the 3rd section to be these: Loans to local authorities, electric telegraphs, harbours and rivers, railways, roads and bridges, road boards and shire councils, water supply and water storage, public works and public buildings, but with these exceptions—Government House, Houses of Parliament, the offices of the several departments of the Government at Brisbane or elsewhere where branches of such departments are established; Supreme Court-houses, Museum, immigration barracks, gaols, custom-houses, lighthouses, benevolent asylums, asylums for the insane and reception houses, and quarantine buildings. I do not propose now to discuss in detail the reasons for excluding these public buildings from the classification of local works; but hon. members looking at them will see they are all works in respect of which we cannot say definitely that

they are for the benefit of one part of the colony alone. They are used for the convenience of the inhabitants of all parts of the colony. For instance, it cannot be said that the lighthouses in Torres Straits are not used for the benefit of the inhabitants of the southern part of the colony; and on the other hand the asylum at Wooragaroo, though it is established down here, is just as much for the benefit of persons in the northern part of the colony who may be so unfortunate as to become, or their friends who may become, insane. The only point upon which a difference of opinion may be likely to arise is that concerning electric telegraphs, but I think money borrowed for electric telegraphs may be just as much considered as borrowed for local purposes as money borrowed for railways. Then general words are added, including in the local debt—

"All other works and services as to which it shall from time to time be declared by Parliament that the moneys expended or authorised to be expended upon them shall be charged to such districts respectively."

One result of that will be that in future whenever Parliament is authorising the borrowing of money it will have to declare how the interest is to be charged; and I may say incidentally—perhaps this is not the right time to say it—that if this system is adopted the annual Estimates for each year will be in a very different form from what they are now. They will have to be divided into four parts: it will be more trouble to the Treasurer, no doubt, and I hope I shall not be the Treasurer who has to do it. There will have to be separate estimates for each district, as well as the general Estimates. The rest of the debt of the colony is treated as general debt, and by reference to the third schedule it will be seen that the votes for local works and services not yet appropriated—that is, railway rolling-stock, loans to local authorities, and things like that—must be treated as part of the general debt until they are appropriated. They will be charged to the general account as a sort of suspense account, and the items will be adjusted afterwards. As to local expenditure, I do not think any serious difference of opinion is likely to arise, and I will refer to that before dealing with the question of local revenue. It is proposed that the local expenditure shall consist of these items—under the head of "Permanent Appropriations": Endowments to grammar schools; endowments to local authorities; interest on Victoria Bridge debentures; destruction of marsupials. I hope that last will disappear from the Estimates. Then under "Colonial Secretary's Department": Police (other than the expenses of the Commissioner's office and the superannuation fund); water police; charitable allowances—it may be a question whether charitable allowances should be considered as general or local expenditure, but probably they may fairly be treated as local—medical officers; grants in aid of public institutions and societies; schools of arts and other societies; cemeteries; fire brigades; expenses of elections. Then under the head of "Department of Justice": Expenses of witnesses and jurors. That is the only part of the expense of the administration of justice which is proposed to be made local, and I think that may fairly be local, because there is no doubt the cost of administering justice in the more distant part of the colony is much greater in proportion than in the better populated part. Under the Department of Public Instruction—State schools and provisional schools; buildings; technical education; orphanages—are to be treated as local. In the Treasury Department: Harbours and pilots; powder magazines; assistant engineers and staff of the Harbours and Rivers Department. That is, all except the Chief Engineer for Harbours and Rivers. In the Department of Public

Lands it is proposed that these should be local : Division of runs ; salaries and expenses of commissioners and land agents, and bailiffs and rangers of Crown lands ; pastoral occupation (except clerical officers in the department) ; reserves and gardens ; local expenditure upon survey of land and roads. Under "Department of Public Works and Mines" : Buildings ; roads and bridges ; goldfields ; mineral lands ; railways (except Commissioner's Department and staff). In the Post and Telegraph Department, the local expenditure will be that for local post and telegraph offices, including salaries ; and contracts for the conveyance of mails wholly within the district. The large general contracts for the conveyance of mails along the coast, or for long distances, are to be considered part of the general expenditure. The local expenditure will also include all other items of expenditure incurred in respect of any service the primary and immediate effect whereof extends only to the district where the money is expended, or which arises out of or in respect of some matter defined to be local revenue or local expenditure, are to be treated as local expenditure. All other items it is proposed to treat as general expenditure. A greater question is, I suppose, likely to arise as to what shall be local revenue. I am unable to see the extreme gravity of it, but it must be a serious question when my late colleague, Mr. Dickson, thought it justified his severing his connection with the Government. I am unable to see the gravity of the question in the same light. It seems to me that the proposals in this Bill are manifestly right ; they are scarcely open to objection as far as I can see. I shall endeavour to explain that. It is proposed that the sources of local revenue should be—Customs ; excise (including export duties) ; licenses ; pilotage ; land revenue (including rents of Crown lands leased for pastoral purposes) ; fees for miners' rights and mineral licenses ; rents of gold-mining leases and mineral leases ; railway receipts ; sales of Government property ; receipts from Government wharves and buildings. Now, with respect to those, I apprehend that no question can be raised that, for instance, railway receipts, fees for miners' rights, mineral licenses, rents for gold-mining leases, land revenue, and so on, should be considered as local revenue ; but it is on the question of Customs and Excise, as I understand, that the difference of opinion exists. Now, sir, I maintain that if there is any item of the contributions to the revenue which is more distinctly paid by the taxpayers of the colony than another, it is the duties payable on the goods they consume. They pay that as much as the selector pays the rent of his selection, or the person riding in a train pays his railway fare. To ascertain the local contributions of the different districts we must surely give them credit for the money they pay on dutiable goods. I believe the objection raised to it is that if you make the Customs local it would encourage direct trade with the ports of the colony where the Customs duties would be paid. Well, I do not know that there would be any great hardship in that ; but I do not myself think it would produce that result. I do not think it would disturb the balance of trade very much in that particular. But if that is the only objection it can easily be got over. If we propose to treat the Customs as general revenue, and divide it according to the population, we shall be doing what is manifestly unfair ; because there can be no doubt that where the population consists to a large extent of adults, and adult males, the amount they contribute per head in respect of dutiable articles is very much larger than that contributed by a population like that of the metropolis and

the more thickly populated districts of the colony, where the women and children do not consume nearly so much per head. In the Northern district, and in some parts of the Central, the population consists to a very great extent of adults, and to a very large extent of adult males, and, more than that, they are a class of people who, I believe, live pretty well as a rule and consume a considerable amount of duty-paying articles.

Mr. DONALDSON : Whisky, to wit.

The PREMIER : I believe they do, and no doubt their contributions are more per head than those of the settled parts of the colony. Dividing the Customs revenue, therefore, at per head of population would be manifestly unfair ; it would be merely a hollow mockery. You say you are crediting them with the money actually raised in the districts, but in respect to the most important item of all the contributions to the revenue you make what is manifestly an unfair division. Therefore, sir, I should not like to propose to this House to treat the Customs revenue as general, and divide it according to population. I should feel that I was only trying to play a trick which would be immediately discovered, and would be unworthy of an honourable man or a member of the Government. If the scheme is to be carried out at all—and I hope it will—I hope the Customs revenue will be treated as a direct contribution by the consumers to the revenue, and that they will get credit for having contributed it. I was giving the reasons why the revenue from Customs—that is, the contributions made by the people of the different districts in the shape of taxation in paying the import duties on dutiable goods—should be credited to them as actual contributions. For my part I should not attach any serious weight to any arguments that may be used to the effect that it may interfere with the trade of a particular part of the colony. We are dealing with a much larger subject than the trade of any one place ; in fact, I believe this is one of the most important subjects that has been under consideration in this Parliament for a long time past. With respect to excise, I think that is a matter which should also be credited to the different districts, because if the liquor or beer produced in a district is consumed in that district, then the people who drink that liquor contribute to the revenue. If it is taken from one district to another, then the people of that district contribute towards revenue, and it should be credited to them. If it is exported, then nobody pays the duty on it, and in that case no duty will be collected. A difficulty, of course, might arise—would arise necessarily—as to what should be done with the Customs duties paid, say, in Brisbane, in respect of goods which are afterwards transhipped to Rockhampton or some other Northern port. Personally I am not very familiar with the details of trade, but I can see no reason why an account could not be kept in the Custom House of all goods taken coastwise in steamers. We know very well that the Customs Department keep entries of goods so taken, and if they are dutiable goods we may be very sure they have paid duty. If they have not paid it, arrangements could be made for that fact being declared before they are shipped ; so that if goods are landed at Rockhampton and pay duty there, and are afterwards brought to Brisbane and consumed here, then the people in the Southern district who actually consume those goods are the persons who really pay the duty on them, and in that case the revenue derived should be credited to the southern part of the colony. On the other hand, if the goods are first landed here and transhipped afterwards to Townsville

or Normanton, then the people of the Northern district ought to receive credit for those duties. It is proposed, therefore, by the 9th section—

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

I really do not see what objection can be made to that proposal. It may cause a little trouble; it may be that some regulations will have to be made by the Collector of Customs or the Government for keeping the accounts; but that is a matter of pure detail. It will have the effect of ascertaining fairly and distinctly by whom Customs duties are contributed. I am aware, as I have said, that objection has been made to treating Customs duties as local revenue, on the ground that it may interfere with the trade of the metropolis, and I have had the opportunity of speaking to some of the strongest opponents of the scheme, who based their objections upon that ground; but when I pointed out the real nature of the proposal the objection was withdrawn. I am very anxious to hear what objections can be made here to this proposal. I have referred to the rule laid down for distinguishing between general and local revenue; the other clauses of the Bill propose to define how practical effect is to be given to the scheme. It is proposed that general and local revenue shall respectively be applied to general and local expenditure. Then the case has to be dealt with of the general revenue being insufficient to defray the general expenditure, or, *vice versa*, being more than sufficient; and the case of the local revenue being insufficient to defray the local expenditure, or more than sufficient. And it is proposed by section 11 that if the general revenue in any year is more than sufficient to defray the general expenditure, the excess shall be credited to the district accounts of the several districts in proportion to the amount contributed by them, not in proportion to the population. And, *vice versa*, if the general revenue is insufficient to defray the general expenditure, the deficiency shall be contributed by the several districts in the same proportion, that is, in proportion to the amounts contributed by them. Under the divisions made in the Bill between general and local revenue, Customs revenue being local, there is no doubt that for the present, at any rate, and probably for a long time, if not for ever, the general revenue will be insufficient, because the sources of general revenue are comparatively small in proportion to the sources of local revenue, so that we have to consider practically the mode in which the deficiency in general revenue is to be contributed, and it is proposed that it shall be contributed in proportion to the total amount contributed by the several districts. I think that is the fairest way. There is no doubt, I think, that the districts which contribute most to the revenue in proportion to the population also cost most for general expenses of government in proportion to the population. That is proposed to be worked out in this way: To ascertain the amount contributed take first of all the local revenue as defined by the Bill, which is, of course, contributed by the district; then we have to divide the general revenue. For of course the amounts contributed by the three districts added together will be equal to the total revenue of the colony—the total revenue of the colony consisting of the local revenue of the districts and the general revenue. It is proposed to divide the general revenue in proportion to the popu-

lation of the districts, and to add the amounts so ascertained to the amounts of the local revenue; I do not know any other way in which the general revenue can be divided. It consists of different items which may fairly be divided according to the population. That, however, is not a matter of vital principle, but one of detail. This is probably the fairest way. The principal items of general revenue are stamp duty, postage, electric telegraph receipts, fees of office, and miscellaneous receipts, which, I believe, consist to a very great extent of interest on money lying to the credit of the Government in the banks. There are some small items besides.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The succession duties.

The PREMIER: Yes. Probably the succession duties in respect to landed estates should be treated as local revenue; but those are matters of detail. I am not prepared to say that all the details of the Bill are the best that can be devised, and in that respect we have been deprived of the advantage of the advice of our late colleague, Mr. Dickson.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Why are telegraph receipts treated as general revenue?

The PREMIER: Because we do not see how they can very easily be made local. If there were only two districts in the colony perhaps we might provide that when a message was sent from one district to another the amount should be divided between the two districts, and that when a message was sent wholly within one district the amount should be credited entirely to that district; but in this colony I do not see how that would be practicable.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The cost of telegraphs is to be local.

The PREMIER: The cost of an ordinary message from Normanton to Brisbane is 1s., and it would be difficult to divide that. You might say that each district should have a third, though the Central district would not be entitled to any of it unless it ought to be paid for the message running over its wires. It is a matter worthy of discussion; it has been discussed by the Government; and it seemed most convenient to make the receipts general, simply on account of the difficulty of checking and dividing them. That is a matter open undoubtedly to consideration and discussion, but it also is a matter of detail. To carry out the scheme, it is proposed to keep separate accounts—four separate accounts—of the general revenue and local revenue of each district. The general account is to be credited with the general revenue, and debited with the interest payable on the general debt and the money expended during the year for purposes defined as general expenditure. In the same way the district accounts will be credited with the local revenue, and debited with the interest payable with respect to the local debts of the districts, and the moneys expended for purposes defined as local expenditure. The balances of each account will be carried forward from year to year. Then there is an important provision in the 17th section, to which I will call attention. That clause is as follows:—

“The sum appearing to the credit or debit of the account of each district at the end of each year shall, subject to such other direction as may be given by Parliament, be deemed to be due to such district from the consolidated revenue, or by such district to the consolidated revenue, as the case may be; and any credit balance shall be available for expenditure within the district upon such matters of local expenditure, and in such sums and proportions as may be authorised by Parliament.”

It is proposed, it will be seen, not to deprive Parliament of its control over expenditure, nor do I think under our Constitution we ought to

do so. At one period of the discussion on this matter it was suggested that the members for the different districts should constitute a sort of grand or permanent committees of the House for the purpose of recommending local expenditure, but the Government did not think it desirable to embody that as a part of the present Bill. I am quite sure that if the system laid down in the Bill were adopted—a sum of money being available for expenditure within a particular district—the House would practically accept the wishes of the members for that district in respect to the distribution of expenditure. But I do not think it is convenient to lay that down as an absolute rule. It might be desirable to establish some other body to recommend the manner of the expenditure,—a body might be established consisting, perhaps, of representatives of the various local authorities in the district. But any scheme of that sort requires a great deal of consideration. What might be convenient for one district might not be convenient for another. I am disposed to think it would be better to adopt a general principle like this; and after it has worked for a year or two, other developments, I have no doubt, will suggest themselves as to the best mode of dealing with the balances available for expenditure in the districts. I must also draw special attention to the 20th section, in which it is proposed that—

“For the purpose of defraying the local expenditure of any district, Her Majesty, with the advice and consent of the Parliament of Queensland, may make laws imposing taxes, rates, or duties within any district or districts, or imposing taxes, rates, or duties of differing amounts within different districts: And all moneys received under such law of local or limited application shall be deemed to be local revenue.”

I will give an illustration of how that may work. It might turn out, sir, that in one district a large amount of public works had been carried on, and a large burden might be laid on the Treasury by what we may call the dead loss on those public works, for which a very large sum of money would require to be found. In another district, where fewer public works had been carried out, or where they were more profitable, less money would be required to be found. Unless we adopt the principle that one part of the colony is to contribute to another—that you are to take the money from one part of the colony to defray the losses on the public works of another—some provision of this kind will have to be made. I will illustrate that by a question that was before the House last week—the imposition of a land tax. Suppose a sum of money were required in one district of the colony to make up the loss on the working of railways, and that in order to make up that deficiency a land tax of 1d. in the £1 was required, but that in another district there was no such deficiency to be made up, or a very much smaller one, it would be quite fair to say that in District A there should be a land tax of 1d. in the £1, that in District B there should be a land tax of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £1, and that in District C there should be a land tax of $\frac{1}{4}$ d. in the £1. I can see nothing unfair in it, and it would bring us more fairly in contact, face to face, with the actual condition and exigencies of the country. We have got into a way, Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say, of not looking at our finances year by year as we ought. In some countries it is the practice not to impose taxation for more than a year. Every taxation Act is in force for one year only, so that every year Parliament has fairly to face not only the items of expenditure but the sources of revenue—just as private individuals have to do. They then say what money they will spend, and determine from what sources they will raise it. And there is a good deal to be said in favour of such a practice. It may

take up a little more time, but it would make the people much more fully cognisant of the facts of the financial situation.

Mr. BLACK : Where are those countries ?

The PREMIER : If the hon. member will carry his political researches not very far he may be able to find out. Hon. members seem to be surprised at a great many things they have to learn. I have pointed out, sir, the nature of the proposals contained in this Bill, and I commend it to the serious attention of the House. It is a most important subject; indeed, there is not a more important subject before the House at the present time, nor can there be a more important one. We have to face things as we find them; we have to deal with the colony as it is. I do not know of any other country in the world of exactly the same conditions as we have, and I believe that some such system as this is the best we can adopt here. I have no doubt I shall be told that I ought to have said so before. That is a matter of opinion. If I did not say so before there may have been reasons for my not doing so. At any rate, I am free now to say exactly what I think on the matter. I do not know what hon. members who represent Northern or Central constituencies think of it, but those who were in their places some years ago used to profess to be very enthusiastic on the subject. For my own part, I always thought it would be a rather good thing if it were worked out fairly.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : You did not.

The PREMIER : I did; although certainly I was not enthusiastic in my support of it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : You opposed it.

The PREMIER : I did not; but I was not in a position to support it more than I did. At present I am free to support it, and I do so firmly believing that it is the best system we can adopt; and I have little doubt but that it will be adopted. Something of the kind will have to be adopted in the interests of every part of the colony. It will be a great advantage to all parts of the country to have such a system. At present public works can only be carried out by the general Government. The members for the district in which a certain public work is proposed to be carried out are probably in favour of it. In other districts they may say, “It is not fair to us to be compelled to contribute towards it.” That is always the case. But if a district understands that for any additional public works that may be carried out, or for any extravagance they may indulge in, they will have to bear the burden, they will be very careful how they make demands upon the Treasury. I believe it will assist most materially in keeping the revenue straight, and of the fairness of the proposition I am convinced. I do not at present see any doubts as to it, although anyone who is an advocate for the adoption of any proposition is, of course, the least likely to see any objection to it. If there are any, I should like to see them pointed out. I have considered the subject from many points of view for many years. The Government have given their binding pledge that they would bring this matter forward at the earliest opportunity for the consideration of Parliament, and we have kept our pledge. I submit this Bill for the consideration of hon. members, and I shall be very glad indeed if the House will deal with the matter during the present session, and hon. members will show by their votes what they affirmed by their words last year when we were discussing the separation question—that they are desirous of doing anything reasonably in their power to show their

determination to do justice to all parts of the colony. If we cannot deal with it during the present session—I see no reason why we should not, but if we do not—I hope it will be dealt with shortly afterwards. At any rate I will undertake that, so long as I can exercise any influence whatever, no matter on which side of the House I may be sitting, I will throw all my weight into carrying out a scheme of this kind for the administration of the finances of the colony. I do not know that I can say, usefully say, anything more at present. I hope that I have, at any rate, succeeded in making plain to hon. members the character of the proposals made by the Government. I do not profess to say that they are perfect. They are, I believe, sound in principle; in matters of detail they may be capable of amendment, but they have been fully considered by the Government, and appear to them to be the fairest way of dealing with conflicting interests. I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to follow the hon. gentleman on the main question of the second reading of this Bill, as I intend to move the adjournment of the debate. I think the hon. gentleman will agree with me that in dealing with a Bill of such importance—one which he himself admits to be important, altering the whole financial system of the colony—hon. members should have a fair opportunity of reading and digesting the explanation of it which he has now given. I do so in the interest of hon. members. It is not for myself, because I understand the system, which is precisely similar to that which I advocated twelve years ago; but there are many members of this House to whom the system is entirely new, and a great many old members who never thoroughly considered the system more than the hon. gentleman himself did in those days, and I think for their sakes, as well as for the sake of all members and also partly for the outside people who are our constituents, that the debate on the second reading should be adjourned. Therefore, sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

The PREMIER: I have no objection to offer to the adjournment of the debate. I think the matter of such importance that the fullest consideration that can be should be given to it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I hope before the debate is resumed the hon. gentleman will bring down some tables showing the revenue and expenditure, as near as may be, of the three divisions, so that we may have some facts to go upon, and also to show, as my hon. friend the member for Townsville has just suggested to me, how the system will work.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It was done in 1872.

The PREMIER: How far do you wish to go back—to last year?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Yes, that will do.

The PREMIER: I can have them ready in a day or two. They are nearly, but not quite, completed.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—Speaking to the adjournment of the debate I wish to point out that I cannot understand how clause 9 of the Bill is to be worked. I draw attention to it because the Premier, in speaking on the Bill, said he would be glad to hear any arguments that could be used against the clauses—as to how they can be worked—and I hope hon. members will look into this clause and see if they can explain it. I can see at a glance that so far as fixed duties are concerned, there will be no difficulty in appropriating the amount paid in Brisbane on goods

afterwards transferred to Rockhampton or Townsville; but how in the world is the Customs to know what amount of *ad valorem* duty has been paid on an invoice sent to Rockhampton from a wholesale house in Brisbane? It cannot be done unless it is done through the house that has supplied the goods to the Northern port. The Customs cannot arrive at the amount, from the fact that they will not know the amount of profit the wholesale house has put upon the goods. To enable them to arrive at that, the wholesale house will have to supply the particulars, and that, of course, will entail a considerable amount of trouble in the wholesale houses in Brisbane, or Rockhampton, or *vice versa*. With the fixed duties, or with Excise, there is no difficulty; but I do not see how it can be done with regard to *ad valorem* duty. Say, for instance, an invoice of fifty articles is sent from Brisbane to Rockhampton on which *ad valorem* duty has been paid. The profits may be 50 per cent. upon one article and only 5 per cent. upon another—varying from 5 to 50 per cent. You cannot average the invoice and say what amount of Customs duty has been paid. It can only be done by getting the cost price at the wholesale house, which, as I have said, would involve considerable labour and necessitate the wholesale houses divulging secrets which they would not care to divulge to the Custom-house. It has been suggested to me that I should read the clause, which is as follows:—

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

“The Treasurer shall cause proper accounts to be kept for the purposes of giving effect to the provisions of this section.”

I believe it is impossible for the Treasurer to keep such accounts.

The PREMIER said: May I be permitted, Mr. Speaker, to say a few words in answer to the hon. gentleman?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: I omitted to refer to the particular difficulty to which the hon. gentleman has referred, but my attention has been directed to it, and I have received communications from merchants in Brisbane, pointing out both the difficulty and the way in which it can be got over. I am not prepared to state at the present time the best way to adopt—that is a matter of detail. Of course, regulations will have to be made prescribing the manner in which the duty should be declared. I do not see any difficulty in requiring a merchant to declare through the Customs, for the purposes of keeping these accounts, what amount of duty he had paid. He need not tell his customers, but there is no reason why he should not declare it to the Customs authorities any more than in the case of an income tax. He need not disclose his profits. I do not see any insuperable difficulty in regard to the matter. It is one of detail, and I hope that is the only objection to the Bill. It is a matter to which I had intended to refer, and I am glad the hon. gentleman has called attention to it. I received a suggestion yesterday from a large merchant in Brisbane, pointing out a practical way of getting over the difficulty. I regret to say that I did not bring it with me, and I have not had time to consider very carefully how it can be carried out; but I could see from reading the note that the suggestion was quite practicable, and that it could be done.

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put and passed.

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

LOCAL ADMINISTRATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I have very little to say in moving the second reading of this Bill, because I said nearly all that was necessary on it in moving the second reading of the last Bill. This measure deals with the matter of local administration, and may be considered quite apart from the other; in fact this Bill might be adopted without the other, or the other might be adopted without this. This is simply a measure of administration entirely apart from any question of finance. It is proposed to divide the colony into precisely the same districts as in the other Bill, Central and Northern; and it is provided that at Rockhampton, in the Central district, and at Townsville, in the Northern district, any department of the Government which may from time to time be found convenient may be established. It is clear that it will be desirable, in the first instance, that branches of the Treasury and of the Departments of Lands and Works should be established at those places, and a branch of the Mines Department certainly at Townsville, and probably in the Central district too. Any others may also be established that may from time to time be considered desirable. All these branches are to be under the supervision of one officer as the general representative of the Government in the places where they are established, who will perform, in respect of the different branches so established, similar functions to those performed by the Under Secretaries of the several departments in Brisbane, and will from time to time communicate by telegram or otherwise with the Minister on matters requiring his sanction. It is also proposed that anything required by law to be done in Brisbane, in respect of any department of the Government, may be done, if it relates to one of these districts, at the branch department. However, I explained before the nature of the proposed system. I believe it is one that will give the very greatest satisfaction in the conduct of the public business, and that it will contribute to economy and efficiency. The greater part of the things referred to in this Bill can now be done by acts of administration, but there are so many that the law requires to be done in Brisbane, as, for instance, matters in connection with the Lands Department, that it is necessary there should be a law to authorise those things to be done locally. Effect of course cannot be given to this Bill without Parliament authorising the necessary salaries for the officers. Some people, I believe, think that this will be a very expensive scheme, but, as I said before, I do not think so. I do not think there need be any serious increase in the number of officers in the public service, as officers may be drafted from the metropolis and sent to do the work at the branch departments. I sincerely hope that this Bill will pass this present session. The Government have taken a long time to consider it, and I think that if decentralisation is to be carried out this is certainly the first step that should be taken. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. MOREHEAD said : Mr. Speaker,—I presume that the Premier proposes to postpone the second reading of this Bill until after the consideration of the measure the debate on

which has just been adjourned, because this Bill contains within itself a provision for the creation of those districts mentioned in the Financial Districts Bill; therefore I take it that the debate on this Bill will also be postponed.

The PREMIER : I do not think it should be necessary.

Mr. MOREHEAD : I think it is distinctly necessary. Certainly it is desirable that the debate should be postponed. The schedules in it are exactly the same as the schedules in the Financial Districts Bill. I therefore move that the debate be adjourned.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—If it is the desire of the House to adjourn the debate I have no objection, but, as I said before, I do not think this stands on the same footing as the other Bill, for it does not introduce a radical change in our financial arrangements, though it introduces a very important change in our administrative arrangements. I shall offer no objection to the adjournment.

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put and passed.

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

REAL PROPERTY (LOCAL REGISTRIES) BILL.

SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move the second reading of this Bill. It provides for the establishment of branches of the Real Property Office in the Central and Northern districts; at Rockhampton in the Central district, and at Townsville in the Northern district. This Bill may be, I think, entirely disconnected from the other two of which I have just moved the second reading. Whether the financial districts are established, or whether there is local administration or not, I believe a great many members of this House approve of the principle of establishing local registries of titles. I do not think I need explain at length the details of the measure. It consists mainly of detail. It provides that there shall be local registries of land under the Real Property Act, and that the transactions shall be registered in the different districts instead of all the work being required to be done in Brisbane, as at present. It is proposed to appoint local registrars at each of the places named. It will be necessary, of course, to transmit to each registry copies of the entries existing now in the books in Brisbane relating to land in the different districts, and those copies will be deemed to be in the registry-book for the future. Then after that the work will go on as it does at present in Brisbane, the entries being made there instead of here. With respect to bringing land under the Real Property Act it is proposed that that shall still be done in Brisbane, because it is not worth while to have separate establishments for that work when there is so little land to be dealt with. I do not know how much there is in the Central district to come under the Real Property Act, but it must be very little, not more than a few hundred acres; and in the Northern district I believe there was only one land sale before the Real Property Act came into operation. So that it would not be desirable to have a separate staff for that purpose. I do not know what objection can be raised to the Bill. Of course it may be said that it will be expensive, but it is simply a matter of clerical labour to make copies of the existing entries, and I do not think the local registries will cost very much; there can, however, be no doubt that the advantages will be

very great indeed. The districts proposed here are the same as in the other two Bills which have been dealt with. I certainly intend to try to get this Bill through Parliament during the present session, and if we do not go through with it this evening, we shall take it up on Tuesday next, and I hope it will be carried.

MR. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I think myself that this is part of the "trinity," and that it may just as well stand over with the other two measures. I believe thoroughly in the Bill, but why should we be called upon to fix the districts this evening? The boundaries are similar to those mentioned in the other measures, and I think it would be well to let the Bill stand over.

MR. KATES: We might as well give them separation at once.

MR. MOREHEAD: I think better.

MR. KATES: I think so.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: We are quite willing.

MR. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I quite agree with the leader of the Opposition that this Bill should be postponed until we have dealt with the other two. I do not think there is anything in particular to be gained by going on with it before the others, because we want to know what the extra cost will be. I hope the Chief Secretary will consent to the postponement of the measure.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think there need be any difficulty about recognising the different districts if we proceed to the consideration of this Bill. We have the principle already in existence in the case of district courts. The boundaries of the several districts, the Northern, Central, and Southern, are already set out, and they correspond very nearly with the districts proposed to be created under this Bill. We all recognise the existence of these several districts for other purposes, and I do not think the same reasons for postponing the consideration of this measure apply to it as to the previous two. I would point out also that one reason why it is necessary that this Bill should be considered and disposed of is that there is a lot of preliminary work to be done, and it will take some time to organise the necessary machinery for giving effect to the Bill. Therefore it is a matter of very great importance that the House should not delay the consideration of the measure.

MR. FERGUSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I must say that I quite agree with the Bill. This is a matter that has been very often urged in the Central district, and I have been requested to try and get such a measure passed by the House. We know very well that there is a great deal of difficulty in getting titles from Brisbane. There is not only delay, but very heavy expense, and I am sure this measure will be approved of in the Central district. No doubt the Northerners want separation, but this measure will be much appreciated. I have had several communications from the Chamber of Commerce of Rockhampton on the subject, and I think the Bill should be passed without delay. I do not think it is connected with the other two Bills in any way, and so far as I can see it should not be delayed at all.

MR. PATTISON said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with a great deal that has fallen from the hon. member for Rockhampton, that this is a measure that has been repeatedly asked for by the Central district, and I approve of the Bill as it stands; but I take exception to its being considered now, inasmuch as the fight upon the previous Bills will take place over the division of the colony. It is only this afternoon that members of the Opposition have been favoured

with the maps, although one has been hanging over the Government benches for some days. As far as I am concerned I will give the Government all reasonable assistance in passing this measure. There is nothing in it that any reasonable member can object to, but in all fairness I think the second reading should be postponed until we have made ourselves thoroughly acquainted with the manner in which the colony is to be divided into districts.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not see anything objectionable in the Bill, in fact quite the reverse. The Bill, so far as the northern portion of the colony is concerned, will just anticipate what we shall have altogether in the course of two or three years, and that is the control of our own affairs. This gives us the control of our own registration affairs. When we get complete separation, as we no doubt shall within the time I have stated, this will be included, and this Bill is simply an anticipation of it; and, as an hon. member has just suggested to me, it may save us the expense of initiating a new system. The Bill will save time, but it will not save very much money. It will certainly save much time in the registration of properties in the northern portion of the colony, but only an officer acquainted with the working of the Real Property Office, or perhaps a lawyer, can say what is likely to be the difference in the amount of expenditure the proposal will involve. I think this Bill may be passed quite apart from the other Bills referred to, and I shall offer no opposition to it.

MR. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with the hon. member for Townsville on this question, and last year I drew attention to this very matter, and the Premier said then in answer to a question I put, that he intended to bring forward a measure dealing with the subject this session. There is only one question that arises in connection with it to which any objection may be raised, and that is the question of expense. I have a word or two to say upon that. I do not believe the expense of working the offices at Townsville and Rockhampton will be very much less than the expense of working the Brisbane office. The same matters are to be dealt with in those offices as are dealt with at present in Brisbane, with the exception of applications to bring land under the principal Act for the first time, when the proceedings must be initiated in Brisbane. That, however, is a small matter, because I believe almost the whole of the lands are now under the Real Property Act, and there would be very few cases where reference would have to be made to Brisbane for that purpose. But there will have to be some officer of experience to take charge of these branches, because every day questions of an extremely difficult character are arising in connection with the working of the Act, and one has only to look at the office book called the "Requisition Book" to see the extreme difficulty of the questions arising, with respect to wills and settlements (although the Act does not recognise trusts)—and many other questions as to succession. I believe that each of these offices will require an officer similar to the Master of Titles here, or if such an officer is not appointed the deputy registrar will have to possess the qualifications of a master of titles, and will have to be a trained real property lawyer; and he must be paid a fair salary for doing the work. The House must not lose sight of the fact that the scheme will be expensive. It will undoubtedly be better for the districts, as they will have their work done locally. Looking at the Estimates for this year, I find that £7,800 is asked for the administration of the office of the Registrar of Titles in Brisbane for the ensuing

year. Last year we spent £8,000 in that office. Well, I suppose these offices will not be as large as the one in Brisbane at the commencement, because there is not so much land alienated in the Central and Northern districts as here, and the transactions will consequently not be so numerous for some time to come. Still there will have to be a relatively large staff as compared with the staff in Brisbane. There will have to be an officer in charge—a deputy registrar; and there will have to be draftsmen. There will have to be an officer similar to the Master of Titles in each of those offices, unless reference is to be constantly made to Brisbane either by telegraph or by letter, in which case the proceedings will take just as long as under the present system. All those expenses will have to be met, and I believe the cost of administering those two offices will be at least £10,000 a year—£5,000 each. I shall be very much mistaken if that is not so. We shall have to provide offices for the officers to carry on the business, and, as I said on a former occasion, the first cost of copying the documents for each of those branch offices, at present in the Real Property Office in Brisbane, will be from £4,000 to £5,000 to start with, and I believe I am understating the figures. Beyond that, I believe there will be an additional £5,000 a year as the cost of maintaining each of these offices.

Mr. MOREHEAD: In case the first of these Bills pass, out of what fund will those registrars be paid?

The PREMIER: Out of the local revenue.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then it is a part of the whole scheme.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad to hear there is such a concord of opinion about this matter—that it is a good Bill. I think it would be better if the districts were smaller, and I do not think it would increase the expenditure. Of course these local registries are to be established to benefit Rockhampton and Townsville, while the Wide Bay district and Bundaberg will be left in the same position as at present in this respect. I know that it has been complained of locally for a long time that they have not had local registries established in those districts. I do not think there will be any objection to the Bill, but I would like to see the districts smaller than they are marked on the maps before us. I think it would give a great deal more satisfaction to the colony if one were established as far north as Cooktown, one at Maryborough, one at Bundaberg, one at Blackall, and one at Normanton; and I believe myself that the expense need not be any more than it is at present.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—Speaking for Maryborough, sir, I feel perfectly satisfied that the exclusion of that place from consideration in this Bill as a place for a local registrar, will give great dissatisfaction. Ever since the Real Property Act was put in force the Maryborough people have been crying out for a branch to be established there, more for local reference than for any other reason. The Wide Bay and Burnett districts, including Gympie and Bundaberg, number about one-seventh of the whole population of the colony, and yet they are to be denied the privilege of having a branch of this office established there, as they so universally desire there should be. I sincerely hope that, when the matter comes to be discussed in detail, such amendments will be introduced as will enable the Government to establish branches of the Real Property Office in the centres of population in the Wide Bay and Burnett districts, as well as elsewhere.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sorry I was not here when the Premier intro-

duced this Bill. There is one question which I would like to ask him, and that is, as the Bill provides for the registering of titles of land sold in the Northern districts what is to become of the money?

The PREMIER: It will go into the Treasury, unless you pass the other Bill.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—I have no objection to the Bill. It is a very convenient measure for the Northern and Central districts; but, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Bowen, it will mean an increased expenditure of £10,000.

The PREMIER: It will not.

Mr. KATES: The hon. member said so.

The PREMIER: He does not know.

Mr. KATES: I do not think that in the face of a deficit of £580,000 staring us in the face we are justified in increasing that deficit by some £10,000 or £15,000. If the hon. gentleman will tell us how he proposes to meet the extra cost I shall be very glad to support him.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the principal benefit which will accrue from the passing of this Bill is the one that has been referred to by the hon. member for Maryborough—local reference. There will be no advantage that I can see accruing in the way of a saving of cost to those who wish to get their titles. I think it will be found that the cost will be quite as much with these local registry offices as it is now in Brisbane. I am disposed to think that the estimate of the hon. member for Bowen is rather high as to the cost of running those offices, although I have no doubt the expense will be more than half that amount, probably about £3,000.

The PREMIER: £1,200 each is quite enough.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS: Then the initiatory cost of transcribing documents now in the Real Property Office will cost an enormous amount of money, and occupy a very long time. Any one who is in the habit of visiting the Real Property Office, and seeing the enormous number of volumes there, will know that. Still there is no doubt that it is desirable that it should be done. I do not think the colony should be broken up into more than three districts; to go further would make the thing ridiculous. I hope the Bill will pass; but if the outside public have any idea that it will save money in the cost of registration of titles, they are very much mistaken. No doubt there will be greater facilities for local reference in regard to local transactions and a saving of time, which is an important element in some transactions but not in all. In 90 per cent. of cases, a week's delay does not make much difference; but I hope the Bill will pass for the sake of the very great advantages it will give.

Mr. McWHANNELL said: Mr. Speaker,—In looking at this Bill I see nothing in the main portions of it to object to; but the schedule which is attached to it will act as a precedent for the two Bills that have been adjourned. The object in bringing forward the Bill, I presume, is to divide the colony into districts so that the port from which the traffic of the western country is drawn will be included in that financial district to which it belongs. I would point out that by this map a considerable portion of the North Gregory district will belong to the Central district. It is generally believed by people who reside in those parts that the 22nd parallel should be taken so far as the dividing watershed between the Thomson and the Diamantina; that watershed should be followed until it strikes the 23rd parallel, which line should be followed to the western boundary of the colony. By that division the northern part of the Gregory

district would be in the Northern financial district—that portion of the Gregory which draws its traffic from Townsville on the east coast and from Normanton on the north coast. I think it would be only justice to that portion of North Gregory to be included in the Northern financial district.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—I have nothing to say against the Bill. It will be a very useful measure if passed. I agree with a great deal that has fallen from the hon. member for Maryborough, that it would not do the Wide Bay and Burnett districts any good. I know the people there will do all they can to obtain some sort of office in their district, as it will save a considerable amount of time in getting their deeds. I think it would be far wiser if the districts were smaller and there were more of them, and I believe the expense would not be greater. Documents will have to be copied and sent to Rockhampton and Townsville, or wherever it may be, and it will cost no more to send copies to other centres besides those two. I have frequently known property to be sold and transfers given, and the deeds sent down to Brisbane, where they have remained for five or six months at a stretch, and no word received as to what had become of them. The Chamber of Commerce at Bundaberg made a very severe complaint about deeds not coming back to purchasers of land in the district, and the consequence was that there were no less than twenty-five deeds sent back a fortnight after. In this colony we are what may be called a floating population, and it often happens that people, after being for two or three months in a place, want to sell out and move to another part of the country. If they cannot get their deeds it puts them to great inconvenience. I think it would be far wiser if branches could be established in many parts of the country.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the establishment of this office for the registration of titles in the Central district would be a very great convenience to the people in the West, at all events the part of the West which I represent. I know there have been great complaints from the purchasers of land round the various townships about the difficulties they have always had in getting their titles registered or in getting any attention from the office in Brisbane; and though it may be a little extra expense to the country, I think it will be a very great convenience, at all events, to the people. But, Mr. Speaker, if there is going to be any scramble for the subdivision of the offices of the State amongst the different townships of the colony, I should like to be in it. I do not see why my constituents should not have a little share of the plunder—that is what it really means. Those gentlemen who are calling out for branch offices at Maryborough and all over the colony simply want to scramble for the funds of the colony; they want more Government money spent for their benefit; and, as I said before, if those gentlemen are going to get anything in that way for their constituents, I do not see why I should not put in a claim for mine. Though I do not think there are any more titles to be registered in the West, or likely to be any more for some time to come, still I do not see why we should not have a registrar of titles, in order to get his salary spread amongst us as well as those gentlemen in Maryborough.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—There is no doubt that this Bill meets a want that has often been felt, certainly in the northern part of the colony, and I think in the central part. I do not think the House intends to offer any serious opposition to the passing of this Bill. At the same time, in allowing the second reading of it to go, I think it should be distinctly understood that we

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do not in any way bind ourselves to the schedule, especially the dividing line between the Central and Northern districts, which is extremely unsatisfactory. No doubt, Mr. Speaker, the dividing line which is embodied in this Bill, if it becomes law, will eventually be the line separating the central and northern portions of the colony, and on that ground it would be just as well to have that line settled in an amicable manner on the present occasion, as it might save a great deal of unnecessary debate later on. The only other fault in connection with this Bill is that the hon. the Chief Secretary has allowed it to get into bad company. If this Bill had been introduced by itself it would have met with no opposition whatever. I do not think it will meet with any serious opposition as it is, but its introduction with two Bills of a most suspicious character has no doubt caused a good many hon. members to look upon it with suspicion. The principles of the Bill are thoroughly sound and just, and if we can settle the matter of dividing the expense of carrying it out—a problem which I have no doubt the Premier, who has now become one of the leading financiers of the colony, will be able to solve—if we can settle how the money for the additional expense is to be raised, and settle the matter of the boundary between the Northern and Central districts, I hope we shall be able to see this Bill pass. It is not a Bill which can be considered a contentious one in the least, and the Northern and Central districts will, I am sure, hail with satisfaction the passing of such a measure, which will give them facilities which they have many years asked for and not been able to receive.

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

Committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. Although the committal of the Bill, of which the second reading has been carried, has been put down for to-morrow, we do not propose to take it until Tuesday. There is a good deal of private business on the paper for to-morrow, and it is not proposed to take up the time of the House with any Government business, so that the whole sitting will be given to private business.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-seven minutes past 8 o'clock.