

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 8 September, 1887.

Questions.—Formal Motion.—Motion for Adjournment
—Bowen Railway.—Message from the Legislative
Council.—Australian Joint Stock Bank Act Amend-
ment Bill.—Financial Districts Tables.—Bundaberg
School of Arts Land Sale Bill—committee.—Chinese
Immigrants Act Amendment Bill—second reading.
—Local Government Act of 1878 Amendment Bill
No. 2.—committee.—Supply—resumption of com-
mittee.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. CHUBB asked the Minister for Works—

When will tenders be invited for the construction of
the first section of the Bowen Railway?

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

I am not prepared to say at present when tenders
can be invited.

Mr. BAILEY asked the Colonial Treasurer—

Will he cause a strict and impartial inquiry to be
made as to the conduct of the Colonial Stores Depart-
ment, especially as to the reasons which led to the
resignation of Mr. J. Curry.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: A question has
been asked.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith): I
understood the hon. gentleman to rise to a point
of order.

Mr. BROOKES: Mr. Speaker,—I do rise to a
point of order. This bungle arises out of my inex-
perience. I want to ask you, sir, if certain words
in this question ought to appear as part of the
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question. The words are "Will he cause a strict
and impartial inquiry." Now, I do not like that
word "impartial." I think it appears to be
coloured. It seems to imply that there is a
possibility of the inquiry not being impartial.

The SPEAKER: I do not think that the
words ought to be in the question, because it is
an implication that partial inquiries are per-
mitted by the Government.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I do not object to the
question going as it is.

The SPEAKER: It is entirely a question for
the hon. Colonial Treasurer to decide whether
he will answer it in its present form. He can
decline to do so if he pleases, and the hon. mem-
ber for Wide Bay can then put the question in
the form in which it ought to be put.

Mr. BAILEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I am
quite willing to alter the question if it is out of
order.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot
speak to the question. No discussion can take
place on a question being put.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think
the practice is sometimes for the Chair to take
the responsibility of correcting questions placed
on the notice-paper when they are irregular.
That has been done when the epithets used have
been considered objectionable. I can assure
hon. members that any inquiry made will be
strict and impartial. The answer to the question
is:—

My attention has not previously been directed to
the matter. I will inquire into it myself, and, if it
appears necessary, take further action with respect to
inquiring into the management of the Colonial Stores.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked the Premier—

Whether the Government propose to discontinue the
issue of miners' rights and publicans' licenses to the
Chinese throughout the colony?

The PREMIER replied—

The Government do not propose to take any action
in the matter at present.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Crushed again!

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. CHUBB—

1. That the Queensland Trustees and Executors
Society, Limited, Bill be referred for the consideration
and report of a select committee.

2. That such committee have power to send for
persons and papers, and leave to sit during any adjourn-
ment of the House, and that it consist of the following
members, namely:—Mr. William Brookes, Mr. Aland,
Mr. Donaldson, Mr. Foxton, and the mover.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

BOWEN RAILWAY.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to
move the adjournment of the House, for the
purpose of bringing under the notice of hon.
members a substantial grievance which I have
to complain of. It is in reference to the Bowen
railway. In this morning's *Courier* appears a
telegram to this effect:—

"A large and influential meeting was held here last
night, when the following resolutions were passed:—
'That the Minister for Works be communicated with
urging upon him that, now the permanent survey of the
first section of the Bowen railway has been completed,
tenders be called for the construction of the same
immediately;' and 'That the Premier be respectfully
reminded of his promise to Bowen when last here, that
there should be no delay in commencing that railway,
and also of a statement in his separation despatch
that the Bowen railway was the only Northern one that
had not been commenced, and it would be proceeded
with at once.'"

Before that meeting was held, I had tabled a question, the answer to which I received just now. Of course I am aware I have no right to discuss on this motion an answer given in that way, and I do not intend to do so, but I propose to substantiate my complaint by reference to other documents I have here. I would point out that the railway in question is one promised by the late Government, and the section which has been approved of by Parliament is practically the same as the section laid on the table by the previous Government, the plans of which were not adopted owing to the defeat of that Government. The matter remained in abeyance for some three years, during which time the Government were boring for coal in other directions, and they postponed the consideration of this railway until last session. The plans were brought down last session and the motion for their approval passed on the 3rd November. During last session there were several other plans brought down and approved by this House, the permanent surveys of which have since been completed and tenders called for same. In the *Gazette* of the 16th July, there are four tenders called for railway works; in the Southern division the North Coast railway, section 5—that is the Gympie end—the Cooktown railway in the Northern division, the extension from the city to Fortitude Valley, and the Maryborough to Gayndah railway, first section, in the Southern division. Now, the plans for all these railways were passed last session, and I see the permanent surveys of those works were completed and tenders called for them as early as the 14th May, the 11th June, and the 9th July, although at that time the plans were not entirely completed. Tenders were called for these four railways though the plans were not ready, and a notice was given that they could be seen at the office on a certain day subsequent to the calling for tenders. The Maryborough to Gayndah railway, section 1, has not been let, as the time for receiving tenders for it expires during this month. No. 5 section of the Gympie line has been let; for the Fortitude Valley line the tenders are in, and I am not quite certain how the Cooktown railway stands.

Mr. HAMILTON: Tenders have been accepted for a short section.

Mr. CHUBB: I am told tenders have been accepted for a short section of it. As soon as the House passed the plans for the Bowen railway, I put myself in communication with the then Minister for Works, the late Mr. Miles, and he promised to give instructions to have the permanent survey proceeded with as soon as possible. Two months elapsed before the instructions were given. In order that I might be correct in my dates, I may say I wrote a letter to the Commissioner in June last asking for answers to certain categorical questions I put to him, and these are the answers I got to those questions:—

"Referring to previous communications *re* Bowen railway survey, I have the honour to inform you the Chief Engineer now reports as follows:—

"1. Instructions were received by the Chief Engineer to proceed with the permanent survey Bowen to Ayr on January 4th, 1887.

"2. The Chief Engineer definitely instructed Mr. Longland to proceed to Bowen on March 29th. Previous to this Mr. Longland had been examining the western end of the Bowen line for flood levels.

"3. The survey was commenced at Bowen on April 2nd.

"4. Mr. Longland has completed the survey to five and a-half miles."

That was signed for the Commissioner.

The PREMIER: What is the date of it?

Mr. CHUBB: The 17th of June. Hon. members will observe that at first there was a delay of two months before instructions were given, and there was a further delay of nearly three months before the Chief Engineer sent an officer to commence the survey. I am aware that it is said that Mr. Longland was examining the western end of the Bowen line for flood-levels at the time; but, from a private letter I have received, I am informed that he was taking the levels of the Burdekin River at that time, and as the river was then in flood it was very easy for him to ascertain the levels within a few days, and within a week at the outside. The survey was commenced, and there is no reason for the long delay that has since taken place and now the plans are not completed. Last week I called again at the office and asked the Commissioner for Railways for information. I asked him to send up a telegram to Mr. Hannam for particulars, and I particularly wanted to know if the survey was finished, and if not, when it would be finished, and whether any field-books had been sent to the office with copies of the plans, and, in fact, what was the state of matters. He promised to do so, and I called again this morning. The only information I got, and which I believe is the only information they have in the office, was that they expected the survey would be completed about the 12th of this month. Almost the last day the late Minister for Works was in this House, on the Thursday, I spoke to him about the matter, and he said that, so far as he was able to judge, he expected to be able to call for tenders in about three months. This is what I want to point out. I have already shown that in the case of four other railways approved of last session the surveys have been completed, the tenders called for, and some of them let. I may point out that this was a very easy line, and the Minister for Works himself said that the bridgeworks would be very light, and the surface-work generally light, as there were no large cuttings to be made. I think, therefore, that nine months is too long for the survey of a railway of that kind to be on hand, and if it was conducted with the rapidity that the surveys in other parts of the colony were done, I believe there is no reason why it should not have been completed in two months. There has been no flood weather to interfere with the survey, and it could have been done within two months if the instructions were given at the proper time and the officers carried out their work properly. I remember in July last that one of the hon. members for Maryborough, Mr. Sheridan, went to Maryborough to see his constituents, and he took in his pocket a copy of the *Government Gazette* in which tenders were called for the line in his district. The *Gazette* came out on the Friday or Saturday morning, and the hon. gentleman was in Maryborough addressing his constituents on the following Tuesday night, and during his address he is reported to have said:—

"He made a resolution in his mind last year that he would not return to Maryborough until he carried in his pocket the advertisement in the *Government Gazette* calling for tenders for the Mungah line, and he had brought it with him, and left Brisbane within an hour after receiving it."

It is further stated in the report that—

"The manner in which Mr. Miles accosted him at the door of his house and informed him that tenders would shortly be called, and bid him tell the news to his constituents at once, was graphically described."

That is the way, I point out, that members in the southern part of the colony seem to have their wants attended to. I want to draw a distinction between what is called justice to the North and justice to the South. I did not refer to this matter last evening on the discussion on

the Financial Districts Bill, because I did not wish to introduce local grievances into a matter of that kind. I prefer to do so to-day, and I may say I have received a telegram from the mayor of Bowen informing me of the holding of the meeting last night, and asking me to convey the resolutions passed to the Premier and the Minister for Works, and to ask them to have tenders invited for the railway. Well, the House is sitting, and I prefer to interview those gentlemen in the House, so that I may make my request publicly, and have their answer given to me just as publicly. I think I have good ground for complaining of the delay, which seems to be unreasonable, unnecessary, and almost deliberate in going on with this work. I think I am entitled to have some answer from the Government in this matter. The hon. member at the head of the Works Department said he was not prepared to say when tenders would be called for. I think that is not a fair answer under all the circumstances, and I must ask for something more definite. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sorry the hon. gentleman did not convey his intentions to me more in the ordinary way, and then I could have told him more in detail than I can now how the matter stands. Before the Government call for any more tenders for railway works they intend to know exactly what the condition of the finances of the colony is. Hon. members on the other side laugh. Of course they consider it is a ridiculous idea to consider the finances before calling for tenders. I quite agree that it is absurd from the point of view of hon. members opposite. The Government intend to see exactly what money will be wanted during this year. We have a certain amount of money to our credit on Loan Fund, and a certain amount only.

MR. CHUBB: You have £150,000 of the last vote, or you ought to have.

The PREMIER: We have a certain amount to the credit of the Loan Fund, and a certain amount only. We have already a considerable number of contracts let, involving serious liabilities, which will fall in during the present year; and it is a very serious question when we should go to the London money market for more money. Before the Government commit the country to any further expenditure of that money, they intend to have a very thorough knowledge of the present condition of the finances. The first thing I did when I went to the Treasury to take charge of that department was to inquire what were the outstanding liabilities to come in during the year against the Loan Fund, and I regret to say the information was not then available. I believe it is all available in the office to-day, but I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing really what is the amount of obligation outstanding, and until I know that, and have had an opportunity of consulting my colleagues on the subject, I decline to make any promise committing the country to further expenditure. I hope to-morrow to be able to get a complete knowledge of the whole position, but I am sorry to say that up to the present time I have not got it.

MR. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I can quite sympathise with the hon. member for Bowen in the complaint that he has brought before the House. I may say, sir, that with regard to that railway the people of Bowen have been treated as if they were mere shuttlecocks. The late Government got this House to vote a sum of money for that railway, and the first thing the present Government did in connection with the loan votes when they came into office was to get another vote for a railway from Bowen to some imaginary coalfields, which,

according to Mr. Jack's report, were burnt out. There was no coal that could be burnt there as far as he knew without the help of a considerable quantity of timber. That is Mr. Jack's report respecting these coalfields to which the House was induced to vote money for building a railway.

The PREMIER: That report was given long subsequently.

MR. NORTON: The report was not given long subsequently, and it was the only official knowledge that the House had, or that the Works Department had, I believe, as to the condition of the coalfield.

The PREMIER: How could that be the only information they had when the information had not then been given?

MR. NORTON: The information had been given, and when the Government Geologist reported upon the place he stated that the best coal he could get he succeeded in burning with the assistance of a good deal of timber. That was all we had to go upon, but the Government, with the majority they had at their back, succeeded in carrying the vote for a railway to that burnt-out coalfield. After conducting a number of experiments, which do not appear to have been very successful, they came to the conclusion that they would abandon that scheme and give the money, in addition to the sum already voted, for a line from Bowen going northward. Now, I think that, considering the nature of the country, which is for many miles from Bowen to the Burdekin almost a dead level, the hon. member has very good ground for complaining that more action has not been taken in the matter by the Government. But, sir, I sympathise with him because I, as the representative of the Port Curtis district, have a similar complaint. A sum of money was voted for a line from Bundaberg to Gladstone, and promises were given to the people up there by the then Minister for Works that the survey would be completed and the line carried out as soon as possible. Well, sir, the first surveyor was taken away before he had completed the line, and after a great deal of delay another surveyor was sent up to the Gladstone end of the line to conduct the permanent survey. I have it on the authority, I might almost say, of the Works Department that that gentleman was refused employment by the Engineer in the Northern Division, Mr. Hannam; he simply would not have him. He was on this line for weeks engaged on trial surveys which all ended in nothing. From the place where he started it was only possible to take the railway by a certain course, unless he deviated altogether beyond the range; but instead of going on with the permanent survey he spent weeks and months in trial surveys which were of no use whatever. Now, this morning, I hear from the Engineer-in-Chief that another surveyor is to be sent up to go on with the trial survey and begin the permanent work in order that an appearance of expedition may be given. But, sir, the work has been delayed beyond all reason; it might have been carried out months ago—I might almost say years ago—had the Government shown any desire to fulfil the promise made by the late Minister for Works. I have spoken on the subject repeatedly, both in this House and to the Minister in his office, but the only effect has been to get a little bit along with this dilly-dallying that has been going on so long. Now, with regard to what has fallen from the Premier in connection with this determination to find out all about the money, I am very glad that the hon. gentleman has come to that determination; but, sir, it is at the eleventh hour. The hon. gentleman has gone on sanctioning expenditure beyond our means for years, and now, when there is a possibility of the

country turning round in disgust upon the administration of the Government, he has suddenly found that it is necessary to see we get the money before it is expended. But, sir, I would ask him what is being done now with regard to the Valley railway? Is anything being done there which will necessitate a greater expenditure than was authorised by this House? From statements I see in the papers, I am inclined to think that the expenditure incurred in carrying out that line as far as Constance street will be very much greater than the sum authorised by this House. I hope the hon. gentleman will be in a position to tell the House, before he accepts any tender of that kind, what is the real cost of resuming the land that will be required to carry the railway to that point. I should be the last to complain if the railway were carried out to a convenient point in the town, leaving the final extension to be carried out when it could be done without exceeding the limit authorised by this House. I believe that in many cases the sums voted will be largely exceeded—in fact, in several cases they have been exceeded already; and, as I pointed out on a recent occasion, a future loan which is not yet authorised has been drawn upon to the extent of considerably over half-a-million; so that there is every justification for the hon. gentleman speaking about the necessity of seeing that works are not incurred which will cause a greater outlay than that already authorised. But I hope the hon. gentleman, while applying that rule to one case, will see that it is carried out in all, and not make an exception of the Bowen line. I was rather struck with the report published to the effect that the Government intended to carry out the Fortitude Valley line as far as Constance street, because I believe, on the representation of men who are well acquainted with the value of city property, that if that line is carried out the money which will have to be paid as compensation for resumption of land will bring up the cost of the line to an amount far exceeding the amount of the vote for the whole of the work.

Mr. McMASTER: No.

Mr. NORTON: I am merely quoting what I heard from gentlemen who are, I believe, competent to give a fair valuation of the land which will be required. I do not believe the line can be made without largely exceeding the amount voted.

Mr. SCOTT said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. member for Bowen has great reason to complain in this matter. A great many years ago—five years at least—a sum of money was voted for the Bowen railway, but from that time till now nothing has been done—except that the money may have been applied to some other purpose. The excuse given by the Chief Secretary for not calling for tenders appears to me to show that the money has been applied to another purpose. The money was voted five years ago, but the reason why tenders were not called was, that the member for Bowen has always sat on this side of the House, and the consequence is that his constituents have been punished. When the present Government came into office they tried to get quit of this altogether, but they could not do so; and after it was brought into something like fair form the late Minister for Works said he would not go on with the work till he had gone over the ground himself. The line is one of the easiest lines on the Queensland coast to construct. The first section from Bowen is almost a dead level, and there are no engineering difficulties in the way. The excuse given by the Premier is a very poor one, because the money has been appropriated for the particular purpose of making that railway; and if it has been used for any other purpose it has been improperly used.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the reply given by the Chief Secretary to the hon. member for Bowen should not apply in the particular case of the Bowen railway. It seems, according to what he stated, that he is uncertain as to the extent to which the cash balance of the Loan Fund will carry on the railways now in course of construction; but surely the hon. gentleman cannot deny the justice of making the railway from Bowen to Townsville *via* Ayr, because the money for that railway should be in the Treasury, as not a penny has been spent, except the amount that was expended in boring for coal. Therefore the £150,000 authorised in 1882, and borrowed by the late Government, should be now in the Treasury unless it has been used for the making of some other railway. Now, will the hon. gentleman say it has been used for the making of any other railway? If it has not, the money must be available. And what is the pretence of not calling for tenders? Simply because there are certain railways in the South with certain liabilities he is uncertain the Treasury will meet or not. The thing seems ridiculous; but it is simply carrying out the policy entered upon by the present Government when they came into office; it has always been their determination not to make the railway if they could avoid it. It was said by the late Minister for Works that he would not make the railway, and certainly he never did. I am sorry he did not live long enough to do it, but if he were in his place here to-day he would not have given a different answer. The manner in which this railway has been dealt with is simply a disgrace to any Government. If the late Government had acted in the same way in regard to a railway in the North, or in the central portion of the colony, I am quite certain that no member of this House would have been stronger in his condemnatory language of their conduct than the hon. gentleman now at the head of the Government. Every railway we contracted to make we set to work at once to try to make. We commenced the survey of this line, which was actually ready; and if I am not mistaken the plans were laid on the table of the House by the hon. member for Port Curtis, who was then Minister for Works. That was in 1883; and now we are told in 1887 that owing to the uncertainty of the balance in the Treasury the hon. gentleman cannot tell us when tenders will be called. We have the amount of the cash balance in the Auditor-General's Report.

The PREMIER: We must know the liability on account of contracts outstanding.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The amount of liability on contracts outstanding can be obtained by every hon. member from the Commissioner for Railways' Report; and the two things put together should give the hon. gentleman sufficient information to allow him to call for tenders for this line. The amount of cash balance in connection with the Loan Fund to the credit of the Treasury at the end of the last financial year was £2,734,000. I should think the first £150,000 voted for this line should be in that, if not the second £100,000. But I am afraid that neither is—that both amounts have been spent in making some of those pet political railways which have been passed by the present Government. Compare the dilatoriness of the present Government in making this line with their activity in making the line—or rather in trying to make it, for I hope they will never be able to make it—the straight line to Warwick, often spoken of as the "*via recta*." Compare their activity with regard to that line, and also with regard to the line from Warwick to St. George as a continuation of the *via recta*, with the delay that has occurred on this

Bowen line. But the difference is this: that the Bowen line is a useful railway in Northern Queensland, while the other is a political line in Southern Queensland. That is the difference. I think the conduct of the Government with respect to this Bowen line cannot be sufficiently widely made known to the people of the colony, both North and South. The people of the South, I am quite sure, would not approve of conduct of this kind: those who think the matter over would never justify the Government in withholding a line the vote for which had been taken five years ago and the plans laid on the table of the House to be passed four years ago. I am extremely sorry that the hon. gentleman could not find some other reason, as far as this line is concerned. The Treasury reason may suit very well for such lines as the *via recta* and the Fortitude Valley line, and perhaps also for the line the plans of which are now on the table of the House—the South Brisbane line—which I may observe, Mr. Speaker, were tabled very readily when the hon. member for South Brisbane was in a quandary as to whether he was going to be opposed or not.

The PREMIER: They were laid on the table in pursuance of Mr. Miles's promise given a fortnight before.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: A promise made by this Assembly is much more important than even a promise made by any Minister for Works; and this Assembly, though not this Parliament, stood committed to a promise to make this railway given five years ago. And yet the plans passed last year are still inoperative, although, as the member for Leichhardt has pointed out, the line is actually as level as the floor of this House. There is not a single engineering difficulty for the whole of the first two or three sections, except it may be the crossing of the Burdekin River. Of course I must give the hon. gentleman credit for his anxiety to find out the liabilities of the Government, but surely this is a very late period in the expenditure of the £10,000,000 loan to attempt to find out its liabilities. This is a matter that the Treasury should have been kept posted up in day by day. There should have been no inquiry necessary at this late period, four years after the £10,000,000 loan was projected, to find out the amount of the Government's liabilities on the railways which this £10,000,000 loan was to make. And I must say that although the hon. gentleman may try to throw the blame upon the late Treasurer, I, for one, and I think the House also, will not allow him to shunt the blame off his own shoulders. The head of the Government is responsible for the actions of every one of its members.

The PREMIER: I am quite aware of that.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: And upon the hon. gentleman the responsibility must remain of allowing the loan vote to get into such a condition as we are led to believe from his answer to the hon. member for Bowen. It is his responsibility, and it is also his disgrace.

The HON. G. THORN said: Mr. Speaker,—I have only a few words to say, and I will begin by saying that I am anxious not to embarrass the Government in any way. In my opinion the loan expenditure ought to be reduced. We have been spending a great deal too much loan money of late. Instead of spending two millions a year, a little over a million would be quite sufficient. But I think the Government have not been acting straight to some of their supporters with regard to certain railways which they promised when they first came into office. I allude more particularly to the straight line to Warwick—the *via recta*. The Government have made many railways since they

came into office, some of which are not likely to pay for a considerable time. But I do not call one of them a political railway, and I firmly believe that they will all be payable after a few years. Certainly the two worst lines are lines which were passed very shortly after the present Government entered office—the two lines about Toowoomba—the Crow's Nest line and the Beauraba line. With regard to the straight line to Warwick, the *via recta*, when I asked a question about it last month I was informed that the plans were ready, and that the line would be constructed for the amount which Parliament voted for it—namely, £500,000. That sum will also include the improving of the Fassfern line, which will have to be re-laid in some places. I do wish, sir, that the Government would give me some pledge that they will this session lay the plans on the table of the House. I should like them to do so before they go out of office. Notwithstanding the remark of the hon. member for Townsville that this line is not wanted, I confidently believe that it will be one of the finest lines in the colony. When that line is finished there will be an enormous trade along it from here to New South Wales, and it will also pick up a great deal of traffic upon the road. There is a large amount of very fine land along that line, and I have no hesitation in saying that from the start the *via recta* will pay, not merely as a direct line to New South Wales, but as a branch line through a rich agricultural district. I do not ask the Government to go on with the line at once; all I want them to do is to place the plans upon the table and get the approval of Parliament for them. Only this morning, before leaving home, I was waited upon by some of my constituents, who asked me to see that the plans were tabled this session, and said they were very anxious to have a promise from the Government on the subject. I am informed that the plans were ready some time ago, and I trust the Premier will see his way to place them on the table this session.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—I give the hon. member for Fassfern credit for knowing a good deal about many things, but he knows nothing of what he is talking about when he says that the Crow's Nest line is not paying. The only fault with the line is in its construction. It is not able to carry the traffic that is there for it. The curves are so sharp that the trains cannot draw a heavy load round them. If that were altered I am certain there would not be a better paying line in the colony.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—I have nothing to say about the Bowen line, but I must allude briefly to a remark made by the hon. member for Townsville. That hon. gentleman never rises to speak on any railway question without having something to say about the *via recta*. He never says anything about his Northern political lines—about the Cooktown line, and the other lines in the North—which do not pay at all. He knows nothing whatever about the country through which the *via recta* will run. He has never been in that locality, or he would not talk so much nonsense every time he has occasion to speak about it. It is the richest district in Queensland. It is full of agricultural land both below and above the Range, and the way the hon. gentleman speaks about the *via recta* is almost a libel on that part of the country. It will be time enough to speak on that subject when the plans come before the House, and they will come before us this session, because the Government are pledged to do it. I understand that the parliamentary plans are ready to be submitted to this House, and I believe that they will be submitted very shortly. If they are

not then they ought to be, and that very shortly. The hon. gentleman is very inconsistent in many ways, and I may say that I have found out that he is not what he pretends to be, especially in the way of consistency. Some few years ago when he was Minister for Works he happened to inspect the Killarney Railway, and, looking round at that magnificent estate of Canning Downs, he said: "What a crying shame it is that this magnificent land should be in the hands of one man. The Government should recover it and cut it up for farms." Some time afterwards I introduced a motion for the purpose of recovering that estate for public purposes, for settlement, and he was one of the first men to vote against it. So much, sir, for the consistency of the hon. member for Townsville.

Mr. HAMILTON: You wanted the Government to buy back a lot of your own land too.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—The motion for adjournment, moved by the hon. member for Bowen, to draw attention to a grievance under which his constituents labour with regard to a railway they were promised by the previous Government—a promise which that Government failed to carry out, and which the present Government are now blamed for—has been made the opportunity by the hon. member for Townsville of having another shot at what he calls "political railways," the *via recta* and the line from Warwick to St. George. It is not the first time he has so referred to these lines, and I do not suppose it will be the last. The hon. member is now, to all intents and purposes, a Northern member, and cares very little about the southern portion of the colony. He does not care how many injustices he inflicts upon the South, so long as he gets his real or imaginary Northern grievances redressed. But the hon. member did not always speak as he thinks now, Mr. Speaker. If I had time I could quote from *Hansard* words which are distinctly at variance with those he has uttered to-day and on several previous occasions since I came into the House. I have just had time to look up the volume of *Hansard* for 1882, page 634, in which there is a report of the debate on a motion moved by the late Mr. Jacob Low, who then represented Balonne, in favour of a vote for the survey of a line from Warwick towards St. George. The hon. member for Townsville was then Minister for Works, and in his remarks in answer to the speech delivered by Mr. Low these words occur:—

"The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) said he was afraid he would be put in the position of having to make £20,000 do £40,000 worth of work. As hon. members were aware, there was only a sum of £20,000 on the Estimates for surveys; and if that estimate passed, as he had no doubt it would, it would be sufficient for only a limited number of miles. He had no doubt that what the hon. member had said about the line tapping the border country was correct. That was evident, looking at the proposed line from a geographical point of view; but it could only be made on condition that the existing line was continued from Fassifern to the Killarney railway, so as to shorten the distance between Brisbane and Warwick."

It was not looked at then, Mr. Speaker, in the light of a political railway, and if I had time to look up *Hansard* and find the debate which took place on a motion subsequently submitted, I believe, by my hon. friend Mr. Allan—who was then, as now, member for Darling Downs—I could show that a very large number of leading members on both sides of the House spoke and voted in favour of the motion. Now, if they regarded that railway as a political railway, then they did a distinct wrong to the country, because they led this House and the public to believe that the work was a national one that ought to be carried out, when, as a matter of fact, they

believed nothing of the kind. I believe, sir, that a good deal of this talk about political railways in reference to the *via recta* and St. George line is nothing more than electioneering talk. I am perfectly certain that when the time comes for a discussion on the merits of the *via recta* and the line westward, good sound arguments will be used in support of both these lines. I am perfectly satisfied that a good deal more can be said in favour of either of those lines than can be said in support of the line from Bowen to Houghton Gap, or its junction with the Northern line. Unfortunately I have not had time to look up the debate on Mr. Allan's motion, but I shall do so, and lay it by me in case the question crops up again. I believe that a short quotation or two from the speeches delivered on that occasion by leading members of the Assembly who are now in opposition will be rather instructive to read in comparison with their recent deliverances on that subject.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to enter into the merits of the *via recta*, or Warwick to St. George railway. I only want to assure the hon. member for Warwick that he need not go to the trouble and research which he has just promised us he would go to, because we have had it all over in this House more than once before, and he will be only telling us older members what we really know all about, and what both sides of the House are quite familiar with.

Mr. MORGAN: You shall have it again.

Mr. ALAND: Very well, Mr. Speaker, we get two guineas a-day for it, so it does not matter. But I do think it is rather a pity that the matter which was brought under the notice of the House by the hon. member for Bowen should have been interfered with in this way by introducing other outside railways. And I should also like to make this remark, which my hon. friend Mr. Kates may chew over at his leisure: That if there is anyone in the country or in this House who has led persons to believe that the Warwick to St. George railway and the *via recta* line are political railways it is that hon. gentleman himself. There is no doubt at all about that. Why, sir, what did we see at Warwick the other day? When the Premier was invited to a social banquet he was met by the hon. member with this statement: "If you do not bring down these railways this session, I shall walk over to the other side of the House." Why, sir, if I had been Premier of the colony, with the following which the Premier now has, I should have at once turned round upon the hon. gentleman and told him to go to the other side of the House; I would not have the company of the hon. member on this side. He only sits here for what he can really get or squeeze out of the Ministry. Have I not quite as much right to say to the Premier, "If you attempt to pass those two railways I shall walk to the opposite side of the House"? But, sir, I do not measure my duties in that way. I do not sit at the back of the Ministry for what I can get; I sit here because I believe in their policy generally, and not for any little particular line of railway they are going to carry out. With reference to the Fortitude Valley railway, I very much regret that the Minister for Works has decided to accept the tender of £175,000. It is no use for the Minister for Works or the Premier to say that they are going to construct that railway to Constance street for the sum of £175,000. Why, we have already been told that there had been claims sent in for £98,000 on that particular line, and do we not know that that represents only 53 per cent. of the claims that are going to be sent in and will be sent in? And we know this further, Mr. Speaker: that the claims that are going to be sent in will be

much greater in magnitude than those which have been sent in. It is absurd for the Premier or the Minister for Works to state that they will construct this line to Constance street for £175,000. Now, sir, the hon. member for Fassfern has aired his little grievance. He has told us that the Premier or someone promised in this House that the plans for the *via recta* would be laid on the table this session. Well, sir, I do not remember any such promise being made, and I have watched the matter very closely.

THE HON. G. THORN: I did not say "in the House." The promise was made to me outside the House.

MR. ALAND: I should like to know who made that promise, because I have sufficient faith in the members of this Government to know that outside of this House they will not make a promise that they are not prepared to make inside of it. I am very sorry to find that they do not always fulfil the promises which they make; but, of course, we know that that is only natural to every Ministry, no matter how good they may be. Now, the hon. gentleman has referred to the Beauaraba line; and a very good line it will be, sir; and here I have a grievance that I might ventilate if I wished, and that is, why is not that line continued right through Drayton? I know the plans of the Drayton railway, which will help considerably to make the Beauaraba line pay, are all ready, and have been lying nearly ready in the office for the last two years, and yet they have not been brought down to this House. I might as well have told the Ministry that if they did not bring those plans down I should sit on the opposite side of the House; but I have learned, I was going to say, better manners. However, I know my duty to my constituents and my duty to Parliament and to the party outside who sent me into the House a great deal better.

MR. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know whether it is worth while answering the hon. member for Toowoomba. He seems to me to be one of that kind of prophets whose prophecies never come to pass. He told us last year that we should not have a tender for what he calls the Valley railway under something like £500,000.

MR. ALAND: The hon. member is saying what is not true.

MR. McMASTER: I am not going to waste time in looking up *Hansard*; but I think hon. members will find his words were as I have said, and that the amount of £500,000 was frequently named.

MR. ALAND: That included the compensation, Mr. Speaker, and the hon. member knows it; and that is distinct from the contract for the railway.

MR. McMASTER: I am not saying what it included; I am saying that the statement was made over and over again in this House that the railway would cost £500,000.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: You are denying it.

MR. McMASTER: I am not denying it. Now, as a matter of fact, sir, the tender that came in for the whole line from the main station to the other station was only £114,000. The hon. member must be in all the secrets of the Government, Mr. Speaker, for he says that the claims for compensation are not all in, and that there are a large number yet to come. He says that the £98,000 worth of claims that have already come in will be very largely augmented. What does he know about it?

MR. MOREHEAD: What do you know about it?

MR. McMASTER: I know as much about the Valley railway and the Valley people as the hon. member for Toowoomba, and a great deal more. I could tell him a great deal more than he imagines he could instruct the House in. The hon. gentleman says that the Ministry are not going to construct this railway for the amount of money that is voted. What does he know of what the Government are going to do? He says he is sitting at their back to do his duty, and he tells us he is very much annoyed to see the tender for the Valley railway—that is the extension from the Southern and Western line to the North Coast line—has been accepted. He seems to have so much information on the matter that he might have told us what the Government accepted the tender for. The hon. member knows very well that many claims are sent in by persons whose property is resumed for railway purposes for twice or three times the amount they expect to receive, and it is probable that if the claims in this case amounted to £100,000 some 30 per cent. or 40 per cent. will be struck off. The hon. member for Toowoomba and other hon. members made a prophecy last year, and now the hon. member has made another prophecy that the railway will cost a certain sum. I think it will fall far short of it, and that he will turn out a false prophet.

MR. CHUBB, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has no cause of complaint at all. He has succeeded in inducing the Government, notwithstanding that they do not know the state of the Loan Fund, as the Premier told us, to let a contract costing them about £80,000 per mile—the most expensive railway we have in the colony. The length of the line is about two miles, and with the compensation that will have to be made it will probably cost £150,000 per mile, or £300,000 altogether.

MR. McMASTER: No.

MR. CHUBB: Say it will cost £200,000, which will be £100,000 per mile for railway-making. Now, the line which I rose to move the adjournment of the House to refer to, was estimated by the Chief Engineer to cost £75,000, and it is thirty miles long, while in the Valley case there are two miles of railway which will cost £200,000. The members who represent Darling Downs need have no fear now that their line will not be brought in by-and-by. The *via recta* will be brought in, and also the line from Warwick to St. George. No doubt those hon. members who sit on that side have a right to expect that their support will meet with due recognition. I have no doubt that the Government will ask us to pass the plans of the South Brisbane line, although, as I said before, they do not know the state of the Loan Fund. Now, Mr. Speaker, it has been denied that the tabling of these plans has any connection with the appointment of the hon. member for South Brisbane to the Lands Department. But it is common rumour that something of the kind did happen. Indeed, it was reported in the Ministerial organ that in consequence of certain satisfactory assurances he had made to his constituents the hon. member for South Brisbane would have no opposition to his return; and on the day he entered the House as Minister for Lands these plans came down. So that at any rate it was one of those undesigned coincidences that do sometimes occur, and from which people may draw their own conclusions. Now, the answer I have received from the head of the Government is extremely unsatisfactory, and I do not think that it is dealing at all fairly with the constituency that I represent. I know that I sit on the Opposition side of the House, and I know that I have not voted for all the Government lines.

But I acted honestly upon my convictions in voting against some of the lines the Government brought forward. I did not swallow the whole scheme in order to get a line at Bowen. When I thought a line ought not to be passed I voted against it, and I shall always do so whether the Bowen line is made or not. If hon. members on the other side of the House choose to act differently they are welcome to do so, and they are welcome to go to Warwick and elsewhere and make speeches of the character reported to have been made by the hon. member who represents the Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, who said that his support of the Government in their decentralisation scheme, and their proposed land tax, and other things would depend entirely upon their decision in regard to the Warwick and St. George railway. The hon. member may say that it is not true; but I say he was so reported in the newspapers.

Mr. KATES: It is perfectly true. I am independent of everybody.

Mr. NORTON: So it seems.

Mr. CHUBB: I will not say another word on the subject, but leave hon. members and the country to draw their own conclusions.

Mr. KATES: So they will.

Mr. CHUBB: My object has been attained. I have ventilated the matter, and I think I have satisfied my constituents of the intention of the Government in regard to this line.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. Jordan) said: Mr. Speaker,—I must ask the pardon of the hon. member for Bowen for speaking after his reply; but I must be allowed to say, with the permission of the House, that the extension to Melbourne street was promised before the late Minister for Works left us. He promised that the plans should be on the table of the House within a fortnight. Hon. members know that, and I remind them of it. The line was also promised at the end of last session. At the beginning of last session the late Minister for Works promised, in answer to a question I put to him, that the plans and book of reference would be laid on the table of the House before the conclusion of the session. It was near the end of the session that I had an opportunity of referring to that promise, and the late Minister for Works then said that as it was near the close of the session it would be impossible for him to lay the plans on the table. He stated that he felt some regret in having to make that statement, but gave as a reason for the delay the fact that the route had been altered. The original route, as we know, was to go across Stanley street from the station near the Dry Dock, and thence along the back of Stanley street into Melbourne street. That was the original route, but the Minister for Works told us that he had consulted the Engineer-in-Chief and that he had found a very much better, shorter, and cheaper route, and one more convenient for the public. The hon. gentleman gave that as an explanation for the delay, and I, as one of the members for the constituency, was satisfied that it was a very good reason. Then the Minister promised that the plans would be laid on the table of the House before the end of the session, and when I afterwards complained that that promise had not been fulfilled, both the Minister for Works and the Premier stated that the plans would positively be laid on the table at the beginning of this session. It is, therefore, too late for hon. gentlemen now to say that they have been tabled to suit a purpose—that is, to prevent any opposition to my return on the part of the gentleman who, it was stated, would be put forward to oppose me. The fact is that the gentleman never intended to come out against

me at all. Of course, hon. members opposite thought this was their opportunity, but, as I say, he had no intention of opposing me, and he was the first who signed my nomination-paper.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—If I may be allowed to say a few words—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has spoken.

Question—That the House do now adjourn—put and negatived.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

AUSTRALIAN JOINT STOCK BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a message from the Legislative Council returning the Bill to amend the Australian Joint Stock Bank Act without amendment.

FINANCIAL DISTRICTS TABLES.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to lay on the table the amended tables in connection with the Financial Districts Bill, which I promised yesterday, and move that they be printed.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg now to move that the paper laid on the table last Tuesday be withdrawn, and that the order for printing the same be rescinded.

Question put and passed.

BUNDABERG SCHOOL OF ARTS LAND SALE BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

On clause 1, as follows:—

"The said trustees or their successors shall be empowered, at any time after the passing of this Act, to sell the said pieces or parcels of land, or such part or portion thereof as the said trustees or their successors may consider advisable, together with the buildings erected thereon, situated in the county of Cook, parish of Bundaberg, town of Bundaberg, described in the deed of grant numbered 63827, containing three roods, more or less, in one or more lots, by public auction or private contract or both such modes of sale, and either for cash or on credit, or partly for cash and partly on credit; and on payment of the purchase money into the hands of the said trustees or their successors, they shall convey the land as aforesaid to the purchaser or purchasers, and such conveyances shall be valid and effectual in law and equity for all purposes whatsoever, anything contained in the Trustees of Public Lands Act of 1869 to the contrary notwithstanding."

Mr. ADAMS moved that the words "situated in the county of Cook, parish of Bundaberg, town of Bundaberg, described in the deed of grant numbered 63827, containing three roods more or less," in the 5th, 6th, and 7th lines of the clause, be omitted.

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

Clause 2 passed as printed.

On clause 3, as follows:—

"Immediately after the receipt of the moneys realised by the sale of the said land, the trustees or their successors shall pay the reasonable expenses of such sale, and the costs, charges, and expenses of and attending the applying for and obtaining and passing of this Act, and shall deposit the remainder of the purchase moneys in the Bank of New South Wales at Bundaberg, and shall not withdraw the same or apply any part thereof for any purposes except for the purchase of another allotment or other allotments of land

in a more convenient situation. And for the purpose of paying for labour done or materials actually supplied for the building and furnishing of the said new school of arts, and expenses incurred in connection with the preparation of plans and specifications and the supervising of the erection of the said building."

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the clause was amended by the omission of the last sentence of the clause and the insertion of the words "And for defraying the cost of erecting thereon and furnishing buildings suitable for the purpose of a school of arts."

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 4, as follows:—

"The trustees and their successors shall hold the lands and property so to be purchased and acquired as aforesaid, upon the trusts declared in the said recited deed of grant, subject as herein is provided, to all intents and purposes, as though the said land had been thereby granted to them."

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the clause was amended by the omission of the words "subject as herein is provided."

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 5, as follows:—

"It shall be lawful for the trustees, notwithstanding anything in the said recited deed of grant contained, to raise from time to time, upon the security of the lands comprised in the said recited deed of grant, or to be purchased and acquired as aforesaid, any sum or sums of money, not at any one time exceeding the sum of three thousand pounds sterling, and any moneys so raised shall be applied in the manner and for the purposes prescribed by the third section of this Act."

Mr. ADAMS moved the omission of the words "notwithstanding anything in the said recited deed of grant contained."

Mr. SCOTT said the clause was very objectionable altogether and ought not to be allowed to pass. If the trustees had power to mortgage the mortgagee had power to sell, and the consequence might be that the property might pass out of the hands of the trustees altogether. The same thing happened in Brisbane where the trustees of the old school of arts had a similar clause in their enabling Bill. The school of arts property was mortgaged, the trustees were obliged to sell it for a trifle, and now the land which was sold for £1,000 was worth many thousands. The same thing had happened over and over again. In the case of the Ipswich racecourse the trustees had power to mortgage; the mortgagee took possession and the racecourse was lost. He thought such a clause should not be in the Bill.

Mr. ADAMS said he did not see why the hon. gentleman should object to the clause, as it was a *fac-simile* of a clause which was contained in the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Act, which was passed last year. He was aware that many years ago such clauses were in similar Bills, and that the Brisbane School of Arts had borrowed money on the land, and been unable to redeem it; but he could assure the hon. gentleman that there was not the slightest fear in the present case. The land was declared by one witness to be worth something over £5,000, and the trustees only required to erect a building. If they could not get what they considered a fair value for the land, they wanted to mortgage it until they could get a fair value for it. The clause said that they should have power to raise money from time to time, and he was satisfied that it was not the intention of the trustees of the Bundaberg School of Arts to mortgage the whole of the land, but only a portion of it, for the express purpose of erecting a building. Every member of the Committee would understand that at the present time there was a depreciation in the value of land throughout the colony, and sometimes that continued for a year or two, or three.

The time was not far distant when the market would again rise, and the land would fetch its full value. He thought, for those reasons, the clause should be allowed to stand.

Mr. NORTON said the objection raised by the hon. member for Leichhardt was a very sound one, and had been raised over and over again in the House during the last four or five years—that land granted for purposes of that kind ought not to be mortgaged. The same objection was raised with regard to the mechanics' institute of South Brisbane, and it was only because there were peculiar circumstances connected with it that the House gave the power to mortgage in that instance. It appeared that the trustees had power to mortgage up to a certain amount before the Bill was brought in last year, and it was because that power was then held by the trustees that it was continued to them, and then only, after the matter had been fully explained. The case of the school of arts in Brisbane, quoted by the hon. member for Leichhardt, was a case in point. Their land had been simply sacrificed because the trustees had the power to mortgage and exercised it, and then failed to carry out the conditions of the mortgage. The same difficulty, he believed, had arisen at the present time in connection with the Toowoomba School of Arts. He had been told that the trustees there had borrowed money and got into difficulties, and had to hand their property over to the municipal council. He would like to hear what the hon. member for Toowoomba had to say about that. He was satisfied it was a dangerous power to give, and especially as the clause before them was worded, for if he understood it rightly it might be taken to mean that the power to borrow to the extent of £2,000 might be exercised from time to time, and the amount borrowed increased by £2,000 each time.

The PREMIER: There is no power if it is.

Mr. NORTON said they might get into the same difficulties as the trustees of the other similar institutions referred to, and their property might be sold by the mortgagee. The present trustees might be men who would see that there was no danger of the land being sold, but in the course of time there might be trustees who, through neglect or mismanagement, might get the institution into such a state that it might be absolutely necessary to sell the land.

The PREMIER said he did not think the hon. member quite apprehended the meaning of the clause as amended by the select committee. It only allowed the borrowing of money upon the present land for the purpose of raising money to build a new school of arts. If they raised £10,000 on it it would be devoted to the building of a new school of arts, and if they could raise £20,000 on it for the same purpose so much the better. They were only given power to raise money by the mortgage of an unsuitable piece of land, and the money must be applied to the purchase of a suitable site and the erection of a new school of arts, which they were not allowed to mortgage at all. In fact it put the trustees in this position: They had a piece of land now which was of no use to them; they were not obliged to sell it, but they wanted a new building, and they were given the power to raise money on the present property to enable them to build a new school of arts. When they had got the new one they might sell the old one. He thought it a very convenient arrangement.

Mr. NORTON said if that was all that could be done, no objection could be raised to it. If the money borrowed was expended on another piece of land secured to the trustees, and which could not be mortgaged, the objection raised would not hold good.

Mr. SCOTT said he would like to understand the matter clearly. If the money was applied to the purchase of a new piece of land, were the trustees to have power to borrow on the new land?

The PREMIER: No.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the clause was further amended by the omission of the words "or to be purchased and acquired as aforesaid," in the 4th line of the clause, and by the substitution of the word "two" for the word "three," in the 5th line.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 6—"No liability of purchaser or mortgagee as to application of proceeds of sale"—put and negatived.

Clause 7—"Short title"—put and passed.

The preamble was passed with verbal amendments.

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with amendments.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

CHINESE IMMIGRANTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. BROWN said: Mr. Speaker,—In moving the second reading of this Bill it is desirable that I should say a few words of explanation. It is not, as some people might suppose, a Bill calculated to facilitate the introduction of Chinese in any way, because I may mention that my constituents are as much opposed to the introduction of Chinese as any other section of the community. The object of this Bill is simply to remove a grievance which affects trade. A very important trade is carried on by means of several lines of China steamers running from Hongkong to the southern ports of Australia, and Queensland's geographical position gives it some little advantage in that trade. The Government some years back passed certain regulations to allow those steamers to come in and pay dues in proportion to the amount of business done—so much a ton on the cargo landed—showing that at that time they appreciated the value of the trade, and saw the advantage of allowing these steamers, bound for the southern portion of Australia, to call at various ports and land cargo. When the E. and A. Company first took our mail contract to Singapore, one of the express objects of that contract, as stated by some members of the House at the time, was to encourage the Eastern trade; and that trade has benefited considerably in consequence of the action taken at that time. I notice that last year, according to the Treasury returns, the importation of tea reached 2,700,000 lbs., which, as tea is carried by measurement, amounted to 4,000 tons of freight; and the importation of rice was over 3,000 tons, so that the commodities from China consumed in this colony amounted to over 7,000 tons, exclusive of goods such as silks and various other articles we get from China. The necessities of life required by our own people reached at least 7,000 tons. Now, nearly the whole of this 7,000 tons comes by these China steamers, and if this trade is allowed to fall, it means that this cargo is to be carried to the southern colonies and freighted back by coastal steamers, at a considerable loss to our community. The freight from Sydney to Brisbane is 10s. a ton, and from Sydney to the Northern ports it varies from 20s. or 30s. to 60s.

a ton; so that to state that a loss of 15s. a ton will be sustained by our community if we stop these steamers from entering our ports, is to make a very moderate estimate. I may say that our community would be a loser to the extent of £5,000 if the restriction continues and steamers are not allowed to call, and that is a very serious loss. It is not only a loss to the taxpayer, but it does away with the geographical advantage that Queensland traders have. If our goods have to be carried on to New South Wales and then be sent back to us, we are in no better position than the merchants of New South Wales; and, of course, the advantage of our nearer position is quite spoilt by legislation of this sort. Another thing worth knowing is that the harbour dues on these coasting steamers would amount to over £500 a year. The dues are 1s. 6d. per ton on every ton landed, and 1s. 6d. for every passenger landed; so that £500 is very much below the mark. The loss affects the revenue and the taxpayers, and I think the restriction should be removed; and that is what is proposed in the Bill. We all know that the Act in force does not allow any steamer to come into our ports with more than one Chinese passenger for every fifty tons burthen. That means that a ship of 2,000 tons, which has over forty Chinese passengers, cannot call here. If the restriction limited the number of Chinese passengers for Queensland to forty there would be something in its favour, but it applies to passengers for all places; so that a ship of 2,000 tons with two Chinese passengers for Queensland and forty for New Zealand could not call here, though the same ship with forty Chinese passengers for Queensland and none for New Zealand could call. Therefore the thing is inconsistent. In New South Wales the restriction is more severe than here. There a ship must not land more than one passenger for every 100 tons, and the same remark applies to Victoria; so that a ship of 2,000 tons cannot have a large number of Chinese passengers at any time, and the danger said to exist with regard to passengers being smuggled ashore in large numbers from these steamers is really absurd. The late Colonial Treasurer always contended that there was danger of Chinese passengers being smuggled ashore; but we know, from our business experience, just as well as the late Colonial Treasurer, that there are sufficient safeguards, and that it is utterly impossible. Only the other day a vessel, of which Gibbs, Bright, and Co. are the agents, called here with Chinese passengers, and we know what was done in that case. The inspector of water police mustered the crew and passengers, and compared the number with the passenger list, and the ship's articles, and he did the same when the vessel left the harbour; and if there had been any discrepancy the captain would have had to pay the penalty before the ship could clear. So that the precautions are quite sufficient to prevent the possibility of any Chinese landing illegally. I may remind hon. members that if Chinese cannot land illegally in Brisbane, they cannot do so at all, because that is the only port in Queensland where those steamers come to the wharves. At Thursday Island, Cooktown, Townsville, and Keppel Bay, they lie in the roadstead; and even if there was any attempt to get ashore, the captains are too vigilant to allow it to be done, because they would be subject to very heavy fines. I may mention that I have business connections with the Northern Territory of South Australia, and I speak feelingly on the question, though I do not mean to say that is my reason for introducing this Bill. From our connection with the place we have acquired special knowledge of the circumstances; and I can tell the Government that a short time ago there

were forty or fifty miners waiting for several weeks at Port Darwin trying to get to Queensland ports, but they could not, simply because none of the China steamers would call. Those people wanted to go to Croydon. At present there is no other steam communication between North Queensland and the Northern Territory of South Australia; and it is very important that we should have communication with Port Darwin, and be able to do business with that port. I do not think I need take up the time of the House further. I have explained the object of the Bill, and I hope the House will, in its wisdom, allow it to pass, in view of the serious injury to trade caused by the restriction at present in force.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I am not one of those who wish to facilitate the introduction of the Chinese amongst us at all; in fact, I want to do the other thing and put restrictions on them now they are here. I intend to assist the hon. member for Townsville with this Bill, because I do not see the slightest danger of their getting in. I can corroborate fully what he says about the men we are losing as well as the trade that has been going too far—the trade that has been over-carried to Sydney and back again. I was in Port Darwin myself and saw men who had returned from Kimberley, and were anxious to get to Croydon, Cooktown, and Cairns, and the only place they could go to was Sydney direct. Men who were anxious to go back to Queensland ports had to go to Sydney in order to do so; and some of them did, and were put to immense expense and inconvenience; and the poorer ones were driven away, because when they got to Sydney they had to take a job somewhere else very likely. I do not see any danger in this, and I hope that if the Chief Secretary will not assist in passing this amending Bill, at all events he will allow vessels to call, say, at Thursday Island; that would give communication at once with the China mail service, which is a very useful one, and also with passengers from other colonies, miners and others who are anxious to come back from Port Darwin or Western Australia. I think that we lose a great deal of valuable trade by the restriction, and I submit that the Bill would bring custom into our towns. A ship wants coals, supplies, and a variety of things, and we lose business in that way, as well as the £5,000 per annum which the community pays for over-carriage, and the £500 a year that it loses in harbour dues. If the Bill is passed two lines of steamers will be induced to call at our ports. The ships of the China Steam Navigation Company I have seen, and they are certainly very fine ships, well fitted up and very comfortable, and it would benefit the travelling public very much if these vessels were allowed to call at our ports. I cannot see the slightest danger—if our water police do their duty, as I believe they do, and the Custom house officials also—of the Chinese getting on shore illegally or coming in excessive numbers. If I did I certainly would not vote for this Bill. I have studied the Act as it passed through committee in the year 1877, when the Douglas Ministry were in power, and no discussion at all took place on this particular clause. I think it escaped the notice of hon. members that it might turn out eventually to be very awkward in its working. The general feeling, of course, at that time was to exclude the Chinese as much as possible, and so I say now. They never took into calculation the inconvenience and evils that might result from it. They never thought that it would put unnecessary inconveniences in the way of the travelling public, and put unnecessary imposts upon trade. We shall be quite as safe if we amend the Act in the way pointed out by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Brown.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am quite aware of the inconvenience under which our direct trade with the East suffers from the present form of the law, in not being able to bring into Queensland waters more than a certain number of Chinese passengers. That matter was carefully considered when the Chinese Immigrants Bill was introduced in 1877, and one of the reasons then urged, and also on a subsequent occasion in 1884, was that we were the first ports of call, and that by restricting the number of passengers that may be carried through our waters we should be not only protecting our own colony, but standing as an advanced guard for keeping out Chinese from Australia as a whole. I think there is a great deal in that. At the same time I recognise the inconvenience of shutting out direct trade from China. But I think that if we are going to deal with this matter at all, we must do it more thoroughly than the hon. member proposes. It would be necessary, for instance, to provide in the 3rd clause of the Act now in force for the master giving the destination of all his Chinese passengers. But even then great difficulties will arise—difficulties which could not be avoided without employing measures of excessive stringency. The Bill should contain a very stringent provision that, if at the last port of departure it appeared that more Chinese had been landed than the Act allows, there should be some punishment much more severe than a penalty of £30 a head for each Chinese landed in excess of the legal number.

Mr. CHUBB: The forfeiture of the vessel.

The PREMIER: I think a clause should be introduced providing that there shall be a list showing the port to which each Chinese passenger on board is bound, and that if, at the last port of arrival before the ship leaves Queensland, more Chinese have been found to have been landed in the colony than the Act allows, the master should pay a very heavy penalty for every one in excess, and that the ship should be detained until the penalty is paid. Then it will be necessary to make a change in the number of Chinese passengers which any vessel calling at Queensland ports may carry, for under the existing law no vessel may carry more in the aggregate than a prescribed number; but it is contemplated in this amendment that vessels shall call in at Queensland ports with Chinese passengers for New South Wales and Victoria and other colonies, as well as for Queensland. In short, if the Bill pass its second reading, it will have to be entirely remodelled in committee in the direction I have pointed out.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not like this proposed amendment, and I do not believe the bulk of the people of this colony will like it either. I believe that if they wanted the Act amended at all they would like to see it amended in quite a different direction—by increasing the difficulties in the way of Chinese coming into the colony, and increasing the poll-tax; and I believe that a majority of hon. members would readily support a proposal of that kind. This proposed Bill, put the matter as you will, means that greater facilities are offered for bringing Chinese into the colony; and one effect of it would be to make it more easy for dishonest shipmasters to land Chinese passengers contrary to the Act. I fully admit that the present system has its inconveniences, and that it interferes with trade to a considerable extent. At the same time I think that under the circumstances it would be far better to put up with those inconveniences than submit to the risk which a proposal of this kind does undoubtedly interpose. I cannot see my way, I say, at once to support the Bill introduced by the hon. member, and on the whole I feel sorry that it has been brought forward at all.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—I confess to sharing the feelings of the last speaker on this question, and yet I do not like to see the course of trade hampered or obstructed in any way. I like honest trade in Queensland to have every advantage.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Is the introduction of Chinamen an honest trade?

Mr. W. BROOKES: But I see dangers springing out of this Bill, and I recommend the hon. member who brings it in not to abandon it, but to put it much more intelligently before the House. I am quite sure that this Bill will give assistance to dishonest capitalists. It seems to be just opening the door—leaving it ajar—and increasing the facilities for Chinese to come to this colony. The Premier has pointed out that the Bill will require great alteration in committee, and I prefer that it should be withdrawn and placed before the House in a more intelligent form. I acknowledge the importance of the Eastern trade. I quite see the absurdity of carrying packages of tea to Sydney and bringing them back. I think that is folly, and surely there should be some way by which that waste of time and money can be prevented. It is the Chinese I am afraid of, and I think, in the interests of public safety, that this House ought to get more information than the mover of the motion has put us in possession of before the Bill can be safely entertained, even through its second reading.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—Like previous speakers, I quite acknowledge the importance of placing as few restrictions upon trade as possible, but I do not think the hon. gentleman who has just sat down will say that the importation of Chinese is an honest trade.

Mr. W. BROOKES: No, I did not. I referred to tea.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The importation of Chinese productions is very different from the importation of Chinese themselves. I share the fear expressed by hon. members who have preceded me, that this Bill will facilitate in some measure the importation of these objectionable colonists. In fact, I do not know that we could properly apply the word "colonists" to the Chinese. I think if any alteration is made at all, either in the principal Act or in the amending Act which we have already on the Statute-book, that the Government should take the responsibility of it. It should not be left in the hands of a private member of this House. Therefore, upon that ground alone, I say that I cannot support this Bill. When the Government take the responsibility, knowing that the responsibility rests upon them, they will take precious good care to protect Queensland against the invasion of even one additional Chinese. I agree with what fell from the Premier when the Act was passed in 1877 about Queensland being regarded as an outpost of Australian civilisation in protecting the rest of Australia from the introduction of Chinamen. Our law has operated in that direction hitherto; therefore we ought to be very careful of amending it in the opposite direction.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I sincerely trust, after what has fallen from hon. members on both sides of the House, that the hon. member, Mr. Brown, will see his way to withdraw the Bill. I entertain the fear which has been expressed by almost every hon. member who has spoken, except the introducer himself, as to the result of the operations of the Bill. If he accepts the suggestion of the Premier, that when the Bill goes into committee it might be materially amended, it might come

out very much in the same state as a Bill that I remember. When it got into committee we knocked out all the clauses, put in new ones, shifted the short title, amended the preamble; and I think if this measure goes into committee the result will be the same. Anything short of that would hardly meet the case.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—Most members of this House are probably averse to anything that would in any manner allow Chinese to come into the colony, and I think the best course for us to adopt would be to legislate so as to prohibit Chinese coming here altogether, and give free course to trade—if that can be done. We have gone so far; can we not go all the way, prohibit Chinese from coming here at all, and give ships from China a chance of calling at Queensland and trading in our ports as before? If we do anything it should be something in that direction.

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

PROSECUTION OF MR. GREETHAM.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL, in moving—

That the papers, as laid on the table of the House on 6th September, in the case of the prosecution of Mr. Greetham, be printed—

said: Mr. Speaker,—In moving the notice of motion standing in my name I suppose the only reason that can be assigned why these papers should not be printed is the motive of economy, to keep down the expenses of the Government Printing Office.

The PREMIER: You should give reasons for printing them.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I will give reasons why they should be printed. A very serious charge, based upon those papers, has been made against a very respectable member of this House, Mr. Macfarlane, in a leading article in the leading journal of this colony. Considerable curiosity was excited about it, and some people outside are under the impression that the only reason why he was not arrested was because he was an M.L.A. I know also that they are very much surprised that no action had been taken by him against that paper, and all sorts of motives have been assigned for his not doing so, such as that if he were put under cross-examination by a 'cute counsel he might be put to very serious inconvenience, and therefore he does not like to go into court. There was also a grievance, real or imaginary, of another individual, a citizen of Ipswich, whose character was very seriously called into question; and I think hon. members should be placed in full possession of the facts. I have glanced through the papers as they lie on the table of the House; I have not thoroughly studied them, but I think that after the discussion the other afternoon in this House, members should have the fullest information upon the subject, and the only way to do that is to have the papers printed and circulated amongst them. If it was a report drawn up by Mr. Kinnaird Rose, or something of that kind, I suppose there would be no difficulty. We have published heaps of matter about the gaols, a good deal of which I think is unnecessary work to have to go through. These papers would be simply a pamphlet when reduced to printing—a few sheets of foolscap—and then members would really know what information there is on the subject. Not three members of the House now know what really passed between the police, Mr. Macfarlane, and Mr. Greetham, except what came out in Mr. Macfarlane's own explanation, and I am sure that we all would like to see that confirmed by the papers. I beg to move the motion.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—I think that when the hon. member wants a large bundle of papers like this printed he should give some better reason than he has attempted to give on this occasion. He says he thinks hon. members would like to have an opportunity of reading them. I have looked through them, and there is not a single word in them about Mr. Macfarlane, the member for Ipswich, and I do not think it worth while printing the whole of those papers to prove that they do not mention the name of Mr. Macfarlane in any way whatever, as connected with the hon. member for Ipswich. I do not know precisely what the cost of printing would be, but it would be a good deal, and no useful purpose would be served by it. Hon. members can read the papers. If a clear case of abuse of power on the part of the police could be made out by showing how they had used their power, there would be something in that. No member comes forward to say anything of the kind. I have looked through the papers, and I must say that I have a very much higher opinion of the police and their action in the matter, after looking through the papers, than I had before. I was disposed to think before that they acted rashly. However, I do not think there is sufficient justification for printing the papers. We must set our face against indiscriminate printing. One of the functions of the Printing Committee is to see to the printing of such papers as they consider desirable ; I do not know whether they have exercised that function, but they should prevent an unnecessary mass of papers being printed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN : That is their duty.

The PREMIER : I am sure that if any hon. gentleman considers the number of papers that have come out this session, and saw how many were worth printing, he will think that we have been a great deal too easy in the matter of printing. I am bound, on behalf of the Government, to object to this motion.

Mr. KATES said : Mr. Speaker,—I really hope the hon. member will withdraw this motion, and not put the country to the expense of printing the papers. Every morning we are receiving reports and papers ; our boxes are crammed full of them, and half of them are never read. So far as the hon. member for Ipswich is concerned, I do not think it is at all to his interest to have the papers printed. The *Courier* published an ample apology in its issue of the day after the discussion which took place here, and I am sure that the hon. gentleman who is chiefly interested in the matter has no desire to have the papers printed.

Mr. ALAND said : Mr. Speaker,—I think this is one of the little jokes of the hon. member for Cook—one of those little matters which he likes to bring before the House, and in which there is nothing. When the matter was before the House, about a week since, the principal complaint was that the Colonial Secretary would not have an inquiry made into the conduct of the police in getting up the case against Mr. Greetham. I do not know whether the Colonial Secretary made a mistake in that direction ; but I think it would be very well for Mr. Greetham perhaps, and satisfactory to members of this House and to the public outside, to have an inquiry made, to see whether the police really did exceed their duties. As to having the papers printed I do not see what object that would serve.

Mr. NORTON said : Mr. Speaker,—I do not think, so far as the hon. member for Ipswich is concerned, there is the slightest necessity for printing the papers. I think the hon. gentleman's character stands so high that he is

quite above suspicion in a matter of this kind. The only reason I can see is this : whether Mr. Greetham is right or wrong, he asked for an inquiry as to the conduct of the police in connection with the matter, which inquiry was refused. Even supposing there was nothing in this case to be charged against the police, another case might arise where the aggrieved person had some serious charge made against them, and if there was any object in protecting the police by refusing the inquiry, this case may be brought forward. I admit at once that I have not looked at the papers. I know that they were laid on the table the other day, but I was under the impression that a motion had been already carried to the effect that they should be printed. I may point out that in this case the Premier has talked of the necessity of practising economy. The other day there were some very large returns moved for by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Salkeld—returns which will involve a very large expense in printing, because they are not merely reports and evidence, or matters of that kind, but there are tables which are very expensive to print, and which, I think, will be very voluminous. But no objection was raised to printing those papers, though they will cost, I dare say, ten times as much as these. I do not believe, either, that they will be very valuable when printed, for the simple reason that all the information asked for in them is furnished in the report of the Under Secretary for Lands. Of course it will appear in a different and more condensed form in the return moved for. In that case the Government raised no objection whatever ; they never made, so far as I know, the slightest reference to the necessity for economy in regard to printing. In regard to the present case the papers will not cost more than a moderate sum ; and yet, in spite of the fact that public suspicion has been raised to a certain extent by the mere circumstance that Mr. Greetham, after being treated as he has been, asked for an inquiry into the conduct of the police, and was refused, the Premier objects to their being printed. That is the only ground upon which the printing of the papers can be asked for ; but I think it is a very good one.

The PREMIER : Let the Printing Committee select the papers.

Mr. SALKELD said : Mr. Speaker,—I have never looked at the papers, and cannot say what they contain. I understand that they are papers which Mr. Greetham wants printed, seeing that he has failed to get an inquiry into the conduct of the police in arresting him. So far as I can gather, Mr. Greetham was arrested a considerable time after the assault took place, when the girl was convalescent in the hospital ; and an opinion has been expressed by a great number of persons that he ought not to have been arrested, and that the police ought to have proceeded by some other means. I do not know what is the usual practice in cases of this kind ; but it was looked upon as a rather hard proceeding to arrest him a considerable time after the offence was said to have been committed. There was no attempt made by him to leave the town. He is a man who is well known in the district. I have known him by sight for some time, although I have never been introduced to him. He appears to be a gentlemanly man, and is quite a gentleman in his manner and appearance, and he feels aggrieved that he could have no inquiry made into the conduct of the police. He is ready to swear that the police have manifested an animus towards him. The hon. member for Normanby said the Colonial Secretary gave Mr. Greetham scant courtesy, but I believe that is not the case, and if the hon. member were in his place now I think he would correct himself.

Mr. Greetham has said that he received every courtesy from the Colonial Secretary, and from the Under Colonial Secretary, and from the Commissioner of Police; but he received no redress. I do not know the merits of the case, but if a man has been arrested on an abominable charge, without any foundation whatever, he is entitled to have an inquiry. Mr. Greetham is suffering from a grievance, as it is plain from the reports in the newspapers that the case hopelessly broke down in the court; and so far as I can see any man in the colony might have been charged with the offence that he was. Of course, the police magistrate and the other gentlemen on the bench were courteous, and told Mr. Greetham that he left the court without a stain on his character; but he said that although all was past so far as the indignity to himself was concerned, he wanted to prevent anything of the kind occurring to anyone else so far as he possibly could. I think that is a very proper thing. If it does not do any good in this case, the very fact that an inquiry will be held into the conduct of any official who oversteps his duty will act as a deterrent in future. So far as I can see that is the only good that can come of the inquiry.

At 7 o'clock,

The SPEAKER said: In accordance with the sessional order, the private business which has been under discussion now stands adjourned until after the consideration of Government business.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT OF 1878 AMENDMENT BILL No. 2.

COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that you do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill.

Question put and passed.

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

On clause 2, as follows:—

"The two hundred and thirty-fourth and two hundred and thirty-fifth sections of the Local Government Act of 1878 are hereby repealed, and the following provisions are substituted therefor:"

Mr. MORGAN said he did not like the Bill at all, and he would briefly give his reasons for not liking it. It had been introduced as a complement to the Divisional Boards Bill they had passed a few days ago, in which a provision was inserted curtailing, after next year, the amount of endowment to be paid to divisional boards. Now, it had been held by the Government that what was sauce for divisional boards should also be sauce for municipalities; but the cases were not exactly similar, and he proposed to show in what respects they appeared to him to be dissimilar. When divisional boards were called into existence they received an endowment of £2 for £1, and had a clear knowledge of the law as it then stood relating to borrowing powers. As regarded municipalities, they had been established for a very much longer period. The first law governing municipalities in this colony was the Municipal Institutions Act of 1864. One of the provisions of that Act was that municipalities should have the right to borrow, and that the Government should have the power to lend State money to be employed in the construction of permanent works within the municipalities; but as far as he could ascertain there was no stipulation as to the period for which that money was loaned to municipalities. They borrowed the money on the understanding that all that was expected of them was that they should expend it on permanent works for the benefit of the ratepayers, and that they should annually pay the interest

charged thereon. They exercised that power pretty largely in many cases—to such an extent indeed that the interest on the loans became a very serious charge on their annual revenues. In the year 1880 the then Government, led by Sir Thomas McIlwraith, brought in a Local Works Loan Bill, which was passed by Parliament. That measure consolidated the loans advanced to local governing authorities—to municipalities—and also provided a fixed term during which those loans would have to be repaid—namely, forty years. It was entitled "An Act to provide for the repayment of loans authorised for the construction of public works by local authorities." It provided that the whole indebtedness of municipalities should be made repayable within a period of forty years, and that moneys advanced thereafter should be repayable within periods ranging from five to forty years, according to the character of the works for which the moneys were borrowed. The consolidation of those loans and the fixing of a period during which they should be repaid had this effect: that whereas local authorities had previously been paying perhaps 5 per cent. annually for interest, the charge they had since had to pay under the Local Works Loans Act was considerably larger, because they had had to pay, in addition to the interest, an annual sum in the redemption of the loans contracted. That was a contingency that municipalities did not provide for when they were borrowing before the Local Works Loans Act of 1880 was passed by Parliament; but divisional boards had borrowed, well knowing that that was a provision of the statutory law, and they restricted their borrowing powers accordingly. So that he thought that the case as between divisional boards and municipalities was not similar, and therefore, that because it had been found necessary to curtail the endowment payable to divisional boards, that should not be held as an argument why similar treatment should be extended even now to municipalities. It must also be remembered that divisional boards had hitherto received an endowment of £2 for £1 raised as rates, whereas municipalities had never received more than £1 for £1, and if they curtailed the endowments paid to municipalities, even to a small extent, they would find that in some cases they would do a very serious injury to those municipalities who had exercised their borrowing powers under the old order of things, when there was no period fixed for the redemption of the loans, and who, since the consolidation of the loans, and the fixing of the period, found it as much as they could do to meet the interest and redemption charges. He thought £1 for £1 was not too heavy a subsidy to pay, and he hoped, even if the Bill were carried in its present form, that before the period for the proposed reduction arrived they might find themselves in such a prosperous condition that they would be able to restore the £1 for £1 subsidy. He would again refer to the question he had mentioned the other night, which was that an exceedingly large proportion of money paid by the State in endowments to local authorities was absorbed by the Brisbane Municipal Council and the metropolitan boards. He had not the figures by him, but he thought that the endowments paid to municipalities last year amounted to about £60,000, and of that sum the Brisbane Municipal Council absorbed nearly £30,000. Now, owing to the amount of endowment payable to the city increasing very rapidly, the outside provincial municipalities were made to suffer in a corresponding degree, though the pressure from that source was not nearly so great upon the Treasury. He thought that the case of both municipalities and boards demanded that there should be differential rates of endowment, and

that the city should receive less than was paid to the provincial councils and boards. In the case of the metropolitan boards they might have a division covering only a few acres, but it was thickly populated, property was of high value, it was highly improved, and the local governing authorities were enabled to levy large incomes annually, and claim double that sum from the Treasury, though they had only a very limited extent of streets and roadways to maintain. In the country districts the reverse was the case. The districts were large; the extent of roadway and streets to be maintained was correspondingly large; the improvements were meagre; property was of low value; the rating power was correspondingly low, and the power of getting money from the Treasury was equally low. Therefore, he held that in the cases of metropolitan boards and municipalities there ought to be a less rate of endowment paid than was paid to the provincial boards and municipalities. Another matter: He was told the other night that there was more traffic on the roadways and streets of the metropolis than in the country districts, but his answer to that was that the country districts had no companies willing to lay down rails and run tramways to carry the traffic. Thus the metropolitan boards were relieved of the duty of maintaining roads which they would otherwise have to maintain. That was an advantage not possessed by provincial municipalities. He therefore thought that under those circumstances the Government ought to reflect very seriously before they took away from provincial municipalities at any rate any of the endowment that was now paid to them. He felt pretty sure that municipalities would have very largely to increase their rates in order to meet their engagements with the central authority if that was done, and he did not think that the local governing authorities in the provinces ought to be interfered with to the extent proposed. He believed that the cases of boards and municipalities were not similar, and for that reason he objected to the Bill.

The PREMIER said he did not see any reason for placing boards and municipalities on a different footing, especially as the municipalities were older and stronger than the boards. The hon. member had made a very forcible appeal on behalf of municipalities. The proposal of the Government was to take the matter again into the hands of Parliament, but giving fair notice that it was proposed to take it into their hands, and in the meantime continuing for two or three years a sum of money equal to that now given. When the Divisional Boards Bill was going through he undertook to bring in the Bill under discussion, which took exactly the same lines; and the Government were fully bound to endeavour to pass it.

Mr. GROOM said he thought the intention of the hon. member for Warwick was to direct the attention of the Government and the country to the absolute necessity of the city of Brisbane being taken out of the Municipalities Act altogether, and having a separate incorporation charter of its own. The city of Adelaide had a charter of its own, governed by its aldermen and council. The city of Melbourne was in the same position, and the city of Sydney also; whereas the city of Brisbane, with a population of 100,000, including the suburbs, was placed upon the same footing as a country municipality with a population of 200 persons. Now, that would appear strange to any person with a knowledge of municipal government; and the consequence was that country municipalities had to suffer for the large endowment paid to the city of Brisbane. If hon. members would look at the "Statistical

Register" for 1886 they would find that the amount of endowment paid to all municipalities for the year amounted to £57,258 odd, of which sum the city of Brisbane received £33,211, leaving a very small sum indeed to be divided among the country municipalities. Now, the question the hon. member for Warwick had raised, and reasonably so, was that that was a very small sum of money to be paid to country municipalities whilst they were burdened with a heavy debt under the Public Works Loans Act of 1880, by which a portion of the endowment every year was taken to wipe off the liabilities incurred before the Act came into operation. He thought the hon. member for Warwick had drawn attention on behalf of the country municipalities to a matter which deserved the consideration of the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill. It was quite possible that, owing to the financial position of the colony, municipalities, like other places, would have to suffer for the depressed condition of the Treasury, but he would direct the attention of the Committee to this fact: that the city of Brisbane had exceptional advantages over country municipalities, and he thought that the time had arrived when it was absolutely necessary that it should have a charter of its own. Now, he would give a typical case so that hon. members might understand the question before them. There was property sold in Queen street four or five years ago which realised £130 per foot. He referred to the site of the old Supreme Court. That was considered at the time a high price for the land, but now that land was valued and was this year assessed at £600 per foot. Upon that a rate was levied, and the country had to pay an endowment of £1 for £1 on that valuable property. Of course hon. members who knew the value of property would see at once the enormous distinction between the value of property in the city of Brisbane and the value of property in the country districts, and the result was, as it came out in the figures which he had just quoted, that during last year out of £57,000 endowment paid to municipalities the city of Brisbane received £33,000, and that was not saying anything at all about the £17,000 which was received by the city as an endowment on the health rate, making a total endowment of about £50,000 which Brisbane received from the general revenue. Now, it might not be known that this endowment was drawn from the Treasury by the municipality of Brisbane at the expense of the country and municipalities. Take the municipality of Clermont. Its endowment for last year was £300. How would it get on if the endowment was to be reduced? Then the municipality of Gayndah received the small sum of £113. Let that be compared with the £33,000 received by the city of Brisbane. Then, if Allora was referred to—and it must be borne in mind that the streets there were made through black-soil country, and that it took a mint of money to keep them in thorough order and repair—it received only £258 last year. He thought the instances he had given were enough to show the different positions in which country municipalities and the city of Brisbane were placed in, and he was quite sure if the city was under a distinct charter of its own it would be put in a very different position indeed. It seemed to him marvellous that the city of Brisbane, which had been in existence for something like twenty-seven years, and which was now undertaking large public works such as drainage and other matters, should be placed on the same footing as the country municipalities. He was surprised that the aldermen of the city of Brisbane had not long ago agitated to have an incorporation Act passed on the same

lines as the incorporation Acts of the cities of Melbourne, Sydney, and Adelaide. He knew from personal visitation of those cities the value of having incorporation Acts of their own, and especially so in the city of Adelaide. If an incorporation Act had been passed for this city some twenty-five years ago, in place of seeing it completely barren, as it was, of anything like public recreation grounds, he believed they would see it like Adelaide was at the present time, surrounded with most magnificent parks, which were a real pleasure to everyone who visited that city. The same might be said of Melbourne, where, after the city was incorporated under a distinct charter of its own, they were able to secure the magnificent parks there. The same might also be said of Sydney to some extent, though they laboured there under the same disadvantages as Brisbane for a long time. It was not too late to mend even now, and the time had arrived, at all events, when the attention of the country should be directed to the fact that a Bill was brought in to reduce the small sums paid as endowment to country municipalities, whilst a city like Brisbane was able to swallow up in one year some £50,000 in endowments. It was manifestly unfair to the country municipalities that such a thing should exist—that the country municipalities were to suffer a decrease in the amount of endowments granted to them, owing to the large amount which the city of Brisbane swallowed up, and would continue to swallow up, no doubt. He took it that if they were to recognise the principle of the unearned increment, it would be shown that, while the proprietors of Queen-street frontages were lying in their beds, the municipal council were adding to the value of their properties every year; that an increased value was put upon the properties, and that that necessitated an increased amount of endowment. By the Bill the sum of £85,000 was to be paid to municipalities, and it was interesting to consider how much out of that sum would have to be paid to the city of Brisbane alone. He could not say whether the amount would be calculated on the basis of last year or of the present year, but if it was to be paid on the basis of the present year the amount would probably be somewhat more than £33,000 out of the total sum of £85,000 to be provided, leaving a comparatively small pittance for the country municipalities. It was, no doubt, satisfactory to notice that the municipalities of the colony were in a comparatively healthy condition so far as the rateable value of the properties was concerned. The figures given on the subject were worth quoting, and should be made known. The total estimated rateable value of the properties in the various municipalities, boroughs, and shires of the colony amounted to no less a sum than £16,257,587, while the total indebtedness of all those local bodies together amounted to only £483,626. So that financially their municipalities were in a sound condition. Upon the question of the endowments, the principal matter in the Bill, he was in accord with the hon. member for Warwick, and he thought it was time to put in a word on behalf of the country municipalities, whose revenue was comparatively small. From personal knowledge he could state that in many cases the towns were handed over to the councils in the state in which nature had left them, and the municipal bodies had to form the streets and macadamise them to make them passable, though all the time their revenues were very small, owing to the rateable value of the properties within them being very small; and now, just as they were beginning to recover themselves, it was not wise to step in and reduce the amount of the endowment as was proposed in the Bill.

He thought that on the whole the hon. member for Warwick had made out a very good case for the consideration of the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill.

Mr. WAKEFIELD said the hon. member for Warwick had drawn attention to a matter which the Government might well be asked to entertain—namely, that country municipalities were as children growing up, while Brisbane was a fully grown person and should be able to take care of itself. It was certainly rather startling to see that out of the large amount paid for endowments by the Government, more than one-half was received by the municipality of Brisbane. The country municipalities should be put on a different footing, as the hon. member for Toowoomba suggested. They had gone into works and borrowed loans from the Government with the expectation of receiving their endowments, and he thought the Premier might see his way to make some distinction between the country municipalities and the municipality of Brisbane in the Bill.

Mr. McMASTER said he was afraid the municipality of Brisbane would be very badly off that evening, seeing that they had the hon. member for Toowoomba, the Speaker, and the mayors of Warwick and Sandgate down upon it. They seemed to think, like a great many other people outside, that Governments and municipalities were fit subjects to be robbed. Those hon. members seemed to urge that because the municipality of Brisbane had got a large revenue the endowment should not be paid to it. He would point out that that House and the Government had been taking the revenue from Brisbane for some years past. They commenced, first of all, by taking the Victoria Bridge and the bridge lands from them; whereas had the House allowed the Victoria Bridge to remain the property of the municipality of Brisbane for five or six years longer the bridge would have been free, and the council would have had the lands as an endowment to help them. They took the bridge and the lands from the council, and what did they do then? After taking their lands and the bridge, though, of course, they also took over the debt—which it must not be forgotten the council could have paid themselves out of the bridge lands, or by the toll upon the bridge, in some five or six years, and still have the lands—and then they published a proclamation in the Government *Gazette*, saying, "We have taken your lands and your bridge, but here is the bridge; keep it in repair." That bridge cost some £2,000 a year to keep in repair. Again they found this year that the Government would not allow them to collect the endowments upon rates raised upon their own properties. Parliament probably never intended that the endowment should be collected upon the health rate, but the council had taken advantage of it, and were right in doing so so long as the House said they were entitled to take it. It had been stated that Brisbane was not entitled to such a large amount of endowment because there was only a few miles of streets to keep in repair. He would point out that though that might be the case there was a very large amount of traffic upon the streets in Brisbane, and he was free to maintain that there was more traffic on Roma street, Creek street, and Eagle street, and that it took more to maintain those streets, than the whole of the streets in the town of Warwick, on account of the large traffic from the shipping to the railway station over those streets. Hon. members from inland towns should not forget also that there was a very large amount of property in the city of Brisbane from which the council could not collect rates, and that was the Government property—the property of the State—and

from which the inland towns all got a certain proportion of benefit. They could collect neither rates nor endowments upon that property. He had got a return from the city valuator of the value of the Government property in the city of Brisbane, and he found it was worth something like £1,000,000 sterling. The annual value of that property for rateable purposes would be £80,000, and if they were able to levy a rate upon it they would get something like £4,000 a year from it, besides the endowment. The municipal council of Brisbane had to keep the whole of the streets leading to those Government properties in repair. They might be told, as they were told last night, that the capital could be removed; but so long as the capital was here the municipal council had to keep the streets in repair for Government property, and they were justly entitled to more consideration than they had received. The greater part of the railway material was carried through the Brisbane streets, and caused a great deal of wear and tear, and for that they only got endowment at the rate of £1 for £1. The hon. member for Toowoomba, the Speaker, said the southern capitals had a charter of their own. He (Mr. McMaster) might be mistaken, but he was under the impression that they only got an enabling Bill when they wanted to borrow. Only recently he noticed that in Sydney they had to get an enabling Bill to borrow money in the London market.

Mr. GROOM: Because they had exceeded their powers.

Mr. McMASTER: There was a great deal to be said in respect of that, and the municipal council of Brisbane had been calling out for that concession for years; but he did not suppose the House was likely to grant it. If they cut down the endowment, as was proposed by the mayors of country towns who had the honour of a seat in the House, Brisbane would be very badly off. Personally, he thought the present method of borrowing was a very good one, provided the Government had plenty of money and was liberal in lending it. It was an excellent thing to have a sinking fund, and repay the loan in small instalments; but if they were to lose the endowment, the municipality would either have to borrow in the London market, or the sanitary state of the city would become such that the Government would have to step in and give relief; and the city of Brisbane did not want the Government to step in in that way. He maintained that Brisbane was not less entitled, but rather was more entitled, to an endowment of £1 for £1 than the inland towns, because the Brisbane streets had to sustain the wear and tear of all the Government material, and had to be kept in order in front of Government property from which no rates were received. The hon. member for Warwick had said that private companies came in and helped to maintain the streets.

Mr. MORGAN: No; took off the traffic.

Mr. McMASTER: That was a mistake. There was just as much traffic now on those streets as before the tram-rails were laid, whilst the streets were worse to keep in order than they were before. The trams were no benefit at all; they were rather a hindrance to the traffic. He hoped the Premier would see his way to extend the endowment a little longer. He was not one of those who thought that Parliament should not have control of the amount of money they should pay; but the city of Brisbane was so heavily taxed that it was not at all likely there would be an increase of taxation, except, perhaps, in the sanitary rate, which might be increased any year. The hon. member for Toowoomba, the Speaker, had spoken of land in 1887—2 κ

Queen street being valued at £600 a foot. Now, he (Mr. McMaster) knew of no case where that rate was approached. The improvements were assessed as well as the land; the land was never valued at that rate. If the Premier could see his way to extend the endowment for two or three years longer, possibly the Parliament might before then see its way to grant a charter to the city of Brisbane, so that they themselves could borrow in the money market. He had no doubt that if the city of Brisbane offered 5 per cent. in the London market, the rate they were paying the Government, they could easily get £106 or £107; and he supposed £3 or £4 would pay the expenses, so that they would be gainers in that way. They had good security to offer, and would have no difficulty in raising a loan. If Parliament cut off their resources in that way, he was sure the municipality of Brisbane would almost insist upon having a charter of their own so that they could borrow in the London market. He hoped the Chief Secretary would extend the period two or three years longer before he compelled them to run the risk of getting only 10s. in the £1, or perhaps only 5s.—they would have no guarantee as to the amount. By that time he hoped things would be better, and Parliament would perhaps see the necessity of voting such a sum that every municipality would get £1 for £1.

Mr. W. BROOKES said in what he was about to say he might run the risk of incurring a little odium. He had heard it said that the idea of an alderman was that his appetite grew with what it fed upon. Now, he was not skilled in the mysteries of municipal finance; but there was one thing he had felt for many years, and it would be strange to him if he was the only owner of Brisbane property in that Committee who held the opinion. He considered that the corporation of Brisbane had been for the last five or six years very extravagant, and that it had not considered in any way—or, not to go too far, it had not considered as it ought to have considered—the interests of the ratepayers. It seemed to have aimed at getting the largest amount possible, no matter at what expense or anxiety to the ratepayers. Property in Brisbane was at the present time a great deal over-taxed, and he considered that what had led to that state of affairs was the lavishness of the Government in the matter of endowment.

Mr. McMASTER: No, no!

Mr. W. BROOKES said that not long ago the manner in which the assessment was made was worthy of the island of Laputa, and the valuation for the city of Brisbane was well worthy of the leather medal which, he believed, was worn by professors of the University of Laputa. It was high time the matter was cut down to a solid basis of pounds, shillings, and pence. At the present moment the shopkeepers of Queen street, if they lived under the régime of a Turkish pasha, could hardly be more oppressed.

Mr. McMASTER: By the rats?

Mr. W. BROOKES said he was not referring in any way whatever to the hon. member. He was an alderman, and therefore his paunch was insatiable. It was quite time they came to a plain, common-sense way of looking at the expenses of the city of Brisbane, which were a great deal too large. He spoke of that of which he had personal experience, because every now and then he had to put his hand into his pocket and pull out a sum of money, which he did with very great reluctance. Yet he found that the municipal council of Brisbane—he knew he should be hauled over the coals for what he said—paid attention to every mortal thing except economy.

Mr. NORTON: Like the Government,

Mr. W. BROOKES said they had no care as to where the money went so long as they got it. He had been of that opinion for a long time; and he considered that the city of Brisbane might be managed a great deal more economically. With regard to the health-rate, for instance, the services performed could be performed for one-fourth the amount. He knew a property in Brisbane the rates on which were one-quarter of the rent—the rent was estimated at a fair amount, as low as was remunerative to the owner. The rates were £125 a year, and he (Mr. Brookes) considered that £80 a year would be ample. The long and the short of it was that he charged the municipality of Brisbane with not studying economy. The more money they got the more they would spend; and he very much approved of the Bill. He also agreed with the opinion of the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, that it was quite time that little poverty-stricken municipalities like Allora and Clermont—

Mr. KATES : Allora is not poverty-stricken. You are mistaken.

Mr. W. BROOKES said he was looking at the difference between £362 and £30,000. That was what struck him. The Brisbane Municipality seemed to labour under this strange delusion, that wherever they came to a rise in the ground it ought to be made level.

Mr. McMASTER : So it ought.

Mr. W. BROOKES said it was the only town in the world where such an insane idea prevailed. If the people of Birmingham, Lincoln, and Manchester, for instance, had made all their streets level, it would have cost millions of money, but they knew better than to spend their money in that way. The Brisbane Corporation as soon as they found a hill set men to work to cut it down. Nobody knew what it cost, and when it was all cleared away there was no substantial advantage—only an addition to the debt. It was not long since the leader of the Opposition told a tale that went to his heart about another local authority cutting down a hill at the back of his property; and it was time that aldermen were given to understand the value of money, which he did not think had been brought home to their minds so forcibly as would be done by the Bill. As a shocking example of what they would do, he might mention that they actually intended at one time to cut down William street. If they had done so, it would have cost £700 or £800, and they would simply have lowered the value of property there. That was a fair corroboration of his statement that aldermen needed to be taught in the school of adversity the value of a little economy.

Mr. McMASTER said he must contradict what the hon. gentleman had said. William street was not going to be cut down. It was proposed by one alderman, who was mayor at the time, that it should be cut down, but he (Mr. McMaster) did his utmost to oppose it. They were not quite so reckless as that. The hon. member said that the sanitary business could be done for one-third of the amount paid, and he should be very glad if the hon. member would state how it could be done for one-third of the amount. The municipality called for public tenders for carrying out the sanitary work, and they got it done as cheaply as they could. The municipality were something like a borrowed noggin—they were well knocked about. As soon as they established one place to carry out sanitary improvements a deputation waited on the Chief Secretary in order to compel them to go somewhere else, and when they went to another place another deputation waited on the Chief Secretary next morning in order to make them move again. The hon. member for North Brisbane was once an alder-

man himself, but he was one of the slow and "go-easy" sort. If he once got through Queen street he did not care how any other portion of the city got on. Brisbane had improved very much during the last five or six years, and would now compare favourably with the southern cities. He knew it did with Sydney, but he could not speak positively as to Melbourne, because he had not been there. With regard to the taxes, it was very well known that the rates were the same now as they had been for years, with the exception of the sanitary rate. The general rate was 1s. in the £1, and if properties in the municipality, which were worth £500 when the hon. member for North Brisbane was an alderman, had increased in value to £20,000, the municipality could not help that. He thought the hon. member was very much mistaken about the extravagance of aldermen. If the city was not kept in good order the citizens came down upon the corporation at once; and if the streets were not kept in proper repair, and anyone happened to fall down and received an injury in consequence, the corporation were liable to be sued and cast in heavy damages. As to what the aldermen ate and drank he could not say, but they evidently, unlike the junior member for North Brisbane, put it into a good skin. On that matter, however, he would say no more. He considered that the city of Brisbane was justly entitled to have its endowment extended for a longer term. It must be remembered that the streets of the city were very much worn by people who came in from the inland districts. They were always glad to see them, of course, but at the same time it could not be denied that they wore down the streets; and if the streets were not kept in order strangers were always ready to tell the corporation what a wretched state their roads and footpaths were in. He hoped the Premier would see his way to extend the period to three years instead of two, as proposed.

The PREMIER : The time proposed is three years—1888, 1889, and 1890.

Mr. McMASTER : But the amounts for 1889 and 1890 will be an uncertain sum; it may be 5s. or even less.

Mr. MORGAN said it was evidently no use continuing the debate, and he was afraid they were not going to obtain any redress. But he would like to quote authority in corroboration of the stand he had taken up. He had looked into the volume of *Hansard* containing the debate on the second reading of the Local Works Loan Bill, passed in 1880. On that occasion the present Premier spoke on the motion, and this was an extract from the speech the hon. gentleman then made :—

"The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that he supposed there was no doubt that Parliament had the power to alter the terms of a bargain which the country had made with the municipalities. Alterations of bargains were not things to be done as a matter of course, and good reason should be shown why one bargain should be substituted for another. If the municipalities found, as the member for Ipswich said, that it would be to their advantage to pay the amount prescribed in the schedule, and that they would be able thereby to pay off both interest and principal, it would no doubt be a very good thing; but suppose it was not to their advantage, and that it would be absolutely ruinous, then the question arose whether the Parliament had any business to make a change, which would be so much for the worse."

The hon. gentleman went on further to speak of the extra charge that would be imposed upon the Brisbane Waterworks Board in consequence of the proposed change, saying :—

"If the proposed change were made the rates would have to be very largely increased, and he doubted whether it was desirable that the Board of Waterworks should be crippled at the present time."

He (Mr. Morgan) maintained that the effect of the change now proposed to be made would be of a similar nature—it might cripple some of the municipalities. There were many other ways in which thousands of pounds could be saved annually. For instance, the populous suburbs around Brisbane should not be allowed to come under the Divisional Boards Act. They should be compelled to incorporate, and the revenue they then collected would only be endowed to the extent of £1 for £1 instead of £2 for £1. By that means £20,000 or £30,000 a year might be saved, and it would not be necessary to rob provincial municipalities of the small amount of endowment they now received from the State.

The PREMIER: They are not being robbed.

Mr. MORGAN said they were to be deprived of moneys which they put to a good use, and which they had calculated upon continuing to receive. There was another point on which he sought for information. In the Local Works Loan Act it was provided that loans should be granted for certain public works on certain terms. For works of the first class—such as waterworks, wharves, jetties, and other permanent and reproductive undertakings—loans should extend over a term of forty years. For works of the fourth class, comprising buildings constructed of stone, brick, concrete, or iron, loans were terminable in fourteen years. As far as his experience went, public buildings, such as town halls, constructed throughout of stone, and which were to all intents and purposes reproductive works, were much more likely to be lasting than wharves built of wood. What he wanted to know was, whether there was any truth in a statement that a loan which had been granted to a municipality in the colony, and which was invested in a public building of stone, had been made to come under the first class, and was therefore, repayable in forty years?

The PREMIER: I do not know. I have never heard of such a thing.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought the proposal of the Bill would have a very wholesome influence upon municipalities, some of which, there could be no doubt, had been borrowing and spending money in a way which was not congenial to the feelings of the ratepayers. The proposition imposed a check, though it was but a little one after all, which would have a beneficial effect upon municipalities.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: It will relieve the ratepayers.

Mr. MACFARLANE said it had been stated by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, that the endowment to be paid in 1889 and 1890 would be an uncertain one, and might not exceed 5s. It seemed to him that the municipal valuations must be very largely increased indeed if less than £1 for £1 was paid.

Mr. McMASTER: Why?

Mr. MACFARLANE said the Bill provided that £85,000 should be available after a certain time, and that was the amount of endowment required during the present year on the existing basis. During those years the ratio could not alter very much unless municipalities largely increased the rating on the valuation. By doing so they might get less than £1, but he did not expect that the endowment would ever fall below 16s. or 17s. during the years 1889 and 1890. So that if that were the case, as he believed it was, it was simply putting municipalities on the same level as divisional boards; and as the representative of a municipality he certainly would not vote to increase the amount and thus be placed in a better position than the divisional boards.

Mr. WAKEFIELD said one argument very much in favour of giving country municipalities some slight advantage over the city of Brisbane was the fact that when municipalities were first erected they were considered by that House to be entitled to receive for a certain number of years £2 for £1. That was a very good argument to assist country municipalities.

Mr. NORTON said he felt rather entertained by the discussion that was going on. It reminded him somewhat of the quarrel between the limbs and the stomach.

The PREMIER: Which is the stomach?

Mr. NORTON said he did not know. Perhaps the junior member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, could give them some information on the point. At any rate he professed to know where the paunch was. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, had referred to the large amount of traffic that passed over the streets of Brisbane in comparison with the amount that passed over the roads in country municipalities and divisional boards, but did not the traffic that passed over the streets of Brisbane represent the trade that was brought into Brisbane by the country municipalities and divisional boards?

Mr. McMASTER: Yes; but it does not increase the valuation.

Mr. NORTON said they ought not to forget the fact which he had just pointed out. However, he was not going to join in that little dispute. Members representing country and town municipalities might fight it out as they liked, but he would simply point out that if they chose to support a Government which could increase the annual expenditure in four years by 53 per cent., then they must expect to have the endowment interfered with. He did not believe in cutting down the endowment at all, because, as had been pointed out several times, municipalities had borrowed money for carrying out certain works; they had to pay off part of that borrowed money every year with the interest, and of course they looked not only to the rates but also to the endowment to help them to meet their liabilities; and if they were cut short in their endowments it might involve them in very great difficulties. Although it was provided by the Bill that the same endowment should be available for them until the end of 1890 as they had been receiving for this year, that would not be sufficient to provide for their requirements, because in 1891 they might get nothing at all. That was the difficulty they were in. They did not know what they were going to get. They had certain liabilities, but unless they knew what they were going to receive year after year they could never know whether they could meet their liabilities or not. In South Australia the Government had got into very great straits, and the consequence was that one amendment adopted was to reduce the endowment to 5s. in the £1 of rates collected.

Mr. GROOM: The same in New South Wales.

Mr. NORTON said the same, he believed, had been done in New South Wales, and of course the authorities which had to receive that money were placed in great difficulty, because the amount was nothing like what they expected, and those bodies that had borrowed money on the strength of their income did not know how to carry on their works or to pay the interest for which they were liable. The present position was the result of the gross extravagance that had been carried on at a time when the revenue was decreasing, as was shown by the fact that the annual expenditure had increased in four years at the rate of 53 per cent.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought that what had fallen from the hon. member for Port Curtis was worthy of the very grave consideration of the Committee, more particularly of those members who were also members of divisional boards and municipalities. It would be a good lesson for them. As the hon. member for North Brisbane had said, they would now taste "the sweet uses of adversity," or some words to that effect. He hoped that the uses of adversity would prove sweet to those hon. members, and that in future they would exercise a wholesome check upon the extravagance of the Government. When they saw that the result of that extravagance rebounded upon themselves—that they had to suffer for the extravagance of the Government, whoever they might be, that they supported—they would endeavour to check them in their extravagant course. They would do so from the very selfishness that he believed remained in the bosom of every councillor and divisional boardman throughout the universe. Their own pure selfishness would come into play, and check the Government that fed them. Now, they found that the Government had got into an improvident state, and could not serve out the usual rations, but had to cut them down considerably. He hoped that it would do them a great deal of good; that it would teach them to be wiser in the future. He thought that if the Bill did no other good it would be good in that way. A little vinegar in their salad would be a good thing for them all.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 3, as follows:—

"On or before the thirty-first day of January in each year, the council of every municipality shall cause to be prepared and transmitted to the Colonial Treasurer a detailed account, signed by the chairman, and countersigned and verified by the municipal clerk, of all sums of money actually raised in the municipality by general rates levied under the one hundred and eighty-seventh section of the said Act, or by special sewerage or drainage rates levied under the two hundred and fifty-second section of the said Act, during the year, ending on the thirty-first of December then last past.

"Upon receipt of such account, the Governor may, by warrant under his hand addressed to the Colonial Treasurer, direct him to pay to the credit of the municipal fund by way of endowment, out of any moneys appropriated by Parliament for that purpose, any sums of money not exceeding a sum equal to the amount actually raised by such rates in the year last past.

"Provided that in each of the years one thousand eight hundred and eighty-nine, and one thousand eight hundred and ninety, respectively, the sum of eighty-five thousand pounds shall be available for such payment.

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

Mr. MELLOR said that, when the Divisional Boards Bill of 1884 was passing through, an opinion was expressed by many hon. members that all local authorities that had emerged from the position of divisional boards into municipalities or shire councils should not be deprived of the amount of endowment that they had been receiving up to that time. He trusted that the Committee would grant that concession, and accept an amendment giving those bodies the same rights that they had before. He knew that a good many divisions in the colony had been merged into municipalities—for instance, North Rockhampton and Gympie—and it was considered only right that they should receive the same endowment that they had been receiving previously.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was quite right. He had called his (the Premier's) attention to the matter a few minutes ago, and,

no doubt, it was an omission in the Bill. Several municipalities had been formed out of divisional boards, and he was sure hon. members would desire to place them on the same footing as they were now. The proper way would be to amend the Bill to correspond with the Divisional Boards Bill. Section 225 of that Bill corresponded with section 5 of the one before the Committee, and when they came to that he would be prepared to move an amendment to give effect to the suggestion. That had also suggested to him another difficulty that might arise between now and the next three years. Other municipalities might be formed. Well, if they were, it would not be fair to take the endowment for them out of the municipal endowment. Although they had been formed into municipalities it should still come out of the divisional boards endowment. He would be prepared to provide for that also when they got to clause 5.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4 passed as printed.

On clause 5, as follows:—

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

The PREMIER moved the substitution of the word "available" for the words "appropriated by Parliament," in the 1st line. That was the word that was used in the Divisional Boards Bill.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the word "available" was substituted for the word "appropriated" in the 4th line of the clause.

The PREMIER said he had two provisions to add to the clause—one dealing with the cases of existing municipalities taken from divisional boards, and the other with new municipalities which might be taken from divisional boards; they were as followed:—

Provided that when the whole or any part of a division under the Divisional Boards Act of 1879 has been, or shall hereafter be, constituted a municipality under the provisions of the Local Government Act of 1878, then in each of the first ten years after the first constitution of such division the council of the municipality shall, for the purpose of making such distribution, be credited with double the amount of the rates aforesaid actually raised in the municipality, and the amount so available shall be divisible in the same proportions as if such double amount had been actually so raised.

And provided further that if, after the passing of this Act, the whole or any part of a division is constituted a municipality or part of a municipality, the endowment payable to such municipality in respect of the area which is taken from the division shall, nevertheless, be chargeable to the amount available for the purpose of the endowment of divisions, in the same manner as if no change of constitution had been made.

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

Mr. MACFARLANE said when the Bill was on its second reading he referred to a clause in the Divisional Boards Bill that he anticipated would have been incorporated in the amending Bill. He would move the following new clause, to follow clause 5:—

So much of the two hundred and twenty-third section of the Local Government Act of 1878 as is contained in the words—

"And the council shall be forbidden to proceed further with such loan if the number of votes recorded against the loan forms one-third of the total number of votes for which voters are recorded on the voters' roll of the municipality"

is hereby repealed, and the following enactment is substituted therefor, that is to say—

If the number of votes given against the loan is greater than the number of votes given in favour of the loan, the council shall be forbidden to proceed further with the loan.

New clause put.

Mr. McMASTER said he wished the hon. member had added something more to that paragraph. He had forgotten that the hon. member for Ipswich intended to move that amendment, although he had spoken of it on the previous day, and he wished the hon. member had remembered that a municipality might be put to the expense of a ballot by twenty rate-payers, and had moved that that number be extended. He (Mr. McMaster) thought it should be extended, as it was not difficult to get twenty individuals in a place like Brisbane—or in any other municipality almost, but particularly in a large community such as Brisbane—who would sign a requisition to the mayor protesting against a loan, and the whole of the municipality was put to the expense of a ballot on the question. He thought the Premier should increase the number to 100 or 150, as twenty was altogether too small.

The PREMIER said he did not think twenty was too small a number. That was not a Bill to amend the Local Government Act generally, which was one on which he dared say 500 amendments might be introduced with advantage—that was to say to make it as good a measure as the Divisional Boards Bill put through the other day. The Bill under discussion was a matter that came up through an amendment in the Divisional Boards Bill. He believed that the rule, as proposed, was better than the one as it now existed, and if hon. members who were more familiar with voting in municipalities than he was, thought it advisable to accept the amendment, he had no objection to it.

Mr. McMASTER said he was not objecting to the clause proposed, but he should like to have amended the provision relating to the number protesting or petitioning against a loan. The number proposed he quite approved of, but he objected to twenty persons being able to put the city to the expense of a ballot for the purpose of ascertaining that number.

The PREMIER: That number is quite fair in a place like Clermont or Warwick, or many other places.

Mr. McMASTER: Not in Brisbane.

New clause put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the title of the Bill be amended so as to read as follows:—"A Bill to further amend the Local Government Act of 1878."

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, and reported the Bill to the House with amendments, and with an amended title.

The report was adopted, and, on the motion of the PREMIER, the third reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that you do now leave the chair, and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, to further consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—It is not unusual, I think, for hon. members to take advantage of a motion of this kind to draw attention to subjects requiring attention, and I

avail myself of the present occasion to try and get a reply from the head of the Government as regards some matters that closely concern the district I represent. According to the map of new electoral districts laid on the table, and according to the Redistribution Bill which is now before the House, I stand here as three members. As I represent a district which is to be divided into three, I suppose that I may be considered to have the voice of three members. Consequently, I hope the Government will attach some importance to the grievances I am about to bring forward. I do not say that the district does not deserve more than three representatives, but that is the position of matters at the present time. The Premier has frequently given us his assurances, but nothing has been very definitely stated by him as to what action the Government are going to take with regard to redressing some grievances that exist in my electorate. I have not had an opportunity of speaking on the Financial Statement, and I may say now that I think the general policy of the Government has affected the northern part of the colony very considerably. I refer to their land policy, their railway policy, and to their financial policy for this year. The deficit is in a great measure due to their land policy, their financial policy hinges upon that to a large extent, and we know that the revenue from the Lands Department has been deficient in almost every item under the Land Act of 1884. I have frequently shown the late Minister for Lands how that revenue could be augmented very considerably. I firmly believe that under the change which has lately taken place in that department some existing grievances will be redressed. I have already seen signs of that within the last few days, so that, as far as the Lands Department is concerned, it is a very good thing that the late Minister has been removed, though I will not say that the hon. gentleman will be an acquisition to the Works Department. That is a most important department of the public service, as it includes railways, public works, and mines, and unless his administration of that office differs very considerably from the manner in which he managed the Lands Department, I can only say that the present muddle will be greatly increased. But to return to the question as to how the revenue from the Lands Department may be increased, I would remind hon. members that there is a strip of land thirty miles wide along the coast all round from South Australia to the southern border called the "settled districts." Why they are called the settled districts I do not know, as there life is often hardest, the returns on investment the smallest, and the greatest inconvenience is experienced in taking up country. I maintain that much money is lost to the department by the way in which the land in those districts is dealt with. From the South Australian border to the Batavia River there is a stretch of 800 miles containing, at a depth of thirty miles from the coast, an area of 24,000 square miles of country. Say that only one-half of that is valuable land—and that is leaving a large margin—we have an area of 12,000 square miles which at a rental of 10s. per square mile would bring in an annual revenue of £6,000. A great deal of that country, good valuable land, is occupied now, but the holders are paying no rent, and neither are they making any improvements on it, because they have no tenure. Under the Land Act of 1884, they are prohibited, as it were, from taking it up, because the land is not thrown open. If the present Minister for Lands will take a note of that, he will find that he would make a very good move in the department at once by throwing open that land to the people to take up, and not define portions and say, "We will give

you a block here and a block there," but leave it to the people to choose what land they require and let them take it up in that way. I know there are some very good lands, and that there are many people in the settled districts who will take up those lands if they have the opportunity; the only hindrance to their taking them up has been the Land Act of 1884. That is one effect of the land policy of the Government in a far-distant district like that, and I suppose a similar thing occurs in other settled districts. Another matter I wish to refer to is the railway policy of the Government. I am surprised that the Government can formulate such a railway policy as they have done, and then attempt to carry it out *bonâ fide*, as they have said they will do. I see by this evening's paper that tenders have been accepted for the Fortitude Valley railway, and £175,000 is to be expended upon that railway, which will never carry a bag of corn or any produce whatever. It will carry a few passengers where there are already tramways, railways, good roads, and omnibuses for that purpose. It is only a loop line; and for what purpose it is to be constructed I cannot make out. While the rest of the country is hungering and starving, as it were, for lines to be carried through it, it is proposed to construct this railway which will cost £175,000. I am quite surprised—in fact, I am in the dark, and I suppose I shall remain so—as to the reason why this line is to be carried out, unless there is something underneath—what they call a political railway. I will just read the railway returns, as set forth in the tables of the Colonial Treasurer, on page 19, to show that this railway will further increase the percentage of non-paying railways in the southern part of the colony. The return on the capital invested in the Southern and Western Railway, according to these tables, is £1 9s. per cent. for the year. For the Wide Bay and Burnett district the return on capital invested is 9s. 5½d. I recommend that to the notice of the hon. member for Maryborough, who was asking the other day when the line from Mungarr to Gayndah was going to be constructed; that line will reduce the return to a still lower percentage. The return from the Central Railway is 13s. 1d. per cent. on the capital invested. Now we come to the Northern Railway. The return on the capital invested is £2 8s. per cent. Now, I maintain that if the Government were to take the £175,000 for the Fortitude Valley railway and employ it in the construction of a line from Normanton to Croydon the amount received from Northern railways would be increased by £1 per cent. on the capital invested. I always understood that Governments were instituted for the purpose of dealing out fair treatment to the country they undertook to govern.

Mr. BLACK: That is a great mistake.

Mr. PALMER: It is a simple idea, I believe, and as the hon. member for Mackay suggests, that is a great mistake. Well, really if a Government had the idea that that was their mission they certainly would not propose such railways as we see laid on the table of the House. There is a loop line to connect with the South Brisbane line. What is that going to produce? We shall then have three termini to one railway. As for the railway to Warwick I do not know what to say. Now, here is a little town which I hear very well spoken of. The district is very pretty. It is an agricultural district, and may be a very good one, but it has one railway already, and one railway for such a small town ought to be quite sufficient; and, moreover, I see by the returns prepared last year that it earns hardly enough to pay the salaries of

the officials. Yet now we are going to spend another million on a new line for Warwick. Surely they can wait for a little time, when other parts of the country are starving for railways. I would like to know now whether the Government really intend to propose a railway from Normanton to Croydon. Considering the railway policy the Government have announced, and are announcing day by day, there seems no chance for this line, and it seems likely that it will be starved out of existence; whilst, in addition, there will be no money left to carry out the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry. Of course, I have heard rumours. I hear they propose to divert the line from Normanton to Cloncurry to Normanton and Croydon. I want to hear the Premier's reply to that rumour, and then I shall be able to speak decidedly upon the matter.

The PREMIER: You will be able to say that whatever the Government propose will be wrong.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Probably.

Mr. PALMER: I am the more moved to take this step because I see a probability of our loans failing. It is on the cards that they may fail, if we compare their success with those of other colonies. There is where the point is—we should be prepared for the worst—and when this does happen what will become of these non-paying lines? We shall have to shut them up; and how will the others be carried on? What will then be the result to the country? The Government indirectly employ over 12,000 men, and they will be thrown out of employment. Fortitude Valley will not be able to support the lot of them. The country will have to support them in some way or other; so that I am really interested in discovering how the Premier is going to meet this difficulty, and how he will provide for all the railways that I see enumerated in the schedule of the £10,000,000 loan. I am also interested to know what steps he will take to carry out the line from Normanton to Croydon. I have had a telegram lately to the effect that the population on the Croydon field is over 7,000, and in another twelve months it will be doubled. The country is easy of access, and I believe a railway can be constructed for £2,000 a mile. It is a step I am sure the Government would be quite justified in taking, and if they put a little energy into the matter survey parties could be up there and plans prepared and approved of within two months, or before Parliament prorogues. That would be a decided step, and if they desired to do so they could take the line in hand, as they have done the Fortitude Valley line, and have it constructed in a very short space of time.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member has been citing a great number of railways, but he left out one, the Cooktown Railway. He did not touch upon that, because it did not suit him to do so. I find in the published tables that the Cooktown Railway was opened on the 13th November, 1885. There was a revenue for 1885-6 of £1,600; and for 1886-7, £7,424. Upon a loan expenditure, up to the 30th June, of £264,843, there was an income in 1886 of £1,638, and £7,400 in 1887.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I certainly thought that the hon. the Premier would have replied to the remarks that fell from the hon. member for Burke, more especially, as that hon. member very fairly and very properly put it, that he represents a larger constituency in area, and I believe a larger constituency in population, than any other one member in this House, and more especially also when that hon. gentleman brought before this House what I

think amounts to a very substantial grievance, and a grievance which I think can be easily remedied at the hands of the Government. He asks that a railway should be commenced without further delay between Normanton and Croydon. The hon. the Premier knows as well as the hon. member for Burke the enormous population that is settled round Croydon at the present time. He also must have reports from his officers as to the nature and probable future of that field, and if the reports are anything like those in private hands he must see that the population now there will be enormously increased within a very few months from this time. I think the people of Croydon are fairly entitled to this line, especially when we have regard to the fact that an undoubted political railway has been laid upon the table of this House within the last few days; I refer to the deviation or addition to the railway system at South Brisbane. That railway has been hurried on, to use a very moderate term, for a special purpose. It is no use hon. members shutting their eyes to the fact that those plans were laid upon the table to ensure the success of the hon. member for South Brisbane, the present Minister for Lands, at the recent election for South Brisbane. It is well known to several members of this House that had those plans not been put on the table of the House there would have been most serious and probably fatal opposition to the present Minister for Lands. The Premier may look astonished, but I do not think that he knows everything. I have no doubt whatever that he thinks he knows everything, but at the same time I believe he knows that very strong opposition would have been set up against the Minister for Lands at South Brisbane had the mouths of the South Brisbane electors not been closed by this railway. Will any member of this House tell me that this extension at South Brisbane is to be compared for a moment with the railways spoken of by the hon. member for Burke, so far as their benefit to the colony generally is concerned? It is, of course, much better for the South Brisbane constituency and possibly for the metropolitan constituency, and it was certainly better, for political reasons, that this extension at South Brisbane should be granted, than that what is a crying evil in the North, or, at all events, in the constituency of Burke—the want of communication between Croydon and the coast—should be attended to. Yet, in order to secure the return of a member of the Government, we are to be asked to consent to a railway there is no present necessity for, and for which in our present financial position there is no justification. That cannot, for one moment, be denied. I will go further than that and will say that, had the hon. member for Burke been chosen as a colleague by the Premier, the railway to Croydon would have been granted at once, and the railway to South Brisbane would have been buried until the hon. gentlemen wanted a colleague from that constituency, and then it would be trotted out. I do not wonder at the Northern members becoming exasperated at the wrongs done them by the Government, and at the way they are refused everything they ask for; and yet the hon. gentleman tells us that when he was at home doing the great work he says he has done, but which he has not yet shown to the House, he was always thinking of what he could do for the North. It appears to me that if, as he says, he has tried to conciliate the North, or in any way attempted to meet their just claims upon this House, he has shown a very extraordinary way of doing it. I still hope that the Premier, out of ordinary courtesy, as the leader

of the House, will give some reply to the statement of the representative of one of the largest constituencies in the colony.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I should like to know if any other hon. members have any imaginary grievances to bring forward. I can only speak once on this question, and I am waiting to see if there is anything else to be asked, so that I may answer all at once. I was really very much amused at the speech made by the hon. member for Balonne.

Mr. NORTON: I hope you laughed.

The PREMIER: I could not help laughing. Are we really to understand that this is the latest instance of a grievance to the North? It is, I suppose, an injustice to the North that the Government have not yet already commenced a railway from Normanton to Croydon; I am ready to agree that it is quite as sensible as most of the complaints made against the Government. This is really a most substantial grievance, that we have not yet commenced a railway from Normanton to Croydon! What did we know about Croydon twelve months ago?

Mr. MOREHEAD: A good deal.

The PREMIER: We knew something about it. We knew it was a promising goldfield, and we know now it is a more promising goldfield.

Mr. PATTISON: That is enough.

The PREMIER: Yes. "That is enough," says the hon. member, "make a railway to it." Never mind the money, never mind what it will cost. However, here is a promising goldfield, and we are therefore told we should straightway construct a railway to it, and, if that railway is not commenced within twelve months after the field is discovered, it is brought forward as another instance of the cruel injustice of the Government to the North, and their neglect of the real requirements of the country. Well, I am glad to hear arguments of that kind come from the other side of the House, because nobody believes they are sincere. There is no man, I think, in the community so foolish as to believe that there is anything in them. Hon. members can gain nothing by making use of arguments of that kind, and let me assure them that by making use of such arguments they are only fighting the battles of the Government, and I feel more grateful to them than otherwise. I said the other day, in speaking of what the Government proposed to do during the present session, that we would reserve the question of a railway from Normanton to Croydon till we were able to give the matter further consideration; and I do not think it likely we can propose it this session, nor do I think the circumstances of the country justify it. We had not sufficient information at that time, and, though we are likely to get further information, I do not think we should be justified in proposing the construction of such a railway at the present time. Those who have been for some time in the colony know the history of other goldfields, and we can remember the time when the Palmer Gold Field had more people on it than the Croydon has now. There were more people at one time on the Hodgkinson, and there were also more on the Gilbert and nearly as many on the Etheridge, which is one of the richest goldfields in the colony, and was thought to be quite as rich as Croydon. And who is on the Gilbert now? I believe there is an inhabitant there. The Government cannot act in this matter on the principle of a mining speculator. They have to act cautiously, and in the interests of the country; they are not bound to make a railway because an apparently good goldfield has been discovered. I sincerely hope that Croydon will turn

out all that it is expected to be. I believe it will turn out a very rich field, but at the same time I do not think the Government are justified in making a railway there at present and rushing into expenditure of that kind without more information than we are in possession of at the present time—or at all events than my department is in possession of. When we do get more information, I hope it may be found that the circumstances will justify the construction of a railway to Croydon; but to bring it up at present as a grievance is too preposterous. I think the only other matter which the hon. gentleman referred to was the administration of the land. He seemed to suggest that the coast lands in the Gulf should be taken up under some new system of occupation licenses. I think the present system of occupation licenses is a very good one, and it was specially introduced to deal with lands like those. I believe a great deal of that land has been taken up under occupation licenses, and I daresay there are also a great many people up there who would occupy land without paying for it. We cannot make them pay for it, because we cannot keep a body of bailiffs to turn them out if they are not paying rent. If that is the only other grievance it is not worth any further argument. The hon. member spoke of the railway in South Brisbane. We are sometimes told about the population in the North; but hon. gentlemen seem to forget there is a population in the metropolis. There really is a population there, though they may think fit to forget it. There are over 40,000 people in the electorates of Fortitude Valley and North and South Brisbane. That, of course, amounts to nothing.

Mr. McMASTER: They are not in the North!

The PREMIER: Because they are not in the North, 40,000 people here are but a feather in the scale, while one or two people in the northern parts of the colony are entitled to a great deal more consideration than a large number of people here. We have had a great deal too much of this nonsense—for it is nothing but nonsense. It is, I suppose, intended for electioneering talk, but it is very foolish even at that. I give the hon. member's constituents credit for a great deal more sense than he appears to attribute to them.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to keep the House very long. I was rather amused to hear the hon. the Premier say this was electioneering talk on the part of the hon. member for Burke. Why, Mr. Speaker, it was the hon. member himself who led up to it; he said the other day that the Government hoped to be able to entertain the idea of a railway from Normanton to Croydon. Was not that electioneering? If not, what was it? The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well that the Government had no intention of going on with it; they have no money, and they are at their wits' end to know how to provide money for necessary works. What did the hon. gentleman tell us this afternoon? That a railway for which £150,000 was voted by the last Parliament could not be gone on with until he saw the state of the Loan Fund. Fancy the Treasurer of the colony, also being the Premier, not knowing the state of the Loan Fund!

The PREMIER: One can't know everything at once, you know.

Mr. BLACK: The hon. member thinks he knows too much. He does not know as much as he would have people think. He presumes too much on the ignorance of his opponents.

The PREMIER: There is plenty of room for it.

Mr. BLACK: The hon. gentleman is not so clever as he thinks he is. He tries to mislead this House and the country on every possible opportunity. It was nothing but an electioneering dodge the other day when he held out this bait to the people in the North. "What a fine fellow the Premier must be; he is going to give us a railway from Normanton to Croydon; he has stated it in the House." It was about the biggest piece of electioneering humbug I ever came across. It was nothing but electioneering, but luckily there are some members in the House who can see through his tricks. He is a very amusing man sometimes.

Question put and passed.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

The PREMIER moved that there be granted for the year 1887-8 the sum of £2,010, to defray salaries and contingencies in connection with His Excellency the Governor. The amount was the same as last year. £300 had already been voted for the salary of the Aide-de-camp.

Mr. NELSON said before going on with that vote he would like to draw attention to some of the schedules—Schedule D, for example, on page 5. The amount set down as required for the present year for the endowment of municipalities was £80,000, and for divisional boards, £160,000. The Chief Secretary had frequently told them that that was an unknown quantity; but why it was an unknown quantity he was not able to understand. When they considered the time of the year that the Estimates were made out, and when they considered further that every municipality and every divisional board must know by the month of August what would be its revenue for the year, and with the facilities the department had for ascertaining from those boards what amount of rates they were likely to collect for the year it seemed absurd to say that the Government could not ascertain within a small amount the sum that would be required to meet the expenditure for the year. Last year, taking the two together, there was an error in the estimate of considerably over £40,000. They knew at the time that it was impossible that the amount of £135,000 put down for divisional boards could be correct, but the Government took no trouble to ascertain the proper sum required. It was perfectly apparent that the sum set down for this year would not be sufficient, and the consequences would be that they would be again thrown out in their calculations. He thought that item should be withdrawn and a fresh estimate placed before them.

The PREMIER said that no doubt a considerable error was made in the estimate last year; but from the information he had he did not think the present estimate would be exceeded by more than £2,000, if at all. One of the largest items would be reduced through the basis of the rating in the city of Brisbane being considerably lower than last year, and he thought the amount put down ought to be sufficient for the municipalities. With respect to divisional boards, it was very difficult to say what it would be. Last year it was £163,000, and he did not know that there was any reason to expect it would be more this year. He had not ascertained the figures for himself, but he believed they had been carefully calculated by the late Treasurer.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had seen an intimation in the Southern Press, and in the Queensland Press also, of a rumoured change with respect to the status of the Commissioner of New Guinea. It was stated that Dr. McGregor was to be appointed Commissioner at £1,500 a year, that the present Commissioner,

the Hon. John Douglas, was to be Judicial Commissioner at £1,000 a year, and that there was to be a private secretary at £500 a year, whose name also was mentioned. Had the Premier any information as to whether the Imperial Government were acting in conjunction with the contributing colonies, or on their own account?

The PREMIER said he had seen what appeared in the Press on the subject, but he had no official information of which he could make use with respect to the proposed arrangements as to the government of New Guinea. The salaries mentioned were in the agreement made with the Imperial Government. He knew for a certainty that the Imperial Government would not do anything in the matter, or appoint anybody without consulting the Government of Queensland. As to the Hon. John Douglas being appointed Judicial Commissioner, that was certainly a surprising piece of information, and he thought it highly improbable. The judicial commissioner would probably be a lawyer. As to Dr. McGregor being appointed, he was not in a position to say anything. He knew Dr. McGregor, and knew him to be one of the most competent officers in the colonial service.

Mr. BLACK said he should like to hear something more definite as to the future government of New Guinea, and whether the colony was likely to get any return for the annual expenditure made in conjunction with the other contributing colonies. The question seemed to be in as unsatisfactory condition as the New Hebrides.

Mr. MOREHEAD : Or Samoa.

Mr. BLACK said the Premier might smile—

The PREMIER : I am not laughing. I cannot hear what the hon. member says.

Mr. BLACK said that hon. members should have some information as to the wretched New Guinea business. The people of England were not satisfied with the condition of affairs. Traders were not protected on the New Guinea coast, and it was a sort of locked-up place.

The PREMIER said the hon. member made a mistake if he thought he (the Premier) laughed while he was speaking. He could not distinctly hear on account of the conversation that was going on near him, and was straining to hear what the hon. member said. The question of the Government of New Guinea had been in an unsatisfactory condition for a long time. At present there was a commissioner with only nominal authority. At the beginning of last year the proposals of the Governments of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, were submitted to the Imperial Government, and accepted by them, with the simple variation of extending the term of guarantee to ten years; and a Bill based upon that agreement was also agreed to by the representatives of those three colonies in London. All that remained to be done by Queensland was to introduce the Bill and pass it, and when that was done the Imperial Government would be ready at once to proclaim sovereignty, and take the necessary steps for the administration of the Government. But the matter hung fire because, since the proposals were first agreed to by the three Governments, there had been a change of Government in New South Wales, and a change in the term of guarantee from five to ten years. As soon as he returned from England he asked the Governments of New South Wales and Victoria whether they concurred in the introduction of the Bill in its present form—that was to say, as agreed to by the Imperial Government and the representatives of the three colonies. He had received an answer from the Government of Victoria expressing concurrence, but could get

no answer from the Government of New South Wales. Within a week of his return from England he wrote on the subject; he had since telegraphed asking for an answer, and he had also asked a member of the Government there to procure an answer for him. He had at last written to say that if the assistance of New South Wales could not be got the other colonies would have to go on without it, as they were in honour bound to carry out the agreement. He hoped they would get an answer from the Government of New South Wales; but they could not allow the credit of the Australian colonies to be injured by the Government of one of the colonies declining to accord the courtesy of an answer.

Mr. PALMER said he wished to know whether the expenditure of £15,000 was still going on, and how the deficit was to be made up in case the Government of New South Wales did not keep the agreement?

The PREMIER said that at the present time the £15,000 a year was contributed by all the colonies according to population. The share paid by Queensland was £1,200, and an extra £100 as a contribution towards the amount due by South Australia, which had withdrawn. At the present time the accounts were audited by the Auditor-General of Queensland and sent to the various contributing colonies and to the Imperial Government. If New South Wales withdrew from the agreement—which he could not believe they would—then the Governments of Victoria and Queensland would have to consider whether they were prepared to carry out their bargain. The agreement provided for any change of that kind.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he took it that South Australia had withdrawn; New South Wales might withdraw; and that would leave the money to be contributed by Victoria and Queensland. Victoria might withdraw, and leave the whole of the cost to be borne by Queensland. Might not that contingency arise?

The PREMIER said it was possible, of course; anybody might withdraw from a bargain, but he did not think it at all probable. He hoped to be in a position in a few days to introduce the Bill.

Mr. NORTON said he was under the impression that the Government of South Australia at one time gave a sort of guarantee.

The PREMIER : Yes.

Mr. NORTON : But they withdrew in spite of that; and he did not see what was to prevent the Governments of other colonies from withdrawing too. The Government of New South Wales had before now gone back on agreements made by previous Governments. It might be the same with regard to the New Guinea question, and then Queensland and Victoria would be bound, as far as he could see, to pay the whole amount. If there was any danger of that they had better be very much on their guard in extending the time for which they were asked to guarantee the money. His object in speaking now, however, was in connection with the reported appointment of Dr. McGregor, of Fiji, as Commissioner of New Guinea. He read the other day, in a letter from the New Guinea correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, that Dr. McGregor was to be appointed Commissioner; and the writer also referred to the popularity of Mr. Douglas, and the general satisfaction which he had given. Certainly Queensland ought to have something to say before an appointment of that kind was made; and he was glad to hear from the hon. gentleman that the colony would have a voice in it. If the Hon. John Douglas was superseded

in the Commissionership it would create a very great deal of dissatisfaction throughout the colony. Both in Queensland and in the other colonies, where Mr. Douglas was very well known, the people had great confidence in his capacity to conduct the affairs of New Guinea as well as anybody who was likely to be appointed. Mr. Douglas was a popular gentleman, and an honourable gentleman, and one who understood how to conduct all the matters that were likely to arise there without giving offence to anyone who was likely to be subject to offence; and he thought the colonies would be making a very great mistake in consenting to any appointment which would have the effect of superseding Mr. Douglas. Nothing was said in the letter about any subsidiary appointment being offered to Mr. Douglas, and the impression left upon his mind was that Mr. Douglas was to be left out altogether. The business of administration there, where there were so few white men, could not be exceedingly arduous, and what little Mr. Douglas had been able to do, with the very limited powers assigned to him, appeared to have given general satisfaction.

The PREMIER: The whole thing will depend upon the administration.

Mr. NORTON said that Mr. Douglas would administrate all that was to be administrated to the perfect satisfaction of everybody concerned. It was also a cause of complaint that Mr. Douglas had not been allowed to exercise his own judgment in connection with New Guinea. On the coasts of those islands a number of people, while following their legitimate business, had been murdered, and almost nothing had been done in the way of redress. Unless New Guinea was to be governed on something like a system, and in a very different way from what they had hitherto seen, it would be better to throw the whole thing up altogether. He gave to the Imperial Government no credit for what they were doing now, because they refused to accede to the wishes of the colonies in occupying the whole of the country that was then open to occupation. The particular reason urged for occupying New Guinea was to prevent any foreign power from taking possession of it; but by only occupying a part of it another power immediately stepped in; and although the foreign settlement was not immediately opposite the Queensland coast, it was only just, as it were, round the corner. The people in the colonies had great cause of dissatisfaction with the action of the Imperial Government throughout the whole of the negotiations concerning New Guinea.

Mr. BLACK said that in that morning's paper there was a rather curious telegram with reference to the New Guinea question. The telegram was dated "London, September 7," and was as follows:—

"In the House of Commons last night a discussion arose on the Pacific Islands questions generally. Mr. Campbell complained that New Guinea had been basely surrendered to Queensland, which colony was, he stated, deeply dyed in slavery."

The PREMIER: Mr. Campbell is evidently unacquainted with the recent history of Queensland.

Mr. BLACK said the Premier had had plenty of opportunities lately of giving Mr. Campbell some information on the subject. The telegram continued:—

"Sir Henry Holland, in replying, said that England would keep New Guinea entirely in her own hands."

In that case he thought they had better let England pay for it. That solemn farce had been going on at the expense of the Australian colonies for about three years, and as far as he could see, the state of New Guinea, in connection with

Australasia, was just as unsatisfactory now as it was four years ago. Hon. members would do well to examine into the bearing of the New Guinea question upon the colonies. He understood that whereas foreigners were, without any difficulty, allowed to trade and settle on the German portion of New Guinea, traders of the British race were actually debarred from settling in British New Guinea, and could not set foot on the island without having first obtained a permit to do so, nor was any protection offered to them when they were there. The entire New Guinea business was a perfect farce, and he was not at all surprised that South Australia, seeing what a farce it was and what a farce it was likely to continue, withdrew its contribution, and he should not be surprised at New South Wales and Victoria following suit. They wanted to know what on earth they were doing with New Guinea, for which they were paying that sum every year and from which they were deriving no benefit whatever. It was at first understood that in the event of the colonies agreeing to subscribe £15,000 a year, England would establish a protectorate over New Guinea, not merely over the small portion now in British occupation, but over the whole of it that was then available; and they misled the colonies all through. The English Government knew that negotiations were going on between them and the German Government to allow Germany to have a portion of the island, and they never told the colonies a word about it. He thought that the sooner they asserted themselves a little, and said that the continuation of the subsidy should certainly depend upon much more vigorous action in the New Guinea question by the Home Government than had been the case during the last three or four years, the better. In fact, he would go so far as to stop their contribution until that was done, and let England, if she thought fit, haul down her own flag. Indeed, it was a pity that that was not made a condition when the British flag was first hoisted there by the late Government. He doubted very much whether England would have done it.

The PREMIER said he was afraid the hon. member had not made himself acquainted with the recent history of the question, although all the papers connected with it had been laid on the table of the House. No matter how unsatisfactory the original negotiations were, that question was at an end, and they were now only awaiting, as he had already said, a formal answer from New South Wales. The proposition made by the colonies had been accepted by the Imperial Government, and he hoped to be able to bring the whole question before the House, in a complete form, in a few days.

Mr. BLACK: A formal guarantee of £15,000 a year for ten years?

The PREMIER said that was the proposition which the House last year unanimously assented to. He would not believe that New South Wales would go back upon their agreement. As to South Australia, it withdrew two or three years ago.

Mr. NORTON: Two years.

The PREMIER: Two years ago, apart altogether from the question of the administration being satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

Mr. PALMER said one matter connected with New Guinea at the present time was the utter helplessness of traders who were losing their lives and their property, whilst no effort was made to avenge them or to protect them. Other countries seemed to be able to protect their subjects all over the island wherever they went. They also

seemed to be spreading their powers in all directions, and perhaps they would take Queensland yet, as they were taking all the islands round about it. They took care, however, to protect their own subjects, but the subjects of Queensland were losing their lives and their property without the slightest redress. Every week almost they heard of murders and robberies, of schooners' crews being cut off when visiting the islands; and there seemed to be no word of any protection being provided for them or of their deaths being avenged in any way.

Mr. NORTON: They kill a pig or two occasionally.

Mr. PALMER said he considered that a private firm in Queensland had, by the judicious expenditure of money, by their trading stations and the running of steamers and other vessels, done more to open up that island than the Government had done with all the money they had expended. They had in the traders of Queensland, and in their seafaring men, a very laudable class of citizens, who ought to be protected, and it appeared to him that a little vigorous action was needed somewhere, either by the Imperial Government or by somebody else in authority over those matters. At present the result was very lamentable indeed.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should like to know from the Premier, in the event—which appeared to him very probable—of New South Wales declining to pay a portion of the annual contribution, what would be the result? Would Victoria and Queensland carry on the business together?

The PREMIER said Queensland and Victoria would have to act together if New South Wales withdrew.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I think she will.

The PREMIER said he could scarcely believe it. He had good reason to complain of the delay. In the event of the other colonies withdrawing, Queensland would be bound to go on alone in the matter. He did not believe the expense would be very much and there would be considerable revenue. New South Wales and Victoria had agreed to contribute £5,000 a year each to the £15,000, or a proportion of whatever was necessary. New Zealand and Western Australia had also agreed to contribute—New Zealand, he thought, for three years longer. Western Australia and Tasmania did not contribute much; there was no fixed term as to their contributions. For his own part, if it became necessary, he should not hesitate to ask Queensland to undertake the whole responsibility. He was quite sure that the expenditure would not come to anything like the present total amount. By the terms of the agreement, which hon. members had not forgotten, estimates would have to be submitted to the Governor in Brisbane, and for consideration of his Ministers, in regard to all expenditure that was incurred beyond the salaries of the permanent officers.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought our own navy should be utilised to redress outrages or to punish the perpetrators of them. Could not the captain or admiral, or whatever he was, of the station go there and teach them New Guinea polo? He thought it was absurd to see a vessel lying idle here month after month and season after season when outrages were being committed almost within sight of the shores of Queensland. It was a most disgraceful state of affairs.

The PREMIER said that at present Queensland had no more legal authority over New Guinea than it had over Samoa or Patagonia. The only connection was that it had to contribute to the £15,000 a year.

Mr. NELSON said on the next page of the Estimates, dealing with the interest on the public debt, hon. members would notice that last year there was an excess of expenditure over the amount set down on the Estimates by £21,250. They knew that a loan was floated in February, 1887, for £2,500,000, bearing interest from the 1st January. The half-yearly interest which would accrue upon that on 30th June last would be £50,000, £28,750 of which appeared to have been paid out of loan. He should like the Chief Secretary to tell the Committee under what statute the Governor in Council had any authority to pay interest out of loan. The Loan Act did not give them that authority, neither did the Audit Act. All that they knew was that the Governor in Council had taken upon himself to pay it, not only without authority from Parliament, but against the expressed authority of Parliament—because the Loan Act expressly and explicitly laid it down that interest was to be paid out of the consolidated revenue—was to be a first charge upon the consolidated revenue. And here they had the Governor in Council arrogating to himself the power to make that large payment of £28,750, which was not provided for in any estimates, and which, so far as he knew, had been paid contrary to law. He should like to hear the Chief Secretary's explanation of it.

The PREMIER said he was not personally familiar with all the details of the matter, but he understood that what was done was this: When the loan was sold the price was made payable in instalments extending until about the present time—at any rate, over the first half of this year—and interest was charged against the consolidated revenue in respect of the money that was in hand from time to time. As to the money that was actually received, the interest upon it was charged to the revenue, and in respect of the money that was not received it was treated as part of the charge of floating the loan. That was what he understood to be the arrangement, but he spoke liable to correction. He believed it was in accordance with the practice in similar transactions on previous occasions, and also in accordance with the practice of other colonies.

Mr. NELSON: Where is your authority for it?

The PREMIER said that, considering the matter from a common-sense point of view, the authority was obvious. They charged revenue with the money they had received, and made the interest on the money they had not got part of the charge of floating the loan, having got so much less.

Mr. NELSON said he did not see how that could be right. The money was paid in instalments and was deposited in the bank, and where was the interest that had accrued upon it?

The PREMIER: That is included in the "miscellaneous receipts."

Mr. NELSON said he was sure they would not find it there.

The PREMIER: "Other receipts."

Mr. NELSON: No, no! That would not do. Whether that was the practice of the other colonies or not he did not know. He did not know the statutes of the other colonies. They must go by their own statute, and there was not the slightest doubt that that payment was contrary to law. If the Governor in Council was going to handle their money in that off-hand way he had better take the whole expenditure into his own hands. It would save the Committee all the trouble. Perhaps the Premier would answer the question he asked the late Treasurer about six weeks ago in regard to the £3,500 accrued interest

on the previous loan. The whole half-year's interest on the loan of £1,500,000 that was floated in March, 1886, was charged to loan, so that they were actually robbing the Loan Fund to pay money into the revenue. Surely that was not in accord with justice or honesty or common sense.

The PREMIER said he did not remember the hon. gentleman mentioning that before. He could not answer the question until he had made inquiries.

Mr. BLACK said he believed those were somewhat embarrassing questions to ask the Premier, and he thought they might safely defer the subject until next week. He was perfectly certain that when the late Treasurer took his place next week, on whichever side he chose to sit, he would be most happy to relieve the present Treasurer from the difficulties he was evidently getting into. He should have thought that the Minister for Works might have been able to come to the hon. gentleman's assistance; but he did not think the financial ability that hon. gentleman had displayed during the last three years was of an encouraging nature. It was getting late in the evening, and the Premier was certainly embarrassed in being called upon to answer questions upon subjects he evidently understood little or nothing about.

The PREMIER: I never heard anything about the matter before.

Mr. BLACK said the Committee ought to have a little commiseration for the unfortunate position in which the Premier was placed, and not press the questions too closely then. Of course they would have to be answered, and he believed that when the late Treasurer returned next week they would receive a satisfactory explanation.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it might be as well for the Premier to inform them if there was any possibility of a gentleman being appointed to occupy the position of Treasurer, or whether the present duality was to continue.

The PREMIER: I propose to keep the Treasurership at present.

Mr. MOREHEAD said perhaps next week the hon. gentleman would be in a position to give more information in regard to the law-breaking charge made by the hon. member for Northern Downs—and properly so, he thought.

Mr. DONALDSON said he would like a little information from the Premier in regard to the endowments for the destruction of marsupials. No reference was made in the Governor's Speech as to the renewal of the Act. Last year some £4,000 was expended in that direction, and he saw that the same amount was down for the present year. During the first half of the present year the expenditure was £2,500, and probably during the second half the amount would not be greater. It appeared to him that the Act had almost accomplished the good purpose for which it was passed, as the marsupials were now well in hand, and he thought that if the powers conferred by the Act were continued in force for a few years longer, if the marsupials were not altogether exterminated, they would be checked to such an extent that the endowment would be very small indeed. It was desirable, in his opinion, to allow the Act to go on, as, if it were not, there would be no compulsion at all in regard to the destruction of marsupials, and he knew that a number of people neglected their interests and would not destroy them.

The PREMIER: The Act will remain in force until the end of next session.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was aware of that; but was there no intention on the part of the Government to renew the Act this year as had hitherto been done from year to year? If it were left until next year, it was possible that by accident it might be passed by. If the Government were willing to pass it he did not think there would be much discussion upon it, more particularly as it was pointed out that in future the cost out of the consolidated revenue would be so much less.

The PREMIER said the Government did not propose to bring in a Bill this session to renew the Act. If they dealt with the subject at all, it would be in the direction of removing the endowment, and leaving the Act in force without it. They would be very glad to do that and make the Act perpetual. But they did not propose to take any other action.

Mr. NELSON said that although £2,310 was voted for the item before them last year, £2,460 was paid.

The PREMIER said the amounts did not always come in exactly with the financial year. He remembered, in comparing the statements of expenditure of different years, he found that the amounts varied some £50 or £60. The total amount in three years, he believed, was not more than three times the amount before them.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the sum of £1,039 be voted for salaries and contingencies, Executive Council.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he hoped the hon. gentleman would not press the vote then. There would be a great deal of discussion in reference to the salary of the Premier's private secretary, and it was getting late.

The PREMIER: Would it not be as well to initiate the discussion now?

Mr. MOREHEAD said they might as well wait and start fresh at it.

The PREMIER said he did not think there was any necessity for adjourning. If any hon. member had anything to say about the private secretary let him say it.

Mr. MOREHEAD moved that the items be taken seriatim.

Question—That the items be taken seriatim—put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 14.

Messrs. Black, Stevenson, Nelson, Morehead, Pattison, McWhannell, Palmer, Philp, Norton, Adams, Hamilton, Murphy, Chubb, and Donaldson.

NOES, 23.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Rutledge, Moreton, Jordan, W. Brookes, Morgan, Isambert, Buckland, White, Bailey, Wakefield, Aland, Salkeld, Sheridan, Foxton, Dutton, Kates, Wallace, Bulcock, Grimes, Macfarlane, McMaster, and S. W. Brooks.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did think that, after the want of knowledge the Colonial Treasurer had shown that evening, the hon. gentleman would be prepared to move the Chairman out of the chair, in order that he might be able to come down at the next sitting of the Committee in a position to inform them what had become of that sum of £28,750. The hon. gentleman admitted that he did not know what had become of it, and that he did not know whether the action taken with regard to it was legal or illegal. He (Mr. Morehead) thought that when the Colonial Treasurer had shown such a want of knowledge on a most important item he should move the Chairman out of the chair, and defer the further consideration of the Estimates, in order that he might be able to obtain such information as would satisfy the Committee. That was a very

good reason why they should not proceed any further with the Estimates that evening. It was quite evident that the hon. gentleman was in the dark as to some very important items.

Mr. W. BROOKES said he had never seen such a flagrant want of logic in his life as that just exhibited by the leader of the Opposition. The Committee were asked to vote a sum of £1,039 for salaries and contingencies for the Executive Council, and—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Speak out!

Mr. W. BROOKES said it would give him great pleasure to repeat it. He was in no hurry to go home. He felt more inclined than he did at 6 o'clock to fight that matter out. The more inconsequent the leader of the Opposition became, the more determined was he (Mr. Brookes) to see it through. What he was saying was that he did not see any connection whatever between what the hon. gentleman last said and the proposal before the Committee. For goodness' sake let them keep to the question!

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was keeping to the question. He could not give the hon. member intelligence if God Almighty had failed to do it. He (Mr. Morehead) had given very good reason why the Chairman should leave the chair, and that was that the Colonial Treasurer did not understand his Estimates. The hon. gentleman had shown that already. He would now ask the hon. gentleman whether the sum paid last year under the vote before the Committee was not £1,089 instead of £1,039 as set down in the Estimates? Was that extra £50 paid on the order of the Governor in Council? Had they Estimates of the Governor in Council as well as of that Committee? Would the hon. gentleman tell them why the sum of £1,089 was paid instead of £1,039?

The PREMIER said it was not unusual that there should be a small excess of expenditure over the amount voted, and in that account the excess was £50.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was certainly usual for the Treasurer for the time being to explain to the Committee any difference of that kind, and to tell them what was the actual sum expended during the last twelve months.

The PREMIER said that was not the practice. It never had been the practice for the Minister in charge of the Estimates to give such information unless there was a very serious discrepancy.

Mr. STEVENSON said he could not understand the action of the Premier. The other day he invited hon. members to discuss the question relating to the private secretary to the Prime Minister when the Estimates came on, and now the hon. gentleman refused to discuss the items *seriatim*.

The PREMIER: No, I do not.

Mr. STEVENSON said it appeared so from the division which had just taken place. The Premier could not know what he was talking about if he denied that he refused to discuss the item. He (Mr. Stevenson) thought it was very late to begin to discuss that item, because he knew that there was a great deal to be said. He thought the Chairman ought to leave the chair, and he would move that he leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 13.

Messrs. Morehead, McWhannell, Nelson, Palmer, Philp, Donaldson, Murphy, Adams, Stevenson, Black, Pattison, Hamilton, and Norton.

NOES, 21.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. W. Brookes, Rutledge, Salkeld, Morgan, Moreton, Jordan, Sheridan, Dutton, Isambert, S. W. Brooks, White, Wakefield, Wallace, Aland, McMaster, Foxton, Macfarlane, Grimes, Bailey, and Bulcock.

Question resolved in the negative.

Mr. NORTON said he would suggest to the Chief Secretary that they might as well adjourn now. The hon. gentleman had beaten them on division, and that ought to satisfy him. He (Mr. Norton) was afraid the Committee was getting a bit cranky.

Mr. W. BROOKES: No.

Mr. NORTON said he knew the junior member for North Brisbane was.

Mr. W. BROOKES: He has been for a long while.

Mr. NORTON said that was the chronic state of the hon. gentleman. He had always noticed that when the Committee did get into such a humour that it was not disposed to do business, business was not done.

The PREMIER: I do not see any disinclination to do business.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman had been asked to adjourn.

The PREMIER: And there has been no reason whatever given.

Mr. NORTON said he would be very glad to give a reason. There was likely to be a very considerable amount of discussion in connection with the matter which had cropped up the other day.

The PREMIER: Let us have it.

Mr. NORTON said he referred to the employment of the Premier's private secretary as an electioneering agent. Even if they began the discussion they were not likely to finish it that night, and they might just as well begin when the Committee met again and have it out. Then he thought they would meet without feeling that they had been beaten. They would meet fresh, and the matter would be discussed on its merits. He did not make the suggestion for the sake of opposition, but he made a friendly suggestion that the adjournment should now take place and the matter be discussed on a future day.

The PREMIER said he did not see any reason for adjourning. There was not much to be said. He had very little to say. Let hon. members say out what they had to say. There could not be very many who meant to speak on the question. He had nothing to say at all. He had said on a former occasion what he conceived the functions of a private secretary to be, and if any hon. members could throw any new light upon the question he was quite willing to listen to their arguments. The objections which had been taken appeared to him to be simply childish.

Mr. NORTON said he could assure the hon. gentleman that several hon. members intended most seriously to take the matter up.

The PREMIER: Do it now!

Mr. NORTON: We are a little bit ruffled now, and—

Mr. McMASTER: We will cool you down on this side.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman knew that when the Committee took a wrong-headed notion, if he liked to call it that, business was never done, and it was just as well to do as they had done on similar occasions—adjourn early—when there had been a chance of having a long debate without any good results. It would be much better to resume business when any little unpleasantness which might have occurred had worn off and been forgotten.

The PREMIER: Say out what you have to say by all means. There is no objection to saying it.

Mr. STEVENSON said the Premier had told them he had nothing to say. The hon. gentleman seemed to fancy he not only represented the other side, but the Opposition also, but he would remind the hon. gentleman that although he was the one man on the Government side he did not represent the Opposition. The Opposition had something to say on the subject.

The PREMIER: And I am only asking you to say it.

Mr. STEVENSON said they were not prepared to say it then. The hon. member on Tuesday invited them to discuss the matter when the Estimates came on, and now he was not prepared to let them discuss it. It had reached the hour at which the House had usually adjourned during the present session, and the hon. gentleman wanted the vote rushed on simply because he saw the Opposition side was not properly represented that night. The Opposition were not prepared to discuss the question fully that night, and it required to be discussed at some length. The hon. gentleman need not think he was going to push the vote through, because he was not, and he would advise the hon. gentleman to move the Chairman out of the chair.

The PREMIER said was he to understand that the hon. member on the other side who led the Opposition meant to say that he intended deliberately to obstruct the business that night?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Who says so?

The PREMIER said that was what was said by the hon. member who had just sat down, and who was generally supposed to be in the confidence of the leader of the Opposition. Did the hon. leader of the Opposition mean to say that he took up that position?

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had given reasons before why he thought they should adjourn, and he could give other reasons. Mr. Macrossan, the hon. member for Townsville, who held a strong opinion upon the question, had left the House at a fairly late hour. It was not believed that any great progress would be made with Supply that night, and at one time it was a question whether they would get to Supply at all that evening, and many members went away with the belief that it would be merely a *pro forma* going into Supply, and that after the first salaries were passed the House would adjourn. There could be no doubt that the vote would be carried, but they did not want to discuss the question, which was a fairly large one, at that late hour. It was not the intention of the Opposition to obstruct the Estimates, as they wished to get them through as soon as might be, and were as anxious as the hon. member at the head of the Government to get through the business, and let the appeal to the constituencies come on as quickly as possible. If the debate which was initiated the other evening was postponed, he could promise the hon. gentleman there would be no obstruction to the vote; and all they asked was that time should be given for a fuller consideration of the question, and before a fuller Committee than they had now. The Opposition considered the question a large one, and, holding those views, he thought they were not asking too much when they asked the Premier to move the Chairman out of the chair, and, as the hon. member for Port Curtis said, start afresh on the subject when they next went into Committee of Supply.

The PREMIER said he was certainly wondering at the tactics pursued by the hon. members of the Opposition. He understood the hon. member who led the Opposition to distinctly say now that he did not wish to obstruct.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I only want additional discussion of the question.

The PREMIER said he had no desire to prevent full discussion upon anything. His experience had been that to prevent a full discussion at any time was only to bottle up mischief. He could not help thinking that it was the intention of the Opposition to obstruct when he noticed the unreasonable motions which were made just now. As he had said, he did not wish to prevent the discussion upon the subject, and would therefore move that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and, on the motion of the PREMIER, the Committee obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that the House do now adjourn. On Tuesday, after the formal business, the Government propose to take, first, the Fisheries Bill—I understand a good many members are anxious that should be gone on with. We will take the second reading of that Bill first on Tuesday; after that the resumption of the debate upon the Local Administration Bill will be taken, and, if there should be time after that, Supply will stand next on the paper.

Question put and passed.

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