

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 26 OCTOBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 26 October, 1887.

Question without Notice—Melbourne Exhibition.—
Question.—Messages from the Governor—Assent to Bills.—Evacuation by France of the New Hebrides.—
Formal Motions.—Maryborough and Urangan Railway Act Amendment Bill—first reading.—Constitution Act Amendment Bill—second reading.—
Electoral Districts Bill—report from committee.—
Supply.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

MELBOURNE EXHIBITION.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—I would like to ask the Premier the following questions without notice:—1. If the Government intend to take any steps to procure the official representation of this colony at the forthcoming Victorian Exhibition? 2. If they intend to appoint a commission to take charge of and forward Queensland exhibits to that Exhibition?

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) replied: The matter is still under the consideration of the Government. It was considered in Cabinet this morning, but no definite conclusion was arrived at.

QUESTION.

The HON. G. THORN asked the Premier—

If it is the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill during the present Parliament to make provision for the better representation of the people in the Legislative Council?

The PREMIER replied—
No.

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of messages from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that His Excellency had, on behalf of Her Majesty, assented to the following Bills:—(1) A Bill to make better provision for regulating the fisheries in Queensland waters; (2) A Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to local government outside the boundaries of municipalities.

EVACUATION BY FRANCE OF THE NEW HEBRIDES.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have the honour to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor has received a communication from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, informing him that a convention has been signed with France respecting the New Hebrides, by which France undertakes to evacuate those islands within four months.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By the PREMIER—

That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend an Act of the Governor and Legislative Council of New South Wales, passed in the thirteenth year of Her Majesty's reign and numbered 27.

By the PREMIER—

That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to authorise the appropriation, towards the construction of a line of railway from Normanton to the Croydon Gold Fields,

of a sufficient part of the sum of £500,000, authorised by the Government Loan Act of 1884 to be raised for the construction of a line of railway from Cloncurry to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

By the HON. J. M. MACROSSAN—

That there be laid on the table of the House copies of all minutes, correspondence, and reports received since, or omitted from, the return ordered by this House on the 6th September last, regarding Gold Mining Leases 960, 981, 983, Charters Towers Gold Field.

By Mr. FOXTON—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill to amend the Maryborough and Urangan Railway Act.

Question put and passed.

MARYBOROUGH AND URANGAN RAILWAY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

Mr. FOXTON moved that this Bill be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—One of the measures which the Government brought in in 1884 was a Bill to shorten the duration of parliaments, and the Government have been consistent in their belief that the present duration of our parliaments is too long. I do not think it necessary to go at length into the subject at the present time. In 1884 the Bill proposing to shorten the duration of parliaments to three years was carried on the second reading by a majority of 26 to 13. In committee it was practically obstructed, not because the House objected to the Bill, but because some hon. members wanted to make it apply to the present Parliament. The Government objected to make it apply to the present Parliament, and for this reason, which was then clearly stated: that if that were done this Parliament would come to an end at the end of last year, just after the census was taken. It was pointed out then that it was necessary and right that Parliament should, in the session of 1887, make provision for a redistribution of the electorates, and if a dissolution took place in 1886 the Parliament meeting this year would not be likely to proceed with a Bill the adoption of which would effect its own destruction. So that it would have had the effect of preventing a Redistribution Bill from becoming law for certainly two years from the present time. Those reasons appeared to the Government to be unanswerable, and I think the events which have followed have shown there were many sound reasons why this Parliament should not be shortened. By the Bill as now framed it is proposed to shorten the duration of parliaments to four years. I am disposed to think myself that possibly three years may be rather too short. Of course any fixed time is arbitrary, and there is no particular magic in a short period. What must be considered chiefly is the circumstances of the colony. I think we have had in this colony only two Parliaments that have lasted for five years—one beginning in 1874, and the other in 1879. Both these Parliaments met in January, and I have no hesitation in saying that I think both sat too long.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Why did you not shorten the first?

The PREMIER: I was not responsible; but I know that during the last session of that Parliament I thought every day we remained in power would keep us two days out afterwards. No doubt we remained in office too long at that time.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : It did not keep you two days longer out.

The PREMIER : I think it did. I think if we had gone out sooner we should have come back sooner. What we have to do now with is the general question, and not with the probable duration of any parliamentary party or combination. It is often said that in the first session parliament does not get into working order. But that is not always the case, though it is sometimes the case to some extent. It is also said that in the next session parliament does good work, and that in the last session members are preparing for the dissolution. That would only leave one year, under a system of triennial parliaments, available for solid work. I think that is an exaggerated idea. I have referred to the Parliament that began in 1874, and I think also that the last Parliament sat too long. As a matter of fact, the last Parliament did no work in their last session. The Government simply met the House and were defeated. When they prorogued the House at the close of the previous session they knew they would be defeated when they next met Parliament, so that they in effect retained office for twelve months after they were defeated. On a previous occasion I gave some examples of the duration of parliaments in other countries. I am not now going into the history of the reasons why parliaments last for seven years in England. We ought all to know that, if we do not. Four years is not at all an uncommon period for the duration of parliament. I am quoting now from my own speech in 1884, or rather refreshing my memory from it, because, of course, I have no doubt the facts are there correctly stated. In Belgium the duration of parliament is four years, but half the members go out every two years, and it is the same in the Netherlands. In France the duration of parliament is four years, and in Denmark and Prussia three years; in Italy it is for five years, and that is the only European country in which that is the case. In Portugal it is four years, and in Sweden, Norway, and Switzerland it is three years. In the Australian colonies the duration of parliaments is three years, with the exception of Queensland and Tasmania, and I think Western Australia, but we do not count that. At the Cape of Good Hope and in Canada the term is five years. I think five years is too long for the mandate to any government to run, and I think before five years they should obtain a fresh mandate or lose it, as the case may be. I think I need not go into the question at greater length. Of course a measure of this kind passed this session cannot apply to the present Parliament, because if it did this Parliament would cease to exist, without doing any more work, immediately upon the Bill becoming law. I think this measure may be fittingly passed this session, when the Electoral Districts Bill is practically passed in this House. I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said : Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. gentleman is slightly in error in his statements as to the reason why the previous Bill did not pass when introduced in the session of 1884. It was not solely because the Bill would refer to the present Parliament. There was a very strong feeling against the shortening of the duration of parliament, and that feeling exists still so far as I am concerned. I believe four years is one-fourth better than three years, but I think five years a better period still. In England, where the duration of parliament is seven years, it seldom lives out the seven years, and the duration of parliament there is generally five years. The duration of parliaments in Queensland has not usually been anything like

five years, or four years. There is, therefore, nothing at all in that contention of the hon. gentleman so far as it goes. Then as to parliament being renewed. Parliament is here being renewed at almost every period of its existence. There are continually by-elections going on, by which parliament is, to a great extent, renewed, though, of course, there is not on that account a fresh mandate given to parliament or to the Ministry. There may be something in that contention; but there is nothing in the contention as to the term of the duration of parliament. I believe five years is better than four, and I believe four years is certainly better than three. It is quite true that a new parliament in its first session does very little work—hon. members who have been in several parliaments must know that—and the last year of parliament is certainly more or less devoted to electioneering. I think that this year it has been less so than I have observed in any previous parliament. Nevertheless it is the fact; so that a four-years parliament only gives two years' solid work, while a five-years parliament, under the same circumstances, would give three years' solid work, with men accustomed to the work of legislation. I think it is rather unfortunate that the Premier should have kept this Bill until nearly the end of the session, when so many members have gone away—members who were opposed to the shortening of parliaments, and would certainly have taken an active part in opposing this Bill. I certainly do not agree with the Bill in any respect. I believe in a five-years parliament, and I think it is an unwise thing to attempt to shorten it, seeing that it has worked so well hitherto. I am rather surprised at the Premier changing his mind so quickly. In 1884 he seemed to be determined upon a triennial parliament, but now that this Parliament has lived four years, he has added one more year in the Bill; and if the Parliament had lived on till the end of next year, as it probably would have done only for the mess the finances have got into, the hon. gentleman would not have said a word about the shortening of Parliament, but would have allowed the 29th session of the Constitution Act to remain in force without attempting to repeal it.

Mr. W. BROOKES said : Mr. Speaker,—I could have wished that the hon. member for Townsville had been able to advance better reasons than he has given for dissenting from the remarks of the Premier. I do not understand what he said last about the Premier's reasons for altering the period proposed from three years to four, and about the Premier not bringing in the Bill at all had this Parliament lasted five years. I do not think that is arguing up to the level of the intelligence of this House. Now, there is a very great deal to be said in favour of short parliaments. Hon. members will remember that there has been a very intelligent and strong agitation in England for annual parliaments.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : There was; not now.

Mr. W. BROOKES : I will admit at once that the demand for annual parliaments is never heard now, but it is sufficient for my present purpose to point out that there has been a demand for annual parliaments. The present duration of seven years in the British House of Commons works badly. It is part and parcel of the old system of government by the few, and that system has been gradually corroding away. The hon. member for Townsville is far better informed on these matters than I am, and he will know very well that, however it may be disliked, the desire for a change has taken definite shape in successive lowerings of the

franchise. Now, all these are steps to the result which will certainly come, when there will be an English House of Commons with not only shorter parliaments, but payment of members as well. Now, we know very well that in such a colony as Queensland five years, to speak moderately, is quite equal to ten years in England.

Mr. S. W. BROOKES: I do not think so now.

Mr. W. BROOKES: Well, I am afraid the hon. member for Fortitude Valley is one of those who stand by and let the stream go past, and fear that it is going to destruction. I do not think so. I admit that there are many people in England, such as dukes for instance, who think that matters are going a great deal too fast; but I do not pay much attention to them. Now, I certainly think that in the currency of five years in the colony of Queensland there is sufficient time for the parliament to get quite out of touch and out of political contact with the people; and I think it very desirable that, if anything can be done to remedy that want of common feeling between this Assembly and the great bulk of the people, it should be done. I can conceive no better or more prudent step than to bring in this Bill, shortening the duration of parliaments by one year. So far from agreeing with the hon. member for Townsville, I think the Premier deserves credit for having split the difference in making the term in this Bill four years. I always believed that we should have a triennial parliament, and I believe the reason which the Premier assigned, and which he read from *Hansard*, will be sufficient, not only for him, but for the majority of members of this House. The hon. gentleman has spoken of this House as being practically renewed during the course of its existence. Now, that is politically true only to a very limited extent. By-elections certainly take place, but I do not think it will be said that they materially alter the structure of the Assembly; it generally ends as it began. I have noticed that it generally ends in this way—and I regard it as one of the evils of five-year parliaments—that when the Ministry is defeated, it is not only defeated, but is very much out of keeping with the present tone of public feeling, and retires, not only discomfited, but somewhat out of credit. Now, I do not think that ought to be the case, and I do not think it would be the case if we had shorter parliaments. Why, when I come to think of the small number of people in Queensland, and when I come to think that we have two parties in this House, I sometimes wonder if there is any hon. member of this House who could really define any essential distinction between this side and that.

The PREMIER: Oh!

Mr. W. BROOKES: I only just state that as my opinion. I hope it will not lead to very much discussion; it is just a kind of glove thrown down which anyone may take up if he chooses. I think four years will be found a convenient and practical term, and that the adoption of that instead of five years as the period for the duration of parliaments will be followed by a great many advantages which we do not enjoy now. We need not be afraid of shortening the duration of parliament by one year. I think we should be very well pleased that we have not triennial parliaments proposed instead of four-years parliaments, and I am certain this Bill will commend itself to the judgment of people outside the House.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member who has just sat down stated that one of his objections to quinquennial parliaments is that parliament is apt to get out of touch with the constituencies if it remains for that length of

time in existence. This Parliament has sat just about four years, and if any hon. member will look round the Chamber at the present time he will, I believe, find that out of the thirty-six members in the House nine have been elected since the last general election. That is about one-fourth, and that is a very good proportion for renewal. There are also several members absent who have been re-elected since the last general election, and I believe that the proportion of renewal on the whole is about equal to that of those now sitting in the House. I can scarcely think that the Premier has shown that he had much sincerity before when he introduced the Triennial Parliaments Bill. If he had, why does he not introduce a similar measure on the present occasion, especially as he stated at that time that he rather favoured the idea of annual parliaments?

The PREMIER: I do not remember saying that.

Mr. PALMER: I can remember the hon. gentleman saying it very well. He stated that there was something to be said in favour of parliaments being elected every year. The hon. gentleman was then in favour of triennial parliaments so long as the measure did not apply to the present Parliament; he thought it would be a very good thing for all future parliaments. He stated that the life of all parliaments in Queensland had been less than five years, with the exception of two. The rule has been that our parliaments have lived less than five, and less than four years; their average duration has been about three years. I therefore think that we may very well leave the Constitution Act as it is. We have had such a lot of tinkering of Acts since this Parliament was elected that it should be a warning to the House to abstain from such non-effective legislation. When this Parliament is over we shall have added to the Statute-book of the colony nearly 150 Acts of Parliament. A great many of these have been amending Acts, and these again have been amended by other Acts. In fact, during the whole session we have been passing Acts which were amendments and re-amendments of previously existing Acts. There seems to be no end to these amendments. I do not think, so far as legislation is concerned, that this Parliament has a great deal to congratulate itself upon, and as to shortening the duration of future parliaments I have heard no desire expressed by the people for triennial or four-years parliaments. I think a five-years parliament, in the existing state of things, is quite good enough.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sorry I was absent at the time the Premier moved the second reading of this Bill, as I should like to have heard what the hon. gentleman had to say on the subject—not that I suppose it differed very materially from what he said on the previous occasion when he proposed a Triennial Parliaments Bill. But there are altered circumstances, which I think require more than a casual explanation. The hon. gentleman professed on a former occasion to believe in the principle of triennial parliaments, and, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Burke, when he spoke on this matter before, he said he was rather inclined to favour the principle that members should be elected every year. The hon. gentleman did not seem to think it was a feasible thing that they should be elected annually, but he rather inclined to the principle. If he had adhered to the triennial parliaments proposal, I could have understood that there was a principle at stake in which he believed. But he has abandoned that proposal, and the present Parliament having existed for four years, and he himself having

been in the position of the leader of Parliament for that time, I suppose he looks upon that as a model period for which parliaments should be elected. Surely some better reason should be given for arriving at the conclusion that four years is the proper term for all parliaments. I daresay it is very desirable—in fact, I am sure it is desirable—that the present Parliament should be dissolved as soon as possible. Most hon. members are, I think, of that opinion. At the same time it is quite within the hon. gentleman's province to bring about a dissolution as soon as he likes. This Bill distinctly aims at the opponents of the Government; it aims at those who differ in opinion from the Government. The hon. gentleman must admit that at any time when in power he could bring about a dissolution of Parliament at the end of two, three, or four years, or whatever time he thought proper; but he wishes to impose a restriction upon others which he does not wish to apply to himself. Of course if this Bill pass in its present form it will apply to all future parliaments; but we have not forgotten what the proposal was when the hon. gentleman first came into power, with regard to the duration of parliaments. Then he had the audacity to propose that a Triennial Parliaments Bill should be passed, but that it should not apply to the present Parliament. I think this is one of the most remarkable things that has ever been done in this House.

The PREMIER: I gave very good reasons for it, and repeated them again this afternoon.

Mr. NORTON: If very good reasons were proposed I did not hear them, and I do not think very good reasons are reported in *Hansard*. I remember what took place then. It struck me as very objectionable that the hon. gentleman should retain office as long as he reasonably could, and that when his predecessors came into power at the time popular feeling had turned against him they should not have a chance of holding office as long as he has done without going before the people. The affair is a piece of mere political—I will not say trickery, but a piece of mere political shuffling; and I do not think the hon. gentleman does himself any credit in going on with this Bill now. When he came into office and proposed a scheme for triennial parliaments, he professed that the principle was supported by the country. He does not adhere to that principle; but now, in this defunct Parliament, and with, I hope, a nearly defunct Government, the hon. gentleman comes forward and says: "Oh! we have reigned our time; let us make it four years for our successors." It looks very mean indeed, and I feel sorry that the hon. gentleman has thought it necessary to go on with this measure. I am opposed to the hon. gentleman in politics—always have been, and probably always shall be—but I do give him credit for a great deal of good that he has done, and I am only sorry that he has blemished his high reputation by bringing in a trumpery Bill of this kind.

The PREMIER: By keeping his word.

Mr. NORTON: I am not aware that the hon. gentleman ever pledged his word to bring in a Bill for making the duration of parliament four years. If he gave his word at all—of which I am not aware—it was to bring in a Bill for making parliaments triennial. I have always been opposed to these triennial parliament Bills, and I still oppose them, not because of what I have referred to now, but because I think there is a principle involved, and I believe in the principle which makes the duration of parliament five years. The junior member for North Brisbane, speaking just now, said it was quite possible that

a member after he had been elected for a certain time get out of touch with his constituents. Some members are never in touch with their constituents, and it is the fault of the constituents if they choose to elect members who do not occasionally go before them and explain their actions during the time they have held a seat. One argument in favour of the five-years system is that new members who are returned to Parliament require a certain time before they can get properly into harness; they need a certain amount of seasoning before they begin to be really useful members, in some cases; and it is only fair to give them a sufficient time to develop the abilities they have in them and to let them show that ability to the country. Then, when they do go before their constituents, after a term of three or four years, their constituents are able to judge what manner of men they are whom they have returned to represent them in Parliament. It may be said that old members get sometimes out of touch with their constituents. No doubt sometimes they do, but if they do it is very much the fault of the constituents themselves, because they are men who have been already tried; their principles and characters are known, and their actions in the House are known, and it is by their acts that they must be judged. If constituencies are not guided by that principle, but simply return them on the strength of some temporary popular excitement, they themselves are to blame, and must put up with the consequences. A public man who has held a seat in parliament for a number of years ought to be so well known that the electors should know whether he is a fit man to represent them or not, and if elected he will no doubt represent them faithfully during the whole term of the Parliament, whether it be three, four, or five years. New members require time to accustom themselves to the forms of the House before they attempt to make a display, and to become acquainted with those forms is about the wisest thing a new member can do. They would then be all the more able to work up to a recognised position in the House; but very few indeed would be the opportunities of doing that when the tenure of a seat is three years. Old members, as I have explained, stand upon a different footing, their previous parliamentary life being sufficiently well known to all the electors to enable them to judge what their future conduct in the House will be. I confess I see nothing in favour of this shortened term. If the hon. gentleman had adhered to the triennial system, I should have felt less disposition to oppose the measure than I do now, because I should at least have had the satisfaction of believing that his action was perfectly consistent with his former action in this matter. But what are we to think of a Bill which simply shortens the duration of parliament by one year? During the entire history of Queensland only one Parliament has sat for the full term of five years.

The PREMIER: Two; and they were both "shocking examples."

Mr. NORTON: And the present Parliament, which has only sat for four years, is also a "shocking example," under the hon. gentleman's own management. I do not think the hon. gentleman is very much in earnest about this Bill. It may pass the second reading. If it does I hope he will be content. But let it stop at that, and do not attempt to pass such a measure through all its stages in a House that is about to expire. The next Parliament will come fresh from the constituencies, and the new members will know what the feeling of their constituents is on the subject. At present nothing is known. In a few cases the question was discussed at the last general election, but in the majority of cases it was regarded

with complete indifference. After the next general election some hon. members may be in a position to judge whether, in the opinion of their constituents, four years or five should be the duration of a parliament; but I believe it will be found that out of all the electorates in the colony one-half will not care a straw whether the term remains at five years, or is reduced to four years or three years. But I am sure of this: that the public mind has got so accustomed to the idea of maintaining the present period, or reducing it to three years, that they will not be at all disposed to accept the compromise making it four years. I do not believe in these compromises. A matter of principle ought not to be compromised. If the hon. gentleman believes in a three-years term let him stick to it on all occasions, through thick and thin. Then, even though we may disagree with him, we shall respect him for his consistency. But when he shuffles from one term to another, brings in a Triennial Parliament Bill, expresses an opinion that it would be a good thing to reduce the term to one year, then brings in a Bill to make the term four years, and when, in addition, in his first attempt to alter the law he wanted that Parliament, of which he was the head, to remain in existence for five years, making the shorter term applicable only to his successors; when we consider these things we cannot but wonder whether he has any heart in the subject at all. I do not think he has; and I think the best thing hon. members can do is to throw out the Bill on the second reading, and not waste the money of the country by spending so many extra guineas daily in discussing it for no purpose whatever. I do not think the Bill is intended to pass. I hope it will not. But, sir, I cannot help feeling that bringing this measure forward at a time when the hon. gentleman himself has told us that it is of very great importance to press on with the business of the country, is mere waste of time, and that it is not very much to the hon. gentleman's credit that he has gone on with the Bill to-day. Let us get on with some business that we feel is advancing the session towards its close; let us get on with the Estimates and work at them until 11 o'clock at night if the Premier chooses. There is a great deal of discussion to take place over some of the Estimates that have not yet come on, and a considerable amount of time will be required over them. I say, let us get on with some useful work, instead of wasting the time and the money of the country in going on with a Bill of this kind.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall certainly support the second reading of this Bill. I do not agree with the hon. member for Port Curtis that the Premier has shown any want of principle in introducing this compromise between three years and five. It was introduced in 1884, and I believe it would have been acceptable to a great majority of this Parliament and the constituencies also. The hon. member for Port Curtis says he does not believe in compromises. Why, sir, parliamentary government is made up entirely of a series of compromises; and as for the constituents treating this matter with indifference, I believe myself that the electors of the colony generally would be very glad indeed to see an election every three years.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Every twelve months.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I daresay, as an hon. member interjects, they would like to see one every twelve months, but I am certain that they would prefer to see it every three years to the present system. With regard to the one-year business, I do not believe that representatives

would be any the worse for it. There would not be that keen competition for seats, and I think only qualified men who were likely to be elected, and more especially only disinterested men who would only come into this House from purely patriotic motives, would present themselves if they had to go through the ordeal of appearing before their constituents every year. I see the greatest danger to parliament in corrupt and unscrupulous persons getting into power. I have seen enough of that kind of thing even in this very Assembly.

Mr. DONALDSON: All the members would have to be unscrupulous.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: The hon. member for Warrego says all the members would have to be unscrupulous. Well, a few of them might be unscrupulous and powerful enough to keep a corrupt and unscrupulous Ministry in power longer than they ought to be. They might find some blind followers, and a few strong, powerful supporters whom they feed with a sort of bribes and baits occasionally. The danger of that, I maintain, exists in all democratic colonies or countries. There are people who, it is perfectly evident to me, come into these assemblies not for the purpose of advancing the good of the people, but for the sake of feathering their own nests; and I think the sooner and the oftener that members have to go before their constituents the better. The hon. member for Port Curtis says it takes two years for a member to gain a footing in this House—to learn the business and show what he is worth. I say nothing of the kind.

Mr. DONALDSON: You evidently have not learned it yet.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I have learned something about it. I have either shown what I am worth or what I am not worth, and I have exposed a good many of the frauds committed by unscrupulous and corrupt members of the House since I have been in it. Even during the first year a member is in this House, the majority will soon recognise his worth or his worthlessness. It does not take three years to show whether a man is good for anything or nothing. I think myself that the country will be perfectly satisfied to accept the compromise of a four-years parliament. The members of the Opposition say the sooner we go to the country the better. Perhaps they think they have an immediate chance of coming into power. I do not know whether they have or not, but I believe there will be very great changes in the constitution of this House after the next election. The hon. member for North Brisbane, Mr. Brookes, said he did not see any difference between the two sides of the House. Well, I do see a great deal of difference between them. All I am anxious to see is a parliament—and a government more especially—constituted of the most able and honest men who are returned from the constituencies. That is the combination I wish to see governing the country. We have men here who are able and hardly honest, and others who are honest and not able. All that I am anxious to see is a combination of men able and honest, holding the reins of power and governing this colony. For my own part I do not care whether they call themselves Liberals or Conservatives, or anything else, but a coalition of that kind is necessary for the good government of this colony, and I trust something of the kind will be found in the next Parliament.

The HON. G. THORN said: Mr. Speaker,—Just a few words before the question is put. I must say first of all that I do not see any great necessity for this measure providing for a four-years parliament, seeing that this Parliament will have lasted more than four years before it is

closed. I do not believe it is possible to get matters ready for the next election within six months, consequently we shall not have a dissolution for six months, so that this Parliament will have lasted then four years and a-half; and if we apply the same rule to the next Parliament as to this the Premier should make the next Parliament four years and a-half instead of four. My opinion is that no parliament should last longer than three years, especially with payment of members, or payment of their expenses. I think when the Premier passed the Payment of Members Expenses Bill he should have accompanied it with a measure for triennial parliaments, and have applied both measures to the present Parliament or the next. I think that should have been his course of procedure, instead of coming down in 1884 and proposing a Triennial Parliament Bill and applying it to the next Parliament and not to the present one; and a Members Expenses Bill, and applying it to the present Parliament. I can tell the Premier that the people out-of-doors are much more anxious to see an alteration in the constitution of the Legislative Council than they are for this four-years Parliament. I asked the Premier a question this afternoon with regard to the Legislative Council, and I think, myself, that now, when we are on the eve of a dissolution, he should have got his Postmaster-General to have introduced a Bill amending the Constitution, as far as that Chamber is concerned, by making it elective. There is a strong feeling out-of-doors in favour of an elective Council. I am strongly in favour of it myself, and I thought that now, even at the eleventh hour, the Premier would have come down with a measure to make that Chamber elective. I would point out that two places in the colony are specially favoured in that Chamber. The members are nearly all representatives of two places—about Toowoomba and about Brisbane. If anything is brought forward and passed here which does not concern them, we generally find that they pitch it out in another place. That has been the practice lately. I am not going into details, but hon. members of this House know very well what I allude to. I do think the time has arrived when the other Chamber should be made elective, and if the Premier had brought in a Bill for that purpose he would have made himself popular, the measure would have received the unanimous assent of this House, and hon. members of the other Chamber would readily have passed it. As I have said, I do not think there is any necessity for this measure, and I would prefer myself to see it kicked out, unless the Premier is prepared to alter the term to three years. In New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and New Zealand the term is three years, and I think we have been too long in assimilating the duration of our parliaments to theirs. I consider, myself, that we ought not to make our parliaments any longer than three years, more especially as we have payment of members' expenses. I had intended, and may do it yet, to bring in a Bill to repeal the Members Expenses Act. I do not at present see my way to do so, but I shall be inclined to do it unless the Premier is prepared, when we are in committee, to shorten the duration of parliaments to three years instead of the four years as now proposed.

Mr. KELLETT said : Mr. Speaker,—I intend to vote for the second reading of this Bill. When we were before our constituents one of the measures of the present Liberal party was a Triennial Parliaments Bill. That measure was brought in in 1884, and was not carried. Now it seems that the duration of parliaments is to be four instead of three years. I believe there is a great deal in what the last speaker said, that triennial parliaments

are more necessary now than we have payment of members' expenses than it was originally. I quite agree with that, because it may be said in some cases that hon. members are stopping here to get their two guineas a day. I do not think that is the case in many instances. As for the three-years parliaments, that was part of the Liberal party's programme at the general election, and although at that time I did not agree with it, I promised to vote for it. Now, as there is to be a compromise made and there are to be shorter parliaments than we have at present, I shall vote for the measure.

Mr. ALAND said : Mr. Speaker,—It appears to me that there are two measures upon which, whenever they are brought in, charges of insincerity are made against the Premier. One is the Members Expenses Bill and the other the Triennial Parliaments Bill. I know that whenever those Bills have been brought in he has been accused of insincerity, and now we have the Triennial Parliaments Bill again.

Mr. MOREHEAD : It is not a Triennial Parliaments Bill.

Mr. ALAND : Quadrennial parliaments, then. The principle is the same. As I was saying, whenever the Premier has brought in such a Bill he has been called half-hearted and insincere. Now, Mr. Speaker, when the Premier gets up and puts a little fire into what he says, he is told he is losing his temper, and when he speaks quietly he is told that he has no heart in what he says and is doing. So that I think it is really very hard for the hon. gentleman to please some of the gentlemen on the Opposition side of the House.

Mr. MOREHEAD : And sometimes on that side too.

Mr. ALAND : Well, I think that is one of the arguments in favour of shortening the duration of parliaments, because on this side of the House we were really a very happy family for the first two or three years that we were here. Now it is true there are signs of discontent, and it is possible that if Parliament had been dissolved last year we should have been back here again sitting just as we are and the Government would enjoy more of the confidence of their supporters than they may be doing now. I do not say the Government have not the confidence of their supporters, but there have been signs of disagreement on the Government side of the House. Now, I supported a Bill similar to this when it came before the House some five years ago. I will admit at once that it is not the same Bill that was brought in before, and I am rather sorry for it; I should have preferred to have seen the Premier bring in the Triennial Parliaments Bill—the same Bill that was before our constituents at the general election and advocated by us and approved of by them. I quite agree with the reasons the Premier has given for not making the Triennial Parliaments Bill applicable to the present Parliament. I thought the reasons he gave at the time, and which he has recapitulated this afternoon, were really sound reasons.

Mr. MOREHEAD : He made payment of members apply to the present Parliament.

Mr. ALAND : Yes, he did; and all the members of Parliament present have accepted that payment. I do not think there is one exception. I notice those members who have such a down upon this Members Expenses Act are generally present, even if they only remain for two or three minutes, and they take their money at the end of the month. Now, I think those hon. members who are so fond of running down the payment of members ought not to take the money. If it is such wicked money—if it is so badly earned—they

had better not take it. However, I shall support this Bill, and when it gets into committee I shall be glad if the Premier can see his way to alter the term from four to three years.

Mr. SALKELD said : Mr. Speaker,—I agree with the last speaker in nearly all he has said. I believe that the electors at the general election were pretty unanimous in favour of shortening the duration of parliaments. I certainly regret that the Premier has not brought in the Triennial Parliaments Bill, and if I thought I should carry it I should propose an amendment.

The PREMIER : I will support it if you do.

Mr. SALKELD : It has been contended that members are in a better position to know their work after they have been a session here than when they commence. There may be something in that, but I believe that as population increases, and more persons have the means of attending parliament, and attending to political matters, that difficulty will be got over. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Fassfern upon the subject of payment of members, I may say that as the present Act stands it never commanded complete approval from myself. I believe in the principle of payment of members, and not the payment of members' expenses, giving them so much per day. Those hon. members opposite who object to the payment of members may feel that they are not worth the money, and the best thing they can do under the circumstances is not to take it. I have no feelings of that kind, because I honestly do my duty to my constituents and the country generally, and I believe the labourer is worthy of his hire, whatever work he may be doing. I believe it would answer better to amend the present Act for the payment of members' expenses in such a way as to provide for the payment of members by a lump sum for the whole year. I suggest to the Premier that he might amend this Bill by making the duration of parliaments three years instead of four. I believe three years would be better than four, and four better than five. As to the statement that the country is not calling for this Bill, the country has had no opportunity of expressing an opinion upon it since the last general election, when it was distinctly called for ; and I believe that at the next general election the country will express the same opinion—that the duration of parliament should be shortened to three years.

Mr. CHUBB said : Mr. Speaker,—I am quite certain that when the question of triennial parliaments was before the constituencies at the last general election, it was understood by the electors who took any interest in the question that the change was to apply to the then coming Parliament, and none of the candidates who then addressed the electors on the subject drew the distinction of applying the principle to future parliaments, and the payment of members to the then coming Parliament. There is no doubt whatever that when the electors expressed their opinion in favour of triennial parliaments they intended that effect should be given to the principle at once. I have never been opposed to triennial parliaments, because I believe they are best. In England the duration of parliament was fixed at seven years and they have ever since been trying to bring it down to five years, but the Bills have never got to a second reading. Five years was thought a happy medium for this colony—the term in England being seven years, and in some of the other colonies three. I believe that if triennial parliaments are necessary, it is in such a case as exists in this colony, where we have payment of members, or where there is payment of members

in any shape. I always hitherto opposed the Bills brought in on this subject, because I thought the Government were actuated by insincerity. It is all very well to say this is done sincerely. It may be, but we know that the records of Parliament show that the Triennial Parliaments Bill was introduced in this House by the present leader of the House when he was in opposition, and to apply to the then Parliament.

Mr. ALAND : He agreed to alter that.

Mr. CHUBB : Objection was taken to that, and I am informed, though it is not recorded in *Hansard*, that he said he was willing to make it apply to future parliaments.

The PREMIER : Yes.

Mr. CHUBB : That measure was not carried, and when the hon. gentleman got the next opportunity to introduce a measure he wanted to apply it to future parliaments, and not to the then Parliament—

The PREMIER : To allow of time for the passing of a Redistribution Bill, as I have already said.

Mr. CHUBB : Now the hon. gentleman brings in a Bill to apply to the next Parliament, and to fix the duration of parliament at four years instead of three. The reason given why such a Bill should not apply to the existing Parliament is just as strong a reason why it should not apply to a future parliament ; and for this reason : The hon. gentleman has said, "We have no right to curtail our own existence as a parliament, because we were elected for five years."

The PREMIER : I never said anything of the kind.

Mr. CHUBB : I understood the hon. gentleman to have said that, and, at all events, that reason has been advanced from the other side of the House before to-day. That argument is just as strong why we should not interfere with the next Parliament. We are now practically moribund. We are dead ; our business is to pass the Estimates and go to the country. Instead of that it is proposed now that we should alter the duration of the next Parliament, although, possibly, we do not now represent the country. It is time for us to go for re-election, but the Premier in effect says, "Before we do that we will alter the Constitution by providing that the duration of parliaments shall be shortened." I could understand a proposal to make the term three years very well. That would be intelligent as a radical change from five to three, but from five to four is neither one thing nor the other. I shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but when it gets into committee I hope to see it so altered as to provide for triennial parliaments.

Mr. MURPHY said : Mr. Speaker,—I shall also support this Bill, because I am in favour of triennial parliaments. I hope, with the hon. member for Bowen, and with other members of the House, that when the Bill gets into committee it will be made a Triennial Parliaments Bill.

The PREMIER : I will support such an amendment.

Mr. MURPHY : I should be glad if the Premier would give the House the reasons for his change of mind on this question, because I think triennial parliaments would be better than the proposal contained in this Bill. In a new country like this, where the conditions of things change so very rapidly, three years is quite long enough for a parliament to last, because it is just as long as members can keep in touch with their constituents, and just as long as a Government can keep in touch with the country. Questions arise after a general election that are never thought of at the

time the parliament is returned. We may have to vote upon questions we never dreamt would arise when we were elected, and we may unwittingly vote altogether out of sympathy with our constituents, and it is therefore better that we should have triennial parliaments than parliament lasting for five or four years. I shall support the Bill in the hope that when it gets into committee the term will be altered from four to three years.

Mr. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—I regret the Government did not see their way to introduce a Triennial Parliaments Bill instead of this one, and I also regret I was not present to hear the reasons given by the Government for the introduction of this Bill instead of a Triennial Parliaments Bill. I would like to see this Bill so amended in committee as to make it a Triennial Parliaments Bill, because I am convinced, from my own observation, that three years is quite long enough for a parliament to exist in this or in any other new country. With regard to the statement made by one hon. member on the other side, that the reason why members on this side objected to payment of members was, perhaps, because they did not think themselves worthy of the two guineas a day, I might say that their reason might be very different. It might, for instance, be that, if there were no payment of members established, it might prevent the influx of many members of that unworthy class into the House. That might be one of the reasons. If this Bill go into committee—and I hope it will—and an amendment is proposed to alter it to a triennial Bill, I shall support it. If no amendment is proposed I shall support the Bill as it stands, as I consider it a step in the right direction. Four years is better than five, but I think that three years would be better than either.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—When the Triennial Parliaments Bill was before the House two or three years ago I supported it because I believed in the principle. I shall support this Bill, but if an amendment is proposed to make the term three years I shall support that, because I believe three years is the proper term. Hon. members may not be aware that of the five points of the Charter demanded by the English people many years ago, we have got all now but one, and that one is the one we are now contending for—triennial parliaments. We have vote by ballot, we have almost universal suffrage, we have payment of members, and we have no property qualification.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: "Annual parliaments" was the fifth.

Mr. MACFARLANE: Three years, at all events, is better than four. I do not know that I would be in favour of annual parliaments, but I do believe in three-years parliaments, more especially with payment of members. The hon. member for Port Curtis made a remark that no arguments had been given by the Premier in favour of short parliaments. The hon. member gave a very good argument himself for short parliaments. He said that a member was scarcely up to the mark during the first three years of his parliamentary life. Well, I think that if a member does not show whether he is good or bad during the first three years the sooner he goes to his constituents the better. I think three years is quite sufficient for any member of this House to declare both to the House and the country if he is a fit member to represent any constituency. I think that it is far better for a constituency to have an opportunity at least once in three years to redress any wrongs that may have arisen between themselves and their member. If they are satisfied

with the member they will very likely return him again, and if they are not satisfied they will have an opportunity of rejecting him. I think, therefore, that three years is much better than four, and I shall support an amendment to that effect when we get into committee.

Mr. FERGUSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I have always opposed the Triennial Parliaments Bill before, and I see no reason for altering my mind on this occasion, though it is not now a Triennial Bill. When I was before my constituents I was asked whether I was in favour of shortening parliaments and I told them I was not. If we have elections too often it disturbs business, and it is expensive to the country. Another reason is this: that when a Government passes a good measure it generally takes a year or two of administration to prove what it is worth. We saw the Divisional Boards Bill strongly opposed, and if the Government had gone out immediately after it passed, and it had been administered by those who opposed it, it would be quite different from what it is now. Another question that was opposed very strongly was the British-India Company's contract. If we had had only a triennial parliament then, and the Government that passed that measure had gone out, we know how the other Government would have treated it. For these reasons I consider it would be a great mistake to reduce the duration of parliaments below five years. Supposing the present Government went out now, and the Opposition went in, we know very well that a tide of prosperity would set in all over the colony, and it is far better that that should last for five years than three: that is another reason why I think the term should not be reduced. I think it would be better to leave it as it is. I am satisfied that the country would be better through it, and the Government would have more time to carry out their measures and more time to administer them. When new measures are passed, the Government must administer them for a year or two before the country knows whether they are good or bad. For those reasons I shall oppose the second reading.

Mr. SCOTT said: Mr. Speaker,—In the two Parliaments that lasted for five years the Assembly became demoralised during the fifth year because their time was nearly up, and I am quite sure that the same thing would take place in the last year of a four-years Parliament. In the short sessions before that the members were never in touch with their constituents, but during the long Parliaments they were in touch with their constituents. I can see no good at all that would arise from shortening the duration of parliaments, either to three or four years.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The Government have continuously during their term of office endeavoured to introduce a Bill for triennial parliaments, and I think they were bound to place the consideration of the changed term before the country at the present time. I must say that, having given considerable attention to the matter, my views in favour of a triennial parliament have considerably weakened. I think that though it has been frequently advocated, it would not be beneficial to the community, for this very obvious reason: In a new parliament the first session is necessarily employed in shaking down the members into their places and making them conversant with parliamentary procedure, and, as we have seen in all parliaments, the last session is generally employed in electioneering speeches and tactics; therefore in a triennial parliament there would be virtually only one year for solid work. I think that a shorter term than four years would be decidedly inadvisable at the present time. I was not aware that it was intended to press this matter

at this late period of the session, and when I saw it on the paper the question occurred to me whether it was wise for us to deal with it, or whether we should relegate it to the new parliament. At the same time, if we did relegate it to a new parliament, and if they passed any measure of the sort, they doubtless would make it prospective, so as not to affect themselves.

Mr. DONALDSON: Why?

Mr. DICKSON: I do not think the parliament would be likely to do anything to shorten its own life; we have seen instances like that before. The parliament would be jealous of interfering with its own existence, and would probably make the measure prospective for the next Parliament. Therefore, I think, if it is desirable that we should deal with the matter, that this removes the objection to our dealing with it in the present stage of this Parliament. I am inclined to favour four years as a compromise. I believe there is a desire on the part of the public that the duration of parliaments should be shortened, and I take it that four years is a fair compromise between three and five. I certainly would not vote for triennial parliaments after the reflection I have given to the subject, seeing as I do the disadvantage to the country of an unstable, uncertain term for Government. Nothing could be more injurious and prejudicial to the prospects of the country than for the reins of power to be held by a Government of ephemeral existence. A Government ought to have sufficient time to formulate and carry out measures of public utility, and should not always be menaced by an immediate election. I think we may learn wisdom from the great country of the west, the United States of America, which has adopted four years as the presidential term, and the period at which parties change in that country. The Senate has a six years' existence, and the House of Representatives has only two years; so that four is a happy mean between the two. At any rate, seeing that a desire has been expressed for a change, I think we may fairly agree to this measure and fix the duration of parliaments at four years. That would not in any way prevent a future parliament from reducing the term. I desire, however, to express my opinion at the present time, and to state, as I said before, that on reflection I have departed from the principle of triennial parliaments, as I believe it would introduce an element of instability and uncertainty in the politics of this country that would be very prejudicial indeed to the progress of the community.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not intend to detain the House at any length with the remarks I have to make on this Bill. I certainly intend to oppose the second reading of the measure, and I think any member who has fully considered the subject will say that it is what I may not unfairly term a gross impropriety for the Government to bring in such a measure as this under existing circumstances, not only as regards the Government, but also as regards this House. The hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, stated that it was much better that we should settle the matter than that it should be left to a succeeding parliament, adducing as an argument that a succeeding parliament was not likely to make any legislation of this nature applicable to itself, but that it would make it prospective in its operation. I say it is better that a succeeding parliament should make it prospective than that a dying House and a dying Government should alter the Constitution in the way proposed by the Government. On their own admission, the Government are a defeated

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Government, and only hold office on the sufferance of their supporters. Night after night they are in abject fear of another defeat; and for such a Government to propose a serious alteration in the Constitution Act, probably in the last few hours of their political existence, is unparalleled in the history of the Australian colonies. The Premier may laugh, but I say he cannot point to any precedent in the Australian colonies or Great Britain where the Government in its last days—in a state of absolute decay—has proposed a material change in the Constitution of the country. Holding these views I do not propose to discuss the question of shortening the duration of parliaments at the present time, but I promise the hon. gentleman that, so far as I am concerned, I shall give this measure an uncompromising opposition if it gets into committee. I shall do all I can to prevent a dying Parliament making a serious alteration in our Constitution, and I hope to receive very material support in the action that I, in concert with others, may take with regard to this Bill.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I believe that in America they have a term called "bunkum." That was invented in consequence of members of the House of Representatives devoting the whole of the last few months, or the last year of their existence as a house, to speeches entirely delivered to their constituents. There was no sincerity whatever about those speeches; they were delivered for the purpose of paving the way for re-election. It has always been looked upon as a particularly objectionable element even in that country, that members in the last year of their existence should, instead of settling down to some practical work, simply kill time by talking to their constituents outside the House. That is a waste of time, and has been called "bunkum." I am confident that we have a good deal of "bunkum" talked here and in other legislative assemblies in Australia during the last year of the existence of our parliaments. There is not nearly as much practical work done in the last year as there is in the early stage of parliament. It is only within the last few months that some of the ablest statesmen in the colonies have advocated the altering of the Constitution on the American basis, so that, when a Government comes into power, it may have security of office. Under their present Constitution they consider there is not sufficient time to enable a Government to pass all the measures they wish to pass and also to administer them; and it is, therefore, argued that it would be far better that a ministry should have the option of remaining in parliament the same as they have in America. There is a great deal of force in that argument, because at present if a Government does not come in with a certain following it is very likely that their best intentions will be frustrated. It is not the length of parliament, I think, that causes members to get out of touch with their constituents; it is the Government who bring forward what are thought to be obnoxious measures. The hon. member for Barcoo said just now that a member may unwittingly get out of touch with his constituents. That implies that if elections were more frequent he would trim his opinions to meet the views of his constituents. Such a proceeding would, I think, be unworthy any member of this House. If a member could not get in without doing that he is better out of the House. Why should members be sent into this House as voting machines? Should we not have the power to use our own judgment?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: We are not delegates,

Mr. DONALDSON : As the hon. member for Townsville very properly says, we are not delegates—we are sent here to exercise our own opinions. Certainly those opinions should, to a certain extent, be in harmony with the views of our constituents. At the same time I feel myself that if I was not in harmony with my constituents I would resign my seat rather than be a mere delegate in this House.

Mr. STEVENS : Is this more bunkum?

Mr. DONALDSON : No, it is not bunkum. I do not think there is any member in the House who uses more bunkum than the hon. member, or trims his vote more than he does. Therefore I am rather surprised that he should use the word "bunkum." The hon. member does it so palpably that it has often been mentioned in the Chamber when the hon. member is trimming. I for one am quite consistent in opposing the alteration of our present term. On a previous occasion when the question was before the House I opposed it, and I shall oppose it again on this occasion. If I thought the alteration would have any good effect I would not hesitate to vote for it. The Premier, I am sure, is just as insincere in his opinion about this Bill as any other member who has spoken in favour of it. Had he been sincere about it he could have passed it through the House long ago. Could he not have carried it in 1884? But what did we find? After one night's discussion, it was put at the bottom of the business-paper, and finally withdrawn.

The PREMIER : It was "stonewalled."

Mr. DONALDSON : It was not "stonewalled"; it was discussed.

The PREMIER : Until half-past 12 o'clock.

Mr. DONALDSON : After the discussion, the hon. gentleman got up in his place and reminded the House that majorities must rule. Next day the Bill was at the bottom of the paper, and we never heard another word about it from that day to this. He could have made it apply, as the Opposition wished, to the present Parliament.

The PREMIER : That would have prevented the introduction of a Redistribution Bill.

Mr. DONALDSON : They could both have been brought in together if desired. What would have prevented a Redistribution Bill being brought in two years ago?

The PREMIER : We had not the materials for it.

Mr. DONALDSON : Well, the only new materials we have since had for it have been the census returns; and it was owing to nearly every constituency having increased enormously since the census was taken—as stated by many hon. members—that the Government were induced to make several alterations in the proposition they originally brought before the House. However, I am digressing. I was saying that if the Government had been sincere there would have been no difficulty in passing this Bill years ago, and applying it to the present Parliament. The hon. member for Enoggera said he did not think the question should be remitted to the next Parliament to be dealt with. But if it is the wish of the constituencies they can exact promises from their candidates that they are in favour of triennial parliaments, and if it is their wish that it should apply to the next parliament, the candidates returned would pledge themselves to vote, not that the following, but that the then coming parliament should be triennial. It would then be put into force at once. The frequent occurrence of elections has a considerable disturbing influence. It is a dangerous thing, because it may possibly stop the tide of prosperity; and,

as an hon. member remarked just now, it is a considerable expense to candidates to go too frequently before the electors. The same remark applies to triennial parliaments that applies to those of longer duration—they are not in touch with the electors during the last year of their existence. There is more bunkum and less sincerity in members' speeches because they expect to go to the country very soon. Another thing to be taken into consideration is, that no member, however intelligent he may be, grasps the parliamentary procedure all in a day. I venture to say that among the new members elected at the last general election, and since, very few are really up in the forms of the House. There is the junior member for Cook, for instance; although he has been a member of a previous parliament, as well as this, yet there is no member of the House who makes greater mistakes in parliamentary procedure. That is probably because he does not give them sufficient attention and try to study them. It certainly takes a man more than three years to make himself acquainted with those forms, and it is not until after he has served his apprenticeship, as it were, that he becomes a really useful member, presuming that he has the ordinary amount of ability we expect to find in members of Parliament. It may be said that if a member does his duty for the first three years he will be elected for a second term. But he may not care to incur the expense of coming forward a second time; and it is a matter which weighs considerably with many candidates whether they are justified in incurring, not only the expense of the election, but the loss which falls upon themselves through being members. There are very few members of the House, notwithstanding the assertion of the junior member for Cook, who are not considerable losers by being here. Many have to neglect their private business and to come long distances to attend to their duties in this Chamber. That is another reason why it would be dangerous to reduce the period. Not only am I not in favour of the Bill, but I am not particularly pleased with the way it has been brought forward, in a moribund Parliament by a moribund Government. The question is one which should most certainly be remitted to the electors, and then we shall learn distinctly whether they are in favour of triennial parliaments or not. If I believed it to be the voice of the country, or of a large majority, that there should be triennial parliaments, I should be the last man to oppose it, notwithstanding that it is not my opinion that we should have parliaments of shorter duration than we have now.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. Jordan) said : Mr. Speaker,—I have much sympathy with the views expressed by hon. members on the other side about the duration of parliaments. My opinion is that five years is short enough, but I cannot blind myself to the fact that a very different opinion prevails outside. At the last general election I noticed a feeling was very strongly expressed by the candidates who addressed themselves to the question, that the duration of parliaments should be shortened. In deference to that feeling, the Government, of which I was not then a member, could not have done other than they did. At an early period of their existence they introduced a Bill to give effect to the general feeling expressed throughout the country, that the duration of Parliament should be reduced to three years. The hon. member for Warrego's memory must have failed him when he accuses the Premier of inconsistency in this matter, as he seems to do. It is well known that when the question was brought before the House two years ago the feeling of the House upon

it seemed generally to be opposed to the feeling of the country, and the question could not be carried. In this last session of this present Parliament I think it was distinctly the duty of the Chief Secretary to attempt to give effect to the general feeling of the country by introducing this Bill; and taking the two things together—the feeling of the country as elicited at the last general election, and the feeling of the House—I think the compromise now proposed is a very wise one. Safety very often lies in the middle way, as the old proverb tells us, and I believe that safety in this matter would be four years. Many years ago there was a very prevalent idea in the minds of the people of England in favour of triennial parliaments; but they never talked about annual parliaments that I can remember. In fact, triennial parliaments was one of the original five points of the Charter. There were to be manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, triennial parliaments, abolition of capital punishment, and doing away with the law of primogeniture. Those were the five points of the original Charter.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, they were. I have a distinct remembrance of them, and feel sure that I am right. There was no mention of payment of members, and I have no remembrance of there being any agitation at that time for annual parliaments. I am aware that there is a class in this colony who would especially like to have an election every three months; and if they could not get one every three months, they would like it every twelve months. There is also a class, more numerous, who have demanded and expect that they should have triennial parliaments; and in deference to the general feeling of the people, I think the present Government could not have done otherwise than they have done. I consider the present proposal a very wise one. Taking the expression of public opinion, together with the feeling manifested in this House, I think the Premier has done well by adopting the exact course he has done, and compromising the matter by proposing four years.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said: Mr. Speaker,—More than one hon. member has argued that there is a good reason for shortening the duration of parliament, in the fact that as matters change so rapidly in these new countries members lose touch with their constituents. It seems to me that that is not sound. I have an opinion that political matters are changing at an infinitely more rapid rate in the old country than they are here. I am thoroughly persuaded of that in my own mind. Indeed, from a comparison of the state of political feeling at home it seems to me that we in Australia have just settled down into an old-fashioned quiet style of political life, while at home the changes are very rapid and great, more rapid and far greater than any change that has taken place in Australian politics for many years. Reference has been made to the points of the Charter, and perhaps it is as well that that matter should be set right, as I find that more than one speaker was wrong. It seems that the points of the Charter were not five but six. These six were: Annual parliaments, universal suffrage, vote by ballot, abolition of property as a qualification for membership of the House of Commons, payment of members, and equal electoral districts. Annual parliaments I remember very distinctly. As a Nottingham man I was brought up in Chartism almost, and I knew I could not be wrong in my recollection of it. I am rather sorry that this Bill has been introduced, or any attempt made to shorten the duration of parliament. I shall oppose by my

vote any attempt to make the period three years. Some hon. members appear to be suffering from an epidemic on that point. I do not see what special virtue there is in three years. I hope no attempt will be made to reduce the term from four to three. I should prefer it remaining as it is—five years—and if a change is to be made in the way of shortening the duration of parliament, I hope we shall not go below four years.

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

On the motion of the PREMIER, the commitment of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE.

Upon the Order of the Day being called for the adoption of the report from the Committee of the whole House—

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—It will be necessary to recommit this Bill, for the purpose of making verbal corrections in the schedule. I therefore move that this Order of the Day be discharged from the paper.

Question put and passed.

RECOMMITTAL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was recommitted for the purpose of reconsidering the schedule.

The PREMIER said a number of small verbal mistakes had occurred in the description of the boundaries of the electorates in the schedule. In some cases the wrong portion of land was mentioned, in others the word "portion" was left out, the word "east" was used instead of "west," and there were other errors of that kind. It would take several hours to make all the amendments seriatim, and no advantage would be gained by it. He would therefore propose, if there was no objection, to negative the schedule as it stood, and substitute an amended schedule. That would save a great deal of time and trouble that the Committee ought not to be put to in making verbal corrections.

Mr. NORTON said, so far as he was concerned, they might substitute the amended schedule in a case of that kind. He took the hon. gentleman's word that the amendments were verbal. He would point out that while they were saving time in one direction they were wasting it in another by useless discussions. So far as he was personally concerned, he could only say that any proposal which would really have the effect of shortening the session he should be very glad to consent to. The leader of the Opposition was not present, being unwell, and personally he was not opposed to the substitution of the amended schedule.

The PREMIER said he moved that the schedule stand part of the Bill, with a view of its being negatived.

Schedule put and negatived.

The PREMIER moved the insertion of a new schedule, with the necessary formal amendments.

Schedule put and passed.

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

The PREMIER moved that the report be adopted.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to make allusion to an alteration that has been made in the schedule. The other night, when the Bill was under consideration, some alteration was made in the electoral district of Stanley,

and it was agreed that one portion which had been included in Moreton should not be taken away—that is, that only the portion around Durundur should be taken, and the other portion should be left in Stanley. Then, with regard to that portion which had been added to Aubigny, it was agreed that only the portion adjoining Crow's Nest should be taken away, it belonging to another part of the district.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—The question was discussed fully when we were in committee, and I then pointed out that after careful inquiry and consideration, the preponderance of argument was in favour of making Kilcoy a part of the Moreton electorate. That matter was explained thoroughly, and hon. members were invited to express their opinions, but the hon. member was not here. Particular attention was called to it. The other boundary has been drawn so as to divide the portions which do business with Ipswich and those which do business with Toowoomba.

Mr. KELLETT: It must have been a private explanation.

The PREMIER: I spoke in my place in the House and invited discussion. I gave the result of the inquiries I had made, and, everybody concurring, there the matter rested. I have never until now heard any objection made to the other boundary. Of course I heard the objection made by the hon. member for Fassifern some days ago, but it was made entirely under a misapprehension. He wanted the police district boundary followed, but that would be going much further to the eastward, and if we had done that we would have taken away a great deal more of Stanley. After the matter has had such careful consideration, I think it is too late, when the Bill has been reported for the third time, to raise any objection.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

The PREMIER moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House go into committee, further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I take advantage of the motion to ask the Premier a question. Has he taken any steps to procure information with regard to the matter I brought before the House last week, the reported influx of Chinese into Queensland from the Northern Territory? I have received a communication since, and I would like to know if the Government have taken steps to procure information with respect to the allegations of the miners of Croydon that there is likely to be an influx of Chinese from over the border, who will come into Queensland without paying the poll-tax. Now, this is not bunkum. I am not making an election speech, and hon. members need not think that this question obtains too much prominence on goldfields. People there have great foundation for the alarm which has been caused. There is something peculiar in the position of things at Croydon, inasmuch as the people there are not afraid of Chinese, as they are the flower of the race, they are physically strong and able-bodied men, and they are looking to the fact that in a few years' time they who are so close to enormous populations of this obnoxious race of people may be turned out by them, that they will come in hordes through the Northern Territory of Queensland and South Australia. If the Government have not taken steps to procure the necessary information, I think they will be able to obtain it from the Port Darwin authorities, if they are so minded. I shall now read the resolutions which

were arrived at by a large public meeting at Croydon, presided over by Mr. C. F. Gardiner, the president of the Progress Association, and which have been forwarded to me by telegram:—

"1. That in view of the large number of Chinamen who are arriving on the Croydon Gold Field the Government be requested by this meeting to pass restrictive legislation to prohibit them being employed on this or any other goldfield except as market gardeners or cooks.

"2. That the attention of the Government be directed to the fact that large numbers of Chinamen are flocking over the border of South Australia thus evading the poll-tax.

"3. That this meeting is of opinion that to more effectually restrict the present increasing numbers of Chinese a residential tax be imposed and that under no circumstances should a Chinaman be allowed to hold a miner's right business license or homestead lease.

"4. That an anti-Chinese league be formed to carry out the foregoing resolutions and to act in unison with other similar leagues throughout the colonies.

"5. That the foregoing resolutions be wired to our member Mr. Palmer and that he be requested to furnish them to the Press of Brisbane and bring them under the notice of the Government."

We see that these Chinese leagues are being formed in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and all over the colony. Therefore there is nothing strange in a large population like that at Croydon forming themselves into a league for their own protection, and it is in order to second their action that I now ask the Government if they have taken steps to procure the necessary information.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am rather surprised that the hon. member has not sent me a copy of those resolutions which were sent to him for that purpose. He might have favoured the Government with a copy of them.

Mr. PALMER: I forgot to do so last night.

The PREMIER: The hon. member might have given the Government a copy of them previous to bringing the matter before the House. I do not consider this communicating with the Government. If it is, it is a very inconvenient way of communicating with the Government where any action is to be taken. I may say I have received no further information upon this subject, and I have no reason whatever to believe that there are any number of Chinese coming across from Port Darwin. I will make further inquiries. As I have stated, I have received no further information on the subject, and I for my part do not believe they are coming.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I cannot help thinking that there may be a large number of Chinese coming over. We know the desire of the Chinese to get on to a newly discovered goldfield, and knowing that there are so many Chinese at Port Darwin I do not wonder at the miners at Croydon becoming alarmed at the prospect of their coming across the border. We all know that Chinese will undergo very great hardships and travel long distances in order to secure what they want. Although it is said they are afraid of blacks, I know that some years ago Chinese who were engaged as shepherds would stop for the sake of high wages in country infested with blacks and where scarcely any white man could be induced to remain. That is the statement made to me by those who have employed Chinese in that way; I never employed Chinese myself. Knowing the great desire of the Chinese to enrich themselves on goldfields, whether at the expense of the white population or not, and knowing also there are so many of them at Port Darwin, and in an impoverished condition, I am sure there is reason for apprehension that they will run great risks to get on to the Croydon Gold Field. I hope the leader of the Government will not treat this

matter with too much indifference, as the fact that the miners of Croydon have taken the action they have taken shows the urgency of the case, and that there must be some reason for their belief on the subject.

Mr. HAMILTON said : Mr. Speaker,—I am sure the miners of Croydon will feel flattered when they hear the reply made by the Premier to their member. The miners of Croydon, through Mr. Gardiner, chairman of the Progress Association in Croydon, and a respectable and well-known gentleman, wire to their member that the Chinese are invading Croydon Gold Field, and wish to know what action is to be taken, and the Premier's reply is that he does not believe their statement is true. It is well known that large numbers of Chinese are going on to the Kimberley Gold Field, and I am certain the miners of Croydon have something better to do than to call public meetings and then wire a lie to their member. They would not have made the statement that the Chinese were invading Croydon unless it was true, and the Government should take some immediate action in the matter.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said : Mr. Speaker,—I believe there is considerable reason to dread the invasion of the Croydon Gold Field by Chinese. Though the Premier pleads short notice now, the Government have had ample opportunity during the recess, and during the present session, to bring in a measure restricting the privileges of Chinese in this colony. That would do more to deter the Chinese from coming here than any attempt at increasing the poll-tax or imposing a residential tax, which would be exceedingly difficult to collect. If the Chinese were given to understand that no more miners' or business licenses would be given to them it would restrict their coming here in a great measure. My hon. colleague, Mr. Hamilton, is under a misapprehension when he says the Chinese are invading the Kimberley Gold Field. They were not going there when I was in the neighbourhood a few months ago, and, at all events, they are not permitted to mine for gold on new goldfields in Western Australia. The request sent down in the memorandum telegraphed to the member for Burke, on behalf of the miners of Croydon, is a very reasonable one, and the Premier must have been perfectly well aware of what it amounted to almost as soon as the hon. member for Burke was, because a copy of it appeared in the paper this morning. I trust the Premier will see his way to introduce some measure restricting the privileges of Chinese before this session closes. A very short Bill would meet the case, and I am sure it would be gratefully received by all the mining constituencies. The fact of the Chinese being allowed miners' rights, one of which is utilised for half-a-dozen very likely, is a very sore point among all miners. I believe the Chinese would be perfectly contented if they were allowed to exercise their avocation at gardening, at which they are very useful, and in any other kind of work where they would not come into competition with white men. I do not think it is fair that Chinese should be allowed to mine for gold here, because they do not allow Europeans to mine for gold in China.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said : Mr. Speaker,—I am rather sorry to hear the indifference expressed by the Premier as to the Chinese, or rather his disbelief that the Chinese are coming on to the Croydon Gold Field. Of course we all know that the Chinese are not allowed to mine on the Croydon Gold Field, in the same way as they are not allowed in Western Australia. They cannot mine upon a goldfield until it has been proclaimed three years; never-

theless, in the face of this resolution, which states : "In view of the large number of Chinese who are arriving on the Croydon—"

The PREMIER : I listened to the resolution, as read by the hon. member, and I understood the words to be, "who are coming across the border from South Australia."

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : No; the resolution says : "In view of the large number of Chinese who are arriving on the Croydon Gold Field" they request that certain action should be taken. Those men who formed that meeting are personally not afraid of the Chinese. I am quite certain there were enough white men at that meeting to make short work of all the Chinese in the North if they were assembled together. But these men wish to keep within the law. They know the Chinese are protected by the law, and they know they have no right to injure them simply because they are Chinese. They therefore ask the Government to do what they ought to do—either to enforce the present law or pass a new law. These men are simply by this resolution taking a precautionary measure to protect themselves against breaking the law, as they have been compelled to break the law on other goldfields in Australia in protection of themselves. Now, the same disbelief was expressed by the Government of which the hon. gentleman was a member at the end of 1874.

The PREMIER : I was not a member of the Government during the session of 1874.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : The hon. gentleman became a member of the Government at the end of 1874. The Hon. Mr. McDevitt gave up the office of Attorney-General immediately the session was over, and the hon. gentleman succeeded him. That was three months before the end of the year.

The PREMIER : That is correct.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : That Government expressed the same disbelief as to the coming of the Chinese to the northern portion of Queensland. I might have used that as an argument when discussing the shortening of parliaments Bill just now. I was a new-chum member then, and I thought I was doing my duty by worrying the Minister to do something to prevent the Chinese from coming. If I had had the experience then that I have acquired since, instead of giving them a worrying, which they accepted very quietly, I should have brought the matter before the House in the shape of a substantive resolution, as I was obliged to do eighteen months afterwards. We tried to turn the hon. gentleman and his Government out of office because they failed to fulfil the duties required of them by keeping the Chinese out, together with other matters. I say I do not fear any very great influx of Chinese on the Croydon or any other goldfield; that is impossible now, because public opinion is too much aroused on the Chinese question. Nevertheless, Chinese may come from the Northern Territory, and they should not be allowed to come at all. A very considerable number of Chinese have been brought by the railway contractors from China to the Northern Territory to make the railway, and I have heard that when they were landed they refused to work. If they would not work for the railway contractor they must go to the goldfields; and we know that the goldfields in the Northern Territory are not sufficiently productive to keep them there, and they will try to come to Queensland where the goldfields are more productive. The hon. gentleman has had time enough since this question was discussed ten days ago to get all this information, and surely with the telegraph at his command he

could have got sufficient information to assure the House that there is no danger, even if the miners of Croydon, who are on the spot, believe there is great danger. I trust he will put the telegraph to work, and use the officials he has in the North, to get information and give it to us as soon as he gets it.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—I was not in the House, unfortunately, when the Premier made the remarks that called forth the comments from the other side; but I may say, speaking entirely for myself, that I am disposed to think the fears of the people in the North are far from being without foundation. While, of course, the senior member for Cook, as his manner is, goes almost indecently beyond the facts, I do not for one moment believe that the Premier or any of his colleagues is indifferent to what is taking place in the North. There are other hon. members on that side who are not so ready to throw about charges of falsehood as the hon. senior member for Cook, who sometimes forgets what is due to himself; and I would ask those hon. members to remember that the Government is obliged to go rather more slowly than the impetuosity of private people would lead them to do. We have great difficulty in the fact that the South Australian Government does not regard this Chinese question as we do. The hon. member for Townsville has alluded to a circumstance which is very well known—that railway contractors in the Northern Territory of South Australia indent Chinese, and that puts a great difficulty in the way of the Government of this colony. Until the South Australian Government see more in accordance with our views, I do not know how this great danger can be absolutely and peremptorily stopped. At the same time I go this far with hon. members on the other side: that whatever the Queensland Government may do in the way of quick, sharp, summary measures to suppress this Chinese element, I should thoroughly approve of. They say a little leak will sink a big ship, and that is the way to look at this Chinese immigration: if it is not stopped at the beginning, the difficulty will increase until it becomes impossible to stop it. I am quite of opinion that the people of Croydon in public meeting assembled, while they may be a little unreasonable and a little hot, know the facts in Croydon better than we do in Brisbane. Still, I will ask hon. members on the other side not to expect impossibilities from the Government. I will go further than that, and say that there is no reason whatever to be suspicious of the sincerity of the Premier in what he has said of his wishes to get rid of the Chinese. I consider that the hon. gentlemen on the other side are quite right; and if I were on the other side I should do as they do, and continue, in season and out of season, to press on the Government the necessity of urgent and immediate measures being taken.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—The old proverb says "Prevention is better than cure." It may be quite possible that the Premier is right; but it is, perhaps, more probable that hon. members on this side are right. The way to deal with the question is to apply all the preventive measures we can. We have been told that the naturalisation of Chinamen is stopped. That is perhaps unlawful, but the way to make it lawful is to repeal that portion of the Act which allows them to be naturalised. Again, they are entitled by law now to miners' rights and business licenses on goldfields. Let us repeal that portion of the Act, and prevent their getting them. Let us put all the difficulties we can in their way so as to reduce their power of doing harm to a minimum. I am told that in

China white people are not allowed on the goldfields. Why can we not apply retaliatory measures here, and keep them off our goldfields altogether? With regard to South Australia, she has so far not chosen to consider this colony, and there is no reason that we should consider her.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—Some remarks have been made by various speakers on this Chinese question which I really cannot fall in with. It seems to be the opinion of those on goldfields that the Chinese should be prohibited from working on goldfields altogether. It is the opinion of others that all business licenses should be taken from them, so that they should not be at all privileged in that respect. Some hon. members are perfectly willing to allow them to cultivate vegetables, and from the discussion which has taken place, that appears to be the whole extent of the privilege to be given to the Chinese. Now, I am not an advocate of Chinese labour; they are not a desirable class of people to have in the colony at all; but I say that if we allow them to come into the colony we should not curtail their liberty. What we should do is to prevent them entirely from coming into the colony—to which I am very favourable; but to allow them to come here, and then say, "You shall not do this," and "You shall not do that," I do not believe in. Everyone is opposed to them. Of course the people on the goldfields do not want them; tradesmen do not want them; small farmers do not want them. Now, the farmer who grows vegetables has the same right to say they shall not be allowed to grow vegetables either. I am entirely opposed to allowing Chinese to come into the colony, but, having let them come in, I do not think they should be restricted in any way at all. They have a perfect right to perform any work, and we have no right to restrict their liberty. I think it is a very serious matter indeed. We are very likely to come in contact with another power when we restrict these Chinese in the way proposed by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: They are restricting the privileges of the English in China.

Mr. MACFARLANE: That hon. member would have them do nothing but grow vegetables. I also am quite willing they should do that, but are the farmers in the outside districts willing? No matter what you confine them to, there will be opposition from some interested parties; and therefore I think if we allow those men to come here at all we have no right whatever to restrict their privileges. Keep them out entirely, and by so doing we shall be consistent with ourselves, and shall not come in contact with other powers that might ask us very seriously why we should restrict those men after allowing them to come into the colony. We cannot confine them, having allowed them to enter, to be hewers of wood and drawers of water, or to anything else. As I have said, I am quite in favour of keeping the Chinese entirely cut of the colony, but I have never been able to see any way to restrict their liberties after having allowed them to come here.

Mr. SMYTH said: Mr. Speaker,—There are many reasons why miners object to Chinese on goldfields. From the Palmer Gold Field somewhere about 1,300,000 oz. of gold have been obtained, and more than half of that has been taken by Chinese to China. It is never known exactly how much gold they do take away, because they take it secretly. If, however, that gold had been left to Europeans a great many reefs now awaiting development would have

been worked by them. The miners themselves are certainly a great deal to blame for Chinese being on goldfields and following their occupation. When I was at Ravenswood and Charters Towers I noticed that a considerable number of the stores there were carried on by Chinese. Now, if the miners did not patronise those stores the Chinese would not be there, so that they are in some measure to blame for the presence of Chinamen on goldfields. As to keeping Chinese out of the colony altogether, that is just about as hard to do with the Northern Territory right on our border, as it is to keep rabbits out of Queensland. The only way to keep them out is to charge them a fee for a residence license. It is not likely that Chinese will do a great deal of damage on Croydon, because, as a rule, they do not take to quartz-mining. With regard to their growing vegetables on goldfields, there are many Europeans who agree that they should be allowed to do that. I am not very fond of Chinese vegetables myself, but they are better than none. The principal thing to look to is to see that they do not pollute the water, which they have done in some instances. I think that if the Premier will look into the matter, and instruct the wardens to protect the people in this respect, Chinese might be allowed to grow vegetables, but they should not be permitted to mine until the field has been open three years in accordance with the Act. I myself would like to see Chinese well treated while they are in the colony; but I would like to see them kept out altogether, which might be done by imposing a residence tax on them.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—There is another matter with reference to Chinese that is deserving of notice. It is all very well to talk about keeping them out of the colony, but I believe it will be a very hard matter to do so. The Chinese congregate on goldfields, but as long as I have been in the colony I have never known or heard of a Chinaman discovering a payable goldfield. They always follow in the track of Europeans. Europeans have to go out and endure all the hardships for the purpose of finding out goldfields, and as soon as they have done that, the Chinese come in in droves. Therefore I think it is desirable that we should endeavour, if we possibly can, to keep them off goldfields, and I would like to know in what better way we can do that than by refusing to grant them licenses. They certainly ought to be restricted in some way. In my district there are Chinese, and some people think they are valuable adjuncts to the community, for the simple reason that they grow vegetables; but if they were all like me very few Chinamen would grow vegetables. I have never bought anything from them, and never will; I would rather do without vegetables altogether than have those grown by Chinese. I believe that people are to blame to some extent in patronising Chinese. We do not invite those men to come to the colony; they come of their own accord, and the only way we can keep them out is to place such restrictions upon them as will make it unremunerative for them to live in Queensland.

Mr. ISAMBERT said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the House ought to persist in the Government dealing with the Chinese question this session, if only for the sake of law and order. If the miners on the Gulf were allowed their own way they would make short work of the Chinese; but as a rule they are law-abiding people, and would prefer that the Government should deal with this very serious question. The question is even a more serious one than those apprehend who dread the Chinese so much. The Chinese in the colony amount to only about 3 per cent of the popula-

tion. Any other kind of people, who amounted to so small a fraction, would not trouble us. But the Chinese have always worked in concert; they understand the effect of association better than any people of European extraction do; and it is by acting always in companies that they are so dangerous. If we do not enact some cast-iron law we shall be overwhelmed by Chinese, not coming so much by sea as from the Northern Territory of South Australia; and the Government ought to bring as much pressure on the South Australian Government to take the Chinese question in hand as they possibly can. The Government there are willing to deal with it, but the Upper House, representing the capitalists who have grabbed the Northern Territory, are in favour of Chinese importation to such an extent that they have passed measures through the Legislature there permitting the importation of Chinese to the Northern Territory. There was never a Government in this colony—and such a Government will never exist again—so fit and so constituted to deal with this difficult question as the present Government. They have removed the danger that at one time threatened the colony from the influx of Indian coolies, and whatever useful legislation has been enacted in that direction has come from the Liberal party. The House as at present constituted, both Opposition and Government supporters, are all in favour of this question being dealt with, and properly dealt with. I am certain that hon. members on both sides will give the Government every assistance to deal with this very serious question.

Question put and passed.

CHARITABLE ALLOWANCES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) moved that £50,850 be granted for Charitable Allowances (hospitals and relief boards). The vote showed an increase on that of last year of £3,250. There were special grants of £200 to the Springsure Hospital, £250 to the Hughenden Hospital, and £250 to the Thornborough Hospital. There was a decrease of £400 in the item for lock hospitals, and one of £200 in the grant to the Brisbane Relief Board. The sum for hospitals generally was increased from £37,000 to £40,000. Those were the principal items in which any change had been made.

Mr. PALMER said he noticed an item in the list of charitable allowances which did not appear in last year's Estimates. That was a grant of £100 to the Ladies' Christian Association, Ipswich. Was that body a female branch of the Salvation Army, or what? And how came the item to appear there?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that on the vote for last year and the year before there was a sum of £400 for the Ipswich Relief Board. This year £300 was granted to the board, and £100 was placed at the disposal of the Ladies' Christian Association, who, though they did not belong to the Salvation Army, were doing just as good work. The money was given for out-door relief. There was no difference in the total amount appropriated for the Ipswich Relief Board, only it was distinctly specified that £100 of it was to be expended by the Ladies' Christian Association.

Mr. NORTON said he noticed a special grant of £200 to the Springsure Hospital. What entitled that amount to be called a special grant?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the money was required for the erection of a new kitchen there. It was a special grant for building purposes. It was a common thing to make

special grants for special purposes to country hospitals. The kitchen in question, when he saw it, was in a very dilapidated state indeed.

Mr. NORTON said he remembered that some time ago there was a special grant for something in connection with the hospital at Ipswich.

Mr. MACFARLANE: Not at Ipswich. The people there helped themselves. They had already spent £15,000, and only wanted £5,000 back, which he hoped the Government would give them very soon.

Mr. NORTON said that if special grants of that kind were made there would be no end of claims sent in. Could the Colonial Secretary tell him how many patients there was accommodation for in the Springsure Hospital, and whether it was generally full?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not give the number. It was the ordinary country hospital, and it was full at the time he was there.

Mr. NORTON asked whether the special grant was in any way connected with the representation of that portion of the colony? The Minister for Works might have a leaning towards Springsure. At the time that hon. gentleman went back for re-election he found it advisable to change his opinions with regard to the Springsure Railway. Previously he was very much opposed to it, and spoke of it in terms which did not encourage the belief that he was in favour of it. But when he had to go before his constituents for re-election, he suddenly became an advocate for the construction of that railway, and since his re-election the railway had been constructed. That created a suspicion, in his mind, at any rate, that perhaps that special grant to the hospital had something to do with the representation of the Minister for Works for Springsure.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was sorry the hon. gentleman was of so suspicious a nature. He could assure him that his hon. colleague the Minister for Works had had nothing whatever to do with that item. He (Mr. Moreton) had seen the necessity for it himself.

Mr. ALAND said he would like to ask the Colonial Secretary how long since it was that applications had been received from the three hospitals for which special grants were put down?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Within the present year.

Mr. SMYTH said he thought there was no vote in the Estimates that could be cut down better than that. Nearly every constituency in the colony had something for relief boards, some of them a good deal too much, while others had nothing at all. The electorate he represented had only £100 put down for it. It had a very large population, about 9,000 persons, and while £100 was good enough for that, if they looked down the list they would see Blackall, a very small place compared with Gympie, had £150; Bundaberg, £200; Charters Towers, £200; Hughenden, £200; Ipswich, £300; Maryborough, £400; Rockhampton, £500; Toowoomba, £300; Townsville, £300; and Warwick, £200. What was there in Maryborough, Toowoomba, Ipswich, and Rockhampton that they should receive so much more than other places? He had no doubt that if the inhabitants of those towns were told that they were hard-up poverty-stricken places, they would deny it; and how was it so much money was voted for them as compared with other towns? He thought that vote might very well be cut down to one-half. By putting all the towns mentioned on the same footing as Gympie, which had as large a population as most of them, they

would effect a saving of about £2,100, and if they could effect a saving to that extent they ought to do so. About £8 a week was voted for relief in Maryborough; and with regard to the ladies' benevolent societies at Toowoomba and Ipswich, and other places, he would point out that, when the vote was before the Committee last year, the fact was commented upon that there was nothing to show how the money was dealt with. They did not know how the money was spent. It might be spent well, or it might not. He did not suppose the Government got any account of how it was spent. He would support any member of the Committee who would go in for reducing all the amounts to £100. He thought £100 was enough for any town in the colony, outside Brisbane, for the relief of distress.

Mr. ALAND said it appeared to him that the hon. member for Gympie was not so much dissatisfied with the vote as a whole, as he was that there was only £100 set down for the town he represented.

Mr. SMYTH: I do not want any more.

Mr. ALAND said he must congratulate the town of Gympie and the hon. member too. Speaking for his own township—he dared say other members could speak for theirs—he could say that they had never found that the amount voted for relief had been too much. Of course, they all personally regretted that any amount whatever was necessary, but it was quite certain that in every town there would be some persons needing relief, and the larger the town the more money was likely to be required in that direction. The hon. member for Gympie had thrown out a sort of insinuation that that money was not well spent, but he could assure him that as far as Toowoomba was concerned it was well spent, and not only was the amount granted well spent, but it was supplemented by contributions from the general public, the same as was the case, he believed, in Ipswich and Brisbane. The plan adopted at Toowoomba had been to hand the whole of the vote over to what was called the Ladies' Benevolent Society. That was done some seven or eight years ago or longer. When Sir Arthur Palmer was Colonial Secretary they asked his permission to do so, and he remembered that that gentleman expressed himself as very pleased indeed that the Ladies' Benevolent Society would take upon themselves the task of distributing that relief. Formerly it was distributed by the police magistrate or the secretary to the hospital, but neither of those gentlemen had sufficient time to thoroughly investigate cases, and see if they were being imposed upon or not. In respect to the hospital vote, the reason he had asked the Colonial Secretary the question he had was that it had been admitted by that gentleman himself, by the late Minister for Works, and by the Chief Secretary, that a grant of money was necessary for the Toowoomba Hospital in order to put up nurses' wards. The Toowoomba Hospital was a building which had cost a lot of money, and at the same time it was a most unsatisfactory sort of building—one that required a great deal of money to work on account of defects in its construction. At the present time some of the nurses in the hospital had to sleep in the wards with the patients, and he thought it would be admitted by everyone that that was a very undesirable state of things. He thought the nurses should live outside the hospital when their work was done; at any rate they ought not to sleep in the hospital with the patients. He would point out that application had been made about three years ago for a sum of £500 to build nurses' quarters, to which they might retire when their duties in the hospital were over.

He had been in the hope that the sum would have been granted long before this, and he was very much surprised to find that applications which had been made only within the last year or two had been granted, whilst theirs had been denied.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he was very sorry and surprised at the statement made by the hon. member for Gympie. If Gympie required £300, £400, or £500 to be distributed amongst the poor there, he would be the last one in the world to say one word against it. It was not because Gympie was a thriving, prosperous place, which it really was, or because £100 was enough, as the hon. member stated, for charitable persons there, that other places, which were not so fortunate, or so rich, or so affluent, should not be assisted in the usual way. It should also be recollected that towns like Maryborough, Rockhampton, and Brisbane—in fact, any of the seaports—had an extra drag upon their funds from the fact that persons coming and going by sea increased the number requiring aid and relief. He had never heard of a single instance of a person going from Maryborough to Gympie to the hospital there, or to get relief. He had known a good many go there for work, who had been very successful, but he had known a good many come from Gympie to Maryborough to go into the hospital or get relief. Sometimes they went there for a change of climate, or because there was excellent hospital accommodation. There was also a fund at the disposal of the Maryborough people for the relief of distress, and he believed those were the reasons which led persons to drift to Maryborough. He was not speaking for Maryborough particularly, more than any other place, but he contended that the seaports generally required more assistance than inland towns, for the reasons he had stated. He was quite satisfied that not one shilling too much was put down for Maryborough; at the same time, if a larger sum was wanted for Gympie he would be the last in the world to say a word against it.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he might point out that the Ladies' Christian Association at Ipswich was an association of ladies of all denominations, who were doing the work of the relief board. The hospital board used to have the £400 a year, but now had only £300 a year from the vote, the other £100 being given to the association, by whom the work was done. He thought that should be reversed, and that the association should get the £300, the same as the Ladies' Benevolent Society in Toowoomba. The hospital committee used the £300 for general hospital purposes, and not for benevolent purposes at all. From what he knew of some of the ladies who belonged to the association, he believed they inquired into every case deserving relief, and he knew, of his own knowledge, that several immigrants had been visited, and several deserving cases had been attended to by them. Therefore he thought the whole of the money should go to the association.

Mr. ALAND said that if the sum of £300, out of the £400 set down, was used by the committee of the Ipswich Hospital for hospital purposes it was improperly used, because that was not the object for which the money was voted. He understood that it was for giving food to persons in circumstances of want. The outdoor relief afforded by the hospital was outdoor medical relief, independent altogether of the vote now under consideration.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hospital committee received £300, and they were supposed to attend to the outside patients with that. The money did not go for benevolent purposes, and

never had; so that the £100 granted to the Ladies' Christian Association was the only amount that went for charitable purposes. That £100 was supplemented, however, by private subscriptions, which brought the sum up to £200 or £300.

Mr. FOOTE said he thought there must be some mistake in reference to the manner in which the vote was appropriated. Originally the hospital committee was a relief committee as well, and the money was granted from year to year to continue that relief to those who needed it. How it had been administered of late years he could not say, but originally the money was used for the purpose of providing food and clothing in cases of distress. He believed it would be better to hand the money over to the benevolent committee, and that if it was used by the hospital committee it was a misappropriation of the vote. There had been several attempts during the last ten years, as might be seen from *Hansard*, to get the whole of the fund handed over to the Ladies' Christian Association. He believed the great objection to that was in the name "Ladies' Christian Association." Some of the previous Colonial Secretaries objected to the word "Christian"—he did not know whether the present Colonial Secretary objected to it or not. As the hon. member for Ipswich had stated, the society was composed of ladies of all denominations, and the money they received from the Government was augmented by private subscriptions. He thought that if the whole of the vote were handed over to the society it would be much more in accordance with the object of the Committee in voting the money. It was not fair that the money should go to the support of the hospital, neither was it needful, because the hospital had sufficient funds without it. He might say that the Ladies' Christian Association had the town divided into districts, and each lady visited the people in her own district, giving attention to the necessitous cases. They did very good and useful work, and it would be much wiser to hand the money over to them, as was done in Toowoomba.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the revelations in regard to the expenditure of the vote took him, as well as other hon. members, by surprise. There was no doubt that the vote for the relief board should be distinct from the hospital vote. He had looked through the correspondence that took place when the Chief Secretary was Colonial Secretary, and he thought that in future it would be far better that the remaining £300 should be handed over by the hospital committee to the Ladies' Christian Association.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it appeared that on those lines the whole of the vote of £7,600, of which £1,600 was for Brisbane, should be handed over to the old ladies for distribution. He should like to hear the hon. member for Fassifern's version of the Ladies' Christian Association. He (Mr. Lumley Hill) had been in Ipswich, and had heard some curious accounts of that association. He went into very good company when he went to Ipswich, and generally stayed with the president of the hospital, whom the hon. member for Toowoomba might know. He did not know why the votes for Toowoomba and Ipswich should be handed over to a committee of Christian ladies of all sorts of denominations, or why those ladies should be the sole patronesses of relief throughout the colony. What special qualification had the ladies in those places for the distribution of that relief money beyond any gentlemen in other parts of the colony, whether old men or young men, or any others who had the administration of that long list of votes amounting to £7,450 a year?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, in regard to Brisbane, the £1,600 was expended by relief boards, distinct from the hospital.

Mr. SALKELD said he had made many inquiries as to what became of that £300 which was down for Ipswich, and which he understood was given to indigent persons and to those in distress. He had found numbers of persons who had been relieved by that ladies' association. Those ladies did their very best to meet the right cases, and see that the money was properly spent, and not only the money that came from the Government but private contributions as well. Of course cases of imposition did occur; but he had never found out a single case that had been relieved out of the £300 that went to the hospital. Without in any way disputing the right desire of those various ladies societies to distribute that relief properly, it raised the whole question as to whether the Committee were justified in voting money to irresponsible persons. Of course the amounts were not very large, and he had no doubt that if three or four times the amount were voted it would be very well spent. The question was—Were they to hand over the money to irresponsible persons or associations? The hospital committees had a certain status. They were elected by the subscribers. Private persons subscribed a certain amount, and the Government advanced a certain amount in proportion. He knew a great many of the members of the relief societies that had been referred to, and knew that they represented all shades of opinion, pretty well, in Ipswich, and were very glad to get other persons to join them who would give them assistance.

Mr. NORTON: Do they allow Jewesses to join them?

Mr. SALKELD said there were none there. The whole matter required careful consideration. At present there was no basis to go upon, but there ought to be. If the Government contributed £1 for £1, or 10s. for £1, there would be some basis; but mere arbitrary sums were put down for the time being. He did not know why Gympie should only receive £100, unless it was because there were so many rich people there who could look after the poor persons. If the money were granted to those societies on the same terms as it was to hospitals, they would know why it was voted and upon what terms it was given.

Mr. BLACK said he agreed with the last speaker that it was very hard to arrive at any basis upon which that vote was founded, and he would like the Colonial Secretary to give them some explanation as to whether there was any basis. He found that places they might expect to be reasonably prosperous received a very considerable proportion of the vote as compared with other places. He agreed with the hon. member for Gympie that there was no reason why, if charity was to be dispensed, the relief board for the electorate that gentleman represented was not entitled to a greater consideration than £100. Now, the amount down for Warwick struck him as being somewhat singular. There was a comparatively small population there. The male population, according to the Redistribution Bill, was only 1,046, whilst the total population of the whole Warwick electorate was only 4,276; yet he found £200 was voted for the relief board there. He did not especially object to Warwick, but they had always been led to believe that Warwick was a sort of garden of the colony, where everybody was smiling and prosperous, and the whole district was one mass of successful

farmers; and they were asked to spend a very considerable amount of money in running a very expensive line of railway direct to that place. It was evident that, instead of its being the smiling and prosperous place that the members representing the district so often stated that it was whenever referred to, it was a place in which poverty seemed to be of a very dear description. He thought it was a matter that required some adjustment by the Government. Those votes should be granted in the way suggested by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Salkeld, proportionately to the amount contributed in the district. Let the people themselves show their charity by subscribing certain amounts in the same way as they did for hospitals, and let the Government subsidise them £1 for £1 or £2 for £1. Let there be, at all events, some basis upon which the votes were granted year after year. It appeared to him that when once a town or district got a vote down on the Estimates it was very hard to get it off again; the tendency was rather to increase than to reduce it. He did not think it was creditable to any district to appear as the recipient of relief to the great extent that some of those districts did; and hon. members, instead of suggesting that they should receive a greater amount of relief for their districts, should rather deprecate the necessity for asking for any relief at all. There was one question he wanted to ask the Colonial Secretary, which was, what was the amount actually spent by the Brisbane Relief Board last year? He noticed that the vote was reduced from £1,800 last year to £1,600 for the present year. He wished it to be understood that the remarks he had made did not apply to such a large place as Brisbane, where they knew that the necessity for administering relief was out of all proportion to that which was necessary in other parts of the colony, Brisbane being the capital, where large numbers of people annually congregated, and where destitution must necessarily prevail to a greater extent than in any other place.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the amount spent was £1,596.

Mr. JESSOP said he thought that was about one of the best votes on the Estimates, for the simple reason that the money was distributed among all the towns of the colony, and handed over to committees, who expended it for the benefit of poor people who could not help themselves. He thought it was a good idea to hand the money over to ladies, for the reason that in nineteen cases out of twenty they would spend the money to greater advantage than their husbands would. In the town of Dalby they had a relief committee, but first one and then another person withdrew, and the committee became so small that the money was eventually handed over to the hospital committee. They accepted the responsibility of giving relief, and he thought the money could not possibly be better spent than by a committee of ten or twelve thinking men—men who worked hard for the hospital, and attended fortnightly meetings, and who would lay out the money to the best advantage. He should like to see the vote increased considerably, because it would do a great deal of good. He did not believe in hon. members crying it down, and talking about "old ladies." The people who administered the funds deserved a great deal of credit, because they spent their time and money to great advantage. They did not squander the money, but laid it out usefully, and every penny spent was accounted for to the Government auditor. He did not think a paltry item of £100 for such a purpose should be criticised in that way, and if the amount were doubled he would be well pleased.

Mr. GROOM said he should like to defend the ladies of the society in his town from the imputation of being "old ladies," as stated by the hon. member for Cook.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I did not say anything about Toowoomba; I was referring to Ipswich.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member did not qualify his remarks.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I was only referring to Ipswich.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member's reference appeared to be general. At all events he could say that the ladies of Toowoomba who had charge of the distribution of the money deserved every possible credit for the work and pains they bestowed upon their duties. They received nothing for it. They left their domestic duties three or four times a week and devoted their time to the relief of indigent persons, and took great pains to distribute the vote equitably. A great many of the unfortunate cases which came under their notice arose from the same cause which compelled an unfortunate woman to drown herself and her two children in the Brisbane River the other day. The majority of the cases were those of deserted wives who were thrown upon public charity. He was one of those who thought that the punishment for wife desertion was not half severe enough. He ventured to say that there were many men at Croydon who had left elsewhere their wives and unfortunate children to the cold charity of the world, or to take care of themselves as best they could. In his own district he knew that such was the case. Many of the women in his district, when asked where their husbands were, replied that they were on the Northern goldfields; and those women were thrown upon the charity of the district where they resided. As an example of that he might mention that the ladies of Toowoomba had upon their lists thirty-five deserted wives. Now, how were those poor creatures to live? It was not only the £300 that appeared on the Estimates which was disbursed by those ladies, but they went about from house to house asking for clothing, and even for food, and he had no doubt in the city of Brisbane the same thing occurred. He said that those ladies who took such cases in hand, as a labour of love, and actuated by high-minded, Christian, and benevolent feelings, so far from having any unkind things said of them, deserved the sympathy and thanks of the community. And it was not only to people living in the towns that aid was extended. Very often strangers came to a town looking for employment. Women whose husbands had gone away, perhaps to the bush, where they had died and would never be heard of again—those unfortunates had to be provided for, and if there was no such relief fund he did not know what they would do. He believed the moneys were very well spent, and that those sums were really among the best items on the Estimates, because they went a long way towards supplying families who would almost go without anything to eat if no such relief were granted.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the hon. member for Toowoomba had said that he (Mr. Hill) referred to the Toowoomba committee of ladies. He had done no such thing, because he had never heard about their work, nor did he know anything about them. But he had heard of the work of the Ipswich Christian Association, and he had heard many complaints from the hospital authorities of the money having been diverted from the proper channel. He had heard many complaints of the money having been handed over to a certain self-appointed body of ladies, who were utterly irresponsible, and who did not

make the best use of the money; he had heard that on very good authority. The member for Ipswich, Mr. Salkeld, said that he had never heard of any relief having been afforded by the hospital authorities, who had the administration of the balance of £300. Now, that was a pretty serious charge to make against people who were responsible, who were elected by the subscribers of the hospital, and who were presumably honest men who had to account for the money which they received from the Government. Yet they were supposed, according to the hon. member, to have received the money and not to have afforded any relief whatever to anybody; in fact, the money was alleged to have been ill-spent. He had no desire to cut down the vote; he did not begrudge any money spent on behalf of the poor and needy, and those unable to help themselves, especially the class of people referred to by the hon. member for Toowoomba—deserted wives. He certainly did not wish to see them starving and in misery, but he did think there should be some recognised system; and if it was agreed to hand over the money to ladies' committees, then let all the money be dealt with in that way. They should not make fish of one place and fowl of another by handing over the distribution of relief money to a committee of ladies in one place and of gentlemen in another. He was sorry that by a slip of the tongue he had made rather disrespectful mention of the ladies of Ipswich, and described them as "old ladies," but the mistake was accounted for by the fact that the members for Ipswich always appeared to him so much like old women. He would like the Colonial Secretary to say whether any definite line would be adopted for the distribution of that money granted to the relief boards of the colony.

Mr. FOOTE said the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, talked of what he knew nothing about. The hon. member moved in a circle in which relief was not much required, and his charities, no doubt, were given in another direction, and he had no sympathy for the purposes for which that relief money was granted. He could quite endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba as to the manner in which the vote was distributed, because the same thing was done in Ipswich. There were ladies from twenty to thirty years of age in the association in Ipswich, and among them were abler women than the hon. member for Cook was as a man, and they spent a good deal of their time in looking to the proper distribution of the vote. The society had only been recipients of the £100 from the Government for two years, as previously the hospital committee had the expenditure of the whole vote. The hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, had been chairman of the hospital committee for a considerable time, and he knew how the vote was expended by the committee, and when he spoke upon that subject he spoke with a full knowledge of the way in which the money was expended. The hon. member for Cook excused the disparaging remarks he made about the ladies of the Ipswich society by stating that he had in his mind's eye the fact that the members for Ipswich were so much like old women. He could tell the hon. member that he had not seen anything more like an old woman in that Committee than the hon. member himself, and he could assure him that no member for Ipswich or for West Moreton would be made an old woman of by him. He rose particularly to refer to the impertinent insinuation of the hon. member, who was on many occasions very impertinent and very insulting to hon. members of that Committee. The hon. member could take that as he liked.

Mr. SALKELD said, in reference to some remarks made by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, he must say that he had not made any charge as to the way in which the hospital committee expended the money. What he had said was simply that, though he had found many cases in which destitute persons had been relieved, from the money distributed by the Ladies' Association, he had not met with a single case relieved from the balance of the vote handed over to the hospital committee. His hon. colleague, Mr. Macfarlane, had explained that, by stating that it was spent for general hospital purposes, and not as they understood it, for the relief of destitute persons. If that was what the Committee intended it for it was rightly spent; but if it was not the purpose to which the Committee intended it should be devoted, it was not rightly spent.

Mr. SMYTH said he was very sorry that the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Sheridan, should get up and say that people went from Gympie to Maryborough for charity. When a case of distress arose in Gympie, a subscription list was made out, and the people put their hands in their pockets to relieve it, and did not go to the Government for money. He had not spoken of Maryborough in particular when he referred to the matter before, any more than to any other town in the colony. He had referred to Toowoomba, Ipswich, Rockhampton, and other towns as well as to Maryborough. He considered it was quite time they should do something to cut down the Estimates, and they should start at once to do it.

Mr. MORGAN said he agreed with the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, in his remarks regarding that vote. It was one which was generally devoted to a very good purpose, and the State got capital value for the money. One or two hon. members had said that the State had no control over the vote. He believed that the Government auditors examined all the accounts of those benevolent societies, and that being so the Government had a sufficient guarantee that the money was expended for the purpose for which it was voted. He was perfectly sure, so far as his own experience went, that the members of those ladies' associations went to a great deal more trouble than any hospital committee or male committee would go to. It should be remembered also that they saved the country—indirectly perhaps—a very large amount of money, by providing for those neglected wives of whom the hon. member for Toowoomba had spoken, and giving them means of livelihood during the temporary desertion by their husbands. If it were not for their labours in that respect there would be a great many more prosecutions for maintenance than they had at present. It was within the knowledge of every hon. member that on many occasions alleged runaway husbands were brought very long distances at very great expense to the State to the place from which they were said to have run away, and when they arrived there the wives declined to prosecute, the whole thing being done simply in order to get the husband back. There were many cases of that temporary desertion in which the husband left his wife, and, after he made a "rise," came back of his own accord. The hon. member for Mackay drew attention to the fact that the amount of £200 per annum was voted for Warwick. The hon. member might possibly know more about Warwick than he did, though he did not think the hon. member did. He was perfectly certain that every shilling of that £200, subsidised largely by local subscriptions as well, was properly spent in Warwick. Notwithstanding the fact that Warwick was

the garden of Queensland, as the hon. member had stated—and which might or might not be the case—the relief money was spent for the purpose for which it was voted. The hon. member for Mackay was a little out in his figures about the population of Warwick. In considering a matter of that kind the hon. member should recollect that the whole population of the district was included, and the population of the district which had its centre in Warwick was nearer 10,000 than 4,000. The indigent poor from the whole of the district round Allora and away westward as far as Inglewood were attracted to Warwick, and the fact that £300 a year was spent in maintaining the poor out of that population was nothing very extraordinary. There was another matter he wished to refer to. The hon. member for Toowoomba and one or two other members had raised the question of applications they had made for grants for buildings in connection with their hospitals, and he saw on the Estimates three several sums of £250, which the Colonial Secretary said were granted for additions to hospitals. He thought there should be some rule governing the appropriations of money for that purpose. All hospitals should be treated alike. Within the last twelve months the committee of the Warwick Hospital wanted an infectious block erected in connection with that establishment, and they had to contribute £500 to the cost of the building. Now, he wanted to know why other towns should be treated on more favourable terms? Why should Toowoomba have nurses' quarters provided free of charge at the expense of the State?

Mr. GROOM: I said "towards."

Mr. MORGAN: Well, there were the other cases. One town ought not to pay half the cost of necessary improvements while another had them provided by the Government free of cost.

Mr. GROOM said the application with regard to the Toowoomba Hospital was this: They had a fixed deposit of £500 kept as a sort of reserve fund in case of extraordinary contingencies, and what they proposed was that if the Government would grant £400 towards the cost of nurses' quarters, they would take a portion of that reserve fund to complete the building. At present, if an infectious disease were to break out and an extraordinary demand were made on the hospital, they would have to turn out the nurses to make room for the patients. At the Toowoomba Hospital they had adopted the system of trained nurses, and they found it answered exceedingly well. Hon. members could very well understand that when they had four or five trained nurses it was necessary that they should have quarters where they might enjoy a little sleep, away from the ward. When they made application to the Colonial Secretary they were told that the funds at present would not admit of any assistance being given, and when they saw that assistance was given to other places, they naturally asked, as the hon. member for Warwick put it, why then should not there be some recognised rule as to the assistance to be given? He thought that when they were willing to help themselves it was only reasonable that the Government should help them. The hospital was not the property of the subscribers, and they were simply asking for aid in improving Government property. He would like the Colonial Secretary to give an idea of what was likely to be done, so that at the next annual meeting they could tell the subscribers what prospect there was of the improvement being carried out.

The Hon. G. THORN said it would be as well to point out to the Committee that those sums were originally given to hospitals as pauper grants, but after a time it was found that the

pauper grant to Brisbane was not sufficient, and a relief board was established. The next year or so, sums were put on the Estimates for relief boards all over the colony, instead of the usual pauper grants. In some places, the hospital still had the pauper grant, and that was what had misled some hon. members. With regard to the hospital at Ipswich, he would inform the Committee that that institution was well managed. He would like to point out to the hon. member for Gympie, who had spoken of Fassifern, that in Fassifern there were no paupers. The inhabitants of his district were all prosperous, and he hoped they would always be so, and never want a relief vote. He was not of the opinion of some hon. members about that vote; he looked upon it as an incentive to idleness, and the Government ought to exercise great care indeed not to subsidise places where the vote was not required. If that vote were not on the Estimates they would not see so many people alleging themselves to be paupers.

Mr. FERGUSON said the money voted for the relief board at Rockhampton had not been handed over to the hospital for ten or fifteen years. It could not be better appropriated for the purpose for which it was voted than it was at the present time. The ladies had regular meetings; they were divided into sub-committees, and there was no relief given until it had come before the meeting. They visited a case to see that it was a proper one for relief before anything was handed over. It was not only the money the Government gave that was spent in that way; they formed collection committees, and took different sections of the town, and collected large sums in addition to what the Government gave. The money would not be so well utilised for the purpose for which it was granted if it were handed over to the hospital. The hospital committee were right enough in their own place, but they would not take the trouble the ladies took, in visiting different people before relief was granted. No hospital committee could attend to the work as well as the ladies did.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he wished to explain that the amount placed on the Estimates for the relief board at Maryborough was administered by a committee of ladies somewhat similarly constituted to that described by the hon. member for Rockhampton. The committee was composed of the most intelligent and respectable female residents at Maryborough. It should be borne in mind in discussing that vote that Maryborough was the centre of a very large and populous district, and that there was no regular benevolent asylum whatever there. The money voted for the relief board was systematically distributed by the ladies forming the committee; they went all over the place, inquired into the cases of the greatest necessity, and relieved them in a kindly manner, such as could not be managed by a hospital committee. The ladies worked in unison with the hospital committee, and were elected by the subscribers to the fund which they administered. He was quite sure that the fund could not be so well administered by a committee of men, and that was admitted by the hospital committee themselves. As a matter of course in a population of 40,000 a good many required relief, but not many were sent from Maryborough to the benevolent institution at Dunwich, for which the sum of £10,138 was voted the previous evening without a murmur. He did hope that the vote would be passed without any difficulty.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that, in reply to the hon. member for Toowoomba, he quite admitted the necessity for the building to which he had referred being erected, and had told the hon. member so on a previous

occasion. He did what he could to get the money asked for placed on the Estimates, but the times were not sufficiently good then. However, he would consult his colleagues and see whether the amount could be put on the Supplementary Estimates.

Mr. NORTON said he quite agreed with what had fallen from some members with regard to the justification of a vote of that kind. It was a very creditable vote, and for that reason he regretted that it was not based on some fixed principle. As it was at present, some districts received more than others in proportion to their size and requirements, and others, again, did not receive any assistance for local relief purposes from the Government. Maryborough, for instance, received £400. He could not imagine that in a prosperous neighbourhood like that so large a sum was required. Rockhampton received £500; but then it had a very large population in the back country and along the Central Railway. All round Maryborough there was a well-to-do population, and there was not the same extent of back country as there was at Rockhampton. Therefore he thought the proportion in the votes for those two places was very unequal. Rockhampton should certainly have more than a fourth more than was given to Maryborough. There was another matter in connection with that estimate which it was only fair to point out. They knew that in many places where a vote was given, private persons had to put their hands into their pockets very freely and dispense charity themselves; that was done very much in Brisbane. But there were also some places which had no assistance whatever from the Government. He would take his own district as an illustration. There was no hospital there, and no relief was given there through boards. He knew that cases sometimes occurred similar to those referred to as arising in other places, and the people had to supply the whole of the funds necessary for their relief. He knew from his own personal experience in the district that a number of cases had arisen in which women lost their husbands or were deserted by their husbands, and the people had put their hands into their pockets and subscribed relief where it was very much needed. They were as much entitled in that district to receive assistance as any other place named in the Estimates. He did not say the whole system upon which the money was granted was inequitable, because there was no system at all. It was a sort of "scratch" affair; money was given in one case and not in another—too much in one case and too little in another. However, he supposed there was no possibility of getting any system introduced in connection with it at the present time. He wished particularly to refer to a matter which appeared to be one that required some explanation. Near the top of the page they found the North Brisbane Benevolent Society set down for £200. There was a note at the foot of the page to the effect that that amount would be paid "conditionally on an equal amount being raised by private subscription." Why should that condition be observed in that case only? It was a simple benevolent society similar to the others, and dispensed relief in the same way as they did, and yet it was required to obtain an equal amount from private subscription to that granted by the Government. He could not understand why there should be any exception. He confessed that it was always a source of some bewilderment to him. He knew that the work it did was very much the same as that done by other societies, and that it was very much in need of money. Yet, unless they got £50 by private subscription they could not get £50 from the Government.

The PREMIER: They have always been quite contented.

Mr. NORTON: No; they have not been at all contented.

The PREMIER: There have never been any complaints.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. gentleman was probably unaware of a circumstance which he thought occurred while he was away. The sum of £100 was advanced to the society, and it was not supposed to be for the half-year then current but for the last half-year. The consequence was that the committee put in an application for another £100, and they were refused on the ground that the sum asked for had already been paid. The result was that the committee were involved in very considerable difficulties which they had to get over in the best way they could. At the present time they were very short of funds, and the amount at their disposal was quite inadequate to meet the demand upon them. He thought it was unfair that the condition to which he had referred should be imposed in their case only, and he would like to hear some explanation of the matter from the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. SHERIDAN said the hon. member for Port Curtis omitted to mention that there was a benevolent society at Rockhampton which got £500 per annum on that vote, as well as the relief board, which also received £500 per annum, while the benevolent society at Maryborough was included in the £400, which was the only sum voted for the whole district. He did not grudge the amount given to Rockhampton, because it was money well expended, and the district required it. At the same time, he thought it was scarcely fair to put Maryborough in juxtaposition with Rockhampton, and omit to mention that Rockhampton received £1,000, whereas Maryborough only got £400.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he believed the explanation of the case mentioned by the hon. member for Port Curtis was that the society wanted more money than was voted for it on the Estimates.

Mr. NORTON said he had reason to know that that was not so. The society had received £100 for the half-year, and were under the impression that it was for the previous half-year, and when they sent in their account for the next half-year the amount was refused, on the ground that they had already received the money—not that there was no money available. It was rather hard that when the society were relieving actual cases of distress they should be denied the privilege given in other places, and that that special condition should be enforced in their case alone.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he might mention that the Ladies' Association of South Brisbane collected several hundred pounds every year for charitable purposes, and received no grant whatever. He wished that all other societies would imitate that excellent example.

Mr. MACFARLANE asked what had been the average number of patients in the lock hospital during the year?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied that the average daily number in Brisbane had been ten.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the establishment seemed to be maintained at a rather extravagant rate. A sum of £1,200 was wanted for the lock hospital, and £500 for a medical officer, to say nothing about the expense of keeping the patients. The number of patients was certainly very large for a place like Brisbane. The city of Glasgow, with a population of three-quarters of a million, had not so many. From inquiries

made by himself, while at home, he learned that in Glasgow, Liverpool, and other large towns the number of patients was nothing at all compared with what it was in Brisbane. That was a very strong reason why the Chief Secretary should take into consideration the advisability of doing away altogether with the Contagious Diseases Act. It would have a very beneficial effect upon the morality of the colony, to say nothing of the saving in expense, if those patients were allowed to present themselves at the hospital when they required medical treatment. The present system was an abominable one. The girls, although fallen, were not quite lost to all delicacy of feeling, and hundreds of them refused to go for medical advice simply because they would have to undergo examination. By doing away with the present system, and allowing them to go freely to the hospital when they required aid, it would be better for them, it would save expense to the colony, and would do away with a great amount of the immorality which now existed. He hoped the subject would be taken into consideration by the Premier, if he again occupied the proud position of head of the Government in the new Parliament, and that something would be done to restore the fair fame of Queensland, which was a byword and disgrace all over the world owing to its retention of that nefarious Act.

Mr. MELLOR said the vote for relief boards was a very necessary one. The discussion had disclosed the idea in the minds of some hon. members that the hospital committees did not dispense the vote in the right manner. That had arisen from the fact that the Ipswich Hospital Committee had not been expending the money in a proper manner, but had been devoting it to the general fund. He knew that in other places hospital committees took a great deal of trouble in expending the money, although he believed it would be still better expended by a committee of ladies. At Gympie the hospital committee took great trouble over the vote, and kept it entirely apart from the general funds of the hospital. It should be for the Government auditor to see whether those moneys were properly expended or not. Even now the Ipswich Hospital Committee were getting £300 a year for relief purposes, and the Colonial Secretary should insist on that money being spent for benevolent purposes, and not for the general purposes of the hospital. Hospitals in general received the large sum of £40,000, being a £2 to £1 subsidy on their subscriptions, and he did not see why any hospital committee should use the benevolent fund entrusted to them for the general purposes of the hospital. That could easily be checked by the Government auditor.

Mr. NORTON said there was one other matter he should like to call the attention of the Government to that he had previously omitted. One hon. member had referred to the work done by the Salvation Army, and he (Mr. Norton) had had an opportunity of ascertaining from a gentleman connected with that body what the work was they were carrying out. He thought all those who inquired into the matter would give the Salvation Army immense credit for the good work they were doing in Brisbane and in other towns of the colony. They were extending their work as their means permitted them to do, and extending it in a way that he thought redounded not only to their credit, but to the credit of the colony itself. Of course they had peculiar methods of carrying out their religious rites, but he was satisfied that the good they were doing in the colony was much greater than they generally got credit for. The "home" they had established in Brisbane

was likely to do a vast amount of good. No assistance whatever was given to them by the Government; he did not know whether they had asked for it; but he did think, when money was being given so largely for charitable purposes, that, whether they asked for it or not, the Government might propose to the Committee to give them a special vote to enable them to carry out their work much more rapidly than they were doing. He believed that no member of the Committee would oppose a vote of £200 or £250 in order to enable that body to carry out their rescue work to a greater extent than they were doing at the present time. He mentioned the matter, because a little time ago he had had a good opportunity of discussing, with a gentleman connected with that body, the work they were doing. It had been extended very much since, and he hoped that the Committee would support him in making a recommendation to the Government to give some assistance to the Salvation Army for the purpose of enabling them to carry out their good work, whether they had asked for it or not.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he had made it his business several times lately to make inquiries as to how the Salvation Army was getting on, and he could assure hon. members that in every instance all he heard redounded to their credit. They were doing a great amount of good in the place, and therefore if any sum of money was placed upon the Estimates for the purpose of subsidising their efforts, he should gladly vote for it, because he held that, whatever their religious tenets might be, they had but one object in view, and that was the benefit of those who required their mediation and assistance.

The PREMIER said he was reluctant to say anything which would add to the discussion on that vote, which had already occupied considerable time, but he thought a proposal to subsidise any religious body was one that ought not to be allowed to pass with general unqualified approbation. For his part he thought it would be introducing a very dangerous principle, and he did not think it would tend to assist or benefit that body whose efforts they all so much appreciated. He thought they were far better free from the State in every way, and hoped they would continue so. At the same time he most heartily sympathised with the work they were doing.

Mr. NORTON said he did not regard the matter as giving assistance to a religious body, because the work they were doing was quite independent of religion. They went to the police court, and with the permission of the police magistrate took away unfortunate girls who were brought there. That had been done repeatedly without any regard to religious feelings or anything of that kind, and they were doing their very best to rescue those unfortunates from the condition into which they had fallen. That was the reason why he thought it desirable that the Government, to whom he gave credit for wishing to benefit that class of people who had fallen so low, should make use of that good instrument for carrying out the work which was being done so effectually by them.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Chief Secretary had just said what he was about to say with regard to the suggestion of the hon. member for Port Curtis. The body that gentleman had spoken about was, no doubt, doing a vast deal of good all over the world wherever it was established. They did it voluntarily and enthusiastically, and his opinion was that once they got into connection with the State they would become demoralised and deteriorate rapidly. They would do their work much better so long as they were unconnected with the

State. There was one matter he should like to have a little information upon. Hospitals, generally, were put down at £40,000, and there was a foot-note to the Estimate which said:—

“Endowment at the rate of £2 for every £1 subscribed, and conditionally on full statements of accounts being rendered to the Colonial Secretary.”

He wished to know if the rule established by that foot-note was carried out?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, it is.

Mr. NORTON: In all cases?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said they had no detailed account of that vote for hospitals generally, which was put down at £40,000. The only details they could get were those published in the Auditor-General's report; the last one did not give details later than December, 1886, and he would like to know whether the answer given by the Colonial Secretary just now applied in the case he was about to mention. Under the head of “Charitable Allowances” the appropriation vote last year was £48,000. The Brisbane Hospital was put down for £8,263 13s. 6d.; that was the first item on the list of charitable allowances. The last item on the same list was “Brisbane Hospital, Government patients, £5,834 7s.” Those two sums amounted to £14,098. £37,000 was spent that year on hospitals generally, of which Brisbane got £14,098 exclusive of what was spent for the children's hospital. What he wanted to know was if the rule to which he had referred applied in that case? He was rather doubtful about it. He did not think that such a large sum had been subscribed in Brisbane as would be necessary for that amount to be paid, and perhaps the Colonial Secretary would be able to correct the statement he had just made with regard to the year 1886.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the £5,834 was for Government patients, who were paid for at the rate of 3s. a day. He might state that all the accounts were duly audited.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not dispute the correctness of the accounts. What he wanted to know was, what was the amount subscribed to the Brisbane Hospital last year?

The PREMIER: Half the sum you mentioned.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Half the £14,000 or half the £8,000?

The PREMIER: Half the £8,000—£2 for £1.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the hon. gentleman was quite sure of that? Had he got that statement before him? Was the amount paid in accordance with the rule established by the foot-note?

The PREMIER: That was the rule of the department.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he knew it was, but he knew also that the rule of that department had been frequently departed from—violated by the department. The hon. gentleman knew that as well as he did.

The PREMIER: It is not done unless there are special circumstances.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that the Brisbane Hospital received an extremely large portion of the £37,000. There was the subsidy of £8,263, and besides that, the Government paid for what were called Government patients a sum of nearly £6,000. Then the Children's Hospital received £1,164, making a total of between £15,000 and £16,000 for Brisbane out of a total vote of

£37,000. He knew a great number of patients came to Brisbane from other parts of the colony, but the same remark applied to the coast towns—Rockhampton, Maryborough, Townsville, and Cooktown—especially to Cooktown. The most costly of those places was Maryborough, whose hospital received £2,095. Ipswich came next with £2,059; but no other half-dozen hospitals received as much as Brisbane. He should like to know the average number of patients attended to daily or weekly in Brisbane, because then he might be able to arrive at a conclusion as to whether the money was well spent, which was a very important matter. The sum was such a large one in comparison with that received by other hospitals that he had doubts as to the money being well spent.

The PREMIER said that the rule as to giving £2 for every £1 subscribed was observed in respect to Brisbane as well as any other place. A large sum was paid for Government patients last year, but that included two or three years' arrears. At the time Sir Arthur Palmer was Colonial Secretary it was arranged that the hospital committee, who were then getting some special aid, should not ask for payment for Government patients unless they were obliged to do so. Since then their expenses had been very great, and they had been obliged to ask for payment which had been made for the period since the middle of 1884, everything before that being wiped off.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he thought the average number of patients in the Brisbane Hospital was about 200, and the average cost per day was about 4s. 6d. all round. The charge for Government patients—namely, 3s. per day—was considerably under the cost.

Mr. MURPHY said he wished to make an appeal to the Colonial Secretary for assistance to the newest hospital in the newest township in the colony—namely, Barcaldine. Two years ago there was not a single building in the place, but since the extension of the Central Railway the place had become a township of considerable importance, and there were often great demands on the charity of the people for assistance from old worn-out bushmen and others. A hospital, called the Victoria Cottage Hospital, had been established there, principally under the management of ladies who had improvised a way of assisting people there; and they were now building a cottage hospital. They had appealed to the Colonial Secretary for a special grant towards their building fund, and had also asked him (Mr. Murphy) to urge their claim when the Charitable vote came before the Committee. Hospitals in the outside districts had almost a greater claim on the sympathy of the Committee than those situated in thickly populated districts, because where the population was large there were wealthy people and large numbers who would put their hands into their pockets to relieve a great deal of distress that never appeared on the surface. In the outside districts the people were not wealthy, and a great number of men suffering from complications of disorders found their way into bush townships, and unless there was a hospital established, they wandered away into the bush and died. Any man who was accustomed to pioneer life knew that hundreds of men perished every year in the bush—old, worn-out men who were unable to drag their weary bones as far as the next station or township. He thought the hospital at Barcaldine was well worthy of a small grant. He did not ask the Colonial Secretary to put a large amount on the Supplementary Estimates, but he hoped he would put a small amount on that year and a little more next year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that £100 had been sent up, but the item did not appear on the Estimates because it was sent up after the Estimates were framed.

Mr. MURPHY said that was for the relief board. What was wanted now was a special grant towards the building fund. There was a lot of expense connected with the establishment of a hospital.

The PREMIER: There are many wealthy people round there too.

Mr. MURPHY said those people subscribed very liberally towards charitable institutions of all kinds.

The PREMIER: And they get £2 from the Government for every £1 subscribed.

Mr. MURPHY said the bulk of the subscriptions come in from the stations, but a great many of the men who went to the hospital received their injuries on the railway. He hoped the Colonial Secretary would look with a favourable eye on his request.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the matter would be dealt with in the same manner as other hospitals. If subscriptions had been collected, and it was shown that something more was wanted for the building, no doubt the Treasurer would see his way to give them something.

Mr. MURPHY said the people were building the hospital themselves. They had not gone to the Government to build it altogether for them. The £2 for £1 which the Government gave was given for the general management and maintenance. As a rule, the Government built the hospitals; but the people at Barcaldine were putting up the building at their own expense. All they asked the Government to do was to supplement their efforts.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said, as the Colonial Secretary had a full statement of the accounts of the hospitals, he would be able to tell them, he presumed, how the Brisbane Hospital compared, as to the cost per head of the patients, with some other hospitals in the colony.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had not that information, and it would take some time to search all the accounts at the Audit Office. He had not expected a question of that sort, or he would have been prepared for it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was certainly very curious. The hon. gentleman had had ever since the last Estimates were on to obtain that particular information. He had a host of clerks at his disposal, and that was the sort of information a Minister should always be in possession of.

The PREMIER: It was never asked for before.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman was mistaken. It had been asked for before. From the statement made by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, he considered the Brisbane Hospital was an expensive affair; 32s. per week for each patient seemed an extremely high cost. The cost of living was not very great in Brisbane, and he did not think the cost of attendance would bring the amount up so high. That was the simple cost of the patients; there was no charge for the building, and he thought the cost need not be more than about 3s. per day.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member for Townsville would find that the country hospitals were quite as costly. In Toowoomba they kept down the expenses as much as they possibly could; but their patients cost them £70 per

annum each, which was very nearly the same as the hon. member for Fortitude Valley said was the cost in Brisbane. And what was more, in the last report of the Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney, which was regularly sent up to the Toowoomba institution, he saw that the cost of each patient was nearly £80 per annum; at least, it was nearer £80 than £70. Perhaps the hon. member was not aware of that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Sydney is no example for us.

Mr. GROOM said he did not suppose that in the Southern Hemisphere they would find a better managed institution than the Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney. He had been all over it. To such an extent was the management carried there, that private patients would pay £5 5s. a week to occupy private wards rather than be treated by a medical man in a private house. Of course they had the system of trained nurses, which he wished was more generally followed in many of the country hospitals in Queensland than at present. Male warders were entirely done away with, and the patients were attended by trained female nurses. The system was carried out in an admirable manner. He had been all over that hospital, and knew something about it, and was supplied with the annual reports on purpose to find out how the institution was going on. The cost of the patients, as he had said before, was between £70 and £80 a year each. He thought, from the statement of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, that patients only cost 4s. 6d. a head per day in Brisbane, so far from the institution being an extravagantly managed one, it was, under the circumstances, very economically managed. So far as they were concerned in Toowoomba, they had to cut down their expenses, and could not undertake the management of patients for less than £70 per annum.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was rather surprised to hear the statement made by the hon. member for Toowoomba. He believed the hospital at Ipswich was one of the best managed in the colony, and from all reports the expense there was only 3s. per day, one of the reasons being that they did not use so much grog as some of the other hospitals did, and they were all the better for it. He knew that a greater amount of grog was consumed in some of the other hospitals in the colony.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not by the patients.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he believed the hon. member for Townsville was right—it was not consumed by the patients. He was perfectly well aware that a great amount of grog was consumed. Two years ago he had called for a return showing the amount consumed in all the hospitals in the colony, but he had never seen it. He supposed it was so alarming that the then Colonial Treasurer was afraid to have it presented. He was not sure whether he would not call for it again if he happened to be in the House next year, when he hoped he would be more successful than last time. It was a matter worthy of consideration to look into those things and see which hospitals were extravagantly conducted and which were cheaply conducted, and to find out the reasons. They might have a committee of inquiry into the matter. It would go a long way to make the patients more comfortable than they were under the present system.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Colonial Secretary considered that the amount he was asking for hospitals and relief boards was sufficient for the year?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.
1887—4 H

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said they spent a great deal more than that two years ago when the population was at least two years' accumulation less.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said £36,974 was spent during the last financial year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that during the year 1885-6 the amount spent was £48,529.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that a sum not exceeding £4,285 be granted for Medical Officers—salaries and contingencies. The vote was the same as last year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that last year when the vote was going through he brought under the notice of the Chief Secretary the salary of the medical officer at Townsville, which was £250 a year, and he pointed out that owing to the duties that gentleman had to perform he should at least be placed on an equality with the medical officer at Rockhampton. The hon. gentleman promised then that that should be done, but he must have forgotten his promise, because the salary remained at the same rate, and the officer's work had certainly not decreased, seeing that the population had largely increased. He thought that £250 a year was far too small a salary to be paid to a gentleman holding that position.

The PREMIER said he did not remember making any distinct promise on the subject. He had a recollection of the hon. gentleman calling attention to the subject, and his assenting to the proposition that the work was at least as great as at Rockhampton. If he made any distinct promise he had forgotten it. He did not think the gentleman at Townsville had made any representation to the Government on the subject. As things were now, if an officer was contented with his remuneration the Government were not disposed to increase it.

Mr. BLACK said there were certain inequalities in the vote. The medical officer at Cooktown received £200 a year. He was not aware that he had made any representations to the Government.

The PREMIER: He is very well paid.

Mr. BLACK said when they considered that the medical officer at Thursday Island received £400—

The PREMIER: He has no opportunity of private practice.

Mr. BLACK said he could assure the Chief Secretary that the officer there did a very good thing out of private practice. He did not know for what reason the salary of the medical officer at Thursday Island was raised in 1885 from £300 to £400 a year.

The PREMIER: Because we could not get a man for less.

Mr. BLACK said, assuming the necessity of having an efficient medical officer there, the present gentleman did not fulfil the requirements. He took it for granted that it was considered necessary to have an efficient medical officer at Thursday Island. That was the first port of call for vessels coming through Torres Straits. He contended the medical officer did no more than the police magistrate or collector of Customs did. He declined to incur any risk in the inspection of vessels. He (Mr. Black) spoke from experience. The hon. member for Cook might have some reason for questioning his statements, but he said that if a medical officer at a high salary was necessary at Thursday Island—a point that he was not prepared to dispute—then the present gentleman holding the position did not fulfil the requirements. He did nothing for his £400 a year. He believed it was necessary to have an efficient

medical officer at Thursday Island, but the gentleman there did not do the work which he believed the Government anticipated he would do. He declined to accept any responsibility, although in receipt of the high pay of £400 a year. He did not go on board the vessels. He sent them on to Cooktown in quarantine. That was what he did in the case of the "Bulimba."

The PREMIER: That was because there was disease on board.

Mr. BLACK said then what was the use of the medical officer if he refused to inspect shipping? The Chief Secretary said there was disease on board, but how was it when they arrived at Cooktown that the medical officer, without any hesitation, came on board, and at once granted pratique? He maintained that it interfered with the trade and commerce of the whole of the colony if vessels were subjected to unnecessary delays through the inefficiency of the medical officer. If it was necessary to have a medical officer there at a high salary he should accept the responsibilities connected with that position. Hon. members might think there was some serious disease on board the ship he referred to, but the fact was there was a child twenty months old convalescent of measles; that was all the disease on board, and the medical officer came alongside the ship, and would not even come on board. He would not accept the evidence of the ship's officer that there was no contagious disease on board, and that the passengers were all healthy; but he ordered the yellow flag to be hoisted, and the ship to go into Cooktown in quarantine. Hon. gentlemen must not think that he was referring to the case in consequence of any personal inconvenience that he suffered; it had not that effect upon him, but it proved a serious inconvenience to other passengers. There were a gentleman and his wife on board—a missionary, who was going to Murray Island—and a vessel was waiting to take him off at Thursday Island; but he and his wife were not allowed to land. They were put to considerable inconvenience and expense by being taken on to Cooktown and landed there. He did not see why the medical officer at Thursday Island, in receipt of £400 a year, should not be expected to perform his duties in an intelligent manner. He had been away for some time on leave of absence, and the duties of that station were well performed by the Collector of Customs; if he had any doubt as to the health of a ship he would send it on to Cooktown. He (Mr. Black) believed that the Government were perfectly right in adopting every reasonable means to prevent any infectious disease being introduced into the colony, and Thursday Island was the first place where strict supervision was necessary, but to have a medical officer who would not go on board was perfectly absurd. The same thing happened to the next ship that called there—the "Duke of Devonshire," which was sent in quarantine to Cooktown. Most hon. gentlemen were familiar with Thursday Island and the conditions prevailing amongst the shipping there. Ships generally took a pilot on board at Proudfoot Shoal, but he landed again at Thursday Island, and thus connected with the shore. Now, if there was any risk of communicating the disease to the shore from that particular ship, was the pilot not just as likely to communicate it as the medical officer, or any other person? That was what actually took place; a steamer took a pilot on board at Proudfoot Shoal, and he went ashore sometimes at Thursday Island—sometimes he went back to Proudfoot Shoal, but he went on to the next ship that came, and took it on to Thursday Island. The fact was, the quarantine regulations there

were ridiculous and interfered very much with trade. The point was that if it was necessary to have a medical officer at a large salary appointed at Thursday Island, they should require him to do something for it. He had, in addition to his salary, private practice, as every accident that occurred was attended to by him, and he was in a position to charge very good fees, being the only medical man in the place. It was the duty of the Government to exercise economy, and if they could not reduce that vote they should at all events get an efficient medical man for the position. He did not object to the amount of the salary, but he objected to its being paid to a gentleman who did not perform the duty which he believed the Government thought he did perform. He hoped the Government would make some inquiry into the matter. He had no particular animus against the medical officer at Thursday Island, and he had never seen him before until he saw him sitting in the stern of the boat. Some cargo was landed from the ship in a lighter after being fumigated, and he did not know what became of it. The missionary and his wife, to whom he had referred, had some twenty tons of cargo for Murray Island, and it had to be landed without an agent to look after it, and they had themselves to go on to Cooktown at great personal inconvenience, and at an expense they were ill able to afford in the position in which they were. The Premier could have all he had referred to substantiated by communicating with the police magistrate at Thursday Island, or from various sources. If it was thought necessary to have ships sent on in quarantine to Cooktown, that was the place at which an efficient medical officer should be stationed, and where the higher salary should be attached to the office. That was a matter with which gentlemen down here were not familiar, and he had not exaggerated the case in a single particular. Hon. members would certainly consider that he was only doing what was justifiable in calling attention to that matter when it came under his notice. If a matter of the kind occurred down here there would be a howl of indignation throughout the southern part of the colony about it. But it was a matter which had occurred at a great distance away and the circumstances in connection with it were susceptible of great improvement.

The PREMIER said the hon. member had taken a quarter of an hour to tell the Committee what he could have told them in half-a-minute. What did it amount to? The health officer at Thursday Island made what the hon. member considered an error of judgment. He did not himself think it was an error of judgment. A vessel came in there from the high seas with an infectious disease on board, and that was told to the medical officer when he went alongside. What advantage would it have been for him to go on board? He would only have had to come down the side of the ship again. What earthly object was there to be gained by his going up the side of the ship and down again into his boat? The fact to be ascertained was whether or not there was any infectious disease on board. There was no doubt about that, and yet the hon. member complained that the health officer did not go on board. He would have gained nothing by it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Somebody else would have gained.

The PREMIER said nobody else would have gained anything. He had already ascertained that there was an infectious disease on board. The hon. member considered measles a trifling matter, and he remembered that he himself had some doubts whether that ship should be quarantined. Instructions were given all the way down the coast to the medical officers at the different ports

of call as to what they were to do with respect to that ship, and it was a matter in which a good deal of judgment had to be exercised. If the disease had been introduced at Thursday Island amongst the coloured population there, there might have been very great mortality. He did not think the health officer was guilty of any error of judgment under the circumstances in sending the ship on to Cooktown. In the meantime the matter was reported here, and he had had the advantage of the advice of other officers, and instructions were given to the medical officers at all the ports on the coast to see that as little inconvenience as possible was caused to the passengers of that vessel. As to the pilots going on board, they did not go on board at Proudfoot Shoal.

Mr. BLACK: They did not?

The PREMIER: No. There might be one come on board from Proudfoot Shoal casually, but the pilots came on board at Goode Island. There would not be much danger in the pilot, who just went on to the bridge of the vessel and off again, carrying with him infection from measles. There might be some danger if he were to go down into the cabin of the vessel.

Mr. DONALDSON: Passengers were allowed to land with measles in the South.

The PREMIER said there was then no provision for isolation at Thursday Island, but provision was made now for isolating people there, although he believed it was not desirable to quarantine people there under any circumstances if it could be avoided. He thought that in that particular instance the medical officer had acted with considerable discretion and judgment, no matter what he might have done in other cases.

Mr. DONALDSON said there had been considerable vagaries indulged in by medical officers with regard to measles. Only a few months ago the "Merkara" came down the coast with some passengers suffering from measles. Some of them were allowed to land at Northern ports, and some at Rockhampton, but when they came down here the cabin passengers, including children, were allowed to land, and the single people were also allowed to land, but the rest were sent into quarantine at Peel Island. He was on board the vessel on that occasion, and he was informed that the disease broke out in that part of the ship occupied by the single people. Yet those people and the cabin passengers were allowed to land. He could not understand the justice in that case. It was a very fortunate occurrence for him, because he was a cabin passenger from Rockhampton at the time.

The PREMIER: When was that?

Mr. DONALDSON: In last January, before the hon. gentleman went home.

The PREMIER: I never heard of it.

Mr. DONALDSON said the disease was found out on board that vessel when she got to Cooktown, and some of the passengers were allowed to land at each of the Northern ports, and at Rockhampton, and, as he had stated, when the vessel arrived in Brisbane only the cabin passengers and the single people were allowed to land, and the rest were quarantined, though they had all mixed while on board the vessel. That, he thought, was a very strange proceeding indeed.

Mr. BLACK said the Premier had said there was a contagious disease on board the vessel to which he had referred, but he had himself seen the medical officer's paper, in which he stated there was a child which had been suffering from measles, but was convalescent.

He was very glad to hear that the matter had received the serious consideration of the Premier, and that the hon. gentleman had given instructions that the passengers should not be subjected to any unnecessary inconvenience on the way down the coast. He would like to know when the hon. gentleman heard of it, or how it was that some passengers were put to inconvenience. He would ask the hon. gentleman when he heard of the matter, and what steps he took?

The PREMIER said that as soon as the vessel arrived at Thursday Island the facts were communicated by telegraph from Thursday Island. He believed the telegraph line was open then, but, at all events, the facts were communicated at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. BLACK said he would point out to the hon. gentleman that the line was not open, and that was where the point was. When they got to Cooktown, long before the Chief Secretary could have known anything about the case, the medical officer there had exactly the same report presented to him by the medical officer on board the "Bulimba," and without any hesitation came on board, examined the passengers, found them perfectly healthy, and immediately ordered the yellow flag, which had been flying from Thursday Island, to be hauled down, and granted the ship pratique. Now, he thought he had made out a very good case, showing the inconvenience to which people in that far-distant part of the colony were apt to be subjected, notwithstanding the good intentions of the Chief Secretary. No doubt the hon. gentleman thought he had heard something about it, and that he had had communications with the health officer from Thursday Island; but it was a significant fact that the telegraph was not then open; and that the medical officer at Cooktown did adopt a sensible view of the case, and immediately granted pratique.

The PREMIER said he must have been confusing the case the hon. member mentioned with an exactly similar case which happened after the line was opened, and in which the medical officer at Thursday Island did exactly the same thing. The complaint of the hon. member now resolved itself into this: that the health officer at Cooktown in the exercise of his discretion, three days after the ship arrived at Thursday Island, came to a different conclusion from the conclusion the health officer at Thursday Island arrived at under different circumstances.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he wanted to say something more about the health officer at Townsville. The Chief Secretary said that gentleman had not complained to the Government. Very likely he thought it would be perfectly useless to complain to the Government.

The PREMIER: He has never been backward.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Who is he?

The PREMIER: Dr. Ahearne. He has never been backward in making any communications to me.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked whether the Premier would adhere to the promise he gave last year?

The PREMIER said he could not give any definite assurance that he would make any addition to the amount asked for on the Estimates. Dr. Ahearne had had a year's leave of absence, and a very nice trip to England, and under the circumstances he might be contented with his salary. He (the Premier) thought he was quite content.

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL BOARD OF HEALTH.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that £800 be granted for the Central Board of Health. The amount was the same as last year.

Mr. NORTON said he did not know whether the Government were satisfied with the work which was being done by the Central Board of Health. It appeared from reports that were published from time to time in the papers that they were at loggerheads with the municipal council, from the fact that they were not able to do more than make recommendations.

The PREMIER said that by the provisions of the Health Act the Central Board of Health was intended to be an advisory and not an executive body. He did not think it would be at all practicable to give a nominee body of that kind executive authority all over the colony; it would not be tolerated. They were an advisory body to advise the Government, and though he believed they thought they ought to have executive authority, he would not be a party to consent to it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: We pay dearly for their advice.

The PREMIER said that it was advisable that the Government should have such a body to advise them, even though the Government did not always follow their advice. For instance, they advised the other day that all persons suffering from diphtheria should be quarantined, and also all children with croup. The Government did not see their way to accept that recommendation. That was an instance in which the Government might fairly differ from the Board of Health, but it was absolutely necessary that there should be a competent body of men to advise the Government.

Mr. NORTON said he agreed it was desirable that there should be a competent body, but the hon. gentleman's statement suggested that the Board of Health were not competent. He was quite aware that those gentlemen wanted executive powers, which he did not think they should get; but he did think that when the country paid them £800 a year it should get something more from them than the advice the hon. gentleman referred to. They wanted a practical body of men, who would not make suggestions of that kind, but who would take the more serious subjects into consideration. The idea of taking from their homes children suffering from diphtheria was preposterous. They might just as well suggest that persons with measles should be quarantined.

The PREMIER: They are very indignant that the advice was not accepted.

Mr. NORTON said he referred to the subject because he thought the public were not satisfied with the way in which the Central Board of Health carried out their work. He did not wish to say anything against them, but there was something connected with the Board of Health which seemed to make it an unfit body to do the work satisfactorily.

Mr. MURPHY said he thought the constitution of that board might very well be altered. It was all very well for the Premier to say that the Central Board of Health should not be an executive body, but they had an instance in the colonies of a central board of health which was an executive body, and that was the central board of health in Victoria. There they had a central board of health and local boards of health. The central board of health had supreme authority, and where they heard of any nuisance in any locality up the country or anywhere else, they had the power to force the local board of health to abate it. He did not see why the Central Board of Health here should not have the same executive

power given to them. The board in Victoria had the power to deal with all nuisances; they had the regulation of all buildings and all drains, and there was no reason why the board here should not be constituted in a similar manner. There was one matter that evidently wanted attention in this city—a matter which was dealt with by the central board of health in Victoria—and that was the regulation of all public buildings. It was the duty of that board to see that all theatres and other places of public amusement were fit for the purposes for which they were used. No person could put up a building for public purposes of any kind in Victoria unless the plans of the building were first approved by the central board of health. He thought that seeing the unsafe buildings there were in this city in which large audiences were allowed to assemble, it was time they took steps to have those buildings put under some control, and that no person should be allowed to erect a building in the city, whether for the purposes of public worship or amusement, in which large audiences were likely to assemble, until the plans had been approved by some competent authority. It was quite evident that they had no authority in Brisbane capable of dealing with that matter, because he noticed that only the other day the *Courier* hall—a very unsafe place in which to hold performances of any kind—was licensed by the Colonial Secretary. He (Mr. Murphy) thought that after the discussion they had had upon the subject, the hon. gentleman was certainly not right in granting a license for that building. No performance should be allowed to be held in any building that was not isolated. Every theatre and every building in which public performances were to be held should be isolated, as unless the exits from a hall were made into the open air they could not possibly have safety. If the exits ran into passages, and the people had to struggle down long passages to get out of the building, more accidents would occur there than on the staircase or in the doorways. It was absolutely essential that all exits from theatres should go straight from each portion of the building into the open air, and the doors should be very wide and open outwards. The staircase should all be made of stone, and there should be at least four exits from every portion of the house if it was a theatre, and four or more from any public hall, according to its size and the audience the hall would hold. In theatres the greatest danger arose from fire breaking out on the stage amongst the scenery. Every theatre should therefore be fitted with a fireproof curtain, so that in case of fire breaking out on the stage the curtain could be dropped and thus prevent the fire spreading to the auditorium. He had a letter in his hand which was written to him by the managing director of the *Courier* immediately after he brought that matter before the House on a previous occasion. The letter was apparently an official one, as it was written on the official paper of the "*Courier*, *Queenslander*, and *Daily Observer* Offices, Queen and Edward streets, Brisbane," and was signed "C. Hardie Buzacott." He would read that letter for the purpose of showing how little that gentleman realised the danger there was in assembling large audiences in a building like the *Courier* Hall. It was as follows:—

"Brisbane, 8th September, 1887.

"DEAR SIR,

"In your observations to the Legislative Assembly yesterday you tacitly charged me with breach of faith, and quite omitted to mention what I very distinctly told you yesterday—namely, that we had determined to put in a large staircase, providing exit at the rear of the building. It is impossible that you could have misunderstood me, as I pointed out to you, when in company with Messrs. Black and Nelson, the place where the staircase was intended to be built.

"I cannot object to your discussing the quality of the *Courier* building, although it would be less invidious if you included in your remarks some other large public buildings used or intended for public assemblages, much more dangerous than the *Courier* building is. The room which monopolises your solicitude is only 17 feet above Queen street, and is provided with many windows from which escape could be improvised in a few minutes."

That last paragraph showed conclusively how little that gentleman realised the position in which he was placing a large number of people by allowing that building to be used for public purposes. He drew the Colonial Secretary's attention to the matter particularly, because it must show him how wrong he was in issuing a license to allow audiences to assemble in such a building as that. He only took the *Courier* building as an instance, showing in what danger people would put large audiences. There was only one staircase in a room in which 1,600 people might assemble, and it was 4 feet 9 inches wide in the clear, and when people got down the staircase they would have to traverse a long passage twice as long as that Chamber. Some fearful accident would happen there some day. He called attention to it as a matter of duty, fearless of whom he might offend. He did not care twopence whether he offended the *Courier*, or Charles Hardie Buzacott, or any other man. He would continue to draw attention to the matter until he had forced the Government or the House to bring in some measure dealing with the subject generally. The Premier might think that he was wasting time, but he did not think he was, and he certainly would continue it. If he succeeded by continually knocking at the door in inducing the Government at last to bring in a measure dealing with the question, he would think himself very well rewarded for his trouble, and he was sure the general community would thank him for what he had done in the matter. He would finish reading that letter, because there was a remote reference to his friend Mr. Lumley Hill, which that hon. member would, perhaps, like to hear. It ran as follows:—

"I do not wish to discuss this point with you, however; but cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that you hold the managing director up to public obloquy, and giving a political Goth like Mr. Lumley Hill the opportunity to insinuate a gross libel upon the managing director of the *Courier* was a proceeding not becoming a gentleman of your position."

"I am, dear sir,

"Yours truly,

"C. HARDIE BUZACOTT.

"F. R. Murphy, Esq., M.L.A."

He hoped the Premier would see his way to do something in the matter. He did not know exactly what the powers of the Board of Health were in that respect, but there was a clause in the Victorian Health Act which gave the whole of the powers of their central board of health in a nutshell. That body had power over all public buildings, and to show that it specially included buildings like the *Courier* Hall, he would read the subsection which defined what a public building was:—

"For the purposes of this section, the words 'public building,' wherever herein mentioned, shall mean and include any hospital or benevolent or other asylum, or any theatre, opera house, concert room, music or assembly hall, whether forming part of or appurtenant to a licensed public-house or not, or any church, chapel, or meeting-house, or any building, structure, circus tent, gallery, or platform in or upon which numbers of persons are usually or occasionally assembled for the purpose of public amusement."

If some clause of that kind were introduced into the Queensland Health Act, enabling the board to deal with buildings of that kind, it would, perhaps, avert a great calamity.

Mr. BLACK asked how, £1,144 19s. 11d. having been expended last year on that vote, it was proposed this year to spend only £800? Also, how the vote of last year came to be exceeded by nearly 50 per cent.?

The PREMIER said the sum actually expended last year was £1,116.

Mr. BLACK said he would give the hon. gentleman the advantage of the figures, although it was stated in Appendix B No. 2 of the Auditor-General's report to be £1,144 19s. 11d. The sum of £800 having been voted last year, what necessity was there for the additional expenditure between £800 and £1,116?

Mr. NELSON said that while the Premier was finding out the answer to the question asked by the hon. member for Mackay he would call attention to another matter. They had a ruling from the Speaker lately with regard to the reading of letters commenting on the conduct of members of the House. It seemed to him that the writer of the letter read by the hon. member for Barcoo had committed a gross breach of privilege. The letter commented very strongly on some action which the hon. member for Barcoo had previously taken in that Chamber, and reflected very seriously upon the hon. member. The question was, whether it was right or not to allow such a letter to be read to the House, and to pass unnoticed?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he thought the hon. member for Northern Downs was quite correct in what he had said. The managing director of that treble-barrelled organ, the Brisbane Newspaper Company, Limited, had written a threatening sort of letter as far the hon. member for Barcoo was concerned, and an abusive one as far as he (Mr. Lumley Hill) was concerned, calling him a "political Goth." He really thought the writer of that letter ought to be brought before the bar of the House and indicted for breach of privilege, and then hon. members might be allowed to deal with him as they deemed fit. The writer ought to consider that he had quite sufficient power in his hands, with his three organs, without writing private letters to personal friends of his own. As far as he was concerned, the writer of that letter might abuse him as much as he pleased, and call him a "political Goth" in his newspaper. He did not care the least bit in the world for that, but he objected to having letters sent to his private friends outside the House, and being described therein in offensive terms. There was no doubt it was meant to be an offensive term. In the meantime, while the Chief Secretary was spelling out the question asked by the hon. member for Mackay, he should like to ask the Colonial Secretary whether he had given a license to that newspaper man to hold public meetings, concerts, and entertainments in a hall so eminently unfit for such purposes, that the managing director himself described it as having ample means of exit through windows seventeen feet above the pavement? In his own letter he described the exit in case of panic or fire as being seventeen feet only above the Queen-street pavement. Why, the man must be an idiot to put such a statement in writing himself. What a pity it was that almost the monopoly of the Press of that city should be in the hands of a man who could write himself down such an ass in his own letter as to say that there were ample means of exit through the windows seventeen feet above the pavement! Hon. members could fancy an unfortunate assembly of people crowding out of those windows and finding themselves upon the pavement in Queen street, seventeen feet below. He should like to know from the Colonial Secretary if he had given permission for that hall to be licensed,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had stated before that the license had been issued.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: When?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: A short time ago.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: After the warning you received?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I received no warning.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that the House and the Colonial Secretary were warned, and well warned, of the unfitness of that building; and, in the face of all the disasters they had seen recorded in the home papers—the disaster at the Theatre Royal, Exeter—the disaster at the Paris comedy house—with all those examples before his eyes, the hon. gentleman was so utterly regardless of the safety of the people of the colony, that he coolly and deliberately licensed a hall in that building which was obviously manifestly unfit. A more abject confession of incapacity he had never heard in all his life.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said he would say nothing with regard to the letter that had been read from the managing director of the *Courier*, but he considered, in all fairness, as he knew something about that room, that he should state what he thought about it. He thought that if all other buildings where the public gathered for purposes of amusement were as safe as the *Courier* Hall, there would be no reason for alarm in the slightest degree. It was utterly impossible for a fire to originate in that room.

Mr. MURPHY said the hon. the Attorney-General had stated that it was utterly impossible for a fire to break out in that room, but it was not necessary for a fire to break out in the house at all to cause an alarm. Anybody might cry "Fire," and that would be quite sufficient to cause a panic. A thief might cry "Fire," for the purpose of picking people's pockets, and that might cause a panic which would be almost as bad as a fire. They knew that the room had a fire-proof floor, but below that room, on the basement there were two steam-engines at work; there was a lot of cotton waste used about them, and cotton waste was subject to spontaneous combustion. There were also large quantities of paper, which, if damp, was also liable to fire. And although the room in which audiences assembled had a fire-proof floor, it must be remembered that there were two large openings running from the machinery portion of the building right up to the top of it. He alluded to the spaces in which the lift worked. Those two places would act as two chimneys if a fire broke out below. There would be an enormous rush of air right up those openings which would fire the building from top to bottom instantly. Fire, or even smoke, rushing up through those two openings would excite a panic. Then the flats were split up by wooden partitions, which would be at once set on fire by the draught rushing up. But it did not require anything of that kind to cause a panic. A very little thing might at any moment cause a panic in that building, and the result would be most disastrous.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, in reply to the hon. member for Mackay, he might explain that the Central Board of Health had sent home for certain sanitary appliances, which were now in their care.

Mr. BLACK asked if the Central Board of Health had the sanction of the hon. gentleman's department for sending home for those sanitary appliances?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes.

Mr. BLACK: Did the Colonial Secretary anticipate that they would send home for any more sanitary appliances? It seemed a very suspicious circumstance that the hon. gentleman himself was not aware of that one expenditure until he (Mr. Black) pointed it out to him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, of course, the matter went through the office, but, like other people, he sometimes forgot things.

Mr. NELSON said at page 34 of the Auditor-General's report he found a list of expenditure which was authorised by the Governor in Council, but there was no notice of that item in it. That, he fancied, was the reason why the hon. member for Mackay had drawn attention to it. There was only £800 voted, and the amount actually spent, as against that vote, was £1,173. The Colonial Secretary had authority from the Governor in Council to expend £23,542, but there was no notice of anything connected with the Board of Health amongst the items.

Mr. BULCOCK asked the Colonial Secretary how often the members of the Central Board of Health met and what fees they received for each meeting?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the board met when they were summoned.

Mr. NORTON: By whom?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: By the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. BULCOCK: What are the fees?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Two guineas.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: How many of them are there?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Six, and the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. NORTON said if the hon. gentleman desired to economise he would summon the board as seldom as possible; in fact, he did not think that they would lose much if they were only summoned once a year. Speaking seriously, some change was seriously required in the constitution of the Central Board of Health, which, according to the statement of the Chief Secretary, was not working satisfactorily. He would like to ask if it was under consideration to make any change with regard to the Board of Health.

The PREMIER said the secretary of the board, Dr. Wray, was also health officer in Brisbane. At present he performed the duties of Dr. Hobbs, who was absent on leave after many years' service. No change would be made until Dr. Hobbs's leave expired. In the meantime the secretary of the Board of Health did not do very much work in that capacity, but his time was fully occupied in doing Dr. Hobbs's work as well as his own. He received £800 altogether—£400 as secretary to the Board of Health, and £400 for acting as Government medical officer. In his opinion the efficiency of the Central Board of Health depended very much on an energetic secretary, who should be a sort of executive officer; but though Dr. Wray was a very good officer in many respects, he was sorry to say that he was not the man to efficiently perform the duties of secretary to a board of health. He did good work as a medical man, but the work of a secretary was not his forte.

Mr. NORTON said that medical men did not make good secretaries, and from what he had heard he thought the sooner a change was made the better. It seemed rather much that Dr. Wray should have two offices and receive £400 a year for each when there was so little to do in connection with the Central Board of Health.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the Premier told the Committee previously that the Central Board of Health was intended to be a board of advice, but now he said he expected the secretary to be an executive officer.

The PREMIER: To do all the work connected with getting information and all that sort of thing. Call him a quasi-executive officer if you like.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he thought it would be very much better if the Central Board of Health had executive power, and could have their instructions carried out without reference to the Government. Was Dr. Hobbs granted leave on full pay or on half-pay?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: On full pay.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he thought a resolution was passed some time ago preventing Civil servants from getting full pay while absent on leave. The Surveyor-General, Mr. Tully, a very efficient officer, lately went away for a well-earned holiday, but that officer only received half-pay; and he did not see why Dr. Hobbs should be allowed to go on full pay.

The PREMIER said the circumstances were very exceptional, and it was not likely that there would be another case of the kind in the Civil Service. Dr. Hobbs had been in the Government service for more than twenty-five years, his health was failing, and he had been granted leave of absence on full pay. Any other Government in power would have done exactly the same under the circumstances.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he had known Dr. Hobbs to be in the public service since 1853, and he had always performed his duties with credit to himself, and to the great benefit of the public.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said that some time ago the Premier undertook that no Civil servant should receive leave of absence on full pay. Dr. Hobbs received £500 a year as medical officer of Brisbane, and £52 for visiting the Diamantina Orphanage; he was allowed the right of private practice, and he had enjoyed a good practice all the time. Mr. Tully had no private practice, but he received only half-pay while he was absent; and why Dr. Hobbs should receive full pay was more than he (Mr. Hill) could see.

Mr. McMASTER said it was to be hoped that the Government would not give executive power to the Central Board of Health. If they had possessed executive power some time ago they would have quarantined those children supposed to be suffering from diphtheria, though they could not agree amongst themselves as to the cause of the disease. Some said it was caused by filth; but as a matter of fact it existed on the heights of the city as well as in the low parts, and in places that were perfectly clean as well as in dirty places. He should like to know where the models or patterns that had cost £300 were kept?

The PREMIER: At their office.

Mr. McMASTER said it seemed absurd to spend £200 or £300 on models, and then keep them in their office, especially when they knew that the sanitary question was one of the most vexed questions the municipal council had to deal with for years. He thought the vote might be very well cut down. As far as the secretary was concerned, no doubt he was a very efficient medical man, but he thought a non-professional man could be got to act as secretary at a less salary. The board's inspector, Mr. Marlow, was quite competent to do the work, and he might as well be appointed to the position. He hoped the Colonial Secretary would insist on those

models—if they were worth anything—being sent out to the local authorities, so that they might know what they were getting for the £300.

Question put and passed.

SMALLPOX HULK "BEATRICE."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that £200 be granted for the smallpox hulk "Beatrice."

Mr. NORTON asked if that amount was to be spent every year?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that was the first time it had appeared on the Estimates.

Mr. NORTON said: Was it anticipated to be a continual charge?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the amount was for maintenance and for the salary of the caretaker. It was only an estimate of the cost.

Question put and passed.

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY, in moving that £2,250 be granted in aid of Schools of Arts, said the amount voted last year was £4,000; but it was now proposed to reduce the subsidy to 10s. for every £1.

Mr. W. BROOKES said it was very extraordinary that £1,750 should be taken away from their literary and intellectual institutions, while at the same time the Government proposed to waste some £30,000 upon a very worthless, swampy, malarial piece of land. He decidedly thought they were not so impecunious as to require that reduction from institutions which were doing such good service. They were about the only educational institutions that their adult population and the population growing up to adult age had. Now, there had been some talk about a university. He believed it was Thomas Carlyle who said the best university was a free public library, and he (Mr. Brookes) was very much of that opinion, and hoped that the schools of arts of Brisbane and in the various towns in the colony would develop in time into that. Even at the present time, in every case the fee was so small as to be within the reach of everybody; but they were not free libraries in the ordinary sense of the word. He regarded public libraries as essential centres of educational influence. What they wanted in the colony more than anything else was intelligence and information such as would induce an interest in political matters and social matters and others. Yet there was a deliberate attempt to diminish by nearly one-half the fund at the disposal of those invaluable institutions. He regarded the proposal to reduce the revenues of those institutions with very profound regret.

Mr. GROOM said there was one aspect of the case which he did not know whether the Chief Secretary had taken into consideration, and that was this: that the committees of some of those institutions, not anticipating that there would be any reduction in the subsidy, had sent home orders for books, being under the impression that they would receive the full amount.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I presume that they will pay for them; they ought to.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member said he supposed they would pay for them, but at the same time it would be a great tax—it threw them out altogether in their calculations. He was one of those who believed those institutions were doing a great deal of good. In fact, he knew they were, and he was very sorry indeed that the exigencies of the financial situation of the colony

demanding the reduction. He was sorry to hear the interjection of the hon. member for Townsville, as he thought he ought to have every regard for those institutions. He did not think that hon. gentleman would like to abridge the usefulness of those institutions. From his (Mr. Groom's) knowledge of them for many years past, they were exceedingly useful to the general community, particularly in bush towns, where they were the only sources of reading and the only places in which books of reference were accessible. He wished that those libraries were free in their towns, or that the local authorities were in a position to levy a library rate, upon the principle of the Free Libraries Act of England. He would like to see that measure introduced here with all his heart, and would cheerfully assist in passing an Act of that kind. But, without such an Act, the institutions they had at present were the only ones of the kind where they could get books of reference. Although he was aware that the Colonial Treasurer had to make those institutions suffer, still he thought it would have been wiser if the amount had only been reduced for six months, because he knew that the proposed reduction would throw a great many institutions out of their calculations through their not anticipating anything of the sort.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he would like to say a word about what had been referred to by the junior member for North Brisbane and the junior member for Toowoomba. He would suggest that, when the Cabinet determined to reduce the vote, things were very much worse in the colony than they were now, and perhaps the Government might be able to place a sum on the Supplementary Estimates to replace what had been taken away, so that the institutions would get the full amount.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would point out that the next vote that would come on for discussion was much too small for the purpose for which it was intended. There was an item there for elections—£500. The elections during the present year would cost a great deal more than that; they would cost somewhere about £8,000; so that the vote was actually £7,500 too little.

Mr. NORTON said he did not doubt that that was the case, but at the same time schools of arts were the only educational institutions in the whole colony, and a great deal could be said in their favour.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: There is novel-reading there.

Mr. NORTON said novel-reading was not always bad; but there was other literature to be obtained, the weekly and daily papers and periodicals, which contained a great deal of educational information, and which were read by a large number of the subscribers to those institutions. Now, he thought it was rather hard that the vote should be cut down for the sake of a few hundred pounds. He did not wish to encourage extravagance, but he thought other items could have stood reduction much better than that one. The people inland were shut off from circulating libraries and many other advantages, and it seemed rather hard that they should be deprived of the benefits conferred by schools of arts.

Mr. PALMER asked the Colonial Secretary if the sum of £4,000, voted last year, was all expended?

The PREMIER: And £1,100 more.

Mr. PALMER said that in that case he took it for granted that a great many of the schools of arts would have to subsidise altogether.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he rose to express his regret that any diminution of the vote should take place. Speaking of the Maryborough School of Arts he might say that for some years past it had been literally a free library. The hall of the institution had been opened to all people provided they were introduced by a member; so that that institution might almost claim to be the first free reading-room or library in the colony. He exceedingly regretted that the amount should be reduced.

Mr. W. BROOKES said he would not have risen except for what fell from the hon. member for Townsville. So far as he understood the hon. member he said that the schools of arts in the country districts were repositories of novels. He did not think the hon. member meant that, but hon. members would agree with him when he said that the country schools of arts were the only places where people could consult atlases, encyclopædias, dictionaries, and other large works, which they understood to be entirely books of reference. He considered such institutions, even though they presented to the subscribers novels and works of that nature, were far better resorts than the public-house. There was no doubt that they conferred very great advantages upon those persons who were educating themselves, persons who were following out some course of study. Those were the class of people who derived great advantage from such institutions, and so much was that recognised that he was given to understand that in some country towns the committees had reduced the subscription one-half in order to admit youths who might be attending to business, but whose funds were small.

Mr. HAMILTON said it was a matter for great regret that the vote had been cut down, because he looked upon the schools of arts as educational establishments, and after having spent so much in the education of juveniles, he thought they might spend a few thousand pounds upon adults. He had known many of those schools of arts—at Gympie, on the Palmer, and elsewhere—and he thoroughly believed that they were institutions which should be encouraged. They encouraged studious habits, and gave opportunities for study that were not elsewhere obtainable.

Mr. ALLAN said he had had a great deal to do with schools of arts in different parts of the colony and in New South Wales, and he regretted to see the amount had been cut down. It was a very small amount, and when they considered the increase which was taking place in the Public Instruction Estimates, from £195,000 to £205,000, they might well afford to give a few thousands in order to enable people to continue their education in the bush and in the back townships. He could assure hon. members that the school of arts was the only place to which people could go to after their labour was done; and especially in this country, where the hours of labour were short, were such institutions necessary. At St. George, for instance, there was nothing at all to do after 4 or 5 o'clock in the evening, except to go to a billiard-room or a public-house, if the mechanics' institute was not patronised. As the hon. member for North Brisbane had said, the people went there to get their news, and it was not only yellow-backed novels that they read—although he did not think they were so bad—but they had books of reference, and, as the hon. member for North Brisbane said, atlases and encyclopædias from which they could extract information. He trusted that it would not be found necessary to cut down the items another year.

The PREMIER said he sincerely hoped that this would be the last year in which the vote would be cut down. He had every reason to

hope that it would not be necessary to cut it down any more, but as he had pointed out on previous occasions, while everyone preached economy everyone objected to particular items being reduced.

Mr. JESSOP said he also objected to cutting down the vote, and he thought that one matter had been forgotten by all hon. gentlemen who had spoken. In all schools of arts *Hansard* was distributed, and that was the only place where a large number of people had the opportunity of seeing *Hansard*. He took it that it was important that every man who had the privilege of a vote should read *Hansard*, so that he could see what was said and done in that House by the representatives of his own district and by every member of the House. The electors could not all get *Hansard* delivered at their doors, but they could get it at the different schools of arts. They could also at the schools of arts read many books interesting and instructive, besides yellow-back novels. He objected to that vote being cut down.

Question put and passed.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES (SUBDIVISION).

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the sum of £15,250 be granted for Miscellaneous Services. The vote was almost the same as that for last year.

Mr. GROOM said he was very sorry to see the vote for agricultural and horticultural societies cut down, more particularly when he considered the small sum they annually voted for the support of agriculture, which was the real foundation of the prosperity of the colony. Whether that vote was cut down in order to provide for the new department of agriculture he did not know. Looking to that vote in another column he saw the cost of that department was to be £1,500, and the amount deducted from the vote for the societies was £1,750. He was one of those who thought, and he had no hesitation in saying so, that those agricultural societies would do twenty thousand times more good than the department of agriculture was going to do in the small way in which it was to be established at the present time. It was well described by a most intelligent farmer at Allora, Mr. Harvey, as a "one-horse affair" that would do no practical good in the country. He had been connected with agricultural societies now for a period of five-and-twenty years, and he knew the good they were doing, and he knew they assisted largely in developing the agricultural resources of the country; consequently that the vote for their assistance should be cut down in that way was to him a matter for deep regret. It appeared to him a step in a backward direction. In place of cutting down the vote for those agricultural and horticultural societies they should increase it and give them every assistance to carry out the good work in which they were engaged. He rose more particularly to refer to another matter. In the early part of the year an insect pest of a very destructive character appeared in the orchards and gardens, particularly on the Darling Downs, and many an unfortunate man who looked forward to a rich harvest of fruit was practically ruined by that pest. The late Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Dickson, who, he was sorry, was not present, visited Toowoomba to open an agricultural show, and the ravages of the pest were brought under his notice. He was shown samples of the fruit, and was also taken to the gardens and shown how men were practically ruined by the pest. The hon. gentleman had been previously communicated with by letter, and he brought up with him to Toowoomba a Mr. Tryon, and he informed his audience at a banquet tendered him that Mr. Tryon would remain in the district for a week

or ten days and visit the principal orchards, and that he would take samples of the diseased fruit with him, with the intention of furnishing the Government with a report upon that insect plague, to see if it were possible to reveal to the owners of the orchards any remedy for the plague. From that time up to the present he had never heard anything more about the report, and he would like to know from the Colonial Secretary whether Mr. Tryon had made any report upon the matter, and whether, if such a report had been made, it would be published for general information?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that no report had been furnished to the Government on the subject by Mr. Tryon as yet. He was inclined to think that it would take that gentleman a considerable time to deal with the matter, as he found it necessary to watch the process of the development of the insect and of the disease. So far no report had been furnished, but as soon as it was it should be placed before hon. members.

Mr. NORTON said he would give the hon. gentleman a little information which he had gained in connection with the matter. Mr. Tryon was a personal friend of his, and, taking an interest in the work, which that gentleman, with others, was carrying out at the Museum, he had often gone in there, and had, at different times, seen in Mr. Tryon's care samples of fruit and plants brought from Toowoomba and other places attacked by insects and fungoids. Mr. Tryon was one of the most precise and accurate men in his observations that he ever met, and in all these cases he was watching the progress of the attack by the insect in its earlier stages, and its different developments with the development of the disease. There were not merely one or two diseases that that gentleman was watching, but a very considerable number, many more than the public were aware of. What would seem to unscientific persons the same diseases turned out to be very different in different plants, and even in the same plant. The scale diseases of plants and fruits, which, to a person without special knowledge on the subject, looked all the same, were, in many instances, quite different. Mr. Tryon had his work in the Museum to attend to, and his examination and treatment of those diseases was being attended to when he was not engaged in the Museum work. It was impossible for anyone so engaged to bring up a report within a reasonable time—such a report, at all events, as Mr. Tryon was likely to bring up. He had spoken to that gentleman the other day, and told him he hoped they would see something of the report before the Museum Estimates came on, because the matter was sure to be brought up then, as he intended to bring it up himself, if nobody else did. Mr. Tryon then showed him a large pile of papers which he had written on the subject, and he knew the information that gentleman could give, if he had the time to write it over, would fill a very large volume indeed, and furnish information upon the natural history of many of those diseases which were not known, and which he had practically discovered and followed out through their whole development. It was hardly a matter of surprise, under the circumstances, if the report had not yet been brought forward. Mr. Tryon was a man who carried out his examination so carefully and accurately that he (Mr. Norton) was sure the work would be as perfect of its kind as could be got up by any man having Mr. Tryon's scientific knowledge. It was desirable that the report should be produced as early as possible, and printed and circulated for the benefit of all those interested in agricultural pursuits. The Government might print with

advantage a very large number of copies, not merely for circulation in this colony, but also for sale outside the colony, because it was a scientific work of very great value, for which he was sure there would be a large demand out of the colony when it was published. He regretted with the hon. member for Toowoomba that the vote for agricultural societies had been reduced; he thought that was one of the greatest mistakes made in the reduction of the Estimates, and the appointment of what was called an Agricultural Department, consisting of one gentleman, was the greatest farce possible. What had Mr. McLean done since he was appointed? He had been to Victoria and South Australia, and, no doubt, had a very nice time travelling about; but what advantage was all that to the country? Of course a man appointed to the head of that department need not necessarily be a man of scientific attainments, but they had not yet had any indication that Mr. McLean was fitted for that special appointment. If so, surely he would have known something of the work he had to undertake without being sent off to other colonies to learn it. He (Mr. Norton) saw that the Colonial Botanist was put under Mr. McLean, and he regretted that that gentleman's salary was not higher. If the amount set down for the Agricultural Department had been given to some of the agricultural societies, it would have done infinitely more good to the colony than any agricultural department, until it was formed on a much more satisfactory basis.

The PREMIER said he did not think it was worth while to discuss the Department of Agriculture just now. When that estimate came on his hon. colleague, the Minister for Lands, would be prepared to give full information as to what was proposed to be done to make the Department of Agriculture valuable to the country.

Mr. NORTON: It is a waste of money now.

The PREMIER said everything could not be done in a day. He hoped his hon. colleague the Minister for Lands would have an opportunity of organising that department, and he was sure the hon. gentleman would make it a very efficient department.

Mr. NORTON: You will have to spend more money than that.

The PREMIER said they would have to spend more money. What was proposed to be done would be explained fully when they came to it. As regarded the agricultural societies he regretted very much the necessity for making any reduction. It was not a popular reduction, and of course hon. members all round would express their disapproval of it, as they would of any other economy that might be made in the Estimates. The Government had to look all round, but hon. members objected to every particular economy, and pointed to something else in which they or their constituents took no interest as a very proper place for making reductions.

Mr. JESSOP said he regretted very much that the Government had seen the necessity of reducing that vote. The associations hitherto had been receiving £1 for every £1 they collected, and the reduction of that grant had run some associations into debt. He knew that the association he was connected with at their last show gave away a certain amount in prizes besides the other expenses, expecting that they would receive the £1 for £1, and now that they were to receive only 10s. for £1, the association was considerably in debt. It was not fair that that amount should be taken from them all at once. Had they received notice last year that the reduction would be made, they might have altered their arrangements and kept out of debt. He hoped the Government would see their way

clear to put a sum on the Supplementary Estimates to remedy that evil. He looked upon agricultural associations as national institutions which educated the people. If they went amongst selectors, farmers, and graziers they would find every man thinking his goose was a swan—that his sheep, cattle, and horses were better than everyone else's; but when he took them to compete at a show he saw, perhaps, that his own were not as good as others, and it stimulated him to raise stock which would take big prizes, not only in the market, but at shows.

Mr. NELSON said he agreed with other speakers in regretting the reduction in that and the previous votes, but he had no doubt the people of the colony would recognise the cause from which it sprang—namely, from the Government side of the House persisting in carrying out a policy which involved sending out of the country, in the shape of interest on borrowed money, half of their available revenue. However, he rose principally to direct the Colonial Secretary's attention to the loose manner in which that vote had been expended. Last year the votes on that account were £15,300, but the actual cash expenditure during the year was over £32,000; and if they took it according to the appropriations it was still between £26,000 and £27,000. Putting down a vote like that seemed like throwing dust in their eyes. They knew well enough that the amount would not cover the necessary expenditure, and yet they were asked to believe that it would. Last year the Colonial Secretary undertook to perform those services for the sum of £15,300, and he spent double that amount, so far as he (Mr. Nelson) could make out from the public accounts. He thought that required some explanation.

Mr. MORGAN said he supposed it was no use attempting to induce the Government to restore that vote on the Supplementary Estimates; but he thought some discrimination should be exercised in apportioning the amount to be granted for agricultural societies. At present it was the practice to endow every little agricultural society that established itself with a score of members, and the consequence was that three or four rival associations existed in some districts. It would be far better to make a rule that only one society in a district should be endowed; that would be quite sufficient.

Mr. HAMILTON said he noticed that the vote for the "relief of aboriginals and aboriginal reserves," was reduced from £1,000 to £500. Although he approved of economy, he did not approve of parsimony. The Premier had stated that they had failed to point out where a reduction could take place in the Estimates. They had pointed out where that could be done on one or two occasions—in the Defence Force, for instance, and it was then made a party question. It was also shown that a reduction might be made in the vote for the "Lucinda." Although the lavish expenditure there was proposed to be increased by an additional cook in order that Ministers, when they made a trip to the Bay at the expense of the country, might have what they took done to a turn, the aboriginals were actually to be deprived of the necessities of life. That vote had affected not only the saving of the lives of white men, but also the saving of property. He had seen places in the North where game was not very plentiful at any time, and the blacks had great difficulty in getting sustenance. When their hunting grounds were appropriated by the whites they speared cattle and individuals, and in such cases he had seen cattle and lives to be saved by a judicious distribution of that vote. On the Hodgkinson Gold Field, for instance, at one time, cattle used to be speared, and the lives

of white men out prospecting were very unsafe; but a certain amount of that vote was expended in providing the blackfellows with flour, etc., and the consequence was that they conceived friendly feelings towards the individuals who showed them that little kindness, and had not the same temptations to commit depredations they had previously. The sum of £1,000 was very small to be expended in blankets and provisions for the whole of the colony of Queensland.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, with respect to the reduction in that vote, hon. members would remember that last year there was an aboriginal mission station at Cape Bedford and one was started at Bloomfield. It was then understood that the Lutheran Association would take over the Bloomfield station after it had been kept going for twelve months. They had done so, consequently the full amount voted last year was not required.

Mr. NORTON asked whether cemeteries which received loans from the Government always paid up?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They have not been paying up, and a circular has been sent out requesting payment.

Mr. NORTON: In case they do not pay up, what will be done then? I suppose the Government are hardly likely to seize their property.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They will come under the provisions of the Cemetery Act. The interest has to be paid out of the fees they levy.

Mr. NORTON said he thought they might as well give them that money.

The PREMIER: Some of them pay.

Mr. NORTON: That is where it is inequitable.

The PREMIER: Others will pay if they can.

Mr. NORTON said he did not know about that. Some others did not pay up at all, and he did not know how the Government could compel them.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he noticed the last item on that vote was £50 for the Royal Humane Society of Australasia. The amount certainly did not seem adequate to the great name of the society, and he would like to know what it meant?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is the subscription of Queensland towards the Royal Humane Society in Melbourne.

Mr. PALMER said the Colonial Secretary had not answered the question put by the hon. member for Northern Downs, Mr. Nelson, in regard to the expenditure of that vote being double the amount that was put down on the Estimates last year. That was shown on page 25 of the Auditor-General's report. Where did the increased expenditure arise?

The PREMIER said he would give the hon. member the figures directly.

Mr. NELSON said the amount voted last year under that general heading was £15,300, whereas, according to the *Gazette* return of expenditure, page 61, the actual amount expended during the year was £32,684, or considerably more than double the amount voted. Or, taking it according to the appropriation, there was spent up to the 30th June, belonging to the year 1886-7, £21,997; and since that time, according to the statement laid before the House, £4,651, making a total of £26,649. That seemed so very much in excess of the vote that some explanation was absolutely necessary.

The PREMIER said that last year agricultural societies got about £700 in excess of the sum voted, and incidental and miscellaneous expenses were £2,260 over the amount voted. The fire brigades got £990 more, and there was also an excess in the item of relief for aborigines.

Mr. NELSON said it all went to show that the expenditure of the department—the largest spending department they had—was getting somewhat beyond the control of the Executive. In 1880-81 the department cost only £307,000, whereas in 1885-6 it was upwards of £542,000. Last year it was somewhat less. For the three years, 1880 to 1883, the average expenditure was £318,000, while for the following three years it had increased to £475,000, or about 50 per cent. That was an alarming difference, and the paltry economies they were effecting in the votes for schools of arts and agricultural societies were mere drops in the bucket as compared with the fearful increase in the expenditure. The same thing was bound to occur again. For instance, the sum voted for expenses of elections, £500, was absurd, considering that they were about to face a general election.

The PREMIER said the vote for expenses of elections did not provide for the expenses of the general election, which would have to be put afterwards on a supplementary estimate, as it was not usual to put money on the Estimates until the Bill under which it would be required passed. As to the large expenditure during the year 1885-6, the hon. member forgot that £30,000 was paid on the New Guinea account, £13,000 for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition, £15,000 for the purchase of the "Otter"; and there were a number of other special items which went to swell the expenditure of that year.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that the House do now adjourn. To-morrow, after formal business, we propose to take the Constitution Act Amendment Bill in committee, and afterwards Committee of Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-eight minutes past 11 o'clock.