

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 1893

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 5 October, 1893.

Supreme Court Acts Amendment Bill: First reading.—
 Grants for Bridges.—Supply: Report from Committee.—
 Gold-mining on Freehold Lands Bill: Introduction: First Reading.—Supply: Resumption of Committee.—Adjournment.

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

SUPREME COURT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. T. J. Byrnes), this Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an order for Tuesday next.

GRANTS FOR BRIDGES.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. POWERS—

That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing the amount of grants made to the different local authorities since 1879 for bridges, specifying the localities where such bridges were erected; also showing what loans have been granted to local authorities specially for bridges.

SUPPLY.

REPORT FROM COMMITTEE.

Mr. ANNEAR, as Chairman of Committees, presented a report from the Committee of Supply, covering the resolutions passed in connection with the Department of Public Works, Department of Justice, Colonial Treasurer, Department of Public Lands and Agriculture, and Department of Public Instruction.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. H. M. Nelson), the resolutions were agreed to.

GOLD-MINING ON FREEHOLD LANDS BILL.

INTRODUCTION.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. R. Philp) moved, in committee—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill to validate and authorise gold-mining on lands alienated by the Crown in fee-simple subject to a reservation for gold, and to provide for the payment of rents and royalties in connection therewith, and for other purposes incidental thereto.

Mr. HAMILTON said that it would be very interesting if the hon. gentleman gave the Committee some information in regard to the objects of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said that it was not usual at that stage to give such information. Briefly, the Bill had been introduced to validate the extraction of gold from freehold lands in the past, to license the owners of freeholds to take out the gold now in the land, and to further tax them and charge a royalty of 1s. an ounce on all the gold taken out by them after the passing of the Bill.

Mr. POWERS said that from what the hon. gentleman said, the Bill was intended to do more than appeared in the resolution, as there was nothing in the resolution showing that it was intended to validate gold-mining on freeholds that had been carried on in the past. He was not going to make any comments, as the right time to discuss the Bill was on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

FIRST READING.

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

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

DEPARTMENT OF MINES.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved that £2,930 be granted for the Department of the Secretary for Mines, salaries and contingencies. As there were no overpaid officers in that department, the amount asked for was the same as that voted last year.

Mr. BROWNE said that although no reductions had been made in the salaries of the officers in the office of the Secretary for Mines, yet, taking the department as a whole, the retrenchment had been greater than in any other branch of the service. The Treasurer, in his Financial Statement, said, "In Mines the expenditure has been reduced in proportion to the revenue we derive by cutting down expenses generally and dispensing with the vote for prospecting." He had gone through the figures to see what justification there was for the tremendous reductions that had been made in the department. First of all, he would state the amount of retrenchment that had been made in the different departments:—In the Postal Department, 6½ per cent.; Railway Department, 9½ per cent.; Colonial Secretary's Department, 13 per cent.; Department of Justice, 13 per cent.; Education Department, 17 per cent.; the Treasury, 21 per cent.; Lands Department, 22 per cent.; and in the Mines Department, no less than 34 per cent. Last year the estimated receipts from mines were £26,000, while the actual receipts in direct revenue were £20,743. The amount of dividend duty collected was £69,937, out of which mining companies contributed £33,995, which paid all the expenses of the department, and left a surplus of £4,997. He was not going to ask for anything to be put on the Supplementary Estimates; his object was simply to point out the neglect with which the mining industry was treated. During the present session various industries had received assistance from the State, such as the banking industry, the meat export and dairy farming industry, and the sugar industry; but not a word had been said about any assistance being given to the mining industry. On the contrary, it had been more neglected than ever.

He would ask what sort of a place Queensland would have been to-day without the mining industry? A gentleman had been sent home, at £1,000 a year, almost purposely to boom the meat industry. Another gentleman had been imported, at £1,000 a year, to teach the curing of meat, also for the purpose of booming the industry. They had also imported an Instructor in Agriculture and a couple of travelling dairies for the farming industry. The only thing of the kind the mining industries had was the Mineralogical Lecturer, who went round the various fields delivering lectures, whose salary, travelling expenses, and hire of lecture-rooms amounted to £700 a year; and yet the department, although it received about £31,000 in excess of the money expended on it, could not actually afford to allow that item to remain on the Estimates. On account of that neglect, some of the very best men were leaving the colony—men who were neither capitalists nor wage-earners, but who were continually looking out for something for themselves. Those men were clearing out of the colony because they got no encouragement whatever. The very best of the miners were also going away for the same reason, and those who went away generally stayed away. Early in the session he asked the Secretary for Mines whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill to amend the mining laws, to which he got the usual answer that the Government had the matter under their consideration. He might be a very new member, but he had been a student of politics long enough to know what that meant. It meant that the matter would remain under their consideration so long as the parties interested allowed it, and did not force them to take action. The state of the mining laws of the colony was a crying evil, and he knew that some of the occupants of the Treasury bench would support his contention that a radical reform was wanted in those laws. A little over three years ago the Colonial Secretary, who was about the best mining lawyer in the colony, stated that in the present mining laws there were over fifty vital errors, any one of which might involve any miner or mining community in almost endless litigation. Since then the hon. gentleman had occupied a position in the Ministry most of the time, but had not stirred hand or foot to remedy those defects. The hon. member for Cook, who was no mean authority on mining matters, following the hon. gentleman on the occasion referred to, spoke in the same strain, and it was then stated that something would be done. Something was always going to be done, but it never was done. During the last nine or ten years he (Mr. Browne) had been on several committees of practical miners appointed on different fields at the request of the Minister to suggest amendments of the mining laws. On one occasion committees were appointed at the request of the late Hon. J. M. Macrossan; and on another at the request of Mr. Hodgkinson. They sent in suggestions, which were acknowledged by a polite letter, in which it was stated that they would receive the consideration of the Government, but nothing more was heard of the suggestions. As the law stood at present, it was no use to those *bona fide* engaged in the mining industry, neither to individual miners, nor to the genuine speculator or capitalist; the only people who really benefited by it were land sharks, commission agents, brokers, and others who simply lived on paper and the holes they could pick in the law. When he saw other great industries were being bolstered up and boomed along, he did not think there was any likelihood of anything being done for the mining industry this session; but it was only fair that they

should have a definite promise from the Government that something would be done next session to reform the mining laws. Though the Minister was new to his department, he might pass a measure through the House without any difficulty, as he would have the assistance of the Colonial Secretary, the hon. members for Cook and Gympie, and the five or six practical miners on the Opposition side of the House, who had followed that occupation for the biggest part of a lifetime. He (Mr. Browne) was in correspondence with committees on mining fields, who were very anxious to see the mining law reformed, and he would continue to work up the matter during the recess. The Treasurer, in his Financial Statement, said that "the prospects for the future were singularly bright, and it might be safely anticipated that there would be an annual increase in the yield of gold for many years to come; the half-yearly returns proved that the most populous goldfields were more than holding their own, and when those with a scanty population once received the attention they deserve, both from capitalist and miner, our gold returns must greatly increase." If the hon. gentleman had added the words "and the Government" after the word "miner," he would have stated the case fully. The mining industry, if not the first, was almost the first in the colony, and it was the only one that had really been successful through all the recent troubles. Would the Minister tell the Committee whether it was the intention of the Government to introduce any mining legislation next session?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said the question asked was a very big one; he might not be in that position next session. But if the hon. member would point out any glaring defects in the mining law, they would be considered during the recess, and probably some Bill would be introduced next session.

Mr. BROWNE thought that the Colonial Secretary, who had stated that there were over fifty defects in the law, any one of which might involve a mining community in endless litigation, could inform the hon. gentleman where the law required reform. He (Mr. Browne) would be happy to give all information in his power.

The HON. G. THORN was of opinion that our mining laws were the most perfect in the world. When the Bill which the Minister had introduced for mining on private property was passed, they would have a perfect system of mining legislation. He did not know whether the hon. member for Croydon was in favour of an export duty on gold. He (Hon. G. Thorn) could not say that he was in favour of export duties, but if any export duty was imposed it should be on gold; a small duty of, say, 3d. per oz. for statistical purposes would bring in a good round sum and help to replenish the Treasury. In some districts the returns made by the wardens did not show half the gold produced in those districts, and he could mention the Port Curtis district as one to which that statement applied.

Mr. HAMILTON said it was clear that the hon. member for Fassifern had never represented a mining district, and knew nothing about their mining laws. Persons who understood the subject knew that their mining laws, especially with regard to general minerals, were a perfect farce, and if he had the rules before him he could prove it. The hon. member for Fassifern was one of those who did not appreciate the benefits that would accrue from the development of the mining industry. It had been neglected more than any other industry, miners being regarded as good milking cows; and under the circumstances no one could wonder at the attitude they took up during the last elections. Prospecting votes

were from time to time put on the Estimates, but they never went any further. Last year he had got the ridiculous sum of £2,000 put down as a prospecting vote, while in Victoria they provided £85,000. Anyone acquainted with the subject knew there were better chances for investing money in that way in Queensland than in Victoria, and yet they were informed that three-fourths of the vote provided here had been knocked off. He hoped no further delay would take place in the alteration of the mining laws, and, if the Secretary for Mines was prepared to accept suggestions from practical men, he was sure that by Monday two or three mining members could show him the desirability of making some most important alterations in those laws.

Mr. SMYTH did not agree with the hon. member for Croydon that their miners were being driven out of the colony. They were being induced to come into the colony, and the prosperity of Charters Towers had attracted many miners from the other colonies. There were about 4,000 unemployed in Charters Towers—about as many as in Brisbane. The Government did not do much for mining in any of the colonies, and the £85,000 voted in Victoria had always been looked upon as a bribe to mining members.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is not what I was told there.

Mr. SMYTH had heard from the Victorian Minister for Mines, Mr. McColl, that the vote was not a success. The mining members formed a powerful section in the Victorian Assembly, and had been able to bring sufficient pressure to get the £85,000 passed as a bribe to the mining constituencies, and the money was wasted. The Government of Queensland had done something for the miners also—they had, on very bad advice, purchased a very large diamond drill, which had been in use at Gympie; there was one, also, at Croydon, and one had been worked by private enterprise at Charters Towers. He was glad to say the drill at Gympie had ceased working, and was to be taken away. It had been worked there against the advice of practical miners, as a drill which could have been used in a chamber from a shaft would have tested two or three times the ground at half the expense. The site chosen for working it on the advice of scientific men was a bad one, and the quicker they got rid of such scientific men in mining matters the better. The scientific men here connected with mining were new chums, and had never done anything for mining. The Government had done one good thing by subsidising the sinking of shafts, but he would not like to expose the gross scandal of the way in which that proposal had been abused. If the hon. member for Croydon would compare the Queensland mining laws with those of New South Wales or Victoria, he would see that they were briefer and clearer, and though there were defects in them they were not so bad as the hon. member had stated. He was aware that in Croydon there had been a good deal of trouble in the registration of mines, but he would suggest that the proper way to make mines pay was to keep the stamps going. This could not be done there for want of water. It was no use leaving the alteration of their mining laws to laymen who knew nothing of the troubles miners had to contend with. The mining community had no wish to come to the House for special assistance, as other sections of the people did. There was no department in the colony carried on so well and so economically as the mining department.

Mr. HAMILTON had frequently heard Ministers contend that no good results had followed the prospecting votes passed in Victoria. While in Victoria recently he had taken

the trouble to interview the then Secretary for Mines, Mr. Peacock, on the subject, and that gentleman had informed him that magnificent results had accrued from those votes, and he was surprised, with the great mineral resources of Queensland, a similar system had not been followed here. He saw the Under Secretary also, who expressed similar views. What was objected to was the manner in which the money was spent. Victoria was divided into seven departments, and each received one-seventh of the vote, independently of the mineralogical characteristics of the country, or the probability of gold being more prevalent in one part than another. The Royal Commission found the same objection.

Mr. DAWSON could substantiate a great deal of what had been said by the hon. member for Gympie in reference to diamond drills. There was no doubt but that the failures of the drills were attributable to stupidity. On one occasion a diamond drill was used to bore for coal, and the services of an expert from Victoria were obtained. But his knowledge was ignored, and a place was pointed out to him where he should bore. He declined to be interfered with, and threw up the position, and was now employed by the South Australian Government in charge of diamond drills. There were some deficiencies in the mining laws which he might point out. The Mills United Company, at Charters Towers, owned at one time 160 acres, which was worked from one shaft, but they had sold twenty-five acres, and were now working 135 acres.

Mr. HAMILTON: They have eight miles of streets.

Mr. DAWSON said their mining laws permitted that huge monopoly, and as the company owned the streets they could control the blocks upon either side, so that the freeholders could not work their grounds if they wished to combine. Then there was the subject of exemptions, which were a very great evil upon all mineral fields. The larger the company the greater its influence, and the easier it was to earwig the warden or the Minister, and the consequence was that a quantity of land was locked up, and men who wished to work the ground could not do so. Before any exemption was granted it should be well ascertained that there were not men on the field willing to pay a fair percentage to work the land upon tribute. Numerous exemptions had been granted at Charters Towers, for which there was no excuse at all. Then, again, in the case of accidents, when they occurred two gentlemen were appointed to inquire into them, and, as a rule, they were mining managers, so that it was always probable they would report in favour of their fellow-manager. He considered that the men should be represented as well as the managers, especially when the managers were working for the same proprietors as the manager of the mine where the accident occurred. If they reported adversely to the owners of the mine, they would possibly lose their situations, and therefore he considered that the men should not be placed at the mercy of mineowners or managers. He wished to draw the attention of the Secretary for Mines to those matters, and thought he might inquire into them without much trouble.

Mr. BROWNE said he had worked under the New South Wales and Victorian mining laws more recently than the hon. junior member for Gympie, and was in a better position to compare them with the Queensland laws than that hon. member. The New South Wales laws had been much altered since the hon. member worked there, and considerable progress had been made in mining legislation. In Queensland, the law

under which they were working was passed in 1874, but various Secretaries for Mines had introduced their petty hobbies into the regulations, so that there were about half a dozen pamphlets and slips of different dates, all of which had to be digested by ordinary working miners. To show the difficulties they laboured under, take the case of protection areas. A party of men might go into the bush, not knowing exactly where they were going, but they might happen to come across what they considered a payable reef, which might be 100 miles away from the office where they would have to make their application. Either the whole party would have to leave the ground, or else one man would have to ride 100 miles to obtain the necessary forms, ride back 100 miles to get the signatures of the other men, then ride in again 100 miles to deposit the forms in the office; and the same thing had to be done after an interval of eight days. Taking the whole of the miners in Queensland, who were quite as intelligent as any other class, there were not 20 per cent. who could take up a claim with the certainty that nobody could raise a point against it. Considering the high charges for leases, miner's rights, and business licenses, besides the interest taxation which the owners had to pay, he thought the very least that could be done would be to make the mining laws so simple that they could be easily understood. There were about twenty or thirty forms which miners had to fill in, and it was well known that even fairly well educated men were liable to make mistakes in filling up forms. They also should be simplified. At the present time the clauses in the Act, together with the regulations, amounted to about 600 clauses, and an ordinary working miner was supposed to understand the whole lot. If not, he was never sure that a piece of ground was his after he had got it. And the same remark applied to companies. He thoroughly agreed with the junior member for Gympie, that the diamond drill was of no use in boring for reefs on a goldfield, and had said the same thing at Croydon.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON said it came upon him as a surprise to hear that our mining laws were so defective. The Mines Department had had the benefit of being administered by some of the ablest men—Mr. Macrossan, Mr. Hodgkinson, and others who were well versed in mining—and both sides of the House had always been ready to lend an attentive ear to the requirements of the miners and the mining industry. He was, therefore, surprised to hear it stated that the mining laws of the colony were in such a condition as to offer an obstacle to mining development. He invited the hon. member for Croydon to give particulars of cases in which the mining laws required amendment, because, he thought, it was not just to make the accusation that the colony or hon. members had been indifferent to the encouragement of the mining industry. He had been informed by members of legislatures in other colonies that our mining laws were particularly clear, and that our mining legislation was superior to that of colonies where mining was developed earlier than in Queensland.

Mr. DUNSFORD agreed with the other mining members that the present mining laws were defective. The wardens and the Minister must find great trouble in administering them; but he would say that the present Minister was doing his best to keep whatever promises he made, which could not always be said of previous Ministers. He remembered being one of a deputation that waited on the present Minister, who then promised not to grant exemptions where miners were prepared to work the mines on tribute. He believed the Minister had refused

to give exemptions in some instances on Charters Towers, and the result had been that a number of mines that would otherwise have been exempted from labour conditions were now worked on tribute, with good results to the miners and also to the owners. Coming back to the vote before the Committee, he noticed that the amount was the same as last year; and he intended to move that the salary of the Under Secretary be reduced by £50.

The HON. G. THORN said that there was an old saying that a bad tradesman always blamed his tools; but he did not know whether that was why the mining members blamed the mining laws. However, there must be some reason for the fault they had found with the laws. The hon. member for Gympie had stated that there were about 4,000 unemployed now on Charters Towers, and he believed that there had been such an exodus from Croydon that the place was almost depopulated. He had been told by capitalists that the rate of wages was so high in some parts of the North—being almost double the wages paid at Gympie—that they could not afford to use their money in mining. Then, again, instead of working eight hours a day, the men were said only to work three or four hours; and it was said that those were the reasons for the uproar they had had that afternoon about the mining laws.

Mr. DAWSON asked whether it was the intention of the Secretary for Mines to stop exemptions being granted to companies, while miners out of work were willing to work the ground and pay a fair percentage of the yield? He also wished to know whether the hon. gentleman intended to stop the monopoly that existed among mining managers, by which they had the exclusive right of sitting on inquiries into accidents?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said that it was not in the power of the Minister to appoint assessors. On some goldfields the warden asked the Miners' Association to nominate a man, and the mining managers to nominate another. That was done at Gympie. If he found that a warden was not acting impartially he would take steps to have it set right, but no complaints had been made that he was aware of. As for the exemptions, that question had always been a source of trouble. So far as he knew, in every case the warden took evidence on both sides, and made a recommendation. The Minister carefully examined into that recommendation, and if he found that an exemption should not be granted he did not grant it. He did not always give an exemption, even when recommended by the warden.

Mr. McDONALD said that he had had a good deal of experience in regard to exemptions. On several occasions he had opposed them, and he knew of cases where wardens had refused to grant exemptions in which the Minister had overruled the decisions of the wardens in spite of the evidence. He had prepared a diagram to show how the swindle in connection with the Mills United Company had been worked. The original lease had consisted of an area of about 13½ acres. After having sunk a shaft they wished to secure three or more leases, and their aim was to work them all from the one shaft. One gentleman intimately connected with the business was a very cute surveyor. Accordingly, the area was cut up into three sections, which were surrendered one after the other, and blocks of twenty-five acres taken up instead of each section of their lease, all of them radiating from their shaft. By that means all the leases were worked from their one shaft. The question arose whether the leases could

legally be worked in that way. He did not know of a more glaring mining swindle than that. But that was not the worst of it. In some way or other the company had managed to so work the Mines Department that they had obtained a lease of the ground under all the streets stretching from the shaft to the reserve, and from Boundary street to a street at the back of Mosman street, which covered an extraordinary amount of country. Having the control of the land under all the streets, they were thus able to force the freeholders of the land comprised within that area to come to their terms. That was one of the things the Mines Department ought to look into; and as he did not suppose the present Secretary for Mines was in any way mixed up with the transaction, he trusted he would forage out the facts and explain why it was allowed to exist. They had no means of knowing whether the labour conditions were complied with in any of the leases. It was known that there were over 200 men working in the claim, but it was not known in which particular lease they were working. If they were all working in No. 1 and No. 2, No. 3 was liable to be forfeited. The three leases were, however, worked from the one shaft. The whole thing was a barefaced swindle, which ought to be exposed to the fullest extent; and if they did not hold the ground rightly it should be taken from them. One day, at Charters Towers, when he was opposing an amalgamation of two claims, a prominent lawyer remarked that no mining company had a right to take gold from freeholds. In connection with that he might add, as an extraordinary coincidence, that two of the principal men interested in the matter had been for the last two or three months hanging about the Mines Office and the Parliamentary Buildings; and at the end of the session the Government were bringing in a Bill to validate gold taken out of freeholds. Originally there were three shafts on the claim, two of which had been closed. They all knew the hanky-panky work in the Mines Office, in 1888, in connection with them. It was currently rumoured at the time that the men working on Tregaskis's lease were told not to work too hard, as the principals were only holding the ground, and not to mind the loss, but to watch "those labour fellows," as if they pounced upon them they might try to get it forfeited. They knew the leases were being watched to see that the labour conditions were complied with. Such an action was a scandal, and a disgrace to the late Secretary for Mines, and he trusted the present Minister would not allow it to go on without a full investigation into all its details.

Mr. SMYTH said the claim in question consisted formerly of 140 acres; it was now 109 acres. The land was alienated from the Crown, and Mr. Mills, a pretty cute customer, managed to secure the land under the streets, and made an arrangement with the freeholders to take shares in his company. Some refused to give up the right to mine under their freeholds; many more took shares, and had been enriched in consequence. It would be a great hardship after the lapse of so many years, and when so many new shareholders had bought into the company, to interfere with the mine in the way proposed by the hon. member for Flinders. Only two months ago he himself bought shares in the company, but he did not consider himself responsible for what Mr. Mills had done. The great harm done was owing to freeholds being allowed on goldfields, a thing which he had always protested against. With regard to the persons chosen to visit mines when an accident had occurred, it was only right that one at least should be a mining manager. Mining managers were thoroughly practical men, while all the

members of the miners' union were not practical miners. There were, however, really good practical men in the union, and if the miners were to be represented, they should select a thoroughly practical and competent man. On Gympie three-fourths of the miners put most of their earnings into the mines. At Croydon nearly all the miners worked on their own account; but those days had gone by for Gympie and Charters Towers. The tribute system was not altogether a good one, because when a claim was let to a party on tribute, they would only work if it paid them, and they generally picked out the eyes of the claim. With regard to granting exemptions, he thought a certain amount of latitude should be allowed to wardens, because it sometimes happened that a company was crippled for want of funds, and found it necessary to reconstruct, and it would not be fair in such case that the property of the shareholders, on which they might have spent a considerable amount of money, should be sacrificed for some small breach of the gold-mining regulations. Why should people at home, who had invested in a mine, be made to suffer in such a case? If the latitude given was abused, they should then come down on the Mines Department.

Mr. DAWSON said that when he stated that in all cases, with one exception, mining managers had reported on accidents, he was speaking particularly of Charters Towers. There was only one instance in which the miners' organisation had been allowed to appoint a man for that work, and he thought it was not fair. As to the argument that all the men in the union were not practical miners, he knew that they had as experienced men among their members as could be found anywhere, and that some of the best miners belonged to the organisation; and the instinct of self-preservation among the miners would ensure the selection of really good experienced men. The hon. member for Gympie entirely misunderstood the remarks of the hon. member for Flinders on that huge swindle at Charters Towers. The hon. member for Flinders did not mean to infer that the hon. member, or any other person, had no right to purchase shares in the mine, but that if they did so they would do it under certain risks. At any rate, it was known that they had manipulated certain freeholds for some time, and it had now been discovered that they had acted illegally, and a Bill had been brought in by the Minister in the ordinary course of business to validate the swindle. He hoped that hon. members would be warned by the discussion that afternoon, and see what it was they were asked to validate. He might mention that there was one company with a capital of £30,000, which they were prepared to spend in developing the field, but were prevented from doing so by the company which had monopolised the land and sank one shaft instead of putting down four or five shafts, employing more men, and expending more money.

Mr. POWERS said he believed that all mining communities in the colony were of opinion that the mining laws wanted amending. With reference to the case referred to that afternoon, in which a company was working one shaft for three leases, he might state that the company had gone even further, and when another company which owned some freeholds actually dared to want to work those freeholds, they were expected to get authority to go under the streets without interfering with the works of their rival. They could not get that authority from Parliament, and the other company, the Mills United, went to the persons who had freeholds and had made agreements, suggesting that they should repudiate their agreements, and promising

to make good any damage the court might allow against them. They entirely prevented the persons who owned those lands from working them.

Mr. SMYTH: How do you know that?

Mr. POWERS had seen the documents himself, and knew that the people concerned had sought the opinion of Sir Samuel Griffith and the Attorney-General on the subject. The result was that those persons who owned freeholds could not work them. He hoped the Secretary for Mines would take such care of his department that no other persons, urged by the success of that case, would try the same thing?

Mr. SMYTH: There are half a dozen cases of the same thing.

Mr. POWERS was sorry to hear it, and hoped they would not be successful in the same way.

Mr. HAMILTON said the passing of that law, allowing persons to take up streets, had been productive of an immense amount of swindling in Charters Towers. The streets, though taken up ostensibly for the purpose of mining, had in reality been taken up only with a view of encircling and separating freeholds held by other persons, in order that they might be compelled to accept the terms of the persons taking up the streets. The warden, who tried to meet the evil and put his foot down, had been promoted to another goldfield, and another warden put in his place, who was more pliable. It had been stated that Dr. Redmond had not been compelled to join, but he had to join or be a loser. If the freeholders who had been encircled and separated could have amalgamated and worked their properties with one shaft and drives to connect the workings below, they might have done so profitably. That might have been done without injury to the individuals who took up the streets, but it would never have paid the freeholders to sink a £10,000 shaft on each property. With regard to the desirability of having a mining manager and a miner appointed to investigate mining accidents, he thought that only a fair request. The miner appointed could be elected by ballot from some other claim by the miners in the claim in which the accident occurred; in that way a practical man, and one in whom the miners would have confidence, could be selected. They did not, in the objections raised, reflect in any way upon the present Secretary for Mines, because the laws they objected to were passed before that gentleman took office. The hon. gentleman had a right to say that they should bring those matters before him, and they would have been remiss in their duty if they had not done so. He was sure they could rely upon any promise the hon. gentleman made, and that he would do his best to meet the objections raised. With regard to the opinion of the hon. member for Bulimba, that their mining laws were perfect, he could say that the late Mr. Macrossan, than whom they had never had a better mining Minister, did not think so, as that gentleman had intended to introduce a comprehensive Bill to consolidate and amend those laws. Since that time the most absurd regulations had been introduced, and, to meet the request of the hon. member for Bulimba, he would give particulars of one. It was provided that in mineral fields beyond the limits of a mining district any one or more men could take up a protection area of eighty acres. One man, or forty men, could take up the same area, but, if they did, the one man, or each of the forty, had to have his name registered as the holder of the area. It was then provided that half the number of men registered as the

holders of an area should work it. So that if two men held the area one man would be sufficient to work it, while if forty men held the area twenty would be required to work it. Was not that an absurdity?

Mr. DUNSFORD desired to put the case of the Mills United monopoly a little more clearly than it had already been put. Under the Act the maximum area allowed to be taken up as a mining lease was twenty-five acres, and the spirit of the Act was that each lease, no matter what its size, should be worked as a separate lease, and by at least one shaft. The company in question had managed, by having control in the first instance of certain freeholds, and by having obtained roads which gridironed the field, to become possessed of several leases which they were working from one shaft, though the aggregate area of the leases so worked was 109 acres. The leases were so situated that by means of that one shaft the company was able to control a number of freeholds that were within their external boundaries or within the roads granted to them by the department as a lease. The hon. member for Gympie had said the freeholders could work their own lands, but they could not do so. Say four of them held four quarter-acre allotments; if they wanted to work their properties they would have to sink a shaft 3,000 or 4,000 feet deep, and it would never pay them to do so to work an area of one acre. The Mills United Company had so fenced those people in that the company only could work their ground, or would work it, unless the leases they held were divided up, and they had to sink separate shafts. One of the ill-effects of working a huge extent of country with only one shaft was that only last summer numbers of men were dragged out in a fainting condition. There was no proper means of ventilating the mine, because there was only one shaft, and they had not broken into any other shafts in the deeper workings. If this large area had been broken up into areas of twenty-five acres there would have been a greater amount of gold obtained, and more men would have been employed, which would have been a good thing for the shareholders and also for the working miners. A great deal of ground was lying idle, and if it were cut up there would be fewer men out of work. The hon. member for Gympie had asked who were the lobbyists who had been referred to. One of them was an ex-member for Charters Towers, who was defeated at the last election, Mr. Sayers. He was a large shareholder now, and used his position as a member to bring about the monopoly. Other lobbyists living at Charters Towers were the Marslands, a firm of solicitors, and Messrs. Mills and Millican, who were also large shareholders, and who did their best to work this swindle. These statements could not be controverted by any member of the Committee.

Mr. FISHER contended that the members of the Miners' Association were just as competent to become inspectors, in the case of accidents, as the managers were, although the junior member for Gympie considered the latter the superior body of men. Regarding the administration of the Mines Department, and the various monopolies that had been complained of, he considered there was room for a great deal of improvement in that direction, although the department had been better administered by the present Government than by any former one. It was notorious that in the past exemptions could be obtained by some means in Brisbane even after they had been reported against by the wardens. In one case, No. 2 Glamire applied for an exemption, which was reported against by the present Under Secretary, who was

then warden at Gympie, and it was shown that the claim had been working at a profit for the previous six months; but the case went to the then Secretary for Mines, who granted an exemption for three months. That was a glaring case of Ministerial interference. Regarding the initiation of the diamond drill at Gympie, that was a kind of official show, and about 300 invitations were issued, but the Miners' Association was not thought worthy to be present, so the other party had things their own way, and made a mess of them. The practical miners were not consulted at all, which did not say much for the administration of the department. Another thing that required amendment was the system of granting certificates to engine-drivers on gold-fields and coal-mines. He was one of the first who submitted to examination at Gympie, and considered the system was rather lax. He had nothing to say against the gentlemen who conducted the examination, but the list of questions was such that a man might be tutored to answer them well, and yet have no idea of the practical work. He was glad to say that very few accidents had taken place, considering the number of engines at work. What had been said regarding inquiries into accidents at Gympie was correct. The system in force was adopted while the present Under Secretary for Mines was warden there, and the practice was for the warden to request a certain number of names to be sent to him periodically by the Mining Managers' Association and the Miners' Association. From those names he made a selection, and whenever an accident occurred two representatives of each association were appointed to report. That system had all the advantages of a Government inspection by persons on the spot with opportunities of learning all the circumstances, and was more satisfactory in every way than if only one side was represented. With regard to mining on freeholds, he contended that the ownership of a freehold carried no title to the minerals. As to the question of ventilation, that was a matter requiring great attention, and he was in favour of a more vigorous system of inspection both in gold-mines and in coal-mines. The other day a person was poisoned by black-damp in the Bundamba district; perhaps the hon. member representing that electorate could give some information regarding that case. Another matter to which he wished to refer was the fact that persons who were flooded out at Gympie were charged £1 1s. for registration on applying for a residence area on higher ground. The warden said that the charge was made under an Executive minute; but the miners were taxed quite enough without that extra charge, which ought not to be imposed at all. The question of providing a subsidy for sinking a deep shaft to the east of Gympie was a matter that might be brought forward, and he hoped it would receive attention.

Mr. DAWSON referred to the practice of leaving ashpits on goldfields unprotected. A number of children had run into those ashpits; and in some cases children had been burnt so severely that they died. He thought that those who stacked red-hot ashes and left them unprotected were morally responsible for the death of those children. Three frightful accidents had occurred lately from that cause. At some of the big mines the ashes from the engine-houses were wheeled outside and stacked. To all outward appearance the ashes were quite cold, but underneath they remained red hot. It was a very easy matter to have a pit dug in which the ashes might be put, covering it with a grating, when there would be no danger to children. He hoped the Secretary for Mines would compel the companies to adopt some such precautions.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said that that was the first he had heard of the matter. If he had power to make regulations, he would see that the mining companies fenced in their ash-heaps. With regard to the complaint of the hon. member for Gympie about the survey fee, everyone had to pay a survey fee. He did not know of any land which was to be had on such easy terms as a goldfields homestead, as the rent was only 5s. a year, and the survey fee had only to be paid once in twenty years.

Mr. HAMILTON said that clause 9 of the regulations required that the amount of labour required on a protection area should be dependent upon the number of persons interested in the claim. If a man discovered payable gold outside a mineral district he was entitled to a prospecting claim of eighty acres. Now, if that man had no partners he could fulfil the labour conditions by himself; but if he had, say, twenty sleeping partners or backers, the claim had to be held by twenty men. That was absurd. What should be considered was how much ground should be held by one man without monopoly.

Mr. HARDING said that, as every mining member had ventilated his views, he hoped they would get on with the business.

Mr. THOMAS said that he would be glad to have an investigation into the case of the man referred to by the senior member for Gympie. He had been in worse places than that in which the man had died from black-damp. Black-damp gave a great deal of trouble, and it had either to be fought, or else the works had to be closed. If he considered only his own interests he would have shut up his mine some months back, but he had to consider many others besides himself. He believed that the man in question had died through his not having been accustomed to the work. He had been sent to lock up the place where the black-damp had been noticed, and a man accustomed to the work could have done it in half an hour. He fancied that when the man felt that he was being overcome by the black-damp he had lain down instead of at once going away. A man could have worked without risk in the spot where the accident had occurred for an hour or two at least.

Mr. DAWSON pointed out that it was necessary to cover in the ashpits instead of fencing them in. If they were covered up, there would be no danger. They ought to have a distinct promise from the Minister that the danger should be done away with so far as he could effect it.

Mr. GRIMES said the danger could be easily avoided by the fireman damping the ashes before carrying them out, as was done in sugar-mills.

Mr. DAWSON said the hon. member did not seem to be aware that wood ashes had a certain value for amalgamating, which would be greatly diminished by their being damped with water.

Mr. SMYTH said a very small fence should be put around the ashes. At Gympie they had put up close paling fences, and locks on the gates; but the locks were broken, and the palings carried off for firewood.

Mr. McDONALD asked whether the regulation with regard to shafts was carried out in the coal-mines in the Ipswich district?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied that no complaints had been made to him about any of the regulations not being carried out.

Mr. McDONALD said, with regard to the search fee of 2s. 6d., that the rule ought to be applied to big mining secretaries and managers, who were continually hunting up leases, as

well as to those whose duty it was to search with regard to exemptions. He had heard that it was the intention of the Government to take away a portion of the goldfield reserve at Cloncurry, and throw it open for homesteads. He hoped nothing of the kind would be done. Cloncurry was an exceptionally rich mineral district, and no one knew how soon there might be a rush there.

Mr. HOOLAN said the initiation of a debate on the first item on the Estimate was not in any way intended as a reflection on the Minister, to whom nothing but praise was due from mining members for the way he had administered his department since he had been in office. The hon. gentleman had always treated their complaints and representations with the greatest consideration. The question of the Mills United, at Charters Towers, was a most important one, and it was greatly to the advantage of the shareholders in that tremendous monopoly that the present Government, and not the Labour party, were on the Treasury benches, for they would certainly have overturned all the arrangements in connection with it. There had been maladministration of the mining laws, encouragement of monopoly, and connivance everywhere; and if that connivance was not fraud, it looked precious like it. It was not one of those mining ventures which was likely to be worked out in a year or two. The company had worked such large advantages by means of the State that they were likely to go on for many years to come, and there was no knowing what shape the question would take in the future, so that it was just as well to have it ventilated. Everything connected with that huge monopoly on the Charters Towers Gold Field pointed to the fact that some person or persons in the Mines Department were either accessories to or confederates in the creation and continuance of that monopoly. The persons interested in the matter maintained that it was for the benefit of miners; that it forwarded the mining industry, and increased the output of gold, and was consequently a benefit to the State. But it was not for the benefit of the miners, because it embraced a large area of land sufficient to keep three or more companies in full work. It could not increase the output of gold, because it had only one shaft, and though they had the most improved machinery they could not haul up sufficient stone, working the whole of the six days of the week and a good part of Sunday, to keep it in full swing. The company would break down 500 tons more of stone weekly than they did at the present time, so that it could not be said that the monopoly increased the output of gold. Moreover, it was directly inimical to the best public interests, as it hampered public spirit and enterprise. What it might become it was something monstrous to contemplate; it might eventually destroy the mining industry on that field. The company owned 130 acres on Charters Towers, but, knowing that they were going on an unsafe basis, and had violated the mining law, they had surrendered a certain portion to another company, the transaction being what was commonly known as "thimble-rigging." Yet even now, according to the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, who candidly stated that he was a shareholder in the company, they had 109 acres left. Such a thing was an outrage on the department, and no other State would stand it. He ventured to say that if the department were closer to the mines, or more easy of access by the people there, they would hear more about it. There was no intention to delay Government business, and that was the proper place to discuss it, because, had it not been for the laxity of the Mining Department for the last few years, no such monopoly would exist. They would, therefore, continue to bring

the matter up, and he hoped it would be brought up year after year until it was rectified. It had been impossible to deal with it effectually in past times on account of the sympathy of the Government with the people who held these leases, and possibly on account of some members of the Government being shareholders in the concern, though he did not directly accuse anyone of being a shareholder in it. There was nothing in the Mining Act that allowed persons to amalgamate a number of leases where the total acreage would exceed twenty-five acres. The Mills United had amalgamated leases greatly exceeding that acreage, and therefore they could not have done so properly and legally, and the amalgamation must have been carried out by fraud and with the connivance of the Mines Department; or else there must have been at the time a lot of wooden-headed noodles in the Mining Department who were not fit to administer it, whatever might be said of those who administered it now.

Mr. DAWSON: Somebody made a "pot" out of it.

Mr. HOOLAN said that probably people took care to secure themselves, and small blame to them. He would pass no direct censure upon individuals, as the spirit of greed was rampant in the breast of everyone, even of their conscientious, respectable, and religious Ministers; and had he been amongst the speculators he would probably have done the very thing they did. The goldfield was only limited in area, and they found one company controlling 109 acres of it. Supposing the 109 acres properly demanded 5,000 men to work them, the directors of the Mills United Company could say, "No; only 109 men shall work it, and no more. We will monopolise that natural wealth of the colony. We are the owners." It did not matter how many persons were clamouring for work; how much the State was in need of revenue from a dividend tax or from anything else; by virtue of paying £1 an acre per year to the State this company could hold the whole of that mine. It was a monstrosity upon their mining laws, the Mines Department, and the whole community. When shares were low, and mines paid no dividends or light dividends, the tendency was to have them widely distributed; but when the output of gold increased, the tendency was to have the shares rise, and the speculator stepped in and grabbed shares until the mine got into a few hands. That was a tendency which swamped the rights of the public and destroyed public spirit. They were bound on every occasion to provide for the widest public liberty and the utmost freedom of the individual, and monopolies of that kind restricted the individual, and put a yoke upon the workmen of the colony that would reduce them to beasts of burden. If the laxity of the Mining Department in connection with Mills United had been taken full advantage of, and there had been three such companies formed instead of one, the whole field would have been in the hands of a few men, and all that was wanted then was to have the shares boomed on the London market, and taken up by the Jews, the dukes, and lords, or whoever else they might be that controlled the money market there, and the Charters Towers Gold Field could be controlled by people living in London. They could send out word to reduce wages and bring about another strike, and by reducing wages 10s. a week they would prevent the circulation of £1,500 a week amongst the Towers public. That was the position, and it was a very wrong position, and one attained by fraud somewhere, whether consciously or unconsciously he did not know. That was what they wanted to arrive at, because the Govern-

ment should not let speculation stand in their way. If people wanted to gamble in mining shares, let them do so. They had as much right to do that as to gamble in "Miller's" sweeps, or "Adams" sweeps, or any other form of lottery, and let such gamblers rest upon their choice. Members had expressed themselves as disgusted with the history of the "Gridiron," but it involved too much money to be a thing to get disgusted over, and it should have been discussed by itself for a week, and thoroughly thrashed out. The present Under Secretary for Mines, who sat in the gallery, knew all about it, and knew the public officials who were tried to be "had"—to use a mild expression—those who refused to be "had," the weak men who kind of consented from fear of the influence which might be used against them, and the men who put their foot down, and would have none of it. They embraced the streets and lanes in the first place, and found that the Government did not interfere, so they went further until they got the whole. For ten months they sent up mullock that only gave four or five pennyweights to the ton, when they should have got an ounce. They deluded the shareholders, and the public, and the officials, and the department, and when they had got the whole thing into their own hands it suddenly became a dividend-paying mine. That sort of thing was directly inimical to the best interests of the country, and he said that, although some of his particular friends were in it. In fact, one hon. member who was speaking against the monopoly was a shareholder. The Government need not think they had heard the last of the matter. Although the free Press would not ventilate it, that portion of the Press which might have been expected to ventilate it had closed its columns to the matter, and the only place left was Parliament House. If the department had not been so sleepy or dishonest, this monopoly would never have occurred. It was hard to say which was the best way to assist the industry. Their laws already allowed anyone to take up a small or a large claim, or a reward claim, for a field discovered at a certain distance from old workings, and the exemption clauses were very proper when properly used. There was nothing to prevent a man who found a claim from keeping it as his own, no matter how poor he might be, and he had no doubt that if any member of the Labour party brought forward any mining proposals the hon. gentleman in charge of the department would consider them. There were rich claims only waiting to be taken out; and only last year a very obscure individual, who only had three horses and a dray, found £6,000 worth of gold. He had no miner's right, so he nursed his specimens and waited until the warden came and put him safely in possession, and if the amount had been £6,000,000 he would have been as secure. A great deal of the friction that had occurred on the fields had been between the officials and the public; while, if the officials liked, they could smooth down and prevent that friction. Since these fields had developed into leasing fields, and the small claims had died out, there had been less quarrelling and fewer disputes. He had nothing to say against the Northern officials. Most of them had done their best, and some were particularly good. There was no better guide than the field he represented; and he felt convinced in his own mind that there were hundreds of mines there lying totally abandoned. There was no Government officer who could prevent him taking up one of them; but the fact remained that they were not being worked. The Government could do nothing more unless they discovered a means of putting gold into the earth, or preventing the heavy influx of water, or of making hard rock soft. The greatest blot in their

Mining Department was this monopoly of Mills United, and they must always denounce any tendency towards monopolies, which did no good to the individuals, or to the people, or to the department. They should denounce the wrong until it was rectified, and even if they did not rectify this mistake, they should prevent such hideous mistakes occurring in future.

Mr. BROWNE was rather surprised to hear several old members express astonishment at anyone saying there were defects in the mining laws. He had been a pretty diligent student of *Hansard*, and he found that the same thing had been brought up session after session, and that both Mr. Hodgkinson and the late Mr. Macrossan when in opposition had spoken strongly of the defects in those laws. It had been said that he did not point out any defects in the mining laws, though he complained of them. The fact was that in the early part of the session it was his intention to table a motion dealing with the question, but there was so much private business on the paper that he saw there was no chance of getting it discussed. He brought the matter forward to-day while the Estimates of the Mines Department were under consideration, and though he could take the mining laws piece by piece and show the defects, he had no desire to take up an hour and a-half or two hours in doing so. Under the circumstances he thought it best to simply point out the fact that defects existed, and legislation was needed. The hon. member for Woothakata had a printed list of suggestions made by a conference which met at Herberton three years ago. Those suggestions were printed and sent to the Mines Department, but no notice had been taken of them. The mining members and miners generally were prepared to give every assistance in the way of improving the mining laws, and he would like the Minister for Mines to state definitely whether he was prepared to take up the question.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said the best proof that the present mining laws were working satisfactorily was the fact that there was now no mining litigation in the courts. The only case in dispute was one which would be met by the Bill which the Government proposed to introduce, giving the owners of a freehold the right to mine for gold, subject to a small royalty. If there were really any defects in the present laws, he was prepared to listen to any suggestions with a view to having them remedied.

Mr. HAMILTON said it did not follow that, because there was no litigation, therefore the mining laws must be good. There might be unjust conditions, with respect to which there could be no litigation, simply because those conditions were definitely fixed by law. He had particularised two absurd clauses in the regulations, and could mention others just as absurd.

Mr. RAWLINGS said that the mining conference which was held in Herberton three years ago went through the whole of the mining laws, and made over sixty suggestions, which they forwarded to Sir Samuel Griffith and to the Mines Department. Nothing had yet come of those suggestions, and he advised the Minister for Mines to consider them and see what he could do in the matter.

Mr. DUNSFORD moved the reduction of the salary of the Under Secretary by £50. He considered that £700 was quite sufficient for any Under Secretary; and the purchasing price of £700 now was as great as that of £800 a couple of years back. In addition to that, the vote was increased by £250 since the present Under Secretary took office, as Mr. Glen Cameron had

only been receiving £500 per annum. The present Under Secretary was a very efficient officer, but not more so than the Under Secretary for Public Instruction, who was only getting £700.

Amendment put and negatived.

Question put and passed.

GOLDFIELDS AND MINERAL LANDS.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved that £16,347 be granted for goldfields and mineral lands. There was a reduction in the vote of £9,616; but, notwithstanding that reduction, the efficiency of the department would not be impaired. The first reduction was due to the abolition of the position of warden on the Palmer Gold Field, as there was very little work on that field. The wardens at Ravenswood, Bidsvold, and Cloncurry had all had their salaries reduced. The number of mining surveyors had been reduced from six to four, who were stationed at Gympie, Charters Towers, Croydon, and Herberton. The mining surveyor at Ravenswood had gone to Charters Towers, where he was doing private work, and he would get any work the Government might have for him to do. The mining surveyor on the Palmer had been dispensed with altogether. The allowances of the mining surveyors had also been reduced from £300 to £150, which would be ample. The forage and travelling allowance for wardens had also been reduced, and the vote for the expenses of working diamond drills had been omitted. Up to the 30th June last the amount expended at Gympie had been £8,300, and at Croydon £6,750—he was sorry to say with very poor results. The department was not going to spend any more money in working the diamond drills, but it was quite willing to lend the drills to any place which would pay the expense of working them. The work of the mining registrar at Herberton was now being done by the clerk of petty sessions. The mineralogical lecturer at Charters Towers had been dispensed with; but, as there was a vote of £250 for technical education in the Department of Public Instruction, if the people of Charters Towers raised a like sum, they would have £500 to spend on technical education, and they might retain the services of that gentleman, if they chose. The vote for the geological survey was reduced by £300. At present the two Assistant Geologists were engaged on a geological map of Charters Towers, and as soon as Mr. Jack had removed into his new offices he would proceed to Charters Towers to carry on that work.

Mr. DUNSFORD had already stated that the positions of police magistrate and warden on Charters Towers could be filled by one man. At a time when there had been a great deal more work to do one man had done the work of the two offices, and, if the Government were sincere in their desire to save, one man could be made to do all the work now. If the Secretary for Mines was not willing to amalgamate the offices, he would be reluctantly compelled to move the omission of the vote for the warden.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said that at one time the present Under Secretary for Mines had acted in the dual capacity of police magistrate and warden at Charters Towers, and so had the present warden. Mr. Sellheim had had to work until 9 and 10 o'clock at night, and the present warden had been unable to do all the work, which had greatly increased, and, therefore, a police magistrate had been appointed. The police magistrate had to travel to Hughenden, and there was such an amount of mining work to do on Charters Towers, which was the most important

goldfield in Australia, that it was necessary that the warden should be always present to attend to his duties. The warden had been on the Hodgkinson, Herberton, and Etheridge fields, as well as at Charters Towers, and he had always been well spoken of. If the work could be done by one man, the department would be only too glad to have it done by one man; but the reduction in the vote was so large that he was afraid he had been almost too parsimonious.

Mr. DUNSFORD was compelled to move the omission of the item. When speaking on the merits of the warden on Charters Towers a short time before, he had stated that he was a competent officer. He still thought he was competent, and that he was well-versed in mining law; but since he had previously spoken he had become aware of certain matters which made it imperative that the warden should be removed. At the beginning of 1891, when that man was filling the two offices of police magistrate and warden, four very serious charges had been made against him. The Civil Service Board had gone to Charters Towers to investigate, and they had reported unfavourably against that officer on one or two of the charges, and the Colonial Secretary had found it absolutely necessary to relieve him of the administration of justice as police magistrate. The Colonial Secretary said he would no longer have the man in his department, as he was unreliable, and he therefore dispensed with the services of the warden as police magistrate and appointed another police magistrate. But the Secretary for Mines would not dispense with his services as warden, and retained him in that position. It seemed strange that one department should continue to employ a man who could not be depended upon by the other department. The fact of the Civil Service Board having reported against the warden was sufficient reason why he should be removed from Charters Towers. But there were other reasons why both those officers should be removed. One was—and he challenged the Colonial Secretary and the Secretary for Mines to deny it—that both the police magistrate and the warden were under the control of a firm of lawyers at Charters Towers, and had been for a long time. They had all heard of the liquidation scandals that had occurred there, and it was not for the good of the field or the country that that state of affairs should continue. The warden also had a weakness to which he (Mr. Dunsford) would not more particularly refer, beyond saying but for that and for local influences the warden, who did his duty as far as he was able, would be an efficient officer. Before moving the omission of the item, he would give the Secretary for Mines an opportunity of saying whether he intended to appoint one man as police magistrate and warden at Charters Towers.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said no one would contend that the largest goldfield in Australia ought not to have a capable man as warden. The present warden was doing his duty, and so long as he continued to do it he (Mr. Philp) would not remove him.

Mr. DAWSON said the hon. gentleman had cleverly evaded the point. His hon. colleague had made a direct and specific charge against the warden, and it had been entirely ignored. They wanted to know whether the charge was true, and whether the colony was to be saddled with two officers where one could do the work.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said he had not evaded the question. He stated distinctly that the business of the goldfield required a warden at Charters Towers; and he did not think anybody could be found who could fill both offices satisfactorily. The duties of warden

required the whole time of one man, and as long as the officer who occupied the position did his work as satisfactorily as was now the case, he should not disturb him.

Mr. HAMILTON said that until the present warden's conduct was made the subject of an inquiry he held the dual position of warden and police magistrate; and no proposition to divide the two offices was made until the result of that inquiry caused the Colonial Secretary to remove him from the office of police magistrate. The Colonial Secretary refused to take him back, the late Secretary for Mines refused to get rid of him, and the Colonial Secretary said he would appoint another man.

Mr. McDONALD complained that the salary of the warden of Cloncurry had been reduced by £50. That officer had the largest district in the colony to look after, and his duties compelled him to travel over vast tracts of waterless country. The warden was far better off with £300 at Gladstone than with £400 at Cloncurry.

Mr. SMYTH said he wished to refer to the inspectors of mines, each of whose salaries had been reduced by £50. Considering that the inspectors did not get the salary of many mining managers, and the valuable services they rendered to miners generally, he hoped the Minister would see his way to restore the amount to what it was last year. Mr. Fryar, the inspector in the Southern district, was a most valuable officer; he had been acquainted with coal-mining all his life, as his father had before him, and he was such an expert that he earned his salary over and over again. Indeed, the precautions taken by the mining inspectors generally for saving life was so great that there had been a considerable decrease in the number of deaths from mining accidents, and he hoped that next year they would receive some consideration from the Government.

Mr. FISHER said it had frequently been pointed out to the department that it would be a distinct advantage if it were made compulsory that any company abandoning a mine which had been worked should, before doing so, make a survey of the workings, and deposit a copy of the plan of such workings with the department. If that were done, persons making workings near the abandoned mine would be able to avoid the danger of accident, and be saved unnecessary expense; and he hoped that matter would receive attention when an amendment of the mining laws was being framed. Another matter requiring attention was the inspection and ventilation of coal-mines. As far as preventing accidents was concerned, they might as well have no law at all as the one now on the statute-book, which was altogether inadequate. Twenty years ago they had a more advanced Act in Great Britain than the one passed in Queensland in 1889. The law here contained no proper provision for ventilating mines, and accidents were occurring almost daily, men having to be carried out of coal-mines in an unconscious condition, both in the West Moreton and Burrum districts. He knew for a fact that from one mine in the West Moreton district miners had frequently to be carried out in an unconscious state during the first two months after work was commenced. The inspector had not sufficient power, and though he might advise mine-owners and managers to provide the necessary mechanical appliances for ventilation, he could not insist on their doing so, and his advice was generally ignored. In one instance recently, in the Burrum district, the owners of a mine had erected appliances for ventilation purposes, and he thought they would be convinced by this time that it was one of the

most profitable things they had undertaken, because without such provision the health of the miners was injured and the companies suffered. He hoped that in amending the Coal Mines Regulation Act the Minister would see that proper provision was made for inspection and ventilation, and that he would carefully consider the recent amendments of the various Acts in Great Britain. He hoped an amendment in that direction would be gone on with, and a thorough system of inspection also provided for in the case of accidents, because in the case of a recent accident reported he thought gross negligence had been shown on the part of a manager in sending a novice in mining to perform very dangerous work. If such an accident happened in Great Britain, a charge of manslaughter would have been brought against the manager. That was a hard thing to say, but it was necessary some persons should say such things, and he said that on the evidence before him and on the knowledge he had of mining, and if further evidence showed that he was wrong he would make the fullest retraction of the statement. The idea that practical miners made better managers than men technically educated for such positions had been upset, and the time had arrived for instituting examinations to test the competency of men seeking employment in such positions, and those already holding such positions might be given certificates of competency.

Mr. DAWSON understood from the Minister's reply to his colleague that the two officers were kept at Charters Towers because of a disagreement between two Ministers of the Crown. The Colonial Secretary would not have a certain officer, and a former Secretary for Mines would not do without him. The present Secretary for Mines was not responsible for the very peculiar position; but he would like to know whether that gentleman would investigate the matter, and see whether the charges made against a certain officer had been proved or not, and whether, if he found that one man could fill the dual office, as he had filled it before, the Secretary for Mines would recommend the appointment? He would be glad to hear the hon. gentleman say he would stop the practice of a public officer having to administer law and justice contracting large debts, as such a man would be biased in favour of his creditors.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES was not going into the past histories of his officers. So long as an officer in his department was doing his duty, he would not seek to remove him, but when it was shown to him that an officer could not do his work, or did not act as a Civil servant should act, he would get someone else in that man's place.

Mr. THOMAS said the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Fisher, had made great capital out of the accident that had been referred to. There was always a great difference of opinion on the question of examinations for managers. He had been as successful as almost any man in Queensland in managing mines, but if he was to be put under an examination to-day he really should not know whether he would pass or not. One of the mines to which the hon. member had referred had been carried on under the instructions of one of those certificated managers, and if there was a bad one in the colony there could be no doubt that was one of the worst. When he gave up the work himself, he was sure he could put his hand on a dozen men who held certificates from England, Scotland, or Wales. The men working under him knew their work, and to see that men did their work properly required a man who knew how to do it himself. Speaking as a working man, as well as a colliery proprietor, he said the colony ought to be proud of Inspector

Fryar, and if things were not carried on properly it was not that gentleman's fault. He did not like to work in bad air himself, and his men would give him credit that he had never asked them to work in bad air if he could help it.

Mr. GRIMES did not know much about gold-mines, but he knew something about coal-mines. He had never heard any complaints so far as collieries were concerned, but thought the Act was considered a very good one, and that the regulations framed under it gave satisfaction to the men and to the proprietors. The hon. member for Gympie showed very bad taste in referring to the accidents which had taken place at the Aberdare mine, especially when he went so far as to lay a charge of manslaughter against the manager. From all they had heard of the inspector, he was quite competent to deal with matters of this kind, and if he saw any evidences of carelessness or neglect he would not pass them over. There was nothing to show that the regulations had been broken, and accidents would sometimes happen in the best-conducted collieries.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said the mining inspectors did not decide those matters. Inquiries were held, and the depositions were sent to the Attorney-General. In the present case the depositions had only just been received, and he did not see how the hon. member for Gympie could offer an opinion at all.

Mr. TOOTH, as a director of a coal-mine, could endorse all that had been said by the hon. member for Bundanba with reference to the inspector, with whom he had had a good deal of correspondence. No officer in the Government service carried out his duties more faithfully than Mr. Fryar, who was a thoroughly competent man, and a practical man. If he saw anything where an improvement could be made, he suggested it to the proprietors, and if he thought it necessary that an improvement should be carried out, he would insist upon it. In regard to certificated mining managers, his experience was that it was not always the man who could produce the best testimonials who was the best manager. In his own district the managers were thoroughly practical men who knew their business, and never sent men where they were not prepared to go themselves.

Mr. FISHER had as much knowledge of coal-mining as any hon. member, and was certain that if they had had an Act similar to the English Act those accidents would not have occurred. They had no system of ventilation or shift inspection here, which there should be in all mines, especially where black-damp was known to exist. He did not suggest that the manager should be considered guilty of manslaughter, although he would have been under the English Act. He knew the managers referred to by the hon. member for Burrum; one of them held a service certificate, and the other was a practical man. He denied what the hon. member for Bundanba said—that because a man had proved himself a good manager he was therefore a careful and capable man, for he might have injured hundreds of people without killing them outright. If a coal-mine was to be successful, it must be worked upon scientific principles, because ventilation had always to be provided for, either by natural draughts or by mechanical power, or else the men might be suffocated, and very little be said about it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that, in the case of every mining accident, there was an inquiry held after an inspection by competent persons. At the inquiry all persons acquainted with facts bearing on the case

were called on to give evidence, and the depositions, accompanied by a report from the inspector, were sent to the Mines Department, and handed over by that department to the Attorney-General's department. The depositions and the inspector's report were examined by the Attorney-General personally, in order to see whether there had been any breach of the Mining Acts or regulations. In some cases where breaches had been discovered prosecutions had been ordered; in other cases where breaches had been discovered prosecutions had not been ordered because, in many cases, the accident was caused by the carelessness of the victim. So far as he was concerned, if a man had been injured through his own carelessness, he thought that was a sufficient punishment, and that it would be needless cruelty to set the law in motion to punish him for having committed a breach of the mining laws. But where the victim was not already sufficiently punished, it was his duty to see that he was prosecuted.

Mr. McDONALD: What about the two men on the Brilliant?

Mr. HOOLAN said that on a recent occasion the miners of Bundanba had shown such unbounded confidence in the member representing that electorate that it seemed like a piece of impertinence to refer to the accident that happened there. With regard to the matter brought forward by the hon. member for Charters Towers, the Government could not fail to understand that their grievance was founded on fact; and he did not think it was judicious on the part of the Government to ignore their opinions, because they were the representatives of Charters Towers, as Mr. Thomas was of Bundanba. He had been a resident of Charters Towers, and he thoroughly understood the matter. The warden there was a capable officer if he liked; he thoroughly understood the mining laws; and he was managing the dual office very well until friction arose between him and the department. Then it was considered necessary to send another officer, and since then neither one nor the other had given general satisfaction, because each was in the hands of a clique. The work of both warden and police magistrate would be too heavy for one officer without assistance; but it could be managed very well by one officer if he had an efficient mining registrar—who ought to be a justice of the peace and acting warden—and sufficient clerical assistance.

Mr. DUNSFORD asked the Secretary for Mines whether he would inquire into the charges he had made, and whether he would appoint one man to fill the dual position if he found that the work could be done by one man?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES could only repeat that no charges had been made against the present warden since he had been in office; and so long as he conducted himself as he was now doing, he would not make any alteration.

Mr. HAMILTON said that one of the hon. gentleman's colleagues had distinctly stated that he would not have that officer as a police magistrate on account of some of the charges which had been proved against him; and if he was not fit for a police magistrate, he was certainly not fit for a warden.

Mr. DAWSON was sorry that he could not speak in such high terms as some hon. members had done of mining inspectors. He objected to the principle of their appointments, and he maintained that an almost criminal neglect of duty had crept in through the system of appointment. Generally nominee appointments were made on account of political services rendered, and with no regard to the qualification of the individual

for the office to which he was appointed. Mining inspectors had greater responsibility than any other class of inspectors, as the safety of thousands of lives rested on them. Another evil which arose from the nominee system of appointment was that the continuance in office of the mining inspectors depended upon the goodwill of the mining proprietors, who had the ear of the Minister, whereas it should depend upon the securing of the goodwill of the men whose health and lives they were supposed to safeguard. It was impossible for the Minister or any other man to know as well as the miners themselves the qualifications required in a mining inspector. The mining inspector on Charters Towers gave such dissatisfaction that, unless he got a promise from the Secretary for Mines that he would remove that officer, he would press the omission of his salary to a division. It was notorious that nothing was ever heard of him until after an accident had occurred. One of the duties of a mining inspector was to see to the ventilation of mines. One hon. member seemed to think that all that was needed was that the list of accidents should be short, but the results of inspection should rather be judged by the general health of the men. He knew of one mine on Charters Towers where, for some considerable time, not a day passed that men were not taken to the surface completely exhausted, and they had to stay at home for a couple of days a week before they were strong enough to resume work. That was due to the bad ventilation of the mine. In fact, the manner in which the mines on that field were ventilated was scandalous, and if the mining inspector had done his duty in the past it would not have been necessary to refer in that Committee to the terrible grievances under which the miners were labouring. On two or three different occasions he went down a big mine—a dry mine—when the men were changing shifts, and they came up utterly exhausted and bathed in perspiration. It was also a fact that a mining director, while making one of his regular inspections, walking at leisure, and no doubt with the mine specially cooled for the occasion, fainted at the bottom of the shaft, and had to be carried to the surface. In some of the mines there were levels driven 500 feet from the shaft, and for 250 feet without an air-winze. On one occasion he and his friends wanted to get some absolutely correct information respecting the heat of a mine, and they got a thermometer down—he could not take the Committee so far into his confidence as to tell them how it was done—and they found that the heat near the air-pipe was 90 degrees, and in other parts of the mine from 93 degrees to 98 degrees; and it must be remembered that 98 degrees down a mine, with compressed air, dynamite fumes, candles burning, and men breathing in a confined space, was a very different thing from 98 degrees on the surface. At the Brilliant Extended it was a notorious fact that they were sinking their shaft with inadequate machinery. One day the spur-wheel broke, and it was a matter of considerable risk and difficulty to get the men up to the surface. Notwithstanding that warning, the mining inspector allowed them to proceed, and the next week the engine broke down, and the men had to stay below until another engine was obtained from Millchester, three miles away. If that shaft had been a wet shaft, and it was almost a miracle it was not, those men would have been drowned like rats in a hole, through what he could not help calling the criminal negligence of the inspector of mines. The Attorney-General had stated that when an accident occurred, particularly if it was a fatal accident, an inquiry was held, and that if it was found that there had been any breach of

the regulations a prosecution was instituted. But it was a matter of history that there had been a gross breach of the regulations at the Brilliant P.C., where, through there being no trap-door at the top of the shaft, as required by the regulations, a trolley fell down, smashing to pieces two men who were coming up; and there had been no prosecution. They also knew of a fearful accident in which two men were killed through the brake of an engine not answering. It was such things that made them feel very strongly about the way the inspector performed his duties, and he thought inspectors should be elected instead of appointed in the way they were at present. He would like to know whether the Minister would remove the inspector at Charters Towers to some other district.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES thought the hon. member had somewhat exaggerated the matters he had referred to. So far as he (the Minister) could learn there was no complaint in the Mines Office against the inspector at Charters Towers. On the Charters Towers field there were 3,000 miners; and surely, if it was the opinion of the bulk of these men that such things were taking place as had been described by the hon. member, someone would approach the Minister or warden, and make a complaint. Mr. Shakespeare had been inspector there for the last ten or twelve years, and never before had such a charge been made against him as had been made that evening. In every case where an accident occurred the depositions were sent to the Attorney-General; and if it appeared that there had been any gross breach of the regulations, the Attorney-General took action; but the hon. gentleman informed him that in almost every instance, when he had taken action, the miners would not come forward and give evidence against the accused. He (the Minister) had been in Charters Towers a great number of times, and had never seen a finer, stronger, healthier-looking body of men than the miners on that field. He had also been down the mines there, and had found them much cooler than some of the coast towns in the Northern part of the colony. He had known men have to knock off work in the middle of the day at Townsville on account of the great heat. There was no comparison between the men living on the coast and the men at Charters Towers as far as physique was concerned. There might be a few weakly miners among them who could not stand the work, but the bulk of the men enjoyed capital health as far as he knew. As to saying that the owners of mines would not break through to other mines in order to provide for ventilation, he believed they had broken through in nearly every case where it was possible to do so. With regard to Mr. Shakespeare, he was writing a pamphlet on ventilation, and took a great deal of interest in the work; and so long as he was doing his duty he would not be removed.

Mr. DAWSON said the hon. gentleman had stated that he had exaggerated the accidents which had occurred on Charters Towers. Did the hon. gentleman deny that the accidents at the Brilliant Extended and Brilliant P.C. had not occurred in the way he had described, and that there had been a breach of the regulations? Those things were matters of history; and when stating that the account given of them had been exaggerated, the hon. gentleman should prove his statement. As to the miners on that field being a fine body of men, that was no reason why they should be crushed like so much quartz or literally sweated beyond endurance. The quality of the explosives used in some of the mines was a matter which required attention. Some of it was very bad, and was dangerous to

the men, and it was to be found on Croydon as well as Charters Towers. Then the extremely careless manner in which explosives were kept down in the mines required inspection; and in the matter of sanitation, he need only say that an inspector of nuisances need be no idle officer in some of the mines.

Mr. SMYTH was on Charters Towers some time ago with some members of the Government, and a mineowner brought a complaint against Mr. Shakespeare. When it came to be investigated, it was shown that the charge was that the inspector had insisted upon certain portions of the mining regulations being carried out which put the mines to a certain amount of expense, and in doing so he was doing only his duty. As to ventilation, he had been in many of the mines on Charters Towers, and there was no doubt they were hotter than the mines on Gympie, and it was for that reason he held that £2 10s. a week on Gympie was equal to £3 a week on Charters Towers. A committee investigated the subject of ventilation in Victoria some time ago, and while they recommended fans and water jets they agreed that the best means of ventilation were found in connecting two mines. It was the best thing for the mine-owners to do, as they could get more work out of their men, and if one shaft could not be worked from any cause the mine could be continued in working from the other. With respect to the case of men left at the bottom of a mine, there were enough men on Charters Towers to haul them up with the rope without waiting for an engine, and he had no doubt that the best that could be done in that case had been done. The machinery on Charters Towers was equal to any in Australia, and he was glad to be able to say that most of it had been made at Maryborough.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES, in answer to remarks made by the hon. member for Charters Towers, said that the Government were most careful in the matter of explosives, and he knew of one case in which a shipment of 200 cases had been destroyed in Brisbane, as it would not pass the tests. Sub-collectors of Customs sent samples of explosives, landed at their ports, to the Government Analyst; and if it was found unfit for use it was not allowed to land, or was destroyed.

Mr. DAWSON could assure the hon. gentleman that cheap and inferior explosives were to be found in some of the mines, and he had seen a hole fired seven times before the charge exploded; and there was one instance in which nineteen attempts had to be made to fire a charge before it exploded.

Mr. DUNSFORD said the remarks of his colleague on the inspector of mines in Charters Towers were correct; but a great deal of the difficulty arose through the inspectors, of whom there were only four for the whole of Queensland, having to cover too big a district. To properly inspect the mines on Charters Towers the inspector should not be in his office writing pamphlets on ventilation, but going round to see that the regulations were enforced. The mines were owned in many cases by absentees, and every advantage that could be taken was taken. They were struggling all the time to pay dividends, and did not care about the men's lives. It was cheaper for them to kill any number of men than to break a piece of machinery. The absentee owners did not know the men, and were not in touch with them, and their sole object was to get dividends. Most of the men were married, and in order to earn the bare necessities they had to swallow all those injuries and insults, and had to jeopardise their lives because the mining regulations were not enforced by the inspector as they should be. If

the inspectors were elected, as they would be in the near future, the lives of the men would be taken into consideration as well as the dividends. This inspector had been there too long, and his interests were too much wrapped up in those of the mineowners and managers, and he could not act against their interests. No doubt if he were shifted to another field he would perform his duties better, but they had better have no inspector at all than the present one.

Mr. CADELL said he noticed that the warden at Eidsvold had been reduced in salary by £100, which was a greater reduction than had been made in the case of any other warden, and he believed his work had been increased. He believed Mr. St. George was one of the oldest officers of the department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES admitted Mr. St. George was a very old officer, but he had not much to do, and £400 was a very good salary for him.

Mr. HAMILTON thought the feelings of the hon. member for Charters Towers had carried him away when he said that absentee owners did not care for the lives of the men. He hardly thought that wealth deprived a man of all human sympathies. At the same time, specific charges had been made against the inspector, and it was the duty of the Minister to investigate those charges. Then, if they were found not to be founded upon fact, the inspector would be acquitted; and if they were true, then he should be dispensed with at once.

Mr. McDONALD endorsed all that had been said by the hon. member for Charters Towers, as this inspector's conduct had frequently come under his notice. He might add that when the level of No. 2 Queen fell in through defective timbering there were some forty men nearly entombed, and very nearly lost their lives; but there was no report sent in to the department about it, and no notice was taken of it. In reference to absentee owners, he might refer to the case of the man Ryan, who had been out of work for some time, but eventually was employed on the Day Dawn Block. They were trying to run the pass, and the manager suggested that they should put a charge of dynamite in it. Ryan started to go up, but, as soon as he did so, the pass came down, and he fell and hurt his back. He was ill for some time, and finding himself a burden to everyone he committed suicide. The manager did all he could for him, and they sent a letter on behalf of his friends to the company asking assistance for him. But the company refused to give any assistance, although the man lost his life in trying to extract dividends for them. The owners did not care much for a life in that case. Another case occurred on the Block in which one man was killed and another seriously injured by some timber falling upon them, owing to the want of proper inspection. It had been stated to-night that the men had a right to give evidence in connection with these inquiries. He did not think that was the case so far as the miners were concerned; nor did he think Mr. Mowbray would allow them to cross-examine. His belief was that there had been a great many accidents, not only on Charters Towers, but also in other places, that would not have occurred if the regulations had been enforced. In the case of the Brilliant P. C. it appeared that some time previous to the accident the inspector told the management that they would have to put up pentiss doors, but they ignored his instructions and the accident took place. If that inspector was not responsible, why did he not have the management of the mine pulled up

and severely punished for not carrying out his instructions? He believed there were hundreds of cases that might be brought forward against Mr. Shakespeare if hon. members liked to rake them up.

Mr. DANIELS said he had come to the conclusion, after listening to the discussion, that there was an absolute necessity for amendment in the mining laws, and that there should be an inquiry into the actions of this particular inspector.

Mr. FISHER wished to know the names of the inspectors who had suffered reductions, also the number of gold-mines and coal-mines Mr. Fryar had to look over. He thought it was high time that gentleman had an assistant. He was in favour of inspectors being elected and being beyond political influence. Another system that would work well in the meantime would be to shift them from place to place every two or three years.

Mr. RAWLINGS was sorry to hear the charges made against Mr. Shakespeare. He knew that officer, but had never heard any charges made against him in his district. So far as he knew, Mr. Shakespeare had always given satisfaction, and he would like an inquiry to be made. He was in favour of the election of mining inspectors.

Mr. DAWSON said that the case referred to by the hon. member for Flinders was an instance that they could not judge by the number of complaints that were lodged. In that case the manager had been too astute to give distinct instructions to clear the pass; but, if the man had not done it, he would have been dismissed. If the Government would not have the elective system, they might at least establish a system of changing officers about. The miners of Charters Towers would sooner be without an inspector altogether than have the present man. He, therefore, moved the omission of one inspector at £350.

Mr. HAMILTON said that it would be better if the hon. gentleman got a promise from the Secretary for Mines to investigate the charges which had been made against the inspector. It would be very unfair for the Secretary for Mines to dismiss the man merely on the strength of the charges which had been made against him that evening. No doubt the hon. member for Charters Towers believed that his information was correct; but still, in the interests of fair play, the officer in question should not be punished without being given an opportunity of answering the charges made against him.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said that, if the hon. member for Charters Towers had known of the charges he had made for months, he should have brought them under his notice months ago, instead of waiting until the Estimates for the Mines Department came on, when he had no opportunity of finding out whether there was any foundation for those charges. If the hon. gentleman formulated the charges in writing, he would inquire into them; but he could not promise to do more than that.

Mr. DAWSON said that since the Premier had come in the hon. gentleman had got a new defence. As the matters to which he had referred had been alluded to in the Press, the Secretary for Mines should have been acquainted with them, and, from what the Attorney-General had said, he was satisfied that that hon. gentleman had the papers in connection with one case that he had mentioned in his office. They did not want an inspector who was not worth his salary, and they would be quite willing to let some other district have him.

Mr. DANIELS thought the Secretary for Mines might promise to inquire into the charges which had been made. It was as necessary in the interests of the inspector as in the interests of the public that an inquiry should be held. If the charges were true, that officer was not fit for his position; and if they were not true, he had a right to have his character cleared.

Question—That the item “One inspector, £350,” be omitted—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 14.

Messrs. McDonald, Hardacre, Dawson, Fisher, King, Daniels, Kerr, Reid, Browne, Dunsford, Hoolan, Turley, Leahy, and Cross.

NOES, 37.

Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Barlow, Nelson, Byrnes, Dickson, Philp, Thorn, Tozer, Burns, McMaster, Murray, Hamilton, Plunkett, Cameron, Lord, Duffy, Thomas, Bell, Drake, Cadell, Rawlings, O'Connell, Grimes, Smyth, Dalrymple, Smith, Petrie, Kingsbury, Armstrong, Tooth, Watson, Midson, Cullen, Agnew, Chataway, Foxton, and Crombie.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. HAMILTON asked who was the mineral lands commissioner at Herberton, and what position in the service the last commissioner now held?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied that Mr. McDonald was the commissioner at Herberton, and that Mr. Zillman, his predecessor, had been appointed police magistrate at Normanton.

Mr. HAMILTON: At the same salary?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said the salary Mr. Zillman received at Normanton was £150 less than he received at Herberton.

Mr. FISHER said he wished to refer to the omission from the Estimates of the prospecting vote, which last year was £2,000. Although the vote had not been taken full advantage of, it ought not to have been omitted altogether; and he hoped the Secretary for Mines would place a similar sum on the Supplementary Estimates for the purpose of assisting small prospecting parties. He would also suggest that the Government should subsidise deep sinking. It was the opinion of mining experts at Gympie that there was a great future before the eastern part of the field. Attempts had been made to float a public company to sink deep shafts there, but they had failed, owing to the uncertainty and the large expenditure that would be involved before the speculation became remunerative. If the Government were to subsidise the sinking of a deep shaft on ground carefully selected, he did not doubt that it would bring in a return more than equivalent to the amount expended.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said it was not the intention of the Government to place a prospecting vote on the Supplementary Estimates. Only £370 was applied for last year for subsidising prospecting parties, without, he was sorry to say, any good result.

Mr. MURRAY asked why no provision had been made for a goldfields warden in the Rockhampton district? The output of gold there was larger than on any other field in the colony—

The CHAIRMAN: I must interrupt the hon. member. According to Standing Order No. 313, after a question for omitting or reducing an item has been disposed of, no debate can be allowed on any preceding item. The discussion must now be confined to items after the item “Inspectors.”

Mr. MURRAY said he supposed he must abide by the Chairman's ruling; but, at the same time, he saw no reason why the Minister should not explain the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied that the police magistrate at Rockhampton also performed the duties of gold warden, which were very light.

Mr. BROWNE said that some weeks ago he asked the Minister if Mr. Jack, the Government Geologist, had been instructed to supply the Mines Department with a copy of his report on the Mount Morgan mine, and the hon. gentleman replied in the negative. Without casting any reflection on the Mount Morgan mine, or anybody connected with it, he would like to point out that there was a suspicion in the public mind, caused by paragraphs which had appeared in the Press, that there was going to be another Mount Morgan boom. If there was any such intention it was possible that some parts of Mr. Jack's report might be selected for publication in a prospectus which would be circulated all over the world, and that anything derogatory to the mine would be omitted. Hon. members would probably be aware that about ten years ago—in the commencement of the year 1884—Mr. Hodgkinson, who was then warden on the Palmer Gold Field, made a report on certain mines, and that parts of that report were selected and printed in the prospectuses of the companies as his report on the Palmer Gold Field. The then Minister for Mines, Mr. Miles, was supposed to have stated that Mr. Hodgkinson was paid by certain parties to make that report. There was a great deal of talk about the matter all over the country, and a select committee was appointed by the House to inquire into it. Mr. Hodgkinson resigned, and came down to Brisbane, and nothing more was heard about the matter. He (Mr. Browne) did not believe that any of the charges were proved, and he merely referred to the matter to show how necessary it was, when a man of Mr. Jack's ability and reputation made a report on any mine, that a copy of that report should be furnished to the Mines Department. Possibly the Mount Morgan company would publish the report they had received; he hoped they would, but there was nothing to compel them to do so, and he certainly thought that a copy of the report should be furnished to the department, so that it could be seen by any well-known mining man who felt inclined to have a look at it. The last Mount Morgan boom had been a source of much misery to a great many people in the colony, and such a boom at the present time would be not only injurious to the company, but also disastrous to the country. He did not say that that was going to occur, but there was a suspicion abroad that something of the kind was intended; and hon. members might very well consider whether copies of reports on mines made by State officials should not be furnished to the Mines Department.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said Mr. Jack had been in the habit of reporting privately on mines with the sanction of the Minister, the owners paying all expenses, and the reports were the property of the owners of the mines. He could only promise that if any garbled report was published the true report would also be published.

Mr. HAMILTON thought it was but right that copies of all private reports made by Mr. Jack should be furnished to the department.

Mr. McDONALD asked if Mr. Jack had reported on the Cloncurry field at any time?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied that he believed Mr. Jack had reported on the Cloncurry field, and if the hon. member would call at the Mines Office he would cause the records to be searched.

Mr. BROWNE simply wanted to have a copy of such reports given to the Mines Department, and he was glad to hear the Secretary for Mines say that if any garbled report was published he would see that it was corrected.

The PREMIER said hon. members must not suppose for a minute that the services of the Government Geological Surveyor were at the command of mining companies to report upon the future prospects of the mines, that they might afterwards boom the shares. A request had been made from one of the biggest mining companies in the colony for the services of the Government Geological Surveyor, as the best geologist in the colonies to advise them, from his geological information, as to how they should work their mine. He had not advised them at all as to the gold they were likely to get. That was information which they could get from those who worked the mine. Mr. Jack had simply to say in his report, "Your data being correct, this is the proper way to work the mine."

Mr. HAMILTON said that when the House last year had decided that £2,000 should be spent in prospecting, Ministers had broken faith with the House in spending only £370 of the vote. Some persons concluded that there was no use in spending money on prospecting when two or three parties went out without finding anything. If they discovered one goldfield it would recoup them for the expenditure of £20,000 or £30,000 in prospecting. Most of the goldfields of the North had been discovered, and many of the towns there had grown up, as the result of the discovery of the Palmer Gold Field, which was due to a prospecting vote, under which Mr. Hann went out to report on the pastoral and geological features of the colony.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT ANALYST.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved that the sum of £500 be granted for the Government Analyst. The vote was £130 less than last year's vote. During the year a former Government Analyst died, and a new analyst had been appointed at a salary of £100 a year less.

Mr. HAMILTON said that Mr. Hodgkinson, when Secretary for Mines, had promised that specimens of stone submitted by miners would be analysed at the expense of the department. He would like to know if the present Secretary for Mines would use his own discretion, and act in a similar way.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said no *bonâ fide* miner was ever refused an analysis of stone.

The HON. G. THORN asked if the Government Analyst was a competent officer, as he thought there were very few men in Queensland who were competent analytical chemists. A good officer should get a higher salary than that appearing on the vote, and he suggested that the analyst should be allowed to supplement his salary by forming a school. Lectures on chemistry were very instructive, and no doubt very large classes would be got together if the Government allowed this officer to charge a fee.

Mr. HAMILTON said that, according to what had taken place, an officer who received only £300 a year was entitled to no consideration. If he had been drawing £600 a year, the case would have been different.

Mr. FISHER wished for information as to the duties of this officer?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said the Government Analyst was attached to the Mines Department, and had to assay minerals sent him

by the Government Geologist. He was a very competent officer, and had to work for the police in connection with the Sale of Food and Drugs Act. He did not think he would have much time to instruct pupils during the day, although he had been lecturing on chemistry in the evenings, to which the Government had no objection.

Mr. FOXTON asked for information regarding the amount of fees received last year in respect of work done by this officer.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES did not know what was received last year. Since this officer had been appointed fees had almost covered his salary.

Mr. HOOLAN supposed there was a demand for the services of this officer, but a mineral assayer would be of more service to the country. Was he capable of making such assays? The former analyst was discharged because his work was too faithful, and he did not find poison where it was expected to be. Could the hon. gentleman guarantee the efficiency of this officer?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said they were compelled to have a Government Analyst to work the Sale of Food and Drugs Act. The late analyst died, and the present officer, Mr. Henderson, was thoroughly competent. He had been a teacher at the Grammar School, and had first-class testimonials.

Question put and passed.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

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