

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 22 OCTOBER 1896

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

PETITIONS.

EXTENSION OF BOWEN RAILWAY.

Mr. McDONALD presented a petition from the Municipal Council of Hughenden praying for the extension of the Bowen Railway from its present terminus to the 37-mile peg on the Northern Railway.

Petition read and received.

Mr. McDONALD also presented a petition of a similar purport and prayer from the inhabitants of Hughenden and district.

Petition received.

QUESTION.

TANBY TO YEPPON, RAILWAY.

Mr. STEWART, asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to accept the guarantee offered by the Gogango Divisional Board, and to take the steps necessary for the construction of a railway from Tanby—on the Emu Park line—to Yeppoon; and if so, when?

2. If not, what are the Government's reasons for refusing to accept the guarantee, and to go on with the work?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

1. No.
2. The intention of the Government will be announced in due course.

MEAT EXPORTATION.

JOINT COMMITTEE.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. BELL—

1. That the Legislative Council be invited to join this House in the constitution of a joint committee to inquire, consider, and report what steps can be taken to place on a successful basis the industry of meat exportation.

2. That the number of members to serve on such joint committee be ten—four to form a quorum.

3. That the following members of this House be appointed to serve on such committee:—Messrs. Bell, Drake, Collins, Groom, and Sim.

4. That the committee have power to send for persons, papers, and records.

5. That these resolutions be transmitted to the Legislative Council, by message in the usual form.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.

CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT.

On the Order of the Day being called for the resumption of the adjourned debate on Mr. Turley's motion on this subject (*vide* page 742),

Mr. BROWNE said: When the hon. member for South Brisbane introduced this motion members on both sides of the House expressed a hope that there would not be much opposition to it. I very much hope that there will not be much opposition to it, but I rather fancy, after listening to the speech of the Secretary for Works, that there will be. The hon. gentleman, as usual, entertained the House with a very interesting discourse, but I fancy, after reading over his speech once or twice since, that the hon. gentleman got mixed in the double office that he holds; that he thought himself more as the head

of the Department of Public Instruction than as head of the Works Department. He gave us a good deal of information, and a good deal of ancient history, and then went off from what he called parochial politics into philosophy. I do not think there is much of parochial politics about the business, or that we need have gone so far back into ancient history as the hon. gentleman went. He said that Governments in times past had attempted to interfere with wages unsuccessfully, and expressed the opinion that Governments had no business to do that. Without expressing my own opinion, I may point out that men who are as eminent and who have as big a name as the Secretary for Works hold a very different opinion. I will quote a passage from an author that I know nearly every member has read—that is, Professor Thorold Rogers. He says—

“Employers will get labour cheap if they can. It is the business of the State to prevent them getting it so cheaply that they imperil the future of the race by so doing.”

That is the opinion we hold, and that is held by people all over the world who have advocated a minimum wage. Professor Rogers goes on in the same work—“Six Centuries of Work and Wages”—to say—

“Employers have constantly predicted that ruin would come on the great industries of the country if workmen were better paid. They resisted, and have resisted up to the present day, every demand which workmen have made, and are now appealing to the doctrine of freedom of contract, after having for centuries denied that liberty.”

Further on he says—

“For four centuries England fixed a maximum wage. The workmen then had nothing to do with law-making; now that they propose a minimum wage employers shriek for freedom of contract.”

I hardly think that all employers do that, and I shall be able to show that it is as much to the interest of employers not to do so as it is to the interest of working men. With regard to what the Secretary for Works said about legislation on this subject not having been successful, I thoroughly agree with him that it was not successful during the four centuries when wages were attempted to be fixed for what are called the working classes. I will give one or two instances to show what sort of laws they had at that time, and from which anyone will easily understand that such legislation was hardly likely to be successful. During the reign of Edward VI. a law was passed which provided that—

“If a man refused to work for statute prices he was branded with a V, denoting vagabond, and reduced to slavery for two years. If he attempted to escape from that condition he was branded with an S, and reduced to slavery for life, and if he objected to this he was hung.”

I hardly think that sort of legislation could be successful. Up to 1795 a farm labourer was not allowed to leave his own parish to look for work, but had to work for any employer in that parish who demanded his services at a price fixed by statute. That sort of legislation could hardly be successful. Then coming down to later times, and even to Australia, hon. members will find, by reference to the “Australian Commonwealth,” that in New South Wales in 1810 wages for mechanics were fixed by statute at 5s. per day of eleven hours, and it was provided—

“That persons taking or demanding more or refusing to work at the above rates to be set in the stocks for two days and one night for the first offence, and for a second or continued refusal three months’ hard labour. Masters paying more to be imprisoned for ten days without bail, to pay a fine of £5 or to remain in prison till paid.”

Those are some of the laws we have had in the past, and they were hardly likely to be successful when the large bulk of the people were prac-

tically slaves. Fortunately those laws have been abolished in nearly all civilised countries. What this resolution aims at, and what is being done all over the world, is to fix the minimum wage below which contractors employed by the Government, municipal councils, and other governing bodies shall not be allowed to go. I am not going to dwell any longer on the ancient history part of the business; I prefer to go in for everyday politics, which concern us more than what occurred years ago. A little plain, practical argument is better for this House and for the country than a learned dissertation on philosophy in all its stages. The Secretary for Works referred very little to what has been done in this matter all over the world. The hon. member for South Brisbane gave a number of instances where the principle he proposes has been tried. He had been in communication with different colonies, and had reports showing how the system had worked. I have gone further, and, assisted by the hon. member, have got more information, and I am certain that when members come to see what has been done in the matter in other places, especially those members who have not studied the subject so much as some of us who, having been workers, are directly interested in it, they will see that there is a great deal more in the question than would appear from the light and airy way in which it was brushed aside by the Secretary for Works. We find that on the resolution passed in the House of Commons the British Government have adopted the system in the Admiralty and Works Departments, and that it is still in full force in Great Britain.

Mr. LEAHY: It has completely broken down.

Mr. BROWNE: If it has broken down, it is a pity that we are not furnished with that information in the library.

Mr. LEAHY: Yes, you are.

Mr. BROWNE: I cannot find that it has broken down anywhere. There have certainly been complaints about it, as there have been complaints about all new laws. Has there ever been a law passed in this House but what we have had to amend the next session or so? I believe it was Herbert Spencer who said that he would never be led away by the “whereas” prefix to an Act of Parliament, because he knew that one Act of Parliament was simply botching up some mistake made in a previous one. I do not say that the system that is advocated in this resolution is perfect, but it is a great advance on the system we are now working under. The British Government, the London County Council—the greatest local governing body in the world—and the local governing bodies all over Great Britain have adopted the system. I have here a return which was made when not so many places had adopted the system as at present; it was moved for by John Burns, and ordered to be printed by the House of Commons. It is dated 3rd October, 1893, and is called—

“Urban sanitary districts in which the contracts entered into by the urban sanitary authorities for the execution of works specify conditions as to the wages to be paid by the contractor, or other conditions with respect to the persons employed by him, and the conditions specified in those cases.”

I have gone through them, and, in addition to the places enumerated by the hon. member for South Brisbane, there is a list of county boroughs in England, not including Scotland or Ireland. I find Birmingham, Bolton, Barrow-in-Furness, Bootle, Bradford, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Derby, Dudley, Exeter, Gloucester, Grimsby, Ipswich, Kingston-upon-Hull, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newport, Northampton, Norwich, Nottingham, Oldham, Oxford, Salford, Sheffield, Southampton, South Shields, Stockport,

Swansea, Walsall, West Ham, Wolverhampton, Worcester, and York. Then non-county boroughs: Accrington, Ashton-under-Lyne, Barnsley, Batley, Berwick-upon-Tweed, Blackpool, Bournemouth, Burton-on-Trent, Carnarvon, Crewe, Darwen, Dewsbury, Guildford, Ilkeston, Keighley, Kingston-upon-Thames, Mansfield, Morley, Richmond, Rochester, Rotherham, Scarborough, Stockton, Tynemouth, Wakefield, Wednesbury, West Hartlepool, and Widnes. Local boards: Berry, Benwell, Castleford, Edmonton, Fulwood, Sevenoaks, Shipley, Teddington, and Walthamstow. There are also a lot of local government bodies that I did not take the trouble to look through; but altogether there are seventy-two of these urban bodies in England alone that have clauses in their contracts to the same effect as that proposed by the hon. member for South Brisbane. There are variations; in the case of Liverpool and others the clause is to this effect—

"The contractor shall be compelled to pay rates as fixed by the trade unions in respect to distance."

Others say that it is to be the current rate of wages paid in the district and arranged between employers and employees. A number of the largest of these bodies seem to think that the easiest and most suitable way out of the difficulty is to recognise the trades union rate of wages—that is to say, the current rate of wages ruling at the time.

Mr. LEAHY: That is the sore point.

Mr. GLASSEY: The sore point is the varying rate of wages.

Mr. BROWNE: Here is an instance—

"Exeter: The contractor must pay the workmen engaged in the work the rate of wages generally accepted by competent workmen as current in Exeter for work of that class."

Mr. LEAHY: Who is to determine that? That is where it broke down.

Mr. BROWNE: I do not think there is any trouble in fixing that. An objection urged by the Secretary for Works was that it would throw responsibility upon the Government, and would be very likely to make them unpopular; but if the Government have no better reason than that for shirking their duty, the sooner they make room for a Government which will not study popularity so much the better for the country at large. At Ipswich and Liverpool the contractor is required to pay the rates of wages and working hours recognised by the trades unions in this district. At Leeds, Leicester, Manchester, and other places he shall pay not less than the minimum standard rate of wages and observe the recognised hours of employment in the district for each class of labour respectively. Although these vary they all recognise that there shall be a minimum rate of wages. This list does not cover bodies like the London County Council and the Glasgow municipality, and others; but all those have similar rules, and that is a point worth emphasising when mentioning the matter. It is very easy to call these people parochial politicians, but a great number of these towns contain populations greater than all Queensland. Everyone who reads anything about home affairs knows that the old-time class of alderman has passed away, and the best men in the country take an active interest in local affairs. Peers of the realm and some of the most eminent members of the House of Commons sit upon these councils, and take part in the work that is done. Lord Rosebery, Sir J. Gorst, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, and a host of other men whom hon. members opposite recognise as more eminent men than John Burns, who moved for this return, are members of these councils; and although hon. members opposite may differ from John Burns in his politics, none of them will deny his

ability. When we recognise that these bodies have adopted this principle one after another, and are composed of hard-headed business men who are not likely to be led away by any sentiment or spurious socialism or anything of that sort, we must admit that there is something in it. One of the latest movements for adoption of this principle was made in the Belgian House of Representatives, where a resolution was carried on the 9th June last by 64 to 28 to the effect that in all Government contracts a minimum wage clause should be inserted. However, it was thrown out by the Senate.

Mr. LEAHY: Did it fix the rate?

Mr. BROWNE: No, it did not. But if that is the line the hon. member adopts, I can refer him to two of these local bodies, which decided it should be 4s., 5s., or 6s., as the case might be. All this resolution asks for is that contractors shall be called upon to pay the current rate of wages. It has been said that this has been a failure, but I do not think it seems so. The thing was first mooted at home in about 1890 or 1891, and I have referred to a list of seventy-two places in which the system has been adopted by the local governing bodies. Is it likely that the business men who comprise the aldermen and members of those local governing bodies would have rushed baldheaded for a thing which they had not satisfied themselves in their own minds had been a success where it had been tried before? The latest report I have been able to get is that of the works committee of the London County Council. It is a very long report, and almost the concluding paragraph reads thus—

"Where the system has been brought into operation the work has been carried on at a reduced rate; the relationship between master and man has distinctly improved; there has been no outcry from discarded men; and the result has been beneficial to the contractors, to the workmen, and to the general public."

That is the verdict of men who have tried the system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: How long has it been in operation now?

Mr. BROWNE: I think it was in 1890 that it was first taken up by the large public bodies.

Mr. LEAHY: This motion applies to Government contracts. What about British Government contracts?

Mr. BROWNE: When the hon. member talks about Government contracts, I would remind him that it is not likely that in the case of Queensland Government contracts a greater amount of money is handled than in connection with the contracts of the London County Council, a body governing 5,000,000 of people, and having all the taxes of the City of London under their control. It is very likely that they have as important duties in the line of contracting as the Queensland Government is likely to have, and when they can carry on the system satisfactorily I cannot see for the life of me why the Queensland Government could not do the same. Another reason the Secretary for Works brought against the motion was the old question of political economy—that the raising of wages would make things dear and bring about a lot of unemployment. I thought that had been refuted years and years ago, not by men who were members of the socialistic Labour party of Queensland, but by men whom the members of this House must have read of as having contradicted that long ago. One gentleman, who, though he was not Secretary for Works in Queensland, was still somebody when he was alive—John Stuart Mill—did so. He was not a socialist; I do not know that he believed in a minimum wage, but on the question of high wages he said distinctly—

"General low wages never caused any country to undersell its rivals, nor did general high wages hinder it from doing so."

Thorold Rogers says on the subject—

“Unless the rates of wages are artificially lowered the cheaper products are the higher wages are.”

And Ricardo has shown not only that it is impossible for a rise in wages to raise the price of all commodities, but that in many cases a rise in wages leads to a fall in prices, and a fall in wages to a rise in prices. Those are three men whose opinions on the subject are worth something.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You might get a dozen more whose opinions would be in conflict with theirs.

Mr. BROWNE: That might be, but political economists of late years have all taken up that theory, and have pointed out plainly enough that where one particular industry is boomed others suffer from a rise of wages brought about in that way in that industry, but that a general rise in the wages of the whole community never did and never would injure anyone.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That does away with the argument of fear from the competition of Japan.

Mr. BROWNE: It does not do away with that argument, because if the Japanese came and settled here the same as other people under a minimum wage system there would not be the slightest trouble. It is only because no wage being fixed they will work here for a lower wage than the rest that we object.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I thought we were all to be protected from the Japanese outside.

Mr. BROWNE: I am not now going into the question of freetrade and protection, or my favourite subject, the coloured alien; I am going to stick to this question. From the experience of other people there appears to be no reason to fear that an increase of wages will do any great harm. I have shown that a very large number of the big towns of other countries throughout the world have adopted this system. In Scotland it has been adopted in Glasgow, Leith, and, I think, in Edinburgh and other places. Does anyone think that the hard-headed Glasgow aldermen and bailies would agree to a thing like this unless they saw it worked better for the taxpayers as well as for the working men? In Ireland the system is adopted in all the large cities—Dublin, Cork, Limerick, and Belfast. It is probable that on the lowest calculation the number of people affected by this system in Great Britain, leaving Government contracts out altogether, is more than twice the population of the whole of Australia and New Zealand combined. When all these people have tried it, surely it is worth our while to try it. I am pleased to say that here we have some gentlemen even on the Ministerial bench who believe in it. I think I may say the Home Secretary believes in it, because he told us that the Commissioner of Police satisfied himself that the contractors for the police uniforms were paying their workpeople a fair price before he would let the contract. He evidently believes in a minimum wage. Leaving the question now as affecting the manual labourers alone and coming to the case of the contractor, I think that if he looks at this in a right light he will say it is one of the best things he could have. Wherever the system has been tried contractors are almost universally in favour of it. We know that there are any amount of employers of labour who are willing to treat their men fairly; but if there were ninety-nine men in any town or in any colony who were willing to pay fair wages and to have fair hours, and there was one unscrupulous contractor who did not care what wages he paid nor how long he made his men work so long as he made a profit, that one man would bring all the others down to his level, or

else squeeze them out of existence. One contractor bases his contract on the fact that he intends to pay his men 7s. a day, working eight hours a day, but another man comes along who knows that on account of the overplus of labour he will be able to pick up men, and he bases his contract on a wage of 6s. per day of nine hours. The man who is willing to pay a fair price for his labour cannot compete under such circumstances. Hon. members know of contractors in Brisbane and all over the colony who have been completely wiped out—men who had a name all over the colony for the good work they did and for the way they treated their men, but they had no show at all against men who came here and brought cheap labour with them. If this motion is carried it will be a fair start for reasonable contractors, as they will know before they tender what the wages and the hours of labour will be. At present it is a system of competition run mad. The very best employers of labour are suffering as much from it as the working men, and it is as much in the interests of the contractor as it is in the interests of the Government and the working man that people should be compelled to pay a living wage. I do not consider this a parochial matter at all, but as a matter of great importance to everyone in the community. It is not visionary or sentimental, but a purely practical matter, and we, who are always calling ourselves practical men, should take it in hand as soon as possible. Whatever hon. members may have thought before of the matter, if they will look into it they will see that there is a great deal more in the resolution than they thought there was. I hope that the House will pass it, and that in a very short time it will be put into force, as it has been in the other colonies.

Mr. ANNEAR: I listened very attentively to the speech of the hon. member who introduced this motion, and I have also listened attentively to the speech of the hon. member for Croydon, and I can come to no other conclusion than that those hon. members know very little about the question before the House. The hon. member for Croydon complained of the speech of the Secretary for Works, but the speech of the hon. gentleman was very interesting, and it contained a great deal of fact, whilst I failed to see any facts foreshadowed in the speech of the hon. member for Croydon. The hon. member said he would not go into ancient history, but that he was going to treat the question as it affected the workmen of this colony at the present time. That is the way I intend to regard it, and I have to say that the quotation of the hon. member went against himself. In reply to the hon. member for South Brisbane, I would also say that in the sister colonies where this system has been introduced it has proved entirely against the interests of the working men. The hon. member referred to England. Well, the system has broken down as completely in England as new unionism has broken down throughout the Australian colonies. The hon. member referred to Government work at home. A great deal of the Government work in England is performed in the dockyards, and there the men are paid the same as men are paid at present in Queensland.

Mr. DAWSON: They are paid by the day there.

Mr. ANNEAR: They are paid according to the amount of work done. There is no minimum wage in the Government departments in Great Britain. I would like to know what the hon. member for South Brisbane and his friends mean when they speak about the interests of the working man in this colony? The hon. member for South Brisbane represents an electorate which largely consists of working men. The other day the hon. member interjected that

no one knew whether he was a freetrader or a protectionist, but we know what votes have been given in this House by the hon. member and the supposed friends of the working man—members belonging to the so-called Labour party. I have never paid them that compliment, because I maintain they are not and never have been the friends of the labouring classes. What do the votes of the hon. member for South Brisbane mean? Freetrade is to buy in the cheapest market. He is against the introduction of Asiatic labour, but that class of labour produces the cheapest article that is sold in the colonies, and as a rule the men professing the opinions held by a majority of hon. members opposite buy in the cheapest market, and I say they are acting in direct opposition to the interests of the working men of this colony. The hon. member who introduced the motion stated that it was the duty of Parliament to protect the interests of all men working on Government contracts. Well the interests of men working on Government contracts were protected long before the hon. member came into this House. On this subject I can speak as a man who came into the colony as a working man, who got his first employment as a journeyman in the town of Ipswich. Since that time I have employed hundreds—yes, thousands—of men. I have contracted for a great deal of Government work; and there is a condition in every contract that the first charge on all such contracts is the payment of the wages for which the men agree to work to every man employed on the contract.

Mr. DAWSON: That is different.

Mr. TURLEY: If it is only 1s. 6d. a day.

Mr. ANNEAR: Before the doctrine of the hon. member was promulgated—which we have been compelled by force to follow for some time—men did not work for 1s. 6d. a day. They did not work for 4s., 5s., or 6s., a day.

Mr. DANIELS: Ten shillings a week, any amount of them.

Mr. ANNEAR: Long before hon. members opposite came into this colony there was any amount of work at good wages, but by the policy they have promulgated they have driven work out of the colony. The hon. member for South Brisbane has told us that contractors have paid a rate below the living wage, and he referred to New South Wales. He was very unfortunate in going there for his illustration, as I will show later on. I ask hon. members who sit opposite, Is it not in the interests of the people to have the public works of the colony carried out at a fair and reasonable rate? I believe in paying men what is known as a living wage.

Mr. DAWSON: Ten bob a week?

Mr. ANNEAR: How many men has the hon. member employed since he has been in the colony?

Mr. DAWSON: A good few.

Mr. ANNEAR: I have employed thousands, and no man in Queensland can say that I ever paid anything but a good rate of wages.

Mr. TURLEY: Did you employ men out of charity?

Mr. ANNEAR: I employed them because they could perform the work I wanted performed. I paid them according to the amount of work they were able to perform. All men are not equal. We are not all born on an equality in this world. Some men can perform twice as much work as others, and therefore those men should be paid according to what they can do. The hon. member referred to the Fairfield contract and other railway contracts carried out in this colony. I think the hon. member will see from the figures I shall give that the assertions he has made cannot be borne out by

facts. Firstly, the hon. member referred to the Tweed railway contract, which was carried out by Mr. G. Wilcocks.

Mr. TURLEY: I don't remember referring to it.

Mr. ANNEAR: I think the hon. member will see by reference to *Hansard* that he did; but whether he did or not it makes no difference, because I wish to show that previous to the minimum schedule being attached to the contracts in New South Wales the rate of wages was better than it is at the present time. Mr. G. Wilcocks took that contract £15,600 under the next lowest tenderer. It was carried out during 1893 and 1894, when there were heavy floods and a banking crisis throughout the whole of Australia. The contractor paid the ruling rates of wages at that time—namely, 6s. a day for labourers, and 7s. for exceptionally good men. For carpenters he paid 9s. and 10s. a day. Those were the rates paid before the introduction of the minimum wage schedule into the New South Wales contracts. The hon. member referred to sub-contractors. Mr. Wilcocks sublet a large portion of the work, but he inserted a condition in the agreement that the men should be paid the same rate that he himself had paid. I make that statement because the hon. member made a general charge against sub-contractors. He said men were paid to work for a month without being told what wages they were going to receive, and at the end of the month they were paid 2s. 6d. and 3s. a day. I assert that there was not a man who worked on the Tweed railway for a lower rate of wages than I have named. I think it will be shown from our own experience, and from the experience of the mother colony, that it is a most serious thing to attempt to regulate wages by statute. The minimum rate, as introduced into New South Wales, has dropped wages all round. What was the rate of wages in New South Wales before the minimum schedule was introduced? The rate for carpenters is now 7s. a day, but before that time they never worked for less than 9s. a day. The minimum rate for labourers at the present time in the country districts of New South Wales is 5s. a day, and 6s. round Sydney and Newcastle. Previous to the introduction of the minimum wage, the rates were 6s. a day in the country, and 7s. per day near Sydney and Newcastle.

Mr. DAWSON: For what class of work?

Mr. ANNEAR: For fitters and navy work on the railways. The wages I quote for carpenters is not a fair wage. Men who have served their time, and who have expensive tools to buy, should not be asked to work for 7s. a day; but, owing to the introduction of the minimum schedule in New South Wales, the minimum has become the maximum, because contractors who are tendering argue that other contractors will put in tenders based upon the minimum wage. The hon. member for South Brisbane wished to show that the minimum schedule has increased wages. I say it has decreased them as much as 15 and 25 per cent. Had the ordinary economic laws been allowed to remain as they were, wages would have kept up to the rate at which they were previous to the introduction of the schedule.

Mr. TURLEY: What would have kept them up?

Mr. ANNEAR: The ordinary laws of supply and demand. Hon. members will see by the *Courier* this morning that bread is so much per loaf. We see that the wheat crop has failed in several parts of the world, and there is a great rise in the price of flour. Is it not caused by the deficiency in the supply? The price of all the food we eat and the raiment we wear is governed by the same law of supply and demand. The hon. member referred to several contracts at present in existence in the colony. I have

taken the trouble not to listen to the words of anyone, but to look into the pay-sheets of some of the contractors, and I have seen what wages they are paying. The hon. member referred to the Charleville line, the Racecourse line, and the Gladstone line. None of the contractors for those lines pay as low a rate of wages as the wages set forth in the New South Wales schedule. On the Racecourse line labourers receive from 6s. to 7s. 6d. per day, and that is a day of eight hours. I wish to inform the hon. member that in 1863, mechanics and labourers worked eight hours in Queensland. I have only worked for a man two weeks at ten hours a day since I have been in Queensland, and that was in Maryborough. During that time I was assisting in an agitation to get eight hours a day.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You were an agitator when it suited you.

Mr. ANNEAR: That was a lawful agitation; nobody was injured by it; it did not bring suffering upon women and children; no windows or shutters were broken; nobody set fire to workshops or did anything of that kind, but perfect freedom prevailed on both sides. Within two weeks eight hours was the rule in Maryborough—that was in 1867—and it has been the rule ever since. Carpenters on the Racecourse line receive from 9s. to 10s. a day, as against 7s. in New South Wales. The Charleville line is being carried out by Mr. Wilcocks—a most competent contractor and a more humane man, I am confident, does not live in Queensland. Mr. Wilcocks pays the same rate as the contractor for the line from the Racecourse to Pinkenba. No one works for less than 6s. a day on those contracts, and eight hours is the standard time.

Mr. DAWSON: Are you sure some of them are not getting 5s. a day now?

Mr. ANNEAR: I am certain there is not a man on the pay-sheet who receives less than 6s. a day on the two lines I have named. On the Gladstone line, which is being carried out by Messrs. Baxter and Saddler, well-known contractors, labourers receive 6s., 6s. 6d., and 7s. a day. There is a splendid bluestone quarry there, from which they procure their ballast, and it is worked by men, some of whom the contractors brought from Victoria, being accustomed to that kind of work. Every one of those men receives 8s. 6d. a day. The general run of wages for carpenters is 9s. a day. That shows that men are paid by results. The hon. member for South Brisbane referred to a strike which took place on that contract. All went well on that contract until two or three men who belong to the same order as the hon. member appeared on the scene.

Mr. TURLEY: The same order that you belonged to in 1867.

Mr. ANNEAR: I have never been a member of the new unionism. I have never gone about like those three men, and like the hon. member for South Brisbane, and many of his friends around him, preaching the gospel of discontent amongst their fellow-workmen. There are thousands of men in the colony who do not believe in the new unionism, and they are able to command plenty of work at good wages, because they faithfully perform the duties they undertake, and will not be coerced by members of the so-called Labour party. The hon. member for South Brisbane and some of his friends went into my electorate at the last general election. What effect had it?

Mr. DAWSON: It put you in.

Mr. ANNEAR: I believe it did. I believe the presence of those hon. members, and the disreputable production which advocates their cause, proved my best friends; that they caused the respectable, the independent, the self-relying men of Maryborough to discard their utterances; because on that occasion 1,120—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is now wandering from the question. I ask him to confine himself to the motion.

Mr. ANNEAR: I think I shall be in order in referring to the remarks made by the hon. member when he addressed himself to the main question. The hon. member said there should be no sub-letting of contracts. That shows how little he knows about contracts of any kind. I am told that when the hon. member is on the deck of a ship, at the hatch, with a chain and hook in his hand, there are few better men in Brisbane at that sort of work. The hon. member may be an expert in that, but he knows very little about contracts when he tries to introduce into this country that there should be no sub-letting on public works.

Mr. TURLEY: The motion does not say so.

Mr. ANNEAR: But the hon. member said so in his speech. How is it possible to erect railway or other fences by day labour? Is it done in any part of Australia? You sometimes see 150 men employed getting ballast. What would it cost to ballast a line by day labour?

Mr. KERR: It did not cost much under Mr. Ballard.

Mr. ANNEAR: It cost under Mr. Ballard twice the amount the Government is now paying for it. I say it is impossible to carry out public works without the contractor sub-letting. What about getting timber? The sawmills receive long timber. Is that timber procured from the bush by day labour? The thing is ridiculous, and I am sure the hon. member, if he had understood it, would not have made such a proposition. The hon. member referred to the minimum rate of wages. How was that brought about? The hon. member and his friends have endeavoured to fix a minimum rate in the Western country. What do we see to-day? The Home Secretary, if he were here, would bear out the assertion I am about to make. There are scores of men at present down at Dunwich, men of spirit who do not wish to be paupers on the State, or to eat "the bread of idleness," but they have been compelled by the rules enforced by the new unionism to come in from the West and become paupers on the people of the country. I think those men should be allowed to engage themselves to any person who will employ them and who will pay them for the work they perform.

Mr. HOOLAN: There is not a unionist at Dunwich, not a solitary one.

Mr. LEAHY: I know some there.

* Mr. ANNEAR: The hon. member for South Brisbane, in introducing this motion, said that if it was adopted—

"Employers would no longer be able to get a month's work out of men at 2s. 6d. or 3s. a day, and when they left take up other men, on the same terms, to complete the work."

"Mr. ANNEAR: Where has that occurred?"

"Mr. TURLEY: I am not saying it has occurred, but I know that men went on the Fairfield deviation expecting to get 6s. 6d. or 6s. a day, and when they were paid at the end of a fortnight they only got 4s. a day, and they did not go near the job any more. And that will occur on many other railway works. Employers will take every advantage they can to make as much as possible out of their contracts."

As I said before, I have been in this colony since 1863. I have worked for four or five employers, but I never went to work for a man until I knew what I was going to be paid. Without any boasting, I say that we can all be employers of labour in this colony if we like. Any man who has got the stamina and perseverance in him can become an employer. I came from a distant part of England, but I am proud of being a Queenslander. I consider that there is no greater country under the face of heaven than the colony of Queensland for the working man. We are protected by its laws, and we enjoy every

freedom. If the hon. member for Burke would only read, as I have done, a little book presented to me by the hon. member for Carpentaria, Mr. Sim, he would see the difference between the country there described and the colony of Queensland. This proposal to fix a minimum rate of wages is based on the idea that all men are equal. I maintain that all men are not equal. I had a man working for me—a man whom my colleague knows—a little man about the size of the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Dunsford; for four years I paid that man 15s. per day. I have had men twice his size working at the same work to whom I only paid 10s. per day. But the man I paid 15s. per day was the cheapest man to me. Therefore, I contend that this proposal to fix a minimum wage will not hold water. I do not want to be too assertive in any declaration I may make, but I challenge any hon. member to prove that this system of a minimum wage has not lowered the rate of wages in New South Wales from 15 to 25 per cent. The hon. member for Croydon quoted from Thorrold Rogers, and said that he advocated Government interference in the rate of wages. If I read that author correctly, the whole tendency of his writings is that the Government should not interfere with the rate of wages. At page 186 of his book on "Work and Wages," he says—

"When a Government goes beyond its proper functions . . . and attempts to distribute employment among its people, to favour one class at the expense of another, to meddle with the innocent habits of its subjects, and to mould their lives after its own pattern; to coerce the open expression of opinion, and to silence criticism on its own proceedings, it makes itself responsible for all the failures of its action, and engenders the belief that if man is unhappy, the Government has brought about the result."

I fully concur in every word of that quotation, and I am certain that when Professor Rogers wrote the words quoted by the hon. member for Croydon he had not the experience we have of the fads and fancies indulged in, not only by the members of the so-called Labour party of Queensland, but by men professing the same principles as those hon. members throughout the Australian colonies. I wish to say, as I have said before a very large audience, that I will assist the hon. member for South Brisbane or any other member who may bring forward a motion to elevate or better the position of the working classes in this colony, but since I have been a member of this House—and I was here before the advent of any hon. member sitting opposite—I have never known any measure introduced or be advocated by them which gave the working man a day's work or put a loaf of bread on his table.

Mr. HOOLAN: Possibly it may not be usual to quote Scripture in this House, but I think it is necessary on the present occasion, and I would remind hon. members—the Government in particular, and most particularly the hon. member who has just sat down—that in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians there is a remarkable passage which says that "The labourer is worthy of his hire." All persons who do not think that the labourer is worthy of his hire do not believe in Scripture. Persons who do not believe in Scripture are most ungodly persons, bad citizens, people of ill repute, and have no right in society. They possess a baneful influence upon mankind, and their words are injurious to their fellow men. Every labourer is worthy of his hire, and particularly the unfortunate everyday labourer, who is supposed to occupy a position in life of hard work and ignorance. He is fitted by nature for toil, and unfitted by nineteenth-century civilisation to take any higher position in life. Being in that position, he should occupy a particular place in the mind of the hon. member for Maryborough, who is, according to

his own words, the crowned king of the district of Wide Bay and the town of Maryborough. The sentiments he has given utterance to are derogatory to the dignity of a common prince or a common pasha, and do not reflect any credit upon the monarch of this realm of Australia. What is the result of this everyday barter in the product of the labourer? Wages are down to a beggar's pittance, and the hon. member cannot deny it. The Government cannot deny it, and no person in Brisbane can deny it. This city of Brisbane owes £266,000, and yet we see the council wants to borrow £60,000 more, because they are not in a position to carry on public works, and they will pay a miserable pittance to the labourers.

The SPEAKER: I would remind the hon. member that this resolution deals entirely with Government contracts; I would ask him to confine himself as nearly as possible to that question.

Mr. HOOLAN: It deals with the minimum wage.

The SPEAKER: The minimum wage in Government contracts.

Mr. HOOLAN: The motion particularly refers to Government contracts, but Government tenderers are guided by the rate of wages throughout the State. The first thing a tenderer in Melbourne would do when he saw a contract advertised in the *Melbourne Argus* would be to look up the rates of wages paid in and around Brisbane. He would look at the rates paid by the municipalities, and by employers, and tender accordingly. The contractors for Government works in progress are paying the wages paid by municipalities, and they are not prepared to pay higher. All the railway men along the different lines are paid 6s. per day, and there is no chance of a rise. The tenders are put in in a cheap way. I do not know whether they have allowed themselves a margin of profit over and above the 6s. per day; but even if they have, will anyone say it is not a shame and a monstrous proposition that the State should encourage persons who are employers of labour to pay low rates of wages because labour is going begging? The money that is paid to contractors is raised by loans, and has to be repaid by the labourers by the sweat of their brow, and the Government have no right to induce people to come from other colonies and other countries to tender for public works that should be tendered for at a good price so that decent wages can be paid. At present tenderers are guided by the pauperised prices now going about, and it reflects discredit upon the Government and the colony generally. The State has a right to step in and protect labourers in every way, not only those it employs itself, but all labourers, because they are in an impoverished position and cannot protect themselves. The State protects four classes of individuals, and finds them houses wherein to rest, such as gaols, pauper asylums, lunatic asylums, and shortly inebriate asylums. A fifth class is the daily labourer, and he should be the next care of the State, because he has in many cases a numerous family depending upon him, and cannot afford to agitate for a better condition of things. He cannot afford to waste 1d. of the beggarly pittance he now receives. Take the goldfields, for instance, where there is a high rate of wages. That is due to the fact that the people there are in a position to protect themselves.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It pays to pay them. They are paid out of produce.

Mr. HOOLAN: It is not due to the generosity of those who receive the greatest share of the wealth, or to the protection given by the State, but to the fact that these men can protect themselves. At one time the industry was in the hands of the miners, and they let it get into the hands of employers; but still they have been able

to keep up the rate of wages. That is not likely to continue for ever, and I will cite an instance. At one mine on the Towers Gold Field now they are offering £2 10s. a week, or 10s. a week less than the minimum wage fixed by society and the regular order of things for the last twenty-two years. We find that under a somewhat poor condition of things in one mine called the Brilliant Extended the directors are offering 10s. a week below the minimum wage, and people are taking it. There are members on the other side, particularly the Secretary for Works, the hon. member for Maryborough, and others, who will say they have a perfect right to take it, and that the directors have a right to reduce the price of labour to as low as they can get it, that the mine cannot pay labour £3 a week, and it must get it for £2 10s. But surely those hon. members cannot carry those ideas into general practice! Surely they will admit that if we establish a low rate of wages at that mine the rate paid at all the mines around it will fall to £2 10s.? And mines that are rolling in wealth, paying tens of thousands of pounds yearly to English speculators in dividends, will come down to the rate paid by that one impoverished mine if people do nothing to try and prevent it.

The SPEAKER: I remind the hon. member that he is wandering away now from the specific to the general subject.

Mr. HOOLAN: By way of illustration.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not go too far with his illustration. He must confine himself to the specific subject dealt with by the motion.

Mr. HOOLAN: This must be followed up and made a principle of Government contracts. To keep to the spirit of the motion I say it is the duty of the State to require that upon work done for the State the labourers shall get a fair rate of pay. Where public money is voted for public works it is the duty of the State not to permit tenderers to reduce the rate of wages of those they employ to 5s. and 6s. a day. Surely hon. members will not say that the State should conduct its affairs like that? Will they say that 6s. a day is sufficient for a man to keep himself, his wife, and three children? That is what we want to know. Six shillings a day is £1 16s. a week, and will they say that is sufficient for a single man? Is it right to ask a young man of twenty-one years of age to work during the best years of his life, during all his freshness and vigour, at that rate. What is there before him with 36s. a week? Yet that is the rate of pay now given on public contracts for railroads, with the sanction of the Government! This does not intend to increase the pay, but only to prevent it going any lower on Government contracts. The tendency is to reduce the rate, and were it not for the present party in the State, of which I have the honour to be a member, it would be reduced to pauper's prices. We do not know to what extent the rate would be reduced with the sanction of the Government if the thing was not interfered with in some way. The hon. member is not by this motion trying to raise wages to an exorbitant price, but the Government have the money, and they have a right to say that the labourers working on Government contracts for Government pay shall receive a decent amount of wages. There can be no comparison between the prices paid now and the prices paid formerly, because in former years very large prices were paid for Government contracts. The hon. member for Maryborough says he always paid high wages; but no thanks are due to him for that—not the slightest in the world—because he was paid not only high prices for his work but exorbitant prices.

Mr. ANNEAR: I had plenty of contracts beside Government contracts.

Mr. HOOLAN: Yes; and the hon. member was paid exorbitant prices for private as well as for Government contracts. The figures in the records of this House show what prices were paid for Government works in former times, and though the labourer then received what would be termed good pay for his day's labour, when the comparison is made with the prices paid then for contracts, he received a mere pittance. No comparison, then, can be drawn between the rate of pay then and now. There is nothing to prevent the State giving a fair rate of pay now, because we hear from the Government and from hon. members opposite that the colony is in a good position, that it is in as good a position as ever, that the financial position is flourishing, that the Government have plenty of credit, and are in a fair way to carry on business, and to fix what might be termed regular prices for labour throughout the State. The Government are now in such a sound position as to be able to invite more persons to come to this country to look for work, and under all these circumstances they should be the last persons to shirk a motion like this. Instead of allowing it to be brought in from this side of the House, it was their duty to say that wherever the Government can interfere, or wherever they have any control or authority, and wherever there is any dribbling out of Government funds, the labourer shall be adequately protected in his day's hire. If they do not do that they cannot expect to carry on a sound and good government, and they cannot expect that Queensland will be either a sound or good country, because the prosperity of Queensland rests but in a small way on its natural resources, and almost wholly on the strength and constitution of its working people. If you have not a good working class, and if you do not protect them in every way when you have got them, you cannot expect to have a good and stable country. It is the bounden duty of the Government to protect, so far as they can, the whole of the labourers of the State; men and women, the whole of the persons called labourers, whose only wealth is their daily labour, which they must hire out to someone else. It is their place as a Government, and as the protectors of every man, woman, and child in the colony, to fix a minimum wage for every person employed upon what are termed Government contracts as included in this motion.

Mr. McMASTER: I do not know what the hon. member for South Brisbane would do with men who are employed at a lower wage than perhaps the most capable workmen are obtaining. It is a well-known fact that men are no more equal at pick and shovel work than they are at any other occupation in which they are employed. My difficulty about supporting the motion is that the weakly man will not be able to do as good a day's work as the able-bodied man, but the weaker man requires food as much as his stronger fellow-worker, and he must have labour of some description. If a minimum wage is fixed—say at 6s. or 6s. 6d.—though a weakly man may be willing to work for 5s. or 5s. 6d. a day—which might be as much as he would be worth to the contractor—the contractor would be unable to employ him on account of the minimum being fixed at 6s. or 6s. 6d. in the schedule, and consequently the man will have to walk about, and the Home Secretary will eventually have to keep him down at Dunwich. I do not think that is a desirable state of affairs. I would like to pay every man good wages, but there is no getting away from the fact that there are hundreds of men who are unable to earn as much for their employers as their fellow-workmen, and, therefore, there would be a great amount of hardship inflicted

if we fixed a minimum rate of wages, compelling contractors to pay the same wages to every man.

Mr. DUNSFORD: Not at all.

Mr. McMASTER: I do not understand what this resolution means if that is not so. I understand that the Government are to fix a minimum rate of wages for all contracts.

Mr. DUNSFORD: He can pay more if he likes.

Mr. McMASTER: I am well aware of that, but he must not pay less. I do not suppose any hon. member on the other side, or even any hon. member on this side, would object to contractors paying their men 10s a day—it would not interfere with them; but my contention is, that one man may be worth 7s. 6d., whereas another may be only worth 5s. 6d., and where are you going to fix the minimum? Will you fix it at 5s. 6d.? If you do, you will be doing an injustice to the able-bodied man.

Mr. HOOLAN: No; you trust to the generosity of the employer.

Mr. McMASTER: Generosity is the very thing the hon. member for South Brisbane does not want to trust to.

Mr. HOOLAN: Who is going to cut a man down 6d. a day because he is a bit weakly? He would be a mean scurvy wretch.

Mr. McMASTER: The generosity of the contractor is not to be allowed to operate if this resolution is carried. Every contractor will have to pay the schedule price fixed by the Government. The 5s. 6d. man can perform 5s. 6d. worth of work, and the contractor will bring the other man down to 5s. 6d. too. I do not want the hon. member for South Brisbane to be placed in this position—that in a month or two, if the session lasts that long, or next session, he will have to bring in another resolution censuring the Secretary for Works for fixing the minimum rate. If the resolution is agreed to, I am afraid that is what will happen.

Mr. HOOLAN: You have a poor opinion of the Secretary for Works.

Mr. McMASTER: No, but I have a low opinion of the members of the so-called Labour party, and what the so-called representatives of labour have done in other places I am afraid would also happen here. I do not want any vote of censure upon the Secretary for Works brought in. In order to bear out my statement that this has happened elsewhere, I shall read a paragraph from the *Sydney Daily Telegraph* of Tuesday, 28th January, 1896. This is the report of a conference of the Political Labour League in New South Wales. The paragraph is as follows:—

“THE MINISTER FOR WORKS CENSURED.”

“The Standing Orders were suspended to permit Mr. E. Riley, delegate from Camperdown, to move the following resolution:—That this conference of the P.L.L. condemn the action of the Minister for Works in reducing the minimum rate of wages to be paid on all Government contracts in the future, and thinks that Mr. Young's action in this respect is a poor return to the electors who gave such loyal support to return Mr. Reid and his party to power.”

I sympathise with Mr. Reid very much. I pity him for being in the hands of the crowd who sat in that conference. Hon. members on the other side want the minimum fixed at a rate that many men could not earn. They do not care whether that man earns it or not. Well, the contractor would have to take it out of someone else, and he would make the man who was able to earn more than the minimum pay for the man who earned less. The paragraph goes on to say—

“It was pointed out that the Minister's action would have the effect of reducing the wages of all men to the minimum. It was inevitable that the minimum wage fixed by the Minister would ultimately become the maximum.”

I say so, too.

“Mr. Griffith, M.P., supported the resolution. Mr. Macdonald, M.P., strongly condemned the Minister, and said he would not have dared to take this action had Parliament been sitting. Eventually the resolution was unanimously carried, and a deputation, consisting of the new office-bearers, was appointed to wait upon the Minister to urge him to reconsider his determination.”

I maintain that that is what will happen here. They got from the Minister exactly what they wanted, and they immediately turn round and kick him and the Government. I have too much regard for the Secretary for Works in this colony to wish to see that happen to him. I maintain that it is very much better for those hon. members who are the supposed representatives of the working man to allow him to get the best wage he can. When a man can earn 7s., 8s., or 9s. a day, why should he be prevented from doing so? Why should he be dragged down to the level of the man who can only earn 5s. a day? The contractor will pick out the best men he can get, and will leave out in the cold those men who are not physically able to do as much work as the others. Then will come the cry, “Our streets are full of unemployed” and that will have been brought about by those who try to make a man do what he would otherwise never think of doing. Depend upon it that if a man who is only earning 5s. a day finds that he can do as much work and as well as the man who is getting 7s. he will leave his job and get another. I am not going to support the resolution.

Mr. DANIELS: I am going to support this motion although it is called claptrap by hon. members opposite. I agree thoroughly with what was said by the hon. member for Croydon that the real evil is the competition between the contractors themselves. They injure themselves as well as their workmen. One contractor may like to pay a fair price for labour, and he puts in a tender based on a certain rate of wages. Another contractor, depending upon the labour market being flooded, puts in a very much lower price, and all the time these men are cutting one another's throats. The consequence of it is that these contractors are most of them involved in the financial institutions more or less. Some go through the insolvent court, and others are so heavily involved that they will never get out of their difficulties. There are many contractors to whom money has been advanced by the banks, the banks cannot get their money in, and therefore the Government cannot get its money from the banks. This is all the result of the competition, which is praised so much by hon. members opposite. If contractors paid a minimum wage they would know what prices to give in their tenders, and when they got a good man to work for them they could give him something more than the minimum wage. So far as I know, there is nothing to prevent that being done. An arrangement of that sort would be better for the contractors, better for the workmen, and better for the business people. People in business would then know that the persons to whom they gave credit would be able to pay, because their wages would be fixed. The majority of people would like to pay their debts if they were in a position to do so, and with a fixed wage they would know exactly what they had to spend. Therefore, from all points of view, it would be a desirable thing to have a minimum wage fixed in all Government contracts.

Mr. STEWART: This motion, I need hardly say, has my entire sympathy. I was very much amused at some of the remarks which fell from the hon. member, Mr. Annear. He referred to the large number of facts adduced by the Secretary for Works and to the fancies brought forward by the hon. member for Croydon. I have

carefully reviewed the speech of the Hon. the Secretary for Works and I cannot find a single fact from beginning to end. It is all fancy; a curious combination of tomfoolery. That is about the best description I can give of it; whereas the hon. member for Croydon brought forward a number of indisputable facts which show that people in other parts of the world do adopt this proposed system and that it has been successful. Not one member on the other side has tried to disprove the member for Croydon's facts. One of the most extraordinary statements I have ever listened to has come from the other side. The hon. members for Fortitude Valley and Maryborough have both said that if a minimum wage was fixed the immediate effect would be to reduce wages.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: So it would.

Mr. STEWART: Is not that the very thing that the party opposite has been clamouring for for years? What did the late leader of that party say at Toowoomba? That until wages came down there would be no prosperity, and that assertion has been echoed and re-echoed by members of the present Government and their party time and again. Here is a motion brought forward which they say will reduce wages, and yet they object to it. That seems to me a very strange position indeed, that the people who are in favour of reducing wages should object to this motion, and that we who are opposed to a reduction of wages should support it. It seems to me that there is a lack of sincerity, or a lack of knowledge, or a lack of common honesty somewhere.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: All three.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. gentleman knows better than I do his own imperfections.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: On the other side.

Mr. STEWART: Hon. members opposite are always telling us that wages are too high; that the colony is being ruined by high wages.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Who said that?

Mr. STEWART: Every member on the opposite side has said it at one time or another.

MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no!

Mr. GLASSEY: Sir Thomas McLlwraith said it very plainly.

Mr. STEWART: Have we not been told hundreds of times that the wages of the shearers and the rouseabouts were too high, that the sugar industry could not pay white men's wages.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: You are a bit off there.

Mr. STEWART: That is the position of some hon. members who have spoken on this subject, and I leave them to explain their attitude as they best can. What does the Secretary for Public Works say? This is about the only grain of wheat I can find in the six bushels of chaff he gave us—

"No doubt we are agreed that those who are employed by the State should be fairly and justly treated; but it is asked that we should go further, and fix the wages of those employed indirectly by the State."

Our contention is that the men who work on contracts are just as much employed by the State as men who are directly paid by the State; and I say it is unreasonable that a navy who is employed by the country directly should get 6s. a day while a navy who is employed by a contractor should be getting no more than 4s. a day, especially as we all know that a man who works for a contractor works harder than a man who works directly for the Government. If the Secretary for Public Works wishes to be logical, he should throw open the whole Civil Service to competition. Under the existing system wages in every department are fixed, and we have had put into our hands to-day a Bill fixing the wages of a great number of the members of the Civil

Service. All that the motion asks is that this principle be extended to men who, though they may be only indirectly employed by the State, are working for the State and receiving the State's money. It has been asserted by speakers on the other side that wages in New South Wales have fallen because of the minimum wage being fixed. I do not think that is the reason at all. There has been a general fall of wages in all the colonies, but for that fall the depression is far more responsible than the fixing of a minimum rate. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley seemed to be very anxious that men who are able to earn 8s., 9s., or 10s. a day should be permitted to earn that amount. There is nothing in this motion that would prevent any man who is able to do a big day's work from getting the full value of his labour if the contractor is willing to pay him. But a contractor does not pay every man according to his ability. It is impossible for any employer of labour to fix to a nicety what each man in his employment is worth; he has to strike a general average. In large contracts where navvies are employed there are usually two rates of pay—6s. 6d. for the good men, and 6s. for the middling men.

Mr. HOOLAN: And as low as 5s.

Mr. STEWART: I dare say there are some men working as navvies who are not worth more than 5s. Navvying is like other occupations. Unless a man is able to do the work he cannot expect to be employed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Then how can you fix the minimum?

Mr. STEWART: In the same way that wages are fixed now. If you set a man to work, and have any knowledge of the work, within half an hour you can tell whether he is able to earn the wages you are willing to give him, and if he is not you can dismiss him at once. There is no need to keep a man longer than half an hour to see what he is worth.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Where is the worthless man to go?

Mr. STEWART: He will have to go where he has to go now. If I go to a contractor, and he tells me to work at a cutting, and I cannot do my work, he will "sack" me within a few minutes; and I have to take my chance of whatever else I can find to do. The passing of the resolution will not affect that matter one iota. What it will prevent is this: On a railway near Rockhampton a large number of men were working at very low wages. The shifting of the earth was sublet to them at a very low price. The low price was in a great measure of their own fixing, but competition was keen, and the men urged the contractors to give them work. Their wages were from 3s. to 5s. per day. The contractors paid higher wages to the men they employed generally on the line. The result was, I am credibly informed, that the contractors made a large sum of money out of the contract. And what did they do? They did as a great many others in the colony have done. They cleared away home to England, and took a good few thousands with them, making the country so much the poorer. If a motion of this kind had been in force then, no man in the employment of the contractors could have earned under 6s. a day; the contractors would have made a smaller profit, and more money would have been circulated in the colony. Another feature that ought not to be lost sight of is that in a very large number of cases, even if these resolutions are carried, the country will not have to pay a single penny more for its work than it does at present. The only difference will be that instead of the money going into the pockets of the contractors it will go into the pockets of the labourers, and become more generally circulated. I do not think that

is a result that anyone could cavil at. We have in this matter the example of Great Britain and of some of the most cautious and far-seeing municipal and local government managers in the United Kingdom.

Mr. McMASTER: And New South Wales too.

Mr. STEWART: There are, I admit, difficulties in New South Wales, even with resolutions like these, but the hon. member, who I have no doubt is a student of his Bible, knows perfectly well that there are difficulties in heaven; and no matter what regulations you may bring into force there will always be some people who will be dissatisfied with them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If there is a Labour party there will.

Mr. STEWART: Hon. members opposite are stealing the Labour party's programme just as fast as they decently can. I do not think one single valid argument has been raised against this motion, and I have no doubt that if it is brought into force it will be the means of doing a great deal of good to the labouring classes.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member who introduced this motion moved it in a spirit which anyone can commend, and the Government and myself personally will treat it in the same spirit. A matter of this kind certainly ought not to be treated in a class or party spirit. The question of wages and of elevating men who receive wages is one on which there have been floods of literature, and one which has engaged the attention of all parts of the civilised world. The question we have to consider is the best way to do what is desired, and I do not think there is anybody in this House who, if it is possible in any way to elevate anybody in the community, would not be glad to do that. The only question is, can we do it by artificial means? Without intending the slightest disrespect, I would say that the hon. member takes only the trade union view of the matter. Trade unions, of course, have always been leading in this matter, and they have always taken one side, but they have no responsibility in dealing with a resolution of this kind. I have before me the responsibility which a Minister necessarily has when considering how he can bring a matter of this kind into a practical form, and I am going to deal with the construction of the resolution. As it is constructed it places a very great difficulty in the way of even one who sympathises to a great extent with the spirit of the hon. member who moved it. The Government of every colony have a duty in regard to contracts and sub-contracts, and in regard to the preventing of sweating. That duty is well recognised. It is recognised in this colony that the Government must do all they possibly can to see that while they get full value for the money they pay that money shall go in the best-regulated channels; that there shall not be a middleman between the country and those who ought to receive the profits of their labour. The Government recognise that the wage-earner should get the profits to which he is justly entitled, and I believe that proposition has the sympathy of the House. But there is another feature in connection with this proposal. From some of the speeches which have been made it would appear that some hon. members are of opinion that there is a duty cast upon the Government to fix the standard rate of wages, by which it is intended that the Government should increase the sum which would under ordinary circumstances be paid for the work they get done. That is a proposition from which I entirely dissent.

Mr. TURLEY: Not a standard, but a minimum rate.

The HOME SECRETARY: Whether it is a standard or minimum rate I entirely dissent from the proposition, and for this reason: That we have no right by any legislation of that kind to impose on other persons a higher burden than under ordinary circumstances they ought to bear. While I admit that we should do everything in our power to give the full fruits of his work to the worker, and while I would go in any direction to that extent, I say it would be impossible for any Government to accept a proposition which will cast a burden of 5, 10, or 16 per cent. on any other class in the community in order to sustain a standard or ideal rate of wages. If such a thing were possible it would be unfair, but it would be negative in its operation.

Mr. TURLEY: This will not do so.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not think this motion would do so; it would have no effect whatever, because the difficulties in connection with its operation are so great. There are five propositions in this resolution. The first is that a schedule shall be attached to all contracts, the second that such schedule shall show the minimum rate of wages, and the third is that that minimum rate shall be fixed by the Government. I do not know whether I misinterpret the hon. member, but it is my duty to point out to the House that the fourth proposition is perfectly distinct from the first. That has not been noticed yet by any speaker. The hon. member has insidiously inserted the proposition that "a clause shall be inserted in the conditions of all contracts that eight hours shall constitute a day's work for which such wages shall be paid." I do not know whether it was intended, but in that proposition the hon. member has got outside Government contracts. It is always difficult when you are making definitions to be exact, and unless you confine yourself to laying down general principles in dealing with a question of this kind, and make them as vague as possible, you are sure to have difficulties. The hon. member asks us to affirm that in all contracts in future we shall provide that eight hours shall constitute a day's work, although we have in this House affirmed that by a Bill. There was a general affirmation that, so far as regards the custom of the country, eight hours should constitute a day's work. The fifth proposition is that this schedule shall be posted up in conspicuous places wherever work is being performed. I think it is advisable that the House should get to practical business upon this matter, and I am going to move an amendment. I want to show the spirit in which I intend to approach this matter so far as I am personally concerned. The true remedy is not ideal or artificial, but lies in endeavouring to bring co-operation into it. I have occupied the position of Secretary for Works, and I say that the Government can only deal with this question by developing a system of entrusting the carrying out of Government contracts to associated bodies of workmen. That is the true cure, because I do not see how the Government can fix the rate of wages. We can no more fix a standard rate of wages than we can make the Brisbane River flow upwards. We would only be able to fix a standard in name, and no employment would be given; and I cannot see that any attempt to raise wages above the ruling rate would be otherwise than futile. I want to show the hon. member that I do not ignore but rather wish to follow the spirit of his motion, and I would amend it to read as follows:—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is the duty of the Government, in all Government contracts, to make every effort to secure the payment of such wages as are generally accepted as current in each trade for competent workmen, and, wherever practicable, to entrust their contracts to associated bodies of workmen.

I agree with some of the hon. member's motion, but I object to a mass of definitions. I prefer that the motion should be vague, but sufficiently open to show what is the deliberate expression of the legislature in this matter. I would like to secure, first, that every man who works is paid the current rate of wages, and, secondly, that the system of sub-contracting or sweating should be discountenanced as far as possible by the Government. The contracts should be taken by associated bodies of workmen, and if there is any profit in them they should make it themselves. That is the true remedy.

Mr. GLASSEY: That is the New Zealand system.

Mr. BROWNE: This is deathbed repentance.

The HOME SECRETARY: I think good results are likely to follow. The hon. member for South Brisbane has not dealt with what I consider to be the gravamen of the trouble. A contractor gets a contract and farms it out to two or three persons, and finally he receives the profit. The House of Lords Committee on the sweating system brought in a report condemning this practice, which has been tried to be stopped by some of the wisest men in the world. The Government admit this evil and discountenance it, but the hon. member wants to go into a question that is beating the air. I do not say that it is not a good object to try to raise the rate of wages, but he is trying to do it by fixing a minimum rate, and I do not see how the Government can ascertain or fix a current rate of wages.

Mr. GLASSEY: Supposing the Government were constructing a line of railway themselves?

The HOME SECRETARY: We should fix the rate, as the hon. member for Rockhampton North said, according to the ability of the men. That is the only way I could ever see. The hon. member must remember the intense feeling that was created at the last Gympie election. I was surprised to hear a remark that I had never heard before, from a lot of labourers, after the election: "We have shown the twenty-ones upon this occasion what wiser heads can do." I found out afterwards what they meant. I found that the men who had borne the burden of initiating the industry, men who were getting on in years, had been replaced by younger men. The younger men were coming on, and the rates of wages were fixed by a custom as strong as if it were a term in a contract, so that the old men were thrown out and younger men were put in their places. I asked what was the meaning of reaction at the last general election, and was told that it was caused by younger and stronger men taking the work, and keeping the older men and their families from getting that which would enable them to keep themselves in comfort.

At 7 o'clock, the House, in accordance with Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY: It will not be necessary for me to enlarge upon this Bill. I have only to prove the necessity for it. Before I do so I may as well explain that there need be no trouble with hon. members as to the second reading, because the Bill is a necessity. The Civil Service Act came into force on the 1st January, 1890, but on the 4th December, 1889, the board were appointed for seven years. By the law of continuance, if we had no Act of Parliament there would still remain in the Governor in Council the power to appoint the members of the board at the previous rate for another seven years. That is not contemplated, and this Bill is brought in to enable the House to review its action in 1889. Hon.

members will remember that the congested state of the Civil Service at that time called for the exercise of some power of this kind, and the result was that the board was appointed. Many hon. members may not know the conditions under which the board was appointed. Two of the officers receive £800 a year. The Act provided that the other, the chairman, should receive £1,000. By an arrangement made in 1889 that gentleman also received a pension which he was entitled to under the Act of 1863, and which he would get anyhow, and so he has received £1,250 a year. The leading idea of this Bill is that the board shall continue for three years at the same salaries. The Bill provides for the same members of the board, but that is a matter which can be regulated as the House desires in committee. The proposal of the Government is really to let matters stand as they are during the life of this Parliament. That being the leading idea, the House will require to know from me what the board has done to justify its continuance. I shall endeavour to show that as briefly as I can, and so far as I can I shall do so in their own words. They have made a report each year, and I shall summarise them. When the Civil Service Act came into force on the 1st January, 1890, there were in the Civil Service 1,597 classified officers exclusive of State school teachers, and their salaries at that time amounted to £351,720. But there was also a very large number of what were called permanent supernumeraries, principally in the offices of the Lands, Customs, and Titles Departments, and the amount appearing on the Estimates for those services was year by year increasing. We will compare that with the state of affairs on the 1st January last. On that date, instead of there being 1,597 classified officers, there were 1,388, whose salaries aggregated £308,969, and practically all the supernumeraries have gone. That shows a reduction of 209 in the number of officers and a reduction of £42,751 in the salaries, although in the meantime new departments have been created necessitating expenditure. I remember making the statement within six months before the appointment of the board that new offices had been created which would involve the colony in more than £40,000. This then we have as the result of the work of the board. Of course, I am giving the board credit for this, but I need hardly say that the Government have been greatly responsible for it. However, the board take the credit for it, and I am prepared to give it to them. I know that in their efforts at retrenchment the Government have been backed up by the board, and I give them credit for that. I know they have given me great assistance in the working of my department in regard to economy, promotions, and transfers. I have never asked them for anything I would not ask for in the light of day, and the board have always dealt reasonably with a Minister who has been so long in office as I have been.

Mr. GLASSEY: Does the retrenchment to which you allude include school teachers?

The HOME SECRETARY: No, it is exclusive of them.

Mr. TURLEY: And wages too?

The HOME SECRETARY: It excludes wages too. It refers only to classified officers who have been marked down. Hon. members will see that this Act might have been brought in in one clause; but when we have two members of the Government who have been in office since the Act was framed, it would have been a calamity not to have taken advantage of the experience we have had by bringing in the Bill in the form in which it is now. This Bill is a complete consolidation of the law, all the surplus matter, such as the superannuation clauses, having been

omitted. The original Bill was hurriedly drafted. This Bill is better drafted, and is more concise in its terms. I will explain all the different matters dealt with in the Bill, although properly this may be trenching upon the powers of the Committee; but when you have to deal with a lot of different matters such as are dealt with in this Bill, it is necessary to refer to them by way of illustration—not by way of argument—in order to show what constitutes the principle of the Bill. I may further state in regard to the duties of the board, apart from their initiatory duties, that their control of financial matters has been most satisfactory so far as the Civil servants and also so far as the colony is concerned. During the period that the superannuation clauses were in operation there was paid from the fund to officers on account of the abolition of their offices, and on account of retirement from the service through ill health, £11,348 15s. 6d.; to the widows and children of deceased officers, who died whilst in the service, £2,619 4s. 9d.; and to other relatives of deceased officers, £550 7s. These sums, added to the £90,623 4s. which was refunded from the Treasury, give a total of £105,141 10s. 6d. paid to officers and the relatives of officers from the fund since the passing of the Act, being £11,303 17s. 10d. in excess of the amount contributed by officers to the fund. The whole of this money was collected, marshalled, and taken care of by the Civil Service Board. There has been paid out of the Treasury on account of the refunded contributions £82,948, on account of interest £7,675, making £90,623. Of this amount the board has paid back to the Treasury £72,393, leaving the indebtedness to the Treasury at £18,230; but against that the board has mortgages on real estate to the amount of £26,900. It is hoped that these will satisfy that amount of indebtedness. In respect to that matter the board has justified its existence. Another satisfactory feature of the board's management is in regard to the persons coming into the service. Nobody can enter the service except on the certificate of the board that there is no person in the service qualified for the office. Since 1st January, 1890, there have been only fourteen certificates—all for professional appointments—given to the Governor in Council, and they have been for these offices: Mineralogical assistant to the Museum, clerk in the Crown Solicitor's Office, medical dispenser for the Dunwich Asylum, Government Analyst, Chief Clerk and Deputy Registrar, Supreme Court, special draftsman in connection with Victoria Bridge, computing draftsman, Surveyor-General's Department, inspector of mines at Croydon, Government Analyst—a new man, Registrar of Supreme Court, Townsville, assistant medical superintendent at Goodna, electrical engineer, assistant Government analyst, and fruit expert in the Agricultural Department. With regard to competitive examinations, it is interesting to know the facts. Seven examinations have been held at which candidates competed, of whom 137 passed. Sixteen declined appointments, and 120 are now in the service, leaving only one available. Without exception these probationers have been exceptionally well reported upon. Of course, they are examined both as regards their physical and their intellectual capacity. To give hon. members an idea, I may say that the first who was appointed was a Toowoomba lad, named Osmond Agar. His examination was entirely satisfactory. He is in my own department, and his present salary is £130, which is the highest any of these youths is getting. The principal function of the board—and it is a very important function—is to see that justice is done to the Civil servants.

Instead of each department making inquiries into the conduct of its own officers, the board has been made the one tribunal with full powers. They also conduct all inquiries in connection with officers of the Education Department. Their reports are of great value in enabling Ministers to decide upon any matter. Since January, 1890, they have held 239 inquiries into cases of misconduct remitted to them by Ministers. This system makes every case go through two hands. First of all the case comes before the permanent head of the department, and if he thinks there is a *prima facie* case he brings it before the Minister, who sends it on to the board if he thinks it necessary. The board inquire into the matter, and make a full report to the Minister, and then the case comes before the Governor in Council. So that there every inquiry and justice is meted out as fairly as possible. In the year 1890-91 it became imperatively necessary to dispense with the services of a number of officers, nearly all of whom, with the exception of some draftsmen and persons employed on the dredges, have been restored to the service. Generally the board claim that the administration of the Act has led to great improvement and efficiency in the public service, and in the promotions and appointments which they have recommended from time to time they have been actuated solely by a desire to do justice to the service. From the notes which I have taken from time to time I have now given the results of the practical working of the board. I have also had some experience of the working of the trust departments not under the control of the board, and I do say sincerely that I hope Ministers will always be relieved of the importunity of persons who by every effort in their power try to induce them to make appointments to the service. I would not undertake duties of that kind for all the salary that could be offered to me. Nobody knows what it is without experience. It takes up nearly the whole of one's time. There is no question that Ministers ought not to have thrust upon them such work. They should be reserved for higher duties than being pestered by members of the outside community to make billets for their friends. Therefore, although there may be something to be said against the board—and boards are not perfect—yet it would be folly of the worst kind to do away with the board altogether. Go back to the old system, and the result would be that you would have a service crammed with persons incompetent to do their work. I speak now after great experience, and I advise the House to make some provision by which Ministers may be relieved of the unpleasant duty of making or refusing appointments, and listening to the perpetual applications of persons wishing to enter the public service. My experience has been that the service are all clamouring to get more payment out of the Government. It is a continual struggle from the highest to the lowest to leap over one another and get more pay. That being so it is not necessary for me to say there is a justification for this measure. My advice, therefore, is that if you want the public service to keep within bounds and be economical we must have a board of some kind. There is another matter I wish to refer to. Under the present Act power is given to the board to make regulations in regard to all contracts. That power has never been exercised; but there ought to be some uniformity in regard to contracts, and this Bill proposes to place the regulations in regard to tenders in the hands of the board. That is a matter I shall be very glad to be relieved of, and I should also be glad to put into the hands of the board the matter of controlling all

advertising. I certainly think that would be an improvement. Certainly there have been no complaints in regard to public advertising, but we should take a little credit for that. It is probably due to the Ministers now in office. Let a lot of Ministers come in who will use the papers, and then you will hear a big outcry for the matter to be dealt with by a board beyond political control. There has been no complaint about the papers, and as far as Ministers are concerned they do not trouble their heads about it.

Mr. TURLEY: But you claim the credit.

The HOME SECRETARY: The credit is in not interfering. Having gone into these matters, I may take the Bill in detail, and show how the different clauses are framed and what will be their effect. The Bill is a consolidation, a redrafting, and an amendment. In clause 3 you will find a definition of "permanent head." In many departments there are several of what I call permanent heads. The present Act makes the Under Secretary a kind of supreme dictator; but this Bill allows the man who has direct charge to deal in certain instances direct with the Minister. For instance, take the control of the prisons. The comptroller is an important officer, and under this Bill he can communicate with the board; but the present Act would compel him to pass everything through the Under Secretary. This will be found to be an improvement. Then the matter of residence is dealt with. At present some officers get residence and others do not. We say in this Bill that all these emoluments and allowances shall be done away with; that if a residence is provided its value shall be calculated and a fixed charge shall be made for it. So that the man who has a house and the man who has none will be placed on exactly the same footing. Take the case of the police magistrate at St. George, who has recently been transferred to Blackall. He has been getting £450. He goes to Blackall, where he gets a house valued at £78 a year. That in reality is an addition of £78 to his salary. I next draw attention to clause 4. It is deemed advisable in practical working to have a sixth class. While there are only four classes a man might go in at £50 and the next jump he would get would be to £200. That has led to some objection because one man gets up to £200 very quickly while another only gets a £10 increase. This sixth class makes a halting-place of £120 a year between £50 and £200 a year. When he gets there he can jump to the next, but he cannot jump from that to £200. Clause 8 relates to suspension and removal from office. In the Railway Acts and other Acts, if a Minister for any cause found it necessary to suspend an officer they did suspend him, and afterwards they reported the matter to the House. If the House could not or would not take any action, he could start work again, although he had been suspended by the Government. That was the difficulty we were in under the Railway Act with regard to Mr. Johnston. This clause provides that if for any cause Ministers find it necessary to suspend they will suspend, and report the matter to Parliament, and the person suspended will not be restored to office unless both Houses, within forty-two days of the report being laid before them, shall declare by resolution that he ought to be restored to office. That is an absolutely necessary provision. The 13th clause deals with regulations which under the old Act were split up and put in half a dozen different places. This clause concentrates them, and makes proper provision with regard to public tenders; and, I have added, "any other matter necessary for the administration of the Act." Clause 17 provides that the permanent head of each department shall report to the board

monthly all changes that have occurred in the department. Heretofore they were only required to send in a return yearly, and the board had no cognisance of what was going on. The 23rd is a financial clause, which formerly involved very serious charges on the Treasury. Formerly it was provided that if an officer who was getting £400 was not worth £400, and he had to be put down to £200, he had to be compensated with a very large sum because he was not worth £400. It has been said all along that the board did not treat such officers properly, because to give effect to the provision would have involved the Treasury in many thousands of pounds. After nine years' experience the service had pretty well cleared itself of such officers, but it was deemed necessary to insert a provision that if any officer is reduced by the board because he is not worth the salary he shall have no claim for compensation. Clause 32 is a clear amendment. It provides that no new office shall be created except on the request of the permanent head of a department to the Minister, and then only upon a certificate from the board that such new office is required. The duty was thrown on the board of protecting the country from having new offices made for individuals who may be either in the service or outside it. Clauses 33 and 34 elaborate what is the present practice with regard to the filling-up of vacancies, and provisions in case of transfers. Ministers do not want a square peg in a round hole, and under the present system a deadlock often occurs. It is now provided that if the Governor in Council do not approve of the board's recommendation they may remit it to the board for reconsideration. If on reconsideration the board sends back the same recommendation, the powers of the Governor in Council will be supreme, and they will have to answer to Parliament if they do anything wrong. Those clauses really give effect to the practice that now exists. Clause 35 is an innovation. Since the Act of 1890 was passed the judicial duties in the courts of petty sessions have been very much enlarged—from £30 up to £100—and the result is in many places that those who were competent before are no longer able to perform the very onerous duties that may arise in some cases that come up to £100. Apart from that the service itself is a kind of disqualification, because it does not train officers for that particular work. When they enter as probationers they get into a groove. We have no nursery out of which we can turn experienced magistrates. This clause provides that in special cases persons may be appointed without probation or examination. Examination was what first suggested itself to me, but examination in judicial matters is only a question of memory. The judicial mind must be trained. The fact is that we have not the persons in the service to select from for those positions. For Thargomindah and Nanango I had the greatest difficulty in filling up the appointments, and I had necessarily to take men from the service more as an experiment than anything else. I think, therefore, it is a wise thing to go outside the service for properly trained persons. I do not see why a lawyer should be disqualified. The object is to get the best man, not to disqualify him, and the best man is certainly wanted for this particular work. Under the present law it is absolutely necessary that an officer shall be suspended before an inquiry takes place. There may be cases in which suspension would be ruinous to an officer, and clause 41 provides that the board may make inquiry, but that the Minister need not suspend. There are two clauses in the existing Act which give the heads of departments power to fine in certain cases, but as those provisions would be harassing and vexatious if carried out I have

omitted them from this Bill. They have never been acted upon, and it is considered better to leave the punishment with the Minister by suspension, and with the Civil Service Board by virtue of their powers under the Act. There have also been cases in which the Civil Service Board have been too lenient with officers and have recommended a milder form of punishment than Ministers thought the case demanded. In some cases the offence amounted to speculation or embezzlement, and the Government have one rule in such cases—

“He that takes what isn't his'n,
When he's cotched shall go to prison.”

And a person embezzling public funds has to stand his trial. In some instances the board were too merciful, and provision is made in this Bill that where the board recommend a punishment which is not considered sufficient for the offence that punishment may be amplified by the Governor in Council. Then there is a clause dealing with holidays. I have omitted the 26th of January, and provided for half-holidays, a power which did not exist before. Since the repeal of the superannuation clauses a man may continue in the service until he dies. Probably for the last nine or ten years before he dies he will be of very little value to the service, and clause 47 provides that at sixty-five a man shall retire from the service, unless the Governor in Council considers that he has an amount of vitality and vigour in him which enable him to perform his work and request him to continue to perform his duties. Unless such request is made to an officer of that age he will not be paid any further salary. A clause of that kind is necessary, otherwise we may have a different rule with respect to the retirement of officers in different departments, but under this provision there will be uniformity. Clause 53 is entirely new. There have been lots of complaints made by officers with regard to their classification, but there has been no appeal. The decision of the board is final. This clause provides that where there has been an error in classification the Executive Council may inquire into the matter and send it back to the board for reconsideration. A provision of that kind is desirable, because classification may affect an officer's right to promotion, and it is only just that he should have the right of appeal. Clause 54 only adds the word “transfers” to the departmental changes which are to be notified in the *Gazette*. Clause 59 was not in operation before; it provides for cases in which an office may become vacated and they may not want to fill it, but wish to appropriate the salary voted for the office by way of addition to the salary of junior officers in the same department. The clause simply legalises what is a necessity in the administration of the Act. Under the present Act the duties of the Civil Service Board were limited to something that Parliament should determine. How could Parliament determine their work? Clause 61 makes an alteration in that respect, and gives the Governor in Council power, if the board are not working up to concert pitch, to fill up their time with other duties that may occur to them to be necessary. I have now summed up the alterations made by the Bill. I think those alterations are an improvement from a practical point of view. If it had not been that the term of office of the board was about to expire we might not have thought it necessary to deal with some of these matters, but seeing that we have to introduce the Bill it is as well that we should make it as complete as possible. I do not think there will be any necessity for hon. members generally to take up much time discussing the principles of the Bill on the second reading, as they will have every facility to go

into details when we go into committee. I have to apologise for the short notice that members have had of the Bill, which has arisen from the fact that we had expected that the Land Bill would be under consideration. That was the reason I kept this Bill back, but as soon as it was understood that we were not to go on with the Land Bill I brought this measure forward, and I hope that hon. members will assist me to pass it in sufficient time to deal with the matters to which it relates before the 4th December next. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. GLASSEY: I was here when the Act which this Bill proposes to amend was passed, and, with the hon. gentleman, took a very prominent part in dealing with that measure. This Bill deals with between 2,000 and 3,000 persons, and is a most important one, as it is likely to affect the weal or woe of those people. A Bill of this magnitude ought certainly to have been in the hands of hon. members at least three or four days before they are called upon to discuss it. We are often told that we should address ourselves fully to the principles of a Bill on the second reading, and the least we have a right to expect is that we should have sufficient time to consider the main features of the Bill before dealing with its second reading. The Act was passed in 1889 as an experimental measure, and I remember very well when the question of the appointment of a board came before us, my then chief, the present Chief Justice, opposed it very strongly. I did not agree with him; but thought it essential in the interests of the public service as well as in the interests of the country that a board should be appointed which might be considered to hold the balance equally between the taxpayers and the Government of the day. I rendered the Government all the assistance I could in passing the measure. The board was expected to classify the officers in the different departments freely and candidly, without fear or favour, and to place officers in positions for which they were fitted, irrespective of any friendship or political bias or connection. I would ask, after seven years' experience, whether the board has satisfied the expectations of those who were instrumental in passing the measure? I do not think it has. The Home Secretary suggests that the board has been hampered in this direction in consequence of a clause which was embodied in the Act granting compensation in the case of persons losing their appointments, but I do not think that he is correct. The real reason is not the presence of that clause, but the want of backbone on the part of the members of the board themselves. That is the reason why officers have not been classified as they should have been, and why some are placed in positions for which their natural abilities do not fit them. It is the want of firmness, not to use a stronger expression, that has led to the heartburnings, the complaints, which exist in many of the departments. I remember stating during the passage of the present Act that my limited experience in one of the departments showed me that there were persons there who drew large salaries for work which they never did, and never would do, and which they were utterly incapable of doing. I would like to place such men in positions for which they are fitted. If the heads of the departments are only fitted to hold the places of the tails than they should be put in those more moderate positions, and if the board found persons occupying subordinate positions, when they were competent to fill higher ones, then they should have placed them in those higher positions; but they have done nothing of the kind. As for the clause entitling those who may lose their positions to compensation,

I do not think that has hampered the board in its operations. That clause was only intended to operate in the event of persons losing their appointments altogether, in which case the House, in its wisdom, thought it desirable that certain compensation might be given. The board has not fulfilled the expectations of the authors of the Bill and of many of their supporters. That is one direction in which there is great room for improvement. I think it is necessary to have a little new blood on the board, and I hope that before the Bill gets through committee some change will take place so as to bring about the desirable changes to which I have alluded. There should be a thorough and complete investigation of the different departments; the various officers should be placed in positions for which they are naturally fitted, and they should be paid accordingly. There are persons holding high offices who are utterly unfitted for such positions, and they should not be entitled to draw the salaries they do—salaries which they never will earn, and never have earned. I would have much pleasure in accompanying the hon. gentleman through one or two departments, and pointing out some officers a return of whose work for one month would astonish him. If there be one weakness in connection with some portions of the service it is this drawing of large emoluments by persons who never earn them, and if this could be obviated much good would be done and a considerable saving would be effected. I admit that something has been done, and that in many instances the board has done good work. I shall support the continuance of a board, and I may possibly support the continuance of the present board if we can frame a measure that will put a little more life into it and show that we expect certain things to be done in the directions I have mentioned. The Home Secretary will agree with me that men should not hold positions in the service for which they are not fitted, and especially high positions, and it is the high positions to which I have referred. Such a thing is unfair to the subordinate and often unfairly paid officers of the State, and it is manifestly wrong and unjust to the taxpayers of the colony who have, even if indirectly, to contribute the salaries which these persons do not earn. I remember when the old measure was before the House a short time after I became a member there was a practice to which I took strong exception, connected with the political status of Civil servants. I am one of those who believe that a man, whether he works in a State department or is employed as an outsider, is entitled to his full rights as a citizen, and to the exercise of them accordingly. I remember drawing up a clause dealing with that matter which I intended to submit in committee. I submitted it to many of my then colleagues and to the then leader of the Opposition, and I am sorry to say that in consequence of the small amount of encouragement I received I did not then submit it. I shall certainly submit such a clause when we get into committee on this Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY: What to do?

Mr. GLASSEY: To give Civil servants their full right to act as citizens of the country; to speak at political meetings if need be, and to write openly to the public Press if need be.

Mr. LEAHY: Disfranchise them altogether.

Mr. GLASSEY: Enfranchise them altogether, not disfranchise them. I believe in having my own rights, and no matter what department of the State I were employed in I should absolutely decline any dictation or interference with respect to my political action. I wish to see every other person have his political rights established in the same manner. I give the Home Secretary notice that I shall move an amendment to give every

man in the Civil service the full enjoyment of his political rights, so far as statute law can give that. Hon. members I know at election times sometimes favour demands of that sort, but I shall not move the clause to put hon. members to the test in that way, but because I believe it to be right.

The HOME SECRETARY: Fancy the police magistrate of Bundaberg getting up on a platform to denounce you!

Mr. GLASSEY: I would give him and every one else the same rights as a citizen which I enjoy myself.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member not to go beyond the intimation that he intends to move the amendment. He cannot discuss the amendment now.

Mr. GLASSEY: What I said was in answer to interjections. I would draw the line, of course, at the judges, as occupying serene positions which should be free from political contentions. Another matter to which I may briefly allude is that since the abolition of the superannuation fund it is not possible that the members of the board can be fully employed. I do not think they were ever overburdened with work; I think the management of that fund was the principal part of their work, and since it has been abolished, and they have no longer those large sums of money to handle, the time has come when we might have a reduction in the number of the members of the board and also in the salaries drawn by the members of it. The chairman of the board is provided with £1,000 per annum. He is a gentleman against whom I have not a word to say—

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member not to enter into the details of the clauses of the Bill. The number of the members of the board and the salaries they receive are purely matters of detail.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Home Secretary discussed these details. Have I not the same right?

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is mistaken. The Home Secretary did not discuss the details. The hon. member is now discussing the amount of the salary to be voted to the chairman and the members of the board.

Mr. GLASSEY: Certainly.

The SPEAKER: Those are not matters which may be discussed on the second reading.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then it seems to me that there is to be a latitude allowed to one member of the House and not to another.

The SPEAKER: Order! I shall not allow the hon. member to make that assertion.

Mr. CROSS: It is a mere statement of fact.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CROSS: Why not make a statement of fact?

The SPEAKER: Order! I remind the hon. member that when the Speaker rises he must be silent. I wish the hon. member to maintain order in this Assembly, otherwise I shall be compelled to make him do so. I point out to the hon. member for Bundaberg that I do not think the Home Secretary discussed the amount, but merely stated it. I ask the hon. member not to go into these details now.

Mr. GLASSEY: I may be pardoned for asking whether you followed the Home Secretary? I did, and I know that he discussed clause after clause.

The SPEAKER: The Home Secretary, so far as I could see, explained the new matter in the Bill, but did not discuss the old matter. I may be wrong, but so far as I know—and I endeavoured to follow him as closely as I could to prevent him discussing matters in the existing Act—he simply confined himself to the new principles introduced into the Bill by way of amendment.

Mr. GLASSEY: That is exactly what I am doing. I am endeavouring to discuss matters which I think should find a place in the Bill, and to show that there is no necessity for the present form of the board being continued and the members paid the same salaries. Of course, it is your duty, Mr. Speaker, to maintain order, and it is mine to obey. Therefore it is not worth while quarrelling upon the matter. In fact, life is too short for quarrelling.

The SPEAKER: Order! There can be no question of quarrelling. It is a question of order. I cannot allow the hon. member to put it in that light. I shall allow him every facility for free and open debate; but he must not transgress the rules of debate.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then do you rule that I cannot discuss this matter?

The SPEAKER: Yes; that is my ruling.

Mr. GLASSEY: Then I move that your ruling be disagreed with. That will bring it to an issue.

Mr. LEAHY: I should not like to give a silent vote on this question. I was following the hon. member for Bundaberg with considerable interest, and as I understood the matter he was replying to the Home Secretary, and giving the House to understand the new matter he intended to put into the Bill. To my mind he was in order in doing it.

Mr. BELL: I think that when we divide on these questions of order we have to consider not merely the virtue of the particular point of order, but the extraneous circumstances relating to the discussion, and I think that the hon. member for Bundaberg, and especially an hon. member who is sitting near him, during the few minutes that this question has been under consideration have conducted themselves in a way that is altogether foreign to the good conduct and reputation of a parliamentary assembly.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is now going beyond the question.

Mr. BELL: Although I have received probably as severe reproofs from you, Sir, as any member of this House, I make it a point to always respectfully submit myself to your direction. I say that I believe the conduct of those two hon. members in an Assembly like this—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is now going beyond the question. He must not reflect upon the conduct of other hon. members.

Mr. Cross: How do you like that?

Mr. BELL: I like it a great deal better than anything coming from the hon. member for Clermont. I shall give my vote in support of your ruling, Mr. Speaker. I regret very much having to differ with the hon. member for Bundaberg, whom I respect very much, but I think he was going into a matter of detail that was quite out of place in a second-reading discussion. Certainly it was a matter of more minute detail than you, Sir, have always made it your practice to observe in this House. You have laid down a line of conduct in your general rulings that it is only consistent you should follow to the end of your career as Speaker, and there is no department in your observance and interpretation of the Standing Orders to which you have paid greater attention or made more emphatic comment upon than the character of second-reading speeches. I have heard you, not once but several times, insist upon the general character of second-reading debates, and in the ruling you have to-night given you have done nothing more than consistently adhere to the attitude you have always adopted, and beyond that—and it is not necessarily a synonymous thing—I think you have interpreted in their best way the Standing Orders and the spirit of the House of Commons, and are adopting the line of conduct which is the best in order to make our discussions effective.

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope the hon. member will withdraw his motion.

Mr. GLASSEY: I certainly will not.

The HOME SECRETARY: When introducing the Bill I placed before the House very clearly the difficulty of drawing the line between explanation and discussion. My intention—and I kept to it as closely as I could—was not to give rise to any disputation, or to express an opinion upon any of the clauses, but I thought it would assist the House if I mentioned them by way of information and not by way of discussion. If I have therefore induced the hon. member to follow me, the difficulty can be obviated in future. From my knowledge of parliamentary practice I can assure the hon. member that the Speaker is perfectly right in his ruling, and his ruling will have my most cordial support. There is no need to make any unpleasantness in a deliberative assembly like this, and I would ask the hon. member to withdraw his motion.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON: After the speech of the Home Secretary we might allow the matter to terminate without a division. I think the Home Secretary has himself admitted that by the explanation which he gave, and to which we all listened with great interest, he very naturally gave occasion for comment from those who followed him. I do not for one moment doubt that your ruling, Mr. Speaker, is perfectly correct, but sometimes in discussing Bills, and especially a Bill like this, it is very hard to criticise the Bill without to a certain extent referring to the information which the hon. gentleman has himself furnished. Therefore I think the hon. member for Bundaberg naturally followed what he took to be the line of argument of the Home Secretary. At the same time, it is our paramount duty to endeavour to show our respect for the Chair, and to support it. After the explanation of the Home Secretary, the hon. member for Bundaberg might withdraw his motion, and accept your ruling, as we should always do, as being expressed with a view to entire impartiality, and with a desire to observe the propriety in debate.

Mr. CROSS: At the risk of being considered obnoxious, I must say that I think the remarks of the Home Secretary have entirely justified the position of the hon. member for Bundaberg. I certainly listened attentively to what the hon. gentleman said, and he was only performing a duty to the House in doing what he did; not only expatiating upon the principles of the Bill but the leading ideas involved in the principles. That was quite necessary in order to inform the House what the operation of the Bill would be. A Minister would be a very remarkable man if he could explain a Bill involving so many changes if he did not enter into detail. What I objected to was that the hon. member for Bundaberg was simply making a statement of fact, and the Speaker claimed that I was wrong. I certainly have a right to exercise my opinion.

The SPEAKER: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks specially to the question of that my ruling be disagreed to.

Mr. CROSS: I think the hon. member was wise in moving that your ruling be disagreed to, and if he goes to a division I shall support him. I quite admit the principle which has been laid down by Speakers who have preceded you and by yourself—that members should not enter into detail upon second-reading speeches—but the hon. member for Bundaberg was simply following the lead given by the Home Secretary. In doing so he might have technically fallen into a breach of the Standing Orders, but by allowing a little latitude that might have been got over. I am quite willing to leave the matter in the hands of the hon. member for Bundaberg to do as he likes, but it would be well if we had an expression of opinion upon

the matter, because it is extremely difficult to confine one's remarks to the principles of a Bill. As an illustration I might refer to the Land Bill. It would be utterly impossible for a Minister, however clever and expert in land legislation, to confine himself to the principles of that Bill. The Minister's speech occupied four hours and three-quarters. Most of it was very interesting, and the hon. gentleman was forced to deal with the details of the measure, and the House was very wise in listening patiently, and following him. The hon. member for Bundaberg might, at all events, have been allowed to follow in the lead of the Home Secretary.

Mr. DANIELS: I am very sorry that this difficulty has arisen. At the same time I cannot see where the hon. member for Bundaberg was out of order. He was simply referring to the salaries certain officials would get under this Bill. I ask any hon. member in this Chamber whether, according to your ruling upon that point, you could not rule any matter out of order? There is nothing we might say that might not be interpreted as referring to the details of the Bill. If your ruling is right, then the second reading of Bills is a farce, because when we come to any measure that you do not care about being discussed, you can rule us out of order. When the Home Secretary moved the second reading he dealt with a lot of details.

The HOME SECRETARY: I did not discuss them.

Mr. DANIELS: If at any time you wish to rush through a Bill you can rule members out of order by saying they are discussing details. I do not think that would be right, and I therefore intend to support the motion.

Mr. McDONALD: I understand that the ruling practically is that the hon. member for Bundaberg is not allowed to refer to the details of the Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY: Not to discuss the details of the several clauses.

Mr. McDONALD: I quite agree that it is not a wise thing to discuss the details of a Bill on the second reading, but we are in this unfortunate position: that during the last three years there have been numbers of Bills the details of which have been discussed on the second reading. I cannot at present lay my hands upon them, but the practice has been continually allowed, and now you suddenly put your foot down and say it shall not be allowed. If the same ruling had been followed all along we would not now be in this awkward position. I remember once I interjected, when the Attorney-General was speaking, that it was not customary to discuss details on the second reading, and the hon. gentleman said he could not exactly lay down a rule, because on that occasion he had to refer to certain clauses. It has also been customary to turn over page after page of a Bill and refer to clause after clause. That was done up to 1894, when the Peace Preservation Bill was introduced, and that was the first time it was put a stop to. The unfortunate thing is that when an hon. member on this side refers to certain details he is promptly called to order.

The HOME SECRETARY: I only explained the provisions of the Bill. I did not discuss them.

Mr. McDONALD: I fail to see the difference between explaining certain clauses and discussing them. The hon. member for Bundaberg was also only explaining the clauses from his point of view. It is an unfortunate thing that the hon. member should be compelled to move that your ruling be disagreed to. It is certainly against the practice of the House. I feel in rather an awkward position in the matter, the hon. member having moved that your ruling be disagreed to. I cannot vote for the hon. member because I know it is wrong; but where the wrong has come in is not in his moving the motion, because it

gives us an opportunity of discussing the question. The whole cause of complaint has arisen from the action of the Chair in times past in allowing irregular discussions to take place on the clauses of a Bill by members on the Treasury bench.

Mr. HOOLAN: It has always been the practice since I have been in the House that the leader of the Opposition should have the fullest privilege of reply to Ministers who move the second reading of Bills. Both the Home Secretary and the Attorney-General, when moving the second reading of Bills, carefully go through them clause by clause; and it seems to me only reasonable that one person at least on this side should be able to criticise it clause by clause in reply. I presume that is what the hon. member for Bundaberg was doing. Of course it is not a privilege that should be given to all of us, but, whatever may be said on the other side, the hon. member for Bundaberg is the actual leader of the Opposition in this House.

The SPEAKER: I would ask the hon. member not to go into extraneous matters, but to deal with the question before the House, which is that my ruling be disagreed to. The hon. member seems not to have been present, or to have misunderstood the question. I do not say that no hon. member shall refer to the clauses in a Bill when those clauses contain principles. But I do say that when it is merely a matter of detail, as in the clause which the hon. member for Bundaberg was proceeding to discuss—whether there should be three or less members of the board, or whether those members should have the salary proposed to be given to them or a reduction—

Mr. GLASSEY: That is the question.

The SPEAKER: I say that is not a matter of principle, but purely a matter of detail, which should be discussed in committee. That is the whole point at issue, and I ask hon. members to confine themselves to that point, and not speak of what has been done in the past. If I have done wrong in the past by allowing hon. members to depart from this rule, my attention should have been called to it. I am only human. But I have endeavoured all the time I have been in the chair to maintain the rule as strictly as possible—that the details of a Bill shall not be discussed on the second reading. But I have laid it down as a rule that clauses may be referred to when they contain a vital principle of the Bill.

Mr. HOOLAN: We ought to have the very highest respect and confidence in the Speaker of the House. I can understand the delicacy of your position in giving your ruling, particularly when it is given against persons to whom you are directly opposed in politics and in every other way.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Order, order!

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is now distinctly out of order in stating that I am influenced by political opinions.

Mr. HOOLAN: I do not think I am.

The SPEAKER: Order! I would ask the hon. member to remember where he is.

Mr. HOOLAN: I will not be bullied by you or by the House either. I would sooner walk out.

The PREMIER: I move that the words be taken down. The hon. member says he is not going to be bullied by the Speaker.

The SPEAKER: I think the hon. member will regret having made that interjection.

The PREMIER: I withdraw the motion.

Mr. GLASSEY: To avoid any difficulty—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member has spoken.

Mr. GLASSEY: I want to make an explanation, if I may be permitted.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member should make an explanation?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY: To avoid any heat that may arise, I will withdraw my motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have only a few more observations to make on the Bill. I trust the Home Secretary will consider the points I have called attention to, and submit amendments dealing with them. If not, I shall be compelled to submit them myself. The board ought to be a live body, active, energetic, and impartial. I have no wish to impugn their impartiality at all. On the whole, I believe they have acted as vigorously as they could with the machinery at their command; and as it is necessary to make the machinery as complete as possible, I shall give the Home Secretary my most hearty support in making this Bill as complete as possible. There is another matter—it is a very small one—which I should like to bring before the hon. gentleman's attention. I believe that under the Postal Act persons engaged as unclassified officers by passing an examination cannot get on to the classified staff. I do not know whether the same cause of complaint may not exist in other departments, but I think the Minister is likely to be approached by some persons in connection with the Postal Department before this Bill finally becomes law. I know some persons who have been in that department for many years, and who are still in the unclassified branch of the service. Some have been there for a number of years prior to the passing of the Act of 1889, and I hope the hon. gentleman will see the necessity for doing something that will enable them to attain to that position to which they are entitled by long service and ability. I do not wish to mention any names, or any particular offices in connection with the department. I know that letter-carriers may go up for examination, and that if they pass they will be placed on the clerical staff; but some of those men have been in the service for the last twenty years, and I do not think it is fair to ask them now to go up for examination. They ought to be placed on the classified list without passing any examination; the fact that they have so long performed their duties in many cases in difficult positions, and apparently to the satisfaction of the department, ought to be a guarantee that they are qualified to be placed on the classified list of officers.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: I do not intend to give a silent vote on a Bill of this importance. At the same time I feel that I address myself to it under circumstances that do not afford sufficient time to consider a measure of this important character. I deprecate Bills of this importance being presented for the second reading without members having that reasonable time to look up existing legislation and consider wherein that legislation can be improved by the measure submitted to the House. It was only this morning that this Bill was received by hon. members, and one day is not sufficient to consider a subject of this very great importance. It would have been wise had the Home Secretary introduced it earlier in the session, instead of bringing it in at this late period, when the tenure of office of the members of the Civil Service Board is about to expire by effluxion of time. Their term of office will expire early in December next, so that we are precluded from considering whether it is practicable or desirable to introduce any change in respect to the constitution and functions of the board. The Civil Service is a very numerous body, and we have to consider not only its efficiency but the most economic conditions under which that efficiency can be maintained. From all that I can learn and observe I believe that the present Civil Service Board have done good work, and this view is substantiated by the figures quoted by

the Home Secretary as to the numerical decrease in the Civil Service officers, and the corresponding reduction in the annual expenditure. But we must not forget that during the last three or four years a financial depression has existed, and that the Government very largely and very reluctantly applied the pruning-knife, and that to the retrenchment thus effected, quite as much as to any economic desire on the part of the Civil Service Board, is attributable the reduction in the annual expenditure on the service. The Home Secretary has told us that there is a persistent desire among the Civil servants to obtain more money from the State. It would have been satisfactory to know if the Civil Service Board had repressed that growing tendency as far as practicable. I was very glad to see that the Home Secretary was so firmly convinced of the fitness of this board, because, if my memory does not betray me, when he was first installed in the office of Colonial Secretary he and the board came into collision. I was then in England, but I read the correspondence on the subject, and it showed that the hon. gentleman was particularly tenacious of his rights and privileges in nominating and recommending the promotion of officers, and I think there was a slight amount of friction between the hon. gentleman and the board. I am not quite certain who came off second best, but I suppose the matter was compromised; but the incident showed me that the old leaven was still sticking to Ministers, and that they desired to retain their political patronage.

The HOME SECRETARY: Not the slightest.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: Well, I know that Ministers had previously to consider and deal with repeated applications from political supporters for the appointment of their friends, their sisters, their cousins, and their aunts to positions in the Civil Service, and that was the reason why it was considered necessary to pass the Civil Service Act. I believe that the establishment of the Civil Service Board has had the effect of removing these constant applications from members of the Ministry, and I am very glad that it has, because it was growing into an abuse of a formidable character. I am certain that in times past many men were introduced into the service who were never qualified for the positions to which they were appointed, and, being once admitted, it was not considered proper to remove them, even though they might be Tite Barnacles. At any rate, unless some hon. member can suggest some other scheme for dealing with the service which will command acceptance, and which can be readily applied, I see nothing before us but to accept this Bill renewing the term of office of the present board for a further period of three years. That is not a very long term, and during that short extended term we shall have an opportunity of seeing what the Civil Service Board is able to accomplish under normal conditions. In criticising their actions in the past it is only fair that we should remember that they had to deal with a mass of chaotic elements. I believe that the colony as a whole has benefited by their appointment, and as the gentlemen who now constitute that board have had a considerable period of probation they will be better able to continue their office for a further term of three years, during which time they may make greater progress than they made during the antecedent period. I do not feel disposed to enter into a long review of this Bill, which is chiefly founded upon the Act of 1891, eliminating the clauses relating to the superannuation fund and the investment board. There is little use now in expressing any opinion as to the wisdom of repealing those clauses. I believe the board have endeavoured to discharge their duties in

a fair and satisfactory manner, but I should like to have learned from the Home Secretary what number of officers retrenched in consequence of the necessities of the State have been re-appointed. I am sorry to learn that in one department, consisting of professional men—namely, the dredge service—some very old officers have not been reappointed; I hope they will be re-employed as soon as opportunity offers. There are very few new features in the Bill; in fact, the main principle in it is the reappointment of the board, and I recognise the force of the statement of the Home Secretary that if the term of office of the board had not nearly expired by effluxion of time there would have been no necessity for the introduction of the Bill at all. We may therefore confine ourselves to the question of reappointing the board. Owing to the lateness of the session it would be a formidable undertaking to interfere with the present administration, and to introduce entirely new machinery; therefore we had better adhere to a system which may not be altogether perfect than go in for another which might be found to contain many more imperfections. There are certain features in the Bill which will require consideration in committee. One of these is the new principle that no new office shall be created except on the request of the permanent head of the department, and then only upon a certificate of the board. The creation of a new office might be a matter for consideration by the Government of the day, and why the board should, as it were, be taken into the confidence of the Government I do not see. It would be placing them in a very invidious position. If a powerful Government considered that the progress of the colony would be greatly accelerated by the creation of some new office, they would be placed in a very false position if they had to get a certificate of the board as to whether such an office should be created or not. The responsibility rests with the Government, and should rest with them until Parliament sanctions their action. In a country like this many different conditions arise, social and political, and things we do not contemplate the necessity for now may be deemed desirable in the course of a year or two. If hon. members from the other side were entrusted to form the Government there would be certain new offices in connection with labour, and why should such offices not be created except upon the certificate of the board. This is a matter which strikes me as being worthy of consideration in committee. Then it is proposed that the money appropriated by Parliament for the payment of a superior officer might be distributed amongst the inferior officers, should the office of the former be vacated. That would be taking the control of the purse entirely out of the hands of Parliament. The Ministry of the day might have favourites to whom they might wish to give a higher remuneration; therefore, I should deprecate taking the power of remuneration out of the hands of Parliament. Then it is provided that additional duties may be imposed upon members of the board by the Governor in Council, and the Home Secretary suggested, by way of illustration, that the duties of the advertising board might be added. But these gentlemen are appointed to classify and purify the public service of the colony and to maintain it in that condition, and while they may be very competent to perform those duties they may be incompetent to discriminate in matters of a purely commercial character. If these officers are to regulate the Civil Service and keep it free from political pressure, and give the officers under the present régime a reasonable expectation of promotion in future, their duties should be confined to that. They should be considered as officers of Parliament not amenable to political

pressure, but as fulfilling an important trust such as the Auditor-General discharges. I wish it to be understood that I do not depreciate the labours of the Civil Service Board. I believe they have discharged their duty fairly well. They undertook a very troublesome task, because when they came into existence a great amount of political patronage existed, and as Ministers were naturally reluctant to part with that patronage, they had to tread upon very delicate ground. To a certain extent they may be said to have cleared the ground, and the order of things existing now in the Civil Service is a decided improvement upon the order of things that existed seven years ago. I have no doubt that during the renewed term of three years a greater improvement will be made in that direction, and if I have the honour of a seat in the House at the close of that term, I shall be very glad to review it and consider any amendment which may then appear necessary. I had not the advantage of being in the House in 1889, when the Act was passed, but I read the debates upon it with interest. It was admitted then to be a tentative measure, and many of our ablest statesmen considered it would not produce the results anticipated from it. I think the pessimists of those days would now admit that the board has done better work than they predicted, though no one then could foresee the financial embarrassment and confusion which has since ensued, with its consequent disturbance of the service. With regard to the leading principle of the Bill—the renewal of the agreement with the board for three years—I am unhesitatingly in favour of it, and I shall support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. O'CONNELL: I regret that greater time has not been allowed for the consideration of this Bill, which affects a large section in the colony, and one which at times requests the interference of many members of the House. So far as I can see, the real essence of this Bill is whether or not it is desirable to continue the Civil Service Board as an advisory board to the Government. One must to a certain extent review the past to decide whether the introduction of this advisory board has been a desirable feature in the management of the service or not, and whether the results claimed for its appointment have been arrived at or not. It was claimed then that officers did not get justice, that promotions were made unfairly, that generally the service was dependent upon the patronage of Ministers, and that men could not secure promotion by merit. The board were supposed to step in between the Civil servants and Ministers and stop undue patronage. Instances will have been brought under the notice of members reflecting upon the management of the service, and instances have come under my notice, especially in the initiatory stages of the working of the board, when the circumstances of the colony were not good, and in consequence of their financial positions Civil servants have had to resign their positions in the service and were reappointed, as it appeared, according to the will of the powers that be. One of the earliest cases was that of a friend of mine who had to resign his position in consequence of monetary pressure, and who was refused re-appointment. Since then several men holding high positions in the service have been allowed to take advantage of the insolvency laws of the colony, during some term of leave, and they have then gone back to their appointments. I hold now, and always have held, that it is a cruel thing running through all our statutes, that because a man gets into pecuniary difficulties his employer—where the State is the employer—shall cast him into the street, and say, "You have done good service for years, there is no black mark against you,

but simply because you have been unlucky in your investments you shall be debarred from earning your living in the way in which you have been accustomed to earn it." I have no sympathy with that principle at all. I do not see why, in such cases, the State should turn a man away from his employment if he has not done anything dishonourable, any more than a private employer would. In such cases, where a man's services are still valuable, he should continue to be employed. I do not speak against the board for retaining honourable servants in the employment of the State after they have got into financial difficulties, but what I do say is that in all cases where men vacate their positions on that ground, equal treatment should be allowed them. Where a man finds that he cannot continue to carry a financial load, and has done nothing dishonourable, he should be made to feel that he can relieve himself from a position in which he may be forced to do things he would regret doing; that by making a clean breast of his position to the head of his department he will have no reason to fear censure. That is one matter in which I think the board have failed. I do not know whether it has been through their own fault, but in the working of the system they have failed to prevent unequal treatment of different officers. Cases are constantly cropping up in which members of the service think that increases have been unjustly given to others while they have been left in the background. I recollect bringing before a certain department the case of a man who was doing a very large amount of extra work without any extra remuneration, and the only satisfaction I got from that department was that I was virtually told that if the man was doing extra work it was no business of mine. The Civil Service Board and the Government of the day may be the best judges as to whether the remuneration which an officer gets is right or wrong, but it is certainly part of the duty of the board—where they find an officer doing work of an onerous character, receiving a very much lower salary than is paid to men who are doing much less work—to see that such inequalities are rectified. They should endeavour to merit the confidence of the Civil servants. Without that confidence they will not do their best for the country, because we want a service that is satisfied that merit will be rewarded and justice meted out to each individual, irrespective of any influence he may be able to bring to bear. We want the board to be assured that when they see fair play done to the different officers they will receive the fullest support from this Chamber. There is no necessity for their being afraid to urge upon the Government of the day that certain things should be done, simply because the Government may not be inclined to receive their recommendations favourably. Of course I admit that the responsibility of finding the necessary funds for paying the Civil servants rests with the Treasurer, and that such powers cannot be delegated to the board; but outside that power I am sure this House will make the board as independent of the Government as possible. Looking over the classification list, one wonders how some of the salaries are arrived at. I shall take the salary of the Collector of Customs in Brisbane as an example. In all the other colonies that position is looked upon as being equal to the position of an under secretary. Yet our collector is paid only £650, whilst the usual salary of an under secretary is £800. I know that some of those recently appointed only receive £700; but the salary of the Collector of Customs is £150 less than the recognised salary of an under secretary, and £150 less than was paid to his predecessor. I believe at one time the Collector of Customs was getting £900, because he got

another £100 as Commissioner for Excise. Here we have a first-class receiving second-class pay. I understand, however, from the Home Secretary that this has been done by the Governor in Council, and therefore the board is not to blame. My remarks have been made in the hope that as the years go by the members of the Civil Service will feel assured that promotion and increased salary will be dependent upon merit alone, and not upon the friendship of any member of Parliament or of any Minister.

Mr. ANNEAR: Like the hon. member, I think that there has not been sufficient time given for those interested outside to consider this Bill. It was only introduced in committee yesterday, and it is now before the House for second reading. There has been no Bill introduced this session of greater importance, and I quite agree with the hon. member for Bulimba that the functions of Parliament within the last few years have been almost entirely handed over to boards. If we could arrive at the stage set forth by the hon. member for Musgrave, when we would have a contented Civil Service, which would not in any way trouble members of Parliament, I should begin to think that we were nearing the millenium. Apart from that, however, I consider the Civil servants throughout the length and breadth of the colony should have an opportunity of considering the Bill before it is passed through committee. Personally I have no complaint to make against the Civil Service Board, but certain things do occur, and people who are interested tell hon. members about them. I am aware that there are several young men who have passed examinations, and who are competent to fill many positions in the service. I have heard of one young man who gave up his position in the Civil Service, and went to what is represented by the hon. member for Bundaberg as a paradise for working men—namely, New Zealand. He did not find it agreeable to his taste, and during the last few weeks he returned to Queensland, and I believe he has been reappointed into the service. That is not fair to those who have remained in the colony, and who have educated themselves to fill such positions. I wish to refer to one vital principle in this Bill; that is, that it is compulsory that officers shall retire from the service on arriving at the age of sixty-five.

Mr. GLASSEY: Why should they, if they have vigorous health?

Mr. ANNEAR: That is what I say. We know of men of seventy and seventy-five who are still vigorous. Why, two or three of the greatest men of the present day are eighty-five years of age, and they are still doing good active work for their country. I trust that when the Bill gets into committee the word "shall" will be omitted and the word "may" substituted.

Mr. GLASSEY: I will take the chair for you, and you can move amendments.

Mr. ANNEAR: The hon. member, I hope, will see that attention is paid to that matter. I believe it is a great relief to Parliament and to Ministers to have a Civil Service Board, but still there seems to be a good deal of appointment by friendship going on. I contend that no person should be appointed, or promoted, except by merit, and I trust that will be the rule in future. That was one of the things for which I most admired the great leader whom I followed when I first came into this House. He would recommend no appointments to the Civil Service except on the ground of merit.

Mr. GLASSEY: He did not believe in a board.

Mr. ANNEAR: No; he did not; but he always gave appointments to the best men. I hope that line of conduct will be followed by the board. I trust the Bill will not be rushed

hurriedly through committee, but that those most interested in it—the Civil Service—will have an opportunity of fairly considering it.

Mr. LEAHY: I do not think there is much danger about the fate of this Bill on its second reading. We are all agreed as to most of its principles, but there is one thing to which I should like to call the attention of the Home Secretary; that is the principle upon which he proposes to get rid of the members of the board, if occasion requires. I think that is a vital principle, which entirely emasculates the board. In the past their position has been this: Useful as the board has been—and I am prepared to admit its usefulness—it has mainly been useful in giving Ministers an opportunity of not making appointments. In fact, the board have acted as the excuse at all times. If the board have served that purpose in the past, it was a good deal because the Government had not the power to get rid of them. The only means by which they could be got rid of was the same means by which the Land Board or Railway Commissioner can be got rid of—a resolution of both Houses of Parliament. The Home Secretary has pointed out that that was a very long procedure, and that if one person chose to stone-wall for a certain length of time the intentions of the Government could be defeated. That is the position in which the Civil Service Board has been in up to the present time, and it is a very important position, too. It gives the board a very strong hand at all events, because they are to a great extent independent of the Government.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is in the hands of Parliament under this Bill.

Mr. LEAHY: The hon. gentleman knows that Parliament means the Government. The Home Secretary, if he wished it, could easily carry a resolution through this House. If the hon. gentleman wants to get rid of the board, I do not care. Perhaps we could get on fairly well without them, if we have Ministers with courage and backbone enough to deal with the Civil Service properly; but there is no doubt the board have served as an excellent excuse for certain things which have been done or which have not been done. The board has very wide powers and important duties. It deals with over £300,000 a year, and has to classify all the officers of the service, and it should at least be on the same footing as the Land Board in the matter of its independence. Under the present law if a member of the Land Board is suspended, and Parliament says he shall not remain suspended, he retains his office in spite of Ministers. Under this Bill a member of the board who is suspended shall not be restored to office unless the Council and Assembly, within forty-two days after they have been informed of the fact, declare that he ought to be restored to office. Why should there be that difference between the Civil Service and the Land Boards?

The HOME SECRETARY: Because it is practical.

Mr. LEAHY: I do not wish to be misunderstood. If the board are simply to act as an excuse, then let them have their proper functions. If it is to be of any use as an independent board, then it should have a proper status, and be independent of the whim of the Minister. I call attention to this matter because the member for Musgrave contended that it was necessary to make the board as independent as possible. That is the very thing that is not going to be done. If it is not going to be independent, then the best thing is to wipe it out altogether. I notice that members of the Civil Service are to have the right of appeal. That is a very important principle, and I am glad to see it in the Bill. I shall support the Minister in getting the Bill through, although in committee I may have some amendments to propose.

Mr. DANIELS: I am of the same opinion as the hon. gentleman who has just sat down—that we could do without a Civil Service Board altogether.

Mr. LEAHY: I did not say that.

Mr. DANIELS: Well, I say it. As far as I can see the board simply acts as a buffer between the Minister and the public. If the departments were under the control of the Government, we would know who to blame. There is no doubt that a good many appointments have been made by favour and not because officers have been qualified for the positions. That is the case even in the very lowest branches of the service. Letter-carriers who have passed examinations and who have been waiting for appointment for years have been thrust on one side in favour of some friend of a Minister. Several hon. members have said that they hope all favour will be done away with. There is nothing to prevent them hoping; but that will be their share of it. The very fact that the board are subject to suspension at the hands of the Minister shows that they are simply acting as a buffer. If they refuse to act according to instructions from the Minister, they will be suspended. A Minister can always find some little mistake some member of the board has committed, and it is put on the shelf to be used when occasion may require.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You seem to know all about it.

Mr. DANIELS: If I walk about with my eyes half shut, I am not asleep; I can see what is going on. I remember once that Mr. Perkins, the late member for Cambooya, when asked what were the duties of the Civil Service Board, said, "When they leave home they have to put on their hat and gloves, pick up their walking-stick, and then walk to the office. Then they sit down, take off their gloves, and have a yarn with somebody. Then they again put on their gloves, pick up their walking-stick, call for their salary, and walk home." If that is all they do, they are remarkably well paid for it. I have no doubt that if the board were not interfered with they would do very good work; but there is no doubt that if one of its members is asked by a Minister, or by the Cabinet, to put a certain man in, the board will find that that man is qualified for the position above all others. I only hope I am wrong, and that the result will prove that the board will appoint men according to their ability, and not, as they have done sometimes in the past, appoint men who have passed no examinations, while leaving others who have passed examinations on one side altogether.

Question put and passed; and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

BRISBANE TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY: On this occasion I have not the Bill in my hands, so I shall be able to move the second reading of it without any relation whatever to the details. It will be remembered that under our local government laws traffic boards were authorised to be appointed; and last year it was deemed advisable that the traffic of the metropolis should be placed under the control of a board. Unfortunately, the Bill came on at a very late period of the session—I think it was pretty nearly the last day—and in another place they eliminated one of the clauses which particularly provided for the finances of the board. That clause gave the board power to get revenue from licenses in respect to vehicles. Now there is only power to get licenses from persons, so that if a man has fifty vehicles the man only is licensed. However, the instalment was accepted with the view of

getting the traffic of the city placed under proper supervision. I believe the board appointed under that Act has given general satisfaction. That being so, they now come to Parliament with the tentative legislation of last session and ask that it be amended in the direction which experience has shown to be necessary. The principle of the Bill is contained in its subsections, which will be considered one by one in committee, and those powers which the Committee consider ought not to be given will be eliminated. The object is to derive more money for the purpose of carrying on the work of the board. If I should fail to make clear the objects of the Bill, there happens to be one of the most experienced members of the board on the other side of the House, and I am sure he will give me every assistance in explaining it and getting it passed into law. With the view of economy it is deemed advisable to utilise the Police Force a great deal more than the last Act contemplated. Under that measure the police only had power given them to call upon a person to give his name. They will now be assistant administrators in the carrying out of the Act. They are always on their beat, and while there they may as well have their spare time occupied in assisting the board to regulate the traffic. My experience is that a man in uniform, especially if he is a policeman, is much more efficacious in regulating traffic than a man who is not. Another principle of the Bill is that some officer shall always be in readiness—in this instance it is Mr. Curnow—to deal with matters as they arise from day to day. The Bill really legalises their own system. It provides further that all the proceedings of the chairman shall be open to the public, so that the light of day shall be thrown on all his actions. It also provides that the commissioners shall regulate their own proceedings, appoint committees, and so on. The main principle of the Bill is that the commissioners shall have power to make regulations and distribute the burden of maintaining the traffic over a larger number of persons, and not let it fall principally on those who have a difficulty in making a living at the present time. I have much pleasure in moving that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. FRASER: I do not see the necessity for this Bill. The hon. gentleman says that it has been introduced for the sake of economy, but he has gone the wrong way to effect that. If he wished to go abroad for an example of the way in which traffic should be managed he should have gone to Melbourne, and not to Adelaide. In Melbourne the traffic is controlled by the municipality, and there is only what is called a licensing inspector, the rest of the work being carried out by the police. If you have two authorities you will have one fighting against the other, instead of both helping each other. The police under this Bill will take action without the Transit Commission knowing anything about it, but at present they have to send notice before taking action. Another thing I object to is that a power is given to the chairman of the commission that is not given even to a judge of the Supreme Court. The chairman is allowed to make laws, and in dealing with anyone who goes before him for an infringement of those laws it is only natural that he should not go against the laws which he has to administer.

The HOME SECRETARY: Where do you find that the chairman has power to make laws?

Mr. FRASER: The commission has power to make by-laws, and when they are approved by the Governor in Council they have to be administered by the chairman. I shall oppose the passing of the Bill as far as it is in my power.

Mr. STEPHENS: I shall not oppose the second reading of the Bill, but I do not like the

new principle introduced into the Bill, under which the chairman will practically issue a summons against an individual, and then give a verdict on that summons, from which there is no appeal, not even to the commission.

The HOME SECRETARY: What clause is that?

Mr. STEPHENS: Clause 3. The inspector will report certain breaches of the by-laws to the chairman, who will then say whether a summons is to be issued or not. If a summons is issued it will be served on the person complained against, and he will appear before the chairman, who will hear the case and give a verdict, from which there will be no appeal, though the verdict may be to cancel the license of a man for three or six months, or for ever, as the clause says that he may order the license to be "cancelled or to be suspended for such period as he thinks fit." I do not think the chairman should have any such power. Another new principle introduced into the Bill is subsection 9 of clause 6 which empowers the commission to impose a license fee on a grocer, butcher, baker, or anybody else who uses a vehicle for the conveyance of goods or merchandise, but does not allow them to touch the owner of a buggy, because it does not convey materials. The general principles of the Bill are all right, but I do not like those provisions to which I have alluded.

Mr. DIBLEY: I think hon. members are mistaken with regard to clause 3, as all the decisions of the chairman with regard to the cancellation or suspension of licenses are submitted to the commission for ratification. With regard to the objection to subsection 9 of clause 6, you might as well not pass the Bill as knock out that provision, as without it the commission will be in the same position as they are at present. We want to get at certain people in order to raise more revenue. At present there are only a few people who pay license fees—namely, bus proprietors, cab proprietors, and a few draymen. The bus and cab proprietors contribute about 80 per cent. of the revenue of the commission.

Mr. FRASER: Why don't you tax the trams?

Mr. DIBLEY: We cannot tax the trams. But I shall not say anything further, as the details of the Bill can be better discussed in Committee.

The HON. J. R. DICKSON: It has always struck me as a remarkable circumstance that we should require an army of inspectors to control the traffic in a small city like Brisbane, when we see that the police in other cities, especially the great city of London, control the traffic in such an admirable manner. Anyone going along the Strand or Oxford street must have been struck with the admirable way in which the police control the traffic of that great city; and I believe that if the police performed these duties here they would be more satisfactorily performed than by a traffic inspector. On Victoria Bridge we have no inspector, but the police regulate the traffic, and do it satisfactorily; and I do not see why their supervision should not be extended to the city of Brisbane. I remember the time when the corporation controlled the traffic, and I believe it was then done more economically and efficiently than it is under the commissioners at the present time. I am not going to discuss this Bill, but I am inclined to agree with the hon. member for North Brisbane that it is unnecessary legislation, and that we departed from economical lines when we constituted the commission.

Question put and passed; and committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at nine minutes to 10 o'clock.