

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 13 DECEMBER 1897

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

MONDAY, 13 DECEMBER, 1897.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 3 o'clock.

DISTRICT COURTS BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the advisableness of introducing a Bill to amend the District Courts Act of 1891.

LAND BILL.

ADOPTION OF REPORT OF COMMITTEE ON
COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I move that the report be adopted.

Mr. HARDACRE: I desire to move, as an amendment, that all the words after "That" be omitted with a view of inserting the words "the Bill now be recommitted." My object is to reconsider the two new clauses inserted by the Council following clause 72 in the Bill, which gives power to the court to agree to the renewal of leases to the lessees in the settled districts whose leases have expired. My justification for adopting what may be an unusual course is the public importance of the matter, and the way in which these amendments were carried the other night—in a very thin House, in the small hours of the morning when there was no opportunity of fairly discussing them.

The PREMIER: That is the only time we can do any business.

Mr. HARDACRE: If we are going to do business in that way we had better do none at all. There were only seventeen hon. members for and fifteen against, and about four pairs—scarcely half the House—and I do not think amendments of such importance ought to be passed like that. Every other time that question has been before us, and has been dealt with upon its merits, the House has rejected it. In 1895 it was rejected in a most decisive manner, and so decisively was public opinion against it that on the second reading of this Land Bill the Secretary for Lands himself had not the courage to introduce it. He appealed to private members to propose it, promising it the Government support. However, no private member did propose it, and, seeing the public importance of the matter, I think I am justified in raising the question at this final opportunity. The leading journal in this colony calls attention to the matter, and goes so far as to say—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is out of order in reading an article commenting upon a question before the House.

Mr. HARDACRE: I shall not read what it says, but the *Courier* goes so far as to say that it would be better to lose the Bill, which comprises nine-tenths of the whole work of the session, than pass it with a provision of this kind included in it. It also calls attention to the regrettable manner in which these amendments have been brought in from the commencement, referring to

the proceedings by the deputation which waited upon the Premier in secret, with closed doors, and refused admittance to representatives of the Press. The deputation admitted that they refused admittance to the representatives of the Press because they were afraid of the public becoming aware of their financial position. The *Queensland Times*, commenting upon the Bill of 1895, which contained a similar clause, said it was quite true that the Land Board could refuse to grant renewals if the land were likely to be required for settlement, but they were much afraid that although the hand was the hand of Mr. Barlow, the then Secretary for Lands, the voice was the voice of the Premier. The fact is that nearly half these lands in the settled districts are in the hands of financial institutions. The *Gazette* shows that over 4,000 square miles of that country is held by financial institutions. The lessees have mortgaged their holdings, and they know that if they cannot get renewals of their leases the properties will decrease in value. That is the whole secret of the deputation which waited upon the Premier. The settled districts include a strip of land along the coast, about fifty miles wide, extending from the Tweed River almost to the Gulf, which land is particularly suited for dairying. We have been told by the hon. member for Oxley, who has visited Victoria, that Queensland is far more favourably situated for dairying than either New South Wales or Victoria, and the lands now in question will be particularly required for this industry. The other night I pointed out that every grazing farm that had yet been thrown open upon these areas had been selected, and I may also say that this land includes nearly all the sugar lands in the colony. Seeing that we have advanced nearly £500,000 for the erection of sugar-mills, it would be a suicidal policy to permit those lands to be locked up which are now in the immediate vicinity of sugar-mills. Of course we shall be met with the argument that the board will not renew the lease of any lands likely to be required. But I ask what facts will they have before them to enable them to rightly judge whether the lands will be required or not? They have only six months within which to report, and it will be impossible for them in that time, in addition to their other duties, to carry out any inspection of the runs. They will naturally say that the Minister and the department have just the knowledge as to the demand for the land which they have not, and they will listen to the representations of the Minister, and upon them give or withhold the leases. It is not a safe or a right thing to place in the hands of the Land Court this power to give new leases for the whole of these lands, or at the least to renew the leases of large areas which, considering the progress of the colony, may be required for settlement in a very short time, if not at once. It is eighteen months since the leases of some of these runs have expired, and what has the department done in the way of throwing the lands open to selection? We have some indication of their action in the reference in this morning's *Courier* to statements made in the *Warwick Argus* as to the refusal to throw open to selection the lands of the Talgai and Canal Creek runs.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What have Talgai and Canal Creek to do with it?

Mr. HARDACRE: They are some of the settled districts leases.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: They have not expired yet. The records of the House will show that.

Mr. HARDACRE: I can tell the Minister that the leases of Talgai and Canal Creek expired on the 30th June last.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member is wrong. He has forgotten the six months' grace given to the lessees, or he does not know about it.

Mr. HARDACRE: I know they have six months within which to apply for the land under occupation license, but the Minister can throw the land open to selection within that time if he desires to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No.

Mr. HARDACRE: The article taken from the *Warwick Argus* points out the rush there was for the Kosenthal lands, that 400 applications were lodged, and that if the area available had been 100,000 acres the demand for land would still have been unsatisfied. It also points out that the land on Talgai and Canal Creek runs is of much the same character as the Rosenthal land; that the leases expired some considerable time ago, and everyone expected that the lands would be made available without unnecessary delay, but after repeated inquiries by intending selectors and others it was only during last week that information was received which indicated that the Government have no intention of making them available for selection at present. It also says—

As far back as the 30th October last a proclamation was issued notifying that these lands would be opened for occupation license, under Part IV. of the Act, at the Warwick Lands Office, on the 4th January next, and it is now evident that unless immediate action is taken the lands will be locked up for at least another year, as instructions have been received from Brisbane that priority of application for the lands under occupation license shall be given to the present lessees.

We know that in the immediate vicinity of these lands we have repurchased lands for settlement at the country's expense. There has been, to say the least of it, considerable delay in opening to selection the lands comprised in the expired leases, and now we are asked to give the Land Court the power to renew the leases for another five years. I think the House should have a proper opportunity of rejecting or accepting these amendments with its eyes open, and I move the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not intend to reply at length to the hon. member. I think it desirable that this matter should be settled as soon as possible, because it has already been discussed at considerable length, and I am sure no amount of talking will alter the decision which hon. members have come to as to how they shall vote on the question. I do not see what possible harm these provisions can do, because they can only relate to lands in the case of which a certificate has been given by the court that they will not be required for settlement for five years. That certificate will only be given after the fullest inquiry, and it is only where it is given that the Government may renew the lease for five years. My own opinion is that there will not be many cases in which the court will for a moment consent to give the certificate, but it is likely to be given in the case of some of the lands which are tick infested, and I think it desirable that every consideration should be given to lessees in tick-infested districts. This is one way in which the legislature can do something for them without loss to the Treasury; but I do not say that the court will give the certificate merely for the purpose of relieving the lessees who have suffered from the ravages of the tick. But where the ticks are, there is very little settlement indeed. People will not take up the land on any tenure—not even if we gave it them for nothing. For that reason I certainly think, even if this clause had only the effect of giving some consideration in the way of extension of tenure to those who have lost so heavily through the

ticks, its existence will be fully justified. As to the land in the more favoured portion of the settled districts, I do not believe the court will give any such certificate as is required by this clause, and the legislature need not hesitate for a moment in committing this duty to them. I presume the amendment is strictly in order, and I trust that if we are going to have the Bill re-committed—and the Government will oppose the recommitment—it will be disposed of quickly. Although the amendment may be strictly in order, it is altogether unprecedented at this stage of a Bill. I would also point out that if the hon. member had been arguing that the period of six months should be extended he would have used a good many of the arguments he has urged on this occasion.

Mr. STEWART: I intend to support the amendment, which I think is an extremely proper one, under the circumstances, to move. It is quite true, as the Minister told us, that this matter has been discussed at various times, but the hon. gentleman seems to have forgotten that each time it has been discussed it has been rejected. The House has hitherto resisted in a most strenuous manner this attempt on the part of certain interests to shut up a large portion of our territory against settlement for a further period of five years. When we take into consideration the circumstances under which this clause has been smuggled into the Bill, it is entirely proper that before finally committing the country to it we should again have an opportunity to consider it. The Government were not game to bring forward this special clause when the Bill was before the House. Although the Minister threw out hints to certain of his supporters that if any private member was bold enough to move it the Government would support him, no private member had sufficient courage to rise to the bait, and it was left to an hon. gentleman in another place to do the Government's dirty work. The hon. member for Leichhardt referred to the circumstances under which the Committee of this House was called upon to consider the new clauses introduced by the Council. Here we were, with only about thirty members present, at 1 o'clock in the morning, after a very exhausting sitting. Under such circumstances the House will be amply justified in carrying the amendment. The Minister must be almost at the end of his tether for argument when he brings in the tick plague as an argument why those leases should be further extended for five years. The hon. gentleman knows that the country afflicted by the tick plague forms only a very small portion of the area that will be affected by this clause, and in using that argument he is simply trying to befool the House into supporting something which I believe to be against the best interests of the colony. The hon. gentleman said five years is not a long time. I say that in the history of a colony like this five years is a very long time. We do not know what new developments may take place in the course of five years. Coming back to the tick question, I know that a number of people in my district are proposing to give up cattle-grazing altogether because of it, and to go in almost entirely for agriculture, where such a thing can be done. Apart from that, we have agents careering all over Europe, trying to induce farmers to come out here. If this clause is allowed to pass, when they do come out there will not be any land for them. They will find that all the good agricultural land is locked up for a further period of five years. The hon. gentleman tells us this is a very innocent clause, and that it will only be put into operation in very exceptional cases. But we know what the protestations of that side of the House are. We are so accustomed to them that we have ceased to place any value on

them. If we are to lend ourselves to this closing up of the country against selection for a further period of five years, let us carry the amendment, and do it after full and deliberate consideration.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: There are few members of the Chamber who will agree with the remarks of the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, with regard to the Upper House. The members of that body occupy at any rate as honourable a position in the country as gentlemen sitting on these benches, and they do their work, according to their ideas of things, as honourably as the hon. member himself.

Mr. STEWART: Whom do they represent?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: There are very few members who will support the accusation of the hon. member when he says that members of this side refuse to do the Government's dirty work. The use of such words as that tends to lower the tone of debate, and are certainly unworthy of the hon. member. Leaving the hon. member alone—as I think he should be left—I will deal with what has been said by the hon. member for Leichhardt. I agree thoroughly with him when he says that this House should pause before locking up these lands for another five years, but I do not agree with his references to financial institutions. He said they had 2,000 square miles in their possession; but what are 2,000 square miles? Did not the financial institutions know very well what security they were getting when they made advances? I place the actions of the Government on a higher plane than to say that they were influenced by any such consideration. In certain portions of the settled districts there is a large demand for land, and in 1895, when this question was introduced by the late Secretary for Lands, the House distinctly rejected it because it was believed that certain expiring leases would be immediately taken up if thrown open. That land has since been thrown open, and not one acre is unselected. The Secretary for Lands says the question has been discussed, but I say it has not been discussed since 1895, although it would have been if the Government had introduced such clauses into their Land Bill. It was so little discussed that when the proposal was made in the Upper House by the Hon. Mr. Norton, the hon. gentleman in charge of the measure said—

The proposed new clause was one of his own children in another place. It was really one of the proposals submitted by the Government in the Bill of 1894, which they failed to carry, and for which they received a vast amount of undeserved calumny and abuse. The principle of the thing he could not object to, nor had he any objection to its being inserted in the Bill, but he wished the Committee to understand that he could not pledge the Minister in another place to see it through that place.

To show how little collusion there was between the Government and the gentleman in charge of the Bill in another place, when the Government had no thought of inserting such a clause until it was suggested to them that it was a proper thing to do, the Minister has pointed out that these extended leases can only be given on the certificate of the Land Court; but he has no power to bind the Land Court, as has been shown over and over again. The hon. gentleman also argues that some concession should be given to those runholders who are in the tick-infested area. I hold that this Chamber should deal with those lessees on their merits; and if the Minister asks for this concession, let him ask for it, and he will get relief for those people.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do ask for it now.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I point out that it is not only the tick-infested country that will be affected, but much of the country in the Wide Bay and Port Curtis districts. I do not attribute

to the Minister any wrong intention, but this appears like cloaking the whole question, and giving privileges to others who are not inside the tick-infested district. I may tell the House that in the settled district there are 6,566½ square miles of the country under leases which are expiring, and only 726 square miles of the country, or about one-ninth, is open to selection. We know that people will wait in the hope of acquiring good land; no man will bind himself down for fifty years to a piece of bad land when by waiting two or three years he will be able to get good land.

Mr. LEAHY: The court will not certify in the case of land wanted for selection.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The hon. gentleman talks about the court now, but he has gained every point that his section require.

Mr. LEAHY: I have got nothing.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The hon. gentleman would never be satisfied; he is like the cormorant; but I know what he has got. I say the class he represents have got nearly everything they require—have secured their positions for many years to come.

Mr. LEAHY: You say I represent a class?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Yes, I do; more particularly in this House. Every member will admit that these lands have a greater rainfall upon them, and are closer to means of transportation, and why should we not pause before we lock up those lands for a further period of five years? I shall certainly support the amendment.

Mr. BELL: I am quite unable to understand the amount of fervour introduced into this question, both in the Press and in this House. Apparently the particular method which preceded the introduction of these clauses in this Chamber has excited the suspicion of one or two members on the other side, but I do not think that is a matter which should induce us to condemn that method of introduction. It is in the nature of things that any proposal that is brought in by the Treasury bench should arouse suspicion on the part of hon. members opposite.

Mr. TUBLEY: This was not brought in by the Treasury bench.

Mr. BELL: No, but it is being advocated now by the Treasury bench. The safeguard of these clauses is that no land will be granted for a further lease of five years until the Land Court has recommended that it should be done. There is no opportunity for the Cabinet to throw a sop to any of their political friends, or to work any of those little dodges, which we are assured by the other side will be worked, but everything has to be done through the channel of an impartial body like the Land Court. That should induce the House to accept the proposal.

What do the Land Commission say on this subject? I am very glad to be able even at this late stage of the consideration of the Land Bill to bring forward that document in support of the attitude taken up by the Secretary for Lands. I recollect that at an earlier stage if I referred to the report the Minister made remarks with reference to myself which were of a rather depreciatory nature. After going through this country the Commission recommend, in paragraph 33 of their report—

Your commissioners recommend that the greatest care should be taken to prevent the locking up, under the terms of grazing farm selection, of agricultural lands, which may in the near future be needed for closer settlement. Your commissioners are of opinion that the bulk of the leases in the settled districts should continue to be held by the pastoral lessees under occupation licenses.

That is another way of saying that in their opinion a large area of country in the settled districts was not immediately required for settlement. That certainly is the opinion I formed,

and I was perfectly unbiassed in the matter, having no "axe to grind." There is an immense area of country in the settled districts for which there is at the present time no demand for closer settlement, and I cannot conceive of a condition of things that is likely to happen within the next twenty years, judging by the progress of the past, that will bring about a demand for that country. The Land Commission arrived at their conclusion, not merely from ocular observation, although that was sufficiently convincing, but from the evidence given by the land commissioners in the various districts. If hon. members will take the trouble to read the evidence they will see that Mr. Young, the land commissioner at Townsville, stated that by far the greater portion of the land in the settled districts in his part of the country was not required at the present time for any other form of settlement than that which now exists. I travelled between Mackay and Rockhampton, and I have no hesitation in saying that a large proportion of that country is not fit for any other settlement than is now upon it, and the reason it is held under lease by the lessees who are there is probably that they have, under some past Land Act, acquired the pick of the country as freehold, and consequently it is worth their while to hold inferior land as leasehold. But certainly it is not worth the while of outsiders to take up the country I have in my mind as grazing farm selections, or any other class of selections, and that especially applies to the land north of Broad-sound. Any man who is impartial could come to no other conclusion, after reading the evidence of the lessees and of the smaller men who have taken up land in those districts, than that if the land was thrown open now it would be unselected. That being so, it seems to me that if the Land Court make inquiries and arrive at the conclusion that the best thing that can happen to that land is to allow it to remain under lease to the lessees for a further period of five years, no *bond fide* settlement will be shut out by extending the leases for that period, and I shall vote for the clauses. I am sorry that my colleague on the Land Commission is not voting the same way, because I think the information he got on that commission should have induced him to vote in favour of the clauses. At all events, I shall vote for them, feeling that the action of the Government either in this Chamber or in the other Chamber does not in the slightest degree justify the vilification that the hon. member for North Rockhampton has thrown upon them.

Mr. LEAHY: I regret the practice, which has too often prevailed of late, of hon. members accusing those opposed to them of being actuated by class or party motives. I deprecate such accusations at any time. Of course, in the nature of things, a man's honest opinions may take him in such a direction as may lead other people to put such a construction upon his actions.

A MEMBER of the Labour party: What about this side?

Mr. LEAHY: I give hon. members on the other side credit for honest convictions, and I expect them to give me credit for being actuated by similar motives. We merely judge things from different standpoints, and it is to be regretted that we do not all look at this matter from a common-sense standpoint. We are called upon to go into committee to consider whether certain lands, mainly along the sea-coast, that have fallen in, or are about to fall in, shall be relet under certain circumstances to the original lessees, or to other lessees. It does not at all follow that they must be relet to the original lessees, though they are to have the priority. The real question

is whether they shall be relet to any lessees whatsoever for any term. Any hon. member who knows anything about the country must know that there will be a large proportion of those leases that will not be fit for close settlement. He must also know that a great deal of those leases will be fit for close settlement. What we ought to do is to excise what is fit for close settlement and utilise it for that form of settlement, and that portion which is unfit for anything but pastoral purposes should be allowed to be used for pastoral purposes on such terms as the Land Court may think fit. What is the machinery by which this is to be done? Does not the Land Bill which we have been passing for the last five or six months, and all the Land Bills which have been passed during the last ten or twelve years, hang altogether upon the Land Board? Take the machinery for the Land Court out of this Bill, and there is nothing else in it. The court is supposed to stand between the Crown and the tenant.

Mr. HARDACRE: You do not trust it.

Mr. LEAHY: I said on one occasion that I did not trust the Land Board.

Mr. HARDACRE: You wanted an appeal to the Supreme Court.

Mr. LEAHY: I have seen a great deal of the board since I said that, and although I have not always agreed with the views held by the Land Board, I believe it is thoroughly conscientious and honest. I believe it gives its decisions honestly according to the evidence placed before it, and whatever I may have said on a previous occasion I am certainly not going to repeat now. We allow the board to decide in matters much more important than this. Take, for instance, the case of a resumption where there are improvements worth £40,000 or £50,000, and where the station is worth £100,000. We allow the board to decide the value of the improvements, and surely we can trust the Land Court to decide justly in the case of a strip of land along the sea coast. If I held such views I would not allow the Bill to pass at all. The whole thing hinges upon the confidence we have in the Land Court. Hon. members know that the members of the Land Court are, in a sense, officers of Parliament. They are appointed by letters patent, but if they are guilty of any maladministration they can be removed by a resolution of Parliament.

Mr. GLASSEY: It would be a very difficult matter to pass such a resolution.

Mr. LEAHY: Let me tell the hon. member that many hon. members who do not agree with the hon. member in regard to the amendment now under discussion, would vote for putting the members of the Land Court out of office if they acted unfairly in the matter. Can any member say that during the twelve years the Land Board has been in office it has ever decided a case otherwise than upon the evidence brought before it? I hope that at this late period of the session no time will be wasted. If hon. members are in favour of recommitting the Bill for the purpose of striking out those clauses, let them take a division at once.

Mr. HARDACRE: Mr. Speaker,—In reply—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has no right of reply.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 24.

Sir H. M. Nelson, Sir H. Tozer, Messrs. Philp, Dickson, Dalrymple, Foxton, Story, Collins, Annear, Castling, Lord, Stodart, Smith, Lissner, G. Thorn, Finney, Cribb, Thomas, Leahy, Bell, Petrie, Stephens, Hamilton, and B idges.

NOES, 17.

Messrs. Hardacre, Stewart, Keogh, Glassey, Dunsford, McDonnell, Kerr, Dawson, King, Sim, Turley, Browne, Dibley, Stumm, Armstrong, Drake, and Stephenson.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. Newell. No—Mr. Fitzgerald.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Original question put and passed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I move that the Bill be returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

Mr. PRESIDENT,

The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's amendments in the Land Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

Disagree to the amendments in clause 13—

Because it is desirable in the public interest that no more Crown lands should be alienated without a reservation of copper, coal, tin, and opal, in addition to the Royal metals, and *because* it is necessary in order to make such reservation effective that there should also be a reservation of the right of access upon conditions to be provided hereafter by Act of Parliament.

Agree to so much of the amendment in clause 39, line 35, as omits the words "seven days," but propose to amend so much of the said amendment as inserts the words "one month" by the omission of those words, and the insertion in their place of the words "fourteen days," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

The Legislative Assembly propose this further amendment—

Because one month would cause needless delay in cases in which the appellant has already had one month to decide on his course of action prior to the refusal of the court to grant a rehearing.

Agree to the amendment in clause 41, line 7, conditionally on a further amendment being made in line 9 (as now printed) by the insertion after the word "thereof" of the words "in the case of any such resumption as aforesaid, in which further amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

The Legislative Assembly propose this further amendment—

Because the clause is intended to preserve existing rights under the repealed Acts which provide for recourse to the Public Works Lands Resumption Act of 1878 only in cases of resumption, not in cases where claims are made for compensation for improvements on the determination of a lease by effluxion of time. (See section 108 of the Crown Lands Act of 1884, which governs the preceding sections 102 and 106.)

Disagree to the amendment in clause 56, line 17 (line 4 of page 14 as now printed)—

Because the matter referred to is one in which an exercise of discretion on the part of the Minister will afford greater facilities for doing justice in each case.

Disagree to the amendment in clause 64, subsection 5, paragraph (e).

Because in many cases the fair rental value of the land can only be determined by considering its carrying capacity after the expenditure of money in improvements, and because it is undesirable that the discretion of the court should be unnecessarily hampered in the determination of rents.

The Legislative Assembly offer this reason without waiving their right to insist on the further reason—

That it would interfere with the public revenue, which reason they hope will be sufficient.

Agree to so much of the amendment in clause 65, line 12 (line 13 as now printed), as inserts the word "or," but propose to amend the said amendment by the omission of the word "part" and the insertion in place thereof of the words "such portion," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Agree to so much of the amendment in clause 65, line 15 (now 16), as omits the words "the resumed," but propose to amend the said amendment by the omission of the words "that part," and the insertion in their place of the words "the land in respect of which the payment is made," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Agree to so much of the amendment in clause 67 as omits the words "one month," but propose to amend the said amendment by the omission of the word "six" and the insertion in place thereof of the word "three," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Agree to the amendments inserting new clauses to follow clause 72 (clauses 73 and 74 as now printed), because they are in furtherance of the intentions of the Legislative Assembly.

Agree to the amendment in clause 90 (clause 92 as now printed), because it is in furtherance of the intentions of the Legislative Assembly.

Disagree to the amendment in clause 98, line 16 (clause 100, line 16, as now printed)—

Because cases may occur in which no tenders have been lodged.

Disagree to the amendment omitting clause 102—

Because many cases have arisen in which the lessee has overstocked the resumed part of his run after applications to select the same have been approved, to the serious detriment of the incoming selector, and because a similar provision in the law of a neighbouring colony has been found to meet with general approval in practice.

Agree to so much of the amendment in clause 161 (163 as now printed), subsection 12, as omits the words "one month," but propose to amend the amendment by the omission of the word "six" and the insertion in its place of the word "three," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

The Legislative Assembly propose this further amendment because three months is a sufficient period to allow a licensee within which to reduce the number of his stock within reasonable limits.

Disagree to the amendment in clause 173 (175 as now printed)—

Because it is not desirable that the limit which now exists as to the area of country lands which may be sold in any one year should at present be extended.

The Legislative Assembly offer this reason without waiving their right to insist on the further reason—

That it would interfere with the public revenue, which reason they hope will be sufficient.

Propose to amend the amendment in clause 224 (226 as now printed) by the omission of all the words after the words "subject to," on line 45, and the insertion in their place of the words "such conditions and, in the case of a holding, to the payment to the lessee of such agistment fees as the regulations may prescribe," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Agree to the amendment in clause 253 (255 as now printed), but propose to amend the said amendment by the insertion after "1861" of the word "or," in which amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Agree to the amendment in clause 254 (256 as now printed) with the following consequential amendments: viz.—On line 52 (as now printed) after the word "and" insert the words "which is contiguous to the selection, and"; omit the words "from the selection," insert the word "therefrom,"—in which amendments they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Disagree to the amendment omitting subsection 4 of clause 258 (260 as now printed), being consequential on an amendment previously disagreed to.

Propose as consequential on the Legislative Council's amendment in clause 56 to further amend clause 253 (260 as now printed) by the insertion after subsection 6 (5 as now printed) of the following new subsection— "Prescribing the qualifications, manner of appointment, and remuneration of members of the board of examiners for surveyors, and the manner in which the business of the board shall be conducted,"—in which further amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

And agree to all other amendments in the Bill.

I may mention with regard to the Council's amendment on clause 13 that I proposed its adoption in committee, but it was rejected, and the effect of the division was that this House refused to agree to the amendment made by the Council. Seeing that the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Stumm, was the hon. member who previously moved the amendment to this clause, which resulted in the clause being adopted in com-

mittee in the first instance in the shape in which it went to the Council, I asked him to frame a reason why this House disagreed to the amendment of the Council, and the reason given in this motion is the reason drafted by him. It is only just to the hon. member and to myself and my colleagues that I should mention this fact. The rest of the reasons given speak for themselves.

Question put and passed.

LAMINGTON BRIDGE BILL.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On clause 20—"How expenses to be paid"—

The CHAIRMAN: A blank has been created by the omission of the word "two-thirds" in line 36, with a view of inserting the word "four-fifths." The question now before the Committee is that the word proposed to be inserted be so inserted.

The HOME SECRETARY had the misfortune to be absent when the Bill was last under consideration, and, as much of the information connected with the matter had come before him, his colleague had been unable to give it to the Committee to enable them to determine the question. He would mention as briefly as possible the circumstances which led to the apportionment provided for in the Bill. A bridge was built at this place years ago by the State, and the question arose as to who should maintain it.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman will allow me to remind him of the question.

The HOME SECRETARY: He had no intention of going beyond the question, which, of course, involved all the circumstances leading to the fixing of the contributions as provided by the Bill. There had been a great deal of discussion as to who should maintain the bridge, and it took several Ministers for Works several years to determine the question. The correspondence as to what should be included in the benefited area was about a foot high, and finally it was determined that the best solution of the difficulty was to fix as the benefited area the area fixed by this Bill. Hon. members, looking at a map he had before him, would see that it should be confined to Maryborough and Tinana. The matter at the time was referred to Mr. Buttanshaw, who was long since dead, and he considered that by the construction of the railway between Maryborough and Gympie the bridge had lost its characteristic as a bridge on the main road between Maryborough and Gympie, and had become a local structure. He was himself Secretary for Works in 1890, and Maryborough was claiming then to maintain the bridge altogether, and Tinana, so far from desiring to throw off liability, was desiring to create a vested right in the management of the bridge. A petition was next sent down signed by both local authorities asking for the constitution of a joint board to maintain the bridge, and at that time it was arranged that there should be four members, and that the cost of maintenance should be divided equally between the two local authorities. He had put it clearly to them as to whether they wanted the representation to be equal, and the answer came back from both that they did. Then the bridge went down with the 1893 flood, and who was first to move in the matter? On the 7th March, 1893, as Secretary for Works, he received a letter requesting the Government to send up Mr. Brady, the Engineer of Bridges, to give an approximate estimate to restoring the bridge for traffic, and stating the great inconvenience and loss of trade that the public of Maryborough and the residents on the Mary River were suffering by the collapse of the bridge. That was signed by the town clerk of Maryborough, who was secretary also of the bridge board. As

if that was not sufficient, the council on the next day also wrote him reporting on the damage, and saying that if it was not convenient to send up Mr. Brady, to send up Mr. Goldsmith, as the immediate restoration of the bridge was of vital importance to Maryborough and the surrounding districts, more especially as the Antigua railway bridge had also been carried away. He (the Home Secretary) said he could not recognise the council, seeing that there was a bridge board representing both local authorities, and on the 23rd a reply came that the request of the council had the sanction of the bridge board. There was a very great anxiety on the part of Maryborough at that time that the bridge should be built, and an Act was passed with regard to it, referring to the benefited areas in the municipality and in the division. When the bridge board was constituted under the Act it was constituted with three representatives of Maryborough. Then the Tinana board prayed for the appointment of representatives. They said that as they were paying three-fourths of the cost of construction and maintenance of the bridge—as based on the toll—they considered they were justly entitled to representation on the bridge board in proportion to the amount to be paid by them. At present the board was constituted of two representatives of Maryborough and one representative of Tinana. On the 18th September the Tinana board, whose revenue was very small, put in a most sympathetic application for a little money to enable them to carry on necessary works. He merely mentioned that to show the pecuniary position of the board. Their total rates were about one-tenth those of Maryborough, and the population was as nearly as possible one-eighth. When it was proposed by a resolution of the House that the Government should formulate some scheme with regard to the bridge over the Brisbane River, the Maryborough people at once applied for the same, and the answer sent by the Secretary for Public Works and also by himself as Acting Chief Secretary, was that a proposal would be submitted to the House on the same basis. After the Victoria Bridge Bill was passed the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, who, he regretted, was in a position where he could not give his own account of what took place, came to him with a request from Mr. Stafford that he would advise immediately as to the respective contributions of the local authorities, and he replied at once to the effect that the principle of the Victoria Bridge Bill was that the Government was to pay one-half of the present liability, and asked the mayor, in order to ensure the speedy passage of the Bill, to decide amongst themselves the benefited area and the proportion of the liability. The answer to that practically told him that they could not well decide that amongst themselves, and doubtless the persons on whom it would have to be imposed—namely, the landowners—could not be got at to ascertain their decision. Then came in the general principle. Under the Local Government (Joint Action) Act, if a bridge was down and it had to be rebuilt, the first thing he, as the Minister charged with the administration of the Act, was to do was to constitute a joint board, and any expense incurred by the joint local authority must be contributed in such proportions as the joint board determined, subject to certain general rules. The first was that when the expense incurred was of equal benefit to the whole district the amount to be separately contributed should be in proportion to the value of the ratable property in each particular district, as ascertained from the valuation lists in force for the time being. When the expense was incurred in a matter where the benefit was unequal, the contributions were to be as nearly as possible in propor-

tion to the benefit derived, and if a local authority thought itself aggrieved it could appeal to the Governor in Council, whose decision was final. In all his experience he had only had one appeal, the local authorities concerned usually falling back upon the principle of apportioning the contributions according to the ratable value of the property. It occurred to the Government that it would be a fair thing to place the Lamington Bridge in the category of works where the benefit conferred was unequal. There was no doubt that the toll was very heavy upon the producers of Tinana, but Maryborough said that when the two bridges were down they were largely dependent upon the producers. If produce was not brought in from one side or the other there would be a lot of empty houses in Maryborough. Just as the Victoria Bridge had the effect of increasing rents in South Brisbane, so the Lamington Bridge increased them in Maryborough. Maryborough must not attempt to make out, now that the bridge was built, that it derived only a small benefit. No man in the House would believe that. If the Bill had been silent on the question, the general principles of the Local Authorities (Joint Action) Act would apply, and they would have to determine the proportion which the ratable value of property in Maryborough bore to that of Tinana. There was not such a vast difference between the area of the municipality of Maryborough, which was the largest in the colony, and the area of the Tinana Divisional Board, but the population of Maryborough was 10,000 or 15,000, while that of Tinana was 1,500 or 2,000. *Primi facie*, the proportion should therefore be about eight to one, but in view of the fact that in the case of the Victoria Bridge Bill a compromise was resorted to because the benefit was unequal, so it was determined to compromise between Maryborough and Tinana. It was manifest that if the same charge was put upon Tinana as Maryborough it would practically amount to the insolvency of Tinana. It was no use that board making a promise to pay £300 a year out of £600 a year. With the very best intentions they would be unable to do it, and if such an enormous burden was put upon them Maryborough would be the losers, because the result would be that the producers of Tinana would have to go elsewhere and where they could produce more cheaply. The Tinana board had written to him to say that it would be impossible for them to pay on an equality with Maryborough, and that they would greatly prefer the Government to fix the proportion. The Maryborough council, in conjunction with certain persons who claimed to represent Tinana—he doubted that they had authority to place a burden of 1d. in the £1 on the Tinana ratepayers without consulting them—held a meeting to see if they could come to some arrangement. No arrangement was come to, but at what appeared to be another meeting, held subsequently, an agreement seemed to have been come to. The mayor of Maryborough then informed him that Tinana had signified its willingness to pay one-half, but that the two bodies protested against the limitation of the area. The latter point was of course altogether beside the question. No action could be taken to increase the benefited area—that had been settled long since. He was further asked by the mayor to alter the provisions of the Bill in accordance with the resolution which had been arrived at. If Parliament could be assured that all the ratepayers of Tinana and of Maryborough were consenting parties to the burden being equally shared, and if they could be satisfied that Tinana was capable of bearing the burden of one-half the cost, then the Bill would have contained a

provision to equally share the burden and make each authority pay one-half. But, judging by the correspondence he had referred to, placing a burden of one-half the cost on Tinana would simply have resulted in making that division become a defaulter to the Government from the very start. That was not a state of things they should provide for. He recognised the difficulties under which the people of Tinana were struggling in carrying on their industry, and the difficulties they had in bringing their produce into Maryborough, but when it was considered that the ratable value of the whole of the property in the division was only £62,000, it would be seen that they could not pay half of the amount to be contributed by the two local authorities. In reply to the letter received from the board, he sent a wire informing them that he found it impossible to enlarge the benefited area; that he was advised by Mr. Stafford that the board were agreeable to pay half, which might reach £325 annually, and that they had stated that they were unable to pay this amount. He asked them was he to understand that they now found that they could pay this amount, and that the board were satisfied that the ratepayers would endorse the arrangement? To that the board answered, "Tinana would like Lamington Bridge Bill passed Maryborough pay two-thirds Tinana one-third. Failing that to assist passage of the Bill Tinana will pay one-half." The people in that district were living from hand to mouth, and sooner than continue to pay the toll, which was really pressing them down, they evidently threw themselves on the justice of the House. He did not think it would be fair that the contribution should be according to the ratable value of the property, and if the matter rested with him he should recommend the provision in the Bill, or he would suggest eighths—Maryborough contributing five and Tinana three. If ever there was a person who had tried his best to get the toll removed from the bridge in the interest of the persons who were at the present moment burdened by paying it, it was the hon. member who was now in the chair. If it had not been for that hon. member's persistent, he might say contumacious, applications to him to carry out the promise which had been made in the matter, the House would not have seen the Bill this session, because after the hard work hon. members had done it might have fairly been left over for six months on the ground that the people concerned could not agree among themselves. He (the Home Secretary) knew that he was abused by the people of Maryborough, but all he could say was that they abused their benefactor, because but for him they would not have got the original promise, and he had done his best to assist the Secretary for Works to pass the Bill. Were it not that the cost of collecting the toll absorbed a large portion of the money received he should have left the discontents to stew in their own gravy for another six months. But in view of that fact he had determined that justice should be done, and he thought that after the explanation he had given, and considering that a great portion of the town of Maryborough down towards Saltwater Creek and those places was not benefited as much by the bridge as the division of Tinana, the hon. member for North Rockhampton should not set up his opinion against the opinion of those who were more interested in the locality. The hon. member might rest content that as fair justice as could be done was done by the provision that Maryborough should pay £400 and Tinana £200. He left the Works Department early in 1893, when it was arranged that a low-level wooden bridge, warranted to last twenty-five years at least, should be erected at a cost not exceeding £6,000. This design, which would have sufficed

for the producers of Tinana, was, on the appointment of the Maryborough Bridge Board, constituted of three representative citizens of the town of Maryborough, subsequently changed to a more pretentious and lasting structure, worthy of the town of Maryborough; and he could hardly conceive that, after having received the full benefit of that expenditure, any ratepayer of that town whose land without improvements was worth £240 would grudge the almost nominal extra payment of 2s. 6d. a year for a limited period for the enhanced benefit to himself and the public generally by the bridge being freed from toll, and the vitality of the town and district being thereby enhanced as requested by their council in 1893.

Mr. STEWART: After listening to the speech of the Home Secretary he was confirmed in his opinion that the proportion set down in the clause to be paid by the two localities was unfair as regarded Tinana. In fact, the whole of the argument of the hon. gentleman was in favour of the amendment he had proposed. Under the scheme of the Bill Maryborough would pay ½d. in the £1 and Tinana 1d. in the £1, which was a most unjust proportion. However, seeing that the people immediately affected were content with the provision he would not press his amendment, but with the permission of the Committee would withdraw it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Though the amendment was withdrawn there was a blank which must be filled up, and judging from the expression of opinion of the Committee, he thought hon. members had come to the conclusion that on the whole it was a mistake to create the blank, and that they would be glad to get back to the proposal originally made in the Bill. They could reintroduce the original ratio at the report stage, and, merely as a temporary expedient, he proposed to move the insertion in the blank, which had been created by the omission of the words "two-thirds," of the words "two thousand and one three-thousandths," which would be followed by the omission of the words "one-third" in the next line with the view of inserting the words "nine hundred and ninety-nine three-thousandths."

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

The remaining clauses and the preamble put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the Bill, as amended, was ordered to be taken into consideration.

REPORT STAGE.

Clause 9—"Chairman"—

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS, the last paragraph, providing for the chairman, or acting chairman, having a casting vote, was omitted.

Clause 13—"Meetings"—

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS, the word "two" was substituted for "three" in the 2nd subsection. The word "representative" was substituted for "representatives;" and the words "or the majority of them, or any one representative if only one is present," in the 2nd paragraph of the 5th subsection, were omitted.

Clause 20—"How expenses to be paid"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS moved the substitution of "two-thirds" for "two thousand and one three-thousandths," and of "one-third" for "nine hundred and ninety-nine three-thousandths," in the 1st subsection.

Amendments agreed to.

The third reading of the Bill was made an order for to-morrow.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.
TRUST AND SPECIAL FUNDS—EUROPEAN
IMMIGRATION.

The TREASURER moved that £7,550 be granted for European immigration.

Mr. GLASSEY asked the Treasurer what results had accrued from the amount of energy which had been displayed by the various lecturers in Great Britain? He was not prepared to say whether it would be desirable to continue the present system, but his own opinion was that, considering the state of trade and commerce in Great Britain, there was no very great fear of many people leaving there for Queensland.

The TREASURER: The matter the hon. member referred to would come on when they dealt with the vote for immigration from the loan fund. He might inform the hon. member that the number of nominated passengers was increasing very rapidly. During the year before last the number of applicants approved of was 230, and the amount paid on their account by their friends was £1,045. During last year the number had increased to 407, and the amount paid in to £1,921, showing an increase in the number of approved applicants of 193, and of the amount paid in by relatives or friends of £886. This was one of the best forms of immigration. The terms were exceedingly liberal, and he was glad to see they were being availed of. If anyone wished to bring out a relative he made application to the immigration agent, and the application had to be approved of by the Chief Secretary. If the person nominated were a male between the ages of one and twelve years, the applicant had to pay £2; if between twelve and forty, £4; between forty and fifty-five, £8; and if over fifty-five, the full passage money.

Mr. GLASSEY had no objection to the vote, because he agreed with the Premier that this was about as good a system as they could possibly get. He would refer to the lecturers further on.

Mr. SMITH asked if these immigrants were subject to the approval of the Agent-General?

The TREASURER: All the applications were made in the colony to the immigration agent, who inquired into the circumstances. The matter was then brought before the Chief Secretary, who, if he approved of the nomination, issued what was equivalent to a free passage for a small contribution.

Question put and passed.

PACIFIC ISLAND IMMIGRATION.

The TREASURER moved that £13,110 be granted from the trust funds for Pacific Island immigration.

Mr. STEWART wished to direct the attention of the Government to the high death-rate amongst kanakas. According to a report issued by the Government it varied from thirty to fifty per 1,000, and he noticed that it was proportionally higher in places where there were a large number gathered together. It had occurred to him that perhaps the inspection as to the sanitary conditions under which they lived, and their general treatment, was not so exhaustive as it might be, and the whole matter required explanation. They found that when the kanakas came here they were generally in the prime of life, but if they took the death-rate of the white population of the same age and in the same localities it would not be higher than seven or eight per 1,000, and it was a proof that there was something wrong when they found such a great difference.

The TREASURER: Every effort was made to see that the kanakas were properly treated.

As hon. members were aware, they had a large number of inspectors, whose duty it was to see that the kanakas were properly housed and attended to in sickness; also to see that any neglect on the part of employers was reported to the Chief Secretary and immediately rectified. The death-rate now was much lower than it had been in the past, and that should satisfy hon. members that every exertion was made to see that the boys were properly treated. He had had no complaints lately in that respect. If the hon. member knew of any it was his duty to inform him, and the circumstances would be immediately inquired into.

Mr. BROWNE: The hon. member for Rockhampton North had not made any charges against the inspectors, but had referred to the fact that those men, who were brought here to do certain work which it was argued that white men could not do, showed a mortality-rate which the Registrar-General told them year after year was four, five, and six times as great as that of white men. The fact that the greatest mortality amongst the white people was amongst children under five years of age while the Polynesians were all adults increased their proportionate death-rate. During the last year or two years there had been a great spread of that terrible disease phthisis, and they were making provision for consumptive hospitals in Dalby, Roma, and elsewhere, while for years past they were introducing people in whom the disease was inherent, and amongst whom it accounted for the greatest mortality. Doctors everywhere were now convinced that consumption was an infectious disease. Many of them went so far as to say that it was a long way worse than leprosy in any country, and when they considered that it was not indigenous to Queensland, and that the Polynesians were inherently affected by it, the question was a serious one which the Government should face. When those people were coming here, dying like rotten sheep, and disseminating a terrible disease, it was time they considered whether the importation of those people should not be stopped, or whether something should not be done to guard against the spread of this terrible disease through the importation of those people.

Mr. STEWART had had an opportunity of looking at the quarters provided for kanakas by employers in two districts of the colony, and they did not anything like approach the condition of the quarters provided for white men in the matter of comfort. The quarters provided for the white men did not come up to what he would consider the standard of comfort, and hon. members could imagine for themselves what were the conditions under which he found the kanakas. They had a death-rate amongst those unfortunates which would be considered a sign of a plague in India, and though the Treasurer told them it was falling, there was still room for very considerable improvement. He trusted that so long as those unfortunates were brought to the colony every effort would be made to promote their health and comfort. He observed in the report upon the Pacific Island immigration that a shooting affray had occurred at the village of Qui at Malayta. The natives fired on the recruiting boats, and the fire was returned, and one man was killed. He wished to know if the hon. gentleman had any information to give on the subject?

The TREASURER: There had been a full inquiry into the matter, but they were not able to take any action with respect to the natives concerned, as they could not discover who they were.

Question put and passed.

POLICE SUPERANNUATION.

The TREASURER moved that £12,615 5s. 9d. be granted from the police superannuation fund for pensions.

Mr. BATTERSBY asked whether the fund was self-supporting or not?

Mr. GLASSEY: The hon. member was perhaps not present when the matter was raised on the Estimates-in-Chief. He would have raised the question himself, but on that occasion the Home Secretary had undertaken to inquire into the matter and report later on.

The TREASURER: All he knew of the matter was that they had to supplement the fund every year, and that the House had already voted £9,000 for the present year; otherwise the fund would be insolvent. Practically it was insolvent.

Question put and passed.

MARINE DEPARTMENT.

The TREASURER moved that £55,655 be granted from trust and special funds for the Marine Department.

Mr. SIM desired to raise the question of the dredging of the Norman River, and in doing so he was acting in accord with the wishes not only of his own constituents, but also of the adjoining constituencies of Croydon and Burke. In 1890 the then representative of Carpentaria, Mr. Edward Palmer, moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling attention to the manner in which his constituency had been treated with reference to that most important matter. At that time the dredge "Hydra" was about to be removed from the mouth of the Norman River, ostensibly for the purpose of being repaired, under promise from the Treasurer that as soon as the repairs were effected she should be returned to continue the work from which she was taken. From that date to this, a period of over seven years, the "Hydra" had remained at the mouth of the Brisbane River, and the work of dredging the Norman River had been discontinued. That motion was moved on the 18th September, 1890, and he would make one or two brief quotations from the speeches made on the occasion. Mr. Palmer, in the course of his speech, read the following telegram he had received from the municipal council of Normanton:—

Spite promise made you by Minister Sunners reports dredge to be removed. If department will not promise dredge to remain bring matter before House to-morrow. Such step would be ruinous future prospects Gulf district.

The hon. member next read the following telegram from the chairman of the divisional board at Normanton:—

Board desire you make strenuous efforts retain and have dredge overhauled here. Failing this to obtain definite promise of immediate return. Are of opinion repairs only subterfuge. Sunners to get South having repeatedly expressed strong desire for removal. Bring this before Assembly.

Then followed an account of a large and influential public meeting at Normanton, with which he would not trouble the Committee. When addressing the House at that time, Mr. Palmer had a very sympathetic audience, and on all sides there seemed to be a general consensus of opinion that unless the "Hydra" were returned, as promised, a grave injustice would be done to the people of the Gulf district. Mr. Hoolan, speaking on the matter, said—

The port of Normanton had had very little attention paid to it, and this dredge is about the only favour granted to it since the port was opened. We see £15,000 or £16,000 for a bridge over that dirty little stream, Ross Creek, at Townsville; and it must be remembered that if the dredge is removed from Normanton the money that has been spent there already will be wasted.

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That hon. member had proved himself a true prophet, because the money so spent had been practically wasted. Then, the Hon. J. M. Macrossan, speaking with a knowledge of the district, which he had just been visiting, said—

The dredge was sent up there to dredge the whole of the bar in order to allow vessels of heavy draft to get inside the river, as once they get in they can go up the river to within twenty miles of Normanton. We are making the railway to Croydon, and propose to take it further; and the line must be carried on from Normanton to the Red Bluff, twenty miles down the river, to which point the river is navigable for large vessels. I say that under the circumstances it is imperative that the work of dredging the bar should be done if we are to derive any advantage at all from the large expenditure of money in the district.

It was promised by the Minister a short time ago, no doubt with every intention that the promise should be fulfilled—and they had no reason yet to doubt that it would be fulfilled, only his constituents were greatly exercised in their minds about it—that after six months' work at Cairns and two months' work at Cooktown, the "Platypus," being considered the best dredge for the purpose, would be sent to the Norman River. Since that promise was made at least five months had elapsed. The motion to which he referred was also supported by Messrs. O'Sullivan, Morehead, and Donaldson, and the Colonial Secretary, in reply, said it was not the intention of the Government that the hon. member for Carpentaria should be badly treated. The removal of the dredge was absolutely necessary for giving her an overhaul. The fact was admitted on all sides that when the dredge was removed it was on the distinct pledge that when necessary repairs had been completed she would be returned, and that pledge had not been kept. The people of the Gulf country had borne their position with equanimity and with a great deal of regard for the exigencies of the Treasury. They had not been clamorous, but had been thankful for what they had received. But considering the extent and richness of the territory, they had received very little in comparison with more favoured portions of the colony. He would point out that Normanton ranked fifth among the ports of the colony, and in view of the railway possibilities hinted at by the Secretary for Railways, which he hoped to see realised at no distant date, it was likely to be a necessity as a port. Since the dredge had been removed the North had undergone great changes. Croydon had been rapidly developed, and the Etheridge, which it was proposed shortly to assist with railway communication, had been pronounced by the Secretary for Mines as a field capable of supporting 50,000 persons. It had recently also been hinted that the Government, either from public funds or by means of private enterprise, intended to do something in the matter of the long-wished-for railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, and with all the present and promised development of that part of the colony, it was of paramount importance that the port or Normanton should be made as attractive as possible. He would, therefore, ask the Treasurer to give effect to the promise that the dredge "Platypus" would be sent back to dredge the Norman bar. He would remind the hon. gentleman that owing to the prevalence of the south-east winds the dredge could not work there all the year round, and in order that time might be saved, it was desirable that she should be sent there immediately at the conclusion of the south-east season.

Mr. PETRIE asked whether it was the intention of the Government, either this session or the next, to do anything in the direction of forming a harbour board for the port of Brisbane?

Mr. BROWNE would like to say a few words in corroboration of what had fallen from the hon. member for Carpentaria. The dredging of the Norman bar was a matter which affected the whole of the Gulf, especially the electorate of Croydon, which he had the honour of representing. As one instance of the disabilities under which the people laboured he might mention that he had been shown the charges on a consignment of case goods from London. From London to Thursday Island the freight amounted to £2 per ton, and from Thursday Island to Croydon, a distance of only 600 miles, the charge was £2 11s. 9d. per ton. Of course the latter charge arose through the cost of lighterage, etc., at the Norman bar. It was that bar which created a monopoly of the shipping at Normanton, one company only running boats there, and owning the whole of the lighterage facilities. Last June, at the request of the Croydon and Carpentaria people, he waited upon the Acting Treasurer with reference to the dredging of the bar, and the hon. gentleman told him that the "Platypus," which was then engaged at Cairns, would afterwards go to Cooktown, and then proceed to Normanton. Since then, however, fresh arrangements had been made, and the "Platypus" had been sent back to Cairns. The Treasurer had stated that she would not be disengaged for twelve months, which practically meant that it would be somewhere about eighteen months before she could go to Normanton, as a dredge could only work there at certain seasons of the year. He thought that a district with such a large population should receive some consideration in a matter of that kind.

The TREASURER was as anxious as the members of the district to see the harbour of Normanton made into the harbour it ought to be. They knew that the mouth of the river was one of the finest harbours that existed in Australia, the only difficulty being the bar at the entrance. He should like to see that entrance made navigable for vessels of 3,000 or 4,000 tons. He did not take much account of what was said seven years ago, as the crisis of 1893 and a great many other things had happened since then. At that time the dredges were all worked by money voted by Parliament out of the loan fund, but the system was now entirely altered. At present they were, as that vote showed, working upon trust funds; that was to say, each harbour found the funds for its own improvements. Some people imagined that some harbours—the harbour of Brisbane, for instance—were getting a large expenditure from the public purse; but that was quite a mistake. All the improvements in the Brisbane River had for some years past been paid for out of the money which had been collected from harbour dues on the traffic in that river. The amount spent last year on the Brisbane River was something over £23,000, and still their account on the 1st of this month was in credit. The aggregate amount to the credit of all the harbours in the colony on the 1st of this month was over £29,000. It had been the habit to treat those funds to some extent as a consolidated fund, and if a dredge was sent to work in any one port, and the harbour dues from that port were not sufficient to meet the whole expenditure, the balance was taken from the general fund, which was afterwards recouped by the collections from the harbour dues of the particular port where the work was executed. There were only three harbours in the colony which had overdrafts, and they amounted to only £2,400.

Mr. SIM: £157,000 was spent on Mackay alone from last year's Estimates.

The TREASURER: The hon. member was under some mistake; that amount certainly

could not have been spent from the trust fund, because Mackay at the present moment had a credit of £11,778. Since the legislation of 1892 every harbour had the matter to a large extent in its own hands. The Act provided that where no harbour board was formed the expenditure should be undertaken by the Treasurer, so that for the time being he was the harbour board; but whenever and wherever the people in any district thought they were not getting sufficient justice, their remedy was to form themselves into a harbour board, and then they would have the expending of their own money. He had been trying to induce the people connected with the various harbours to do that wherever practicable. He had been asked why they did not form Brisbane into a harbour board. Nothing would give him greater pleasure than to do that, but he did not find that the people of Brisbane were anxious for it. With regard to Normanton, he admitted that there were difficulties in dealing with that port. In the first place, a dredge could only work there at certain seasons of the year, and it was a most expensive thing shifting a dredge backwards and forwards between Cairns or Townsville and Normanton. The mere delay would represent a large sum. During the last five or six years the harbour dues at Normanton had been accumulating, and it had now to its credit £3,598, but that would not keep a dredge going very long. As for sending the "Hydra" to Normanton, he should never dream of that; she was not suitable for that harbour at all. They had very much better dredges now. The only way he could see to accomplish what was desired at Normanton was, when they had sufficient accumulated funds, to send up two dredges to do the work right away during the short season when they could work. It would be an enormous waste of money to send up a dredge for three or four months, and then have to send her round to the east coast again. The "Platypus" was not the best dredge for that port. Either the "Willunga" or the "Casuarina" would do the work more expeditiously, and in that case expedition was everything. The total expenditure on all harbours during last year was £42,349, but they required more this year on account of two additional dredges—the "Willunga" and the "Casuarina," which involved an expenditure of £5,585 for wages alone. The "Platypus" would not be available for twelve months for Normanton, and hon. members would have to exercise a little patience until the Government devised a scheme whereby they could send up one or two of the most powerful dredges and finish the cutting through the bar in one season. It was perfectly feasible, and he hoped to see it accomplished before long; but he could not promise when it would be begun.

Mr. SIM: The people he represented had been feeding on promises for a long time, and they were not getting fat on them. Any member, whose constituency had been for seven years relying on the promise made by a Minister, and who was then put off for an indefinite period, would press the claims of his constituents. He considered that he had made out a good case for a dredge being sent to Normanton. He did not grudge Cooktown and Cairns anything they got, but, if Normanton had received the same consideration that had been shown to ports of the same rank, he would not now be standing up like "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." Although the port of Normanton had only £3,598 standing to its credit, it was impossible for the harbour board of Normanton to collect the dues payable by shipping in the Norman River until something was done for the port like what had been done for the harbour of Brisbane ever since separation. A very large proportion of the

goods consumed in the North came up the Brisbane River, and dues were paid in Brisbane. If the harbour of Normanton was improved by the cutting through the bar those goods could be imported direct, instead of having to be transhipped into the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company steamers at Brisbane, and afterwards lightered up the Norman River. Then those dues which were now collected in Brisbane would be paid at Normanton. Queensland would not have become what it was if their policy had not been to help all those who needed help. The ports in the North were not in the position of Brisbane, which had been fostered on every hand. If the hon. gentleman would weigh the disadvantages they had to contend with, he would not think that in pressing the fulfilment of the promise made by a Minister seven years ago they were asking for anything which was unwarranted.

The TREASURER repeated that all the harbours in the colony had been treated alike since the passing of the Harbour Boards Act. Every harbour had had the money spent on it which was collected there, and nothing had been granted from the Treasury. If the hon. member could show him how the money which was now standing to the credit of the port of Normanton could be expended to advantage, he was prepared to do his best to assist him in carrying out his scheme.

Mr. SIM: He would not pursue the discussion any further, except to say that, relying upon the promise of a Minister made a few months ago, they had expected to see the "Platypus" at the mouth of the Norman River within eight months of the promise being given. No question of the harbour board had been raised at the time that promise had been made, and he was sorry that they would have to go back to the position in which they had been before—that, for the future, they would not be able to rely, as they had thought they could, on the promise made by a Minister.

Mr. GLASSEY asked if anything had been done with regard to restoring the wages of the men employed on the dredges to what they received in 1893? He thought the hon. gentleman said last year he would see what could be done to equalise the wages of those men, and make them something like the wages paid to the men on the "Lucinda" and the "Otter."

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: They received an increase last year.

Mr. GLASSEY: Still they were now receiving less than they received in 1893.

The TREASURER said the men were all perfectly satisfied.

Mr. GLASSEY: Because those men who were at work down the river did not go to see the Treasurer in his nice comfortable office about this matter the hon. gentleman thought they were perfectly happy and contented; but he happened to know that they were not. And they had no right to be satisfied until their old rate of wages had been restored to them, the same as to other members of the public service.

The TREASURER believed that the men working on the Government dredges were getting too much pay, because in every case in which a harbour board had been formed there had been a reduction in the wages paid to the men.

Mr. BATTERSBY asked for an explanation of the item "training walls, Brisbane River." He also wished to know why a harbour board had not been formed in Brisbane?

The TREASURER: It was intended to construct a stone training wall from the Hamilton in order to confine the current to its proper channel. He had already referred to the other matter.

Mr. STEWART could mention one fact that might perhaps have a bearing on the Treasurer's intimation that harbour boards were in the habit of lowering wages. In one case, a man who was pensioned off by the Government, being presumably too old to earn his money any longer, had been taken on by a harbour board, who were quite satisfied with his services.

Mr. McDONNELL had a letter from some of the employees on the dredges, and thought they had a good claim for consideration. Last year they got a certain amount restored—10s. a month and ration allowance; still they were short of what they got in 1893, though the wages of the men on the "Otter," the "Lucinda," and the "Miner" had been restored. He understood that the hours worked on the dredges were much longer than the hours worked on those boats, and that they worked extra time for which they received no pay. The conditions under which they worked were not too good. They had to take their meals, not at regular times, but whenever they could get them, and the sleeping accommodation was insufficient. He hoped that before the next Estimates were framed the Treasurer would see the advisability of restoring the wages of those men to what they were before the retrenchment.

The TREASURER thought it was rather mean of the men not to go to him direct instead of getting the hon. member for Fortitude Valley to represent their case. He was always accessible; why did they not come to him? He maintained that they were as well paid as any men doing similar work in any country at present.

Mr. CROSS said it was no use the Treasurer saying he was always accessible, when they all knew that he had been jubilating for seven months out of the year. But even if these men did interview him they would only be told that the proper course was to see the head of the department, and lay their case before him. Therefore the men had taken the proper means to ventilate their grievance. The Treasurer said these men were receiving more money than men similarly employed elsewhere, but still it did not follow that they were sufficiently paid. The hon. member could not contend that they should be content with 20s. per week because men employed by the harbour boards were receiving only that amount, when a fair living wage would be 40s.; but that was what the hon. member's logic would lead him to. There seemed to be a great distinction drawn between some Civil servants who were called "officers" and others who were called "servants," and he could not see the reason for it, particularly as the servants were of more importance to the community than a very large number of the officers were. He contended that the claims of these men deserved a great deal more attention at the hands of the Government than they received. They had taken the stand they were obliged to take, and had already interviewed the head of the department.

Mr. McMASTER: No doubt the reason why his colleague had brought forward this matter was that a very large number of these men lived in the Valley, and he had been approached by them when they were off duty on Saturdays. He was not surprised that they had not been able to see the Treasurer, who, as a rule, was not to be found at the Treasury on Saturdays. There was no doubt that these men had as much right to have their salaries restored as any other Civil servants, especially as they were paid out of the harbour dues and not out of the general revenue. A promise was given last year that something should be done for them, and they did receive a slight increase, but still they were not placed upon the same footing that they were on before 1893, and it was only right that they should receive a small increase this year also. They

must make themselves heard somewhere, and if they could not do it through the Treasurer they must do it through their representative in Parliament. If they put their case straightforwardly before the Treasurer he was sure it would be considered.

Mr. TURLEY was very glad it had been pointed out that it was impossible for these men to see the Treasurer; but even if it were possible, did any hon. member suppose that they could do so and keep their job for twenty-four hours? They were not even allowed to go to the head of the department in the first instance, but were supposed to represent their grievances to the man immediately over them.

The TREASURER: There is always an appeal.

Mr. TURLEY: After they had communicated with that gentleman they might get to the gentleman at the head of the department, but the idea of their coming to the Treasurer was nonsense. The hon. gentleman had said that those men were as well paid as any other men employed in the same class of work. The hon. gentleman could not have read the Estimates, or he would see that firemen and coxswains were paid at the rate of £10 a month, and that men employed on other Government boats were paid £8 a month and 2s. a day "tucker" money, which brought their payment to £11 a month. The hon. gentleman had said that the first thing harbour boards did was to reduce wages, but that was not confined to the harbour boards. He knew the case of one man employed in the dredge department, who had been seventeen or eighteen years in the Government service, and was second mate, taking charge in the absence of the first mate of the vessel. The mate had been put into the new dredge from Melbourne as master, and though the other man naturally expected that he would be appointed to the position he had often filled temporarily, the little move adopted was to ask several men if they would accept the position at £160 a year, though the man previously in the position got £188. There was a roundabout underground-engineering attempt to reduce the wages by £28 a year, but to the credit of the men they all refused to accept the position at the reduced salary, though it would have been promotion for all who were asked. The result was that a man who had been employed on one of the dredges in the North, and who had not been in the service more than a third of the time of the man he had referred to, was brought down and put in charge of the vessel at the reduced wages. Owing to an accident occurring on the dredge he had left he had since been sent back to it, and it was possible that the matter would be righted now. He pointed that out as an attempt made in the Government service to reduce wages to a much greater extent than any of the harbour boards had attempted, and it was a mean way of doing it.

The TREASURER: If the men the hon. member had referred to had not direct access to the Treasurer the hon. member himself had, and if he was aware that any injustice was being perpetrated, and he was really a friend of the men, one would think that it would have been his duty to represent it to the Treasurer and ask him to look into it. The hon. member did not do that, but he rubbed his hands and said "No, this will be a fine thing to bring forward in the House when the Estimates are on." After all, the grave injustice to which the hon. member had referred was only carrying out an excellent rule applied in every department—that a man promoted should take the lowest salary of the class to which he was promoted, and should be eligible for an increase of salary as the years went on. If those men had been offered a fair salary and had refused to accept it because they

were too proud to take less than their predecessor got, it served them jolly well right if they did not get the appointment, and the man who did take it with a view to promotion did the right thing. If that was the kind of thing they were going to have established in connection with the dredges—if there was to be a union to refuse wages unless they were such as the Trades Hall permitted them to accept—the sooner they got rid of those men the better. With regard to men who did that kind of thing, it might be his duty to inquire as to whether they were not getting too much wages, with the view of getting them reduced. There were plenty of good men in the country who would be glad to get the good wages the department offered.

Mr. GLASSEY: Surely you don't object to a union!

The TREASURER: Not to a proper union; but there are unions and unions. The hon. member himself had shown that a number of the men had banded together to refuse to take the wage offered, and that was very discreditable to the men, because in every other department the same system was pursued.

Mr. TURLEY: The right hon. gentleman misrepresented the facts when he said it was the usual custom when a man got promotion to give him the lowest rate of wages paid to that class. Was there one mate on any of the dredges who got only £160 a year? The wages paid were shown on the Estimates-in-Chief, from which it would be seen that the mate of the "Hydra," as the senior mate, got £198, and all the others £188. That was the lowest amount paid to that class of labour in the dredges. There was no following of the usual custom in the matter. It was a deliberate attempt to reduce wages in that class of employment by £28 a year. He did not believe the men had banded themselves together for the purpose of keeping up wages, and if they did they had a perfect right to do so if they thought fit. The right hon. gentleman would probably prefer to see a lot of crawlers prepared to accept anything offered to them. As to the right hon. gentleman's threats, he took no notice of them, and his reference to the Trades Hall was bunkum; and as far as he himself was concerned if he had reason to believe injustice was being done to any man in the public service he should not ask the right hon. gentleman whether he should bring it before the Chamber or not.

Question put and passed.

GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK.

The TREASURER moved that £8,889 be granted, from trust and special funds, for the Government Savings Bank. He might mention, as illustrating a previous remark, that when the chief clerk and examiner, Mr. Norris, retired, it gave an opportunity of promoting nearly all the junior officers. The officer who last year got £400 now got £375; the officer who got £275 now got £260; and so on all the way down. They were all perfectly satisfied, and they were all getting more salary than they got before.

Mr. STEWART wanted some explanation with regard to a sum which appeared in the receipts of the Government Savings Bank. The sum credited to the savings bank as having been received from interest accrued on current account in the Queensland National Bank was set down in the report at £22,515. He wanted to know how that amount was made up—whether it was correct or not? From the annual report of the savings bank he found that the amount at current account on 30th June, 1897, was £892,112. The hon. gentleman knew that the interest on current account was 1 per cent. up to £100,000. He found from the Auditor-General's report that the sum paid on current

account was £7,128, instead of £22,515, as shown by the bank's report. The savings bank was made to appear as though it was self-supporting, whereas it dipped to the extent of about £15,000 into the pocket of the State. The statement in the savings bank report therefore appeared to be a deliberate misrepresentation. He wished further to say that the sum left at current account with the Queensland National Bank was a great deal too much. Sometimes it was over £1,000,000, and the Government might well convert £500,000 into stock and sell it. It would produce at least 3 per cent., and the balance would be quite sufficient to carry on the savings bank. The Government would have occasion to go to the London money market at no distant date, but there they had an opportunity of borrowing in the colony. He did not think misstatements of the kind he mentioned should be allowed to go unchallenged.

The TREASURER confessed that he was not quite able to grasp the hon. member's question. At the same time, before he made charges of wilful misrepresentation, he ought to be sure of his facts. He (the Treasurer) had explained often before that, as far as all trust funds were concerned, revenue credited them with a certain amount of interest, varying according to the nature of the account. They were not credited with the actual amount of money which the bank paid as interest, which was less than 1 per cent. at the present moment. He had pointed out frequently that the savings bank trust account was the pet account of the colony; that the revenue paid it a much larger rate of interest than any other account. It now received 2½ per cent., and had only lately been reduced. On the principle which he had explained, the savings bank was self-supporting, and making a profit, although the Government had no desire to make a profit. The profit did not belong to the depositors but to the State. The savings bank was in this splendid position, which he wished it had always been in—that the depositors had the fullest security it was possible to give them. They had the full security of the State—the security of the current balance of the consolidated revenue, the security of the Treasury coin reserve, and a large amount of Government debentures of various denominations, which were all available, and which could not be sold except in case of emergency, and then only on the certificate of the Under Secretary to the Treasury and the Auditor-General. He had arranged that £1,000,000 of those securities, at least, were always to be held in London, so that in case of need the utmost extremity that any depositor would be put to in the way of inconvenience would be waiting about six weeks until those debentures were sold and the money came out here. What more they could do for the bank he did not know. He could not see what object anyone could have in representing it to be earning more than it did. The fact was that if the London securities were sold they would return a large profit, because they were all 4 per cent. securities, and the current price was £114, so that they would return a profit of £14 for every £100.

Mr. STEWART: The right hon. gentleman had not told him a single thing he did not know before. In the annual report of the manager of the savings bank there was the statement, "credited by the Queensland National Bank on current account, 1st July, 1896, to 30th June, 1897, £22,515," which meant that the Queensland National Bank had paid that sum as interest upon the current account.

The TREASURER: No, it does not mean that.

Mr. STEWART: If the right hon. gentleman made his account up fair and square, as he had no doubt he wished to do, he would put it in this fashion—interest on debentures so much, interest

on current account so much, and subsidised by the Treasury so much. Then people would understand the exact position of the bank, but anyone taking up the account as now presented, and reading it superficially, would come to the conclusion that the bank was paying its way without any assistance from the Treasury. The right hon. gentleman had said that certain debentures if sold in London would fetch £114, and he (Mr. Stewart) did not see why £500,000 should not be taken from that current account and sold as stock.

The TREASURER: If the hon. member read the Savings Bank Act he would find that the trustees had no option in the matter; that they were not allowed to lend saving bank funds on any mortgage or other security than Government security. They were obliged to have at all times two-thirds of their money in those securities.

Mr. STEWART: I know all that.

The TREASURER: The hon. member knew a great deal more about the matter than he did himself.

Mr. DUNSFORD thought that in face of the fact that the savings bank was growing to such huge proportions, it was very strange that there should be a decrease in the cost of working the department. The number of depositors last year was 63,310, an increase of over 5,000 on the number for last year, and the total amount of deposits was £2,568,477, or an increase of £239,096 on last year. He would suggest that the report of the department should contain something more than a statement of the number of depositors and the amount deposited.

The TREASURER: Up to within a very short time ago the whole of the statistics of the department were given in the report every year, including the transactions of every office, but it was not considered to be of any advantage, and the practice was discontinued. If, however, any considerable number of members desired to have that information, there would be no objection to supplying it. It was only a matter of expense. With regard to reductions, he had already explained that the reduction of £212 was in consequence of promotions, and that £31 had been added to the salaries of the junior officers. The branches of the bank were principally worked by post office officials, and the amount the Post Office required for their men this year was £2,502, which was a slight increase on last year. He might state that the adoption of the new system dispensing with the sending of receipts by the department had resulted in an immense saving in labour.

Question put and passed.

MEAT AND DAIRY PRODUCE ENCOURAGEMENT ACT.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £1,900 be granted for salaries and contingencies under the Meat and Dairy Produce Act. Last year they paid in bonuses on butter £602 16s. 5d., and for the first four months of this year the bonuses amounted to over £1,400.

Mr. GLASSEY: What is the total amount to credit of the fund?

The HOME SECRETARY: About £40,000.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The regulations framed last year stated that the bonus on butter would be 1d. per lb. and ½d. per lb. on cheese, and that, if any part of the £1,000 voted remained unspent after paying those bonuses, it would be divided amongst the exporters. The consequence was that there were still nearly £400 available for distribution. The hon. gentleman informed them that up to the present £1,400 had been spent, and very probably they would require another £800 or £900 before the end of the year.

The HOME SECRETARY: Another £500. The £1,400 includes up to the end of November.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Parliament had expressed itself in favour of a bonus, but the exporters did not know what the exact amount of the bonus would be. They knew that they would get 1d. per lb. for butter, but they did not know how much more it might be, and the manufacturers would not give as high a price for the cream as they would give if they knew the exact amount of the bonus. It would be far better for both producer and exporter to know the exact amount of the bonus. On the figures the hon. gentleman had given, the exporter had already received a bonus equal to about 1½d. per lb. as compared with last year. Now that the department had approximately arrived at the amount likely to be exported, they should definitely fix the bonus for the year. If the amount voted proved insufficient, the deficiency could be made up the following year.

The HOME SECRETARY: The regulations had been largely copied from the Victorian regulations, where the bonus was a shifting quantity. There was a balance of £397 3s. 7d. left over after paying the bonuses fixed last year, and that amount would be divided, according to the arrangement Parliament had made, amongst those who had got the 1d. per lb. for butter and ¾d. per lb. for cheese. Of course, they could not give more than £1,000, and 1d. per lb. for butter and ¾d. per lb. for cheese was the minimum. He said that £1,400 had been spent during the first four months of this year, but it was paid in January and February and October and November of this year. They had exported 157 tons 11 cwt. 76 lb. of butter and cheese—or 352,988 lb.—and the bonus amounted to £1,470 15s. 8d., so that they would get no more than the 1d. per lb. on butter and ¾d. per lb. on cheese. Although they were only asking for £1,000, the £470 15s. 8d. would require to be voted on the Supplementary Estimates next year, as well as any further amount that might have to be paid. He could do no more than give particulars as to the transaction, but if there was any discussion of the principles, he would convey to the Secretary for Agriculture the desire of the Committee.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Those engaged in the industry ought to know that they would get 1d. per lb. on butter, and then the producers would know what the factories would pay for the raw article. The exporters would receive the £397 3s. 7d. which was to be distributed from the vote for last year, and the producers would get none of it, as they had been paid in full already for their product. The bonus worked altogether in favour of the factories last year, and not at all in favour of the producers.

The HOME SECRETARY: Indirectly in favour of the producers.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Only to the extent of 1d. per lb. It would be better to fix the bonus at the commencement of the year, instead of leaving it to the discretion of the Minister.

The Hon. G. THORN: If the hon. member for Lockyer imagined that the producers would get anything out of the export bonus he was greatly mistaken. The producers would always be in the hands of the factories until they went in for an extensive system of co-operation in butter-making. What was the use of creameries when the butter factories got the bonus? He wished to know whether all the Torres Straits boats were fitted with refrigerating machinery for the carriage of agricultural produce to the old world? The Treasurer had promised that he would see they were so fitted. It would be a nice state of things to have a glut of butter and not be able to send it away. The Treasurer should make it a *sine qua non* in entering into

any contract with a shipping company that the boats should be fitted with refrigerating machinery.

The HOME SECRETARY: Nothing had given the Treasurer and the Secretary for Agriculture more anxiety than their dealings with the British-India Company in this matter. It had formed the subject of a conference, and it was not yet settled. The British-India Company would not sign the contract. They declined to have this duplicate machinery; they said it would not pay. They would guarantee insurance at the lowest rate; but would not undertake to fit up their boats as no other boats were fitted up. The Secretary for Agriculture, seeing that our butter was sent to Sydney, and injured by being sent there, put himself into communication with the British-India Company with the view of either knocking off the contract or coming to the promised terms. He did not know the result; he knew that the matter was not settled; but he thought that before long the result would be that, instead of this produce being sent to Sydney, other arrangements of a much more satisfactory nature would be concluded shortly. The Secretary for Agriculture had never lost sight of the fact that the only good feature in regard to this mail contract was the facility it was to give for carrying our agricultural produce to England without sending it to Sydney. The Government knew a large number of other companies that would be prepared to do what was required, and negotiations were pending with the object of making arrangements for regular shipments of agricultural produce to England.

Mr. KEOGH: The assistance given by the Government to the dairying industry by way of a bonus was very paltry indeed. The amount paid last year was £602 16s. 5d., and they contemplated spending the same amount next year. Surely the industry was worthy of more encouragement than that! Another thing, it was not the actual producers that got the bonus, but the parties who owned the butter factories; and he agreed with the hon. member for Fassfern that the farmers should establish co-operative butter factories of their own. He trusted that a larger sum than was put down here would be placed on the Supplementary Estimates, in order that more people might benefit by this bonus. He was positive that it would tend to the advancement of the farming districts if a larger amount were placed on the Estimates to stimulate this industry.

Mr. BATTERSBY: 1d. per lb. had been paid upon the butter exported, but another ¾d. had been promised, partly. They understood that 1d. should be paid, but if the total amount paid did not come to £1,000, then the balance should be distributed amongst them. Up to the present some £600 had been distributed, so that the balance would be sufficient to pay another ¾d. per lb. So far as his vote would go he was prepared to support an increase in the bonus.

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that this Committee cannot increase a vote; it can only reduce it.

Mr. BATTERSBY: He did not wish to decrease the vote, but he represented a farming constituency, and if the £1,000 that was voted would pay 1½d. per lb., that amount of bonus should be paid in order to encourage the export of this article.

Mr. KERR: They had been given to understand that the British-India Company had undertaken to provide facilities for the cold storage of butter and cheese, but had not kept up to their contract. If that were the case, he should like

to know if the subsidy were being paid, because it should not be if the company was not fulfilling its agreement.

Mr. HARDACRE called the attention of the Government to the large amount standing to the credit of the meat and dairy fund in the Central district—some £20,000. He thought the Government ought to bring in a Bill to amend the Act, so that some of these funds might be used for auxiliary purposes, such as the erection of meat extract works or boiling-down works, if there were no demand for them in regard to the erection of meatworks proper. The Act did not permit that now.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Yes, it does.

Mr. HARDACRE: None of the funds belonging to the Central district had been applied for under the conditions of the Act, although the people of Clermont had asked the Secretary for Agriculture if some of the money might not be used for the purposes of extract works. The other day the Premier had told a deputation that something would be done in the way of subsidising the coastal steamers for carrying meat to the southern colonies. When in Victoria last year he had been shown the books of a butcher in Melbourne who paid as much as £9 10s. a head for cattle, and found that even at that price he could send meat to Western Australia at a fair profit. If that was so, they should be able to send it from Queensland direct to Western Australia at a very good profit indeed, and it struck him that some of the fund to which he had referred might be used for that purpose.

The HOME SECRETARY did not think they could use any of the fund for that purpose. If the project was taken up the Government would find the means to subsidise the steamers. The fund was in the nature of a loan from the contributories to it for purposes specified in the Act, and it could not be used for other purposes without the consent of the contributories. No application made to the Minister from the Central district had been refused. With regard to the British-India Company, he could say no more than that so long as the company performed their contract they got the subsidy, but he did not think they were receiving subsidy at present. The time came when the Government had to say: "Are you or are you not going to make the arrangements for this contract," and the Government would do their best—British-India Company or no British-India Company—to see that those products were sent direct without the necessity for transshipment. He could say that if the colony could put forward four or five times the quantity of those products put forward that year the British-India Company, forced by competition, would be prepared to take all that stuff at current rates, and insure it that it might besure to reach the London market. The Government were anxiously considering the matter.

Mr. KEOGH drew the attention of the department to Mr. Mahon's report as to the miserable way in which cream was being carried on the railways in unsuitable cars with a temperature up to 100, along with dead game and other objectionable things. The cans were also left exposed to the sun at the stations, and the system adopted detracted considerably from the success of the industry. There was no use in trying to make good butter until those things were rectified.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They have been rectified.

Mr. KEOGH: They had not been rectified at Lowood yet, for the cans were left there on the pavement without protection from the sun, until they could be taken away by the down train. He drew the attention of the department to the

report of the expert on the matter, and he trusted there would be no more of those complaints.

Question put and passed.

LIVE STOCK AND MEAT EXPORT ACT.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £3,080 be granted, from trust and special funds, for the administration of the Live Stock and Meat Export Act of 1895. This was practically the first year the item had appeared in a complete form, and the object was to see that the meat exported from the country was in proper order.

Question put and passed.

DISEASES IN STOCK ACT.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £6,715 be granted, from trust and special funds, for the administration of the Diseases in Stock Act of 1896. The Act having been only passed last session, the items were all new. The supplementary vote showed the expense of administering the Act—which he might call the Tick Act—last year, and the present vote showed the contemplated expenditure for the current year.

Mr. KERR: When the quarantine line was laid down contracts were entered into with certain persons for the erection of dips at Alpha, Jericho, and other places. After the contracts had been let the department made some other arrangement, and instructions were issued to the inspector of works to stop the work for a time. That was done, but the dips were subsequently completed by them. The contractor at Jericho, with his three men, were delayed for five weeks, and had to lose something like £30 in wages, through the action of the inspector in not supplying him with timber and ironwork that had to be supplied by the department from Rockhampton. The man put in his claim for the money, but the inspector reported against it. He brought the matter under the notice of the Secretary for Agriculture, who promised to look into it and send him an answer. That answer had never been sent. Another contractor, at Alpha, working under exactly the same conditions, put in his claim and got paid. It was certainly unfair to treat one contractor in one way and another in another.

The HOME SECRETARY: The Alpha case came before him, and as he had come to the conclusion, after many years' experience, that the cheapest way in matters of that kind was to come to a compromise, he settled it to the satisfaction of the contractor. Probably the Secretary for Agriculture did not see the other case in the same light. In any case if the man did not get justice he could go to law, and probably the department would be mulcted in expenses. But he had no doubt that if the man had any equitable case his hon. colleague would come to some arrangement with him.

Mr. KERR: A working man could not afford to go to law against the Government, and he had no doubt that if a reasonable sum had been offered in the Jericho case it would have been accepted. But both the contractor and himself had been treated with contempt by the Secretary for Agriculture. There was another matter that wanted clearing up. He understood that the district inspector at Rockhampton had got the sack. Some time ago regulations were issued to the inspectors which acted very unfairly, and caused a lot of trouble to the carriers. The inspectors misunderstood the instructions sent to them, and when the carriers came down with their wool they were blocked, and not allowed to go out again. He would like to know who was responsible for the delay and trouble and expense those men were put to? Last year he brought a case under the notice of the Minister in which a carrier suffered severe loss, and no compensation

was granted to him. He certainly thought the Government should recompense those people. There was another matter he would draw attention to—that was the unfair advantage given to the station owned by Mr. Niall. The quarantine boundary was drawn by the board of the district, and that gentleman was a member of it. There were runs adjoining his run which were miles within the clean country, and yet they were quarantined, while Mr. Niall was allowed an unfair privilege. A deputation of the Central members waited on the board of stock commissioners and pointed that out. They allowed that it was an anomaly; that there had been favouritism; but said that there was no remedy for it. It was actions such as that which caused great discontent among the station-owners whose cattle were quarantined.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quarantine, whether enforced on land or on sea, was always a most troublesome matter. On one occasion he found himself in Cooktown, and took passage to Brisbane in a steamer conveying 100 Chinamen. Although he was very anxious to get back to Brisbane, he was taken on to Sydney and quarantined. Actions such as that were done for the good of the community in general. The few had to suffer for the sake of the many. He knew that the stockowners of the Central district complained bitterly of the quarantine, and were it not so late in the session he would take advantage of the opportunity to do away with a lot of romance which surrounded the administration of the Stock Department in that district. It would be news to Mr. Niall that he fixed the boundary line. His complaint was that an abominable Government fixed it, and that he did not. The first information that the department got at that time was in reference to the Fort Constantine cattle, which came right down to Lake's Creek. At that time Mr. Bruce was in the district advising the Government, and New South Wales let it be plainly known what they intended to do. They did all they could do under the then existing law to get those cattle put into the pots, and if that had been done there would have been no ticks at all at Lake's Creek, or on the north side of the river; but the cattle were allowed to run at Lake's Creek for a long time, with the result that they distributed the ticks over the north side. When the department found that the ticks were there, and that they were threatened by New South Wales, at the suggestion of the Central squatters they made the 21st parallel the quarantine line, and with that they were perfectly satisfied so long as he made the condition that clean cattle from the clean zone could cross the railway at certain spots where there was no danger, and after being dipped if necessary. There was no favouritism granted under that condition to Mr. Niall or anybody else. The man who came afterwards was not ready to send his carts through at the time, but he never got any refusal from him (the Home Secretary). New South Wales then said it was no use going on any longer in that way, and a conference was held, at which he did the very best he could to put the practice that was in vogue of letting clean cattle through from the clean zone before the representatives of the other colonies. He pointed out that it could result in no injury to anybody, but they did not see the matter in that light. They said they had to look after their own cattle, and wanted some assurance that this colony would make the line south of that a permanent quarantine line, at least up to the 1st of May last. That proposal was made on the advice of experts, the Queensland expert included, and he had, *volens volens*, to agree to the arrangement. After that conference the cattle commissioners, who were appointed under an Act which was practically obsolete and which was not intended

to deal with such a contingency, afforded advice to the department with regard to the carrying out of that quarantine line, and they accepted the 24th parallel as the line because it carried with it a get-out. Afterwards, when they found that it was made absolute as a quarantine line, and that their stock were included, they began to complain. On the 1st of May last that arrangement was at an end, and the Minister in charge of the department went down south to see if he could make a new arrangement which would let those people into the Southern portion of the colony, but he was not successful. The other colonies sent up their experts. Mr. Taverner, of New South Wales, came at his invitation—as the Hon. A. J. Thynne was away, and he was acting for him—and he assured him that they could not go any further in the matter, as, if they relaxed the conditions, pressure would be brought to bear upon New South Wales by Victoria. There had, he might say, been more pressure on the part of people in New South Wales to induce them to enforce the quarantine than any person would imagine. Of course, the Minister could say, "Gentlemen, mind your own business"; but directly he did that a proclamation would be issued preventing any Queensland cattle crossing the border. That would be no benefit to the Northern people; on the contrary, it would injure everybody. He had had five or six conferences with squatters on the subject; his colleague had had dozens, and they had done the very best they could in the matter. The correspondence on the subject of fixing the quarantine boundary would show that every Minister who had had anything to do with the department had done his level best to give facilities to the people of the Central zone to get their cattle out of that zone. It also showed the intense anxiety of the Central people to have forced against the North a quarantine that they now objected to being forced against themselves.

Mr. HARDACRE: This is the first time I heard of it.

The HOME SECRETARY: What nonsense! The Fort Constantine cattle came through to Barcaldine in November, 1895, having picked up ticks at Kynuna. The Brighton Downs cattle came through the following month. Both those runs had been, and still were, free from ticks. Instead of killing them immediately at Lake's Creek, the manager had kept them in the Meadow Flats paddock, and that had caused the ticks to spread through the Rockhampton district. The trucks in which the cattle were taken down to Rockhampton had been disinfected and steamed, and the cattle-owners in the district had been asked to nominate commissioners under the Diseased Animals Act—since repealed—which they had done. A number of commissioners had also been nominated by the owners of cattle in the Mitchell district. Both bodies of commissioners had taken steps to prevent cattle crossing to the south of the Central Railway line, in their own interests. Those facts would be found in the papers marked "1." From the second batch it would be seen that the Rockhampton commissioners objected to stock being travelled by rail, but no protest was made as to quarantining country north of the railway. The third batch assumed that the Central line as the quarantine line was still necessary. The fourth batch showed a change of opinion, as it had been found that some of the Western runs were prevented from taking stock south, and Mr. Niall wrote that the cattle about Barcaldine and Longreach were as clean as any in Queensland, and wished to have the quarantine line moved back to the 22nd parallel. The fifth batch of papers showed that Messrs. Niall and Archer resigned because the Home Secretary permitted Alpha cattle to be taken south, as they had always

pastured south of the line. In his action the Home Secretary had been guided by what those gentlemen had previously been contending for.

Mr. HARDACRE: Who wrote those letters?

The HOME SECRETARY: The cattle commissioners. When the Fort Constantine cattle came to Barcaldine, the department had no knowledge of the presence of ticks in the Central district, although some communication had reached Winton in the absence of the inspector of some deaths having taken place in the mob. The question the department had to decide was whether it was better to keep the Fort Constantine and Brighton Downs cattle at Barcaldine, infecting the whole district, or take them down in trucks—which could be disinfected—to Lake's Creek to be slaughtered, and thus turned to some profit. The commissioners who had been appointed had acted with the Government in the matter, and they had displayed great anxiety in penning off the Central district from the North, because the North was unclean. They had done all they possibly could to get the quarantine line fixed at the 21st parallel, and the line had been fixed at the 24th parallel, because the same reasons obliged them to fix that line which operated in connection with fixing the 21st parallel. They had had two zones—the one to the north of the 21st parallel penning off the infested country, and the one to the north of the 24th parallel cutting off the suspected country—country through which tick-infested cattle had passed. It was difficult to say whether cattle could be removed from that suspected area without there being a risk of their carrying ticks with them. Inspection of the cattle was no use. There was no doubt that that zone was surrounded by tick-infested country. It was a doubtful question whether cattle could be removed to the south without risk of carrying the ticks, although the Government of New South Wales had no doubt on the question. Mr. Smith, the Secretary for Agriculture in New South Wales, had told him of the persistency with which the hon. member for Leichhardt had argued the case of the Central district cattle-owners, but all his arguments had been of no avail in securing any concessions. He (Sir H. Tozer) had also done his best, and so had the present Minister, but New South Wales was firm on this point. However, it was a Rockhampton man who had introduced the ticks into that district, because Mr. Patterson, the manager of Lake's Creek works, bought both the Fort Constantine and the Brighton Downs cattle on the runs.

Mr. KERR: There were no ticks on them when he bought them.

The HOME SECRETARY: There were no ticks on Fort Constantine, but they were picked up when travelling to the coast. There was no use the Central men screeching and howling. The Northern men had never complained, although their herds had been decimated, while so far the Central men had only suffered from being unable to get rid of their annual cast. Those who were screeching were asking the Government to do impossibilities. The Secretary for Agriculture was very anxious about the matter, and in a month or two there would be a conference of Premiers. He hoped the matter would be prominently brought before them to see if there was a possibility of their agreeing to give Queensland a lone hand, trusting to this colony to protect New South Wales and Victoria as it would protect its own Southern herds. Then the Minister would have to send the best experts to see if those cattle could travel without any possibility of injury. If that arrangement was not come to, there was an open market for those cattle at Townsville, Bowen, Mackay, Gladstone, and Rockhampton; and if that was not enough, arrangements could

be made for sending chilled meat to the southern markets, and the Government would assist all they could in finding a remedy for the trouble of which the Central people complained. Meanwhile, not one thought of Southern interests ever entered his mind when he was Minister in charge of the Stock Department, and he knew that the present Minister had the interests of those men as much at heart as if he had resided all his life in the Central district.

Mr. KERR: The Home Secretary's own words proved that Mr. Niall had a good deal to do with the quarantine line.

Mr. SIM: The Home Secretary just now said the North was absolutely infested with ticks, and compared it rather unfavourably with the Central district; but there was a stretch of country in the north-west portion of the colony that always had been and always would be free from ticks, because ticks could not exist there. That part of the country had been quarantined, yet the people there had never raised their voice against it, except through him in that Chamber; and the quarantine was a greater hardship in their case than in the case of stockowners in the Central districts, because they had no means of getting their cattle to meatworks. It was only after the ticks began to threaten the Central district that this Chamber began to deal with them, and that was long after most of the herds in the North had been ruined. He would be glad if Central members would recognise that fact. It was probable—so he had been informed—that within a few weeks certain gentlemen would be sent from New South Wales to visit certain parts of Queensland alleged to be free from ticks, and find out whether there was a practicable route by which they could be travelled to the southern colonies, and he hoped those gentlemen would be sent to the part of the country to which he had referred, where there were practicable routes and no ticks. He hoped that the clean districts which had not howled and screeched in the past would soon be able to get some relief.

The HOME SECRETARY: No arrangement had been made, but it had been suggested by the department that when the Premiers met in conference they should be asked to send experts to see if they could find an outlet for the Central cattle, and more particularly to find an outlet for those North-western cattle—amongst which there never could be any question of ticks—and enable them to get to the Southern markets. We wanted to work in a federal spirit, and make some arrangement by which the cast of Central cattle could be taken to the Southern markets without any harm to the South of Queensland or to the southern colonies; and he felt sure that the other colonies would join in such a proposal.

Mr. HARDACRE was astonished that the hon. member for Carpentaria should have made such an uncalled-for attack upon the Central district. The Central members had been howling and screeching, as he called it, against the very injustice that his own district was suffering from, and wished to have exactly what he claimed for himself. The hon. member had never heard a single syllable from Central members against giving the people in his district the same concessions that they were asking for themselves. The hon. member might remember that he was a member of a deputation on one occasion which brought up the very question of these stations in the north-west, and a letter was read to him from the stock board in New South Wales refusing the request of the Stock Department in Queensland that these stations should be released from the quarantine. He did not wish to take up much time, because he had no hope of moving the Government. But the Home Secretary had come down prepared for an attack, and had

made a speech which was not required. The Central people had never as a body asked for the absolute prohibition of Northern cattle, and it was not until the South was threatened that such an outcry was made about the Central district, which was made a buffer for the South. He wished to point out that there were areas in the Central districts in which ticks had never been suspected, and which were as remote from any infested country as Bundaberg was, and yet the latter was not quarantined. Of course they did not object to tick-infested cattle being locked up, but the Home Secretary had said that the clean cattle in the Central district were surrounded by tick-infested cattle—from Hughenden and Longreach down to Lake's Creek. That was an utter misrepresentation, and the hon. gentleman had no right to make such a statement, because it was just such statements as that which made the people of New South Wales opposed to doing justice to the Central district. For a long time there had been no ticks from Boolburra, sixty miles from Rockhampton, out to Mount Cornish, a distance of about 400 miles; the country had been admitted to be clean, and therefore such a statement should not be made. He did not think the Government had done what they ought with the New South Wales Government. Victoria need not be considered, because no stock travelled there in consequence of the stock tax, and it was political considerations in New South Wales which had led the Government of that colony to do an injustice to Queensland. If the Queensland Government had said they intended to see justice done to this colony they would have left the New South Wales Government to fight this question within her own borders, when the cattle-owners who wanted the quarantine would have had to fight the consumers who did not want it.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The first thing they had was the mange in horses, then the rabbit plague, and now the tick plague, and it was all to keep down the pastoral rents. He did not know what the plague would be next year, but there would be a new one. He believed the squatters should be treated fairly, but it was the duty of the Government to get a fair rent for the land they occupied. The hon. member for Leichhardt had said that a great injustice had been done to the Central district, but he failed to see it. The fact was that the politics of some hon. members were parochial, but his constituency was only the second consideration with him; the colony was the first. When the southern people said that they would not receive cattle from beyond a certain boundary the Government were not to blame in the matter.

Mr. CROSS: The hon. member for Moreton did not see that any injustice was done to the Central district; but it was admitted by the Chief Inspector of Stock and by the Home Secretary. When the hon. member for Leichhardt pointed to the fact that there were hundreds of miles of country in the Central district and 800,000 head of cattle that had never been tick infested, it was clear that injustice was being done. If the hon. member was a cattle-owner in the district he would soon feel that injustice. He admitted that the Government must take into consideration the interests of the whole colony, but something should be done to relieve the districts that were not infested. A deputation to the Premier recently on the subject, of which he was a member, asked for a reduction of rent, compensation from the consolidated revenue, and an increase in tenure for the lessees. He took that opportunity of stating, that though he was one of deputation he set his face against that kind of thing, and he agreed with the Premier in declin-

ing to accede to those requests. The Premier also pointed out that the matter might be dealt with on the principle embodied in the Sheep Act, under which a whole flock might be destroyed if suffering from disease, and all other sheepowners were compelled to subscribe to a fund to meet two-thirds of the loss thus incurred. It would be a gross injustice to pay compensation in the present case from the consolidated revenue, as the public in the Central and Southern districts were not affected, but the Southern cattle-owners, being given a monopoly by the quarantine, might with justice be asked to contribute to a fund for the purpose. The Premier also mentioned that two shipping companies were prepared to accept a small subsidy, and one company thought it would not be wanted—at all events not after the small preliminary expense of fitting up the vessels had been met.

Mr. STEWART: There seemed to be a sort of conspiracy between the South and the North as against the Centre. The Home Secretary had been trying to prove that the Central men were responsible for the prevalence of ticks, and the hon. member for Carpentaria had accused them of being selfish. If the Northern people had been as little selfish as the Central people the tick plague would have been dealt with much sooner than it was. There were ticks in North Queensland for years before they were heard of elsewhere, but the cattle-owners there did not howl and screech, as the hon. member described it, because they did not want people to know the ticks were there, as if that knowledge got abroad the value of their stations would be reduced. With regard to the Home Secretary's historical dissertation, it was well known that the Government received notice when certain tick-infested cattle were being trucked from Barcardine, and that they were requested to stop the trucking of them. But they refused, and the result was that those cattle were railed all over the Central division, and that ticks were dropped at Boolburra.

With regard to the blame sought to be cast upon the manager at Lake's Creek, he admitted that the cattle in question ought to have been slaughtered at once, but the initial mistake was in allowing them to leave Barcardine. But if the Northern men had not been silent and had done their duty to themselves and to the colony, those cattle would never have been allowed to leave Brighton Downs, and the Central division would never have been afflicted. And more, if the Central people had been as selfish as the Northern people, the whole of the South would have been covered with ticks by this time.

What the Central men grumbled at was not at the quarantine line, but at the fact that clean cattle had not been allowed to travel over clean country, and that the Government had never taken the pains to ascertain whether those cattle were clean or not. They had asked the Government to appoint a commission to examine that country, but they had refused, because, in his opinion, they were afraid the commission would find out that the cattle there were not tick-infested; and sooner than admit that they had made a mistake they were willing to go on inflicting a still greater wrong on the Central stockowners. He was glad to hear the Home Secretary say that measures for the relief of those people were to be considered. There were one or two other matters in connection with the administration of the Act to which he would refer. There had been great complaints about the smearing of cattle. Ticks were prevalent on both sides of the river, and why that custom should be carried out was more than he could tell. They were also informed that dipping had been abandoned in America, but in spite of that the people round about Rockhampton were being continually harried, their

cattle driven about and frequently impounded. He thought also the people of the Cawarral Gold Field had just cause of complaint. An Act was passed years ago allowing holders of miners' rights the privilege of grazing so many head of cattle on proclaimed goldfields. That Act had never been put in force, and now the authorities were impounding the cattle of the miners. As far as he could see there was not the slightest necessity to impound the cattle, as they had become immune. Then he thought the people had some cause of complaint on account of the attempt to find a remedy. When people like Archer Bros. could spend £300 in experiments, the Government could only spend a few pounds, and had sent Mr. Pound to conduct inoculation experiments instead of employing a scientist like Dr. Hunt.

Mr. BATTERSBY called attention to the state of the Committee.

Quorum formed.

Mr. STEWART trusted that in future the Act would be better administered, and more sympathy would be extended to the people of the Central division.

The HOME SECRETARY: In reply to the hon. member for Leichhardt, he would point out that on the 24th December, 1895, the stockowners requested absolute prohibition at the 21st parallel, and in a communication forwarded by Mr. Niall it was recommended that cattle infected with ticks or redwater should be prevented from coming down the Central line, either by road or rail. In June, 1895, a large meeting of pastoralists, at which twenty-five stockowners were present, carried the following resolutions—

That the 21st parallel be made absolute against all Northern stock.

That the 22nd parallel be a quarantine line against all stock north thereof until they be dipped at that line.

That the Central railway line be the central line of quarantine instead of the 24th parallel as now.

Those were the three resolutions submitted to the Premier, and the hon. member for Leichhardt was present at the time. No wonder the Premier looked at them when they spoke of the Central Railway being the quarantine line, especially considering the telegram he had read, and the fact that the yards to which those cattle came at Barcaldine were on the south side of the railway.

Mr. STEWART asked if it was intended to continue smearing on the Fitzroy Bridge?

The HOME SECRETARY: Only this week the Stockowners' Association had recommended the discontinuance of smearing, and the matter was now under the consideration of the Minister. He could not say what his determination would be, but very likely the practice would be discontinued.

Mr. KERR wished to point out that the cattle yards at Barcaldine were on the north and not on the south side of the railway.

The HOME SECRETARY: The yards at Longreach and two or three other places along the line are on the south side.

Mr. STEWART: There had been complaints made that cattle had been seriously injured owing to the strength of the solution used in dipping. Had that matter come under the notice of the hon. gentleman?

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member brought under his notice last session a very hard case, in which not only a strong but also a bad solution had been used, but they could not come to any correct solution of the matter. He could not say anything with regard to details, but he knew that the Secretary for Agriculture was making arrangements to secure on the board Mr. Archer, who had taken a very active part

in investigating that subject. Personally, he was satisfied from his reading that there was not much good obtained from either dipping or smearing, and he was sure it would not be done now except with the consent of the owners.

Mr. HARDACRE: The resolution which the hon. gentleman had quoted was passed on the 5th June, 1896, and the Northern quarantine line had been fixed long before that date. All that the Central stockowners asked in that resolution was that, seeing that the 21st parallel had been fixed as the line of quarantine, no alterations should be made in the boundary. It was merely a formal resolution, and did not prove the hon. gentleman's contention that the Central stockowners had initiated this quarantine. It was simply another of the mare's nests discovered by the Home Secretary. The Central stockowners had never objected to clean cattle travelling from the North.

The HOME SECRETARY had never met a more obstinate man than the hon. member for Leichhardt. He was not prepared to take anybody's word on any subject. They had on every occasion to ram the facts down his throat. The hon. member disputed his word that the people of the Central district initiated this quarantine, and he showed him the resolution of 1895. On the 24th of December of that year Mr. Niall, the chairman of the cattle commissioners selected by the pastoralists, wrote stating that the line should be drawn somewhere about the 22nd parallel, and on the 16th of January, 1896, he wrote that a second meeting of the commissioners had been held; that he was desired to impress upon the Minister the necessity that existed for preventing any cattle north of the 21st parallel travelling south, and that the board were most anxious that the 21st parallel should be restored as against Northern cattle immediately. Would the hon. member accept that?

Mr. HARDACRE: The hon. gentleman said that he had to have facts rammed down his throat; but the hon. gentleman so often came there with a cock-and-bull story, which created a false impression, that they had to suspect everything he said, or at any rate to be very chary in accepting his statement as correct. Whatever might have been done by the commissioners, he did not believe that the general body of the cattle-owners of Central Queensland had been selfish enough to propose that all Northern cattle should be prohibited from crossing the quarantine line. He accepted the correspondence which the hon. gentleman had last quoted as proving the hon. gentleman's contention, but that information should have been given before.

Question put and passed.

REGISTRAR OF BRANDS.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £3,608 be granted for the Inspector of Brands.

Question put and passed.

CHIEF INSPECTOR OF SHEEP.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £3,062 be granted for the Chief Inspector of Sheep.

Question put and passed.

STOCK INSTITUTE.

The HOME SECRETARY moved that £1,356 be granted for the Stock Institute.

Mr. GLASSEY asked who was the director who received an increase from £400 to £500?

The HOME SECRETARY: Mr. Pound was the officer. Dr. Hunt—who had his private practice—had been given a fee of £500, and, in view of Mr. Pound's attainments and the work he was doing, his salary was being increased by £100.

Mr. GLASSEY did not object to a man of ability receiving a fair salary, but it did

not always follow that a man was worth the large salary which was paid to him. As he supposed the officer in question was worth the salary he was receiving, he would offer no objection to the vote.

Mr. KERR noticed that there were two assistants at £65 per annum and one at £26 per year. He supposed the one at £26 was a messenger, but if they could afford to pay the director £100 a year extra, they could surely afford to pay his assistants more than £65 a year.

The HOME SECRETARY: The two assistants were lads who were serving their apprenticeship. They were doing very well, and when they had shown that their services merited an increase, it would be given them.

Mr. BATTERSBY called attention to the item of £100 for a pleuro-pneumonia commission. Who were the commissioners?

The HOME SECRETARY: The item really should be pleuro-pneumonia calves. The department had to buy calves to inoculate with pleuro-pneumonia, in order to provide a supply of the virus. The virus was distributed among cattle-owners, and the department was paid for it.

Question put and passed.

LOAN FUND ACCOUNT.

LAND DEFENCE.

The TREASURER moved that £16,380 be granted for Land Defence. The amount had been kept down as low as possible. The principal item was in connection with the supply of small arms and ammunition. An offer had been made by the Imperial Government to exchange the whole of our arms for Martini-Enfield rifles, which was pronounced to be the most efficient weapon that could be obtained at the present time, and the exchange was going to be effected by degrees. It was proposed to spend, for the present year, £8,000 in that direction. With regard to the £7,000 for quick-firing guns, ammunition, and stores, that probably would not be required this year. As to the Maxim guns, the amount voted last year proved insufficient, and the guns were not ordered. The £600 now asked for was required to complete the order.

Question put and passed.

IMMIGRATION.

The TREASURER moved that £6,000 be granted for immigration.

Mr. GLASSEY asked for information as to the progress being made by the lecturers in the old country, and whether any persons had shipped this year in consequence of their work?

The TREASURER: It was hardly reasonable to expect very much from the expenditure yet. Several men had been sent home to advertise the colony, and he believed the fruit of their labours would be seen within a reasonable time. A very small portion of the vote had been paid in salaries; most of it had been spent in advertising the colony in Europe, and he had no doubt that the result of the expenditure incurred would show itself in a practical way before many years were over.

Mr. STEWART: As they possessed a large territory and great resources they ought to take means to bring their possessions before the notice of people in more thickly-populated countries; but the best men ought to be employed for that purpose. He believed, however, that several of the gentlemen appointed were not men who should have been placed in the position. One whom he would mention specially was the Rev. Mr. Wilson, for whom he had the greatest respect as a clergyman, but who knew absolutely nothing about the country. He was supposed to lecture on the Central division, but his knowledge of the Central division was almost entirely confined to Rockhampton, as far as he knew. He knew

one man at home who would be a much better lecturer than the Rev. Mr. Wilson; but there was nobody to bring his name before the Government, and for that reason he was not appointed.

The TREASURER: He might explain to the hon. member, if he were amenable to any explanations, that the Rev. Mr. Wilson was not appointed a lecturer. It often happened that certain old colonists, of whom this gentleman was one, applied to the Chief Secretary, when they were going home, for the privilege of explaining to the people of England, Ireland, and Scotland what the colony of Queensland was. They asked for no salary, but simply wished for a letter to the Agent-General, who, if he approved of what they proposed to do, allowed them a certain amount for expenses. The expenses this gentleman had incurred up to the end of last June were £25. Surely they were not going to sit up all night discussing that!

Mr. BATTERSBY: There was a great deal in what had been said by the hon. member for Rockhampton North. There was another lecturer he might refer to, Mr. Francis, who was a schoolmaster at Oxley many years ago, but who had since been appointed a police magistrate, and later on was dispensed with. He had been sent to England and had delivered twenty-one lectures for which he was paid. He did not think he was competent to lecture.

Mr. BELL: The references of the hon. member for Moreton to Mr. Francis were absolutely untrue. Anybody who knew Mr. Francis would know that there were few finer men in the colony.

Mr. BATTERSBY was glad to hear the hon. member for Dalby give Mr. Francis a good character. He had been a police magistrate in the Moreton district, and was transferred to Dalby, and while there he was so very sleepy that the people could not awaken him, and he was dismissed from the department. Then he opposed him (Mr. Battersby) at the last election; but was defeated, and as the Government could do nothing else with him, he was sent home as a lecturer.

Mr. PETRIE admitted that there might be a great deal of difficulty in selecting lecturers. One, Mr. Lyons, had been sent from his electorate, and no doubt he would give a good account of himself. No doubt the hon. member for Moreton was a little sore about Mr. Francis, because he opposed him at the last election, but all the same he thought Mr. Francis was rather too old for that kind of work. Another gentleman appointed was a member of the Upper House, who was also a very old man—Mr. Heussler—and although he had a great respect for that gentleman, he did not think the appointment was a good one.

The TREASURER explained that Mr. Francis had not been sent home by the Government. He was one of the volunteers, and the amount he had drawn as expenses up to the present was £42. He received no salary, and paid his own passage home.

Mr. PETRIE was glad to hear that explanation, as it was not generally known outside. He hoped the lecturers sent home would do good work.

Mr. BATTERSBY wished to know how many lectures Mr. Francis had delivered for the £42 which the Treasurer had said he had drawn?

The TREASURER had already explained that that was a matter entirely in the hands of the Agent-General. If he was not satisfied that Mr. Francis was doing good work, he would pay no more of his expenses.

Mr. KERR agreed with the hon. member for Rockhampton North that the Rev. Mr. Wilson could know very little of the colony, and that they should not have as lecturers men who had

not a good knowledge of the colony. Mr. Francis had a good knowledge of the colony, and with regard to the sending home of elderly men, they would do good in counteracting the feeling which was very general in the old country that the climate of Queensland was not a good one to live in.

Question put and passed.

MARINE DEPARTMENT.

The TREASURER moved that £58,000 be granted from loan for the Marine Department, harbour works.

Question put and passed.

BUILDINGS.

The TREASURER moved that £55,000 be granted from loan for buildings.

Question put and passed.

ROADS AND BRIDGES.

The TREASURER moved that £20,000 be granted from loan for roads and bridges.

Question put and passed.

WATERWORKS AND WATER SUPPLY.

The TREASURER moved that £2,134 be granted from loan for waterworks and water supply.

Question put and passed.

ARTESIAN BORING AND WATER SUPPLY.

The TREASURER moved that £17,800 be granted from loan for artesian boring and water supply.

The CHAIRMAN: Under Standing Order 171 I call upon the hon. member for Dalby, Mr. Bell, to relieve me in the chair.

Mr. BELL took the chair accordingly.

Mr. KERR asked whether it was the intention of the Government to put down bores in dry country otherwise suitable for agriculture? There was some very good country of that kind near Barcaldine, where it had been proved that water could be obtained at a reasonable depth, which would be taken up readily if the Government would aid in the finding of artesian water.

The TREASURER: A little further on there was an item, "Loans in aid of co-operative agricultural production, £10,000," which was exactly for the purpose the hon. member required.

Mr. SIM: He would again bring under the notice of the Government the desirability of testing the neighbourhood of Camooweal for artesian water. That district was particularly adapted for sheep, and if a supply of artesian water could be procured it would soon be stocked with 10,000,000 sheep. The district, covered as it was with Mitchell grass, required only water from artesian bores to make it one of the most productive in Australia. He trusted the Treasurer would give the matter due consideration.

The TREASURER: He had been under the impression for a long time that a test bore ought to be put down at Camooweal. It was a very rich country, he was given to understand, but boring had not been tried yet to any great extent. Having been in communication with the hon. member on the subject, he was under the impression that he, like himself, believed in doing the best they could in the interests of the colony, but he was beginning to doubt that, and to think that the hon. member brought up the matter merely for electioneering purposes. Under those circumstances he could have nothing more to do with him.

Mr. SIM: Whatever the right hon. gentleman might think of himself personally, he was glad to be able to pin him down to his statement that in the interests of the colony it was desirable to

carry out that work. Did the Treasurer think he came into the House forgetting what he owed to his constituency? When he brought the matter forward last year he did not intend to embarrass the Government, but to keep it in fresh remembrance, and that it should be no accusation against him that he had not done his duty.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member will not be in order in debating generally the relations between his constituents and himself on this matter.

Mr. SIM: When the Premier ungenerously went out of his way to attack him, by saying he was electioneering, he thought he had the right to reply. He would again impress upon the Treasurer the necessity, in the interests of the country generally, of putting down a bore at Camooweal.

Question put and passed.

LOANS TO LOCAL BODIES.

The TREASURER moved that £103,000 be granted as loans to local bodies. Hon. members would see there was a large increase. The vote last year was not sufficient, and they had now to provide for the harbour boards. Last year £24,623 was lent to divisional boards, £18,554 to municipalities, and £6,250 to rabbit boards. Harbour boards would undoubtedly require some assistance during the year, and he thought he had amply provided for them.

Mr. BATTERSBY asked the reason for the large increase in the amount to be lent to harbour boards, and also upon what terms the money had been lent for the Cairns-Mulgrave tramway?

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: There is no vote for the Cairns-Mulgrave tramway, and the hon. member will not be in order in discussing that question.

Question put and passed.

DEEP SINKING IN MINES.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved that £10,000 be granted in aid of deep sinking in mines.

Mr. STUMM asked how much of the vote was spent last year?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: £4,178 was spent last year, but a great deal more than that had been promised this year.

Question put and passed.

CO-OPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES moved that £10,000 be granted in aid of co-operative agricultural production.

Mr. SIM: The vote was an admirable one and had his full sympathy and approval. If a similar vote was placed on the Estimates in aid of pastoral co-operative production, would the Government support the expenditure of money in putting down a bore in the district of Camooweal with the object of enabling a large number of sheep to be placed in that district?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: As Camooweal was on the border, they wrote to the South Australian Government some time ago asking if they were prepared to bear their share of the expense of putting down a bore there, but they refused to do so.

The TREASURER: A trial bore had been put down under the vote for that purpose at Bando, on the west side of the Warrego, between Charleville and Cunnamulla, and he had just received advice that splendid water had been struck at a depth of 1,474 feet. That would open up the whole of that country, and the Government intended to pursue the same policy wherever they found good country that was

likely to be taken up by grazing farmers, and where there was a probability of their paying something towards the cost of supplying water.

Mr. SIM : It was just as well that people who were prepared to come here with their cattle should know the fact which the hon. gentleman had mentioned, and he thought that in raising the question he had done his duty to his constituents and to the colony.

Mr. GRIMES asked how it was proposed that the vote for loans in aid of co-operative agricultural production should be expended?

The TREASURER : Where agricultural settlements were formed, and the settlers wanted, say, co-operative flour-mills, this vote would enable the Agricultural Department to afford them the encouragement they required, on somewhat similar terms to those on which loans were granted for sugar-mills.

Mr. KERK : There was a farmer at Barchaldine who had to pay rent to a private person for water from a bore which cost, including the casing of the bore, £500, but he understood that the man could not get a sufficient supply. He would like to know whether assistance would be given to him and surrounding selectors to put down a bore if they made application for a loan, and were prepared to mortgage their farms and buildings as security for its repayment?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES : A case like that would be considered by the Secretary for Agriculture.

Mr. KING pointed out that farmers complained that there was a "ring" among flour-millers which prevented them getting a fair price for their wheat. The millers, it was said, bought their wheat from 15 to 25 per cent. cheaper than the millers in the southern colonies paid, and sold their flour from 25 to 30 per cent. dearer. He should like to know whether assistance to erect a flour-mill would be given from that vote to farmers in districts where mills were already established, so that they might be able to get fair value for their produce?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES could not say what course the Secretary for Agriculture would follow in such a case; but if the mills in a certain district were sufficient to grist the grain grown there, he did not suppose the Minister would care to enter into competition with them. Question put and passed.

DEBENTURES UNDER THE SUGAR WORKS GUARANTEE ACT.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS moved that £103,519 be granted for debentures to be issued under the authority of the Sugar Works Guarantee Act.

Mr. CASTLING noticed a sum of £30,000 on the Estimates for the Aloomba mill, but he understood that the proposal to erect that mill had fallen through, and that the money was to be transferred to Geraldton.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS believed that the money would not be required for the Aloomba mill, and that certain negotiations had taken place with regard to the erection of a mill on the Johnstone River, but the Government engineer reported that the mill which was proposed to be erected there would cost £40,000.

Mr. GRIMES : As there appeared to be further advances to those companies, he would like to know which mills had not paid their interest?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS : According to the Auditor-General's report the amount of interest paid up to 30th June last was £2,972 8s. 6d., and the amount unpaid was £21,754 15s. 4d. The Eton and Racecourse mills at Mackay now only owed the Government £10,454 7s., although at one time they had owed some

£45,000. For the first few years of the existence of those mills they had also been unable to pay their interest and redemption, owing to the heavy outlay incidental to the initiation of a large commercial undertaking of the kind, and he was certain that, with good seasons, the other mills would be able to do as well as those mills. He had already been told of two or three mills which had not paid their interest last year which would be able, owing to the better season, to do so next year.

Mr. STEWART asked if the hon. gentleman thought it wise, in the face of the depreciation in the price of sugar and the consequent fall in the value of sugar lands, to advance £70,000 more during the present year? He also asked whether the Treasurer had found it necessary to fix the price paid for the cane, and whether the Eton and Racecourse mills still paid 14s. or 14s. 6d. per ton.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS : As Secretary for Works he had no official knowledge of the price paid by the Eton and Racecourse mills, but as member for Mackay he could tell the hon. member that the rates paid for cane in the Mackay district were as high as they had ever been—from 12s. to 14s. per ton being paid. With regard to advances to the amount of £70,000, he would point out that, with the exception of £30,000 for the Aloomba mill—which would not be spent for that mill—the balance of the vote was necessary to complete obligations which had previously been incurred in connection with the companies mentioned in the vote.

Mr. STEWART : Under the Sugar Works Guarantee Act the Treasurer, when any company paid interest and redemption, might fix the price of the cane. Had the Treasurer intervened to fix the price of cane?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS : The Treasurer had not done so. He could not imagine anything worse than lowering the price of cane. If a mill was to succeed it was by having sufficient cane to keep it going night and day throughout the season; and that would explain to a large extent why a mill did not pay for the first year or two. The Eton and Racecourse mills had for some years paid interest and redemption, and he believed they would do so this year.

Mr. STEWART still thought it necessary that the Government should be very careful in dealing for the future with these sugar-mills. Prices had come down so low that those engaged in the industry said they could not possibly work at a profit if they fell any lower. For several years the Racecourse and Eton mills were coming money, and could have paid their indebtedness off before now; but instead of that they divided the money amongst the shareholders and cane-growers. He did not object to that; but in view of the drop in prices it was necessary that the Government should be very careful. The companies who obtained money under the Act knew there was little danger of foreclosure, and there was a temptation for them to divide as much as they could amongst themselves.

Mr. GRIMES presumed that the companies making application for advances stated how they intended to spend the money. Was the money now asked for required for increased appliances in the mill, or for outside appliances to enable the cane to be brought to the mills at a cheaper rate?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS : Some years ago, when sugar brought a higher price, it was possible to do with a certain amount of machinery and tramways, but as the price of sugar fell it was necessary to go in for more labour-saving machinery, and they should also remember that it was very difficult to give reliable estimates in matters of this kind. Since the price of sugar had fallen it had been found

necessary to give the farmers greater inducements to supply the mills, but every further advance had to be reported upon and approved by the inspector and the engineer; and if they decided that more money was necessary to carry out improvements which would make the mills more profitable, the Government were constrained to advance that money. The necessity which impelled a private mortgagee to make further advances was also at work in regard to the State, but none of these advances were made unless they were recommended by persons who were competent to judge.

Mr. GRIMES: All he wished to know was whether these further advances had been spent in outside work to enable the operations of the mills to be extended over a greater area of cultivable land, or in additional appliances inside the mills?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Mossman Company originally proposed to build ten miles of tramway; but it was found necessary to construct eighteen miles, so that the cost was greater than was expected. In his district some of the mills had cost twice as much as was anticipated; but the principal factor was the increased length of tramways.

Mr. BATTERSBY pointed out that the Moreton mill was at Nambour, and not at Maroochie. The people at Dulong had asked for £30,000 for a mill, but as they could not get security they went to the Moreton Company and asked for a tram line to the top of the range, costing £12,000, which arrangement would have been concluded had it not been for the red tape of the department, which insisted upon the tenders being submitted to Mr. Fiddes. The real cause of the delay was that a nephew of the Under Secretary for Works who had a selection there was not able to hand in his deeds, and it was unfair that the district should be blocked just because there was a friend at court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They could not advance money for machinery and tramways without the works having first the approval of the engineer who represented the Government in the matter. The amount advanced to the Moreton mill was £32,000, and of that £9,000 was set apart for a tramway towards Dulong. On buildings, the expenditure had been £4,275; on machinery, £16,500; and on seven and a-half miles of tramway, £10,955. The country was particularly difficult, as the mill was on the railway line and Dulong was on the top of the Blackall Range. More than one survey was required, and they were effected by the company, but the engineer had eventually to say whether the route chosen was practicable. No doubt, in endeavouring to see that the money advanced was expended prudently in the interests of the State some of the applicants would not be altogether satisfied, but that could not be helped.

Mr. BATTERSBY protested against the company being compelled to go to unnecessary expense, and he hoped the hon. gentleman would take what he had said into his consideration.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAYS—GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £28,021 be granted from loan for railways—general establishment. The vote appeared to show a considerable increase, but, as hon. member's would see on reference to page 107 of the Estimates, it was largely accounted for by a transfer of votes for the survey staff. The balance of the increase was made up by the votes for additional draftsmen and by certain changes in connection with the resident engineers. If hon. members desired fuller information he was prepared to give it.

Mr. KERR asked whether any route had been decided upon for the extension of the Central Railway?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Several trial surveys had been made; and, although the route had not yet been definitely decided upon, the present opinion of the department was in favour of an extension from Dartmouth to Stonehenge.

Mr. KERR: He was very glad that the survey had been made in that direction, and believed the Government were adopting a very wise course.

Question put and passed.

ENGINEERING BRANCH—CONSTRUCTION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £260,620 be granted from loan, for the engineering branch—construction. That seemed a very large amount, but a considerable portion of it was simply a revote.

Mr. STORY wished to bring forward the question of the St. George railway. At a large and influential meeting held at St. George on the 7th instant, a resolution was passed that he should arrange with the Minister for a select committee to inquire into the matter during the present session. He had seen the Minister, and he must confess he did not see what a select committee could do this session towards advancing matters. The facts connected with the railway had been so well known for so many years that new light could only be thrown as to the best route by surveys made later than 1895. St. George was in a most peculiar position. Other railways had a terminus from which an extension naturally proceeded. In the St. George district there were so many points from which it was possible to commence a railway that the choice was embarrassing. Warwick, Ipswich, Dalby, Yeulba, and Roma all had claims; and it was for the Government, after due inquiry, to select the proper starting point. He trusted the Minister would make him a promise, which he could send to his constituents, that the matter was not being lost sight of. It was reported that a permanent survey was being made from Wallumbilla, but whether that was so or not he did not know.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS could assure the hon. gentleman that the matter had by no means been lost sight of. He regarded a railway in the direction of St. George as one of great importance, but before commencing its construction they should make sure that the starting point adopted was the best in the interests of the country. The department even now was busy obtaining trial surveys, and when all reports were in the Government would be prepared to arrive at a conclusion without the intervention of a select committee. He could not see that a select committee would accelerate matters in any way, inasmuch as it was the duty of the department to act on the information received from its officers. The hon. gentleman was quite mistaken as to there being a permanent survey; that could only proceed when the Government had decided definitely upon the route. He only hoped that when they met again next session he would be able to say that funds were available for the extension of the line. It was his intention during the recess to investigate the matter very fully, and without pledging himself to any route he could assure the hon. gentleman that the matter would not be lost sight of.

Mr. STORY was gratified at the Minister's reply. He had himself felt that without evidence from Government officers a select committee could arrive at no definite conclusion; and as that information was not yet complete, the labours of a select committee would be of no avail.

Question put and passed.

ENGINEERING BRANCH—CENTRAL DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £167,700 be granted for the engineering branch, Central division. As in the previous vote, a large amount of this money was being re-voted.

Mr. BATTERSBY asked whether it was contemplated to connect North and South Brisbane by rail?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Two surveys had been made, but in the present state of the finances, and seeing that the two systems were connected at Corinda, there was no immediate necessity for the completion of that work. The extension of the main lines and branches he considered of more pressing importance in the interests of the colony.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The sooner the two systems were connected the more economically would the lines be worked.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS explained that it was comparatively easy to remove rolling-stock from one line to another, *vid* Corinda. Eventually, no doubt, the two systems would be connected.

Mr. GLASSEY: What about the vote for the Broadmount branch?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: £26,000 of that item was a revote of money granted last year. The total estimated cost of the branch line to Broadmount, including the wharf, was £88,000. The engineer's estimate for the wharf as originally designed was £17,061, and Mr. Watson's tender of £16,081 was accepted for the work. The dredging, however, was estimated to cost about £8,000, so that the wharf and dredging represented about £24,000. But the scheme had since been amended and the wharf widened to 94 feet. The estimated cost of the amended structure was £31,617, and Mr. Watson's amended tender of £31,600 was accepted. Since the last discussion on this matter he had again consulted the Commissioner, and he fully maintained his opinion that the amended scheme was decidedly preferable to the original scheme, as it would give greater facilities for working the wharf, as well as enlarged accommodation for shipping. The line was completed, had been taken over, and would be opened on the 1st of January—perhaps earlier.

Mr. GRIMES asked if the steel sleepers to be used for re-sleeping the Normanton line were Phillips' patent sleepers?

Question put and passed.

NORTHERN DIVISION.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £167,700 be granted for the engineering branch, Northern Division. The steel sleepers referred to by the hon. member for Oxley were Phillips' patent sleepers, which had been converted into steel sleepers at the Toowoomba Foundry.

Mr. BATTERSBY asked if the item of £10,600 for the Pioneer Bridge at Mackay was the whole cost of that structure, or only a moiety of it?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: £12,000 was voted last year on account, and to complete the contract £7,800 more was required. The footway would cost £800; the permanent way material and contingencies £2,000, which made up the amount asked for in the present vote.

Question put and passed.

GENERAL EXPENDITURE.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that £132,000 be granted for surveys, additional telegraphs, rolling-stock, and land, all railways. The amount for surveys had been

reduced by £6,000, which hon. members would notice had been placed under the heading of "Survey Staff."

Mr. STEWART asked whether it was the intention of the department to have a permanent survey made of a line from any point on the Emu Park Railway to Yeppoon?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: At the present time the department possessed two alternative surveys to Yeppoon, and had sufficient preliminary information to deal with the matter when the Government considered it was desirable to extend the line. This was one of the cases in which a light line might be constructed, and, when the Government arrived at a decision with reference to the construction of light lines, it would receive consideration, with others. Until the Government had definitely decided to proceed with the construction of a line they did not consider the question of permanent surveys.

Question put and passed.

POSTMASTER-GENERAL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that £40,000 be granted for electric telegraphs. The item was just double what was voted last year. A great number of posts throughout the colony had been found to be ant-eaten and required renewal, and in addition to that they were introducing a system of underground wires. In towns where there were electric trams there was always a risk of accident in connection with the telegraph wires and the tram trolley wires.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES, 1896-7.

The TREASURER moved that £79,610 12s. 3d. be granted for the services of the year 1896-7 out of revenue, for the various departments. The whole of the votes had been fully explained by the Auditor-General, but he was prepared to give any further information that was desired.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY TRUST FUNDS ESTIMATES, 1896-7.

The TREASURER moved that £41,030 3s. 5d. be granted out of the trust funds for the services of the year 1896-7.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY LOAN ESTIMATES, No. 2, 1896-7.

The TREASURER moved that £93,068 be granted out of the loan fund account for the services of the year 1896-7.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to certain resolutions, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again at a later hour of the day.

Ordered that the resolutions be received at a later hour of the day.

The House adjourned at twenty-two minutes past 1 o'clock.