

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 23 AUGUST 1898

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 23 AUGUST, 1898.

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

QUEENSLAND NATIONAL BANK.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT ON BALANCE-SHEET.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a letter from the Auditor-General, transmitting his report on the balance-sheet of the Queensland National Bank, Limited, laid before the general meeting of shareholders on 18th August, 1898.

Ordered to be printed.

ROCKHAMPTON ELECTION.

RETURN OF WRIT.

The SPEAKER announced that his writ for the election of a member to serve in the House for the electoral district of Rockhampton had been duly returned with a certificate endorsed thereon of the election of George Silas Curtis.

SUPPLY.

DEBATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Question—That £300 be granted for salary for aide de-camp to the Governor—stated.

Mr. GLASSEY said : Before referring to the Financial Statement, I wish to say that it is rather unusual for a Treasurer to deliver his Financial Statement immediately after the House has disposed of the Address in Reply. I find no fault with the Treasurer for delivering his Statement at the earliest possible date, provided that there has really been some business done by the House previously. That of course, brings me at once to find some little fault with the way in which business generally has been conducted this session. We have two Chambers, one of which must to some extent depend upon the legislation initiated and carried through the other. I understand that the Council, after passing their Address in Reply at the beginning of the session, adjourned until to-day, and having no business to perform, that House will have to still further adjourn. Now, I wonder if it was not possible for the Government—some members of which have been in office for a long series of years—to have dealt with some practical legislation before the Treasurer delivered his Financial Statement. There are two or three little Bills on the paper which might reasonably have been gone on with. Doubtless some hon. members on the other side will say that the exigencies of the political situation in Queensland demand the presence of our Premier in New South Wales. I am not going to cavil with the arrangements of the Premier provided that he and his Ministers give some consideration as to how the business of Parliament is to be conducted, with a view to meeting, not only the convenience of members on their own side, but to all parties in this House, and also of the members of the Legislative Council. Now we have three measures on the order paper which might have been gone on with, passed this Chamber, and sent to the Legislative Council for their consideration and approval, or otherwise, and which would have given that Chamber some work to do. But not a scrap of work has been given to them. The same complaint was made last year. The House had been in session a considerable time before any practical legislation had passed this Chamber and gone to the other place for their consideration; and the same way of conducting business seems to have been initiated this session. Now, I ask, is there any justification for not proceeding with these three measures—the Jury Bill, the Workmen's

Lien Bill, and the Intestacy and Insanity Local Administration Bill? Is there any reason why those three measures should not have been sent to the other Chamber in order that that House might be occupied with practical and useful legislation instead of its members being inconvenienced by being brought down here and having to retire again to their homes at great inconvenience and expense to themselves? If the Prime Minister had to go to Sydney, as the exigencies of the case demanded, surely other Ministers—the Home Secretary for instance; a gentleman of long experience both as a member of Parliament and a Minister of the Crown—might have fairly taken up these three measures. I think the way in which business has been conducted is altogether unprecedented. However, I suppose there is no help for it, and we must now deal with matters as they are. I wish now to refer to some matters contained in the Financial Statement—a lengthy, and at the same time a fairly lucid statement, well read by the Treasurer, and which no member who listened to it could have failed to grasp in every detail. I take some slight exception to the second paragraph, in which the Treasurer says, concerning the late Treasurer, Sir Hugh Nelson—

Before doing so, however, I think no more fitting opportunity is likely to arise than this of stating that, in my opinion—which I believe is shared by a large majority of the House—this colony owes a deep debt of gratitude to the late Treasurer, Sir Hugh Nelson, for the mastery way in which he handled our financial affairs during the five years he was in charge of the Treasury.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY: He further says—

His broad grasp of finance, coupled with his extensive knowledge of the circumstances and requirements of the people, enabled him to render excellent service to Queensland, especially during a most critical period of its history.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY: I do not know whether hon. members opposite would spell the word "people" with a big "P," but at all events I challenge that last statement. I was obliged last year to take some exception to a statement of a somewhat similar character, and I hope, in speaking on this matter now, hon. members will acquit me of being ungenerous, because I never withhold a generous remark as applied to either friend or foe when I believe it is deserved. But I cannot share the sentiments expressed by the Treasurer. I admit at once that Sir Hugh Nelson is a man of ability and capacity, and a man who has some knowledge of finance, but when we are told that his financial management of the colony's affairs merit such high encomiums as we find here, all I can say is that I do not agree with such a statement. Last year I showed, as I believe by fact and argument, that the statements made then with regard to this man's wonderful grasp of finance and great service he had rendered to the country, were altogether erroneous, and that I was not prepared to endorse them. If it be an achievement of finance to make both ends meet by increasing the burdens of the people to a considerable extent, by reducing wages and salaries where they should not have been reduced, and by disposing of the public estate in the manner in which it has been disposed of, then I am not prepared to endorse such action.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And by reducing taxation.

Mr. GLASSEY: I shall deal with that to some extent later on. I say if it be an achievement to increase the burdens of those least able to bear it, then I have never been taught in that school of finance, nor do I want to be. I have never

been taught that by increasing the burdens of the people, by improperly disposing of the public estate, by reducing wages below a living rate, by reducing the salaries of some of the Civil servants, many of whom earn a great deal more than they are paid, is an achievement in financial administration; and it is a species of administration which I do not understand. Doubtless as soon as the present Treasurer retires from office we will have the next Treasurer coming along and passing similar encomiums upon him.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Why not, if he deserves it?

Mr. GLASSEY: I deny that the late Treasurer deserves it. No man in the House has a greater admiration for the many excellent qualities possessed by Sir Hugh Nelson than I have.

Mr. STEWART: What are they?

Mr. GLASSEY: Oh, yes he has. As a gentleman and a companion he is a very excellent man, but I could not go so far as to lend my sanction to such words as have been used by the present Treasurer. I said last year, and I am obliged to repeat what I said, that new duties have been imposed on the people to a very considerable extent during the last few years—about seven years, five of which Sir Hugh Nelson was Treasurer. Duties have been imposed during those years to the extent of upwards of £100,000 a year. Land has been sold to the value of half a million—the very pick of the country—and that, too, in a jerryandering way that is discreditable to the persons who were administering the Lands Department during that time. Then, again, we have the imposition of another form of taxation which did not previously exist, although in principle I am not by any means opposed to it. I want to tell how the late Treasurer and the present Treasurer have been able to make both ends meet—income and expenditure. They collected from dividend duty during the seven years £385,339, and by means of the 3d. postage on newspapers, which did not previously exist, they obtained £76,000. Some hon. members tell us that the agriculturists have had a considerable reduction on the freight of their produce during the past few years, but I would point out that during the few years previous to the freight being reduced that more than £70,000 were collected from the farmers in the shape of higher freights than previously existed. Then we have had the local authorities starved during the seven years by reduction of endowment to the extent of £865,825, with the result that in the agricultural districts the means of access to the dwellings of the people are in many instances a disgrace. Then the wages of the railway men were reduced during four years by some £50,000 a year, or £200,000. During the seven years the salaries and wages of many of the Civil servants were also reduced considerably. Many of the officers high up in the service were not reduced at all; they were not fair game. The Ministry have not shown much courage in their administration; the small salaries were fair game for them and they were attacked accordingly. Altogether we have £3,091,226 accounted for by these reductions and this extra taxation. And then we are told that the country owes a debt of gratitude to the late Treasurer for the way he handled the finances. Then, again, the party now in power have spent only £41,965 on roads and bridges during the seven years they have been in power, while their predecessors spent nearly £100,000 on roads and bridges for the benefit of the people, and especially for the benefit of those in the country. May I be permitted to give a few facts regarding the

amount spent by New South Wales on roads and bridges and putting their highways in order?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why not quote Victoria?

Mr. GLASSEY: Because New South Wales is most convenient at present.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Because it has no local government in the country districts.

Mr. GLASSEY: I happen to have a valuable work beside me to which I shall refer, because I thought that remark would come. During the five years ending on the 30th June, 1897, New South Wales spent from revenue—not from loan—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Taxation! Sales of land!

Mr. GLASSEY: From taxation, to some extent, imposed in a way that this colony is a stranger to. Those persons who accumulate wealth without much effort are compelled to pay a handsome amount towards the maintenance of the government of the country, whereas in this colony the people of means and those who accumulate wealth without much effort are allowed to go practically scot-free.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Ask the New South Wales farmers.

Mr. GLASSEY: By way of showing that the people of the country districts in New South Wales appreciate their present Treasurer, I may remind hon. members that he was at the late general election again returned to place and power with a fairly substantial majority; and I venture to say that had it not been for the federation question intervening Mr. Reid and his party would have been returned triumphantly with a substantial majority. I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not agree with all of Mr. Reid's policy, because he is a rabid freetrader; but I contend he has shown courage and pluck that hon. members opposite as yet have shown a wonderful lack of. Mr. Reid has tackled men of means and wealth both in and out of the colony, and has compelled them by force of law to pay something substantial and handsome towards the maintenance of the Government and the welfare of the country generally. During the five years I have mentioned that colony has paid fully £2,500,000 for the maintenance of roads and bridges in the country districts.

The TREASURER: And public lands worth £5,000,000 were sold in the meantime.

Mr. GLASSEY: In addition to that they have compelled absentees to contribute handsomely to the revenue, but I shall deal with the land tax later on. I certainly shall not shirk my share of responsibility in urging, so far as possible, the imposition of such a tax as a means of obtaining some legitimate revenue for the maintenance of the Government. I think it is just as well that we should see how far we have local government established in New South Wales and Victoria, and I shall quote from the latest edition of "Coghlan," page 466. I wish to emphasise what I have already stated—that a considerable amount has been collected from local authorities in the different colonies.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION and Mr. McMASTER: Municipal rates.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am aware that these are municipal rates, but I wish to show that inasmuch as New South Wales has not a local government system in the country districts—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You admit that?

Mr. GLASSEY: They pay a very substantial sum from their revenue every year, while we have given a very small sum, which has enabled the Treasurer of this colony to have a larger sum

of money at his disposal than he would otherwise have had to spend in other ways. It was mentioned in the Statement that we have a considerable deficit hanging over our heads, but has the Treasurer taken the steps to meet that deficit in the manner in which Treasurers usually do, and in the manner in which a Treasurer who had at heart the welfare of the whole of the people, instead of that of only a certain section of them, would do? Instead of raising taxation from legitimate sources—from the people of means and wealth—what did the late Treasurer do? He went to London and floated a loan to pay off our floating debt in the shape of Treasury bills, and thereby made it a permanent debt instead of a temporary debt. That was the means adopted to restore the equilibrium. That is what they call wonderful financing. I observe from the Statement that we have still the old trouble in regard to the small sum of money received from our pastoral tenants. I also observe that year by year our pastoral properties are becoming more and more valuable, but still the State does not receive any increased rents. The Treasurer was obliged to say in his Statement that pastoral occupation shows a decrease of £2,709, and the amount received as rents from runs is less than last year by £4,886. This is very much to be regretted, and I think that a tremendous want of capacity is shown by the Treasurer, not to say want of courage. Treasurers always deplore the decline in pastoral rents, and say that the Treasury is getting poorer in consequence of pastoral properties not realising sufficient revenue, and yet neither the last nor the present Treasurer has had the courage to grapple with the question and ask the pastoral tenants to pay a fair and legitimate rent for the properties they hold, notwithstanding that the returns from pastoral properties are increasing in value so much. The Treasurer says—

We cannot forget that cattle and sheep growing is the largest industry in the colony, exporting as it does over £5,000,000 worth of produce out of a total of £9,000,000.

In addition to that the value of cattle and sheep slaughtered for home consumption cannot be taken at the present time to be less than £1,000,000, so that last year the produce of pastoral properties was something like £6,000,000. In fact, according to the work compiled by Mr. Weedon, the value of pastoral produce was £6,159,539 for the year 1896-7. Then the Treasurer goes on to say that notwithstanding this deplorable state of things he sees no means by which we are to derive a greater sum. Why? Is it because the means are not at the disposal of the Government? I contend that both the late and the present Treasurer had the means at their disposal, but they lacked the courage shown by Mr. Reid in New South Wales in compelling men of means to contribute more. Our Treasurers are prepared to come down at all times and impose fresh taxation upon those who are least able to bear it. Of course we will be told that this year we have a surplus of £20,000, but it must not be forgotten that last year new taxation was imposed, which brought in £48,000 in ten months, so that I do not think it was a very great achievement in financing to end the year with a small balance of £20,000. I do not think the country at large is likely to award very high honours for such an achievement. We have very little more revenue from pastoral properties this year than we received ten years ago, in spite of the increased income they have yielded in the same time. The amount received from rents of runs in 1888-9 was £311,169, and in 1897-8 it was only £322,244, or an increase of only about £11,000 in nearly ten years. The Treasurer in his Statement says that the present mode of valuing these properties is unsatisfactory, and that being so I ask him why

it is he has not taken some steps with a view to obtaining a better revenue from pastoral properties? I can put my finger on the reason. It is because the Treasurer and his predecessor and his friends on the other side of the House have not the courage to tackle the bigger proprietors of the country, and especially the financial institutions to which the majority of these properties belong at the present time.

The TREASURER: Whose fault is that? The 1884 Land Act, which your friend passed.

Mr. GLASSEY: That Act was not made for all time surely? It is perfectly within the province of the Treasurer to obtain a larger revenue from pastoral properties if he and those sitting behind him desired to do so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How

Mr. GLASSEY: "How?" I remember a few years before the Coalition Ministry was formed another Government proposed a system of taxation, to some of which I admit I objected, and I gave my reasons for objecting to it at the time. If it were proposed now to tax the man with 160 acres on his land, his horses, improvements, and crops, I should offer all the opposition at my command to such a proposal; but I think it a perfectly fair and legitimate thing to have a re-arrangement by which the pastoral tenants of the Crown should be made to pay a fair rent for the splendid advantages they enjoy.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How? That is what I want to know.

Mr. GLASSEY: Does the hon. gentleman mean to tell me there are no means at his disposal by which a larger revenue could be derived?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No other means than those provided by law. Have you followed the recent decisions in the Supreme Court?

Mr. GLASSEY: I have, and I think there would not be much difficulty in obtaining a substantial increase?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: How?

Mr. GLASSEY: I think it was Sir Robert Peel who said the physician should not prescribe until he is called in. The Treasurer admits in his Statement that the present system is unsatisfactory, and I say that if gentlemen opposite have not the courage or capacity, or are not prepared to find means for getting a legitimate revenue from the country, it is their clear duty to make way for those who can do it. Every year pastoral properties are becoming of more value in consideration of the enormous sums of money being spent in affording railway facilities through pastoral country. Look at the sums being spent now on the line from Charleville to Cunnamulla, and on the line from Hughenden towards Winton. In this direction, during the last few years, considerable sums have been spent in opening up pastoral country and making those properties more valuable, but instead of having a corresponding increase of revenue year by year from those properties the reverse is the fact. I need not remind hon. members that considerable sums have also been spent in providing artesian water in the interior. I admit that it is money well spent, and I do not begrudge it, nor do I begrudge reasonable and moderate expenditure in opening up the country for closer settlement by railways. I do not object either to a certain expenditure to abate to some extent the rabbit pest, though I object to some unnecessary expenditure going on in portions of the country where the rabbits are not likely to be for many years. But while I am prepared to agree to some of this expenditure as useful and convenient for the people, it is not unfair that the people should expect some corresponding return of revenue from the properties which have been improved in value by this expenditure—more

particularly as the old squatter has largely disappeared, and the properties in the hands of big financial institutions are becoming more numerous every year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Which shows how well they pay.

Mr. GLASSEY: The financial institutions we know can fight the Crown from court to court right home to the Privy Council; but that should be sufficient evidence that the law is defective and unjust, and it is in the power of the Government, if they choose, to amend it in such a manner as to secure a larger revenue from these splendid properties than they are receiving at the present time. The Treasurer says he would like to see a larger income from rents of runs, "but that cannot be looked for at the present time." I ask him—why? Is it that the law will not allow it? And is that law of such a nature that it cannot be amended?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: And repudiate existing contracts?

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not here to repudiate contracts. Except the contracts themselves are exceedingly bad contracts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Oh, oh!

Mr. GLASSEY: Except the contract be an exceedingly bad contract. Do not anticipate what I am about to say. It all depends upon the nature of the contract. If it were an outrageous contract then it is possible that I might have something to say against it. In this case I am not prepared to say whether the contract is a fair or an unfair one, but I do say that it is not an unreasonable thing that some means should be devised whereby the country might get a larger return from its property. The Treasurer says he would like to see a larger return from rents, but that it cannot be looked for at present. Why cannot it be looked for at present? The present Treasurer and his friends cannot do such a thing at present for fear they should quarrel with a few influential friends in the country; in view of the approaching general election they have not the courage to tackle the question with sufficient firmness and energy, and obtain a larger return from pastoral properties. They are waiting for another lease of office, and then things will again be permitted to drift until we approach another election, when the Treasurer will come down and say, "I am very sorry we cannot get a larger return from these properties, but we cannot look for such a thing at present." When will the time come when we can look for it?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Have you been reading the reports of the proceedings in the Supreme Court?

Mr. GLASSEY: I have read them, and I think one of the weaknesses of the recent Act is that it does not prevent any appeal to the Supreme Court.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is under the Act of 1884, not the present Act.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Act of 1884 was deficient to that extent, and the Secretary for Lands should have had the courage to prevent such a thing going on in future; but he had not that courage. If he had made such a proposal probably many of the members on his own side of the House would not have supported him; but I would have supported him most firmly in a proposal not to permit appeals to the Supreme Court on the rents of pastoral properties. The Treasurer also says, "The present mode of assessing the value of runs is very unsatisfactory." Then, I ask, who is responsible for that? The Secretary for Lands answers, "The Land Act of 1884." If the Land Act of 1884 will not permit under any circumstances a larger return being obtained from these properties, then it is for the House to take into

consideration what is the next best thing to do. Does the Secretary for Lands, or the Treasurer, mean to tell me that this House has not sufficient strength of will and sufficient wisdom to devise means whereby we can get a higher return from pastoral holdings? Surely to goodness we have not come to that state of affairs that we are incapable of dealing with this great question! Some hon. member made mention during the course of my remarks of a land tax, and the Treasurer in his Statement says that the present system of local government practically amounts to a land tax. He says—

Land revenue last year produced £560,676; this year we hope to receive £570,870, or slightly over £10,000 additional. The aggregate figures are very small considering the area of country under occupation, but circumstances do not indicate a much greater advance this year than that mentioned; and it is considered wise to err on the side of an under estimate in this, as well as all other sources of revenue, rather than the reverse. It should, however, be borne in mind that the direct income from land is by no means the only barometer by which to gauge its revenue contributions. Every settler and his family add their quota to revenue through the Customs and railways.

Of course it all depends upon the people to supply the necessary means for the maintenance of Government; freights and charges for the carriage of goods are kept at a high rate, in some instances at a rate that is practically prohibitive; but some persons, who ought to pay something substantial towards the expenditure of the country, go scot-free, or at least to a considerable extent. The Treasurer further says—

And this further important fact should not be overlooked, especially when making comparisons with other colonies: That on our settlers, large and small, is cast to a very large extent the duty of constructing and maintaining roads and other local works. This is practically a land tax, and while it relieves the general Government of the expense, there is no doubt that the money is expended to much greater advantage than under the old system.

I deny that; I say that during the time when divisional boards were endowed to a greater extent than they are now, the roads, in the country districts especially, were very much better than they are to-day.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Question.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not afraid to say that the roads in the hon. member's district, and in other country districts, were in much better condition a few years ago when the endowment to divisional boards was larger, than they are to-day. A few years ago we voted £150,000 or £200,000 as endowment, and in one year the amount was—I am speaking from memory—£250,000 or £300,000, whereas the endowment to divisional boards and municipalities is now only £60,000. Does not common sense then dictate that the roads must have been considerably neglected during the last year or two for want of the necessary funds? The endowment in 1889-90 was £273,870, and last year it was only £63,010; and does the hon. member for Lockyer mean to tell this House that the roads in the country districts have not suffered considerably in maintenance in consequence of that reduction? I say the roads to-day are not in a fit condition to meet the requirements of the people.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I say distinctly that they are no worse now than they were in 1890.

Mr. GLASSEY: I say that the roads in the Lockyer, the Rosewood, the Fassifern, the Moreton, the Wide Bay, the Burnett, and other districts are not very creditable to those in authority, and not very creditable to Parliament.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is rough on the divisional boards.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is not rough on the divisional boards; it is rough on the Government,

which has reduced the endowment to local authorities to such an extent of late years, thus starving the local bodies.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Endowment means more taxation.

Mr. GLASSEY: It certainly means an adjustment of taxation whereby those who have hitherto escaped their share of taxation shall be made to bear their legitimate proportion, and thus relieve a number of persons who pay more than their fair quota at the present time. It also means an adjustment of expenditure, so that money shall be expended where it is most required, and withheld to some extent where it is not so much needed. This local system of taxation can in no way be described as a land tax. It is not a land tax as we know it in New Zealand. It is not a land tax as it is known in South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria, or the adjoining colony of New South Wales. Some hon. members may be inclined to draw the inference from this statement that local taxation is higher than it was a few years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Certainly.

Mr. GLASSEY: That is to say, that the revenue derived by the local authorities is larger than it was under the old system. Can hon. members substantiate that?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is larger than it was a few years ago.

Mr. GLASSEY: I say unhesitatingly that the present system does not yield as much revenue as the old, irrespective of endowment. I have been going into this question during the last few days, and I may have something more to say upon it in some parts of the country where a great deal of capital is sought to be made by some hon. members on the other side who are likely to oppose a land tax, and who say that such a tax would be most burdensome and irksome to the people of the colony, and more particularly to the people in the country districts. I deny that, and I shall give a few figures to show that the present system yields less revenue than the former system.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You have shown that it is heavier than a land tax.

Mr. GLASSEY: Not at all. I do not blame the local authorities for the present state of affairs, but I blame the Government for reducing the endowment in the way they did a few years ago, and which I opposed, and the result of which has been to deprive them of the revenue which is necessary to enable them to keep their means of communication in order. The amount collected in rates in 1890 by the local authorities was: By municipalities, £138,824; by shires, £13,449; by divisional boards—from general rates, £99,781; and from special rates, £8,372; or a total from all local authorities of £252,054. In 1897 the amounts collected were: By municipalities, £112,494; by shires, £12,783; by divisional boards—from general rates, £102,192; and from special rates, £4,380; or a total of £231,849, being a decrease since 1890 of £20,205—not an increase as those hon. members would have us believe who are opposed to the imposition of a land tax for national purposes. Some of those hon. members are afraid that such a tax would make them contribute something like their fair share for the maintenance of the government of the country. There is the fact that the revenue of the local authorities last year shows a decrease of £20,205 as compared with 1890.

Mr. McMASTER: That is because the value of property has gone down.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am quite prepared to go into that question with the hon. member, and perhaps I may be able to prove that the boot is on the other foot.

Mr. HARDACRE: Land is going up in value now.

The Hon. G. THORN: The local authorities in Queensland raise four times as much as they raise in New South Wales from a land tax.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am prepared to state that the hon. member is in error.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: There is far more raised in Queensland, at any rate, in proportion.

Mr. GLASSEY: All I can say is that in no way can a tax on unimproved properties instead of on improved be described as a land tax.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is nothing else.

The Hon. G. THORN: It is ruining the country districts in Queensland at present.

Mr. GLASSEY: The hon. member may blink this matter as he likes, but what is ruining the country districts in Queensland at the present time is the enormous reduction in the endowment given to the local authorities.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They would have to provide the money in any case by a land tax, and you would give them part of it back.

Mr. GLASSEY: I welcome the announcement that the Government are prepared to increase the endowment to local authorities by the enormous sum of £17,000. It is a wonderful sum of money! We are told in one breath that the country is exceptionally prosperous, that it has never been so prosperous in its history, and yet while some years ago we spent as much as £300,000 on local authority endowment out of revenue and not out of loan, we are now to have merely another £17,000. What a wonderful proposal, to be sure! And that, too, by a Ministry that has the good fortune to be in power when the country is exceptionally prosperous. I think the Government, if they had any desire to promote the welfare of the country districts, would not have come down with a paltry proposal of this nature, but would have proposed an increase of at least £100,000, which would have been useful and beneficial to the local bodies. £17,000 extra over the whole vast area of this colony! Why, it will scarcely be more than a couple of pounds each.

The Hon. G. THORN: Not a drop in the bucket.

Mr. GLASSEY: Not a drop in the ocean, let alone the bucket. Yet, small as the sum is, I welcome it to some extent. Then I observe by the Treasurer's speech that he proposes to spend £22,500 on immigration. He says the Government have tried all sorts of means of inducing a larger number of people to come to Queensland and they have utterly failed. Now they are going to pay a portion of the passage money to induce persons to come here. They say in effect that the country is so prosperous that nobody will come here. I always thought that when a country was reasonably prosperous people would flock to it. In New Zealand two or three years ago the country was in such a state of prosperity that people were arriving there at the rate of 1,000 a month, and the Government were obliged to bring in a measure to restrict the number of people coming to the country. I do not by any means agree that the country is as prosperous as alleged, and the fact that people will not come here unless their passages are paid is fairly good proof that the colony is not in such a very prosperous condition. I will read what the Treasurer says on this matter, because it is a question of some importance and deserves consideration—

One of the most important items—if not the most important—is £22,500 for immigration, of which £15,000 is for passage money. We have tried by advertising and by employing lecturers to induce our country-

men on the other side of the globe to come and settle among us; but we have found that the United States of America, Canada, and even South America, being so much nearer to them, offer greater attractions.

Of course, there is no doubt that countries nearer to the centres of population will be the first to attract persons of limited means unless there is a strong counter attraction elsewhere; yet, as I have said, in consequence of the prosperity existing in New Zealand, the people arriving there were so numerous that the Government were obliged to restrict the number.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It was not because they were so numerous. It was because they were undesirable—paupers.

Mr. GLASSEY: No, no. It was merely a means of restricting the number of persons who arrived there. I also observe with some satisfaction that provision is made for the prosecution of certain public works. I observe there is to be a new Museum, a new Lands Office, and a new Central Railway Station. That last item ought to be some consolation to the hon. members who represent the city of Brisbane. I believe I am right in saying that that projected work wrecked the McIlwraith Ministry. Sir Thomas McIlwraith retired from the Ministry in consequence of his colleagues withdrawing a sum of £40,000 which it was proposed to spend upon a new central railway station for Brisbane. I hope this proposal is not likely to wreck the present Ministry. One thing we do know is that it has not conciliated the two city members, one of whom gave vent to his feelings strongly the other night, inasmuch as he told the House that his support would be withdrawn from the Government, and that he held himself at liberty to act a perfectly independent part.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Bundaberg has been consoled with a bridge.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think it is not much of a consolation, inasmuch as that work found a place in the Loan Bill of 1888. It found a place in an Act of Parliament in the year following, and it obtained the sanction of the House in 1890. There is not much consolation in that. It is merely carrying out a contract entered into many years ago, before I became member for Bundaberg. I find also that a very considerable sum of money is to be spent upon harbours and harbour boards. The Treasurer says—

With regard to harbour boards, it has been found that the dues now levied are quite inadequate to carry on the works necessary to enable our principal harbours to be completed in anything like reasonable time. The Government therefore propose to endow every harbour in the colony with a sum equivalent to four times one year's collections. This will absorb £246,784, but it will be money well spent, inasmuch as it will greatly facilitate trade and commerce.

I entirely agree with that, but there is one big proposal here which I am bound to take notice of—that is £50,000 for the purchase of a new steamer for carrying the Northern mails, and I presume Northern products also. Surely the present Government are not so hungry for suggestions, not so devoid of conception, that they are obliged to fall back on the Labour platform for one of their chief planks to enable them to launch out upon a new line of policy. The Treasurer, in looking about for some means to popularise the Government, more particularly in the Central district and in the North, has stolen one of the planks of the Labour platform. I welcome this proposal inasmuch as it is part of our policy, and so far as it goes the Ministry may reasonably expect a fair amount of support from this side. But it looks peculiar that those gentlemen on the other side, who are always denouncing socialism in our time, who during the 1896 elections told the people not to return those Labour people, who wanted to bring about

socialism in our time—it is peculiar that those hon. gentlemen should run away with one of our planks. I suppose they will be stealing them all one by one. I trust that in future our friends opposite will be a little more charitable, and not declaim so loudly against those who make what they call unpractical proposals. A good deal was said during the debate on the Address in Reply about the enormous amount of land settlement that has taken place during the last few years. The gentlemen on the other side were so slow in adopting any means to promote settlement that the fact of a little spurt taking place makes them tell the country what wonderful progress is being made. The methods they employed a few years ago had the effect of retarding settlement on the land. They practically prohibited the carriage of farm produce just at the time the previously ruling freights were assisting progress. Notwithstanding the fact that New South Wales possesses fewer advantages than Queensland as regards settlement on the land, with the exception of having a larger population, I find that settlement has progressed more in the neighbouring colony during the past few years than in this colony, and that in the face of a land tax, against which members on the other side declaim so much. We are told that we on this side opposed the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, but I say that the Government have been compelled by the force of circumstances and by those sitting on this side to adopt measures to some extent encouraging land settlement. Now let me give a few facts by way of comparison to show that land settlement is going on at a more rapid rate in New South Wales than in Queensland. Then I will give a few facts to show the miserable position we occupy as an agricultural country, with all our splendid advantages as compared with the other colonies. I got this return from the New South Wales Lands Department. In that colony in 1890 there were less than 1,000,000 acres under crop.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Why not give us the figures for ten years?

Mr. GLASSEY: I take the year 1890 because it was the most disastrous year in the history of Queensland, being the year that brought into existence the coalition Government. I deal with the period beginning in 1890 to show that we have not made the progress with the present retrograde party in power that we should have made if a progressive party had been in office. In 1890 the area under crop in New South Wales was 947,078 acres, and from that time the increase is infinitely more rapid than anything we have ever experienced in Queensland.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We have more land under agriculture in proportion than there is in New South Wales.

Mr. GLASSEY: On the 31st March of this year the area under cultivation in New South Wales was 1,828,829 acres, or nearly 900,000 acres more than ten years ago, which shows that considerable progress has been made, and very great progress in comparison with what has been done, in spite of the boasted land settlement which has been going on in this colony.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: New South Wales is a freetrade colony.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not going to be drawn into a controversy regarding freetrade and protection. In Victoria the number of *bona fide* settlers has increased by 5,258 since 1890. I wonder if Queensland can show anything approaching that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: More than that.

Mr. GLASSEY: We shall hear the Secretary for Agriculture by-and-by. I shall quote from a

return I received from the Agricultural Department in Victoria, which shows the area under tillage in the various colonies, and also the area per head of the population. I think it is a very useful return; it will show us how unfavourably we shall appear in the estimation of the people as compared with the other colonies. In Victoria the area under tillage in 1896 was 3,097,998 acres; in New South Wales, 2,043,733 acres; in Queensland, 348,735 acres; in South Australia, 2,584,395 acres; in Tasmania, 455,514 acres; in New Zealand, 1,656,912 acres; and in Western Australia—which is making more rapid progress in proportion to population than we are doing here—138,343 acres. Now I shall give the area per head under tillage. In Victoria it was 2'63 acres; in New South Wales, 1'51 acres; in Queensland, 0'74 only, not quite three-quarters of an acre; in South Australia, about 7 acres; in West Australia, 1 acre; in Tasmania 2'74 acres; and in New Zealand, 2'32 acres. We stand proportionately worse than any of the other colonies.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: And South Australia, with the largest area per head, is the least prosperous country of the lot.

Mr. GLASSEY: I think it will compare favourably with any of the others.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Farmers are leaving there and going to New South Wales.

Mr. GLASSEY: Does the hon. member mean to say that because a few farmers are coming here from that colony and looking for land, which in many instances they cannot get, it is a sign that that colony is not prosperous?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I said they were filling up New South Wales.

Mr. GLASSEY: I am not going to allow the hon. member to draw any inferences of that kind. There are no people in any of the colonies, or in any part of the world, who are more prosperous than the people of South Australia and New Zealand. I was in South Australia in January last, and I say that I have not seen more universal prosperity in any colony than there. Take our trade societies, for instance, which give a fair indication. If these societies are prosperous, it is a fair indication of the prosperity of the artisan class. I visited these societies in Adelaide and in the country, and I am sure that there is no country in the world where the industrial classes are more thoroughly organised than there, and I found everywhere general contentment and prosperity.

The TREASURER: Did you go among the farmers?

Mr. GLASSEY: Yes. According to a return I have, both of the banks of issue and the savings banks, I find that in South Australia there is the largest sum per head to the credit of their prosperity. I have already referred to the surplus we have of £20,000, of which we have heard so much; but let us take New Zealand for the last five years. In 1893 the surplus was £283,780.

The TREASURER: How much was carried forward from the previous year?

Mr. GLASSEY: None of it; but their money was spent in such a way as to give encouragement to settlement and to industries. In 1894 the surplus was £290,238; in 1895 it was £180,024; in 1896, £215,558; and in 1897, £354,286—so that in five years they had surpluses amounting to £1,750,000. For last year, according to the Treasurer's Statement, the surplus was over £500,000.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: They have a large floating debt.

Mr. GLASSEY: Year by year we are increasing the burdens upon our people, and disposing of our public estate to a considerable

extent, and endeavouring by every means to prevent such an adjustment of taxation as will compel the wealthy classes of the community to pay a larger share towards the maintenance of the Government than they have hitherto done. There is one more matter I wish to refer to. I regretted very much to see in the Statement that there has been some difficulty in regard to the quality of butter exported from the colony. I do not wish to elaborate upon the subject, but I sincerely hope that every precaution will be taken to have a first-class article only exported, so that the reputation of the colony will be established, and an extra inducement given to people to settle on our lands. The Treasurer says—

When funds were available for bonus, it was necessary that all butter exported, for which the owners intended to claim bonus, should be inspected and passed by officers appointed for that purpose.

I entirely agree with that.

In the shipments under review it is known to the department that butter which had been rejected by the inspectors had been shipped, and consequently the adverse reports received may have some foundation.

That is the point I wish to get at. By whose authority was this butter shipped after it had been rejected by inspectors appointed by the country?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There is no authority to prevent it. You could ship anything you liked.

Mr. GLASSEY: Should not some authority be established to prevent such a state of things?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: We couldn't get it through the House.

Mr. GLASSEY: Does the hon. gentleman think that hon. members on this side would withhold the necessary authority to enable us to establish a reputation for the production and export of butter? I am satisfied that if the Minister makes a fair proposal in this direction he will have the support of all parties in the House to enable him to carry out such a scheme. If there is no authority to prevent anyone shipping butter or anything else likely to injure the reputation of Queensland in the eyes of the world, it is the clear duty of the Government to provide some such authority with a view, in the case of butter, to encouraging that growing industry, which is likely to do so much to induce a greater amount of land settlement. The Statement goes on to say—

In other cases the owners voluntarily desired that their butter should be inspected, notwithstanding that no pecuniary benefit in the shape of bonus was to be derived from such inspection, but rather expense.

Of course it will follow as a natural consequence that any article shipped into Great Britain with a Government stamp will carry considerable weight as of first-class quality. One matter to which I must refer before I close, is with regard to the disposition of the public balances. The question is one which the Treasurer should seriously consider in all its bearings, and see that public confidence is absolutely restored, so far as the safeguarding of the public funds are concerned. That can only be done by the Government disposing of the public balances, not in any one institution, but in various institutions—that is to say, by placing reasonable sums in each, and not, as shown in the Statement, large sums in any one bank. Take the amount of the current account in the Queensland National Bank for instance. No member can say that I wish to say a single word against that or any other institution that would be likely to be detrimental to their interests. On the contrary, recent events connected with that institution particularly, prove that I can lay claim to be one who has not taken a stand to injure it. We find the Queensland National

Bank contains these funds: Extended deposits, regulated, of course, by law, £2,008,817; current account, £618,300 12s. 6d., and Treasury notes, £322,000. Why do we require £618,000 at current account? And why is that money not lodged in various institutions instead of being lodged in one?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: It is not half a year's interest.

The TREASURER: How much had we last year?

Mr. GLASSEY: I have not the table before me. In the interests of the bank itself, as well as in the public interest, I ask the Treasurer if it is not an imprudent thing to keep such a large sum in one bank? Why not distribute it? Further, I take exception to the considerable sums of money at fixed deposit in the different banks. Surely they are unnecessary, and it is time we had a change in this matter? The fixed deposit in the Royal Bank is £120,000; in Bank of North Queensland, £50,000; Bank of New South Wales, £200,000; Commercial Bank of Sydney, £200,000; and Union Bank of Australia, £100,000. Does the country really require these sums of money to be lodged at fixed deposit in the different banks? If it does not require them I ask reasonably and rationally why this money is there? Is this one of the financial achievements which find a place in the document I have referred to? If Parliament is simple enough to permit the borrowing of a large sum of money from the moneylenders of Great Britain to put into the different banks on fixed deposit, why any school-boy could do that. The people of the country are looking with grave apprehension and much misgiving at the deposit of these large sums of money in the way I have stated. Surely it is not necessary to have so large a sum as £618,000 at current account, and if it is necessary, then I say it should, for the safety and benefit of the country, be distributed amongst a number of banks and not be confined to one. I hope these matters will not be lost sight of. At any rate I will protest against these large sums being lodged at fixed deposit when they are not required.

Mr. LEAHY: What ought to be done with them?

Mr. GLASSEY: We do not require such a sum at fixed deposit. That it goes on from year to year is a proof that it is not required, otherwise it would be drawn upon for the works or services for which it was borrowed. We may require to have a considerable sum at current account, but if we are not to have a repetition of such dire circumstances as we experienced in the years gone by, the current account—whatever its amount—should be distributed, and should not be confined to one institution. I sincerely hope that the Treasurer will consider this matter, which is causing a considerable amount of uneasiness and alarm in the minds of some people in the country.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: I take this opportunity to compliment the Treasurer on his assumption of his present office, and also on his Financial Statement. Of course, we do not look upon our Treasurer as a financial genius in the same way as we look upon the hon. member for Bundaberg. The hon. member for Bundaberg wants more taxation.

Mr. GLASSEY: No, he does not; he wants a readjustment of taxation.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Well, a readjustment of taxation. The scope here is not big enough for the hon. member's financial genius. He should go to his pet country, New Zealand, where he would have sufficient scope for his genius. I read a paragraph in yesterday's *Telegraph* in which it stated that the *Investors'*

Review charges the New Zealand Government with an attempt to operate in a secret manner. The paragraph further says—

The aim was to get £2,700,000, under an unworthy, because really untrue, pretext, and the hope was expressed that the public would block the attempt. The plea was that the money was merely or mostly for "conversion" purposes, but the *Review* insists that using the word "conversion" in the sense in which it is ordinarily used, the plea was untrue.

This being so, the use of the word conversion or consolidation is, as the *Review* insists, a breach of public morals, and deserving of condemnation, not only in England, but also and perhaps especially by other Australasian Governments. The British people do not know enough of our geography to be able to separate the various countries in their judgment of us.

The hon. member for Bundaberg ought to go over to New Zealand and learn what financial genius is displayed there; but I trust that our Treasurer will never become the financial genius we now see in that colony. Outside people in looking at the amount of loan money we are expending every year may perhaps think that we are going ahead too quickly. But when we consider that the amount of interest we have to pay and compare it with the amount of interest received—£701,335; and when we consider also the large estate which this colony possesses, and the amount of money that has been spent on railways to open up the country, and that those railways have to be worked in such a way as will assist in developing our resources, I do not think there is very much to be afraid of. As long as the Treasurer can see his way to pay the interest on the public debt, I do not see why we should always have that pessimism displayed by the other side of the House. If the pessimists in this House and outside wish to get rid of the public debt, all they have to do is to sell the railways and they would get sufficient to leave a surplus.

Mr. STEWART: The Home Secretary advocates that.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: It would be madness for us to sell our railways, because they will be the best asset we shall have in years to come.

Mr. DUNSFORD: You gave one away last year.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, and I hope we shall have one or two more on the same conditions. I am glad to see that the Treasurer has got rid of that old deficit of £295,608. Treasury bills were issued for the amount, but were never used; I am glad to see that the Treasurer has issued savings bank stock at 3½ per cent. instead, as it is always a good thing to arrange to keep the interest among our own people as far as possible. The debentures under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, bearing interest at 3½ per cent., will be redeemable on the 1st January, 1901. If the Treasurer had issued savings bank stock for this amount it would have meant the saving of flotation charges. While it may be a good thing to borrow large amounts in the home market, I think it is very questionable whether it is wise to raise small sums in the same way, but in any case I question whether it is good policy to borrow on such long terms as we have for our stock, seeing that the rate of interest has a downward tendency. If we could only see our way to convert our present debts from 4 to 3 per cent. we should effect a saving of £300,000 per annum, but of course the question is at what price would the debenture holders agree to such conversion. I hope the Treasurer will give his serious attention to this matter, and find out from the Agent-General what can be done.

Mr. LEAHY: You cannot do anything in that line.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Well, it has not been tried.

Mr. LEAHY: Oh yes, it has.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: At any rate I understand that the Treasurer is alive to the matter, and I hope it will be found practicable to do something. The Sugar Works Guarantee Act has been a non-success as far as the repayment of interest and principal is concerned. The Auditor-General says that "unless redemption money is punctually paid the funds at the end of the fifteenth year will not be large enough to pay off the debentures." The Act is, of course, only in its infancy, and the people have been in trouble—bad seasons and the reduced price for sugar have gone against them. But what I wish to call attention to is the fact that the Treasurer has been given power to sign for £500,000 worth of debentures, and we have really no system in connection with these sugar-mills. If there is anything that requires auditing it is the books of these mill companies.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The Auditor-General is appointed to do it.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: The only accounts at present audited are those of the Racecourse and Central Mills at Mackay.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He audits all the accounts.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: I am very pleased to hear it, but only the two mills I have referred to are mentioned in the last report. The amount set down for immigration is £22,500. When I first entered the House I spoke as follows on the Address in Reply:—

I think we have been remiss in the past in not advertising our lands in the southern colonies. I am sure, with proper advertising, we should have any number of farmers coming from New South Wales and Victoria to settle here.

I had the pleasure the other day of meeting a Victorian who had been through the greater part of Queensland, and he informed me that if the people of Victoria knew what good lands this colony possessed they would rush them. I have no objection to getting the right class of people from the old country, but the question is, Can we get the farmers to come out here, when they seem to be so very well off in the old country? Possibly the reduction in the passage money may be an inducement, but why not offer every inducement to farmers and the sons of farmers in the colonies to come and settle in Queensland? With regard to the Treasury notes, they are a disgrace to the colony. I thought at the time they were first issued they were only a temporary expedient, and I trust the Treasurer will devise means whereby we can be provided with a better issue. There is to be a large amount voted from the loan fund for public buildings. Those which are now being erected are necessary, I have no doubt, but I notice that nothing is put down for Maryborough. The Government buildings in Maryborough are a disgrace. The Custom House is falling down, and I am informed on good authority that it is not worth repairing.

Mr. LEAHY: Who built it?

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: I am very glad of that interjection. Part of the building was erected before separation. I trust the Treasurer will get a report upon the public buildings in that town and see the matter rectified. I am very glad that the hon. gentleman has been able to increase the endowment to local authorities, although I do not approve of the present system of granting the endowment. The larger the population the greater the value of property, undoubtedly, but the mileage of streets does not increase in an equal ratio. With regard to the endowment of harbour boards, I cannot say that the system adopted agrees with me. I understand that this endowment is going to be taken from loan moneys,

which means that the revenue will have to provide the interest. The question is whether that endowment is going to continue every year or not. It is to be hoped not. My own idea is that this endowment is to be given to those who have "overrun the constable." However, the harbour boards are really in want of money, and perhaps the Treasurer will get compensation in an indirect way by an increase in the volume of business, shipping, etc. When the question comes before us in committee I shall have a little more to say about it. I take this opportunity of complimenting Captain Townley on his appointment to the Public Service Board, and I trust that when he gets into harness he will go through the classification of the service and rectify it, as there are a lot of anomalies. With regard to railways, it is true that last year we opened up over 100 miles, but there was only an increase of £21,797 in the receipts. That is very unsatisfactory, and one of the things attached to that is the bad ends the railways of this country possess. Railways have been started, but have never reached their objective points. The Treasurer says—

No plans for any new railways will be tabled this session, but £665,000 will be asked to complete railways now being built.

I presume that amongst these lines will be the thirty-three miles to complete the railway to Gayndah. This will be the means of causing the line to pay interest on the outlay. We do not wish the Treasurer at the present time, if it does not suit him, to go in for a new railway policy, but we do expect that the railways already passed will be gone on with. Surely it is not right for Parliament to repudiate any of its past work. If this is to be done, let the country know it, and do not fool them any longer. In every district in the colony railways have been approved of which have not been completed.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Take one railway in the Wide Bay and Burnett district. That district contributes largely to the wealth of the colony. We have the Gympie Gold Field, which at its inception got the colony out of the mire, and is now largely assisting to get the colony out of the present depression. We have Bundaberg, the Isis, Bauple, and the Mary River districts for sugar. We have the Aldershot works, which are largely developing the mining industry. We have timber, coal, and all the manufacturing industries, but we have no feeders to this large district. We are just on the fringe of what we want to get at. The Secretary for Railways can inform the Committee that he saw some of the finest land in the whole colony right through from Gympie to Bundaberg. I do not say that it is all good land, but a very large area of it is. Then there are thousands of acres of good land around Gayndah and Nanango. The late Secretary for Railways—the present Home Secretary—visited that portion of the country, and he was very pleased with the land. The late Mr. McCord—a man whose name is held in reverence, and who was every inch a gentleman—and you, Mr. Annear, and myself sat down in deliberation. We said, "We want this land to be opened up, but it has no railways." We then went to the late Secretary for Railways and asked him to send up an agricultural expert to report on the land. He did so. Afterwards he went up himself, and was pleased with what he saw, and so was everyone who went with him. The *Courier* was pleased.

Mr. LEAHY: The *Courier* is pleased with every district they go to.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: The Commissioner for Railways never saw the land, as unfortunately he was too ill to visit it, so that he knows

nothing about the district. The railway has been built two-thirds of the way, and we have £63,000 to our credit in the Treasury. The detailed plans and surveys and the working plans are now ready, so what more does Parliament require? With the permission of the Committee, I shall read what Mr. McLean, the Under Secretary for Agriculture, Professor Shelton, and Mr. Winks, the agricultural expert who was sent up by the Railway Department, have to say about the land about Gayndah. Mr. McLean says—

There is no doubt about the quality of this land, which is of great extent. It is certainly adapted for wheat-growing. We saw a crop of wheat that would have gone forty bushels to the acre, but was of course only intended for hay. I am greatly pleased with what I saw during my trip from an agricultural point of view.

Professor Shelton says—

The wheat he saw would make a good milling wheat; it would so be reckoned and classified by any miller, he was sure. It was as good in quality as any grown on the Downs, and that was equivalent to saying as good as grown anywhere. He was greatly struck with the appearance of the Gayndah land, which had all the appearance of land that would grow very good wheat, and where they could grow wheat the grape and stone fruits would thrive also.

Mr. R. W. Winks, the agricultural expert, says, in reference to Wetheron Run—

This belt, about eight miles in length, and varying in breadth from three to four miles, is on the whole good land. It is principally composed of fine black and chocolate soil; ridges even in contour, and in many places lightly timbered with broad-leaved ironbark and a kind of bloodwood. In some parts there is scarcely any timber, from which fact a portion of this zone is known locally as the Wetheron Clear Lands.

With regard to Reid's Creek he says—

In this direction the agricultural land begins about twenty-seven miles from Gayndah and runs on the western side of Reid's Creek with scarcely an interruption to the junction of Branch Creek, fourteen or fifteen miles from town, extending from three miles back from the creek frontages. The land here is undoubtedly first-class. The flats are of black and chocolate soils of great depth, lightly timbered—chiefly with blue gum—and free from melon holes. The ridges, nicely undulating, are of chocolate and red volcanic soil with broad-leaved ironbark, bloodwood, and Moreton Bay ash timbers. On the other side of the creek the good land begins about nine miles from town, continuing for six or seven miles, and extending to the Yenda boundary; from there to Ideraway along the river Burnett. This land is similar to that on the western side of the creek; all of it admirably adapted for close settlement.

Speaking next about Aranbanga, he says—

Next went up Deep Creek to the junction of Harriet Creek and as far as old Aranbanga. This country must be about twenty miles with an average of from two to three miles. This land is similar to that on Reid's Creek though not quite so good, but all of it is good agricultural land.

And then, in relation to another portion of the land, he says—

I inspected a considerable part of what proved to be a plateau on the range between Reid's Creek and the Burnett River, about seven or eight miles from Gayndah. The soil is red volcanic, apparently of immense depth, and almost entirely free from stone. I feel sure that the area of this plateau would not be overestimated at 20,000 acres, and should a railway be established to Gayndah, this will be one of the first places in the district to attract the attention of intending selectors. In conclusion, I consider that the land of any extent suitable for close settlement within a reasonable distance—say, from eight to ten miles of the present survey—is that on the head of Bin Bin Creek, the country between Wetheron head station and Oakey Creek, Reid's Creek, Ideraway, Deep Creek, and Aranbanga.

I think I have satisfied the Committee that the Wide Bay and Burnett districts contain as fine land as there is in the colony; and if I wished to occupy the time of hon. members further I could refer to other portions of the district which are equally as fertile as those I have mentioned. I compliment the Commissioner for Railways upon the

way in which he conducts the railways, and I can say that he does not sacrifice the interests of the country at the expense of the railways. He is always prepared to meet producers as far as rates are concerned. I hope that the present Secretary for Railways will go into the matters I have mentioned, and see that those lines on which the country is getting no return are extended to their proper destination. I may say I have a little railway grievance like everyone else. I complain of the way in which the North Coast Railway is run. It is dangerous to life and property. On one portion of the line the train runs so fast that it overtook a team of bullocks recently, and we find passengers playing marbles with the people at the wayside stations. I hope the Minister will take this matter into consideration, and see that this line is run to the satisfaction of the people. Now, the Treasurer expects an expansion of the railway revenue. That being so, I think our policy should be altered—that we should adopt the American plan of regulating charges by what the commodities will bear. A few years ago the railway tariff was revised, and the reason given for that was that it was justifiable to encourage expanding trade. How much more so is that the case now? At that time the reductions, as compared with the charges on the New South Wales lines, were as follows:—For 101 miles wheat and maize were charged 13s. 10d., was reduced to 8s. 10d., and the charge in New South Wales was 8s. 6d. Potatoes were reduced from 13s. 10d. to 8s. 10d., and the charge in New South Wales was 8s. 6d. per ton. Hay, straw, and chaff were reduced from 13s. 10d. to 11s. 1d., and in New South Wales the charge was 9s. Those were very satisfactory reductions, but since then New South Wales has still further reduced the charges, and I hope the Secretary for Railways will see his way to reduce our rates to the same level. I am pleased to see that the Commissioner has re-classified the sugar rates. There have been a good many anomalies, and I am sure he will bring the rates down to a price which will give the factories some inducement to pay their way.

Mr. KEOGH: You have enough inducement already.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: We want more yet. I can assure the hon. member for Rosewood that produce from the Downs is carried at the lowest class rates; and why should not sugar be treated in the same way, and the growers have as good opportunities as the Downs farmers?

Mr. KEOGH: You have every opportunity.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: What is fair for one class is fair for another. We want to assist the producers if we have any desire to make the country prosperous. We have heard a great deal of the timber industry, and the hon. member for Woollongabba has said that prices have gone up 25 per cent. As a matter of fact, there has been a good deal of cut-throat competition, and the mills have been going back. I happen to be connected with one mill, and last year, I may say, was a very bad year—indeed one of the worst we have had. I can assure the hon. member for Woollongabba that timber has not gone up 25 per cent. In Maryborough we have only raised the price 5 per cent.

Mr. DIBLEY: It has gone up 25 per cent. in Brisbane.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: I am only speaking of Maryborough, where the rise has been 5 per cent.; but we shall have to raise it still further.

Mr. KEOGH: You have all the contracts.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, and we intend to keep them, too. The reason why timber must go up in price is that it is now hauled longer distances, we have longer railway

carriage to pay, and owing to the scarcity of timber we have to take a very poor class, which means more waste. And it must be borne in mind that in America they can put the cut timber on a vessel at half the price we can get our log timber to the mill. I maintain that timber should be brought down from the "A" class to the "M" class, the same as minerals.

Mr. KEOGH: Where do you want to bring the timber—to Maryborough?

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: To the manufacturers, whether at Maryborough or Brisbane. If the cost is not reduced, it is the consumer who has to pay the difference. The advantage will not be to the sawmillers only. They will not make more profit because the price of timber has increased, and they do not anticipate it. They will have to pay more for the article. I would also point out that the railway traffic at Maryborough is in a congested state. Mr. Mathieson, the late Railway Commissioner, made certain recommendations—and I wish the present Secretary for Railways would take notice of them—to remove that congestion. But nothing has been done, and the present Commissioner blames the Government for not giving him the money. We want a duplicate line from Croydon, so that people going further—to Bundaberg or Gladstone—should not be delayed there. Our station, when first built, was for suburban traffic; now it is the head station for the Wide Bay and Burnett districts. And such a station! I trust the Minister will look into the matter and see what he can do. On looking into the Estimates I see no increase in the votes to the railway employees. As compared with New South Wales, I find that whereas we, in the Southern division, pay labourers up to five years' service 6s. a day, and after five years' service 6s. 6d. a day, in New South Wales they are paid from 6s. to 9s. 6d. a day, or an average of 7s. 4½d. We pay gangers 7s. 6d. for the first five years and 8s. afterwards. In New South Wales they get from 8s. 6d. to 12s., or an average of 8s. 11d. Guards, in Queensland, Southern division, get from 7s. to 11s. a day, in New South Wales they get from 8s. 6d. to 12s., or an average of 10s. 2½d. Engine-drivers here get from 9s. to 12s. a day, in New South Wales they are paid from 11s. to 15s., or an average of 13s. 11½d. a day. I will not weary the Committee by going through the whole of the railway employees. But in New South Wales there has been a further revision of rates, and in Victoria there is a new revision going through the House, to further increase their pay. Victoria is in a worse condition than Queensland, and yet the Commissioner sees his way to increase the wages of the employees. In Victoria the railways lose £100,000 a year more than we do, but they do not make it up at the expense of the railway employees.

Mr. KEOGH: Is this an electioneering speech?

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: No. I am simply stating a few facts bearing upon the condition of our railway service. I am pleased that the Government have increased the vote for defence, both land and marine. We had a regiment at Maryborough, called the Wide Bay regiment, which did its duty well during the shearers' strike. This regiment was disbanded in 1893 and reduced to two companies. I hope now that the Government will see that they get another in that district, with a band, as formerly. The men at Maryborough are complaining very much about the deferred pay being abolished. The new regulations reduced the pay by £2 per annum. If the Government wish to encourage the men to remain in the force, they will have to increase their pay. We heard a good deal about the defence of the colony in the Governor's Speech, but nothing can be done in that direction unless the land defence and the marine defence forces

are put on a sound footing. I thank the Committee for the kindly ear they have given me. As the various votes come up for discussion I may have a little more to say on them.

After a pause,

Question put.

Mr. McDONALD: I did not think the debate was going to close so early; but before the question passes I should like to know what are the duties of this particular officer, the Governor's aide-de-camp?

The TREASURER: This vote has been explained every year for the last seven or eight years. The late Treasurer told the hon. member fully what the duties of the aide-de-camp are—that he has to perform the duties of an aide-de-camp. If the hon. member wants more information, and will go to Government House, he will probably find the aide-de-camp exceedingly busy. He has to invite all the guests, to attend the Governor when he goes anywhere, and he is the medium, generally, between the Governor and the public. I understand the present aide-de-camp has so much to do that he wants another to assist him.

Mr. McDONALD: I have got more information on the subject now than ever I had before. We have now some idea, at all events, of the duties this particular officer has to perform. The principal one, it appears from the hon. gentleman, is to hand cups of tea round at the Government House receptions.

The TREASURER: I did not say so.

Mr. McDONALD: He has to attend to the various guests that come along. The Committee seems to be pretty unanimous in continuing to vote this salary, and, personally, I have no further objection to it; but I certainly shall have something to say if there is any attempt to duplicate the office. I was always under the impression that this officer was merely used for bringing messages to the House—which an average schoolboy could do just as well—and I must say that the last gentleman seems to be a vast improvement on all those who have gone before him.

At 7 o'clock,

Question put.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is unfortunate that members are not more punctual after the tea hour, but in justice to those who are not here and wish to speak I do not think the debate should close at this early hour. I know that the hon. member for Leichhardt has been busy collecting information during the recess regarding matters affecting, not only his own electorate, but the Central district generally, and he desires to speak on various matters referred to in the Financial Statement. Therefore I should feel responsible to some extent if I allowed the debate to close without prolonging the discussion somewhat so as to give members an opportunity of being in their places. One matter I overlooked when discussing the general question was the proposed expenditure of £50,000 on the extension of telegraph and telephone lines. That is a very large sum, but possibly good reasons may be adduced for the expenditure of so large a sum. Speaking generally, Queensland is on the whole fairly well off as regards facilities for communication by wire; and here I may say that I think the arrangement entered into by New South Wales and Queensland with regard to cheapening the cost of messages will meet with the approval of the country, though it appears on the face of it that the result will be to reduce the revenue to some extent. It is expected, however, that the estimated loss of £10,000 will be considerably reduced by the increased volume of business. I am reminded by the hon. member for Wide Bay that to retain the rate of 2d. a word for every extra word is a mistake.

The HOME SECRETARY: That was insisted on by New South Wales.

Mr. GLASSEY: I have no doubt that the Home Secretary, who represented Queensland would do his best to bring about a change in the rate for the extra words. I also see that considerable expenditure is likely to be incurred for the purpose of strengthening the armaments at Thursday Island. I have on various occasions urged as strongly as I could the necessity for strengthening the weak points of our longseaboard as much as possible; therefore I will not quarrel with this proposed expenditure, and I am not aware that any hon. member on this side will begrudge the necessary expenditure to make our coastline as strong as possible against attack. It is absolutely necessary to readjust taxation in such a manner that we shall be able to remove some of the burdens from a considerable portion of the community, and at the same time call upon those who are deriving large incomes—from Mount Morgan, for instance—and do not even reside in the colony, to contribute more than they do. There is nothing more that I need refer to at present, although I may have something further to say if any new point is raised.

Mr. KEOGH: I do not rise with any intention of opposing the salary of this gentleman, but I certainly am opposed to the amount that is proposed to be spent on defence. I am decidedly of opinion that the members of our military force do not earn their money, and that that money would be more profitably expended if distributed amongst our volunteers. I am prepared to support the proposed vote for marine protection in its entirety, and should be glad to see even more money spent in this direction, but I object to the amount of money wasted upon these people in Brisbane. When you see them in town the whole of Queen street does not seem to be large enough for one of them. They do the "la-di-da," and receive large sums of money for nothing. They go picnicking down the Bay, spending money which they decidedly do not earn. Of course we shall be told that it is for practice, but what do they practice? Only drinking champagne and that sort of thing, and therefore I should be glad to see the money distributed in a more useful manner. I hope the Treasurer will give his serious attention to this matter and see that these men earn their money in future; but I consider that the volunteers will eventually provide for the defence of the colony.

The HOME SECRETARY: As the leader of the Opposition seems to be desirous of maintaining the debate so as to allow hon. members on his side time to criticise the Statement, I shall occupy a few minutes in dealing with his remarks. I do not think he has said anything which will damage the force of that Statement, which, I think, gives a very clear exposition of the present condition of the colony. I am sure it was listened to with very marked interest and attention, and that it shows the actual condition of the colony and its progress. It is divested of all political feeling and bias, and only contains statements which hon. members on both sides will assent to, besides being worded in an impartial and lucid style which will enable it to be read by all who are interested in Queensland, wherever they may be situated. No Statement ever placed more explicitly before the people, and all who are interested in the colony, the actual condition of affairs at the present time. I may say that while I listened to the leader of the Opposition with considerable attention, I failed to see that any of his statements damaged its integrity or tended to weaken our confidence in it. The hon. member commenced by deploring that no legislation had been brought before the House before this Statement

was delivered, and said that some of the Bills on the table should have been proceeded with first. But I do not altogether agree with that view, because he must admit that it is the function of Government to consider what measures can be most conveniently proceeded with, and how the business of the country can be most satisfactorily conducted.

Mr. GLASSEY: What is the good of the other Chamber doing nothing?

The HOME SECRETARY: The other Chamber will have plenty to occupy its time before many weeks of the session are over, but I think the hon. member has not reflected that a very considerable time was occupied by the very discursive debate we had on the Address in Reply. Seeing that it was unanimously agreed to, the amount of time spent upon the debate was hardly justified, and had it been confined within proper limits we would probably have been discussing some of the Bills to which the hon. member has referred, and we might have provided something to occupy the time of the Council. The present week might have been occupied in the discussion of some of the matters of legislation on the paper had they not been in the department of the Chief Secretary, and containing legal matter which it is desirable he should expound to the House. It is natural that we should desire before entering upon that legislation that he should return from the very important meeting he is now attending in Sydney, and at which I have no doubt he is doing very good work, not only for Queensland, but for Australia generally. When he returns, the Bills which the hon. member is so solicitous to have under consideration will doubtless be proceeded with.

Mr. GLASSEY: The Secretary for Lands is also a legal gentleman.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, but the Bills on the paper belong to the department of the Chief Secretary, and it is desirable that he should be present when they are discussed. In fact, it was foreseen that his absence would cause some delay in connection with those Bills and some others which are to follow. In the meantime, by the discussion of the Estimates and the Financial Statement the ground will be cleared for the consideration of legislative action upon the Bills referred to and those which are to follow. I do not think, therefore, that the hon. member's contention will have any weight with the country as a charge against the Government for delaying action in connection with these matters. The hon. member's tone generally in connection with the Financial Statement continues to be of that pessimist character which characterised his utterances on the Address in Reply. I am very sorry to see that the hon. member continues in that morbid frame of mind in which he cannot see any "silver lining to the cloud" which has so long overspread the community. I regret that he will not accept the positive assurances that the condition of the colony is improving. On all sides evidences of improvement are to be found. In the department I have the honour to administer one satisfactory point is that the amount of relief being distributed is not so large as it was a year or two ago. The Labour Bureau informs me that while there is not the large demand for labour I should like to see, still in certain centres there is considerable activity and a much greater demand than previously existed. Another very important fact is that the index of gaols and criminals shows that the number of criminals is decreasing, and that may be accepted as an assurance of improvement.

Mr. GLASSEY: While the police vote is increased by £8,000.

The HOME SECRETARY: That does not necessarily imply an increase in the number of

criminals. It is due to the increased population and to the demands made upon the department for increased police supervision, not to arrest crime so much as to merely maintain law and order. I am glad to be able to agree with the hon. member for Rosewood as to the demand for labour.

Mr. KEOGH: I have been advertising for the last week, and cannot get a man.

The HOME SECRETARY: The wages of labour are on the upward grade, and that is one of the best indications of the return of prosperity in the colony. I shall not follow the hon. member for Bundaberg in all his discursive remarks upon the Statement, in which he opened up several large questions for the consideration of Parliament, each of which might furnish a night's debate. But I cannot pass over his constant assertion that the land occupation does not produce as much revenue as it might at the present time. I agree with him that that is a matter to be deplored, but why blame the Government for it? Contracts have been entered into under the Act of 1884, and a certain form of procedure has to be gone through in connection with them.

Mr. GLASSEY: Could you adopt no other procedure?

The HOME SECRETARY: Will the hon. member have repudiation?

Mr. GLASSEY: No, no!

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member does not advocate repudiation, and I will do him the credit of saying that I do not believe he would advocate it. I am sure that if he were on this side of the House he would see that it would be dishonourable to the colony. I am sure he would not adopt anything that would have even the appearance of repudiation, though he said, "unless it was a very unjust contract." That would be a very nice point, because what might appear unjust to him might appear just to the man whose contract was infringed. The matter deserves the very fullest consideration, and why should not the Supreme Court be the arbiter to decide whether the contract is just or unjust? The interpretation of the statutory enactment under which the contracts are made is delegated to the Supreme Court, and we must abide by its decision. The hon. member contends that year by year the Government could increase the pastoral rents, but tied up as they are by the enactment of 1884, continued by the Act of last year, it is impossible for any Government of their own sweet will to go against the decisions of the Supreme Court. That is a sufficient answer to the hon. member on that point. With regard to the endowment to local authorities, I would like to have seen a very much larger amount provided for them if the Treasurer had been able to grant it, but the question is whether the endowment should be enlarged and additional taxation imposed. The hon. member will see that the margin between revenue and expenditure is very small indeed and would not justify the Treasurer in making larger provision than appears on the Estimates—an increase of about £17,000 on the previous appropriation. But in addition to that the hon. member must bear in mind that there has been an increase provided in the roads and bridges vote which comes under the department of the Home Secretary, and which supplements the assistance to the local authorities.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: They have to impose taxation upon themselves for that, remember.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is a considerable assistance in the erection of new and the repair of old bridges, and it is an increased endowment in addition to that paid on ordinary rates.

Mr. GLASSEY: What does it amount to?

The HOME SECRETARY: It does not amount to a very large sum, but it is a considerable improvement. I certainly do not think the hon. member can draw any comparison whatever between the conditions in this colony and those in New South Wales with regard to the manner in which roads and bridges are constructed. In New South Wales roads and bridges are constructed, not only out of revenue, but also out of a large accumulation of money derived from the sale of land. However, it is not my intention at the present time to discuss the whole subject of local government, or the financial aspect of the matter, which is a very large question indeed. I shall only say that if I have the honour of introducing a Local Government Bill for the consideration of the House, I shall see that it contains a provision under which small divisions may be incorporated with larger divisions, so that the funds derived from the smaller divisions shall not be wholly appropriated to the payment of office expenses and the interest on loans obtained from the Government.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: The benefits of local government are to a large extent undermined by the fact that many of the divisions, especially near the larger towns, are too small; if these are made more extensive, they will have larger funds, and with more economic management, they will be able to effect the improvements that are desirable. To my mind, it is a matter for regret to observe that when you pass the border of Queensland into New South Wales you come upon much better roads than exist in this colony.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Main roads.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, much better main roads. At the same time, I do not wish to derogate from the utility of the local authorities; they are badly cramped, no doubt, for want of funds; but they must be content to wait for the reappearance of better times. With the reappearance of better times there will be the ability of their ratepayers to bear increased burdens, as well as the ability of the State to endow their rates. The hon. member also referred to a land tax, and endeavoured to show, as he constantly asserts, that the rates imposed by local authorities are in no sense a land tax. Well, whether they are a land tax or not, all who are possessed of landed property feel them to be a very oppressive burden. But, after all, I do not think, if the hon. member were to follow the incidence of a land tax, he would find that it was altogether a convenient or preferable tax at the present time. What was the position of the land tax that was mooted in the past? It would simply have affected a few freeholders. The Crown leaseholders would not come under the land tax, and its incidence would therefore be entirely unequal. I speak with a perfect knowledge of what I am talking about, and I say that the land tax proposed in the past was to be levied merely upon the amount of pastoral rents, and not upon the value of the fee-simple of the land, whereas the freeholder was to be assessed upon the actual value of his freehold. The incidence, therefore, of that taxation was distinctly dissimilar, and would have weighed heavily upon the freeholder, and would not have affected the leaseholder to the same extent. Besides that a very large area of the public estate of the colony is still vested in the Crown; that was to be wholly exempt, and the few men who had shown their confidence in the prosperity and progress of the colony by investing all the accumulations which they could from time to time make in freehold property were to be saddled

with a heavy land tax, while those who were not tied to the colony in any sense, but who perhaps occupied the land more profitably, were to escape the burden.

Mr. GLASSEY: It could not be considered very heavy.

The HOME SECRETARY: If a land tax were once imposed, like the income tax, it would come to stay, and the gradual abrogation of Customs duties would very likely follow. At the present time I do not think the absence of a land tax is to be deplored, at any rate until the financial condition and circumstances of the people improve. Another matter—one which I am not going to enter very largely into—is the question of immigration. The hon. member did not touch very much on that matter. I only hope that the Government will from time to time be able to see their way to encourage European immigration. I believe that with our immense territory we shall never have a really satisfactory distribution of taxation until some of our waste places are filled with profitable and permanent settlement. A remark made by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Bartholomew, elicited an interjection from the hon. member for North Rockhampton to the effect that I had advocated the selling of our railways. I wish to give a distinct denial that I have ever made any such statement, or that any such idea has ever entered into my mind. I have advocated the construction of railways by private enterprise in parts of the colony where the Government are not prepared at the present time to build railways, especially if based upon the principles pertaining to the Mareeba-Chillagoe Railway; and I have shown that if railway facilities are to be afforded to settlers over our vast extent of territory within a reasonable period that would certainly tax the borrowing powers of any Government. That is the whole extent of my advocacy of such railways, but to sell our present railways never entered into my mind. I have certainly represented to the House the value of our railways as a national asset—an asset that must constantly improve with the increase of settlement, but I should be very sorry indeed if it were attributed to me that I advocated at the present time, or any time that I can foresee, the selling of our railways, or that the Government should cease to have a hold over the railway system of this colony. I trust, therefore, that the hon. member will discriminate between the two positions; and I make these remarks because I do not wish the interjection of the hon. member for North Rockhampton to appear in *Hansard* without a contradiction from myself. The hon. member for Bundaberg quoted some elaborately compiled figures with regard to the agricultural settlement, to the effect that we had a smaller agricultural settlement per capita of the population than the other colonies, and that this colony was therefore not in a prosperous condition.

Mr. GLASSEY: I was answering the interjection which had been made that land settlement had been going on at a rapid rate during the last few years, and I said such settlement had been going on more rapidly in the other colonies, and that we were not progressing as rapidly as we ought to do, nor could we until we had a more progressive party in power.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member was of course within his province in pointing out the millennium that would arrive when the party supporting him occupied seats on this side of the House, and I am justified in pointing out that this is an hallucination—that the hon. member was maintaining a position which is not warranted by stern facts. If he will turn to "Mulball" he will find that in the great United States of America—where the agricultural industry is more

prominent than in any other country in the world—aided by machinery and continuous improvements in that direction, 9,000,000 of agriculturists produce in value more than one-half the value of the produce of 66,000,000 of agriculturists in Europe.

Mr. GLASSEY : I was dealing with Australasia, although I could deal with America too.

The HOME SECRETARY : The hon. member compared our agricultural population with that of the southern colonies, and came to the conclusion that agriculture was not in as satisfactory and progressive a state of development as in those colonies, and I refer him to Mulhall, who says that 9,000,000 agriculturists in America produce in value more than half the value of the produce of 66,000,000 agriculturists in Europe.

Mr. GLASSEY : That is due to science and invention.

The HOME SECRETARY : Exactly. It is due to skilled labour and invention, and possibly we may be, and are, producing crops in Queensland which are of a higher value per acre than those produced in the other colonies of Australia.

Mr. GLASSEY : And employ fewer hands in proportion, I presume ?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : That is what they do in the United States.

The HOME SECRETARY : I suppose the hon. member will accept "Coghlan" as an authority. He gives the average value of produce per acre in the various colonies. In his "Seven Colonies of Australasia" for 1895-6 he gives the value per acre of crops in New South Wales as £29s. ; in Victoria, £115s. ; in Queensland, £5 2s. 2d.

MEMBERS on the Government side : Hear, hear !

Mr. GLASSEY : Largely produced by black labour.

The HOME SECRETARY : Of course our sugar crop is largely produced by black labour, but the fact is there—that the value of our produce is £5 2s. 2d. per acre. In South Australia it is 18s. 6d. per acre, in Western Australia it is £3 2s. 8d., in Tasmania £3 16s. 3d., and in New Zealand it is £3 6s. 2d. per acre. So that, judged by those figures, we should be the most prosperous colony in the group in the value of our agricultural products.

Mr. GLASSEY : We ought to be, but are we ?

The HOME SECRETARY : "Coghlan" says—

From this estimate it will be seen that the value of produce per acre cultivated is much larger in Queensland than in any of the other colonies—a fact which is due to the proportionately large area under sugar-cane. But that does not at all detract from the fact that the value of our agricultural products ranks higher than that of any of the other colonies, and that is the particular fact sought to be established. I just say this by the way—that even if the hon. member's contention were correct, which I by no means admit, it does not at all prove that the prosperity of the colony is declining, or that it is progressing. I quote now from "Industries and Wealth of Nations," by Mulhall—a standard work. Under the heading of "Agriculture" he says—

It was observed by Lord Liverpool that the most prosperous periods of British agriculture were sometimes those in which the general condition of the British people was unsatisfactory, from which it may be inferred that agricultural depression may exist while the general progress of the country is uninterrupted. Thus the last half century has witnessed an unprecedented increase of commerce, manufacture, and wealth, and at the same time agriculture has ever been stationary, or in some respects retrograde.

He proceeds then to show that although agriculture has been stationary in the number of people

employed in Great Britain in the industry, yet at the same time the production may be maintained. He says—

It appears that two hands now produce as much in value as three did fifty years ago, and, seeing that prices have fallen no less than 40 per cent., it may be said that two men now produce as much in quantity as five did then.

Again, he points out—

England raises food sufficient to support her people only five and a-half months : Scotland, ten months ; and Ireland produces enough to feed 7,000,000 persons all the year, or 50 per cent. more than her actual population.

Yet I very much regret to say that Ireland is not the most prosperous of the three kingdoms. I mention this to show that the hon. member need lay no particular stress upon this point, and to show that he has not successfully demonstrated that agricultural settlement in Queensland is not progressing. I would ask hon. members who have been at the recent agricultural and pastoral shows in various parts of the colony—on the Downs, in the Moretons, in the Wide Bay district, or elsewhere—whether they saw anything like signs of adversity among the people ? Were not the people well-clad, looking happy, contented, and prosperous ? Are not the exhibits at these shows year by year improving and increasing in value ? Agricultural produce, which in former times we would have thought could never be raised, is now produced in districts in which the yield points to the fact that there is no more fertile country in the world than Queensland, and that the settlement taking place is attended with the most satisfactory results. The living object lessons which are presented before our eyes when we visit these shows is a sufficient refutation of anything like the pessimism of the hon. member for Bundaberg. I am convinced that our agricultural population—taking them man for man—will challenge comparison with the agricultural population of any of the other Australian colonies, and I believe that they are in a far more prosperous and contented condition than those of any of the southern colonies. The hon. member, therefore, has no justification whatever to cry out on their behalf that agricultural settlement here is not attended with more satisfactory results, or that the colony is not in this direction alone making progress by leaps and bounds, owing very largely to the wise and judicious action of Government in enabling the most fertile lands of the colony to be occupied by a prosperous agricultural population. The hon. member referred to the large sums of money asked for the electric telegraph extension. That expenditure is absolutely necessary at the present time. The hon. member approves of the reduced scale for telegraph messages between Queensland and the southern colonies, and I quite go with him in his desire to see that accompanied by the reduction of 2d. a word for extra words. It was not the fault of Queensland that that was not done ; but the fact is that although New South Wales claims to have every consideration for Queensland, yet when it comes to a question of pounds, shillings, and pence—whether it be in connection with our telegraphs, or in connection with our railways—anything in which there should be mutual co-operation—

Mr. LEAHY : Newspapers, for instance.

The HOME SECRETARY : I am not dealing with that question now. That had better be discussed on the Postmaster-General's Estimates. In those matters at any rate a real federal spirit should be shown, and I have no hesitation in saying that if that spirit existed we should have had lower tariffs both in telegraphic and railway rates between New South Wales and Queensland. In railway rates especially, I know

it is not the fault of our Commissioner that such a state of things does not exist. He has interested himself very largely in the matter, but he found the New South Wales authorities were unapproachable either in the matter of the tariff or in reducing the time of the train service whereby we might have fuller advantage of time gained under the recently contracted oversea mail service. In that matter it was impossible to get the authorities of New South Wales to agree. With regard to the item to which the hon. gentleman has referred I may say that it has become absolutely necessary that new wires should be extended to our border, and also to the North. Although the word "wire" seems very small, yet it requires the expenditure of several thousands of pounds to provide the increased facilities so that we may cope with the expected increase of business consequent upon a reduction of rates. I had not intended to speak or occupy the attention of hon. members at any great length.

Mr. HOOLAN: Go on. It is very interesting.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is not my business to criticise, nor can I find any room in the Statement for criticism. The comparative silence with which it has been received is certainly a compliment. It is a proof that it commends itself to the good sense and intelligence of the House on both sides, inasmuch as it has not challenged incisive criticism. I have little else to do but compliment the Treasurer on having presented such an acceptable Statement to the House, and also on the fact that the leader of the Opposition, who generally goes into minute detail when figures are concerned, has failed to make any onslaught on the speech to its detriment. While it is the province of that hon. gentleman to criticise, yet it seems to me that his criticism on this occasion has been of a very ineffective character. It will be a matter of interest to listen to the remarks of other hon. gentlemen and to see whether they will be able to effect a breach in the Statement which has been delivered. I think it would be a pity if a valuable document like this were allowed to be passed over in the way in which hon. members seem inclined to pass it over. I am sure it demands fair consideration, but I believe the more it is considered the more it will be fortified, and will show that the care which my hon. colleague must have devoted to its compilation has been well directed, and placed before those who are interested in the progress of Queensland a document which can be referred to at all times as showing the present condition of the colony and its substantial progress. It has been in former days the custom to take the debate on the Financial Statement in the House on the motion that the Speaker leave the chair and the House go into committee. That has its advantages in this respect: That the debate is conducted according to the procedure of the House. In committee of course it is competent for every member to make two or three speeches, but I believe it has always been accepted as the proper form that hon. members should make one speech containing all their objections to the Financial Statement, and deal with individual items when the Estimates are being considered.

Mr. GLASSEY: I spoke a second time for a purpose.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, I presumed that the hon. gentleman did not wish to see the debate terminate abruptly.

Mr. GLASSEY: Hear, hear!

The HOME SECRETARY: I hope, although we are in committee, that the good practice of making only one speech on the Financial Statement

will be adhered to, and that we shall not have a continuity of speeches from one or more members at different stages of the debate.

Mr. STEWART: As no one seems desirous of saying anything, I wish to pass a few remarks upon this Financial Statement. I cannot conceive why this document is headed "Financial Statement." It appears to me to be more like an inventory of goods of some wholesale house, which might be drawn up by a junior clerk, than a Financial Statement of the affairs of a great colony like Queensland. We have any amount of information in the Statement that we have access to in other ways. The fact of the matter is that the Statement is so loaded up with unnecessary detail that it is almost impossible for anyone not acquainted with the minutiae of finance to get a clear idea of what the real financial position of the colony is. It is not a thing of this sort that we want or expect from the Chancellor of the Exchequer. I would like to ask the hon. gentleman why he does not follow the excellent models set by the statesmen of older and even greater countries than Queensland—great as this colony undoubtedly is? Why does he not take Mr. Gladstone as a model, and deliver a lucid statement?

Mr. LEAHY: Why don't you?

Mr. STEWART: I am not Chancellor of the Exchequer, but when I attain to that position I will endeavour to follow a higher example than either the hon. gentleman or his predecessor. The hon. gentleman began by complimenting the late Treasurer, and says—

This colony owes a debt of gratitude to the late Treasurer for the masterly way in which he handled our financial affairs during the five years he was connected with the Treasury.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEWART: Of course hon. gentlemen opposite will say "Hear, hear" to anything. Sir Hugh Nelson was a little tin god to the hon. gentlemen opposite. But just let me see where the masterfulness of this gentleman's financial ability came in. The Government obtained authority from Parliament to sell certain areas of land on the distinct understanding that the proceeds were to go to the extinction of certain liabilities which they had incurred. What did Sir Hugh Nelson do? He sold the land, and he did not set the proceeds apart for that purpose. He threw the money into the consolidated revenue and funded the debt. Do hon. members opposite call that masterly finance? If that is their idea of masterly finance, I say, God help us from such financiers! We have had heaven-born financiers, and masterly financiers, and all sorts and conditions of financiers; and the only result of it is that the colony is getting deeper and deeper in the mire every year. I would have liked very much if the Treasurer had made some remarks upon how the revenue of the country is raised and how it is spent. But since the hon. gentleman did not see fit to enter into that question, I think it might not be altogether out of place if a humble member like myself did so. I find that the income of the colony is derived first, from taxation; second, from rents of Crown property; third, from railways; and fourth, from post and telegraph and miscellaneous. With regard to taxation, I find that that forms the chief portion of our income, and I find also that it is levied almost exclusively upon the poorer classes of the community.

Mr. McMASTER: Not at all.

Mr. STEWART: Who else is it levied upon? I believe an ordinary working man, earning £2 a week, contributes as much to the revenue of the colony as the hon. member who interjected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Who contributes the land revenue?

Mr. STEWART: Does the hon. gentleman call that taxation? Just imagine an hon. gentleman, filling the position of a Minister of the Crown, who says that rent is taxation! The hon. gentleman ought to go back to his books. He is not fitted to be a Minister of the Crown holding such crude ideas on the subject of government. If the hon. gentleman does not know the difference between rent and taxation, he ought to apply to his colleague sitting beside him, the Secretary for Public Instruction, who I have no doubt is not only able, but will be most willing to enlighten him. I find that the Customs duties are derived almost entirely from the earnings of the working classes. Our exports last year amounted to somewhere about £9,000,000. Suppose that in addition to that £9,000,000, another £1,000,000 was produced and spent within the colony. That would mean that our total products during the twelve months were £10,000,000. We imported a little over £5,000,000. That, with the £1,000,000 produced and spent within the colony, would make the earnings of the working classes somewhere about £6,000,000. The taxation upon this £6,000,000 is about £1,300,000. That is the question as it affects the working classes. But I find that there is another class which draws almost exactly half what the working people in the colony draw as wages. I refer to the absentees. These men get about £3,000,000 out of the colony every year. But how much do they pay in taxation? How much do they contribute to the cost of the government of the country? Only a few thousands per annum!

Mr. BATTERSBY: They found the money first.

Mr. STEWART: Is the money everything? Who found Queensland? Who finds the sun and the rain, and who finds the labour? I am not one of those individuals, if there are any such—I do not believe there are any—who desire to withhold from capital its due reward, any more than I desire to withhold from labour its due reward. But we ought to have a fair division. Capital should get its fair reward, and labour should get its fair reward. But we are talking now about the question of taxation, and I am not going to be led off that by the interjections of hon. members opposite. To repeat what I said, the working men of the colony get about £6,000,000 per annum, and upon that £6,000,000 they pay £1,300,000 in taxation.

The TREASURER: How do you make that out?

Mr. STEWART: That simply means that the amount of money the working classes receive for their labour is barely £5,000,000. Take the absentees. These men get £3,000,000, and they contribute only a few thousands per annum towards the government of the country. Do hon. members opposite think it fair that those absentees should go untaxed? We are asked to contribute a few thousand pounds additional this year for defence. Defence, if you please! Why, we have not only to find soldiers to defend those peoples' property, and to provide them with muskets and ammunition; we have not only to provide a navy and a naval brigade, and to lay down torpedoes and all the rest of it to defend those peoples' properties, but we have to throw our own persons into the breach if need be.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You won't be there.

Mr. STEWART: I do not object to defend my country. There is no country in the world that has a better record for defending itself than the country of which I am proud to be a native. And the particular portion of that country from which I came was never yet conquered by man. I can assure hon. members opposite that if ever there should be occasion to draw the sword in defence of Queensland, the Scotchmen of the country will not be the last in the fight. Where

will you get a better warrior than the hon. member for the Valley? Dress the hon. member in Highland garments, and put a sword by his side, and where will you get a better specimen of a warrior?

Mr. McMASTER: You would make a very poor one.

Mr. STEWART: We must get back to the question in hand. I would like to know whether hon. members opposite are going to permit this system of levying taxation to continue, or whether they are in the position indicated by the leader of this party, that they are not game to attack the absentees. The Home Secretary, talking about agriculture, said that notwithstanding the fact that Ireland produced 50 per cent. more than was necessary to support itself, its people were not in such a good position as those of England or Scotland. Had not the hon. gentleman sense enough to see that he was damning his own position? Can he not see that this colony is in exactly the same position? Ireland is an absentee-ridden country, and so is Queensland. It is just because Ireland is an absentee and a landlord-ridden country that it is in the position it is; and it is for exactly the same reason that Queensland is in the position it is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The best of all the colonies.

Mr. STEWART: I am not denying it, but no credit is due to the Government for that. We have larger areas of pastoral land than any of the other colonies; we have richer mineral deposits; we have a better climate; in fact, the Creator has richly endowed Queensland, and a beggarly Government tries to take the credit for it.

MEMBERS of the Labour party: Hear, hear!

Mr. STEWART: It is like the presumption of hon. gentlemen who sit over there. We have heard something about the rents paid by the pastoral tenants, and hon. members opposite admit that they are not sufficient. The hon. member for Bulloo is the only member, as far as I have discovered, who says they pay too much. He is in a minority of one on this occasion.

Mr. LEAHY: No, no!

Mr. STEWART: Yet, strange to say, we find it impossible to get more rent from the pastoral tenants. Why? Simply because the men on the front Ministerial bench have not the power, or the will, or the courage to alter these matters. The Home Secretary said everybody admitted that they did not pay enough, but Ministers were powerless because the Act of 1881 said one thing and the Act of 1897 said another. Why did not the hon. gentleman and why did not the Treasurer see while the Act of 1897 was going through that the rights of the country were safeguarded? Those hon. gentlemen are not here in the interests of the pastoral tenants, but in the interests of the community at large. Yet we find them admitting on the floor of this Chamber that they have been neglecting the interests of their constituents—sacrificing them to the pastoral lessees, or rather to the financial institutions who lease these lands. I find that some years ago the rents paid by the pastoral lessees amounted to one-eighth of the pastoral products, but now they are only one-fourteenth of the products. Pastoral properties are becoming year by year more profitable, notwithstanding the evidence lately given in a court of justice, and notwithstanding the assertions of the hon. member for Bulloo, who may very well be termed the member for the pastoral industry.

Mr. LEAHY: I would sooner be that than the member for St. Helena.

Mr. STEWART: Just imagine what would be the position of these pastoral tenants if Queensland were the property of some private landowner. With our population rapidly increasing and making every foot of land more

valuable, and with our pastoral products increasing every year, I ask any fair-minded man what a private owner would do. He would see that the rents bore some reasonable proportion to the incomes derived, and I say it is the duty of the Government to take up the same position as a private landowner would. I am not in favour of a private landlord rackrenting his tenants, but I say the State should have the same consideration from its tenants as a private landowner would. The Minister for Lands admitted some time ago that it was impossible for the State to get the same rent out of its lands as a private owner, but I do not see any reason for that except the supineness of the Government, or the fear that if they were to do certain things they might be turned out of power. If these are the lines on which government is to be conducted, the sooner we have a change the better.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Talk about something you know.

Mr. STEWART: I did not hear what the hon. member said.

Mr. LEAHY: That is a nice way to get out of it.

Mr. STEWART: The hon. member being the representative of a pastoral constituency holds the same ideas, perhaps, as the hon. member for Bulloo, but I can assure him that his knowledge is not founded on a rock. He asks me to talk about something with which I am acquainted.

Mr. FITZGERALD: Then you did hear me, did you?

Mr. STEWART: I don't profess to have a very exact knowledge of this subject, but I think I know quite as much about it as the hon. member who has interjected. I don't know, perhaps, quite as much as the hon. member for Bulloo, and perhaps it is as well for hon. members that I don't. Another source of our income is our railways. While Customs duties have gone up from 5 per cent. in 1888 to between 15 and 25 per cent. in 1898, I find that the rates of carriage on wool have gone down 50 per cent., so that the whole thing operates in favour of the absentees. Taxation on the people in the colony goes up, while charges on the absentees go down. I say we ought to reverse the order of things, and make taxation as light as possible on the people who are here while we make those who do not live here pay as much as possible. Coming to loan expenditure, I see that a sum of £20,000 is to be spent on immigration. Since the establishment of the colony, between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000 have been spent in bringing immigrants out to Queensland, and the interest on that money has to be paid until the debt is wiped out. The amount we are paying every year now, as interest upon that sum, is over £100,000, and why should we go on spending more money in introducing immigrants? Is there any scarcity of labour in the market? Is there any demand for labour?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Yes.

Mr. STEWART: I cannot hear of any demand that cannot be supplied.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: We do not want any more members of Parliament.

Mr. STEWART: I suppose members of Parliament will be wanted after both the hon. member and myself have disappeared from the scene. They were wanted before we came here, and they will be wanted after we have left, and we can always get them. If there were any scarcity of labour; if any industry or all our industries were crying out for labourers, does any hon. member imagine that that demand would not be speedily filled? If the employers of labour in this colony were paying sufficiently high wages to induce men to come here from the

other colonies or from the old country, those labourers would come here without any assistance whatever. There is always a large number of men, not only in Great Britain, but in the southern colonies and other parts of the world, who are eagerly looking out for a field for their labour, and if they were offered sufficient inducements they would soon come. But is there any need for bringing these people here? They will simply be coming into competition with those who are here now, and there are quite sufficient here already for all the work there is to be done; and, such being the case, it is quite out of place for the Government to propose spending any more money in this direction. What does it mean? It simply means that we are to be called upon by the State to find more labour for employers. We on this side have very often been asked to find employers for labourers, but the State, as represented by hon. members opposite, has always objected to take that course; and here we have another instance of so-called socialism in the employer's time. That is the spurious sort of socialism we have ladled out to us by hon. members on the other side. But what is sauce for the labouring goose should also be sauce for the employing gander; and, so far as I am concerned, this proposed vote will be opposed, as I do not see the slightest need for it. We do not require immigrants here, and, besides that, I do not think the people in the old country are in the least degree anxious to come here. What are the reports of our immigration agents? Have they not reported unanimously that the people in the old country, although they are not so comfortably off as they might be, are yet sufficiently comfortably off as not to be induced to come here by the wages offered? The Home Secretary took occasion, when speaking, to reply to an interjection of mine in regard to the railways, and said he had never advocated the sale of our railways; but still he was in favour of railways being constructed by private enterprise where the State did not care to build them. I am glad to have that expression of opinion from the hon. member. It pleased me exceedingly to hear that he did not contemplate the immediate sale of our railway system, and I am sure the colony will be relieved to hear such an expression of opinion from such a high authority. But we have heard something here to-night upon the general subject of railway extension. There are a number of places in the colony to which it is desirable to extend railways, but before extending those railways would it not be wiser to try to develop the country already served by railways? Would it not be wiser and better and more business-like to do that than to be continually building lines into new districts, and making experiments in railway construction? Go along any of our existing lines, and you will find immense areas of undeveloped country, and why should the colony be asked to increase its railway mileage while that country is still undeveloped? It would be most unbusiness-like. I next come to the question of the endowment to local authorities. The Treasurer expects to be able to increase the amount spent in this direction by about £17,000 during the current year, and I am glad that such is the case; but I did not hear the hon. member say one single word as to whether the method of distribution is to be altered, or whether it is to be continued as at present. I believe that in Victoria there is a system of differential endowments in force, and I should recommend the attention of the hon. member to that system, as I think it is a very much better system than ours. For instance, a great proportion of the amount voted here every year is taken up by Brisbane and other large cities, and I think such a method is entirely opposed to

the best interests of the country. Large populations should get as little endowment as possible, but the rate should be increased as you go further out in the country. The poorer the local authority—the less populous, and the more remote from the large centres—the larger should be the endowment; but the very opposite is the case at present. Why assist bodies which ought to be able to do their business without assistance? Brisbane and the bodies in the neighbourhood received £60,000 last year from the Treasury in aid of a bridge across the river, but I think they should have been able to build that bridge without assistance to the extent of one farthing from the State. That money would have been much more profitably expended if it had been given to some of the poor, outlying districts. I should like the Treasurer to take note of that idea, and I recommend it for his adoption. I do not wish to prolong this discussion, but I must say I am exceedingly sorry that the Treasurer, instead of acting carefully as I think the Treasurer of a colony in the position of Queensland ought to do, has started to plunge. I find that while the revenue is slowly mounting up—and that is most gratifying to every one of us as evidence, if not of a return to prosperity, of a return at least to better times than we have had—while the revenue is mounting slowly the expenditure is going up by leaps and bounds. I would advise the Treasurer to go slow, and not to be too rash in spending. The cost of government is increasing every year out of all proportion to the increase of population and the needs of the country. My opinion is that the Treasurer is "overrunning the constable," and will, if he does not take care, soon find the colony landed with another deficit. We know, of course, that it can be dealt with ultimately as deficits in the past have been dealt with and merged in the national debt, but I do not think that is masterly finance or the kind of finance an intelligent community would care to allow to go on. Notwithstanding that his receipts are increasing, I would recommend the Treasurer to put the brake on, or it is just possible that he may find himself with a deficit at the end of the year instead of a surplus.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The hon. member who has just resumed his seat referred to himself as a descendant of a race whose country has never been conquered. That is a country where the first Roman Governor, Agricola, erected a chain of forts to prevent the incursions of northern barbarians into the lower country. I only wish that the hon. member was there still—that Agricola's walls had kept him there—because in many of his remarks to-night, as on other occasions, he has shown a faculty for misconstruing and misrepresenting things as they really are. He has done so with regard to several paragraphs in the Financial Statement. First of all he has complained that there is too much information in the Statement; that hon. members could obtain it from their parliamentary papers. But the readers of *Hansard* require some information, and though hon. members opposite are ready to give it to them from their own point of view, the Treasurer does well when he has such an opportunity to give the reading public the fullest possible information; and I congratulate him upon the issue of a very full, precise, and lucid statement of the colony's finances. I do not say that I agree with all that is in the Statement; and, in fact, the Treasurer has come to some conclusions with which I cannot agree. In dealing with the question of pastoral rents the hon. member said he did not see why the Crown should not be just as firm with its lessees and tenants as private individuals are. I can say from my experience that private individuals in my district, and in the Southern part of the colony generally, are far

more lenient with their lessees than the Government are. I say that statement cannot be contradicted.

Mr. HARDACRE: Not with the pastoralists.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: It makes no difference what they are. I make no distinction.

Mr. HARDACRE: The Government does.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I am answering the statement of the hon. member for Rockhampton North. The Crown goes on year after year requiring a certain amount of rent, whether the lessees are in a position to pay it or not; but when the private owner of land finds his tenant is not in a position to pay the rent he makes some allowance for him, and in that way helps him to tide over his difficulties. I admit that we are not receiving a sufficient revenue from our pastoral lands. I have always taken up that position in the House, and I am going to take it up now; but the difficulty cannot be met by running straight at the lessees, and saying, "We require you to pay so much; you have not been paying enough." It must be done by a just system which has yet to be introduced. We are in this position: We have one member pleading to another to get this larger revenue. But we are a long way from attaining the proper system—which must ultimately come—that is, assessing each individual holding on its own basis of value; and that basis must be taken from a period of years, and not arrived at haphazard as has been done so often in the past. The hon. member for Bundaberg, in support of his argument, quoted figures showing that so much was received in 1884, and so much last year; but since 1884 a very large area then under pastoral occupation has become selected, a large area has been alienated, and a large area has—owing to the high rent placed upon it by the Crown—been thrown up altogether. Those are facts which anyone dealing with the pastoral rent question should take into consideration.

Mr. GLASSEY: I did not go back to 1884. I took the Treasurer's tables, going back about ten years.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: To be perfectly fair to the House, I think the hon. member should have gone back to the initiation of the 1884 Act. What is the real position? The revenue from pastoral rents in 1884 was £259,221, and for 1897-8 it was £322,244. But this is the point: From special sales of land we have received some £760,000, and that at 3½ per cent.—£26,600—should be added to the amount we are now receiving, because that land in 1884 was under pastoral occupation. Then I ask the leader of the Labour party to take into account the amount of land under pastoral occupation in 1884 which has since been selected as grazing farms, and also the area now open to selection as grazing farms. The total area alienated or selected since 1884, or available for selection, amounts to about 23,000,000 acres. In other words, 1,000,000 acres have been sold, 13,000,000 acres have been selected, and about 9,800,000 acres are at present available for selection. In dealing with this question the whole matter, and not a portion of it only, should be dealt with, because the public ear is so susceptible on these matters that it will probably take the hon. member's statement that we are getting so little, when that statement is not a statement of fact. That we should get more than we do I agree, but it is not going to be done in the way the hon. member suggests. To be fair to the hon. member, he said the physician should not prescribe until he was called in; and I can only assure him that when he gets to the Treasury benches he will find that to be one of the hardest nuts he will have to crack, and I do not think it will be cracked in his time. The hon. member for

Rockhampton North has taken exception to the loan proposals for assistance in the introduction of a desirable class of immigrants, and I disagree most thoroughly with him in that. It is an absolute necessity at the present time that we should do all in our power to assist in the introduction of a desirable class of immigrants. The hon. member says that if we offer sufficient wages here people will come from the old country and from the other colonies. I admit that if we could afford to offer higher wages here than are offered elsewhere people would come here, but we can only offer what our industries will return to us, and if that is sufficient for people who are working for less in other parts of the world, why should they not be induced to come here? Some of the best men in the country are those who landed here without a pound to bless themselves with. But they are now employers of labour; and the sooner we can introduce this desirable class of immigrants the better for the colony. The hon. member asked was there any demand for them? I can tell him that if the wheat harvest on the Darling Downs had been a full success this year the farmers there would not have been able to control enough labour to harvest their crops.

MR. STEWART: How long would that last—two or three weeks?

MR. ARMSTRONG: It does not matter how long it would last. The harvesting of his crops is everything to the farmer; if he does not get it in it is a loss to him for the remainder of the year. In my own district, which is also a farming district, it is almost impossible at the present time to get reliable farm hands. I use the word "reliable" advisedly, because you can get intermittent hands, who will stay a week or a fortnight, and as soon as they get a few shillings in their pockets they are off; but that is not the class of labour we want. It is, however, the class of labour that is, I am sorry to say, induced by the frantic utterances—I will not say of all members on the other side, but—of the hon. member for North Rockhampton. The hon. member for Bundaberg went very largely into statistics to show that the late Premier was not deserving of the praise accorded him in the first paragraph of the Financial Statement. I certainly commend the present Treasurer for the compliment which he paid to Sir Hugh Nelson. I think it was one that was most deserved.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

MR. ARMSTRONG: That reference showed a good feeling on the part of the present Treasurer, and I hold that every man in this House should pay a tribute to Sir Hugh Nelson for the work he has done for the colony. We have, as individuals perhaps, made assaults on the Treasury for our own little requirements which we thought were in the country's interests, and we know how the right hon. gentleman withstood our demands. It was purely his strength of will and determination that carried the country through in the year 1893-4, and that being so I hold it was a mistake on the part of the hon. member for Bundaberg to speak in the way he did, especially as the leader of a party. The hon. member attributes the success of the late Treasurer to the fact that during his administration of the Treasury Sir Hugh Nelson cut down the wages of the lengthsmen on the railways and the salaries of Civil servants. I ask what producer, what farmer, what single individual in the whole of Queensland did not have his income curtailed during those years? And was it not right from the colony's point of view that there should be a reduction in that very large spending department, the Railway Department? The railway lengthsmen themselves looked upon it

as a thing of necessity, and they have since got back a fair proportion of the reduction that took place in 1893.

MR. HARDACRE: No.

MR. ARMSTRONG: I say a fair proportion, and I am beginning to think that the present scheme of payment is a better one than that which existed before the retrenchment of 1893. As a producer I know that my income was very much reduced in the years 1893, 1894, and 1895, and I cannot see why lengthsmen and Civil servants should not submit to some reduction. I am one of those on this side of the House who helped to carry the legislation which effected that retrenchment. It is a very popular thing now to attack the Government for having done it, but everyone admitted that it was the right thing to do at the time. The hon. member also dealt with the amount that is set down for endowment to local authorities. With the Home Secretary, I am sorry that the amount is not larger. I am sure we should all like to have seen a large sum put down for that purpose. If there is prosperity in the colony—and we admit that there is—that prosperity has been directly brought about by the large settled population who really benefit most by the perfecting of the roads by which they bring their produce to important centres, and they should not now have to put up with the difficulties they endured in times past. The hon. member for Bundaberg, in reply to an interjection by myself, made the assertion that the roads in the country districts were in a worse condition at the present time than they were in 1890. I state distinctly that the roads in the farming districts and throughout the colony are better now than they were in 1890. I know that the hon. member for Bundaberg goes through my district occasionally, but he does not see it as I and others do who are intimately acquainted with the condition of the various roads, not merely the macadamised roads, but the roads that are made passable for farmers in different localities. Certainly we have not been able during the last few years to spend the same amount of money on the main roads as we did when the endowment was higher, but they are not in a more serious state of disrepair than they were in 1890. Had the boards in the settled districts received a higher endowment we should have been able to overcome the difficulties that exist, but it must be remembered that in 1889 and in 1893 we had heavy floods, and that the repairs which those floods necessitated exhausted the funds that were available for road purposes. Some boards were unable to surmount those difficulties, but we have now got past that. Still I should have liked to have seen a larger amount put down for endowment. There is certainly a sum of £10,000 down for roads and bridges, for which there was only £5,000 last year; and with reference to that I would say that I hope the basis upon which it will be distributed will be a fairly liberal one. I congratulate the Home Secretary upon the stand he has taken in matters I have brought before him. I think that if a divisional board have to find one-third of the cost of a bridge, and they are given two-thirds from this fund, they will be able to provide for the structures on main roads. One thing which struck me as peculiar in the remarks of the hon. member for Bundaberg was this: He stated that most of the pastoral properties in Queensland were now in the hands of the financial institutions, and then he went on to indicate that those institutions have such great influence that they have secured their partial immunity from taxation. Now, if those properties were producing such immense incomes for their owners as hon. members on the other side would have us believe, how comes it that

they are all in the hands of financial institutions? We have only to look at the trade journals, or the statistics of the colony for the last few years, to see that pastoral proprietors are giving mortgages to those institutions; but in the face of the assertions of hon. members opposite, how is it that they have got into this position?

Mr. HOOLAN: Mortgages are indigenous to the soil.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Amongst the men who have to mortgage their holdings are some of the most manly and persevering men in the community—men who have gone out to develop the country and fit it for closer settlement.

Mr. HOOLAN: Spirited men always get into debt.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: They have self-reliance, and they go out with a determination to make homes for themselves, and fortunes—if they can. Many of them go out with money, but come back with heavy mortgages. This is so well known that it is surely unnecessary to get up in this House and rail against these people, because there is no denying the Treasurer's statement that the pastoral industry is still the chief industry of the colony. It gives employment to more men and returns more value than any other industry, and it is not a bit of use attempting to destroy it. It will die out of its own accord. It will disappear quietly as grazing farming progresses, and that in turn will disappear before the advance of a still smaller class of settlement. It is a question of time, and no efforts of hon. members on the other side will hasten it. The only thing to be done is to make the best of the position.

Mr. GLASSEY: I do not want to destroy the industry. I only ask that it should pay a legitimate rent for the privileges it enjoys.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: We all ask that. The whole country asks it; but if it is so easy to do, why does not the hon. member, as the leader of a party, present us with a solution of the problem? The hon. member for Bundaberg compared Queensland with New South Wales while dealing with land settlement. Undoubtedly there is more agricultural production in New South Wales than here, but I question very much whether, in comparison with the population, that is so. I have not had time since the hon. member made the statement to look into it, but I shall not lose sight of it, and I shall answer him later on. In the meantime, I am sure that he is not correct. I find, on reference to "Coghlan," and following immediately on the tables which the hon. member quoted with reference to the yearly increases in the area under cultivation in each colony, the following statement:—

Thus, although the provinces of Victoria, South Australia, New Zealand and New South Wales have during this period provided the largest increases in the area of land cultivated, Queensland shows a much greater proportional increase.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: He did not read that.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: No; I am sorry the hon. member did not read that. I think he was wrong to omit that statement. It goes on to say—

Whilst agriculture in Tasmania has, relatively to population, remained almost stationary, It often strikes me as strange that hon. members when quoting from authorities go only as far as they want, and go no further. I am sure that it would be much better in our discussions if they would quote the whole thing, and then we would know where we were. In dealing with the question of population the hon. member should know that in every community where there is a large consuming population, the increase of production will be proportionately greater. New South

Wales shows a higher consuming power than Queensland, but that is purely attributable to the greater population—the very thing the hon. member for Bundaberg and the hon. member for Rockhampton North want to prevent us getting. These things will correct themselves when we have more people. Dealing with the disposal of the public balances, the hon. member for Bundaberg questioned the advisableness of the Government having such a large amount at current deposit in the Queensland National Bank. Why did the hon. member not state that in six other banks the Government had £700,000 at fixed deposit?

Mr. GLASSEY: I did.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I did not understand the hon. member to do so. At all events he did not go so far as to give the Treasurer credit for having spread the balances formerly held by three banks over seven banks.

Mr. GLASSEY: But I say those sums are not required to be placed there.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I ask the hon. member what would he do with them? Would he put them in a box and lay them on the table of the House? They cannot be instantly employed in reproductive works, and a certain amount has always to be sent home to meet our interest engagements. The next half-year's interest, for instance, is now either in London or on the way there. The Treasurer promised last year that he would distribute our public balances over the associated banks, and he has fulfilled that promise. Instead of being all in the Queensland National Bank, the Royal Bank, and the Bank of North Queensland, it is now spread over those three banks and the Bank of New South Wales, the Commercial Banking Company of Sydney, the Union Bank of Australia, the Australian Joint Stock Bank, the London Bank of Australia, and the English, Scottish, and Australian Bank.

Mr. HOOLAN: Is the money in those banks? Well, it is to be hoped it will not get into the pockets of the directors.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The hon. member should give the Treasurer credit for distributing the money in that way, instead of allowing it to be still concentrated in three banks. The amount at current deposit in the Queensland National Bank is only £618,000—just about enough to meet the engagements of the colony for two months. Are we to borrow or overdraw at every moment that we require a certain sum?

Mr. GLASSEY: I said that the money should be distributed over the other banks, but that we have too large a sum at fixed deposit in the other banks.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: There is no advantage in that, because it is in to-day and out to-morrow. I can see no reason why the balances should not remain where they are, and I think their distribution is quite correct and right. I should, however, like to point out to the Treasurer that I think Parliament would be more satisfied if the audit sent out from England showing the state of the balances, the Treasury notes and savings bank stock, was signed by two or three independent auditors instead of by one official in the Agent-General's office. Dealing with the Financial Statement generally, I think the provision made in the way of expenditure is wise, but I take very great exception to the amount placed on the Loan Estimates. During the debate on the Address in Reply I called attention to what I thought was the dominating influence in the Cabinet—the interests of the Northern portion of the colony. I take exception first to the expenditure at Mackay. I observe that £13,700 is to be granted to the harbour board. Then the Plane Creek Mill absorbs another £4,000. I

think it would be far cheaper to spend £13,000 on a short line to Port Newry than waste that amount of money on the harbour.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You are speaking about something you know nothing about.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That is the way the hon. gentleman usually answers a difficult question. Then I notice for the same locality a proposed expenditure of over £5,000 on the Double Peak Mill and also £20,000 for a tramway. Here in one year it is proposed to spend at Mackay alone a sum of £43,700, and in addition to that it is proposed to spend £80,000 on a tramway system north of Rockhampton. These are matters which, from a Southern point of view, are certainly worth considering when we remember the pressing need which exists for the construction of small lines of railway for the purpose of carrying farming and other produce and to act as feeders to the main lines. It appears to me that the North is to be boomed at the expense of the South.

The HOME SECRETARY: All this money has been borrowed.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I am prepared to admit that; but what has been the experience with Mackay on former occasions? Money has been borrowed; but how has the interest and redemption been met?

The TREASURER: Mackay has always paid.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The Pioneer Board is certainly in a fair state, but there is interest and redemption money due to the Government by the Mackay municipality. I have often thought, when looking at the expenditure that goes on in that sink of sovereigns, the Pioneer River, that it would be better to buy the whole place back again and hand it over to the blacks. Then, again, there is a proposed reticulation scheme for this insolvent town, which will mean the borrowing of more money—a sum of £10,000, I believe.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Are they not to have a water supply?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I think they ought to pay their overdue interest and redemption first. Then there is a proposal to borrow sufficient money to erect a huge sugar refinery.

The TREASURER: That comes from the Labour party.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I am not concerned with the origin of the scheme. All I know is that it is a public question; that by-and-by it will exercise the mind of public opinion, and that it will be represented through two Ministers in this House. There is another proposed item of loan expenditure to which I take exception—the proposed bridge over the Maranoa River at Cunnamulla. That might easily be held over for a year or two. The bridge may ultimately be necessary, but at present I hold that it is not. The argument is that if you leave the railway at Cunnamulla you cannot get across the river, but for years and years teams and everything else have been able to cross a little to the east of the town. There is no pressing necessity for this expenditure, which means extra taxation, which will fall heavily upon the South. The money might easily be spent upon more reproductive works.

The HOME SECRETARY: It means a feeder to the railway at Cunnamulla.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I can assure the Home Secretary that it means nothing of the kind. People have been able to get into Cunnamulla for years and years past without any bridge, and where is the pressing necessity for a bridge there now?

The HOME SECRETARY: Why is it necessary to build a railway?

Mr. ARMSTRONG: The necessity for the railway is apparent, but I look upon the bridge as something which will be used as a lever to effect the extension of the railway. Until Parliament has decided that it is wise to extend the railway we have no right to vote this money for a bridge, and if it goes to a vote I shall oppose it. With these exceptions I am pleased with the Financial Statement. Unlike some hon. members who have preceded me, I see very little to quarrel over in the Financial Statement from a revenue and expenditure point of view; but I take great exception to the items I have just mentioned.

After a pause,

Question put.

Mr. JACKSON: There seems to be a considerable amount of reluctance on the part of members on this side to discuss the Financial Statement. I do not know whether that is because the Treasurer is a rather popular gentleman with them and that they do not care to criticise his Statement severely, or whether it is because we fired off all our grievances during the Address in Reply. It may seem rather ungracious to take exception to the compliment the Treasurer paid to his predecessor, Sir Hugh Nelson; at the same time I am not prepared to admit that there has been such a great deal of financial ability shown by hon. gentlemen on the other side who have been running the Government during the last few years. Of course they can point to the £65,000 remitted from Customs duties. On the other hand, I would say, look at the increased taxation that has been put on during the last few years.

The TREASURER: It is less per head.

Mr. JACKSON: There has been a large amount of extra taxation imposed. There have been increased duties—both Customs and excise—on beer and tobacco, and tobacco licenses have been imposed. From the excise duty on beer alone £48,000 were realised during the last financial year. And we must also consider the amount of money the Government have saved during the last few years by cutting down the wages of Government employees. Then look at the £1,700,000 of deficit. We did not fund the whole of that amount. There was funded £1,200,000, and the balance between that and £1,700,000 has been made up by surpluses and also by money received for Government Savings Bank stock. I do not think there has been any great financial ability shown by the late Premier. If we look also at the advances made to the sugar-mills we see that out of a total of £430,000 advanced £58,000 are due in interest and redemption. I am well aware that sugar has fallen very considerably, and I remember seeing the other day in the newspapers a statement made by the Secretary for Agriculture, who we all know is particularly interested in the sugar business, that the Government would consider that matter of the reduction in the value of sugar; and it is proposed to give the sugar-growers who have received this money a further extension of time in order to pay up the balance. I agree with what was said by the leader of the Labour party that Customs duties have been increasing all the time.

The TREASURER: They are less per head.

Mr. GLASSEY: That is in consequence of the increase of population.

Mr. JACKSON: It is possible it may be a little less per head. Since I became a member of the House in 1893 I have made it a practice, until the last year or two, to denounce the tariff we have in Queensland. It is, in my opinion, an unjust tariff to the North, and generally speaking it is an unjust tariff to the poorer classes of the community. But during the last year or two I have not made a special point of

objecting to the tariff, because I considered the probability was that in a very short time the control of our Customs duties would pass over to the Federal Government, and that therefore it was not worth while agitating the matter any further. I also recognised that there was a very strong protectionist feeling amongst some members on this side of the House, as I know there is on the other side, and I was rather prepared to drop my objection to the tariff on that account. To reduce the Customs tariff, and at the same time to collect the same amount of revenue that we are now collecting, it would be necessary, as I pointed out some years ago, that we should have a land and income tax, and also that more money should be raised from our Crown lands. That seems to be generally admitted. The hon. member who has just sat down has admitted that we ought to receive more money from our Crown lands, particularly in the shape of rent from pastoral lessees.

Mr. LEAHY: And have more leases forfeited.

Mr. JACKSON: I am aware that there has been a good deal of land forfeited by pastoral lessees in the far Western country who considered the rent too high. I believe a great many of the Western runs are too highly rented. The hon. member for Lockyer challenged the leader of the Labour party to put forward some feasible scheme by which we could get a larger revenue from pastoral rents. The solution of the matter is simple. We ought to charge a less rental in the dry portions of the colony, and a much larger rental for better country within the more settled districts—I am not referring to the strip along the coast—and where there is a much heavier rainfall. To return to the question of the tariff, I still hope that in a very short time we shall have a Federal Government that will deal with Customs. I notice, from a telegram in to-day's paper, that our Premier has been speaking on federation in Sydney, and I congratulate the Government on the fact that the Premier has become apparently a convert to federation. I admit that the remarks made by him were made at a banquet, and that it is customary to discount speeches made on such occasions. I myself had to appeal for mercy on that account in a speech I recently made at Gatton. So that, probably, when the hon. gentleman returns to Queensland, and is hauled over the coals by some members on the other side with regard to what he said on federation, he may plead that the speech was made at a banquet. Some years ago, speaking on a Financial Statement in this House, I pointed out that if we had a land and income tax and obtained a little more from our Crown lands, the amount of money paid out of the consolidated revenue to make up the deficits on our railways could be made up in that way; and then we could go on making railways perhaps till further orders. The Treasurer in his Financial Statement tells us to look at Table S. He wants, I think, to point a moral which may act as a sort of wet blanket on members who are desirous of getting railways constructed, but I take a different view from studying the tables. I take it that the hon. gentleman was referring to some of the railways that do not pay interest on the cost of construction. In the Southern division we find the return on capital invested was £1 19s. 11d. in 1897-8; and in the Central division it was £4 6s. 8d., which is considerably greater than the return for the previous year. No doubt that excessive return was caused principally by the quarantine, which caused a large number of cattle to be trucked to the meatworks at Rockhampton—not that I want to throw any discredit on the earnings of the Central Railway. The return for the Northern Railway was £6 18s. 9d. per cent. which was a drop of nearly £1 as compared with

the previous year, and I think that drop is to be accounted for by the drought the North suffered from very considerably last year. The returns from the other Northern railways, I am sorry to say, do not show any interest on expenditure. Some of them have paid working expenses, some have not. These figures might lead one to take a rather pessimistic view of the position, but if we look at the first part of the table and see the net revenue derived since 1893, I think our deductions will take a more hopeful turn. The net revenue for 1893-4 was £332,000; in the next year it was £393,000; in 1895-6 it was £408,000; in 1896-7 it reached £452,000; and in 1897-8 it was £472,000. So it is evident that the net revenue is gradually creeping up. Then if we look at the actual charge on the consolidated revenue we find that in 1893-4 it was £420,000; in 1894-5 it was £364,000; in 1895-6 it was £348,000; in 1896-7 it was £317,000; and in 1897-8 it was £316,000. So that there has been a big drop since 1893. Then if we look at the next lot of figures we find that the return on capital invested was at the rate of £1 16s. 2d. per cent. in 1893-4, the following year it was £2 2s. 7d. per cent., the next year it was £2 3s. 6d. per cent., the next year it was £2 6s. 7d. per cent., and in 1897-8 it was £2 7s. 3d. per cent.—which is very nearly the rate at which we can borrow money at present. My deductions from these figures are that if we levied land and income taxes, and got a larger revenue from the land under pastoral occupation, we should make up the actual charge on the consolidated revenue—that is, the amount taken from revenue to make up the deficit on our railways; and if we could raise that amount by extra taxation we could go on making railways all over the country. Of course we should have to raise sufficient taxation all the time to keep this amount clear.

Mr. LEAHY: Would not the people have to pay it all the same?

Mr. JACKSON: Some would have to; some might have to pay a little more. The hon. gentleman must remember that under our present system of making railways where the State finds all the money, it is one class of the community that benefits principally by railway construction—the squatters out West, the landowners, the people who derive their incomes from the colony, and yet there is no return given at present by these people, that is—

Mr. LEAHY: The main trunk lines pay.

Mr. JACKSON: They pay interest on the cost of construction, but there have been a great many lines made besides those. Does the hon. member argue that the lines about Brisbane, for instance, have not increased the value of land about Brisbane? I say they have, and those people who have received this benefit from the State construction of railways ought to pay something towards the revenue as a set-off. I am sorry the Government do not intend to proceed with any railways this session. I would like to see a couple of lines made in my electorate. We know that the hon. member for Bowen has asked for a line from the terminus of the Bowen line towards the Northern Railway. The people at Ravenswood are very anxious to see that line extended towards the Northern line, but they think a better route than to the 37-mile peg would be coming towards Ravenswood. I will not go into the details because there have been a couple of flying surveys made and the Government intend to make another one, and there will be an opportunity of discussing the question when the motion put on the paper by the hon. member for Bowen comes on for discussion. There is also another railway which the whole of the people in the Kennedy electorate are very much interested in—the extension of the line from Clermont to the North line at

Ravenswood or some other point. I will not attempt to go into the merits of that line either. I am only pointing out that there is a strong desire on the part of many members to see in the Government programme a vigorous policy of railway construction.

Mr. BATTERSBY: You might get it.

Mr. JACKSON: I should be very glad to have the support of the hon. member for Moreton. I believe I should get it in a case of that sort. While on the subject of railway construction I may say that I hope the Government will sooner or later introduce some system of cheap lines in agricultural and other districts. I had an opportunity recently of travelling with the Premier's party to the Darling Downs—a visit which I very much enjoyed, and which was very instructive to me. During the day or two I was there I saw the necessity of making some sort of cheap lines into that district, and the same remarks apply also to the Atherton district. That is a district I am very well acquainted with, although it is not in my electorate, but I have friends and relations living there, and have no doubt but that hon. members can quote other cases in which it would be well to open up the country by means of these lines. Coming back to the question of getting larger rents from the pastoral tenants, the Treasurer himself admits that a larger revenue ought to be obtained. He says in the Statement that he should like to see a larger income from the runs, and also that the present method of assessment is unsatisfactory.

Mr. LEAHY: I suppose he would like to see a larger revenue all round.

Mr. JACKSON: Yes; but when the Treasurer puts an authoritative statement of that kind into his Budget Speech, it looks as if there was something wrong about our present system. I am not going so far as the leader of the Labour party, who said that the Government were not sincere in this matter of trying to obtain a larger revenue from the pastoral tenants, because I think, after having read the cases that were before the court recently, that the Government made a big fight to get higher rentals.

Mr. LEAHY: You may take my tip; they are sincere enough upon that point.

Mr. JACKSON: The hon. member for Bulloo is an authority upon that point, and I shall take his tip. I believe the Government are anxious to obtain a larger revenue, and there is the fact that they are appealing against the decision of the Supreme Court. I think that shows their *bona fides*.

Mr. LEAHY: They started in the wrong place.

Mr. JACKSON: I can quote another instance to prove that I think they are sincere, and are really in earnest in this matter. I remember reading in the *Courier* of an interview with a Mr. Field, who stated that most of the squatters in his district held their lands under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, and their leases would very soon be expiring. They are just about expiring now, and the question with those far western squatters is, whether they shall renew them. They have the right to renew them for ten years on payment of £1 per square mile, but they say they cannot make a living now at 15s. per square mile. I may explain to those who are not particularly well up in the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, that the rental fixed in that Act was fixed in a very rough and ready fashion. It seems strange to us at present that legislators in those far back times should pass an Act of Parliament which fixed the rentals in such an automatic manner. The lease is for twenty-one years. For the first seven years the rent was 5s. per square mile; for the second term of seven years it was 10s. per square mile, and for the third term 15s. per square mile. Now,

the assumption was that every square mile of land held under that Act was of equal value—a most absurd conclusion to draw.

Mr. LEAHY: You are entirely wrong. There is the dry-country clause, for instance.

Mr. JACKSON: I had forgotten that particular clause, but what I have stated is practically correct, taking it all through, and most of the runs paid what I have said. Now that that Act is about to expire, the squatters represented by Mr. Field do not see their way to renewing their leases at £1 per mile, and yet they are afraid to come under the Act of 1897. Under the 1897 Act the minimum was reduced to 5s. per mile, whereas under the Act of 1884 it was 10s. per mile. Those squatters are afraid to trust the Government officers, and I think that is a sufficient proof that the Government have been acting in good faith in trying to get increased rents from the runs.

Mr. LEAHY: There is no minimum for the second and third periods.

Mr. JACKSON: After that interview there was one with the Secretary for Lands, who, I understand, proposes to give these squatters some relief. The suggestion made by Mr. Field was that some entirely new method should be adopted of assessing the rentals of the runs. He proposed that the country should be classified according to rainfall. Class (a) would consist of country on which the average rainfall was 6 inches, and of that the rent should be a maximum of 2s. 6d. per square mile. Class (b) would have from 6 to 10 inches of rain on the average, and its rent would be 10s. per square mile; and class (c) would have from 10 to 15 inches of rain, and its rent would be 15s. per square mile. There may be something in that idea; probably there is, and it might be worth trying. I understand the Secretary for Lands intends to bring in some legislation on the subject shortly, although there is no indication of it in the Governor's Speech or in the Financial Statement, but something will have to be done.

Mr. LEAHY: You were nearly right.

Mr. JACKSON: The hon. member for Bulloo has been particularly good at interjections to-night, but I hope he will reserve them till later on. It is always a pleasure to listen to him on pastoral matters, because he is a past master on those subjects, but he has not spoken on the Address in Reply or on the Financial Statement.

Mr. LEAHY: I am not going to waste time.

Mr. JACKSON: I do not think my remarks are altogether opposed to the views of the hon. member for Bulloo.

Mr. LEAHY: I have only corrected you; you were nearly right.

Mr. JACKSON: I am very glad to know that. I do not profess to know nearly so much about this matter as the hon. member. To deal with another matter referred to by the hon. member, Mr. Bartholomew. I did not hear all the hon. member said, but dealing with the advantages of consolidating our national debts I heard him say that if we could only consolidate them, and instead of paying 4 per cent. pay only 3 per cent. we would be able to save something like £300,000 a year. That would be a very good thing for the colony if it could be done, and my proposal for a land and income tax could then be put on one side as the £300,000 would exactly fill the bill, and we could use that sum to make up the deficit on our railways. But I am afraid the suggestion is rather too good to be true. At the same time Sir George Turner has a proposal now before the Victorian Parliament to consolidate the national debts of that colony. It looks as if federation was rather far off when the Victorian Premier is talking of consolidating their debts, as it has always been understood that one of the advantages we would get from federation would be that we should be able to

consolidate our national debts, probably at a reduced rate of interest—as Australia would be able to give greater security. Whether Victoria or Queensland can consolidate their national debts singlehanded and gain much from it is a question upon which I am very doubtful. We might consolidate and get a lesser charge for interest, but very often when consolidation takes place in that way it simply means increasing the capital, and there is no particular saving in that. It simply means passing a little more on to posterity. This question of the consolidation of our national debts is a very important one. It may seem a bit far fetched to consider the question of the debts that will fall due within the next twenty-five years; but when we see that federation is not very likely to come off it is well worth the while of Australian Treasurers to consider whether it is not advisable to consolidate their national debts, and I have a few figures here showing the debts that will be falling due within the next twenty-five years, and they will seem rather astonishing to those who have not looked up the matter. I find that in 1913 we have a debt falling due of about £1,500,000; in 1915 Queensland will have a debt falling due of about £11,700,000; then New South Wales, in 1918, three years after, will have to meet a debt of £12,826,000; Victoria, in 1919, will have a debt falling due of £10,000,000, and in 1923 a debt of £7,750,000. Queensland, in 1924, will have to find £13,000,000 within a few pounds; and New South Wales, in the same year, will have £16,500,000 falling due. That makes altogether £73,000,000 falling due as I have indicated. Besides that there are smaller amounts I have not reckoned, and in connection with them Victoria has, between 1889 and 1913, a sum of £20,000,000 to meet, and New South Wales has to meet £13,000,000 between 1898 and 1912, in addition to what I have stated. That makes a total of £93,000,000 which these three colonies have to repay within the next twenty-five years. It is rather a serious question to consider how these loans are to be repaid. As a rule, we know that when a loan becomes due for repayment we simply re-vote it. That is the custom, but if we think that in some of the years when this money is falling due there may be a war and the money market may be unsettled, it will be evident to everyone—whether he is a particularly cautious individual or not—that the Treasurers of Australia ought to consider whether these loans ought not to be consolidated and made interminable. That is the position which the Treasurers should take up—that the loans should be interminable, with a right of paying them off at any time after twenty-five years. It is astonishing to think that the Australian colonies in floating loans have not floated them under those conditions, especially when we know that private financial companies have been in the habit of borrowing money on those conditions, by the issue of interminable debentures with a right to pay them off.

The HOME SECRETARY: There are two people to a bargain, remember. The buyers of stocks might not agree to take interminable debentures.

Mr. JACKSON: If they will take them from private companies they will take them from colonies, and, if I recollect aright, that course was adopted in the case of one of our loans.

The TREASURER: The fifty years' loan we have a right to pay off in twenty-five years.

Mr. JACKSON: I thought we had adopted that course in one of our recent loans, and I am glad to hear from the Treasurer that that is so. A good deal has been said about the amounts of public money at fixed deposit; but I am not inclined to find much fault with the caution of

the Treasurer in keeping a fair amount of money at hand at fixed deposit. I am very glad to find, with regard to the coin reserve which we have been keeping at the back of our State note system, that the Government have placed £250,000 of it at fixed deposit. I have pointed out several times during the last year or two that there was no necessity to keep such a large reserve of coin at the back of our note system. We have had our note issue in force now since 1893, and I think the public have full confidence in it. At present the Treasurer is keeping a coin reserve of £367,000 to back a note issue of £1,000,000. That is some £117,000 over the margin of 25 per cent. of coin, which is considered a sufficient reserve. In my opinion that £117,000 could be used in some other way, and in this respect the Treasurer is exercising rather more caution than is necessary.

The TREASURER: We cannot get it out.

Mr. JACKSON: Well, the hon. gentleman has got £250,000 out of the coin reserve, and placed it at fixed deposit in the Commercial Bank of Sydney and the Bank of New South Wales. There was no occasion to place it at fixed deposit; he could have used it for the benefit of the country. With regard to mining, I am very glad to notice that for the first time in the history of Queensland the output of gold last year was of more value than that of any other single article exported from the colony. I do not mean to say that it is larger than the pastoral productions, if we include beef, wool, hides, and tallow, but it is the largest single item in our exports. We had an increase of £9,000 in the revenue from the Mines Department last year; I noticed from the Financial Statement that the sum of £11,000 that was spent in the purchase of mineral specimens has been charged to the Mines Department, which of course brings the surplus from that department down to a very small sum indeed. I think that £11,000 should have been paid out of loan. If that had been done we should have had a surplus of £11,000 from the Mines Department, and that could have been spent very advantageously in assisting in the establishment of schools of mines in the colony. At the present time we have not a single school of mines in Queensland. We all know what the Government have done for the agricultural industry in establishing an agricultural college, but no steps have been taken to assist the mining industry by establishing a school of mines. Look at the attitude of the Minister for Mines in Victoria, who is establishing metallurgical branches in different parts of that colony. He estimates that there is a loss of £500,000 per annum in Victoria owing to the defective treatment of gold ores, on account of not having more scientific knowledge available for the treatment of refractory ores. We know that in Victoria they are about as far advanced in the extraction of gold as any other part of Australia, and if there is a loss of £500,000 there, what must be the loss in Queensland where we have so many mineral fields carrying refractory ores? It must be very much greater. Mining members have had frequent experience of the loss that has taken place. I, myself, in travelling round my own electorate, and visiting the different goldfields, have constantly seen tailings that have been put through the cyanide process which have had to be treated over again, not for any want of intelligence on the part of the persons concerned, but because they had not the scientific knowledge necessary for the treatment of the sands. The Treasurer draws attention in his Financial Statement to the advantages that have accrued to the mining industry in the Northern part of the colony owing to the construction of the Chillagoe Railway. Well, I think that is quite true there

has been such a rush of miners, speculators, and capitalists, as those hon. members who voted for that railway did not expect at the time they supported it. I wish here to make a little personal explanation. It is well known that, along with the hon. member for Carpentaria and the hon. member for Burke, I have been charged by certain Labour papers in this colony with having accepted a bribe for the vote that I gave in connection with that railway. I shall not say here what further action I may take in the matter, but I do say distinctly that I was never approached by anyone in any way with regard to my obtaining any pecuniary interest if I voted for that railway. I never received one farthing in any shape or form, nor was there ever so much as a hint given that I should do so, and I say with the hon. member for Carpentaria that I do not believe any member in this House received any money or any other favour whatever because of the vote given for that railway. My vote was given for the railway, and I never gave a vote in this House more honestly. I believed that that railway would be the means of opening up some country, though I did not look at it so much from that point of view as I did from the point of view that it was on the same footing as a railway made to any mine for the purpose of bringing the ore down to the crushing-mill. I did not dream that the making of that railway would open up the Chillagoe in the way it has done. If I had thought that the district was such an extensive mineral district, there would have been more justification for insisting upon the Government making the railway but there were no mines working there at that time, except the mines owned by the company who proposed to construct the railway. Mr. Moffat was the principal owner, but since the Bill was passed the men who got the concession, if you like to call it a concession, have shown that they were not concession-mongers, and have proved their *bona fides* by putting their hands into their own pockets to make the railway. I am informed that they found the bulk of the money of the company, and that they practically own nearly all the shares at the present time. We heard some time ago about the tremendous increase in value of the syndicate's shares. I have made inquiries, and have not been able to attest that it is true that the sales that have been mentioned ever took place. My information is that those shares were not sold at that tremendous high value stated in the Press. I wish hon. members, and whoever may read my remarks in *Hansard*, to understand that although I voted for that railway last year I am still just as great a believer as ever in the State ownership and construction of railways. I think the whole of my speech on the question of railways to-night shows that I still believe as firmly as ever in the State ownership and construction of railways. I wish before concluding to reciprocate the kindly sentiment expressed by the Treasurer at the close of his Financial Statement, where he refers to the fact that there has been no industrial disputes in the county during the last year or two, and says he hopes that capital and labour will go hand in hand in the development of the colony. I re-echo the hon. gentleman's sentiments. I hope there will be no more industrial disputes in this colony for a long time to come; but hon. members on the other side ought to give the Labour party credit for having had something to do with the fact that there have been no industrial disputes. It is quite evident that if the working classes of the community have a fair representation in this House—if they see that their interests are safeguarded here—there is much less temptation for them to take up an antagonistic attitude in industrial disputes. My

opinion has always been that it is quite possible to elevate the condition of labour, to raise the standard of living, and to raise the standard of education among the working classes without doing any serious injury to the capitalist—indeed without doing any injury at all.

On the motion of the TREASURER, the House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at three minutes past 10 o'clock.