

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 1898

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SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.
TREASURY.

The TREASURER moved that £6,140 be granted for the Treasury. The vote was £190 more than last year, which was due to a number of small increases—namely, £25 each to the Receiver and the Registrar, and £10 each to other officers.

Mr. GLASSEY : Hon. members would observe, on looking at the schedule to the Estimates, that the Under Secretary to the Treasury, Mr. King, also received £70 a year which was paid by the Imperial Government for looking after matters connected with the Imperial pensions in this colony. Mr. King was an excellent officer, who had the confidence of every hon. member, but judging by the reports that had appeared in the public prints in connection with a trial which took place lately, there must have been a tremendous amount of laxity in connection with the administration of that fund, or the defalcations of the late paymaster—extending over a number of years and amounting to over £6,000—could not have taken place. He did not wish to say anything regarding the gentleman who now occupied such an unfortunate position—a man who for many years had the respect of almost every person with whom he came in contact—but he would be glad to hear from the Treasurer what had been done with a view of putting this fund on a more satisfactory basis. He had in his mind a gentleman well qualified to reorganise the department, and he believed that if a man of that character were placed in charge of that fund he would place it in such a position that it would be impossible for anything like what had already taken place to occur again.

The TREASURER : He did not care about saying much on the question at present, because the Public Service Board were now holding an inquiry into the whole of the circumstances. It came with as great a shock to him as to anybody that such a thing should occur in the Treasury. He had seen the Auditor-General since then, and had given instructions to audit every account in the colony with which the Government were in any way connected. He believed the only accounts not audited hitherto, in addition to this, were the Harbour Board accounts throughout the colony. The Public Service Board would no doubt furnish a report on the subject, and it would be made public as soon as it was received.

Mr. TURLEY : Is there any particular reason why this account was not audited ?

The TREASURER : It is the Imperial pension account. It was our money, unfortunately. We paid the pensions and were afterwards repaid by the Imperial authorities. Why the account was not audited he was at a loss to explain, except that the Auditor-General informed him that it was not audited by his predecessors.

Mr. TURLEY : Does the colony stand to lose the amount ?

The TREASURER : The fund was insured for £1,000 against defalcations. The other portion the colony would have to lose.

Mr. DRAKE asked if any steps had been taken with regard to the distribution of the Government banking account ? In the early part of the session he was told that the matter was under the consideration of the Government, and last session Sir Hugh Nelson said that steps were then being taken.

The TREASURER : Nothing had yet been done, but he hoped very shortly to do something. A report had been received from the Under Secretary to the Treasury on the subject. The current account in the Queensland National

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER, 1898.

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

BRISBANE TECHNICAL COLLEGE BILL
—COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION BILL
—EVIDENCE BILL—GAME AND
FISHES ACCLIMATISATION BILL.

THIRD READINGS.

These Bills were read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Council for their concurrence.

BRITISH PROBATES BILL.

THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Council without amendment.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL.

FIRST READING.

The House having affirmed, in Committee of the Whole, the desirableness of introducing this Bill, it was read a first time, and the second reading made an order for to-morrow.

Bank was about £560,000. All the rest of the money the Government had there was at fixed deposit. He hoped to open accounts with two of the local banks shortly, and give them some of the trust money.

Mr. STEWART: What was the object of having such a large amount of money at fixed deposit with the local banks?

The TREASURER: Because the Government wanted to earn interest. A portion of it belonged to the Treasury note issue, for which they previously held sovereigns. The other was part of the loan fund, on which the Government were receiving $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. They did not want to use it at present, but it was available whenever required.

Mr. STEWART thought it extremely unwise to have such large amounts at fixed deposit in any bank, after the experience they had gained with the Queensland National Bank, and knowing that the directors and auditors were not responsible to anybody. If the directors and auditors certified to false balance-sheets it appeared that there was no recourse under the law. Did the Government intend to introduce banking legislation to put the law with regard to banks on a common sense footing? Any ordinary individual who embezzled £20 was brought to book, but bank directors could make away with hundreds of thousands of pounds and go untouched. If the money at fixed deposit was not required why was it borrowed, especially as they paid more interest than they received? In reference to increases in the department, the country seemed to be in a very flourishing condition when so many could be given. Additional taxation had recently been imposed, and while they were doing that it was utterly wrong to increase already high salaries. He noticed the receiver was to get an additional £25, and there were numerous other increases, yet when it was complained that the rank and file of the service were underpaid the argument was that the country could afford no more. He submitted that the increases were not justifiable.

The TREASURER: The receiver was previously allowed an extra £25 for extra work in connection with the note issue, and it is now proposed to make that part of his salary. He had been in the service for twenty-four years, and the last increase he received was given fifteen years ago. As a matter of fact it was the rank and file who were getting the increases.

Mr. GLASSEY: It was not a question of length of service. That argument was always used in favour of those who were already getting high salaries, yet when members urged the claims of those persons belonging to the lower grades of the service they were told that they were getting old and were remarkably well paid, seeing that they were not capable of performing as much work as in years gone by. If a man had to perform extra duties it was a most rational thing that he should receive a higher salary, but it could not be contended that a man drawing £450 a year was not adequately paid. He had no fault to find with the increases proposed to be given to those in the lower branches of the service, but as he was opposed to this one he would move that the item "Receiver, £475" be reduced by £25. He would afterwards move the reduction of the salary of the registrar by £25.

Mr. STEWART did not think that any Civil servants were overburdened with work. In any case they were paid for their whole time, and if their time was not fully occupied, additional duties ought to be imposed upon them so that the Government might get as much out of its servants as they possibly could. His complaint was that the same rule was not generally applied throughout the service. In the higher ranks

salaries were increased and the work reduced, while in the lower ranks the reverse was the case. There ought to be some uniformity in the administration, so that if more work meant more pay in one branch, it should also mean more pay in other branches. Men who were high up in the service and could hob-nob with Ministers or the friends of Ministers were well looked after, while the swinish multitude, as he supposed hon. members opposite would call them—

MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no; it is you who do that.

Mr. STEWART: They did not have their wants attended to. He did not know that this receiver was overworked, and would like to be told whether the extra work he was said to be doing was done during office hours or after 4 o'clock. In any case there were just as able men who would be glad to work longer hours than Government servants did, and he was certain they could get a competent receiver for even less than the £450. He was quite certain the Treasurer would not conduct his own private business upon these lines. As to length of service, that argument was used in the opposite way when they came to deal with the lower ranks. A man who had served over thirty years was told that he was not so fit to do the work as a younger man, which was quite true; but the same argument also applied to those in the higher ranks. Instead of being an argument for an increase of salary, length of service was an argument in the other direction, and the Treasurer would be acting in the public interest if he accepted the amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. GLASSEY: Before he moved the other reduction he desired to draw the attention of the Treasurer to the case of Mr. Newman, a very old officer with an excellent character and a splendid record. Through an unfortunate illness, that gentleman was now in a position in which he drew the very small sum of £190 a year. They had the promise of Sir Horace Tozer last year that something would be done to ameliorate Mr. Newman's position, but so far nothing had been done, and he now asked the Treasurer to take up the matter and give Mr. Newman's case the attention it was entitled to receive. Anyone who had come into contact with Mr. Newman would admit that he was qualified for any position of trust requiring ability. He hoped the promise made last year would be carried into effect, and that it would not be necessary to raise this question again.

Mr. PETRIE was glad the hon. leader of the Opposition had brought Mr. Newman's case before the Committee. He had himself had a motion on the paper for certain papers connected with the Newman-Cahill inquiry, but he happened to be out of the Chamber, engaged with the Home Secretary, when his motion was unexpectedly called, and much to his regret the motion lapsed. He believed he would have done some little good if he had had an opportunity of bringing those papers before the House. He intended to cast no reflection upon the Under Secretary for Justice in the matter, because he believed that Mr. Cahill had the best intentions and wishes towards Mr. Newman. He had since spoken to the Premier on the matter, and he understood that the hon. gentleman intended to do what he could for Mr. Newman. He believed that gentleman had been very badly treated, and if he could have got the papers in the inquiry to which he had referred, he believed they would show that Mr. Newman was an able man, who was fitted for a much higher position than the one he was in now. If something was not to be done to improve Mr. Newman's position, he might still bring on the motion he had had on the paper, if the rules of the House would permit it. He believed the

Premier had the best intentions towards Mr. Newman, and he hoped the hon. gentleman would see that that officer got fair play and justice.

The TREASURER: Mr. Newman's case had not been lost sight of. It had been in the hands of the Public Service Board for some time, and any recommendation they made in the matter would, he thought, be given effect to by the Cabinet. He might point out that formerly Mr. Newman was not a Treasury officer; he had been connected with the Crown Law Department, and they had only found a haven for him in the Treasury. It would not, under the circumstances, be fair to put Mr. Newman over the heads of a number of officers in the Treasury. He expected that the Public Service Board would find some vacancy for Mr. Newman, who it should be remembered had retired from the service and had received a large sum as compensation—some £500 or £600.

Mr. GLASSEY: A good portion of that he was entitled to.

Mr. JENKINSON: And the office he held was abolished.

The TREASURER: Mr. Newman received compensation on his retirement before the office was abolished. The Public Service Board had Mr. Newman's case in hand, and they would probably make some recommendation on the subject very soon.

Mr. JENKINSON: The last words used by the hon. gentleman would lead to the belief that there had been something wrong with Mr. Newman which had led to his retirement; but the fact was that through some amalgamation the office which he held was abolished. As it had been insinuated that there was something wrong with Mr. Newman mentally, he would point out that in their report upon the inquiry to which the hon. member for Toombul had referred the Public Service Board said—

Mr. Newman is apparently completely restored in health. He is full of mental and bodily vigour, and the board think him fitted for a much higher position in the service than that which he at present occupies.

Last year Sir Horace Tozer had said—

If Mr. Newman was so far restored to mental health that he could be put into a position of trust, no effort on the part of the Government would be spared to effect that desirable purpose.

Taking those two sentences in conjunction the Government would only be doing what they were entitled to do in meting out justice to an old officer of the service. During the same discussion last year the then Secretary for Railways, the present Premier, was unstinted in his praise of Mr. Newman, and he believed the praise given was well deserved, and that the hon. member still held the same opinions. The Government would be doing a just action if they reinstated Mr. Newman at a salary commensurate with his abilities, somewhat on the same footing as he occupied prior to his retirement.

The PREMIER had no hesitation in saying that his opinion of Mr. Newman remained unchanged. He had held a very high opinion of Mr. Newman's abilities for many years. Mr. Newman's retirement took place at a time when he (the Premier) was not connected with the Administration, and he exceedingly regretted to hear that his health had necessitated the change taking place. He felt that the State had lost the services of a most meritorious officer. He would be very glad if an opportunity presented itself for improving his position, and it was not the fault of the Government that the opportunity had not presented itself up to the present. The Government, however, were governed by the Public Service Board in regard to making these appointments, and the very spirit of the Public Service Act would be frustrated if the Government made

appointments to positions of trust in opposition to the views and recommendations of the board. If the board would make a recommendation with regard to Mr. Newman, or if they had done so in the past their recommendation would have received immediate attention. With regard to the motion of the hon. member for Toombul, he did not think it was altogether unsatisfactory that that motion did not pass, because there was nothing in the correspondence of sufficient public interest to justify its publication. Both Mr. Cahill and Mr. Newman had done good service to the State, and though they were unable to work together they both still retained the confidence of the Government. He very much regretted that unfortunate circumstances had prevented Mr. Newman from remaining in the superior position he formerly enjoyed, to which he trusted circumstances would enable him to be restored.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY moved that the salary of the registrar be reduced by £25.

Mr. STEWART asked what were the duties of the registrar, who was down for £400 a year, while the clerks under him were down for £110 and £80 respectively?

The TREASURER: Mr. Bourne was in charge of all the records of the Treasury; he also had charge of the correspondence. He occupied a most important position, because the correspondence was very lengthy, and he drafted the letters. He had been twenty-nine years in the Treasury, and was a most worthy and responsible officer.

Mr. STEWART: According to the reply of the hon. gentleman this officer was merely a correspondence clerk. He supposed that he got notes from the Under Secretary and drafted the replies to letters from those notes. He did not think any private firm in the colony would give £375 a year for such work, and he considered this officer was overpaid. He thought £200 a year was quite enough for any correspondence clerk. The fact was that the officer was only a sort of superior copier, and it was altogether ridiculous to give him £400 a year.

Amendment put and negatived; and item agreed to.

COLONIAL STORES.

The TREASURER moved that £10,690 be granted for the Colonial Stores. There were several increases, including £30 to the storekeeper, who was a most valuable officer. He had had a commercial training, and was well qualified to fill the position. In fact, his commercial knowledge saved the Government thousands of pounds a year. There was one officer less in the department this year.

Mr. GLASSEY: It was astonishing the number of apologies Ministers could make when they wished to increase high salaries. He thought nothing of the statement that the Government storekeeper saved the Government thousands of pounds a year. Every officer should faithfully perform the duties of his position or he was unworthy to fill it. He thought the present salary was ample, and there being no justification for the increase he moved that the item "Colonial Storekeeper" be reduced by £30. He intended to set his face against increases to highly-paid officials.

Mr. STEWART supported the amendment. The officer might do all that the Treasurer said, but they had not been told what his duties were. What stores did he distribute? and what amount of money passed through his hands in a year? He thought they should have an annual report from the storekeeper. In any case he was well paid at his present salary.

The TREASURER: The Colonial Storekeeper supervised the calling for all tenders, and

saw that the tenderers carried out their contracts for Dunwich, St. Helena, the Government Printing Office—in fact, for all branches of the Government service. He thought about £25,000 a year passed through his hands. Judging by the number of complaints which came to the department from tenderers, he should say that the storekeeper did his duty very well and kept tenderers up to the mark. The complaint by contractors was that he was too hard upon them, but the fact was that he saw the Government got value for their money. He did not believe the department had ever been so well served as it was now by the present occupant of the office.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. STEWART said there was one matter that required some explanation. There were seven clerks, three storemen, and a carter connected with this department, and he did not see that it required all those clerks to do the writing in connection with the work done by only three storemen and a carter. Of course it might be explained that a great proportion of the articles supplied to the Government departments did not pass through the stores at all, but went direct from the tradesmen to where they were required, but still the clerical staff seemed to be out of all proportion.

The TREASURER: He had made a mistake, for he found that the value of the goods that went through the hands of the storekeeper was nearer £50,000 a year. Everything but the supplies for the Railway and Post and Telegraph Departments went through his hands, and he might inform the Committee that Mr. Woodward had had a long commercial training—not only in Brisbane, but also in Sydney—before he was appointed to this position.

Mr. KERR noticed that last year there were four storemen, but this year there were only three. If the work was the same there ought to be the same number of employees, but it looked as if reductions had been made in order to give an increase to the storekeeper.

The TREASURER: Last year one man was transferred to the Customs Department, and it was found that the work could be done without him. The men would rather do the increased work for the increased pay.

Mr. KERR: If the work in this department could be done with a smaller staff, it was reasonable to suppose that the same thing could be done in other departments.

Mr. FINNEY thought the cost of running this department was a very small percentage of the business done. The storekeeper was a very old commercial man, and had all the necessary experience to see that the goods supplied by tenderers were of the proper quality. That was a very important matter. There was far more work in handling £50,000 or £60,000 worth of goods properly and carefully than some hon. members seemed to imagine.

Mr. McDONNELL: They must take it for granted that the work in this department was increasing, and therefore the fact that they were able to do with a smaller number of storemen required explanation. He would not say that they had decreased the number of storemen in order that an increase might be given to the storekeeper, but if such were not the case the department must have been overmanned before.

The TREASURER explained there was really one man more than before, because one of the storemen had been promoted to a clerkship, and two apprentices had been taken on in his place, who were paid out of contingencies.

Mr. McDONNELL: Last year there were also seven clerks, so there must have been a

vacancy for the storeman to be promoted, and therefore an apprentice must be doing the work done by a storeman.

The TREASURER: There were two extra apprentices.

Question put and passed.

ENDOWMENT TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

The TREASURER moved that £80,000 be granted as endowment to local authorities. Last year the divisional boards got endowment at the rate of 6s. 4d. in the £1, and municipalities at the rate of 7s. 2d. This year the estimate was that divisional boards would get 8s. 3d., and municipalities 8s. 10d. in the £1. He would like to see the divisional boards getting more, and it would be seen that they got the greater proportion of the increase provided for. Municipalities would get £7,000 more and divisional boards £10,000 more than last year. The increased endowment altogether was £17,000, and though he knew that some hon. members thought the amount was still too little, they had provided for as much as they thought they could afford at the time the Estimates were being framed. The increase upon the amount voted last year was substantial, and he hoped that they would be justified in further increasing the endowment next year. The revenue certainly looked like it. Anyone acquainted with the subject would know that the roads under the charge of the local authorities required a great deal more money spent upon them than had been spent in the past, but in the matter of endowment the Government could only go as far as their means would allow.

Mr. GLASSEY: This matter had been very fully debated during the discussion on the Address in Reply, and again during the discussion on the Budget, and it was not his intention to repeat what he said on those occasions. He shared the hope expressed by the Treasurer that a considerably larger sum might be voted as endowment to the local authorities in the future. He had contended time and again in this Chamber that unless they were prepared to vote a larger sum in the shape of endowment to country local authorities, local government in the country districts would break down. He regretted that there was not a larger sum on the Estimates this year, and though the Treasurer had told them they could only go so far as their means would allow, he had no hesitation in saying that if the investigation which he advocated were made into the expenditure of the public departments, they would find that they could economise to such an extent as to provide a substantial balance, which would enable them to vote a much larger sum in the shape of endowment to local authorities. He need only refer to the deplorable condition of the main roads in the Moreton, Wide Bay, Burnett, West Moreton, and Stanley districts, and in many other parts of the colony, to show the necessity for a larger endowment than had been voted during the last few years. As the result of his observation and experience—and he was not without experience of local government in other parts of the world—he repeated that without a larger endowment the system in some of the country districts must break down.

Mr. CO'ONNELL admitted that the local authorities had very great difficulty in keeping their roads in order. Their roads were in very bad order in spite of the assistance the central authorities had been able to give them. But what he could not reconcile in the matter was that the leader of a party who believed in a land tax should urge that the whole community should be taxed in order to give landowners a larger proportion of the general revenue to make

good the roads in their different districts. The contention of Sir Thomas McIlwraith, in opposing a land tax, was that if the land was not contributing sufficient to the revenue, the best means of making it do so was already in the hands of the local authorities—that instead of establishing a land tax and an expensive department to collect it, they should do away with local authority endowment, and the local bodies would then make the owners of land in their districts contribute more largely to their revenues.

Mr. LEAHY: How could they do that where there is no freehold?

Mr. O'CONNELL: Where there were no freeholds the leaseholds should contribute to the revenue of the local authorities. A land tax might not touch the leaseholder, but it would touch a great many people governed by local boards.

Mr. KIDSTON: Do you believe in a land tax?

Mr. O'CONNELL: Not unless it was absolutely necessary. Before they started to get a land tax they should do away with the endowment to local authorities. That was the most economical way of raising revenue by way of a land tax, because there would be no necessity for a new department with all the cost of collecting the new revenue.

Mr. BATTERSBY was surprised to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Musgrave. It would be better to reduce the endowment in Brisbane and the suburbs where the roads were made and give more to the country local authorities, who had to look after a lot of roads that passed through Crown lands. There were four divisions in the Moreton electorate, and not one-third of the land in those four divisions was already selected. For the first five years a man took up 160 acres he paid something like 3s. 6d. a year. During that time, whenever he got a chance, he sold every log he could sell from his land, and the carriage of that timber over the roads cut them up very much. At the end of the five years a rate of 1½d. could be put on. He hoped that would be altered. He was glad to see that there was an increase in the endowment, and he would like to see it more. If it was made more the Government would be improving its own land through which the roads ran. He hoped when the new Bill came along provision would be made allowing the rating of land from the day it was selected, the same as freehold, instead of during the first five years being allowed to collect only 3s. 6d. on 160 acres.

Mr. GLASSEY: With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Musgrave he wished to say that the scheme propounded by Sir Thomas McIlwraith was absolutely unworkable in Queensland—abolishing the endowment in some districts and keeping it on in others. It did not follow that because Sir Thomas McIlwraith propounded it that it was workable. In a district where there were large areas of Crown lands, and also large areas of freehold, how could it be divided and no endowment given as far as the freehold was concerned, but endowment given to maintain roads which served both parties? How could it be carried out where the land was all leasehold, or in mining districts where there was little ratable property?

Mr. MORGAN: What scheme is that?

Mr. GLASSEY: The scheme referred to by the hon. member for Musgrave.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no! That's your own scheme.

Mr. GLASSEY: At any rate, unless the local authorities received a larger endowment local government in some districts would absolutely break down.

Mr. O'CONNELL: I agree with you there. I thought you believed in a land tax.

Mr. GLASSEY: He thoroughly believed in a land tax for national purposes, and would give effect to it whenever he had the opportunity, both in the country districts and more particularly in the towns, because he wanted to get at those who had profited by the unearned increment. He understood the hon. member for Musgrave to say it would be better to abolish the endowment.

Mr. O'CONNELL: No, not if you are going to put a land tax on.

Mr. GLASSEY: He would put on a land tax and increase the endowment. It would be seen from the Treasurer's tables that the endowment to local bodies in 1889-90 amounted to £279,000, but under the sway of this wonderfully capable and economical Government it had been so reduced till last year it stood at £63,000. In consequence of that curtailment settlement had been prevented to a large extent. It had actually driven people off the land and deprived them of the opportunity of going upon it. Let hon. members visit the Lockyer and the Rosewood districts and they would see that the settlers had been driven to the ridges, and had almost to climb up to their holdings. If encouragement was to be given to settlers a larger endowment must be given. In New South Wales about £500,000 yearly was given for road purposes as against a paltry £60,000 here, and he would gladly see the proposed vote of £80,000 doubled.

Mr. O'CONNELL: He in no way disagreed with the member for Bundaberg in the statement that the local authorities required assistance, and his vote would always be given towards assisting them; but what he stated previously was that he could not understand anyone advocating a State land tax and increased endowment. They would be taking a certain sum of money from the community generally, and handing it back to the representatives of the local authorities. He believed that the prosperity of the country was enhanced by the present contributions from the public purse, but the local authorities pointed out that they could raise a bigger revenue only the people could not afford to pay the taxation. If they were asked to pay 3d. in the £1 they would simply be ruined. If in addition to the local taxation the general Government levied a land tax, then those who escaped paying to the local authorities would be taxed by Parliament, but in order to collect the money a separate State department would have to be established. When Mr. Donaldson proposed a property tax he expected to realise something like £200,000, but said it would cost £30,000 to collect it. What stood out distinctly was that they had now in the local authorities the means of collecting a revenue greater than that which was at present collected from the land, and if the State withheld contributions from the public purse the local authorities would have to make up the lost revenue from their own land which a direct State tax would take from the same pocket. If the State imposed a land tax there would be two sets of tax-gatherers at work at the same time on the same property.

Mr. GLASSEY: How do they collect the income tax in Great Britain?

Mr. O'CONNELL: By special collectors, undoubtedly. They might of course ask the property-holder to pay his money into the Treasury, but he was perfectly certain that if the Treasurer really wanted the revenue, he would have to employ officers to see that the tax was paid. One of the great objections to the property tax was that it led to misrepresentation on the part of the landholders, which would be a very undesirable thing to introduce here. If

it was necessary to raise a tax from real property to assist the colony, he was satisfied that the majority of property-owners had no desire to avoid paying their fair share towards the general Government expenses; but so long as the country was doing as it was at present—taking money out of one pocket and putting into another—there was no justification whatever for a State land tax. Property-holders did not object to paying for the good government of the country, but they did object to being specially taxed in order—as it was plausibly stated—that the burden might be put on the shoulders best able to bear it, while the government of the country went into the hands of those who escaped taxation. Parliament would be doing a very good and just work in assisting local authorities to make better roads, but if that were to be done it could not be done contemporaneously with levying a land tax for the benefit of the Central Government.

Mr. KIDSTON felt quite sure that the persons the hon. member referred to would not pay any taxation that they could escape any more than anybody else would. He agreed that it was far better that public bodies should only be able to spend money that they raised themselves, and if there were any practicable way by which they might enable local bodies to raise sufficient revenue for their local requirements, it would be very much better to give them power to raise it and not give them any endowment at all. However, in a country like this, that was impossible, because in many of the outside districts the central Government owned such a large proportion of the land. Reforms had been promised in this direction ever since 1885, and a Royal Commission, which inquired into the matter, recommended that the total endowment should be raised to some £212,000. When he saw an increase of £17,000 he wondered whether the approaching general elections had anything to do with it.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The successful financial policy of the Government has enabled them to do it.

Mr. KIDSTON: The inference from that remark was that if this endowment were to be continued the present Government would have to remain in office. There was a great deal to be said about the way in which the poorer local authorities were neglected to the advantage of the rich municipalities, which did not require to tax themselves so heavily, but which received a larger endowment. There were twenty-three municipalities which rated themselves at 2d. in the £1, but the divisional boards rated themselves at amounts ranging from $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. in the £1, with one exception—Bundaberg—which rated itself at 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. The principle that should be adopted was that the central Government should pay endowments in proportion to the local rates levied. The Government were paying about 8s. in the £1, and he thought that amount might be distributed at the rate of 1s. 8d. in the £1 for every $\frac{1}{2}$ d. of the rate levied. Under that system the local authorities which thought they had not money enough would have the matter in their own hands, because they could always get more from the Government by rating themselves higher. The board which struck a rate of $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £1 would receive 1s. 8d. for every £1 collected, and the board which levied $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £1 would receive from the Government 3s. 4d. in the £1, while the board which levied the full amount allowed of 3d. in the £1, would receive £1 for every £1 collected.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: What about the valuations?

Mr. KIDSTON: They would all have an equal chance of altering their valuations. A municipality like Brisbane, rating itself at $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £1, got a much larger aggregate endowment

than a poor municipality that was perhaps rating itself at 2d. in the £1. The correct principle was that local authorities should be endowed in proportion to the burden they were themselves willing to bear. The Royal Commission that examined into the matter proposed a scheme under which two-thirds of the endowment should be paid on the same scale as at present, and one-third in the form of a special fund to be distributed according to the judgment of a committee composed of a Minister of the Crown and three members of Parliament.

Mr. MORGAN: No.

Mr. KIDSTON: That certainly was the report of the Commission on Local Government, and the hon. member for Warwick, as chairman of that Commission, should know what was in his own report. He did not think that would be an improvement on the present system. Money that was to be got by influence of a Minister of the Crown or three members of Parliament, led to corruption and abuse, while money that was to be got out of the Treasury by people putting their hands into their own pockets first, would lead to the purification of the whole system of endowment. In addition to what he proposed, he thought it would be perfectly fair that a special endowment should be given to those local authorities within whose boundaries there was a large amount of Government land which they could not rate.

Mr. PETRIE: They had only got an increase of endowment to the extent of £17,000, but the question was a very big one for the Government to face, and he believed they had done the best they could for the country. The Hamilton board, in the electorate he represented, had great difficulties to contend with. They had a small area, but they had a very long river frontage from which they could derive no rates at all, and they had to keep up a good road for the convenience of a great many people who paid nothing towards it. The hon. member for Rockhampton could never have been a member of a local authority or he would never have spoken as he had this afternoon. The hon. member knew nothing about the subject, but he could tell him that the Government had a lot to put up with, and he believed they had done their best for the colony generally.

Mr. DANIELS: Then what are you grumbling about?

Mr. PETRIE was not grumbling about anything except that the local authorities in his electorate should get more than they did.

Mr. STEPHENS understood that the hon. member, Mr. Kidston, had been mayor of Rockhampton, that it was a live place, and could teach Brisbane a good deal about local government. But after hearing the hon. member's little scheme as to how endowment should be paid, he concluded that in Rockhampton they had yet a lot to learn, and he doubted whether the hon. member could have been mayor of Rockhampton at all. The basis of the hon. member's scheme was that where the rate was higher the endowment should be proportionately higher. But that scheme would not hold water anyway. If those who knew anything about the subject heard that if they doubled the rate they would get double the endowment, there would be a little meeting at which the valuations would be reduced 50 per cent., and the rates doubled; and the local authority would in that way get double the endowment without taking any more money from the people in their district. The thing had been done almost on similar lines in South Brisbane. After the big flood in South Brisbane the local authority, thinking that the people were contributing proportionately one with another, did not lower the valuations, and decided to leave things as they

were. Then one or two smart men went to the appeal court and got their valuations reduced by about 50 per cent. What was the result? The council decided to reduce all the other valuations 50 per cent. and put up the rate, and then everyone had to contribute the same in proportion and to the same extent as they did before the valuations were altered. If land had a standard value like gold, the valuations could not be altered, but he defied anyone to go into a court and say what the real value of a piece of land was. For rating purposes what they had to consider was not the market value of land, but how they could get a proportionate contribution from all the ratepayers. The hon. member also said that if the local authorities went in for special rates they should have a higher endowment; but if the endowment were higher there would be nothing but special rates. It was the duty of the aldermen to get as much as they could for the ratepayers, and if they did not do that the ratepayers should turn them out. As a property-owner he congratulated the hon. member for Bundaberg on the position he had taken up to-day. The hon. member practically said to the landed proprietors "You are suffering a great injustice; you cannot make your roads; we will tax the people to provide money for you to improve your property." Until to-day he was a little anxious about the hon. member going south as a delegate, but after hearing the views expressed by him to-day his anxiety had gone. He congratulated the hon. gentleman on the change.

Mr. GLASSEY: There is no change in me.

Mr. STEPHENS: Nine out of ten people in the colony who knew the hon. member as the leader of the Labour party would think he had changed when he advocated taxing the people to give money to the property-owners to improve their property. As to the land tax, the hon. member had misconstrued what the hon. member for Musgrave said. When Sir Thomas McLlwraith made the remarks referred to by the hon. member for Musgrave the question before the House was a land tax, and he said that rather than have a land tax he would let the people tax themselves for their own benefit. Additional revenue was wanted, and it was proposed to raise it by means of a land tax, but Sir Thomas McLlwraith said that was a left-handed way, and that the simplest way would be to give the property-owners nothing by way of endowment. The leader of the Labour party had to-day shown himself a strong advocate of red tape, because the imposition of a land tax would mean the creation of a new department with an officer at the head drawing a big salary, a lot of valuers, and collectors all over the colony.

Mr. GLASSEY: I don't think so.

Mr. STEPHENS: If the Government collected a land tax, there must be an office, and the Government must have their own valuations, because they would have to be on the same basis all over the colony. It would have to be red-tape from one end to the other, and the collection would cost 10 or 20 per cent. on the amount raised. The hon. member might think he was trying to make this a personal matter, but he was not. He was surprised at the attitude of the hon. member this afternoon, and was sure the landowners of the colony would sleep peacefully when they heard that the hon. member was in favour of collecting money from the people, and giving it to the property-owners to improve their land.

Mr. GLASSEY: It is a beautiful red herring; but I will deal with it by-and-by.

Mr. STEPHENS: He hoped he would be present when the hon. gentleman did so.

Mr. KIDSTON: Some hon. members were willing to congratulate anyone who seemed willing to take money out of the Treasury and

give it to the local bodies, and were very much displeased at anyone who tried to get them to understand that in one way or the other they themselves had to find the money. He had pointed out that the proper principle was to contribute from the Treasury to the assistance of the local bodies in proportion as the local bodies were prepared to tax themselves, and it had been objected that the local bodies would at once evade the system by reducing the valuation. But the remedy for that was to do as had been done in New Zealand—give the Government power to take over the land at the valuation put upon it.

Mr. STEPHENS: That was where the land was valued for a land tax, and it applied all over the colony. It had nothing to do with local government at all.

Mr. GRIMES noticed that improper motives had been imputed to the Government for increasing the endowment to local bodies, but he gave them credit for better intentions. It had been imputed that the vote had been increased for electioneering purposes, but he did not believe they would put an increased sum on the Estimates for the purpose of catching votes. He believed the Government saw plainly that extra assistance was a necessity. He agreed with the leader of the Opposition that some of the local bodies were in extreme difficulties, and he was glad to see this extra assistance provided, because he knew it would be appreciated.

Mr. MORGAN: The reference made by the hon. member, Mr. Kidston, to the recommendations of the Local Government Commission were altogether erroneous. He said they recommended a different system of dealing with the endowment—that two-thirds of the total sum should be paid according to the present system and the remaining third distributed according to a system to be devised by three members of the House of whom the Treasurer should be one. He (Mr. Morgan) interjected that they recommended nothing so absurd, and he now repeated it. He agreed with those who thought that the local bodies were entitled to a larger measure of Government assistance. It would be true policy to treat them more liberally, but he did not agree with the leader of the Opposition, who seemed to wish to revert to the system in force ten years ago under which the local bodies raided the Treasury for an amount which the Treasurer could not control. He hoped that system would never be returned to. The hon. gentleman, however, did not enlighten the Committee as to the justification which might exist for the payment of any endowment at all, and he should be glad to hear his views on that subject. He had listened with some amusement to the advocacy of the hon. gentleman of an endowment—knowing that the hon. gentleman was a single-taxer—payable on the proceeds of a tax upon land. The fact was that the local revenue was derived from a land tax.

Mr. GLASSEY: No.

Mr. MORGAN: It was a land tax, because the rate was on the unimproved value of the land. He had always understood the hon. gentleman to argue strongly in favour of the bulk of the general revenue coming from the land, and he was rather surprised to hear him advocate that the revenue raised by that means should be endowed from a fund raised by general taxation. Of course that would be a present to the landowner. It seemed to him that that was a halo which did not fit the hon. gentleman; and while he entirely agreed with him that the local bodies should have a larger amount of assistance from the central Government, he could hardly follow him in the view that the assistance should go in large part to the local bodies outside of municipalities. He understood the hon. member to advocate the

claims of local governing bodies in the country districts as against those in town. Of course the former had more moderate means and perhaps larger demands upon them for road-making purposes, but still the latter had calls upon their revenues which were unknown to the others. Until a different system of distributing the endowment was devised it would be idle to increase the amount very much. At present the bulk of the money voted by Parliament was snapped up by the metropolitan local governing bodies—particularly by the municipalities and shires. Quite one-half went in that direction, leaving the other half to be distributed amongst councils in other parts of the colony, and that was not a desirable state of things. There was an additional £7,000 to be distributed amongst shires and councils this year, but the extra assistance the outside bodies would receive would be almost inappreciable. It would be very difficult to devise a better system of distribution, although the hon. member for Rockhampton seemed not to think so, and he was astonished to think that a gentleman occupying a position in that Committee should give credence for a moment to the fallacies so apparent in connection with his scheme. Of course the hon. member for South Brisbane had pointed out that that scheme must inevitably fail, but the hon. member for Rockhampton did not think there was much in his criticism. Differential schemes were in force in the other colonies, some of which had been found to work very well, and an alternative scheme to this was formulated by the Local Government Commission, which, though not perfect, would to a certain extent correct the evils that existed at present. It would deprive some of the rich bodies around the city of some of the assistance they received, and which they were not fairly entitled to; therefore their opposition might be expected, but that opposition would be one of the greatest recommendations in favour of the scheme. He hoped that the finances of the colony would continue to improve so that the Treasurer would feel justified in recommending Parliament to still further increase the sum to be distributed in endowments, and he also hoped some better method of distributing it would be arrived at. He further hoped that the hon. member would see the wisdom of linking the fortunes of the local authorities with those of the central Government, paying the former a certain proportion of the general revenue—say, 3d. or 6d. in the £1. That would teach local bodies to weep with the central Government when the latter wept by reason of bad times, and it would teach them to rejoice with it when it rejoiced by reason of good times. Such a system had much to recommend it, and he hoped the Treasurer would be able to see his way to adopt it.

Mr. TOOTH was perfectly in accord with the hon. member for Warwick—that the great blot upon the present system was the want of a better method of distribution of the endowment. Of course, those boards which were established in the old days, when they received £2 or £1 for every £1 collected, were able to get all their rough work done, but the small amount paid now made things very hard for those local authorities in which large areas of new land had been thrown open for selection. There was a large block of land thrown open in the Burrum division, and it had been readily selected; but it would necessitate the board opening up something like twenty miles of road through scrub land. All the extra assistance they would get from the Government to do that work was only £100, and that would not build a bridge over one of the gullies. They had quite enough to do with their present revenue to maintain the roads they had

already, and in such cases the Government should certainly grant some preferential endowment. He had no hesitation in saying that one of the greatest drawbacks to people taking up land was the want of roads to it. They had scarcely a meeting of their board at which they did not receive letters of complaint from people who had been induced to take up land to which there were no roads made, and to which, without assistance from the Government, there was not the slightest chance of the local boards being able to make roads for years to come.

Mr. ARMSTRONG thought the action of the Government in increasing the endowment to local authorities was one that would meet with general approval. The increase would be very beneficial to local authorities generally. One of the greatest troubles to country divisional boards was that lands were allowed to be taken up in most inaccessible places, and there was no provision beyond the indirect one of endowment by which roads could be made to those lands. The hon. member for Bundaberg had every year since he had been in the House been good enough to twit him and his electorate with respect to roads in that electorate. He was glad to say the hon. member had every year been growing milder in the remarks he made. In the first instance he criticised the conditions under which the people in the Lockyer were living, and now he merely said that the roads in that electorate and in the Rosewood electorate were in a very bad state. But he should remember that there were perhaps no other electorates in the colony in which the traffic was more circumscribed to the main roads than in those electorates. They had two main roads which were the arteries for the valleys along the creeks in those electorates, and they naturally required a large expenditure for maintenance. That reminded him that when they came next year to consider the Local Government Bill it would be a question for consideration whether there should not be some special endowment given for those main roads. He had always held that the main arteries of communication throughout the country should be maintained at the public charge.

Mr. LORD: How are you going to define them?

Mr. ARMSTRONG was astonished at the question. Main roads were the main arteries of communication between centres of population, and their maintenance in the past was one of the chief factors bringing about the present impoverished condition of divisional boards. A difficulty they had to contend with was that a man might take up a homestead, the rates paid upon which to the local authority might not be more than 4s. or 5s., and it might require an expenditure of from £20 to £50 to give him an outlet from his homestead. He held, with the hon. member for Warwick, that a more equitable system of distribution of endowment must also be considered. It was a fallacy to imagine that it could be considered upon the basis laid down by the hon. member for Rockhampton. As the hon. member, Mr. Stephens, had pointed out, and as was known to every man who had ever sat on a divisional board, they could circumvent that system the first time they had to deal with it. And another very great objection to it was that the Treasurer for the time being would never know what amount of money would be required to meet the claims for endowment. The Government were to be congratulated upon the increased amount of endowment provided for this year, and he hoped that as the best means of returning taxation to the producers of the country, if the revenue continued to expand, they would have a still larger endowment provided next year.

Mr. SMITH believed that every member of the Committee was pleased at the action of the Government in increasing the endowment this year, but he could not agree with those who contended that the endowment came altogether from the general taxpayer. A proportion of it came from the sale of lands within the different districts, and he had always held to the doctrine that in the case of a local authority in new country, the lands sold within its boundaries were properly chargeable with the cost of providing access to those lands. Of course, the Government with a rising revenue should increase the endowment, and he was glad to see that there was also an increase in the amount put down for bridges, and that a considerable amount was to be granted from loan for the purpose of making bridges in different parts of the colony. The question of endowment required serious consideration, and he hoped the Government next session would come down with some proper system of apportioning the amount voted for that purpose. In Victoria there was a differential system, under which local authorities with a large population and large revenue received less endowment than local authorities in the country districts where the population was small; and he thought it would be well to devise some system of that kind in this colony. In the outside districts the funds at the disposal of the local authorities in many cases were not sufficient to make improvements to roads that were absolutely necessary, and that did not tend to induce settlement. Besides, most of the land in the country districts belonged to the Government, and on that account the amount subscribed by the Government should be proportionately larger in those cases than where the population was greater and the revenue more adequate for keeping the roads in proper repair.

Mr. KEOGH congratulated the hon. member for Warwick on the lucid and intelligent remarks he had made on this question. If it was correct that nearly two-thirds of the increased endowment would go to Brisbane and the suburbs, he thought that was a very unfair distribution of the amount. With regard to the question of defining main roads, it had been said by the late Mr. Macrossan that the main roads of the colony were the public railways. He could not agree with that, because he thought it was an easy matter to define the main roads of the colony. At all events, the road from Brisbane to Toowoomba ought to be considered the main highway of this colony.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: There is the railway.

Mr. KEOGH: No doubt there was the railway, but it did not answer all the purposes of a public road. Even in the dilapidated state pointed out by the hon. member for Lockyer the road had to some extent competed successfully with the railway between Ipswich and Dalby; so he considered there should be a little more money expended on the public roads of the colony, particularly on the main outlet to the interior—the road from Brisbane to Toowoomba and Dalby. The Minister for Railways and others who visited his electorate the other day saw a portion of that road, and though he took them over the best portions of the road they could see that more money should be spent on them, particularly on the road between Ipswich and Rosewood. He only hoped that by and by the Government would contribute a larger amount. Even if the people were taxed a little more for the endowment it would be a great benefit to farmers and others to have their roads so improved that they could have ready access to market.

Mr. McMASTER: Several schemes had been propounded for the better distribution of the endowment to local bodies, and they were told that Brisbane swallowed up the greater part of the vote. He did not stand there as a representative of Brisbane, and regretted that the members for the city were not present to defend it from such aspersions. The hon. member for South Brisbane expressed surprise at hearing the leader of the Opposition advocating a larger endowment, but he was not at all surprised. He congratulated the hon. member. He was now beginning to be sensible, to be "clothed in his right mind"—he wanted to do justice all round. He agreed that the endowment should be larger, and only hoped that the Treasurer would be able next year to carry out what he had foreshadowed. He would point out that within ten miles of the Brisbane Post Office a quarter of the whole population of the colony resided, and a large portion of the money which the leader of the Opposition wished to be given to local bodies was contributed by those people through the Custom-house, and some of it went towards the assistance of the poor people who were living at a distance from the metropolis. Some time ago he represented to the Government that Brisbane was quite willing to give up all endowment if it was permitted to rate Government buildings, the same as was done in Sydney. Why, in Sydney there was an endowment granted also, but the city of Brisbane did not desire that. They had to maintain miles of roads, light, clean, and water the streets in which the Government buildings were situated, yet they never got one penny piece in the shape of rates from the Government. All they got was the paltry endowment, which they were ready to give up to-morrow on the terms he had mentioned. Years ago he had made that proposition in the House without consulting the city council, but on mentioning it afterwards every member of the council endorsed his proposal, and said he was quite justified in making it. He admitted, when speaking of the city and the outside districts, that all things were not equal. The capital of the colony must keep its roads in better order than was necessary in the outside districts, and there were quite a number of other things which must be done, but which could be dispensed with in sparsely populated localities. There was more revenue contributed through the Customs by the residents of Brisbane and the districts within ten miles of the metropolis than was contributed by any other portion of the colony, and they were therefore entitled to get more in the shape of endowment. He had never heard of such a mad scheme as that propounded by the senior member for Rockhampton—that endowment should be paid on the rates levied by a local authority, and not on the amount collected; and he congratulated the leader of the Opposition on having taken a sensible view of the matter, and on coming to the assistance of those who wished to do justice to the distant parts of the colony.

Mr. GLASSEY could scarcely understand what those congratulations meant. He was supposed to have propounded some new theory of taxation, and some new theory of distribution of revenue, so far as endowment to local bodies was concerned, but he was not aware that he had done anything of the sort. The hon. member for Warwick in his bland, gentle, persuasive style had endeavoured to draw him into a discussion where the towns and the country would come into conflict, with a view to get some weapon to use against him at the general election, but he was aware of the hon. member's little manoeuvre, and was not to be drawn. The hon. member, Mr. Stephens, had said that in advocating a large endowment to local bodies he

had departed from opinions he had previously expressed. But where was the evidence of that? Certainly not in the records of the House.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: You have always advocated a land tax in addition to that levied by local authorities.

Mr. GLASSEY: He still advocated a land tax for national purposes in addition to what was levied by local authorities for their own purposes. He thoroughly believed in a tax on the unimproved value of all freehold land over and above the first £300 for national purposes, and had never swerved in the slightest degree from that position.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Have you any freehold land?

Mr. GLASSEY: He had a small freehold, but not quite so much as the hon. gentleman, and he was extremely anxious to get at the hon. gentleman in that respect. As to the statement that he had changed his opinions in advocating a larger amount of endowment to local bodies, he might say that this was the eleventh year he had been a member of the House, and during the whole of that time he had always opposed the reduction of the endowment to local authorities. There might be something to be said on the question as to whether it was necessary to pay as large an amount to wealthy municipalities as to country districts, but he was not prepared to discuss that matter just now.

Mr. MORGAN: Why pay anything to towns at all?

Mr. GLASSEY: The very fact that endowment was being paid now was some evidence that it was required.

Mr. STEPHENS: Give us some reasons for it.

Mr. GLASSEY: That was as far as he was going to go in that direction. He might, however, say that it was an established principle, not only in Queensland, but in many other parts of the world, including the old country, where the endowment had been considerably increased during the last few years. In regard to changing opinions, he remembered being a member of a party with the hon. member for South Brisbane and the hon. member, Mr. Annear, who actually favoured a land tax upon unimproved values. The hon. member came into Parliament in 1888 as a follower of Sir S. W. Griffith, pledged distinctly to support that gentleman, one of the planks of whose platform was a land tax. Another of his planks was a more equitable distribution of wealth, on the principle that the profits from industries by right belonged to the labourer.

Mr. STEPHENS: You are wrong altogether.

Mr. GLASSEY: He had always contended that a larger amount should be paid to local governing bodies, and he challenged the hon. member to show him anything in *Hansard*, or anywhere else, to prove that he had changed in the slightest degree in regard to either the endowment or the land tax. The hon. member for South Brisbane said that because he advocated an increase in this endowment, he was inclined to benefit the landowners, but that was only a red herring drawn across the trail, because that hon. member and others were afraid that they might be called upon to contribute, and they wished to divert public attention from the matter. He hoped that those hon. members would be compelled to contribute, and that the industrial classes should not be burdened as they were through the Customs and in other ways. Now, in regard to the land tax—

The CHAIRMAN: I must now call the attention of hon. members to the vote before the Committee. There is no doubt that I should have called their attention to it long before, but hon. members seemed very anxious to speak upon the general question. But this is not a

question of a land tax or of a policy to go before the country upon. It is a question of voting £80,000 as endowments to local authorities, and I must ask hon. members to confine their remarks to that question.

Mr. GLASSEY: He would not attempt to prolong the discussion, but he had been trying to reply to the hon. member for South Brisbane. With regard to the vote he thought a far larger sum might be granted, without oppressing anybody, for the assistance of local authorities. He was sure that hon. members would agree that the assistance was deserved.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The hon. member for Bundaberg had challenged hon. members to prove that he had changed his opinions, but even if it were proved it did not follow that it would be discreditable to him. It might be the reverse. It was not that he changed his opinions, but it was the peculiarity of his temperament that he could hold diametrically opposite opinions at the same time. It was not inconsistent to hold different opinions at different times, but it was radically inconsistent for the hon. member to hold the opinions he had given utterance to this evening. He pointed out that the people were crushed and driven off the soil because local authorities were not sufficiently subsidised. But where did this money come from? The hon. member had told them that he was in favour of a land tax because it would take money from one particular class of people, and while his mind was clear upon that point, he was so constituted that he advocated that the Government should put their hands into the pocket of the taxpayer and pay money out of the general revenue for the benefit of the land sharks. Having got £63,000, the hon. member demanded that he should have probably double as much. Well, who was he going to give it to? Practically to the landowner. He was going to relieve the landowner from burdens which the hon. member would himself say the landowner should legitimately bear. In fact, he would go further and say that the landowner should not only bear those burdens but double those burdens. How was the poor man going to be relieved if the hon. member gave him a little more subsidy at the expense of his brother who had land, when at the same time he took the money from the man who hadn't land and gave it to the man who had? It was a perfect piece of political hocus pocus; that was the only way in which he could account for it. The hon. member was one of the most intelligent politicians he had ever met. There was not a fly that would catch a political trout that the hon. member had not got in his book. What occurred was this: When the hon. member was dealing with the landowners of a prosperous and solvent municipality like Bundaberg, which had done him the honour to elect him—and he was not sure that they had made any very great mistake in electing a man who could catch fish if there were any, political or otherwise—the hon. member would say to his constituents, "If we get the money out of the general revenue for the purpose of improving your streets it will relieve you of a burden." The general revenue would not particularly trouble the ratepayer of Bundaberg, and the moment the hon. member said he should be relieved of the burdens placed upon unimproved land values the Bundaberg ratepayer would carefully scratch out the other man's name at the next general election and allow the name of the hon. member to stand.

Mr. GLASSEY: Is that what you do in Mackay?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Never mind what he did in Mackay. The hon. member wanted to get him

off the track. He wanted from the hon. member an intelligent explanation partly of his reticence and partly of his attitude. By saying to the people of Bundaberg that we should give them an increased subsidy the hon. member pleased the people of Bundaberg. At the same time, when the hon. member said he was going to put a tax upon land values the people of Bundaberg thought it was somebody a long way off who would have to find the money. One lot of people believed that they were going to be relieved of burdens and the other lot believed that some other man had got to pay something and hand it over to them, and so the hon. member squared the circle.

Mr. KIDSTON: The hon. member for Warwick, who was chairman of the Royal Commission on local government, had contradicted his statement as to what the commission had recommended. He found on page 73 of the report, paragraph 45, the following statement of the scheme proposed—

We recommend that two-thirds of the amount of this appropriation should be distributed to local authorities in proportion to the amount actually raised by them in each year by means of rates now carrying endowment, and that the remaining third be placed to the credit of a fund to be established—to be called a "Special Endowment Fund"—which would be distributed to local authorities in such manner as may be recommended by a committee consisting of the Minister and three persons appointed by the Legislative Assembly, to whom they shall make a report annually.

He thought that was just what he had said.

Mr. MORGAN: No. You said three members of Parliament, not three persons appointed by the Assembly, and not members of Parliament at all.

Mr. KIDSTON did not think there was very much difference. Why he objected to that scheme was that those four members of the House would have it in their grace to give to or withhold from particular local authorities as they might think fit. It was to avoid that difficulty that he suggested a method of distribution which depended entirely upon the willingness of people who claimed endowment to rate themselves. The amount of money the Treasurer had to pay for the benefit of the general taxpayer depended entirely upon the amount of money which the general taxpayer was prepared to provide for the Treasurer, and the sooner the same principle was followed with regard to local authority endowment the better it would be. The ideal Treasurer would be a man who could find money to build a railway and a road and a bridge against every man's door, but though they had had many financial geniuses in Queensland none of them had risen to that height, and until they struck such a jewel of a Treasurer they must struggle along in the way of benefiting the taxpayer in proportion as the taxpayer was willing to pay.

Mr. MORGAN: The hon. member had got up with the intention of showing that his contradiction was wrong, but he had only proved that he did not understand the passage he had quoted from the Royal Commission's report. The hon. member had referred to the roads and bridges vote, and the commission had been particularly anxious to do away with the pernicious system under which the Treasurer or the Home Secretary had the disposal of a considerable sum of money for that purpose at his discretion. They proposed to create a fund which should be distributed upon the recommendation of a committee of experts appointed by a vote of the House, but not members of the House. The proposal was that they should distribute the money voted by Parliament upon fixed rules laid down and printed in the report of the commission. That was the recommendation, but that was not the hon. member's interpretation of it.

Mr. DUNSFORD: The speech of the Minister for Education was an effort to show that there could be no justification for taking money from the people in the shape of general taxes and handing it over to property-owners by way of endowment to local taxation. Therefore, the Government proposed to increase a vote for which there was no justification, or else the Minister for Education was not in earnest. They had been asked if they could show any justification for endowment of local authorities out of the general revenue, and he would endeavour to do so. In the first place much of this money called rates was spent for the purpose, not only of improving the property of private property-owners, but also for improving Government property, therefore the Government should contribute something towards the improvement of their own property. Another thing, much of the taxation now collected by the Government should be truly local taxation, and should go into local coffers instead of going into the general revenue; and then there would be no necessity for the local authorities to ask for the moiety. And if the local authorities were given the right to rate Government properties in their respective districts, there would be no reason for them to beg this money. He thought many of the difficulties of local authorities arose from the fact that there were too many of them. Around Brisbane there were twelve or fourteen local authorities managing the local affairs of 130,000 or 140,000 people, while the London County Council managed the local affairs of 4,000,000 people. Here a lot of money was spent unnecessarily in management. There should be federation of local authorities, so that more money would be spent in improvements and less would go into the pockets of unnecessary officials. The seven local authorities in and around Brisbane drew nearly half the whole amount of the endowment, and though the hon. member for Fortitude Valley said they first contributed the money through the Customs, that was not right, because they were only about one-fifth of the population of the colony. If the endowment was only distributed on the basis of population, the country municipalities would get a larger proportion than at present.

Mr. HAMILTON: Though he agreed that country districts should receive a greater portion of the endowment than at present, he could not agree with the proposition of the leader of the Opposition that the endowment should be increased to all local authorities, because in many divisions the whole of the land was freehold, and as the endowment came from revenue, and revenue from Customs taxation, it followed that the taxation on the working man would be increased in order to benefit the freeholder—by giving him money to make roads to improve his own property. He was surprised at such a proposition emanating from the leader of the Opposition. In divisions, however, in the Cook district, where roads ran entirely through Government property connecting towns fifty and sixty miles apart, such as Maytown to the Laura or Port Stuart to the Coen, it was only fair that the endowment should be increased, as the money spent on those roads benefited the Government property through which they ran. As the Government finances were improving he hoped that in future, while allowing the endowment to remain as it was in divisions where the land was chiefly freehold, in other divisions in the interior the endowment would be increased.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The hon. member for Charters Towers had referred to something he knew nothing about. The roads of Charters Towers were made, but it was very difficult to

make roads through Crown lands where the revenue from most of the landowners did not amount to more than 3s. 6d. or 4s. a year.

Mr. STEWART had been astonished at listening to the speeches of the metropolitan members. It must be plain to everyone that as the country outside prospered so Brisbane must increase in wealth and importance. Representatives of metropolitan constituencies who claimed their "pound of flesh" in the shape of endowment were therefore very shortsighted, because the more money spent in making roads and bridges in the outside districts the more inevitable it was that Brisbane must progress. If those hon. members took a common-sense view of the situation they would not claim any endowment at all, and they would then soon find that not only would the country districts be benefited, but the metropolis as well. But, unfortunately, members representing places around Brisbane and elsewhere were strongly saturated with the sole idea of getting money for their own districts. He was surprised at anything in the shape of progressive thought coming from the other side, but he was glad to hear hon. members opposite advocating a differential scheme of endowment. He advocated that system last year, and was pleased to see the idea making way.

The TREASURER: It is ten years old.

Mr. STEWART: Then it had not grown very tall, and he hoped before another ten years had passed to see the system in operation. It had been asked of hon. members on his side that they should state their reasons for the granting of any endowment at all. There were 100 reasons. Had the Government no land of its own which wanted developing? Every road made in every division led to a Government property, and for that reason the Government should assist in making and maintaining the roads. One hon. gentleman referred to a place where the land was all freehold. Of course the endowment in that place would be small. Where there was half Government land and half freehold it would be larger, and where there was still more Government land it would be largest of all. On the matter of the land tax, he would ask the attention of hon. members to the fact that in a number of municipalities and divisions the expenses of the local bodies were largely increased by the fact that certain individuals held large areas of land which were not occupied. He could give instances in which miles of road had to be made for that reason, and if there was no other justification than that for a land tax that would be justification enough. The sooner a differential system of endowment was established the better.

Mr. BOLES: There was great diversity of opinion with regard to the endowment of local authorities. Some hon. members on the other side appeared to favour a differential system of endowment, but they had not said that in the event of the Government introducing such a scheme next year they would be prepared to support it. Not one of those hon. members had had the ardour to formulate any definite scheme. It was a difficult thing in a large colony like Queensland to say what would be a fair and equitable method of assisting the local authorities in different places. The metropolitan local authorities were in much the best position, because nearly all the land was alienated, so they could easily collect revenue. The hon. member for Cook had referred to divisions in his electorate with an area of 4,000 or 5,000 square miles, where there were miles and miles of roads passing through nothing but Crown lands, from which they could derive no revenue, although they had to keep the roads in repair. Under such circumstances it was impossible to

do any substantial work such as the erection of bridges, and it was only reasonable that the local authorities in a case like that should receive a larger endowment.

Mr. MAUGHAN ventured to say that when hon. members on this side had taken possession of the Treasury benches next year, one of the first measures of relief they would introduce would be in the direction of a local government reform. They could not well discuss the ethics of taxation on this vote, although the debate had been particularly interesting. As the representative of a large electorate, in which there were several struggling divisional boards and one or two municipalities, he was exceedingly obliged for even this small and pitiful measure of relief. The leader of the Opposition had referred to Table Z4 accompanying the Treasurer's Statement. The result was rather startling when they compared the amount of endowment given to the local authorities ten years ago with the amount they now received. Ten years ago the population was 100,000 less than at present, and the road mileage was from 1,800 to 2,500 miles less. Yet the endowment to divisional boards had been reduced by £130,000, while the reduction in the endowment to municipalities was something like £70,000. That was not a very progressive policy for any Government to pursue. Considering the substantial increases which had taken place in Estimates which had been discussed earlier in the session, he regretted very much that the Treasurer had not seen his way to grant more relief to the local authorities. Why, £17,000 was a mere drop in a bucket! The divisional boards in his electorate alone could easily swamp that amount, and ask for more. They had about 2,000 miles of roads in the district, 700 or 800 miles of which were really important roads; but owing to the want of revenue and the small endowment, they were in a very bad state of repair at present. He hoped that whoever might be in charge of the Treasury next year, there would be a considerable increase in the vote. In fact he believed that one of the test questions at the general election would be an increased subsidy to local authorities, who certainly deserved more consideration at the hands of the Government than they had received for many years past.

Question put and passed.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES (SUBDIVISION).

The TREASURER moved that £16,550 be granted for miscellaneous services. There was a large decrease in the vote from last year owing to the omission of the subsidy to the steam service *via* Torres Straits, £19,800. They had been unable to come to terms with the company, so they had dropped the subsidy altogether. The trade was going on the same without the subsidy, as steamers were coming out from home regularly for frozen meat and other produce. He thought the service would continue without the subsidy.

Mr. KERR: Only they have coloured crews now.

Mr. JACKSON: In 1893 they made a rather interesting socialistic experiment in the way of nationalising the currency, and he should like to know how it was that every year there was a large increase in the number of notes destroyed. From the Auditor-General's report he found that in 1894 notes to the value of £119,000 were destroyed; in 1895, notes to the value of £241,000; in 1896, notes to the value of £412,000; and last year the amount destroyed was £516,000. The total value of Treasury notes issued amounted to about £1,000,000, and last year one-half the total amount were destroyed, which seemed a rather extraordinary state of things. Seeing that they had been trying the experiment

since 1893, the Government ought to have been able to remedy the matter of defective notes by this time. He was very glad to see that the interest they were deriving from the issue of Treasury notes was increasing considerably. In 1894 the interest received was £5,761; in 1895, £5,900; in 1896, £7,100; and last year it jumped up to £13,506. Judging from that he took it that the experiment was becoming more of a success now than it was in the early days, when the banks did not view the experiment with favour. He did not say that it was not a success in the early stage, but since then he took it that the banks had not been so opposed to the experiment. In his opinion the Government still kept a reserve of £100,000 or £120,000 more than they need keep under the Treasury Notes Act of 1893, seeing that the advantage of the system was now almost universally recognised, and that the opposition of the banks had almost died away. He should like the Treasurer to answer his question as to why it was necessary to destroy so many notes every year, and how it was that the paper was so defective in quality?

The TREASURER: The order for the Treasury notes was sent to the best bank-note manufacturers in London, but there was something wrong with the watermark in the first batch, and the Government had been destroying them after the first issue, but of course they could not get them all in at once. The manufacturers had made an allowance of £600 for the defective notes. As to the reserve, it was kept at that amount, because some of the banks were still not at all anxious to have the notes.

Mr. TURLEY: What is the total amount of notes in circulation?

The TREASURER: They had issued about £900,000 worth, but some of them were in the hands of the banks, and could not be said to be properly in circulation. A record was published every month of the notes in hand and in circulation.

Mr. JACKSON: There had been about £1,200,000 of notes destroyed in four years, so that there must have been other defective notes besides those in the first order.

The TREASURER: There was only one batch of defective notes.

Mr. JACKSON: Then the wear and tear must be very severe. Of course the notes were used more in the country districts than in the towns, where the banks generally paid in gold, which was, he supposed, a mild form of boycott—an indication that some banks still viewed the Treasury notes with disfavour.

The TREASURER: The country banks still give out notes.

Mr. JACKSON: He supposed they found it more economical.

At 9 o'clock,

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with Standing Order 171, I call upon the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Stephens, to take the chair.

Mr. STEPHENS thereupon took the chair.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW pointed out that a lot of notes were going all through the country with little round holes, about the size of a shilling, in each corner. He hoped the next issue would be more acceptable to the public. He was glad to hear that these notes were being recalled.

Mr. STEWART asked for some information regarding the item, "Commission, exchange, etc."

The TREASURER: The amount voted last year was £12,000; the amount spent was £14,124. The exchange upon drafts sent home for the payment of interest last year amounted to £1,857 10s., and there was paid to the Bank of England, for the management of our stock

£9,818; commission, etc., £930. The expense of shipping gold was £1,527. He might state that they had remitted a great deal more money this year than was necessary to pay the interest; in fact, by the end of the year they would have sufficient money in London to pay the interest due next June.

Mr. STEWART: He wished to know whether there was a standing agreement with the Bank of England, and if so, how long it would last?

The TREASURER: It will last as long as the stock is in existence; it is inscribed for a certain time.

Mr. STEWART asked, in reference to the premium on the general guarantee policy, whether the Government paid the whole cost, or whether they were reimbursed to any extent by the officers who were insured?

The TREASURER: The Government stood the whole cost. The amount paid last year was £506 12s. 9d.

Mr. GLASSEY asked if the contract for the Torres Straits mail service had ceased?

The TREASURER: We pay no more subsidy, but the steamers still run.

Question put and passed.

CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

The TREASURER moved that £41,890 be granted for the Customs Department. There was a total increase in the vote of some £1,300, made up principally of small increases. The late Collector of Customs was paid £800 a year; the present occupant of the office was appointed at £650, and it was proposed to increase his salary up to £700 a year. The senior sub-collector at Rockhampton received £50 more, and the sub-collector at Cairns £25 more.

Mr. STEWART: The sub-collector at St. Lawrence received £200 last year and was to receive £300 this year; but on looking up the statistics he found that the total imports at that port were only £271.

The TREASURER explained that this officer also acted as police magistrate, for which he received nothing additional.

Mr. TURLEY: The Treasurer had promised to give him some information from the Collector of Customs in regard to the disposal of money received on account of some confiscated pearl-shell. As that officer was now present, the hon. gentleman might find out when he was likely to have his report ready.

The TREASURER: There had been some trouble about getting the name of the informer in the first instance. It was thought the collector of Customs at Cairns would know the name of the informer, and he was being communicated with to get the name.

Mr. TURLEY: Is it likely that we will get the name before the session closes?

The TREASURER: They might get it tomorrow. They were wiring now for it.

Mr. GLASSEY: A correspondent had complained to him that all goods and stores for the Colonial Sugar Refining Company's mill near Lucinda Point were carried straight to the mill without being checked by the Customs officer as to the amount of duty which should be paid upon them. His correspondent wanted to know if there was any contract between the mill and the department that that should be the case, because it was rumoured at the place that the late Treasurer, Sir Hugh Nelson, had entered into some arrangement of the kind with the proprietors of the mill.

The TREASURER: There was a sub-collector of Customs stationed at Dungeness, which was now called "Lucinda Point," and it was his duty to check all the stuff as it left the ship's side. It might be that the manager of the mill, which was twenty miles away, had given the

sub-collector some guarantee that he would pay the Customs duties when he received a memo. of the amount due. But the sub-collector of Customs ran the risk himself in such a case if anything went wrong, as he was responsible to the Treasurer for the amount of Customs duties due. From his knowledge of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company he did not think they would defraud the Queensland Government of a penny. He did not think the sub-collector of Customs would lose a shilling by confiding in those people and waiting until the cheque came back for the Customs duties due. No special facilities were afforded by the Government to the company any more than to anyone else.

Mr. GLASSEY was not in a position personally to say that the statement of his correspondent was absolutely true, but from the handwriting, dictation, and general structure of the letter, he judged that his correspondent was a man of some judgment and some standing in the neighbourhood. What he said was that that system had been going on for a considerable time, and there was some grumbling on the part of persons who were differently treated, and the answer to those who grumbled was that there was some agreement made by Sir Hugh Nelson—

The TREASURER: There is no agreement.

Mr. GLASSEY: That was the statement made, and the correspondent insinuated that everything about the matter was not as straightforward as it ought to be. He was himself inclined to agree with the Treasurer, notwithstanding what might be said as to the hold the company had on the country, that they were an honourable firm and would not do what was suggested. Still it should be the practice of the department to treat the man who got £20 worth of goods in the same way as the man who got £1,000 worth, and the utmost vigilance should be exercised by Customs officers to see that the department received the duty it was entitled to. With regard to the proposed increase to the Collector of Customs, did the Treasurer mean to tell the Committee that £650 was not a fair salary for that officer? It was difficult for those who objected to those increases to supply details to justify their objection, and it should rest with the Treasurer in such a case to show that some extra amount of labour had to be performed, or some other reason existed, to justify the increase. There were five men getting an increase of only £10 each, and he objected to one man getting this increase of £50; therefore he was bound to move that the salary of the Collector of Customs be reduced by £50.

The TREASURER: As he had explained, the former Collector of Customs received £800 a year, and the present collector, to whom it was proposed to give an increase of £50, received £650 a year. During the last twelve months the sum of £1,207,000 was collected through the Customs all over the colony. That gentleman had entire control of the Customs, not only on the coast, but also the border Customs; he was also in charge of the distilleries and the breweries. The work in connection with breweries was extra work this last year, and £60,000 more had been received from that source. The position required a man of considerable ability with a thorough knowledge of the work. There was a very large staff under Mr. Irving, and he was not too highly paid. Some of the sub-collectors received £500 a year and quarters as well.

Mr. KERR: There might be something in the contention of the Treasurer that the Collector of Customs and Chief Inspector of Distilleries should get the proposed increase, because he had a large department to manage, but the same could not be said with regard to the sub-collector at

Rockhampton, who was down for an increase of £50. He thought that officer was well paid with £500 a year and house allowance. The hon. member for Rockhampton North had drawn attention to the officer at St. Lawrence getting an increase of £100, but he acted as portmaster as well. It was strange that the hon. member did not draw attention to the fact that the sub-collector at Rockhampton was to receive an increase of £50. If a division was called on the amendment he would vote against the increase.

Mr. BATTERSBY intended to vote for the increase. The former collector received £800 a year, and if it was worth that amount the gentleman at present occupying the position was worth £700 a year.

Mr. MAUGHAN believed that the Collector of Customs bore an excellent reputation as a good chief, but, though he believed the heads of departments should be well paid, yet, as a country member who had to approach Ministers for necessary requirements for his constituency, and received the intimation that there was no money in the Treasury, he felt compelled—if the amendment went to a division—to vote for the reduction. He did not see any increase for the sub-collector at Maryborough, who was a very zealous hardworking officer with large responsibility. If the sub-collector at Bundaberg was entitled to a rise, surely the Maryborough sub-collector was also entitled to some consideration. He was sorry to see that many of the junior officers in the head office had, as usual, not been considered, and he hoped that they and the tidewaiters and other junior officers would not be overlooked next year.

Mr. STEWART did not think the left-handed rebuke of the hon. member for Barcoo was deserved. The hon. member seemed to imply that he had not mentioned the Rockhampton officer because it might have a prejudicial effect upon himself from an election point of view. Such was not the case. He did not see why he should continually protest when it led to no result, and he mentioned the St. Lawrence officer because it appeared that it cost £300 a year to collect Customs duties to the extent of £271, which was not very good business. He would like to point out that the Estimates were very misleading to the public. For instance, the Maryborough sub-collector received £400, but he also had quarters, light, and fuel, valued at £80, which were not mentioned. The Bundaberg officer received £430, and his allowances amounted to £86, making the salary £516. The salary of the Gladstone sub-collector was £250, but he had quarters valued at £50. In Rockhampton the sub-collector received £550, and he had quarters and light valued at £80, so that practically he received £630. No doubt he was a good officer, but he was very handsomely paid. He thought all those allowances should be included in the salary, and if there was any rent due to the Government for premises the money should be paid back as rent so that the accounts could be kept in proper form.

Mr. GLASSEY moved that the item "Collector of Customs and Chief Inspector of Distilleries, £700," be reduced by £50. He did not intend to divide the Committee upon the question, but he moved the amendment as a protest against increases being given to officers drawing more than £300 or £400 a year.

Amendment put and negatived; and item agreed to.

BORDER CUSTOMS.

The TREASURER moved that £5,674 be granted for border Customs.

Question put and passed.

DISTILLERIES AND EXCISE.

The TREASURER moved that £8,205 be granted for distilleries and excise. The increase, about £2,500, was mainly on account of the appointment of officers in charge of breweries.

Mr. DUNSFORD asked for an explanation of the item £700 for "incidentals."

The TREASURER: It was a new vote. Temporary men often had to be put on in consequence of the Act passed last year.

Question put and passed.

MARINE BOARD.

The TREASURER moved that £3,308 be granted for the Marine Board. The salary of the chairman of the board had been removed from that vote to the vote for the Marine Department. The salary of the engineer-surveyor had been restored to what it was before the retrenchment in 1893, and there were a few small increases to clerks.

Mr. BROWNE: He had noticed the change referred to by the Treasurer, and it was a change he did not like to see. Year after year objection had been taken to one officer holding the dual position of Portmaster and Chairman of the Marine Board. It seemed now that it was intended to perpetuate a system which was unfair to shipowners, ship captains, and the travelling public, and which was strongly objected to by at least 90 per cent. of what he might call the maritime men. The Portmaster had charge of all the lights and buoys along the coast. If, in consequence of any alteration of those lights or buoys, a vessel was lost, the inquiry was held before the same officer in his capacity as Chairman of the Marine Board. With regard to Government vessels, it was the Portmaster who had to advise as to their suitability. If anything happened to one of those vessels, the same gentleman would have to sit in judgment on what had happened in consequence of his expert advice having been taken. He had not a word to say personally against Captain Almond, but on public grounds he protested against the anomalous position held by that gentleman.

The TREASURER: He knew of only one case where Captain Almond could have sat in such a case as had been stated by the hon. member; and he did not do so. That was the case of the "Glanworth," which was wrecked off Gladstone some time ago. He was perfectly satisfied that Captain Almond would not do anything but what was thoroughly fair and impartial in any inquiry.

Mr. TURLEY: The hon. gentleman must surely have been misinformed. He need only refer to the wreck of the "Aarhus," which was lost at Cape Moreton. The inquiry in that case was held before Captain Almond, in his capacity as Chairman of the Marine Board, and he put leading questions to his own lighthouse-keepers and pilots. In no other colony, he believed, was a similar anomaly permitted.

The TREASURER: Does not Captain Hickson hold a similar dual position in New South Wales?

Mr. TURLEY: It might be so; he was not aware of it; but in any case the principle was wrong. Surely the hon. gentleman would not contend that a judge of the Supreme Court should sit in a case in which he was interested, or in which he was responsible for something having gone wrong? Yet when a shipmaster met with a mishap at sea he was sat on by the official who was responsible for the lights and the sailing directions. He had said it before, and he would repeat it now, that it was a public disgrace that the Government did not interfere and remove the Portmaster from the anomalous position he held. It was not as if the Treasurer did not know that it gave general dissatisfaction, because it was brought up in 1893 by his own

colleague, the late Mr. Burns, who was then member for Townsville. He got a promise that things would be altered very soon.

The TREASURER: He wanted an engineer on the board.

Mr. TURLEY: That was so; but he took exception to the constitution of the Marine Board, and advocated an elective board. But although he obtained a promise that an engineer would be appointed, no such engineer had yet been appointed.

The TREASURER: There has been no vacancy since.

Mr. TURLEY: Yes. Mr. McDiarmid only died about three years ago—at any rate some considerable time after the promise was made to the late hon. member for Townsville. There was no reason why the holding of the two positions by the Portmaster should become a permanency.

The TREASURER: It is no more a permanency now than it was last year.

Mr. TURLEY: Previously the two positions appeared separately on the Estimates, but now they were combined. It was very nearly time some change was made in the constitution of the board.

Mr. BROWNE: The Treasurer said that in the only case in which Captain Almond was implicated he refused to sit. There had been other cases in which he was concerned, but even that one case showed the absurdity of the position. The man who had control of the lights and of the navigation of the coast, and who was more likely to be mixed up in those affairs than anyone else, was the chairman of the board, and one of the very few nautical members of the board. The chances were that if Captain Almond, acting honourably and honestly, retired from the board in such a case, the board would be left without the assistance of the very man who should be supreme. The constitution of the board had been referred to year after year. In 1890 the then Treasurer, Mr. John Donaldson, made a distinct promise to the marine engineers in Brisbane that one member of the board should be an engineer. The promise was repeated in 1893, but no alteration had yet been made. Such a state of affairs did not exist in any other country in the world. By the combination of the two offices in the one vote, it meant that not only would Captain Almond continue to hold the dual position, but his successor would do the same.

Mr. STEWART thought the Treasurer was in error in saying that Captain Almond did not sit on the inquiry into the wreck of the "Glanworth." His own recollection was that he did sit, and on referring to *Hansard* for 1896 he found that on page 1182 the hon. member for Croydon stated that the captain of the "Glanworth" objected to Captain Almond sitting as chairman of the board. Notwithstanding that objection he did sit, and he (Mr. Stewart) then read an extract from the *Rockhampton Bulletin* dealing very exhaustively with the whole case. On the same occasion the present Premier, after referring to the ambiguous position held by this officer, said—

The Treasurer might ask him to make a charge, but it was invidious making charges which it was difficult to substantiate, because they might be merely errors of judgment, and not intentional neglect of duty; but where a serious casualty occurred to which the Portmaster had unintentionally contributed by the erection of lights or beacons in certain positions, and where the administration of the department might be called in question, it would be better that the Portmaster should not occupy a seat on the Marine Board. Of course there would have to be legislation before the constitution of the board could be reorganised; and though the Government could hardly be asked to deal with the question this session, he hoped the suggestion he had made would not be lost sight of.

Now the hon. gentleman had an opportunity of translating his ideas into legislation, but they found that he lost this opportunity. He agreed that it was placing the Portmaster in a most invidious position—he, as Chairman of the Marine Board, having to preside in cases where his own conduct as Portmaster was under consideration.

Mr. BATTERSBY: They ought to have a marine board altogether outside the Government service, but there was not time within the next week or two to make the change. Whether the Labour party or the present party was in power next session, they should take steps to reorganise the Marine Board, and keep either Captain Almond or anyone else in the Government service off the board.

Mr. TURLEY: The position was that most of the Governments, when the Estimates were under consideration, were always willing to recognise that some alteration in the constitution of the board was necessary, but as soon as the Estimates were passed they did not think there was any necessity to interfere with the board. The only way in which members would be able to deal satisfactorily with that question would be to refuse to vote the money for this service. A wreck might be caused by some error on the part of the Portmaster, and in that case he would certainly be biased in his own interest, and the master of the vessel could not expect to be cleared from blame. It was about time that this rotten state of things, which had been continued year after year, should be done away with, and some alteration made in the constitution of the board.

The TREASURER: It did not follow that because Captain Almond was Chairman of the Marine Board that he would be biased, or that the men under him would not give truthful evidence in any matter in which they were called as witnesses. In the case referred to by the hon. member for Croydon, Captain Almond left the boardroom as soon as he was objected to. There were many cases, however, in which he would not be in any way influenced by his position as Portmaster; and besides he was only one of five members. Why should it be assumed that the men under Captain Almond would not tell the truth before him because they were afraid they might lose their situations?

Mr. TURLEY: There were some of the men who were afraid to state the truth before the board.

The TREASURER: He did not think there was a single man in the department who would be afraid to speak the truth before the board.

Mr. TURLEY: I know that was the case.

The TREASURER: He did not believe it. He believed that all the men were as honest and straightforward as the hon. member for South Brisbane, and he did not think that Captain Almond would sit in any case where he was directly interested. Captain Heath was Chairman of the Marine Board before Captain Almond, and Captain Hickson, the portmaster in Sydney, was chairman of the Marine Board in New South Wales. Was the head of the department bound to protect his servants if they were wrong? The probability was that he would be harder upon them than an outsider. He heard more about the Marine Board in this House than he did outside, and he was among shipping men as much as any member of the House. He might mention that the Hon. E. B. Forrest was appointed in 1894 to represent the insurance companies, as Mr. McDiarmid had done previously. He would promise that if he was Treasurer when the next vacancy occurred on the board an engineer would be appointed.

Mr. TURLEY: Will you alter the constitution of the board?

The TREASURER: A Bill would have to be passed to do that.

Mr. TURLEY: Will the Government introduce a Bill to do it?

The TREASURER: I will not promise that. Question put and passed.

MARINE DEPARTMENT—HEAD OFFICE—PORTS.

The TREASURER moved that £49,010 be granted for the Marine Department. There was an increase in the vote of some £2,500, made up of various items. The cost of buoys, beacons, pilot vessels, and steamers was estimated to be £1,000 more; maintenance and repair of wharves £500 more, and there was £326 down for spare gear and lamps for gas buoys. All the pilots received a little more, and the salaries of the chief clerk and the accountant were also increased.

Mr. LEAHY asked the Treasurer for information regarding the cost of replenishing and maintaining the gas buoys at Rockhampton?

The TREASURER: The gas was obtained from the Railway Department at a cost of £25, and the freight on the gas cost £60. The total cost was £85, as against £500 under the old system for one buoy for a year. Each buoy held ten weeks' supply, but the holder sent from Brisbane contained thirty weeks' supply, and it was sent up twice a year.

Mr. LEAHY: He had been told that it cost £23 each way for freight on the gasholder, which seemed very high.

Mr. SIM asked why it was that the two boatmen at Normanton received only £108 each, while those at other ports, not so far from Brisbane, received £118.

The TREASURER: The salary depended upon the length of service. When these men had been a certain time in the service they would receive £118 too.

Mr. SIM contended that men who were serving the colony at such a distance from the centre of civilisation should be dealt with as liberally as those nearer Brisbane.

Mr. MAUGHAN asked if any allowance was made to men in the Marine Department employed in the North for the extra cost of living?

The TREASURER: In the last item of the vote there was £700 put down to cover allowances to employees stationed north of Ingham.

Mr. STEWART asked if the hon. member could give them any details as to the up-keep of the different steamers maintained by the department?

The TREASURER: If the hon. gentleman would turn up the items referring to different ports, he would find the amounts paid to the masters, engineers, firemen, etc. The amount paid for coal for all the steamers was £1,195; but he could not give the separate quantities consumed by each vessel, or other details.

Mr. TURLEY: In order to show the difference between the actions of the Portmaster and other officers exercising judicial functions, he would refer to a case reported in to-day's paper, in which Mr. McMahon proceeded against J. Selke for unlawfully signing a receipt without affixing a stamp. Mr. Murray, Police Magistrate, declined to sit in the case, because the person charged being an officer of his court, it might be thought he would be biased in his favour. How much better that was than to have a man sitting in a case in which he was himself personally interested! If that principle were adopted in connection with marine board inquiries far more satisfaction would be given, and the system would receive far more support than it did at the present time.

Mr. BOLES asked whether the vote for the repair of wharves and jetties referred solely to Government wharves and jetties? He mentioned the matter because with respect to the Government jetty at Gladstone there was some doubt

as to whether it would be repaired from that vote or from the Harbour Board's funds.

The TREASURER: It would not come from this vote.

Question put and passed.

EXPLOSIVES MAGAZINES.

The TREASURER moved that £1,041 be granted for explosives magazines. There was an increase of £133 on the last year's vote.

Mr. SIM asked whether the magazine at Normanton had been removed to a safer position outside the town than it had previously occupied, and why it was that the caretaker there received only £52 a year while those in charge of magazines at other places, where a smaller amount of explosives was stored, received a good deal more?

The TREASURER: There was no special caretaker at Normanton, but two men there got £25 a year each for looking after the magazine in addition to their other work for which they received salaries. He understood from the Secretary for Works that tenders were being called for the removal of the magazine at Normanton.

Mr. BROWNE asked what was being done with regard to the examination of explosives? It was about three years since a promise had been given to the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Smyth, that a Bill would be introduced to regulate the importation of explosives, and he was reminded by the hon. member for Charters Towers that it was promised in the Governor's Speech last year, but so far nothing had been done in the matter. Hon. members knew that several accidents had been due to bad explosives, and the hon. gentleman might tell the Committee what system the Government were proceeding on at present.

The TREASURER: Hon. members would see in the Mines Estimates that an extra vote was asked for this year in connection with explosives. At present the Government Analyst examined all explosives that were brought here, and in addition all explosives in the magazines in the far North were examined every three months, and it was understood that inferior kinds of dynamite deteriorated after three months in a hot climate. Of course they ought to have legislation on the subject, but at present they dealt with it under the Navigation Act, which was a roundabout way of dealing with it. Still for some time past they had been extremely careful in examining all explosives imported, and they had condemned a lot of the stuff that had been brought in.

Mr. SIM explained that the council of the municipality of Normanton had complained to him, through the mayor, of the position of the magazine there, and its danger to the town. It was desirable that it should be removed as early as possible.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is being done.

Mr. SIM was glad to have that assurance; but in connection with what had been said by the Treasurer, he suggested that a magazine at which such a large quantity of explosives was stored should be placed in the special charge of one person, who should be paid a proper salary for looking after it.

Mr. JACKSON wished to know how the keeping of explosives by storekeepers in mining townships was regulated? He had heard complaints of the danger which existed in some mining townships owing to the large quantity of explosives kept by some storekeepers.

The TREASURER: The municipality regulate it under a by-law.

Mr. JACKSON: He was not aware of that. In the case he spoke of it was a divisional board.

It sometimes happened that storekeepers kept a large quantity of explosives under the counter, and if it came under the control of the police in any way he hoped they would be instructed to see that only the usual quantity was kept.

The TREASURER: At one time on Charters Towers the storekeepers had magazines of their own, but were only allowed to keep a limited quantity. It was under the control of the municipality.

Question put and passed.

DRY DOCK.

The TREASURER moved that £1,500 be granted for the Dry Dock. The vote was the same as last year.

Mr. TURLEY: Two years ago the Treasurer promised that something would be done to make the dock more capable of dealing with large vessels, and he would like to hear whether the Government were going to do anything in the matter?

The TREASURER: It was intended to hand the dock over to the Harbour Board, and they would no doubt provide more accommodation if it was required. The rocks at the entrance had been blasted lately, and that was an improvement.

Question put and passed.

WATER SUPPLY.

The TREASURER moved that £4,702 be granted for water supply. The increase in the vote was in consequence of the provisions made to provide a system of flood warnings in different parts of the colony.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: There had been considerable comment amongst the ironfounders of the colony with regard to ordering machinery from home for the Gympie waterworks, and he thought it right that the Treasurer should give a statement publicly as to the reason why the local ironfounders were not allowed to tender for the same. We had been enabled under our protectionist policy to create industries which could not be beaten in any of the colonies, and it was nothing but right—if Queensland was a protectionist colony—to carry out that policy. Of course the Hydraulic Engineer had his reasons, and it was right that the reasons should be stated publicly.

The TREASURER: This was a matter for the Gympie municipality to explain. They were getting the water supply, and the Government had undertaken to do the work for them. The matter was left entirely with Mr. Henderson, who was responsible for the machinery supplied, and he ought to be allowed to get it where he thought he could get it best. The bulk of the machinery would be made in the colony; but for one pumping machine made in Queensland he supposed 400 or 500 were made in England. He was not a protectionist by any means, at the same time if work could be done as well in the colony as out of it, he would rather see it done in the colony. But complicated machinery could not in every case be made as well and as cheaply as in the old country.

Mr. MAUGHAN: What about the locomotives made by Walkers?

The TREASURER: That was where they could afford to order thirty or forty locomotives; but if they could order only one, Walkers Co. could not afford to make it. There was only one pump wanted by the Gympie municipality, and though they might be able to make it as well in Maryborough they would have to buy the patents, and that would cost a great deal more money. It was not wise to insist upon everything being made in Queensland.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Is it wise to encourage local industries?

The TREASURER: Those who prated about local industries very often did not support them themselves. Most of the freetraders dealt with local places, while the protectionists got their stuff from outside.

Mr. SMYTH: The Gympie people ought to be allowed to go for their machinery outside if they wished to do so. The mining community as a rule were freetrade, because it did not suit them when they wanted to develop ground to go to the dearest market for machinery. They liked to stick to the colony as much as they could, but the duty was so heavy that the persons wanting the machinery required protection as well as the foundries. He had been given to understand that this pumping machinery was a patent, and could not be made in the colonies. No doubt they could make others equally good in the colony of another pattern, but when a pattern or design was insisted on it had to be got where it could be made. As to the horizontal engine and boilers, 25 per cent. duty on them was a stiff amount to pay, and they rather objected to those stiff duties, though it was all very well for towns maintained at the expense of other portions of the colony. Their idea was to develop the colony and develop their mines, and they did not want any obstacles of that kind. The principal portion of the work would be labour in connection with the waterworks. One item was sinking a shaft and tunnelling, and that would come to £3,000. Then there would be the pipes and the laying of the pipes, but the only work wanted by the people of Maryborough was the pumping machine; and the Gympie people thought they might as well import it themselves as allow other people to import it. He hoped the Gympie municipality would be allowed to do its own business in its own way.

Mr. GLASSEY: The hon. member for Gympie said that all miners were freetraders. If that were so, what were they going to do with their boys and girls? It was the most natural thing that Gympie people should be allowed to do their business in their own way; but it was not wrong that the representatives of towns in which industries were established should foster those industries. If there was any prohibition against the Maryborough firms tendering for the work in question, it was most improper. The department should encourage local industries when calling for tenders for work under its control. Even if a little extra was paid for such work the people in the colony would be employed. He regretted very much that the machinery required for Gympie should have been ordered from the other end of the world instead of being made in the colony.

Mr. BATTERSBY: He was a protectionist, but he began to think it was time he became a freetrader. The 1888 election was fought on the question of freetrade and protection.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! This is not a debate on the question of freetrade and protection.

Mr. BATTERSBY: Maryborough had fought hard to get trade to that town, and was doing its best to rob every other town. It had been patted on the back altogether too much, and the sooner it learned that it was only part of the colony the better. It had been thieving and robbing all round.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member is out of order in using such language.

Mr. BATTERSBY: He would withdraw what he had said, but he desired to say a word or two on the question of protection as affecting the Gympie Waterworks.

The TREASURER: Is the hon. member in order?

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: It is difficult to know whether he is or is not. Strictly speaking, he is out of order.

Mr. STORY asked whether this was the vote on which they might discuss the question of artesian bores for the encouragement of settlement?

The TREASURER: No, this is not the vote.

Mr. MAUGHAN asked how much had been expended on the Mary River with regard to flood surveys and warnings?

The TREASURER replied that he had not the information by him, but he would furnish it to the hon. member if he would call at his office.

Mr. JENKINSON asked what progress had been made with the scheme for flood prevention which Mr. Henderson had in hand on the Mary River, and whether it was likely to be completed before the next wet season?

The TREASURER replied that Mr. Henderson had the work in hand now, and he hoped to have it finished before the wet season set in.

Mr. TURLEY: Some time ago they were informed by the Press that all the information on the subject of floods in the Brisbane River had been sent to the Agent-General with the view of submitting it to experts for their advice. Had any expert opinion been sent in on that subject? He would also call attention to the fact that last January, when there was a flood in the Brisbane River, the hour-to-hour information, though posted at the post and telegraph office and the Treasury Buildings, was not transmitted to the south side.

The TREASURER: All the information the Government had was published in the newspapers as well as posted at the places named by the hon. member, and most of the people interested in South Brisbane could have seen it. With regard to the information sent home about the Brisbane River, a preliminary report had been received from Colonel Pennycuik, who asked to have the heads of the river surveyed. That was now being done. Colonel Pennycuik thought it was possible to have a reservoir built there, but he would not make a report until he had full information. The cost of that scheme was roughly estimated at £1,500,000.

Mr. STEWART: Was it the intention of the Government to spend £1,500,000 in constructing a reservoir at the head of the Brisbane River?

The TREASURER: The Government could not spend any money for any purpose unless it was sanctioned by Parliament, and he was not prepared to say whether, when the complete report was sent in, the present Government would ask the House to vote the money.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported progress, and leave was given to the Committee to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: I move that the House do now adjourn. The business to-morrow—after private members' business is disposed of—will be the second reading of the Elections Acts Amendment Bill and of the Weights and Measures Bill; and after that Supply. I may mention that on Friday I shall not ask the House to sit on Monday, it being a holiday. I may also mention that it is the intention of the Government to give hon. members an opportunity of meeting Mr. Lindon Bates on board the "Lucinda" on Monday afternoon. I am sorry the invitations did not reach hon. members to-day, as I thought they would have done, and I make this announcement now, so that hon. members may hold themselves free from any other engagement if they choose to do so.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 11 o'clock