

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER 1898

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

WEDNESDAY, 7 DECEMBER, 1898.

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

REVISED STANDING RULES AND ORDERS.

The PRESIDENT reported that, in pursuance of an order of the House made on the 22nd ultimo, he had laid the Standing Rules and Orders adopted by the House on that date before His Excellency the Governor for his approval.

ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving—

That, unless otherwise ordered, this House will meet for the despatch of business at 3 p.m. on Friday in each week, in addition to the days already provided by Sessional Orders—

said: As hon. gentlemen are aware, we are approaching the end of the session, and we must make use of another day, if necessary, in order to get on with the business. There are several Bills before us now requiring attention, and I think hon. gentlemen will have no objection to the motion. I am not sure that we shall want Friday in this week, because I propose, with the consent of hon. members, to sit after tea. With regard to the Mining Bill now before the House I may say that if we get through the second reading to-day and to-morrow I will not take it into committee until Tuesday, in order to give hon. gentlemen plenty of time to consider it.

Question put and passed.

CHRONIC LEAD-POISONING.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR, in moving—

1. That, in the opinion of this House, an exhaustive inquiry should be made into the cause of the disease of the brain and nervous system prevalent among the children of this colony, ascribed by some medical practitioners to lead-poisoning, and the source ascertained as far as possible.

2. That the Government be requested to institute the necessary inquiry into the cause of this disease, and the source or sources from which such cause is derived—

said : Before moving the motion standing in my name I should like to give some reasons for bringing this matter before the House and asking hon. gentlemen to agree to it. I dare say most hon. gentlemen are aware that there has been for some time past a disease in this colony characterised by pallor, loss of appetite, constipation, vomiting, excruciating pains in the abdomen and the head, pains in the arms and legs, loss of power, and in some cases an affection of the optic nerve causing permanent defective vision or total blindness. Those cases have been recognised for a considerable number of years. In fact, so long ago as 1891 it was made a subject of inquiry, and efforts were made to ascertain the causes of the disease. All those symptoms I have enumerated indicate the presence of an irritant poison circulating in the blood and affecting the brain and nervous system. After a considerable amount of investigation, traces of lead were found in the urine of some of the patients suffering from those symptoms. Mr. Henderson, in a report he has furnished me with, states that he examined 22 cases, and that 4 contained traces of lead. It has been inferred, therefore, that all those cases are due to lead-poisoning. During the last five years, beginning with 1893 and ending with 1897, 83 cases of disease of the brain and nervous system ascribed to lead-poisoning were admitted into the Sick Children's Hospital. Of these, 26 were cured, 43 relieved, 7 became totally blind, and 7 died. The disease is specified as peripheral neuritis, paralysis, plumbism, lead colic, etc., 54 cases; meningitis, 20 cases; and optic neuritis, 9 cases. During the present year 17 cases of optic neuritis, peripheral neuritis, etc., have been admitted into the hospital, but the result in each case has not been stated. Of the 83 cases above referred to, 31·32 per cent. were cured, 51·8 per cent. were relieved—which means that they have been more or less permanently crippled by paralysis of the extremities; 8·43 per cent. became totally blind, and 8·43 per cent. died—that is, 68·68 per cent. of all the cases admitted into the hospital for the five years became either permanently paralysed, blind, or died—making a yearly average of 8·6 cases of cripples from paralysis, 1·4 from blindness, and 1·4 deaths. Those were cases admitted into the Sick Children's Hospital only during that period, but 135 cases of peripheral neuritis, etc., are reported from other sources. The clinical history of each case has not yet been ascertained, but no doubt a similar proportion of recoveries, paralysis, blindness, and deaths existed as in the cases of the Sick Children's Hospital patients; so that during the last five years 213 cases occurred, or a yearly average of 42·3, giving rise to 22·58 cripples from paralysis, 3·6 from blindness, and 3 deaths. Hon. gentlemen will agree with me that this is a matter of very great importance. There is no getting over the fact that this disease exists. It is not a disease of the past. It is a disease of the present and it will be a disease of the future unless some means are taken to ascertain exactly its cause, and the source or sources from which that cause emanates. The matter received considerable public notice at

the beginning of this year, so much so that the Government were induced to move in it, and a board to inquire into it was appointed on the 30th May last. That board consisted of Dr. Jackson, Dr. Love, Mr. Henderson, Mr. Pound, and myself, I acting as chairman. Before accepting the appointment I interviewed Mr. Dickson, who seemed anxious to have the matter thoroughly investigated. I told him I was perfectly willing to act. After the board was appointed some little delay occurred before the board got to work. Suitable accommodation having been provided, the board held their first meeting on the 7th June, when it was decided to send circulars to the various boards of health and the principal hospitals throughout the colonies, and to all medical practitioners in Queensland, requesting all possible information respecting cases of chronic lead-poisoning which may have come under their notice during the past five years, including cases of peripheral neuritis, or paralysis of doubtful origin, simulating cases of lead-poisoning, and the supposed cause or source of such. The second meeting of the board was held on the 10th June, when it was resolved to investigate certain cases, and also to analyse all articles of daily consumption, such as tea, sugar, coffee, coffee essence, cocoa, bread, flour, meal, rice, jams, tinned fish, butter, cheese, sweets, mineral waters, also tap-tank and school waters, Mr. Henderson undertaking to supply Winchester quart bottles for water and dishes for samples of food to enable him to carry on the analyses; and to apply to the Home Secretary for the necessary extra expenditure and labour to carry on the analyses. The third meeting of the board was held on the 15th of June, at which it was decided that nothing could be done of any definite nature until the Government Analyst was prepared to receive samples. The fourth meeting of the Board was held on the 22nd of June, when it was decided to write to the Under Secretary pointing out that no active steps could be taken until the sum asked for to enable the Government Analyst to carry out the necessary analyses was granted. Mr. Blackburn informed the secretary of the board on 25th of June that if the Government Analyst ordered the necessary articles to the extent of £30 the Under Secretary would sign the requisition. Some little time was occupied before the Government Analyst was in a position, after having received permission to do so, to carry on his analyses. In his report, dated the 20th July, Mr. Henderson says—

A large amount of preliminary work has been done. The explosive-room, which is detached from the main building and away from the lead fumes of the assay-room, has been cleared out, and is now being utilised solely for this work. Some special apparatus costing about £5 has been obtained. About £2 additional outlay is all that will be required for some time.

On commencing the analytical work the—

- (a) Distilled water in the laboratory was found, as expected, to contain a minute trace of lead as the still is in the assay room.
- (b) The tap-water, evidently by its hardness, from Mount Crosby, was found free from lead and zinc.
- (c) The water is now distilled in a glass condenser in the special room, and has been proved quite free from lead or zinc.
- (d) The hydrochloric acid was found free from lead and zinc.
- (e) Four samples of acetic acid were tested, and two were found to contain lead and had to be rejected.
- (f) Potassium cyanide was found free from lead or zinc.
- (g) Potassium chlorate was found to contain traces of lead. I may have some difficulty in obtaining a supply of this salt free from lead.
- (h) Three porcelain basins all gave lead reactions on first boiling with acid, but now give no result.

I may mention that the difficulty which Mr. Henderson experienced in obtaining reactions quite free from lead tend to point to a probability—I do not say it was a fact—that the lead was introduced by some of the reagents used in those cases in which lead was found in the urine. I simply mention this to show the extreme care necessary in carrying out investigations of this sort. In the report of their proceedings the board state that—

Pending the necessary authority being given to the Government Analyst to obtain the materials required by him, and to appoint someone to undertake the analysis, the board did not meet until the 7th July, when a large amount of correspondence from various hospitals, boards of health, and medical practitioners was read, and replies thereto considered, and at a meeting on the 13th July similar letters were read and answers thereto dictated.

The board met again on the 20th of July, when, amongst other correspondence, a letter from the Under Secretary, Home Department, dated 18th July, asking for a progress report, with a view of enabling the Home Secretary to decide whether the inquiry should be continued or brought to a conclusion, was read. The chairman was requested to draw up the desired report, and to send with it, to the Under Secretary, Mr. Henderson's progress report and a copy of the minutes of the meetings of the board.

Hon. gentlemen will see that Mr. Henderson was only in a position to commence work on the 25th of June, and that he occupied a considerable time in testing his reagents before he could proceed with the analysis of samples. In point of fact he only analysed six samples up to the time his report was sent in on the 20th of July, and on the 18th of July a letter was received from the Home Secretary requesting a progress report, with the view of enabling him to decide whether the inquiry should be continued or not. The board, in their report, further say—

It was also decided that the chairman should interview the Home Secretary on the subject of the inquiry, which he consented to do. Pending the decision of the Home Secretary as to whether the inquiry should be at once terminated or continued to a satisfactory conclusion, the board did not meet again until the 3rd of August, when the communication from the Under Secretary, dated the 28th of July, requesting "that the inquiry may be now directed to a conclusion," was considered, and, the members differing as to the interpretation of these words, it was decided to write to the Under Secretary for an explanation.

The board pointed out that the preliminary work had been gone through, and that they were in a position in which they hoped to be able to carry their inquiries to a satisfactory conclusion. But that was not satisfactory to the Home Secretary, who directed that the inquiry should be directed to a conclusion. In accordance with the request of the board I called at the Home Secretary's office to see Mr. Dickson. Mr. Dickson was engaged, but I saw Mr. Ryder, who, after visiting Mr. Dickson, informed me that the Home Secretary was too busy to see me, and could not say when he would be able to see me, if at all, but he had the progress report under his consideration, and would send an answer in a few days. In the course of my conversation with Mr. Ryder I said: "I was unable to understand why the Home Secretary had directed the inquiry to be brought to a conclusion at so early a stage of the proceedings when the board have only been in a position to carry on the necessary chemical analyses during the last three or four weeks, because at a personal interview with Mr. Dickson on the 9th of May that gentleman stated 'that the Government wished for an exhaustive inquiry into the nature and cause of the disease in question, and would be satisfied with nothing less,' and subsequently on interviewing Mr. Dickson with Dr. Love he again repeated the statement: 'That the nature of the disease, as well as its source, must be inquired into, and that the inquiry should extend back for five years.' Dr. Love remarked,

That an inquiry of that sort would take at least six months,' and the chairman stated, 'It must extend over a sufficient term to enable as thorough a clinical investigation as possible to be made, and of necessity a very large number of chemical analyses.'" As the board state in their report—

Mr. Dickson understood, therefore, from the first that the inquiry would entail a large amount of work and must extend over a considerable time.

Dr. Love stated "That in company with Dr. Taylor he saw the Home Secretary re the scope of the inquiry into cases of lead-poisoning; he (Dr. Love) was desirous of limiting the scope of the inquiry to the investigation of the source of recent cases of lead-poisoning, whereas Dr. Taylor advocated the inquiry into the nature and source of all cases of which details were available; but Mr. Dickson decided that the inquiry must be exhaustive and the matter probed to the bottom, though he (Dr. Love) pointed out that such an inquiry would be expensive and prolonged."

At the ninth meeting of the board held on the 17th instant a letter was read from the Under Secretary, dated the 15th of August, stating that the Home Secretary was willing to grant the board an extension of two months in which to conclude the inquiry.

I should like to refer to that letter. It reads as follows:—

SIR,—I have the honour, by direction, to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of the 3rd and 10th instant respectively, and with reference to the question of whether the inquiry on the subject of lead-poisoning should be at once concluded, or be further proceeded with, to inform you that while the Government consider that sufficient time has now elapsed to permit of a decision being come to by the board of inquiry upon the two points which required to be investigated—namely, the existence or otherwise of lead poisoning in and around Brisbane, and its cause if it exists, the Home Secretary is prepared to allow a further term of, say, two months, for the board to continue their investigations and to bring the inquiry to a conclusion.

Evidently, then, the Government had considered the matter, and were of the opinion that sufficient time had elapsed from the 17th of June, when the Government Analytical Chemist was in a position to commence analyses, to the 18th of July to carry out an important investigation of this sort. On what ground they arrived at such a conclusion it is impossible for me to say, nor do I think their position could be understood by any other person who has had any experience of scientific investigation. I could understand their action if it had been a matter of erecting a building, but for the Government to say that in a matter of this sort, which involves the consideration of the clinical history of a number of cases and a large amount of chemical analyses, three or four weeks was ample time in which to arrive at a conclusion, when medical men had been engaged eight or nine years trying to sift the matter and without success, either shows a total misapprehension of the circumstances of the case, or is—I shall not say a deliberate—but a covert insult to the board, for the board is charged by inference with either negligence or incompetence. It has been asserted by some that the board exceeded their functions in going outside the colony for information. I say the board were entitled to get information wherever they could obtain it, and would have been perfectly justified in getting information on the subject of their inquiry from Great Britain, America, or elsewhere, if necessary. But what are the facts? The board in their report state that—

As the conditions of existence in the other Australasian colonies are very similar to those which pertain in Queensland, it was considered advisable to ascertain the result of any investigations into the subject of lead-poisoning which may have been in any of these communities, with the view of obtaining some clue which might materially facilitate and shorten the work of the board. The circulars were posted at the same time as the Queensland ones, and replies have been received in some cases sooner than those coming from the more distant parts of this colony, consequently no extra time has been occupied, and the cost has been merely the postage—about 5s. in all.

Yet a charge is made against the board for going outside the colony to get information on this important subject. The board conclude their report as follows:—

The board would draw attention to the fact that, although twice asked for, permission for the Government Analyst to obtain the necessary chemicals, etc., to enable him to carry on the analyses was not obtained until the 25th of June, when it was given verbally by one of the officials connected with the Home Department, and on the 27th of June, or the Monday following, the Government Analyst was notified of such permission. On the 18th July, when in addition to the necessary analyses of reagents, etc., sufficient time had elapsed for the analysis of only six samples in connection with cases, a progress report was asked for to enable the Home Secretary "to decide as to the desirableness or otherwise of proceeding further in the matter," and on the 28th of July the board are informed that "Mr. Dickson desires that the inquiry may now be directed to a conclusion." In the absence of any reason being assigned by the Home Secretary, the board are unable to conceive on what grounds an inquiry of such vital importance to the community should be stopped so soon after its commencement, and consider that they are entitled to an explanation on that point.

On the 7th of September last the Under Secretary of the Home Department wrote as follows, in reply to the remarks of the board:—

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 31st ultimo, forwarding a report of the proceedings of the board appointed by the Government to inquire into and report upon the subject of chronic lead-poisoning in Queensland, and, with reference to certain conversations which took place between members of the board and the Home Secretary relative to the scope of the inquiry, am directed by Mr. Dickson to inform you that the substance of what occurred thereat is in many essential particulars incorrectly set forth in the report.

The Minister desires me to state that he did not urge an "exhaustive" inquiry for the past five years, nor for any stated period, and that he was not informed that the inquiry would require to extend over a term of six months. The interview on the 9th May, referred to in the report, was the outcome of a wish expressed by Dr. Taylor to have another medical practitioner associated with him upon the board in addition to Dr. Love, the latter not being likely to agree with him as to the origin of lead-poisoning in Queensland, in view of the fact that Dr. Love had already given full expression elsewhere as to his opinions upon the subject. During the conversation which ensued at this interview, Mr. Dickson, after the names of several medical gentlemen had been considered in connection with Dr. Taylor's proposition, stated that the board would of course make full inquiry into the matter of alleged lead-poisoning in Brisbane and other parts of Queensland, and that they would ascertain facts for themselves, and not be swayed by any views which might be held by members of the board unless such views were supported by satisfactory evidence.

I think it is perfectly clear from that last sentence that Mr. Dickson was, at the time referred to, willing that a full inquiry should be made into the matter. Yet, in order to carry out this very large order, we were allowed only three weeks. However, I do not want to occupy any more time in discussing the correspondence between the board and the Home Secretary. The fact remains that the inquiry was brought to a summary conclusion. Why, I do not know. Probably the Postmaster-General will be able to enlighten us on the subject. My own impression—and I think it will be the impression of anyone who reads the report—is that the board was appointed simply as a sort of sop to public excitement at the time, and that as soon as that excitement died away the board was quietly swept out of existence. If the Government think that is the proper way to treat a subject of this sort, which concerns the cause of a considerable amount of very serious illness among children, producing in many cases total disablement, paralysis, and blindness, then I think we may be allowed to differ. In support of what I have said I shall read two letters which I have received through the Central Board of Health. The first is as follows:—

3, Ashleigh Terrace, Vulture street, West End.
13th September, 1898

SIR,—It is to be regretted that the board appointed to inquire into the matter of lead-poisoning, did not confine their investigations to Brisbane and its environs, instead of wasting valuable time in going so far afield.

Only a fortnight back one of my little ones, a healthy, sturdy boy, aged three and a-half years, was taken seriously ill with continuous vomiting.

As neither Drs. W. T. Cuthbert or Lillian Cooper could diagnose the case, I called in Dr. Turner, who pronounced it lead-poisoning.

The result is that the child now lies in a most critical condition in the Children's Hospital, with paralysis of the vision.

I regret to say that since our boy was taken ill the water in our drinking-tank has been flushed again by the late rains, so that to analyse the tank-water now would be useless.

In justice to others, don't you think something practical might be done to mitigate the danger of lead-poisoning in drinking-water?

I am afraid my own sad case is hopeless, and beyond human aid.

I am, yours faithfully,

W. H. BROCKLEBANK.

The Honourable the Home Secretary, Brisbane.

The other letter reads thus—

3 Ashleigh Terrace, Vulture street, West End,
South Brisbane, 10th November, 1898.

SIR,—Referring to my letter of the 13th September last on the above subject, I beg to inform you that an analysis made of our tank water by the Government Analyst shows three-quarters of a grain of zinc to the gallon and not the faintest trace of lead, yet an analysis made of the urine of my child by Mr. Denham gives a small percentage of lead.

The Government Analyst tells me that out of twenty-seven analyses made of samples of tank water submitted him where lead-poisoning occurred that in only one instance was a slight trace of lead found. Zinc in the water is, I believe, not considered by medical men detrimental to health. Such being the case, the lead-poisoning theory is still an unsolved problem.

My little boy, who has been in the Children's Hospital over ten weeks, still lies there totally blind from this cruel scourge.

In the interests of public health it is to be hoped that further investigation will be made by the Government to trace this extraordinary malady to its source, so that an antidote may be found to cope with it.

I have, etc.,

W. H. BROCKLEBANK.

The Honourable the Home Secretary, Brisbane.

I may mention that Mr. Henderson has furnished me with a statement showing that out of forty samples of tank water which he analysed three contained traces of lead, and that in four samples of tap water no lead was found. We are therefore in this position: that the source of this cruel disease has not yet been ascertained. It was supposed by some medical men who have had such cases more particularly under their charge, that tank water was the cause. Whether it may be a cause of lead-poisoning I am not prepared to say, but I say that up to the present time we have no definite information as to the cause of the disease. It is quite evident, therefore, that an exhaustive inquiry is necessary to discover it. If hon. gentlemen think that it is worth while inquiring into the cause of the disease at all, then it is useless to undertake such an inquiry unless it is exhaustive. Out of the whole of the cases which have been reported, only in three or four has it been positively proved that the disease was caused by lead. In my opinion, and in the opinion of other medical men, it is still an open question whether lead is the cause of this disease. That the cause is an irritant poison there is not the slightest doubt, but it is our duty to endeavour to discover what that irritant poison is, and where it comes from. If no steps are taken to ascertain the cause of the disease, the number of cases will increase year by year as population increases. From an economical, if not from a humanitarian, point of view it is surely desirable that

some steps should be taken to institute an exhaustive inquiry. It is not desirable that we should have a yearly increase of paralytic cases, or of blindness in children, the outcome of which to a great extent would be that they will be a burden on the State. That is the economic view. From the humanitarian point of view the letters which I have read will appeal to everyone. The case of Mr. Brocklebank's child may be the case of any other person's child in the near future, so that it is really a question of the most vital importance to the community. I sincerely trust that the matter will be thoroughly and impartially investigated. I set aside altogether what has occurred in regard to the board of inquiry. Let the matter be started afresh. Let us ascertain, if possible, the cause of the disease, and then we shall be in a position probably to arrive at its source. But time is absolutely necessary. You must have time to collect your facts; you must have time to investigate your cases; and you must have time to watch the results, and endeavour to get such evidence as to warrant you in coming to a satisfactory conclusion. The great danger in these cases is generalising from one particular instance, thereby obscuring the main issue, as I believe it has been to a certain extent in these cases. I do not for a moment believe that cases of lead-poisoning have not and do not occur, but in all these cases it has been open to doubt whether they have been due to lead-poisoning. At the same time, if they have not been due to lead-poisoning, they have been due to something else. There is no doubt that the disease exists. I myself have had experience of these cases, and that experience has not been satisfactory. Not more than twelve months ago a lad of seven or eight years of age was brought to me. He had been a fine, healthy, happy little fellow, but when he was brought to me he was suffering from a dimness of vision, with a tendency to squint. I ascertained that he was seized occasionally with severe abdominal pains and vomiting. So excruciatingly severe were the pains that on one occasion I was sent for from Wynnum to go and see him, and on another occasion I was sent for at 2 o'clock in the morning. The result of the case is that the little fellow has recovered his physical health, but he is totally blind. I do not say the Government are utterly indifferent in the matter, but the steps they have taken have been absolutely inadequate to achieve the result desired. It is not sufficient for the Government Analyst to make analyses of water in every case reported to him. He may direct all his efforts to the discovery of lead, to the neglect of something else which may be the real cause of the disease. An investigation of a medical nature should go hand in hand with a chemical analysis. What I have said should prove to hon. gentlemen the necessity for making a thorough investigation into the whole question. I now beg to move the motion standing in my name.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am sure we will give the highest credit to the Hon. Dr. Taylor for the interest he has taken in this subject—a subject, of course, of great interest to the whole community. But the question is what is the best way to go about the matter? From some cause or other the investigations of the board of inquiry closed at a time when Dr. Taylor, as chairman of the board, thought that some results might possibly follow if an exhaustive inquiry was undertaken. I am in this position in this House. The board was appointed by the Home Secretary, who is in the other House. He might possibly be able to explain the matter very much better than I can. The Hon. Dr. Taylor has named the Government very frequently in his speech, but

he should have said the Home Secretary, because the matter was entirely under his jurisdiction. I have consulted the Home Secretary, and he informs me that no report has been made to the Government concerning such brain and nervous diseases in the juvenile population. He says the Board of Health should bring the matter before the Government, when the necessary steps would be taken. Doctors generally do not yet agree as to the existence of lead-poisoning; and under the circumstances I must oppose a motion of this kind because it is not exactly in order. If the Board of Health, who have the guidance of the health of the community under their charge, report to the Government that certain steps are necessary, then, of course, those steps will be taken. At any rate, the Government will favourably consider any resolution that may be forwarded to them by the Board of Health; but so far as the inquiry which has taken place is concerned, it has, as Dr. Taylor has said, proved abortive; and largely, I understand, because medical men cannot agree as to whether the cases which have been reported have been caused by lead-poisoning or not. It certainly is a singular thing to me, as a layman, but a very old colonist, that this question should resolve itself into an attack on tank water, when we have been using tank water all over the colony for the last thirty or forty years, without ever hearing before of this danger. Possibly there may be something in the fact that when, in times of drought, the water is allowed to accumulate in the tanks, the water may be contaminated by corrosion of the zinc or lead which is used in the construction of the tanks; but then the disease might be expected to manifest itself in adults as well as in children. It is not for me to place my views against those of a medical scientist like Hon. Dr. Taylor. At the same time it is clear that the question is not free from doubt, and the position the Government take up is that it should be approached by the Board of Health and asked to take some definite steps. The late inquiry was unsatisfactory for the reason that the board of inquiry opened up a tremendous subject, where there was a great difference of opinion. Such inquiries are seldom satisfactory. As Dr. Taylor has already pointed out, the Government Analyst has reported on twenty-two cases which have been brought under his notice, and of that number four seemed to be cases of lead-poisoning. That is a very small proportion, and it is not at all certain that even those four cases come under the direct charge of being due to lead-poisoning. As the Hon. Dr. Taylor has pointed out, the Hon. J. R. Dickson was Home Secretary at the time the investigation was undertaken, and he was very anxious that it should take place, and gave every facility for the purpose of the investigation, but he seemed to think that the investigation which was entered upon was of too exhaustive a nature, and one which the Government had not anticipated, and which they did not agree with. The consequence was that the inquiry was closed. I hope that the House will not agree to this motion being carried, because it will be far better to leave it to the Government to take whatever steps they find to be necessary when approached by the Board of Health.

The HON. C. F. MARKS: I do not wish to take up the time of the House in repeating all that has been said by the Hon. Dr. Taylor. I hope the House will take note of the very careful way in which the Postmaster-General has walked round the thing. Why was the inquiry burked? Why was it stopped? We want to know that. Here is a disease—it does not matter whether it is caused by lead-poisoning or whether it is due to zinc. It has been induced in some way, and

it is causing numbers of cases of paralysis—whether of the optic nerve or not is immaterial. We want it stopped. Why did the late Home Secretary stop the inquiry? The hon. gentleman evidently knew nothing about scientific inquiry or he would have known that no valuable results could be obtained in three weeks, which was all the working time the board of inquiry had at their disposal. I hope the House will back up Dr. Taylor and strengthen his hands by insisting that the Government should do something. The Postmaster-General has stated that the initiative should be taken by the Central Board of Health, but we know that that body is quite helpless. They are under the thumb of this same Home Secretary; they can do what he tells them to do, and nothing else. They can only act by his directions; and for that very reason, years ago, the Hon. Dr. Taylor and I resigned our positions on the Central Board of Health. We did not consider it consistent with our sense of right to be placed in such a position on questions of importance. The Government at that time would not consent to take active steps, and so we threw up our responsibility. That will be the result in the present question if the matter is left to the Board of Health to move the Home Secretary. I hope the House will strengthen the hands of the Hon. Dr. Taylor, and insist on the Government doing something. It will be on the conscience of the Home Secretary, I take it—not on the Postmaster-General—if more patients die, when the cause could be discovered.

The Hon. A. H. BARLOW: I do not profess to have the slightest acquaintance with this subject, although I have taken a great interest in it. Still I would like to put before my hon. friends one fact. You can scarcely go near a school when the children are out eating their lunches but you see them with bread and butter or jam in their hands, hanging on to the fences, and we know that lead enters largely into the composition of the paint on the fences. Very possibly some cases of lead-poisoning owe their origin to that source. When the Hon. Dr. Taylor was delivering his exhaustive and interesting address, it struck me as singular that, at any rate in some degree, adults had not been affected by this disease. I have not heard during the course of this discussion, nor have I read in the public prints, that adults have been affected. It may be that the poison might not have such a great effect upon them as upon children, but surely it would have some effect. With regard to the lead-poisoning being due to eating food such as cheese, butter, jams, and tinned goods, if that were so then the symptoms should appear in the southern colonies, because I take it that the goods used in all the colonies are of much the same character. I am not going to take up time except to say this—that I believe that one great source of trouble is the bringing up of children under iron roofs. Let any hon. gentleman get upon any slight eminence in the suburbs and look down upon the smaller houses with their iron roofs, and their little height of ceiling. These terrible roofs are the most unsuitable for any human being to live under in this climate. I fancy it will be found that the generation living under iron roofs is a very different generation to that which lived under shingles. In my early days we never heard of an iron roof. All the houses were covered with shingles. They were cool and they were ventilated. However small the house might be, however low the rooms inside, there was a ventilation through the shingles. I sincerely hope that something will be done, although my hon. friend, the Postmaster-General, has taken a view which, as a member of the Government, I must support. Still I hope that the individual medical men, by their investigations, may be

able to check this terrible evil. At the same time I believe the iron roofs are responsible for a fearful amount of infant mortality in this country. It may be that through the bringing up of children in these terrible ovens a steady deterioration is going on in the development of our children. I do not want to raise any alarm, and therefore deal with the subject as delicately as possible; but there may be a deterioration going on in the rising generation under the conditions I have stated.

The Hon. E. B. FORREST: I do not see in what way the Hon. Dr. Taylor is to get any support. The Hon. Mr. Barlow says he hopes he will get support, but as a member of the Government he thinks he must support his colleague. I am not going into the question of the jam, the butter, and all those things, nor to discuss the effect which living under an iron roof has on the health of children, though no doubt that has something to do with it. I understand the Postmaster-General to say that the Government want to be put in motion by somebody, particularly by the Board of Health. The experience most of us have had lately of the proceedings of the Board of Health has not been such as to warrant us in believing that they are likely to put the Government in motion. It is the Government who govern the Board of Health. Whatever the Government want to have done the Board of Health does it. That is the explanation given by the Hon. Dr. Marks. I do not think we are likely to get any help from them. If it is a question of being put in motion, I would ask the Postmaster-General what he thinks of the board that has already been sitting on the subject? On that board there were Dr. Jackson, Dr. Love, Mr. Pound, Mr. Henderson, and the Hon. Dr. Taylor, all men who are well known in Brisbane and with a reputation at stake. They have been investigating this question for some time, but not long enough according to their own statement. We find the Hon. Dr. Taylor saying in his letter to the Under Secretary on the 10th October—

It is evident, therefore, that this is a matter of grave importance to the community. An insidious poison is yearly prostrating a number of children with pain and disease, and of these a large majority—about 70 per cent.—are permanently paralysed, blinded, or killed.

What stronger evidence do the Government want; or is half the country to be buried before anybody is going to be put in motion. Here are men well known in the colony who tell us deliberately that 70 per cent. of the children afflicted with this disease are permanently paralysed, blinded, or killed. If that cannot put the Government in motion it is difficult to conceive any sort of evidence that would. I know nothing about this question, and do not want to know very much, but when I find men like those whose names I have mentioned making a statement of this kind, I object to the Government saying they want to be put in motion by another body altogether. They have appointed a committee to inquire into this matter independently of the Board of Health. Those men make an interim report, or rather they are blocked in their proceedings at an early stage, but they have gone far enough to warrant them in stating what the Hon. Dr. Taylor has said in his letter. I hope the House will support the hon. gentleman in pressing this thing upon the attention of the Government. It is a thing, to my mind, that ought to be pressed upon them, and I shall be very pleased to vote with the Hon. Dr. Taylor if he presses his motion to a division.

The Hon. A. NORTON: Sufficient has been disclosed in connection with this matter to show

that further inquiry into it is necessary. We are very particular about the health of the people in some respects. We are anxious to save them from catching tuberculosis from diseased cattle. We strive even to prevent pigs from being fed on the meat of tuberculous cattle lest the pork of those pigs should be the means of conveying tuberculosis to human beings. When we are so particular in such respects, surely we ought to take every care of children who cannot help themselves. Those who are old enough to use their understanding, if they have any, we may leave to take care of themselves, but we are bound to show some regard for the health of the young. With regard to this particular complaint, I heard of it some months ago from a gentleman who was at the time connected with the Sick Children's Hospital. He told me that some of the cases brought into the hospital resulted in absolute blindness, and others in paralysis. He did not say that was the result of lead-poisoning, but he told me that medical men who had inquired into the disease were of that opinion. He was, however, certain that of the cases brought into the hospital a large number were incurable. Such being the case, when we know that the children are helpless in the matter, and that they are liable to the disease being introduced into their system, without any knowledge on their part, or on the part of their parents, is it not desirable, when we are so anxious to protect the public health, that we should look after these little ones? That is, to my mind, the main reason why this matter should receive the support of the House. I do not know whether it should pass in this particular form or not, but I do say that an inquiry should be held, and that it should be instituted by the Government, and that the sooner it is done the better. The Hon. Mr. Barlow talked about the iron roofs and tanks and the white-painted fences of the State schools. Why did the Government paint the fences white if the lead in the paint poisoned the children; and why did they put up corrugated iron roofs and tanks which led to the contamination of the water consumed by the children? Those are matters that want inquiring into. The late board tried to do a great deal, possibly to go too far. I notice in the correspondence that the Chief Secretary took up the position that the inquiry should be confined to Brisbane and the immediately surrounding districts. But that was not the form in which the board was appointed; it was appointed to inquire into the cause of the disease in Brisbane and other parts of Queensland. It might, perhaps, have been better if their instructions had been limited to Brisbane and its neighbourhood. But be that the case or not, so serious is the disease that this House has a right to ask the Government to take steps for the appointment of a commission which will so investigate matters that there will be a reasonable hope that they will discover the cause of the paralysis and blindness with which the children are attacked, and that through that discovery measures may be taken which may lead to the diminution, if not the prevention, of the disease in the future. I speak especially on behalf of the children who, along with their parents, are entirely helpless in the matter; and really, considering the trouble we take to prevent the spread of tuberculosis and actinomycosis, and the anxiety we have to protect even our pigs from disease, we might give a little thought to the children and give them the first place in a matter of this kind. I think the Hon. Dr. Taylor is entitled to commendation and the sympathy of the House for having brought this motion forward, which, even if not passed in its present form, will have the effect of abating or ending this wretched disease which is affecting the children of the colony.

1898—4 R

The HON. G. W. GRAY: I notice that from 1893 to 1897 there were eighty-three cases of this disease treated in the Sick Children's Hospital. In my opinion the practical way to get at the source of the disease, and to find out whether it is really the result of lead-poisoning is for the doctor at the Sick Children's Hospital, as each case arises, to visit the child's home and school, ascertain the nature of the water supply, and so on. With an average of twenty cases per annum occurring it would occupy a Royal Commission a very long time to arrive at any sound conclusion. The doctor at the hospital, by the method I suggest, would be able to get to the seat of the trouble, and to prove beyond doubt whether it is owing to lead-poisoning from the water which the child had been drinking. None of those eighty-three cases, as far as I can see, have been investigated in that way.

The HON. J. ARCHIBALD: The question before us is more or less of a scientific character, and one of which few of us, excepting the medical members of the House, know anything whatever. But the facts before us are simple. Early in the year certain medical gentlemen in Brisbane had before them certain cases of disease which they did not understand. The facts placed before the Government were sufficiently conclusive to induce the Government to appoint a small board to inquire whether that disease was due to lead-poisoning or otherwise. That board, appointed on the 30th May, comprised the Hon. Dr. Taylor, Dr. Love, and Dr. Jackson, three of the most eminent medical men in the colony, gentlemen of very high attainments and with an extensive practice. With those were associated Mr. Henderson, the Government Analyst, and Mr. Pound, the well-known bacteriologist and director of the Stock Institute. The board so composed state at the conclusion of their report that further investigation is necessary and desirable. I think from what the Hon. Dr. Taylor has said to-day, supplemented by the Hon. Dr. Marks, the Government should continue this matter, not necessarily at any great expense or by the appointment of a Royal Commission, but simply by giving the medical gentlemen of the city of Brisbane every facility and opportunity to prosecute their inquiries by allowing them to send water and various articles of diet to the Government Analyst from time to time for analysis, and by having the results of those analyses made public through the Press. I believe that a great deal of information could be got in that way. I do not think there was any necessity for the Government refusing to carry on this matter. No sufficient reason has been given by the Home Secretary for discontinuing the inquiry, and I shall certainly support the motion of the Hon. Dr. Taylor.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY: We have discussed this matter at considerable length, and the question we have now to decide is whether it is desirable that there should be further inquiry into this matter of supposed lead-poisoning. The general discussion of the subject by medical men and the public which has taken place so far has been exceedingly valuable, and I think it would be a most unfortunate circumstance if we did not proceed to make further investigation. The cases which have been referred to as evidence of blindness or paralysis resulting from some cause that it is desired to discover have been cases in the Children's Hospital, but I think far more serious cases can be found in the Deaf, Dumb, and Blind Institution. There you will find numbers of children suffering from blindness who have come from the Northern parts of the colony, and I believe that in many cases their affliction is due to climatic conditions. No doubt

there are instances of lead-poisoning in our cities, and I am only sorry that the Government have not continued the investigation on the subject. If the matter were thoroughly investigated, and sufficient information obtained to warrant us in arriving at a definite conclusion with regard to this disease, that would be of great benefit to the community. But, as I have said, I believe that the climatic conditions of the tropical portions of the colony will explain some cases of blindness which are brought under notice, for there is no doubt that a great many cases of individual blindness have occurred from what is called heat apoplexy. Many persons hold the opinion that what is commonly called sunstroke only occurs from exposure to the sun, but from my own experience I know that it frequently arises without the person attacked going into the sun at all, the cause being an exceedingly moist atmosphere and a high temperature. I merely mention that as one of the sources of some of the ailments which have been spoken of, but I am satisfied that there are many other causes, and it would be well to make further inquiry into the matter, so that the public might be put on their guard against them. From such an inquiry very valuable information would be obtained which would be of great assistance to the medical profession, and the knowledge thus gained would also tend to promote the health of the community. I am therefore in accord with the proposal of the Hon. Dr. Taylor that there should be further investigation into the matter. The precise form in which that investigation should be made is a matter for consideration, but there ought to be an investigation. As to requesting the Central Board of Health to originate it, I would ask, Has that board originated anything? Whether the cause of the disease that has been referred to is lead-poisoning or tank-poisoning, or whether it comes from jam tins or anything else, I am satisfied that it would be of great advantage to the public to find out what is the danger and what is the antidote, and what is indispensable for the maintenance of health in our climate.

The Hon. W. F. TAYLOR, in reply: I should like to make a few remarks concerning some of the statements made by the Postmaster-General. The hon. gentleman stated that I should not in this matter have made any charge against the Government as a Government, because it is the Home Secretary who has charge of this business. I should not have had anything to say about the Government if it had not been stated in a letter from the Under Secretary to the Home Department, dated the 15th of August, that "the Government consider that sufficient time has now elapsed to permit of a decision being come to by the board upon the two points which required to be investigated." From that it is evident that the Government had considered the matter, and if they were not cognisant of the proceedings which took place they ought to have been. With regard to the objection that medical men are not agreed on the subject, I would ask what on earth would be the use of having an inquiry if they were agreed on the nature of the ailment and its cause? It is simply because they are not agreed on that point, and because they do not know and cannot find out the cause of the disease that they wish to obtain the assistance of the Government in the matter. I want to arrive at the facts in connection with this matter; we have lots of theories, and lots of possibilities, but we want the facts, and in order to arrive at them we must have an exhaustive inquiry. With that view I now ask the House to press upon the Government the necessity for making this inquiry, for evidently they will not make it without some pressure being brought to bear upon them. The Postmaster-General said

they were waiting for the Central Board of Health to take action. The board did what they could before the commission was appointed; they not only passed resolutions, but a deputation waited on the Home Secretary, but without any effect. The *Courier* then took the matter up, and after they published one or two leading articles on the subject, the commission was appointed. The Central Board of Health have failed to secure an exhaustive inquiry, the staff of the Sick Children's Hospital have failed, and the *Courier* has failed. What then must be done? Probably this House may succeed in inducing the Government to take the necessary steps in that direction, and it is in the hope that such may be the result that I ask the House to pass this motion.

Question put and passed.

BRITISH PROBATES BILL.

MESSAGE FROM ASSEMBLY.

The PRESIDENT announced the receipt of a message from the Assembly returning this Bill without amendment.

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

FIRST READING.

These Bills, received from the Assembly, were read a first time, and their second readings made Orders of the Day for Tuesday next.

COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION BILL.

FIRST READING.

This Bill, received from the Assembly, was read a first time, and its second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MINING BILL

SECOND READING.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The object of this Bill is to consolidate into one statute the present laws relating to mining, and which are contained in sixteen Acts, all of which it is proposed to repeal, and in doing so to liberalise the law and take advantage of the experience gained in twenty-four years' administration of the present law, and otherwise to give effect to numerous pressing reforms which have been urged on successive Ministries from time to time, and so endeavour to satisfy the legitimate wants of the mining community. When we reflect that the mining industry is the second great factor in the industrial development of this advancing colony, that it contributes its millions to the wealth of the community, and that so large a proportion of our population are dependent upon it for their livelihood, it imposes a duty upon the Government to foster it in every way possible, and this has been more recently recognised in the appointment of the Royal Commission of 1897, to inquire into and report on the mining laws in force at that time, and to advise and report upon the best mode in which assistance could be rendered to develop the mineral resources of the colony. The Commission visited nearly all our goldfields and took a large mass of evidence. Upon that evidence they submitted an elaborate report, and although they did not all agree as to what should be done, they were successful in giving the Government very valuable advice on the subject, which has resulted in most of their recommendations being incorporated in this Bill. Though the Bill runs into 252 clauses, I propose to show that three-fourths at least of the Bill consist of sections taken from the sixteen Acts which are proposed to be repealed. I hold in my hand the pamphlet containing all the Acts relating to mining in Queensland, and hon. gentlemen will see that on nearly every page the whole of the

clauses have been re-enacted in the Bill before us. Hon. gentlemen who take an interest in the matter will find, if they go into the question, that, although the Bill is so lengthy, it is very largely a re-enactment. Of course there are a great many important amendments in the Bill, and it is to these amendments alone that I propose to address myself, because there is no necessity for discussing the law as it at present stands. Taking the Act of 1874, which is the basis of our mining laws, it speaks volumes for the authors of that measure that, notwithstanding the lapse of twenty-four years since it was passed, such is the satisfaction it has given to the mining community that it has been virtually adopted as the basis of this Bill. The other Acts have also been incorporated with it to such an extent as to render it an easy task to point out what is really new in the Bill. Hon. gentlemen will see from these remarks that the Bill is largely a committee measure—to be discussed in detail, and not so much on the second reading. That being so, our dealing with it now is rendered much easier and more satisfactory. The synopsis which is in the hands of hon. members will also serve to do the duty of a second-reading speech, as it shows concisely and clearly the scope of the Bill and the proposed alterations which have been made in the existing law. Hon. members having this by them can at once see if a clause is new, or in what manner it has been altered. There is nothing very important until we come to Part III.—miners' rights and business licenses. The miner's right is in future to authorise the holder to mine, not only for gold, but for any other description of mineral, and the fee is reduced from 10s. to 5s. It can be issued to any company registered in Queensland, as well as to a trustee or manager of a company, but it does not authorise an Asiatic, African, or Polynesian alien to mine on a new goldfield. These can mine as now on an old goldfield provided they hold miners' rights; but they must only mine on alluvial ground, and only on a goldfield which they could mine upon at the time of the passing of this Bill. It is provided also that all gold or other minerals found by the holder shall be his absolute property, even as against Her Majesty, and land held by him may be sublet. The same may be said of business licenses for the surface land. The Bill provides for their issue and transfer. An important matter to the mining community is contained in clause 7, where the reward for the discovery of a new goldfield is raised from £1,000 to £10,000. Part IV. relates to goldmining leases and mineral leases; and here we find the Governor may grant to any person, not being an Asiatic, African, or Polynesian, a goldmining lease, except in certain cases set out in the 24th section, and the term of such lease must not exceed twenty-one years, but may be renewed for another twenty-one years. The area is under certain circumstances increased from twenty-five acres as at present to fifty acres, which will no doubt encourage the introduction of foreign capital which is so much wanted for the more rapid development of our goldfields. The introduction of capital will also assist in developing such fields as the Hodgkinson, the Etheridge, the Palmer, and other fields now almost deserted, where there are great possibilities and prospects of adequate return for investors. The provisos relating to this area of fifty acres are important, and I direct hon. gentlemen's attention to clause 25 which settles the rent, term, and area of such goldmining leases. These are the qualifications connected with these fifty-acre leases which I would like to call attention to—

Provided always that the area shall not exceed twelve acres until the expiration of seven years from

the date of the original proclamation constituting the goldfield, nor twenty-five acres until the expiration of fourteen years from the date of the said proclamation:

Provided also that not more than twenty-five acres shall be granted, except where the depth of the ground, difficulty of working, or the expense of erecting mining machinery is likely to be great, or the poverty of the ground warrants it, or the ground has been previously worked, and abandoned for six months:

Provided further that no shaft shall be sunk in any such lease, except at a distance of at least ten feet from the nearest boundary line of such lease.

Clause 26 is a new clause. It states—

In every goldmining lease a portion of the surface of the area not exceeding one-half shall be reserved for residence purposes, but in no case shall the portion of the surface not so reserved be less than six acres.

I know that that clause has been subject to some contention. Clause 27 prescribes the covenants and conditions of these leases, and provides new labour conditions. At present the law requires one man to every acre, and this is also a requirement strongly objected to in London and elsewhere, and is said to have immensely retarded development. The matter has been exhaustively discussed in another place, and the consensus of opinion seems to be as contained in the 3rd subsection, which provides for one man to every four acres, and in no case less than three men unless in cases of exemption. Hitherto the Minister has had sole discretion to forfeit leases for breaches of conditions, but this has been considered too uncertain as depending on the will of the Minister. It is therefore provided in clause 27 that for the first and second breach of conditions the lessee shall pay a fine not exceeding £100, with provision for forfeiture on non-payment of these fines, or on the commission of any further breach of covenant. We now come to Division II.—Mineral Leases. These are largely on the same footing as at present, excepting as provided in section 33, subsections 4, 5, and 7 of which are new. The lessee is not to assign or sublet without the leave of the Minister or warden, and there is to be employed on the lease one man for every ten acres unless exemption is granted. At present the condition is one man to five acres. There is also a similar condition as in goldmining leases as to two fines before forfeiture. Clause 35 is important. It refers to the provisions applicable to mineral leases when gold is found on them. The union of existing mining leases is provided for in clause 41. No greater area than fifty acres is to be allowed in a united goldmining lease, or 160 acres in a united mineral lease. There are no material alterations in Parts V. and VI., except those rendered necessary by consolidation, and by the transfer of the administration to the Mines Department. Hitherto the administration has been divided between the Lands Department and the Mines Department, and it is now proposed to hand over the whole administration of the lands which concern mining to the Mines Department. In Part VII. I draw attention to the last subsection of clause 57, which provides—

All lands situated within the limits of a goldfield or mineral field, which may be alienated in fee-simple after the passing of this Act, shall be subject to a reservation of copper, tin, opal, and antimony; and shall also be subject to a right of access under the provisions of this Act.

Part. VIII. relates to miners' homestead leases. Clause 71 is the most important. It fixes the areas that may be applied for—within the township, one acre; within two miles from township boundary, five acres; outside two and within five miles, forty acres; outside five-mile radius, eighty acres. I mention these matters particularly because they are new to the Bill, and, of course, will be subjects for discussion. The area of a township is not to be less than 4,000 acres,

unless that area is not available. The rent is to be 5s. per acre for a homestead within a township and 1s. per acre per annum for forty-acre homesteads, and 6d. per annum for homesteads exceeding forty acres. On a homestead which is outside the township boundary when taken up no rent is to be charged after the thirtieth year. It is proposed that after a man has held a homestead for thirty years he shall not be charged any further rent. The homestead may be subdivided or mortgaged, sold, or resumed, or may be taken up for mining purposes under a miner's right or a mining lease, and any damage done to the surface is to be compensated for. Clause 97 is new, and provides for the valuation of the miner's homestead being estimated at the fair average value of unimproved land of the same quality held in fee-simple in the same neighbourhood. I want to draw particular attention to this clause so that we may consider whether the method of valuation laid down therein is one which should meet with approval. At present the Valuation and Rating Act lays down a certain method of rating, and this proposes to alter that system. Part IX. is very lengthy, and relates to the administration of the Act by wardens and the constitution of the wardens' courts. It differs but little from the previous law, excepting that the machinery for administration has been slightly altered so as to meet the new conditions embodied in this Bill. For instance, in cases where assessors are required, three are to sit in place of two, a majority of assessors to decide questions of fact and the warden all questions of law. Special cases may be submitted for the opinion of the Supreme or District Court as may be elected by the party raising the question of law. Hitherto the District Court only has been utilised for this purpose. The power to appeal from warden to District Court is the same as at present. This is another matter to which I wish to direct attention, because the party raising the question has the right under this Bill to elect as to whether he shall go to the Supreme Court or to the District Court. It is for hon. gentlemen to say whether that is a proper method of procedure. Some hon. gentlemen may think it would be better to go to the District Court, and then to appeal from the District Court to the Supreme Court, or that cases should not go to the Supreme Court at all. That will be for hon. gentlemen to consider and decide. When the appeal is from a decision of a warden sitting with assessors, if either party so require, it can be held before the District Court judge sitting with three assessors. Sections 139 and 140 provide for quashing orders. That is a cheap and effective remedy adopted from the Justices Act, and has worked very well up to the present time. Sections 156 and 157 are new. They provide that no miner's right, lease, or license shall be granted to any company which is not registered in Queensland. That is a very good provision. It is also provided no Crown lands on a gold or mineral field shall be leased or disposed of without the consent of the Minister for Mines. Clause 159 is new. All wages or other earnings of managers, clerks, miners, artisans, and labourers employed in a mine are to be a first charge upon mining tenements, and are protected in case of liquidation of a company to the extent of four weeks. Infants may sue and be sued in the wardens' courts; and for all other administration work in these courts this part makes adequate and elaborate provision. By clause 167, the penalties hitherto imposed upon persons mining without a miner's right are to apply only to persons found mining on Crown lands. Persons working on mining leaseholds are no longer required to hold miners' rights.

Part X. deals with miners' commons, but contains nothing material that is new. Part XI., relating to drainage of mines, is extended to areas outside goldfields or mineral fields, otherwise it embodies the present law taken from the Gold Mines Drainage Act of 1891. Part XII., more than any other part of the Bill, evidences the work done by the Mining Commission. This part applies to the regulation of mines, and contains lengthy provisions relating to mines in general and collieries, some of which are new, notably clause 198, providing for the appointment of a board of examiners to examine and give certificates of competency to mining managers similar to those which must at present be obtained by engine-drivers. It is also provided that no person shall act as manager of more than two mines at the same time. Sections 206 to 208 are new, and returns are now to be furnished by mining managers and accident associations to the nearest warden of all their members, and on the occurrence of any accident the warden is to select one member of each association and depute them to investigate and report on the same. These are clauses recommended by the Mining Commission, and their object is to obtain a fuller inquiry into mining accidents than is at present the case. By clause 210 it is provided that the occurrence of any accident in or on a mine shall be *prima facie* evidence of neglect on the part of the owner and the manager. This is taken from the Mines Regulation Act of 1887, and is at present the law, although I must admit that it seems rather hard that the mere occurrence of an accident should involve such responsibility on the part of the owner and the manager, when, as a matter of fact, they may be entirely blameless. The age below which boys are not allowed to charge or fire explosives is raised from sixteen to eighteen years. This is a very good provision. In this part are also included rules for the ventilation of mines and the securing of shafts. Subsection 11 (c) is new, and a code of signals to be used in all mines is given. At present different mining centres have different signals; in future there is to be one uniform code. Adequate brakes for the winding-drums are to be provided, and no person is to be employed as driver of an engine unless he possesses a certificate of competency. Overhead covers when lowering or raising persons in the shafts, proper appliances for the cages, self-closing doors, the testing of ropes and chains, the length of shoes or cones on ropes, and ambulance for use in case of accident, two separate openings to the surface from the mine not less than fifty feet apart—all recommended by the Mining Commission—are prominent amongst the very elaborate provisions contained in this part for the protection of the lives and limbs of the miners. The provisions contained in clause 224 formerly applied only to collieries, but are now made to apply to all mines. Clause 240 is new, and makes the Weights and Measures Act apply to all weights, balances, and weighing-machines used in a colliery for determining the wages payable to colliers. Clause 241 is also new, and provides for the ventilation of collieries, stations, and inspection of condition as to ventilation, securing of roofs, slides, timbering, and giving option of using a downcast shaft. Part XIII. gives the Governor full power to make regulations, specifying as far as possible in forty-six subclauses all the purposes for which regulations can be required and which are necessary to give effect to the Act. I will call attention to clause 251, which provides that—

In any case where the Legislative Assembly by resolution requests that any regulation be amended in any respect, or be repealed, the Governor may forthwith amend or repeal such regulation accordingly.

With regard to that I need only remark that it goes without saying that this House is quite capable of looking after itself. I may state that on going through the Bill I find, as may be expected with so comprehensive a measure, that some verbal, and perhaps more than verbal, amendments will require to be made; and these I will submit as they arise in committee. In conclusion, I may be permitted to express my regret that circumstances have prevented the introduction of the Bill into this Chamber at an earlier period of the session. But the urgent need there seems to be for the consolidation of our mining laws, and the assimilation of the laws relating to gold with those relating to minerals other than gold, and the fact that the labour of revising the mining laws has been greatly simplified by the work of the Royal Commission, induce me to express a hope that hon. gentlemen will assist in passing the Bill with such amendments as they may think likely to further develop the mining industry. Although, as I have said, the Bill looks rather formidable, still, when it is looked into by hon. members familiar with the goldfields and the mining laws, such as the Hon. Mr. Archibald, the Hon. Mr. Deane, and others, I do not think we shall have much difficulty in dealing with it and making it a thoroughly good measure. I am sure hon. gentlemen will agree with me that it is a work that is worth doing, and I am sure that any amendments we introduce into the Bill will receive that consideration in another place which, coming from this House, they will deserve. I ask hon. members to assist in carrying the Bill through without the session being unduly prolonged. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The Hon. R. BULCOCK moved the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed, and the resumption of the debate made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

TOWNSVILLE MUNICIPAL LOAN ACT REPEAL BILL.

COMMITTEE.

This Bill passed through Committee without amendment, and its third reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at thirteen minutes to 6 o'clock.