

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER 1898

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

WEDNESDAY, 14 DECEMBER, 1898.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 3 o'clock, and vacated it until half-past 3.

PEARLSHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY BILL.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was formally resolved—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Pearlsell and Beche-de-mer Fishery Acts.

ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.
RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On clause 4—

Amendment moved by Mr. Glassey—"That all the words in lines 24 to 30, inclusive, be omitted, with a view of inserting the words 'no electoral registrar shall act as a member of any court during the revision of any annual or bi-monthly list, under a penalty of £50, to be recovered on summary conviction'"—put.

Mr. KIDSTON said he wished to offer a word of explanation. Just before the House rose the hon. member for Bundaberg made a statement to the effect that he wished a division to be taken. He was busy at the time, and did not hear what was said, and when the hon. member concluded his remarks he continued the debate. He regretted now that he did so; he would not have done it if he had heard the remarks of the hon. member.

Mr. HARDACRE: He desired to make a personal explanation. He was reported in the *Telegraph* to have said in response to an interjection by the hon. member for Toowong—

The hon. member for Toowong was evidently been so long at the refreshment bar that he cannot understand what I say.

That appeared to make him say that the hon. member was the worse for liquor, which was not fair to the hon. member, neither was it correct. What he meant was that the hon. member had been so long out of the Chamber that he was not able to catch the drift of his remarks.

Mr. STORY: Early yesterday afternoon he received a message from his house that serious illness had taken place there. Of course he went away, and did not come back, and in his absence certain references were made to the district from which he came, and to the action of the electoral registrar there. How much was said he did not know for he had nothing like a full report, but unless he gave some explanation and some denial to what was said he should be wanting in his duty to his constituents and to himself. He expected better things from the leader of the Opposition, who always posed as the one man in the House who was in favour of fair play and justice, but that hon. member made certain quotations from a paper, and without knowing whether they were true he made them appear to be so. At any rate, the hon. member might have gone to the library and seen the list of names struck off at the revision court at Cunnamulla, and thereby have found out whether they were friends or opponents of his (Mr. Story's), or he might have asked him for an explanation, but he did none of those things. He took it upon himself to read certain extracts from the paper, and let them go forth to the country with his corroboration. In reference to the electoral registrar at Cunnamulla, he said—

This impartial gentleman admitted that he was a great friend of Mr. Story. He presumed that he was a friend in more ways than one—that he desired to purify the rolls in order that he might favour the sitting member against all competitors.

That was mere presumption, and neither the hon. member nor anyone else had any right to make such a statement knowing nothing about the case.

According to this report the police magistrate had to admit that he was the party who instructed the police to gather information which enabled him to remove such a large number of names from the roll—in order that he might accomplish the work he had in hand, which was to reduce the rolls, so that his great friend, the sitting member, would be safe.

While reading that he felt so utterly indignant that, when he had finished, he proposed to say not one word, but to leave to the verdict of the country the conduct of a man who could make such statements when he knew nothing whatever about the case.

Mr. KIDSTON: What are you quoting from?

Mr. STORY: The speech of the leader of the Opposition made last night, as reported in *Hansard*. Further on the hon. member said—

It was perfectly plain what the ulterior motive was—to remove from the roll the names of those who might be considered favourable to the opponent of Mr. Story.

These were three references to the hon. member's speech, and they contained one presumption and two assertions and slanders. At the end of it when some hon. members, who in his absence had so much regard for him as to put in some sort of interjection, the hon. member, in reply to the Secretary for Lands, said—

It was not a ruffianly attack. Those men had acted most partially, assuming that those reports were true. He did not vouch for their accuracy.

And that, too, after having vouched for their accuracy—after having made it appear as if they were true. Here they had an hon. member who at some time hoped to be at the head of the Government, and what sort of a man was that to trust—who could take up a newspaper, and, without making any inquiry as to the truth of the statements he found in its columns, read from it an attack upon one who might in a few

months become one of his own Civil servants? He would leave the matter with the statement that it required no great stretch of imagination to believe that Mr. Francis and himself were quite as honest as the hon. member for Bundaberg, the hon. member for Toowoomba, or Mr. Pegg.

Mr. GLASSEY could not understand all this indignation. What was the meaning of all that heat and passion? The hon. member for Balonne said that those statements were slanders. Who had slandered the thin-skinned hon. member for Balonne—that boy who must not be touched forsooth!

Mr. STORY: "Boy"! I was a colonist before you saw Australia.

Mr. GLASSEY: That thin-skinned boy-politician from the Balonne who must not be touched. He had every respect for the hon. member, who, from his appearance, was probably about as old as himself, but the hon. member must not be so thin-skinned.

The HOME SECRETARY: Do you mean that you may hurl what charges you like, and those who resent them are thin-skinned?

Mr. GLASSEY: He had merely read a few extracts from the *Toowoomba Chronicle*—extracts which had been taken from the *Comet* newspaper and some papers at Mackay.

Mr. STORY: You put your own interpretation upon them.

Mr. GLASSEY: He had merely made a few passing comments as he went along. Did the hon. member for Balonne think that he was going to remain in Parliament and not be subject to a little criticism now and again?

Mr. STORY: Do you call that criticism?

Mr. GLASSEY: He had never attempted to slander the hon. member.

Mr. STORY: It is the electoral registrar you slandered. You can't slander me.

Mr. GLASSEY: If what appeared in the public prints was true, or if even a modicum of it was true, then the registrar at Cunnamulla was utterly unfitted for the position he held, and he ought to be removed.

Mr. STORY: Why did you not prove it was true?

Mr. GLASSEY: And if that man was to be promoted in consequence of a display of political bias, it was a sorry day for Queensland that that sort of thing should exist. What they wanted were men of integrity, ability, and strict impartiality to hold those public offices, and he said again, that assuming that those reports were true—

Mr. STORY: Why should you assume that?

Mr. GLASSEY: Assuming they were true, the conduct of that officer was unjustifiable, and the man who attempted to defend him was equally culpable with himself.

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

AYES, 29.

Messrs. Dickson, Philp, Dalrymple, Morgan, G. Thorn, Armstrong, Stodart, Grimes, McMaster, Smyth, Hood, Story, Bell, Finney, Leahy, McGahan, Casling, Moore, Battersby, Corfield, Bridges, Callan, Lissner, Newell, Smith, Lord, Hamilton, Stephens, and Collins.

NOES, 22.

Messrs. Glassey, Keogh, Kerr, Dunsford, King, Sim, McDonnell, Botes, Curtis, Jackson, Drake, Groom, Jenkinson, Dibley, W. Thorn, Turley, Browne, Daniels, Hardacre, Kidston, Maughan, and Stewart.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Mr. GLASSEY moved the following new clause:—

At the end of paragraph seven of section 30A of the principal Act, and after the words "State school" in

section 30B of the said Act, the following words are inserted, namely:—"Or by any two electors of the district in respect of which the claim is made."

He was not sure that the Chairman would put the clause, because he was not sure that it came within the scope of the Bill, and at present he would only say that its object was to extend the number of persons who might attest claims so that the fullest facilities might be given to persons to get their names placed on the roll.

The PREMIER: This was a clause that should be fairly considered. He would resist it even on the ground that it would not be a useful addition to the Bill, but he must press on the attention of the Chairman the fact that it was entirely outside the scope of the Bill. The Bill did not deal with the attestation of claims, but simply with the appointment of a principal registrar, the disqualification attached to justices, and the validation of returning officers; whereas this clause proposed an important change in the mode of attesting claims. If the hon. gentleman desired to introduce a clause to alter the attestation of claims it should have been done by an instruction by the House to the Committee when the Bill passed its second reading. There were numerous precedents which might be referred to in support of the objection he raised, and he would quote one which occurred in New South Wales, where a ruling was given by the Speaker, Sir J. P. Abbott, on the 16th May, 1894, in the Legislative Assembly, on an amendment which was taken by some hon. members as initiating a new principle. The Bill was dealing with the registration of electors, and there was an amendment moved to establish a letter-vote. Sir J. P. Abbott gave his ruling against the introduction of this new feature, notwithstanding that it was connected with voting, and afterwards wrote a letter on the subject to Sir Reginald Palgrave, clerk of the House of Commons, who, under date the 7th August, 1894, stated—

DEAR MR. SPEAKER,

The only reply that I can make to your letter of the 29th June is to felicitate you on the clear, concise, and able decision you gave on Mr. Haynes's proposed amendment to the Parliamentary Electorates Act Amendment Bill.

You stated conclusively that the relevancy of an amendment to a Bill must be tested; not by the title of the Bill, but by its subject-matter.

The title of this Bill might allow the hon. gentleman to introduce his new clause but the subject-matter of the Bill would not admit of the amendment.

You stated conclusively that the relevancy of an amendment to a Bill must be tested, not by the title of the Bill but by its subject-matter; indeed it was to establish this principle that the House of Commons passed our Standing Order No. 34.

And unquestionably, according to the rulings delivered from the chair which stands behind me, a clause to establish a letter-vote is wholly outside the scope of a Bill restricted to the registration of electors. That was a very pertinent case in point. There were plenty of precedents in "May" to show that the amendment was outside the scope of the Bill; and the hon. member, to judge from his speech in moving it, himself appeared to admit it.

Mr. GLASSEY: A day or two ago the Premier was good enough to inform him that he did not think the amendment came within the scope of the Bill, and since then he (Mr. Glassey) had consulted the Speaker on the question. Although he was very anxious to see the amendment carried, he was bound to say that the Speaker was inclined to think that the amendment did not come within the scope of the Bill, and therefore he had taken up as little time as possible in moving it. Notwithstanding all that had been said by the Premier, however, he hardly thought the case was on all fours with that on which Sir Joseph Abbott had given his ruling

in the New South Wales Assembly. He had not looked up the authorities, but he was inclined to think that, as they were amending the Elections Acts, 1885 to 1897, the amendment introduced no new principle, and was pertinent. He merely wished to add to the present list of attestors of claims.

Mr. BROWNE: The Premier might be perfectly correct in contending that the amendment did not come within the scope of the Bill; but the case quoted by the hon. gentleman was not at all parallel to the present case. In that case an attempt had been made to introduce an entirely new principle into the Bill—that of voting by post—while the amendment of the hon. member for Bundaberg contained no new principle at all. It was simply an extension of the number of persons who could attest claims under the attestation clauses of the Act. Although the Premier said that there was nothing in the Bill about attestation, the very clause which they had been debating for the whole night proposed to restrict the powers of persons who could attest claims. The title of the Bill was “A Bill to amend the Elections Acts, 1885 to 1897.” There was no new principle in the amendment, and with all due deference to the Premier, he was of opinion that it was perfectly in order.

Mr. STEWART did not think the case cited by the Premier had any bearing upon the present situation. Clause 4 dealt specifically with attestations, and for that reason, if for no other, the amendment was quite within the scope of the Bill. But there was another reason why the amendment was in order. The title of the Bill showed that the Elections Acts were before them for revision. The machinery of those Acts had been found defective in certain particulars, and the Government had brought them forward for amendment. The Government had incorporated their own proposed amendments in the Bill, but it was within the right of any hon. member to propose any other amendments which he considered desirable. If the Committee had not the power to make such amendments, then the Government could dictate not only what legislation should be passed, but also the exact form those legislative proposals should take. That position was not contemplated by the constitution. It was not in harmony with their institutions, and it was not in harmony with common sense. If the electoral law was before them for emendation they should be allowed to amend it in any way they thought fit.

Mr. KIDSTON: When a Bill to amend the Elections Acts was before them last year, the very same amendment which was now before them was carried, but was thrown out when the Bill went to the other House. Was not that fact the very best precedent they could have for bringing it forward now?

The CHAIRMAN: After reading the quotation cited by the Premier, I think a very clear opinion has been expressed by the Speaker of the House of Commons that the scope of a Bill must be gathered from its contents, and not from its title. There are numerous cases in “May,” which I have read, showing the class of amendments that require an instruction from the House, and in my judgment this amendment falls within that class, and cannot be put to the Committee.

Mr. GLASSEY: He had no desire to come into conflict with the Chairman, because he believed he was actuated by the very best motives, and had no doubt given the matter the fullest and most complete consideration. Nor was he inclined to pit his opinion against that of the Premier. He was sorry the amendment could not be put, as he attached the greatest importance to it, but considering the long time

that had already been spent on the Bill, he was not disposed to dispute the ruling of the Chairman, but wait for a more favourable occasion to submit his proposal.

Clauses 5 to 11, inclusive, put and passed.

Mr. STEWART moved that the following new clause be inserted after clause 11, namely:—

Notwithstanding anything contained in the Elections Acts, 1885 to 1897, from and after the passing of this Act no elector shall vote at any election of members of the Legislative Assembly in respect of more than one electoral district, and any person voting in respect of more than one electoral district shall be deemed to be guilty of an illegal practice under the principal Act.

The CHAIRMAN: The ruling I gave regarding the amendment moved by the hon. member for Bundaberg applies to the amendment now proposed by the hon. member for North Rockhampton, which, in my opinion, is not in order, and cannot be put to the Committee.

Mr. GLASSEY: In the early part of the day he read an amendment which he intimated he would move, and which he believed would be a fair compromise between the supporters and the opponents of clause 4 as passed. He had reason to believe from the tone of the remarks previously made by the Premier that the hon. gentleman was not unfriendly to the amendment, and he hoped it would be accepted by the Committee. It would give considerable satisfaction to the country, as it would safeguard to the full the rights and privileges of electors claiming to be registered at the forthcoming revision courts. He therefore moved the following new clause be inserted:—

Section 4 shall not come into operation until after the first day of May, 1899.

The PREMIER: Of course, in pursuance of the promise he made to the hon. member earlier in the day, he was quite willing that they should have a full expression of opinion concerning this amendment. They had got the Bill safely through its perils, and having maintained the principles of the measure intact, it was only fair and reasonable that they should consider the arguments of hon. members who apprehended that clause 4 would seriously affect electors at the approaching elections. Notwithstanding the heated character of the debate, he had not lost sight of this matter, and, as he had already stated, the Bill was not introduced with any desire to meddle with the system in vogue before the approaching elections. He did not wish to be accused of persecuting people who had forwarded their claims, or to put them in a worse position than if the Bill had not been passed. He was, therefore, individually inclined to make a concession to a certain extent; but at the same time he really thought the apprehensions of certain hon. members were not well founded. It was distinctly laid down in section 11 of the principal Act that in the event of any deficiency, or expected deficiency, of a quorum of qualified justices at any court, the Governor in Council might appoint any other justice or justices to perform any of the duties required of justices of the district by this Act. He had made a promise that every care would be taken that the revision court would not be affected, but at the same time if hon. members imagined that the Bill in its present shape would seriously interfere with the validity of the rolls, he thought he was justified in dealing with the amendment upon its individual merits. He was inclined to favour the amendment, but it should be in a somewhat different form, because the reference to clause 4 of this Bill would not be the reference to the principal Act, with which the Bill would be incorporated. Then, again, he should have thought it would be sufficient if the time had been extended to the 31st of March, because that would cover the

compilation of the rolls for the approaching elections; but that was not a matter of any material interest. As the Committee had agreed to the appointment of the electoral registrar, and to the time when magistrates who had attested claims should cease to sit upon the bench, it did not matter whether it was March or April. The Government were satisfied with having passed the Bill through in the form in which it was intended, and any concession now asked might be dealt with upon its individual merits. However, he would like to hear the opinions of hon. members, and would ask them to divest the discussion of anything like the temper which appeared in the earlier part of the day. He also hoped that hon. members opposite would reduce their speeches to moderate dimensions, so that this matter would not be the subject of another stonewall.

Mr. BROWN: You will support the amendment?

The PREMIER: Yes.

The Hon. G. THORN: He was surprised to hear the speech of the Premier after all the stonewalling that had taken place. Clause 4 was the essence of the Bill, and the hon. member for Bundaberg saw plainly that if the Premier did not make this appointment now, he would make it himself by-and-by.

The HOME SECRETARY: What appointment are you talking about?

The Hon. G. THORN: The appointment of the electoral registrar.

The HOME SECRETARY: This has nothing to do with it.

The Hon. G. THORN: What was the good of all this stonewalling if the Government were going to cave in to the hon. member for Bundaberg?

The CHAIRMAN: I would remind the hon. member that this amendment in no way applies to the appointment of the electoral registrar, which was dealt with in clause 3. The hon. member is now going back to a question which was settled yesterday.

The Hon. G. THORN: He could see the motive of the hon. member for Bundaberg in moving the amendment. He had caught the Premier napping.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment provides that clause 4 of this Bill shall not come into operation till the 1st of May, 1899, and clause 4 does not in any way refer to the appointment of the electoral registrar.

The Hon. G. THORN: He was quite aware of that; but if this amendment were to be accepted, why was the Bill introduced?

The CHAIRMAN: I must now ask the hon. member, who having once been the leader of this House, should assist me to conduct the business, to speak to the clause before us.

The Hon. G. THORN: He did not want to take up the time, but he contended that the Premier had done wrong in agreeing to the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition in regard to clause 4, and he should oppose the amendment.

Mr. GRIMES thought the arguments advanced by the hon. member for Warwick were answerable. If the clause were a good one, it should apply to the next revision court, and therefore he could not understand what led the Premier to accept the amendment. He, for one, could not follow him, but would take an independent stand. If the 4th clause was worthy a place in the Bill, it should come into force forthwith with the rest of the Bill. He should vote against the amendment.

Mr. GLASSEY hoped there would be no unnecessary temper displayed over the matter. What he was sure they all desired was that there should be no apprehension in the minds of any

person that they would be likely to lose their electoral privileges under the Bill. The new clause was moved in case there might be a semblance of wrong done to any section in the community. It would delay the operation of the 4th clause until the 1st May next, and what possible harm could that do? The hon. member for Warwick had made an excellent and commendable speech, as the hon. member usually did, but after his explanation the hon. member was satisfied. He hoped hon. members would not allow the feeling which had arisen through the long discussion on the Bill to prevent agreement with what had been accepted by the Premier as a reasonable compromise.

Mr. BATTERSBY: This morning the Premier accepted a suggestion of the leader of the Opposition upon certain conditions, and those conditions the Premier was prepared to carry through. He was one of those who said that if the Bill was allowed to go through he would vote for the proposed new clause, and he intended to do so.

The PREMIER did not desire that it should be understood from the remarks of the hon. member for Moreton that he had made any promise with respect to the amendment. He promised to support it now, but at the time to which the hon. member for Moreton referred he had made no promise whatever, and held out no conditions. What he had said was that the 4th clause and the Bill must go through. The Bill had gone through, and they now had new matter before them; and viewing it in the light in which he had previously expressed himself, he saw there was a good deal to be said in favour of the amendment. He did not want it to be understood for a moment that he supported the amendment as any part of a condition he had made with the leader of the Opposition when the Bill was going through. The hon. member would bear him out that he had distinctly declined to accept any condition whatever as to the passage of the Bill.

Mr. GLASSEY: Hear, hear!

Mr. ARMSTRONG admitted that the Premier had explained the identical position he had taken up this morning, but if the amendment was accepted he saw no utility in the passage of the Bill at all at the present time. He could not see how the Premier could consistently accept the amendment. The hon. gentleman would have shown a stronger front if he had disapproved of it entirely. He made no secret of his own feeling with regard to it; he was prepared to sit until next week, if necessary, to prevent the passage of the amendment. He could only stigmatise the action of the Premier in approving of the amendment as an attempt to temporise with the hon. member for Bundaberg. It was showing a front to the leader of the Opposition and his party which was unwarranted, in view of the front which hon. members opposite had shown to members on the Government side.

The PREMIER would not like to see the amendment passed as it stood, as it would be inconvenient for reference.

The new clause having been amended to read as follows:—

The provisions of subsection 6 of section 11 of the principal Act shall not come into operation until the first day of May, 1899.

Mr. CRIBB said he did not think that the persons who had attested claims should be allowed to sit on the bench when those claims were being dealt with, and he intended to oppose the amendment.

The PREMIER wished to clear away some misconception that appeared to exist. Now that the Bill was practically passed, he might inform the Committee that he would not have thought it

worth while to introduce the Bill merely on account of the provision contained in the 4th clause. His object in introducing legislation to amend the Elections Acts was to provide for the appointment of a principal registrar, and to validate the duties of returning officers, and it was matter of subsequent consideration to introduce a clause to remedy some of the abuses alleged to exist in connection with magistrates attesting claims and subsequently proceeding on the bench without due investigation. He did not attach to the 4th clause the importance that had been forced upon it by the opposition of hon. gentlemen opposite, and by postponing the operation of the clause for a short time, so as not to be accused of interfering with the approaching elections, he did not think he was weakening the Bill or casting discredit on the manner in which the Bill passed through the Assembly. Hon. members who supported him had won the victory and could well afford to consider in an impartial spirit whether they would lay themselves open to the charge of attempting to introduce a new feature into the forthcoming elections which would not have been introduced had there not been other reasons for introducing an amendment to the Electoral Acts at the present time.

Mr. BATTERSBY: If the leader of the Opposition would accept the suggestion made by the Premier, he would support the new clause which the hon. member proposed to insert, and he intended to do as he had promised.

Question—That the new clause as read stand part of the Bill—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 24.

Messrs. Dickson, Foxton, Glassey, Keogh, Kerr, Sim, Kidston, Smith, Jackson, Curtis, W. Thorn, Browne, Jenkinson, Groom, Boles, Drake, McDonnell, Daniels, Dibley, Battersby, Dunsford, Stewart, King, and Maughan.

NOES, 31.

Messrs. Fraser, G. Thorn, McMaster, Callan, Newell, Tooth, O'Connell, Finney, Hamilton, Stephenson, Bell, Leahy, Morgan, Castling, Story, Hood, Armstrong, Stodart, Moore, Bridges, Smyth, Grimes, Lissner, Stumm, Collins, Cribb, Lord, McGahan, Stephens, Bartholomew, and Corfield.

Resolved in the negative.

Mr. BROWNE had a new clause to propose. He had intended moving it earlier in the afternoon, but had refrained from doing so on account of a sort of implied promise which had been made to the leader of the Opposition. The object of the clause was something similar to that which had just been disposed of—namely, to prevent the disfranchisement of people in districts which were sparsely populated, and where there were but few justices. He moved that the following new clause be inserted after clause 11:—

Section six of section eleven of the principal Act shall not apply in any case where the attendance of justices does not exceed the number required by the principal Act to constitute an electoral revision court.

Mr. KIDSTON thought the new clause was a very fair proposal to make under the circumstances in which they found themselves. They had been contending that clause 4 as passed was likely to have a very injurious and hurtful effect on a large number of electors, particularly in the more sparsely populated districts; but in spite of the very strong opposition which some members on that side had to the clause they agreed to allow it to go through on the promise of two Ministers that they would support the very reasonable concession asked for by the hon. member for Bundaberg. But those who depended on the promises of the Coalition Government were apt to be disappointed, and they had certainly been disappointed in this case. The Premier had not come up to their expectations of what they expected he would do, but he had done something; he had at least voted for what he

had promised to vote for, but he was very sorry to have to add that the hon. gentleman smiled very sweetly when the majority went the other way. As for the other Minister, the Secretary for Mines—

The CHAIRMAN: I draw the hon. member's attention to the fact that the clause of the hon. member for Croydon is now before the Committee, and he must address himself to that clause.

Mr. KIDSTON: He was giving a very cogent reason why the clause should be passed. While the Premier redeemed his promise and voted for the amendment of the hon. member for Bundaberg, he was not powerful enough to get his supporters to follow him. The Secretary for Mines did not vote, and he was sure hon. members opposite had nothing to flatter themselves about in the victory they had gained. Under the circumstances hon. members on his side were quite right in going back to the old question, and trying to get what they had been contending for. The object of the present amendment was simply to avert the inconvenience that would follow the administration of the Elections Act with the amendments they had made. It simply provided that in cases where there was not a sufficient number of justices, the clause should be inoperative. The Premier accepted the amendment of the hon. member for Bundaberg which went a great deal further.

The HOME SECRETARY: It never would have allowed one justice to sit.

Mr. KIDSTON: It was not proposed that one justice should sit, but only that clause 4 should be inoperative where there were only two justices. After all that had been said and admitted from the other side of the Committee, this was a very moderate and reasonable concession to ask, and he hoped the Premier would see his way to agree to it; also that hon. members on the other side would become sufficiently reasonable to do so as well.

The HOME SECRETARY: The Government would not accept the amendment, because there was no necessity for it. He did not think there would be any difficulty in securing a sufficient number of magistrates to preside at the revision courts to be held at the next ensuing period. Only three would be required, and, as they had adopted clause 4, he would undertake to send a circular to each electoral registrar in the colony, requesting him to take steps to secure the presence of at least three magistrates at every revision court. That would always leave two justices who had not witnessed a particular claim to deal with it. Hon. members ought to be thoroughly well satisfied with that, and he did not think he need say any more. There were not many districts where special efforts of this kind would have to be made. With regard to some remarks made by the hon. member in reference to some members of the Government, he might tell him that the Secretary for Mines, the Secretary for Railways, and the Secretary for Public Instruction were absent, otherwise they would have taken part in the late division.

The Hon. G. THORN: He was pleased that the Home Secretary was not going to accept the amendment, but he thought they should have some statement from the Premier after the adverse vote. He expected that the hon. gentleman would have moved the Chairman out of the chair, and taken time to consider what course the Government intended to pursue.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must know that that is not the question before the Committee. I am sure the hon. member can teach me in matters of procedure, and therefore I must ask him to assist the Committee to expedite the business.

The HON. G. THORN: It was the practice all over the world for the Premier to make some statement after a defeat like that.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member knows that no question regarding the policy or stability of the Government can arise in committee, and I trust that he will not indulge in the amusement he so much delights in any longer.

Mr. BROWNE: He had introduced his amendment without consultation with his leader or his party. Though they had seen the amendment before, they did not know it was his intention to introduce it at this stage of the Bill. The sole object was that men should not be disfranchised through the 4th clause in places where it had been pointed out there were very few justices of the peace. The Home Secretary had stated that he would cause a circular to be issued to all the electoral registrars to see that courts would be provided to prevent what was feared from happening. If that were done it would fulfil all he expected of the amendment, and relying on that promise of the Home Secretary he would withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause 12 put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with an amendment. The Bill, as amended, was taken into consideration, and the third reading made an order for to-morrow.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—"Construction of Act"—put and passed.

On clause 2—"Short title"—

Mr. GLASSEY was sorry he had not been present on the second reading of the Bill, but probably the Secretary for Agriculture would give some explanation of it on this clause?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They had a Weights and Measures Act under which municipalities worked, or did not work, at present, but it was passed in 1852, and was entirely unsuitable to the weighing-machines at present in use. The Bill was drafted somewhat in accordance with the English Act so far as weighing-machines were concerned, and the latter portion of it dealt with the regulation and inspection of weighing-machines.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—"Definitions"—put and passed.

On clause 4—"Providing weighing instruments"—

Mr. GRIMES: There was no definition of the word "mills" in the clause, and it would be rather a hardship in the case of some small mills that they should be compelled to provide a large weighing-machine to weigh the small amount of produce brought to them. Had the hon. gentleman noticed that difficulty in the clause?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He had noticed it, and was of opinion that the clause should apply to all mills. It was not the large mills that would give the most trouble in the matter, but the small mills which might refuse to provide sellers of produce with proper weighing-machines. There was no reason why a small mill should provide a large weighing-machine; but if it was going to purchase produce by weight it must provide such a weighing-machine as would weigh that produce accurately. It was exactly the same as in the case of the coalminer, who might turn out in his day's work a couple of tons or less; but, little or big, his turn-out had to be weighed, because when he sold his labour by weight the weight had to be accurately ascertained.

The HON. G. THORN reminded the hon. member for Oxley that there was a weighbridge

at nearly every railway station in the colony, where the Government weighed the produce of farmers.

Mr. SMITH: Suppose produce was sold by measure, would the seller and the millowner agree as to the quantity of produce required to make a certain weight?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: There was no provision here for measuring produce.

Mr. GLASSEY hoped the Minister would set his face against the system of purchasing farm produce by measure which was supposed to represent a certain weight. Under that system the producer would have to deliver considerably more than he received payment for.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE, in reply to Mr. Cribb, said that where the purchaser was willing to take the weights shown by railway machines under Government supervision there would be no alteration in the present system.

Mr. GLASSEY hoped that provision would be made for keeping the Government weighbridges at railway stations in perfect order. He also hoped the Minister would see that weighbridges were put at every place where farm produce was disposed of, so that the farmer would get full value for his produce.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. gentleman desired that the railway platform weighbridges, which were said to be accurate, should be kept accurate, and that would be done as far as possible. Subsection 7 of clause 12 made provision for that. It would be dealt with by regulation.

Mr. GROOM: He had received complaints from farmers that when the produce was weighed at the railway weighbridges and afterwards weighed by the storekeepers to whom it was sent the weights did not tally. Sometimes the difference amounted to two or three hundred-weight in a ton of produce. They gave the Government credit for the introduction of the Bill, but were under the impression that no provision was made for a thorough inspection of railway weighbridges. He hoped that would be one of the first regulations made under the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes; and if necessary further power will be asked.

Mr. GRIMES again drew attention to the fact that there was no definition of a mill. If a man had a four horse-power engine working a chaffcutter and a corneracker, that might be termed a mill under the Bill, and anyone going there with a load of loose hay might demand that the owner should have a suitable weighbridge to weigh his load of hay, and would perhaps commit the owner to an expenditure of £40 or £50. When it was chaffed it could be weighed on a small machine.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: How was a load of loose hay weighed at present?

Mr. GRIMES: The party weighs it himself before he takes it to the buyer.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In the future exactly the same thing would happen; he supposed the buyer would weigh it in bags. They had specially provided that they might make regulations respecting "the class or make or power of weighing instruments required to be provided in certain mills, trades, or under certain circumstances and conditions." If a man had a small chaffcutter which would cut up half a ton an hour, and he wished to buy his hay by weight, it could be weighed after it was cut into chaff. Was not that reasonable?

Mr. GRIMES: Under subsection 1 of clause 4 the owner or proprietor of a mill was supposed to have a suitable weighing instrument, and the next subsection provided that "when required or

requested so to do, and without unreasonable or unnecessary delay, and without charge," he should "cause to be weighed thereon all field produce" which he might have "purchased or sold." Therefore a person bringing to him a load of hay for sale, could claim that the millowner should have a suitable weighing-bridge to weigh that hay.

Mr. NEWELL pointed out that a "weighing instrument" was defined to include "weighbridge, scales, scale beams, balances, spring balances, steelyards, weighing-machines, and other instruments for weighing." He had seen hundreds of tons of maize weighed on a spring balance—not all at once, of course, but they could weigh almost anything on a spring balance.

Mr. GRIMES was sure that the hon. member for Woothakata would not be satisfied to have a load of hay weighing a ton or 30 cwt. weighed on a spring balance, because it was not a suitable weighing instrument for that purpose. To properly weigh a load of hay a weighbridge was necessary.

Mr. McMASTER: No person selling a load of hay would accept the weighing of that hay after it had been cut into chaff, because there was some loss in the process, and while the weighing of produce by steelyards might do for the seller it would not suit the buyer. The clause might operate very oppressively in cases where a cantankerous person insisted upon a suitable weighing-machine being provided, and such a thing should be avoided if possible. If he bought a load of loose hay he sent it to the market weighbridge or a private weighbridge to be weighed. No tradesman would take the railway weight, because there were very often discrepancies in it either one way or the other; the machines were all right, the discrepancies being due to carelessness. There was only one firm who weighed on their own weighbridge all the maize they received by rail, and whose weight would be taken in Brisbane—that was the firm of Cribb and Foote. There were some large weighing-machines in the city, and as long as they were correct they should be sufficient, without every man being compelled to procure them for himself.

Mr. O'CONNELL: The remarks of the hon. member for Oxley showed how difficult it was for them to interfere with matters of trade by Act of Parliament. A man who dealt in only small quantities of produce could not have a weighing-machine for himself, and, unless the seller was willing to sell it by the load, a possible purchaser would decline to take it. A man would always decline to buy if the seller insisted upon being paid by weight, and business would be absolutely blocked. It would be all very well where people were dealing with large quantities of sugarcane in which the sellers have no means of ascertaining the weight for themselves, but the clause meant the complete stoppage of small business. The Minister had called their attention to the power given by subsection 11 of clause 12 to make regulations, and possibly the Bill might be modified by those regulations, but they did not know how far those regulations would go.

At fifteen minutes to 6 o'clock,

The CHAIRMAN: In accordance with Standing Order No. 171, I call upon the hon. member for South Brisbane, Mr. Stephens, to relieve me in the chair.

Mr. STEPHENS took the chair accordingly.

Mr. BATTERSBY: He knew something about this matter. There was a weighbridge at Roma street, and he had seen the wheels of trucks weighed separately upon it—a method which would not give the correct weight. They first put the four front wheels on and then the four hind wheels, and added the two weights

together, and although the truck was supposed to carry seven tons, he had to pay for ten tons. He would advise the Railway Department to get a weighbridge which would take a whole truck at once, and then they would know the exact weight. There was a small weighbridge at Nundah, and all the trucks carrying timber had to have their ends weighed separately, which made a difference of about a ton for each truck. It was simply "spoiling the ship for a hap'orth of tar." At Roma street at any rate they should have a weighbridge big enough to weigh the largest eight-wheeled truck they had, whatever the cost of providing it might be. He believed that Campbell's and Dath Henderson's timber was always brought into Roma street to be weighed, but he knew that his constituents suffered from the present shuffling system.

Mr. ARMSTRONG was inclined to agree with the hon. member for Musgrave with regard to the effect of the clause. The Minister had stated, in reply to the hon. member for Ipswich, that there would be no difficulty in having produce weighed as in the past at the Ipswich Railway Station, but if they passed this Bill the Commissioner might say that as it was compulsory for people to provide weighing-machines, the weighbridges at the railway stations could no longer be used.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He could say that now without this Bill.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: He was not so likely to do so. He was afraid that unless they had some definition of "mills" the clause would result in a lot of trouble and inconvenience to people in the farming districts who had had the use of the railway weighbridges in times past.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Oxley had suggested that mills and factories employing small horsepower might be exempted, but he was not sure that that would meet the case. There were many small factories and there might be small mills which, though employing small horsepower and a small number of hands, might put through a lot of valuable produce that required to be carefully weighed. Coffee mills and rice mills were examples. He would like to draw attention once more to the word "suitable," which occurred in the 1st subsection of the clause. A suitable instrument for weighing a couple of tons of hay on a wagon would be the instrument which would most readily weigh that wagon with its load of hay; and the inference was drawn that if loose hay was purchased by a man owning a chaffcutter worth £20 or £30 he would be compelled to put up a weighbridge worth about £50; but that would never be the case. The word "suitable" not only applied to the produce to be weighed, but also to the circumstances of the case; and under the clause providing for regulations power would be taken to prescribe "the class or make or power of weighing instruments required to be provided in certain mills, trades, or under certain circumstances." Where a man did a small business, and could do it with an ordinary Avery platform machine, he would use that machine. The hon. member, Mr. McMaster, said he bought an immense amount of produce which he weighed over an Avery machine, and that suited him; but that under this Bill, if he bought loose hay, he would be required to provide a platform weighbridge. Under the Bill he would be required to do nothing of the sort. Would a man who required to buy a few loads of loose hay put down a platform weighbridge? No, he would go to the municipal council, if they had a weighbridge, and pay them for the use of it. The hon. member for Oxley seemed to fear that the administrators of the Bill would require those persons who owned a small chaffcutting

machine or corn-cracking machines to put down weighbridges which were entirely out of keeping with the rest of their machinery, but he could assure the hon. member that that would not be the case.

Mr. BATTERSBY did not want the Minister to put up weighbridges on the North Coast line for weighing timber, but he wanted to see weighbridges there on which they could weigh a wheeled truck, not simply the front wheels, which might weigh two and a-half tons, while the other wheels weighed five and a-half tons.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is tediously repeating himself, and if he continues to do that I shall have to order him to discontinue his speech.

Mr. GRIMES: The Minister had referred to coffee-mills, but the hon. gentleman would see that the cost of the instruments required to weigh coffee, which was in bags or sacks, would be a very small item, possibly about £4. Moreover, the Bill dealt with field produce, and coffee would not, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, be called field produce. He would suggest that a mill should be defined as a steam-mill of eight-horse power, employing five or more men, but it would require a draftsman to draft the amendment properly, so that it should not clash with other provisions of the Bill.

Mr. BATTERSBY was sorry that the Acting Chairman had not allowed him to finish before calling on the hon. member for Oxley, but he forgave the hon. member. Boys must always be forgiven until they became men. As far as the resolution before the Committee was concerned it had his sincere sympathy, and he hoped that while the Acting Chairman sat in that chair he would not allow Mr. Grimes or any other gentleman in the House to steal a march on him or any other hon. member. The hon. member could have his laugh and interject, but he intended to address the Chair whether members interjected or not.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I must now order the hon. member to cease speaking for continued irrelevance; he has not been speaking to the question at all.

Mr. BATTERSBY: Mr. Stephens—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! The only motion the hon. member can now move is that he be further heard.

Mr. BATTERSBY: Who moved the motion?

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: No one moved it; I said that is the only motion the hon. member could move. Under Standing Order 134 I order the hon. member to resume his seat, and if he does not do so I shall have no option but to name him to the Speaker, which I have no wish to do.

Mr. BATTERSBY: I won't move that motion.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Then the hon. member must resume his seat.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 5—"Inspection of weighing instruments"—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The clause stated that "an inspector is hereby authorised and empowered once in every six months" to inspect weighing instruments. He moved that the words "once in every six months" be omitted, and later on he should move an amendment providing that the fees the inspector was entitled to receive should not be chargeable against the same person oftener than once in every six months.

Amendment agreed to.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE, the words "but such fee shall

not be chargeable against the same person more than once in every six months" were added to the clause.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

On clause 6—"Fraud in use of weighing instrument"—

Mr. GRIMES: The clause provided for a penalty of £20 in the case of fraud, but it also provided that the machine, which might have cost £50, should be forfeited. Surely that was not intended!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He did intend it. He was following the English Act, and did not think any penalty could be too severe upon a man who was guilty of wilful fraud more than once. The clause only said that he should be liable to a penalty, and therefore if there were any mitigating circumstances he would receive the benefit of them.

Mr. GRIMES: There was more likely to be fraud in connection with small weighing-machines than in connection with weighbridges; but the fine was much greater in the latter case, because the machine would probably cost some £50, while the value of the small weighing-machine might not be more than £5. He thought the weighing-machine should not be forfeited, and therefore he moved the omission of all the words after the word "pounds," in line 14.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He had already said he could not accept the amendment. No penalty could be too severe upon a man who wilfully took advantage of the defenceless position of the man selling produce to him.

Mr. GLASSEY: Take the case of sugar-mills. There were thousands of tons of cane brought in weekly, and yet each of the persons supplying it might be delivering 24 cwt. or 25 cwt. to the ton. He was not a believer in large penalties as a rule, but this was a case in which the penalty should be very severe, in order that hard-working producers should not be robbed, and he should support the Minister.

Mr. GRIMES: The hon. member for Bundaberg had mentioned an extreme case, but there were instances in which the loss might be very trifling as compared with that.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The hon. member for Oxley must see that it was very difficult to prove wilful fraud, and therefore the penalty must be correspondingly severe.

Mr. GLASSEY: In the case of sugar-cane, a millowner who did not pay for the full amount of cane delivered to him ought to be severely punished. According to information he had received from various parts of the Isis district, as much as 20 cwt. had been given to the ton. He hoped the Minister would be firm and not give way.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: He agreed with the view the Minister took; but the point raised by the hon. member for Oxley had been somewhat lost sight of. A man who had a very small machine would not lose much by its forfeiture, although his frauds might amount to a great deal, but a man with a machine worth £50 would lose a great deal by its forfeiture, although his offence might not have been great. He did not see how the difficulty could be overcome. What they required was to give the utmost protection to producers.

Mr. DRAKE: In the case of the forfeiture of a machine there was nothing to show that its value would bear any proportion to the offence committed. They had a clause further on providing that for a second offence the offender might get two months' imprisonment, and while it might be a proper thing to increase the penalty or term of imprisonment, he could not see why

the principle of forfeiture of the machines had been introduced. The forfeiture of the machine was optional, and the magistrates might, to make the penalty proportionate to the offence, forfeit a machine of low value, while they would hesitate to forfeit a valuable machine; so that a man with an expensive weighbridge might save his machine, and a man with a machine of less value would run the risk of losing it. The machine would probably be sold again to someone else, and he could not see the advantage of introducing the principle of the forfeiture, when, if the penalty was increased, the magistrates hearing a case could inflict punishment proportionate to the offence, without the forfeiture of the machine.

The PREMIER: If a second or subsequent offence of fraud was proved against the owner of a weighbridge it was not too much to provide that in addition to a penalty of £20 the weighing instrument might be forfeited. Some weighing-machines had been known to be very eccentric, and had proved a fortune to their fortunate owners, and if a machine had been so manipulated that it consistently inclined to an unfair balance and was incapable of being restored to paths of rectitude it ought to be destroyed. The gravamen of the offence would decide whether a machine should be forfeited, and the power of forfeiture in addition to the penalty should be retained.

Mr. SMITH: The difficulty would be in adjusting the penalty to the offence, and he agreed that it would be better to increase the penalty than to provide for the forfeiture of the machine.

Mr. BATTERSBY would not take long, but he was going to give the hon. member for Oxley a bit of advice. Some eight or nine years ago the hon. member for Oxley used to pay 19s. for cutting, loading, and taking to the mill. Whether the hon. member had a weighbridge or not he did not know, but when the carts came along and turned up through the fields, and the men cutting and loading had to reload them again the hon. member paid them nothing more for it.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Order! It is not a question of cutting cane, and I must ask the hon. member to confine his discussion to the question before the Committee only.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The only way in which he could show that an alteration should take place was by making reference to what had taken place in times gone by. If the Acting Chairman ruled that he could not do that—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I do.

Mr. BATTERSBY: The Acting Chairman had ruled that, and he thanked the hon. gentleman for it, as it saved him from saying hard words.

Mr. O'CONNELL was very sorry the hon. member for Bundaberg should have attempted to blacken the character of people in the district he represented, but he was strongly disinclined to believe that anyone in the district would wilfully or intentionally defraud a man of 9 cwt. in every ton of his produce. It seemed to him that it was absolutely necessary to provide for the forfeiture of a machine. It might be that a machine would be in such a bad condition that it could not be relied upon for accurate weight. Such a machine should be destroyed, and a man who wilfully continued to use such a machine should certainly be punished under the clause.

Mr. GLASSEY: Information had reached him that numerous growers of cane were not getting the legitimate value for their produce, and he was informed by a gentleman in this House that 29 cwt. to the ton had been given in some instances, though he could not vouch for the accuracy of the information. He did not share the opinion of the hon. member

for Musgrave that a machine out of order should be forfeited, because it might be only temporarily out of order.

Mr. O'CONNELL: He did not say that because a machine was out of order it should be forfeited; what he said was that the power of forfeiture should exist. It was a very undesirable thing for the hon. member to accuse people as he had done of dishonesty in connection with the weighing of produce without verifying his information. He should not make such a statement unless he knew it to be true.

Mr. GLASSEY declined to be lectured by the hon. member as to what information he should give the Committee. He did not say that all the people in the Isis were dishonest; but he contended that the producers should be protected in the sale of their produce. He did not believe the hon. member would be a party to anything dishonest; but he was not going to withhold information which showed the necessity for high penalties for fraud being imposed.

Mr. GRIMES: He did not think it possible that the growers of cane could have weighed 29 cwt. to the ton, as stated by the hon. member. It was an excess of nearly 50 per cent., and the difference could be detected by the merest novice. A driver who had driven a few weighed ton loads could easily tell the difference. When he spoke before he was not referring to the sugar-growers; he was speaking in the interests of the small men. The weighbridges to which he had referred, especially those wooden platforms, had to be adjusted twice a day sometimes after wet weather, and it did not follow, because a weighbridge was a little out of order, that it could not be put right. If a weighbridge was temporarily out of order, and a mistake in weighing occurred, that might be construed into wilful fraud, and the proprietor might be mulcted in the sum of £50—the value of the machine—in addition to a penalty of £20. If there was any necessity to increase the fine let it be increased, but he protested against the power given in the clause.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE quoted from the principal Act to show that the provisions in this Bill were more lenient. The clause did not seem to him to be too drastic.

Mr. KEOGH welcomed the measure, as it was very necessary as far as farmers were concerned. He certainly thought the Railway Department should have weighing-machines that could be relied on, which was not the case at present.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the amendment before the Committee.

Mr. KEOGH: It was very hard to do that, as the scope was so narrow, but he would keep as close to it as he could. The machines at the railway stations should be correct, but up to the present the weights, as shown by those machines, had not been correct.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I must ask the hon. member to confine his remarks to the amendment.

Mr. KEOGH: Very well; that was all he had to say on the matter.

Mr. DRAKE: The reference made by the Minister to the present Act bore out his contention, because under that Act it was only in cases where weights were found to be light, or the instruments unjust, that forfeiture followed. What he could not understand about the proposal in the clause was that the justices should have the power to inflict a fine of £20 with imprisonment, and in addition to order the forfeiture of the machine.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: What do you suggest?

Mr. DRAKE: If the hon. gentleman thought the penalty proposed in the clause was not high

enough, he should increase the amount of the fine from £20 to £50, and then, instead of omitting the words proposed by the hon. member for Oxley to be omitted, he could insert the words, "and the weighing instruments, weights, or measures, if found to be defective, shall be liable to be forfeited and destroyed." The magistrates would then be able to suit the penalty to the gravity of the offence.

Mr. TOOTH understood the hon. member for Bundaberg to have made the astounding statement that in the Isis district 29 cwt. of cane were given to the ton. All he could say was that in that district, and also in the Pialba district, where he had personally seen thousands of tons of cane weighed, 20 cwt. of cane were given to the ton. Where cane was brought by dray or tramline it was weighed in the presence of the canegrower's checkweigher, and where it was brought by the railway it was weighed in the presence of the growers themselves, or their checkweigher, on the Government weighbridge.

Mr. BATTERSBY wished to know how a fine or forfeiture was to be enforced in cases where Government weighbridges were found to be defective? He did not think that either the Nambour or the Moreton Sugar Company received fair play, and he hoped that before the beginning of next season the weighbridges would be put into a better condition, so that a large truck could be weighed at once.

Mr. GLASSEY: If all they heard from the sugar-growing districts were correct, he did not see the object of the Bill.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I would point out to the hon. member that the question before the Committee is not the necessity for the Bill; that was decided at the second reading. The question is the omission of certain words from clause 6.

Mr. GLASSEY: He wished to state, in reply to the hon. member for Burrum, that information had reached him that the sugar-growers were giving about 29 cwt. to the ton, while they were only paid for 20 cwt. It was nearly three years ago since he had raised this question, and he was very glad to see the Bill, which would be welcomed by very many people in the Isis and other districts.

Mr. GRIMES: He understood the hon. member for Bowen wished to move an amendment prior to his, in which case he would have no objection to withdraw his for the time.

Mr. SMITH: He understood that the hon. member for Enoggera wished to increase the penalty, and alter the end of the clause so that the machine would only be forfeited if found defective, when it would be destroyed. He thought that was the most sensible way of dealing with the clause.

Mr. GRIMES: With the permission of the Committee he would withdraw his amendment to allow the hon. member for Enoggera to move his.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He thought the penalty might be left at £20, because in a later clause they provided for imprisonment for second offences. It would meet the case if the words "if found defective" were inserted after the word "measure," in line 15, and he moved that as an amendment.

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

The remaining clauses were passed without discussion.

On the schedule,

Mr. GRIMES thought the fees for the inspection of weighing-machines were excessive.

The charge was 30s. for inspecting a 10-ton machine, and as they did not want to make a profit, the amounts might be reduced by half.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They did not want to make a profit, but they could not keep a man to travel all over the country, and charge a sum which would pay his wages for only the bare time of inspection. He had put the fees at about 50 per cent. higher than under the English Act, and did not think they were excessive. Labour was a good deal cheaper and means of locomotion easier, and he thought that 50 per cent. upon what was there considered sufficient would be enough here. It was certain that local authorities, who would collect the fees, would not make a profit out of them.

Mr. NEWELL pointed out that a man might go into a produce store where there would be perhaps five or six weighing-machines of different sizes—

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is done now under the present Act.

Mr. NEWELL had never seen such an inspection made yet.

Mr. GRIMES: In a district like the Isis an inspector might inspect five or six machines in a day. He thought the fees excessive.

Schedule and preamble put and passed.

The House resumed; the ACTING CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments. The Bill, as amended, was taken into consideration, and the third reading made an Order for to-morrow.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE. AGRICULTURE.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE moved that £6,201 be granted for Agriculture. The increase asked for this year was £1,858, but that was more apparent than real, as it was mainly due to transfers from one vote to another. There was the transfer from the Works Department of the inspector and valuator at £300 and the inspecting engineer (six months) £150, the instructor in fruit culture £600, and the assistant instructor in fruit culture, £250, transfers from the State farms vote. That made £1,300 out of the £1,800 due to transfers. Another part of the increase was due to adjustments of salaries for the full year instead of for broken periods as appearing in last year's vote, in the cases of the viticulturist, the tobacco expert, and the coffee expert. The inspector under the Diseases in Plants Act also appeared on the vote for the first time, having hitherto been paid from the vote for miscellaneous services. A reduction on the vote was for the assistant dairy instructor, who was now paid from the Agricultural College vote. The increases to officers of the department were £20 to the accountant, and £10 each to the salaries of three clerks; and provision was also made for two additional clerks at £70 each.

The HON. G. THORN: That was a fitting opportunity for a few words on the operation of the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act.

The HOME SECRETARY: No; that should be on the Lands Estimates.

The HON. G. THORN thought that it had been the practice to deal with it on this vote.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I think it has been the practice to deal with it on the Lands Estimates; but I am in the hands of the Committee, and hon. members will correct me if I am wrong.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Yes; on the Lands Estimates.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Then I must ask the hon. member to talk about agriculture.

The HON. G. THORN intended to do so, and to bring in the question of the agricultural lands purchases. The fact was that there were other

places in the colony besides the Darling Downs where the Act should be applied. Some time ago a large estate under the Range in the West Moreton district was offered to the Government. That was the Normanby Estate.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I do not wish to be harsh in any way, but the hon. member must confine his remarks to the vote before the Committee. If he talks about selling land it will not be relevant to the vote before the Committee.

The HON. G. THORN was pointing out to the Minister in charge of the vote that there were other places besides the Downs where the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act should be applied, and that an estate under the Range had been offered to the Government.

The HOME SECRETARY: And the Land Court reported dead against it.

The HON. G. THORN: He had no wish to reflect upon the Land Court, or any officer in the Agricultural Department. He maintained that the Normanby estate, in the opinion of those who knew it—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not talking to the item before the Committee; he is talking about the action of the Land Board. It would save me, and the hon. member as well, a lot of trouble if he would confine his remarks to the present item.

The HON. G. THORN: He was going to say that the land in that estate—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: It is no use mincing matters. I shall have to order the hon. member to resume his seat if he persists.

The HON. G. THORN: The land in that estate for agricultural purposes was equal to the land on the Darling Downs, in many respects superior, and would be taken up with the same avidity as the land on the Darling Downs—not that he wished to detract from the land on the Darling Downs—for agricultural purposes. There were many reasons why it was good for agricultural purposes—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is attacking the Land Board and their report, and practically saying that their report was wrong. If he does it once more I shall order him to resume his seat.

The HON. G. THORN: He was not attacking the Land Board; he did not wish to reflect on the Land Board or anyone connected with the Agricultural Department; but he said this land for agricultural purposes, and at the rate it was offered the Government for, was very cheap; it was superior to the land at Headington Hill.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I shall have to order the hon. member to discontinue his speech for continually leaving the vote before the Committee.

Mr. BATTERSBY addressed the Committee, and proceeded to read the items of which the vote was composed.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: Unless the hon. member discusses the vote instead of simply reading the items I shall have to caution him.

Mr. BATTERSBY thought it only fair that he should read over the items, but if the Acting Chairman said he was wrong he had done.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I would be obliged to the hon. member if he would sit down.

Mr. BATTERSBY wished to know from the Minister why the vote was increased from £4,343 last year to £6,201 this year?

Mr. GROOM: Might he ask the Minister whether he preferred to take the discussion on the paper laid on the table in regard to Professor Shelton upon this vote or upon the next?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: On the next vote.

Mr. JENKINSON noticed that there was a large increase in the vote as compared with the

estimate for the previous year, that many of the experts had increases in their salaries, and that the instructor in fruit culture received a higher salary than the Under Secretary, which was an anomaly that should not exist. It was the general impression that the Secretary for Agriculture had been an immense success as head of the department, and it was only right that he should receive credit for his administration. He would ask the hon. gentleman to consider whether something could not be done to prevent the sale to farmers of defective seed which contained the seed of weeds, and caused a great deal of damage to farms and loss to agriculturists. The penalty might be made so extreme that the retailers of seed would not find it worth their while to sell impure seed.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE quite agreed that the selling of impure seed was a very serious offence which should be put down, and that the selling of impure fertilisers ought also to be stopped. The hon. member was in error in thinking that there was any increase in the salaries of the experts. He had already explained that there were no increases, but that the amount voted last year was for a broken period. The only increases were £20 to the accountant and £10 to each of three clerks.

Mr. GROOM: Does the instructor get travelling expenses besides his £600 a year?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Mr. FINNEY presumed that those experts were necessary for the education of the people, but thought it was an anomaly that the instructor in fruit culture should receive a higher salary than the Under Secretary. He noticed that £600 was down for instructor in fruit culture, and £250 for assistant instructor in fruit culture, in all £850. He thought that rather a large amount.

Mr. SMITH considered that the money paid to experts was money very well laid out, but would like to see those experts visit the distant parts of the colony regularly. He knew that some of them had been up North, but he was not aware that the instructor in fruit culture had travelled so far. It was just as necessary that the experts should give cultivators of the soil in distant parts of the colony the benefit of their knowledge, as it was that they should give information to people in the districts in the vicinity of the metropolis.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The colonial botanist, entomologist, and the agricultural chemist had both been up North on business; the instructor in fruit culture had been up North as far as Cooktown, calling at every place on the way; the tobacco expert had been up North about three months, and he also called at every place; the viticulturist had been up North as far as Cairns, and had called at every intermediate place and gone inland at several places.

Mr. SMITH knew that some of the experts had travelled up North, and that some of them had gone inland, but there were others who had simply gone up the coast and back again.

The HON. G. THORN bowed to the ruling of the Acting Chairman that he would not be in order in discussing agricultural lands on that vote, but he wished now to refer to—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I ordered the hon. member to cease speaking on this question. Is it the pleasure of the Committee that the hon. member be further heard?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Yes. No.

The HON. G. THORN thought it was an extraordinary anomaly that the Under Secretary for Agriculture should be paid less than the fruit expert, and hoped that the Government would

increase his salary next year, and place him on the same footing as the Under Secretaries of other departments.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW considered that the department did not work their experts in a satisfactory manner. An expert should spend a couple of months in each district, so that he might become acquainted with its climatic conditions and the character of its soil, and be able to point out to the farmers the weak points in their methods of cultivation. The experts were continually going round the various districts delivering lectures, but it was a marvel to most persons how they could give lectures to suit several districts at once, because different soils required careful study, and one district well studied was worth 100 only partly studied. A great deal had been said about the State interfering with exports, but the examples they had from other parts of the world showed that Government supervision was better than that of private individuals. He might quote the expansion of the butter industry in Denmark and Victoria, and they now found that South Australia was opening a wine depot in London, which was an unqualified success. It seemed to be a paradox that while they had lecturers at home trying to get people to come here where there was plenty of soil for them to till, they should still be buying up agricultural lands. He had no objection to lands being bought back on the Darling Downs, but when those lands were bought back they were all taken up by people from the south, and it was their duty to see that there was land ready for them. He had already spoken about the rich agricultural lands about Gayndah, and would now like to say something about the lands in the neighbourhood of Nanango. There was land there fit for grazing, dairying, and agriculture, and it was within thirty miles of the present terminus of the railway. It was their duty to let it be known that there was land there for 100,000 people, and he considered he was only doing right in bringing the matter publicly before the House and the colony. In connection with this matter he would read a report by Professor Shelton, dated 19th December, 1896—

The district to me was a good deal of a surprise. Certainly I went there quite unprepared for the very large areas of fruitful soils which are met with in all directions from Nanango. The productive soils of the district are here, as usual, roughly classified under the three heads—namely, forest, scrub, and creek bottom lands . . . and in point of quality they are hardly surpassed by similar soils elsewhere in Queensland. To the farmer, with an eye to good land, the great stretches of magnificent scrub, the long-connected pockets of river and creek bottom, and the extent of productive forest land is deeply impressive.

Necessarily, the progress of settlement has been slow. Years ago, when railroads were being pushed (on paper, if not actually), this district seemed one of the first likely to be favoured with railroad communication. It is needless to say that the expectations then raised have never been realised. . . . Nowhere in Queensland have we a better illustration of the intense land hunger that consumes the average colonist. . . . As you go about this district you everywhere in the most out-of-the-way and unexpected places, encounter homesteads, and in some cases considerable groups of farmsteads are met with, surrounded by well-cleared fields, good fences, and often really splendid growing crops. . . . About some of these homesteads I saw really excellent orchards; and orange, apricot, peach, plum and other trees at the present time loaded with fruit, or full of the promise of crops yet to come. Undoubtedly this district strikingly resembles that about Toowoomba; it has nearly the same elevation, I am told, and its soil has the characteristic red of the Toowoomba ground, while in respect to climate the analogy between the two places yet holds. Most likely all that has been done about the favoured district surrounding Toowoomba may be hopefully attempted in the Nanango district. As I said before, settlers recently have reached an almost unanimous determination to add wheat-growing to the list of staple crops of the district.

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There are no great plains like the Darling Downs, which require only the breaking up and the seeding for the growth of crops, and which, on account of their smoothness, make possible the use of agricultural machinery from the start. Whether the Nanango people can clear and stump the ground in the first instance, and raise wheat in competition with the residents of the plains, who add to their other advantages ample railroad facilities, may well be questioned. Of this I have not the slightest doubt: That there are tens of thousands of acres of land in the district which will produce crops of wheat above the average yield even of Queensland, and I am equally certain that the quality of the wheat will rank with the best produced in the colony. Having railroad communication, and considering the possibilities of growth in other directions, I should have no hesitation in saying that this district ought, in the very near future, to take rank with the best in Queensland for the production of the great bread staple.

A party visited Nanango about the beginning of November, and three Ministers accompanied it, and he was sure they never saw better land any where. It was a cruel shame that such land should be lying idle, and he was sure that if the Secretary for Railways would see that a permanent survey of this line were made—

The ACTING CHAIRMAN: I thought the hon. member was reading the expert's report with a view of commenting upon his ability or otherwise. If he read it with a view to advocating a railway, I must rule him out of order.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: He had shown the Committee that it was the duty of the Minister to get land ready for intending settlers. They were trying to induce people to come here, and when they came here he hoped the land would be available for them.

Mr. STEWART complained of the treatment yearly meted out to the Central division by the Agricultural Department. They had a large staff of experts who paid occasional flying visits to the division, but they were of no use to the people. He had no wish to refer now to the large amount of revenue derived by the South from the Central division, but they wanted a fair share of the use of the experts employed by the Government for the service of the colony. The Minister told them that the experts were constantly travelling up and down the colony. The records of the steamship companies would show that, but the question was: What good had they done? He could tell the hon. gentleman how they came to his division. They heard perhaps on a Monday that an expert had arrived in the locality, and comparatively little previous notice of his visit was given, and the time left for making arrangements was so short that in nine cases out of ten nothing could be done. The expert took a drive round a few places near Rockhampton and saw half-a-dozen farmers and then cleared away, South or North, by the first convenient boat. That was not the proper way in which to utilise the experts of the department. Notwithstanding that the Government had a little army of experts, the Rockhampton Municipal Council had to send out a man to the people of the Western districts of the Central division to teach them fruitgrowing and other branches of farming. They had the tobacco expert in Rockhampton a few weeks ago, but because the farmers had not everything prepared for his visit he cleared out again. If any real assistance was to be given by the experts to the farmers they should remain in a particular district for one, two, or three months. They had a fruit expert in Mr. Benson, who got £600 a year, or £100 more than the Under Secretary. He understood that gentleman was also manager of State farms.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Not now.

Mr. STEWART was glad to hear it, as he understood that Mr. Benson knew less about farming than many a man who had great difficulty in making a living at it. He suggested

that the Government should provide an expert for the Central division who would be able to teach fruit culture, the planting, pruning, and cleaning of trees, and other branches of agriculture as well. They had a tobacco expert at £500, and he would like to be told where that gentleman was employed, and what he did? Then they had a coffee expert. There was one place in the Central division where coffee was grown, but he did not know if the expert had visited it. There was another place near Maryborough which the expert might have visited, but so far as he knew that gentleman was of comparatively little use to the colony. The only experts who had been of any use to the people in the Central division were the travelling dairy experts. They had gone from farm to farm teaching the people how to dairy, and he had before suggested that the fruit experts should do the same thing—teach the people how to plant, prune, and clean trees. That style of instruction would be very much better than the method adopted by the department. When the fruit instructor came up to their division he yarded a lot of farmers into a room, as a grazier would yard cattle, and he talked at them. What earthly good was that? Sometimes he gave an exhibition of pruning, and he was said to be a good man amongst trees, and the farmers stood round him and learnt very little from the exhibition unless they were very smart in the uptake. The instructor would convey as much to them in three months under the method of instruction he suggested as in three years under the present system. They had no agricultural college in their district, and no experimental farm.

The TREASURER: Yes, you have.

Mr. STEWART: Yes, away at Emerald, but farmers around Rockhampton were not going to travel 165 miles to visit that farm. At Gindie they showed principally how wheat could be grown, and though the department acted properly in establishing a farm there he claimed that there should be a farm also near Rockhampton, where agriculture was in a rather backward state, and where the soil and climate were not so good as on the Darling Downs. He had been asked by the selectors in the district to put these views before the Minister, and he trusted that they would recommend themselves to the hon. gentleman.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE agreed to a large extent with what the hon. gentleman had said, but he thought more good had been done to Rockhampton by establishing a farm and encouraging agriculture in its back country than would be done by any attempt to establish a large agricultural industry in the limited area of good land in the immediate vicinity of Rockhampton. The best man among the dairy experts had been sent to the district, and remained there as long as he could get anything to do. The hon. member talked about the instructor in fruit culture pruning trees. That was why he was brought here—to show people how to cultivate, prune, spray, and pack. The department had improved last year over the year before, and hoped to improve still more next year.

Mr. O'CONNELL: The sugar-growers in his district had been trying for some time to get an experiment farm for the purpose of raising and testing different varieties of cane. He need not tell the hon. gentleman that a variety of cane suited to the North might not suit the climate of Bundaberg. Two or three years ago they had a promise that an experiment cane farm would be established in the neighbourhood of Bundaberg, and he now asked the Minister whether there was any hope of something more than words in connection with the matter?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It was always easier and pleasanter to say "yes" than "no," and he would like to say "yes" on this occasion, but the whole question was one of very great magnitude. It was one of supreme importance to the Isis and Bundaberg districts, where the volcanic soil had been cropped for years and was less fertile in some places than it used to be. What the hon. member suggested, if it was to be really effective, would involve a very considerable expenditure. In Honolulu, where such experiments were carried on, the expense was met by a tax on the canegrowers. There the chief chemist got £1,200 a year, and he more than repaid his salary to his employers. If they really set their minds to do work in that direction, which would repay the money spent on it, it was likely they would have to get some contributions from those interested. At any rate he was convinced the experiments for the purpose of ascertaining what manures were best and what sorts of cane should be planted in that red soil was an absolute necessity, and had become of primary importance to the southern end of the colony.

Mr. SMITH: There were two centres of the sugar industry in the Bowen electorate—Ayr and the Proserpine—in which the climatic conditions differed considerably. The Proserpine district might be said to be within the rainy zone, whereas the Ayr district was completely removed from it. He believed that the Minister had received an application for the establishment of an experimental farm somewhere in either one or both of those districts, and he hoped that appeal would be favourably considered. A disease had appeared in the cane there, and he understood that the hon. gentleman had promised that an investigation should be made by an expert into the disease, the nature of which was at present unknown. It affected the sugar-cane very disastrously, and he therefore hoped the Minister would see his way to have an investigation made into the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He believed he was correct in saying that the disease referred to by the hon. member was not spreading. With reference to the establishment of an experimental farm in the Ayr district, where the rainfall was somewhat less than it was in the Proserpine, he presumed the hon. member, and those who urged the establishment of such a farm, did not desire it merely for the sake of having an experimental farm in the district. If the hon. member would put the matter to the department in a concrete form, as the hon. member for Bundaberg had done with regard to the Isis, no doubt it would receive the same consideration.

Mr. GRIMES did not think the sugar industry had received that attention from the Agricultural Department which its importance demanded. On the contrary, he considered that it had been sadly neglected, and he was surprised to hear from the Minister that if anything was done in the line suggested it would be necessary to call upon the growers of cane for contributions. Nothing of that sort had been demanded from wheat-growers or dairymen, and he could not understand why cane-growers should be placed on a different footing from other agriculturists. The value of sugar was lowering year by year, and the cost of making it had been brought down to almost the minimum, so that it was necessary that something should be done in the way of increasing the crops and the percentage of sugar obtained from the cane. He did not think the best way of doing that would be to establish experimental farms. The cheapest way would be to lease six or seven acres from farmers in different districts, or pay them so much an acre

for cultivation, plant the land with different varieties of cane, and have the cane thoroughly tested at a mill where there was an expert chemist, and then make the results public. The hon. member for Rockhampton North referred to the large salary the instructor in fruit-growing was receiving, and he quite admitted that he was receiving a large salary, especially when they compared it with the salary received by the Under Secretary, who was receiving some £200 a year less than the Under Secretaries in other departments. Either the instructor in fruit-growing should be brought down £100 a year or the Under Secretary should have his salary raised, so that he would not be receiving less than his subordinate; and he thought, considering the care and attention the Under Secretary had given to his department, that he deserved to be placed on an equality with the others. There was no reason why the Department of Agriculture should be a second-rate department; it ought to be one of the most important in the State. Hon. members would notice that there was £200 down for an artist and photographer, and he had learned that agricultural views were being obtained to be used as lantern slides for the lecturers in England. He had had an opportunity of seeing some of these, and thought they would give a very good idea of agriculture in Queensland, and would be very instructive to intending immigrants; but the people in Queensland were also interested, and before they were sent home those views should be exhibited here in the different towns. In fact an arrangement might be made for the charging of a small fee, which could be given to the hospitals.

THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: In regard to experimental sugar farms, what he had said was that the matter was of so much importance, and would cost so much, that it would perhaps be desirable that small contributions should be obtained from outside, and he was led to say this by the fact that he had received a letter from four sugar-planters offering a sum of £250 towards a farm in his district. This was not four rich sugar-planters, but four farmers, who offered to pay 2d. per ton upon their cane for five years. He was pleased to hear the kind things that had been said about the Under Secretary, who was devoted to his department, and worked very hard for it. In fact, there was not an idle bone in his body, and he earned his salary as well as anybody could. The feeling of the Committee that he was not sufficiently recompensed was a very generous one, and he hoped that next year he or his successor would be able to carry the wishes of the Committee into effect. The instructor in fruit culture was engaged two years ago, and the work he had done had been such as to assure the department that his fidelity and devotedness to his work was above praise. This officer, he might mention, had hopes that this year he, with the assistance of another gentleman, might find a spray which would be so repulsive to the fruit fly that it would cease to attack stone fruit. It was all very well for the hon. member for Barcoo to laugh; but surely he did not think that because they had been unsuccessful in finding a specific up to the present they should therefore give up the struggle. They should never say they would let their orchards go because they could not find anything against the fruit fly. It was true they had got to spend a few pounds, but fancy what it would mean to the country afterwards—what it would mean for their fruit—the luxury of the poor! What would it not be to be able to get a clean peach instead of one with a foul maggot inside of it! He was very hopeful that they were now on the high road to the discovery of a specific

against that fly, and if they accomplished that the expenditure of the last two years would be amply repaid. He might explain that there was a very serious disease affecting many hundreds of acres in the Southern part of the colony—a disease of the sugar banana. Hon. members would know that though the Cavendish banana was a very heavy bearer, the sugar banana was better for the grower, as it had at all times a readier sale. A very serious disease was found to infect that banana wherever it had been planted for any considerable time in the Southern part of the colony. Mr. Benson was carrying out experiments with a view to discovering exactly what that disease was, and what assistance could be given to the plant to resist it. It was rather too early to say what the result would be, but he was inclined to say that the experiments carried on at Redland Bay—where the disease had been most ruinous to the growers—would show within twelve months that, with certain assistance, the sugar banana could be grown with safety on land that was previously supposed to be impregnated with disease. He mentioned this as one of many series of experiments now being carried on with a view to putting the fruitgrower of the colony in a better position. With regard to the artist, that officer was occupied in drawing for the *Agricultural Journal*, and also in taking photographs which were made into lantern slides to be sent home to England. He might say that the department besides teaching agriculture was constantly supplying men like Mr. Randall at home with exhibits. A constant stream of new stuff was going home to England, and the Agent-General's Office and those representing the colony at home appreciated it very much. They had made an excellent exhibit at the Smithfield Show last month, and he saw by cablegrams in the papers that much comment was caused by the excellence of the Queensland exhibit, and by the fact that other colonies were not represented at that most important annual show. They tried to do as much as possible in that way. They sent home wheat, maize, wools, and cognate stuff to keep the resources of the colony as much as possible before those who might possibly emigrate here with means at their hand. The great object was to attract those who were reared in the country and had some means, and who would come out of their own accord, and who, he was sure, would make excellent colonists. The artist had from time to time taken a number of pictures that were extremely interesting. He thought there was much in what the hon. member for Oxley had said—that they should set up a limelight lantern and exhibit the pictures in many of our schools. It would be an instructive and an inexpensive form of education. At present they were entering upon another undertaking—the preparation of a series of cinematograph views of agricultural operations on the Downs and in other parts of the colony. They would be extremely interesting to the British people, and, as the hon. member for Oxley suggested, it would be very interesting also to Brisbane children to see a reaper and binder at work on the Downs, or to see a cinematograph view of a threshing-machine. They might in that way be induced to look more kindly, and with greater interest, upon the country life—to leave the insufferable heat of the streets of the city for the purer air of the Downs.

Mr. ARMSTRONG was sure it would be satisfactory to every member representing an agricultural district to hear what the Agricultural Department were doing. Those who had fought for a separate department represented by a separate Minister in that Chamber were now getting the results of their work. They had a

Minister in this Chamber who had to justify the somewhat large expenditure upon the department, though he admitted it was an expenditure which would ultimately be repaid many times. He had been struck by the remarks of the hon. member for Oxley with respect to the expense of providing some new kinds of cane. He did not suppose there was an industry in Queensland that had received more assistance than the sugar-growing industry, but they did not grudge that, as they knew what the value of the industry was to the State. But on the other hand he thought the suggestion of the Minister that those chiefly concerned in the success of the experiments should bear some portion of the cost of them was a very reasonable one. He had been astonished to hear the hon. member for Oxley objecting to it. He rose particularly to refer to a question connected with dairying, an industry which was of great importance, and which had rapidly grown to its present importance. There was one factor likely to be detrimental to it, but one which could be easily overcome. Most of the suppliers of butter products were now small people dealing directly or indirectly with the factories established in the large centres of Warwick, Toowoomba, Ipswich, and Brisbane in the Southern portion of the colony. But the great difficulty they experienced in the testing of their products was preventing them from going more largely into the industry, because they could not get what they considered a fair test. There were people who were scrupulously honest, and others inclined to take any advantage they could, but if it were possible or the Agricultural Department to establish at the centres he mentioned an expert who, for a small fee, would test their products, and the samples could be sold to the factories on the test of that officer, a great deal of the present trouble would be removed. It would lead to confidence being established between the producer and the buyer. Before he sat down, he would ask whether the agricultural chemist, for whom provision was made in this vote, was the chemist settled at the Gatton College?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: If that was so, seeing that his services were given principally in the interests of that college, the question was whether his salary ought not to be charged against the college.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: With regard to the question of testing milk, that really should be a matter of co-operative effort on the part of the dairy farmers. At the Chino factory in California, where the farmers supplied 60,000 tons of beet annually, that beet was sold on analysis, and the farmers kept a check chemist in the laboratory to see it analysed. It would be a simple matter here to have the milk tested if the farmers would only agree, but they would not agree to put a checktester in to test their milk, which ought to be tested at the factory where the buyer received the cream.

Mr. DANIELS asked what travelling expenses were allowed the fruit expert?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It depends on the number of days he travels. The Public Service Board have a scale, and I think he is allowed 12s. 6d. a day. It is not over 15s.

Mr. DANIELS considered that the salary was high enough without allowing travelling expenses, because this officer did not have to travel a great deal. According to the Minister, he was practically managing a State orchard at Redland Bay. The salary of £500 a year for a tobacco expert seemed a large amount considering the small number of people engaged in the industry, outside of Chinamen. He would like

to know what that expert did, and where he travelled? The Minister had drawn a very pretty picture of State school children looking at the men working a threshing-machine and longing to be able to work the machine themselves; but the fact was that there was so much dust about that they could not see the men working the machine.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The dust does not show in the photograph.

Mr. DANIELS: He had worked a threshing-machine himself, and had made up his mind that he would never do so again if he could get anybody else to do it. Still, it was a very good thing to have those views, because they showed what machinery was necessary for farming in these days, and he considered that it should be the duty of the Agricultural Department to keep farmers posted up in the knowledge as to the best kinds of machinery to adopt. They had a regular army of experts, and he believed they all did very fair work, but the dairy experts, who instructed the people how to make butter and cheese, had been of more service than all the others, and they had been the worst paid. He should like to have some information as to the work done by the tobacco expert, as he had never heard of him travelling anywhere.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The tobacco expert had an excellent character among the farmers. He travelled among the growers of tobacco, and those who it was hoped would become growers, and showed them how to plant and how to cure tobacco—in fact, how to carry on the industry from one end to the other. It was a somewhat risky experiment, getting a first-class man from America, and paying him a first-class salary. It was initiated by his predecessor in office; but he believed the experiment would be justified. Tobacco cured under the instructions of the expert was now fetching 8d. per lb. in Brisbane.

Mr. ARMSTRONG hoped that before very many years had elapsed the system of co-operation would be in full operation in Queensland, and probably the trouble he had spoken of with regard to the dairying industry would then be overcome, but he should like to know what those small communities who had not the means of co-operating and did not understand the principle were to do in the meantime. The carrying out of the suggestion he had made would be a very inexpensive matter, and he hoped it would receive the consideration of the Government.

Mr. NEWELL: Some years ago a piece of land was set aside in the Barron Valley for an experimental farm, and selectors in the district had been looking forward for years to the establishment of that farm, but up to the present nothing had been done in that direction. A good deal of settlement had taken place there, and the district would grow almost anything that could be grown on the Darling Downs. He had gone in for experimenting in agriculture himself, but he had not the Queensland Government at his back, and he gave up the experiments. He had grown wheat there, and the Under Secretary for Agriculture, who visited the district when the wheat was turning yellow, said he had never seen anything like it—or better than it—on the Darling Downs. Professor Shelton had also visited the district, and he was so pleased with what he saw that he asked him to go in for other experiments with wheat. Accordingly, he planted some twenty-nine varieties, some of which were a success, but others were a failure. He thought the time had now arrived when the Department of Agriculture should direct their attention to the establishment of an experimental farm in the district. Every year for the last ten years there had been

exhibitions there, and he was sure that the agricultural products would compare very favourably with those in any outside shows in the South. Everything that grew on the Downs would grow there, and the climate was equal to anything in the South. In fact, he saw by to-day's paper that it was cooler there than at either Killarney or Stanthorpe. The land was equal to anything; the only objection that had ever been made to it was that it was too heavily timbered. He remembered the Under Secretary saying that this was land that they could take crop after crop off, whereas in a mining district they could only take away one crop of gold or silver and then the land was worthless. The rainfall was equal to that in any part of Queensland—in fact, better than in most parts of it. These facts should be made known to intending settlers, and he hoped that the Secretary for Agriculture would send experts, not only to lecture, but to remain there long enough to give the farmers some practical instruction. In regard to the experimental farm, the land had been set aside but was lying idle, and the people were wondering when "the farm" was going to be an accomplished fact. It would not be very long before a railway would be running in the district, and if its characteristics as to soil, climate, and rainfall were made generally known, not only would it attract settlers, but it would become a sanatorium to which Queenslanders and even people from the southern colonies would resort.

Mr. SMITH took exception to the suggestion of the Secretary for Agriculture, that he (Mr. Smith) only wanted an experimental farm in his district for the sake of having one. He took a broader view than that. It was rather a long distance from Kamerunga to Bowen, and there was a great difference in the capabilities and the requirements of the two districts; so that an experimental farm was absolutely necessary. He would also ask the Secretary for Agriculture to see if he could not remove the discrepancy which existed between the salaries of the Under Secretary and the fruit instructor, because it was not fair that the former should be receiving less than his subordinate, and a great deal less than other Under Secretaries. No other officer in the service was more worthy of an increase.

Mr. W. THORN: He wished to congratulate the Government upon the general run of this Estimate, and was very pleased to hear the comments of the Minister upon the work of the Under Secretary. It gave him great pleasure to hear that his claims would be taken into consideration next year, and he was only sorry that an increase could not be put upon the Supplementary Estimates this year. In regard to the instructor in fruit culture, if that gentleman did a little more practical work instead of indulging so much in theory it would be better for the colony. He believed he was starting practical work at Redland Bay, and had done a little near Toowoomba, which he considered a step in the right direction. That was the class of work all their experts should be at, as they could get any amount of theory in books upon agriculture. As the hon. member for Rockhampton North suggested, they should go round amongst the farmers and teach them how to plant, prune, and clean their trees. He noticed that Mr. Benson was getting £600 and £100 a year for travelling expenses, and he thought that was a rather high salary. With respect to the tobacco expert, he did not know that gentleman, but he knew that what had crippled the tobacco industry in the colony had been the excise duty imposed by the present Government. In his district there had been fourteen or fifteen farmers just getting a start in the industry in a way that would pay them, when

the excise duty was put on. If the Government would remove the excise duty and let the tobacco expert go round amongst the farmers and teach them how to cultivate and cure the leaf it would be a step in the right direction. He noticed that the dairy expert was getting £300 a year, which was rather a small salary compared with what others in the same line had got. The present principal of the Agricultural College was, when travelling as a dairy expert, the best of the experts they had got so far. Some time ago the Government promised assistance to the wheatgrowers, but he saw no provision for it on the Estimates.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Page 109 £10,000.

Mr. W. THORN was surprised to hear the Minister say £10,000 when he remembered that the sugar-planters of the colony had received about half a million of money. He would say of the wheat-farmers that they would always pay up their interest, which was more than could be said for the sugar farmers. He was pleased with the vote and hoped the department would go on flourishing, and he believed that the hon. gentleman in charge of it was doing all he could in the interests of the agriculturists of the colony. Some mention had been made of the great timber grown in the North and some members had said that good timber would grow on poor land. To his mind they would find that where they had good land there was good strong and long timber growing on it. The hon. member for Maryborough had dealt with a report of Professor Shelton which was very favourable to a great portion of his electorate, from Crow's Nest to Blackbut Range, and when the Secretary for Agriculture saw that land he would say there was nothing to surpass it in the colony.

Mr. BOLES had nothing to object to in the vote. They had made very fair progress so far as they had gone, but he wished to refer to the matter dealt with by the hon. member for North Rockhampton—the visits of the experts to the Central division. A few years ago, Professor Shelton made periodical visits to different parts of the colony, and he gave timely notice to the various centres he intended to visit. That gave the local people time to make necessary arrangements; they could take him round and show him the different parts under cultivation, and in that way the farmers got a certain amount of information. He thought the same practice should be followed in connection with the visits from other experts. He agreed with the hon. member for Auburn, that it was a pernicious thing to place an excise duty upon tobacco just as the industry was getting upon its legs in the colony. It was pointed out at the time that that was against the best interests of the colony, but the Treasurer then wanted some £15,000, and that was thought the best way of getting it. With regard to the experts, those gentlemen should give the associations interested notice of their coming, so that word could be sent to the agriculturists in the district, and provision could be made for driving them to different places, so that the people might glean as much information as possible.

Mr. KEOGH was sorry he was not able to accompany the Minister a few days ago to the college at Gatton, but he had read the speeches made on that occasion, and he thought one or two of the matters were a little far-fetched.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The college is the next vote.

Mr. KEOGH: He would reserve his remarks on the college till the next vote was proposed.

Mr. MAUGHAN was glad that the vote had been increased since last year. In view of the importance of the agricultural industry the department had been very much starved in the past, and it was about time that it was placed

on a proper footing. He would like to see the salaries of the chief clerk and the accountant increased a little, but he thought the experts were very well paid for the services they performed. He hoped the suggestion made by the hon. member for Woothakata and other Northern members with regard to the services of those experts would be carried into effect, and that a still larger amount would be required for the department next year, so long as the demands made were reasonable.

Mr. JACKSON : Two or three years ago he drew attention to the advisability of increasing the salary of the Under Secretary for Agriculture, and was glad to notice to-night that many other hon. members had followed his example in that respect. He was pleased to learn from the Minister that the Under Secretary would probably receive an increase next year.

Mr. STEWART asked whether the scale of fees for the analysis of soils was likely to be reduced ; and whether Rockhampton was likely to be made a port of entry under the Diseases in Plants Act ?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : The scale of fees probably would be reduced, although it would involve considerable expense, as there was a loss already on the charge of £2 2s. made for analyses. With regard to the other question, the board who regulated the matter of the Diseases in Plants Act had not recommended that any other ports than Brisbane and Cairns be declared ports of entry. No great hardship had arisen, as on account of the reciprocal arrangements with other colonies certificates from those colonies were accepted.

Mr. GLASSEY asked if any engagement had been entered into with Mr. Benson, the fruit expert, who he considered was overpaid ?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : No, there is no engagement of any sort.

Mr. GLASSEY hoped there would be no curtailment of discussion to-morrow if this vote was allowed to pass. He observed that the editor of the *Agricultural Journal* received only £200 a year. Did he draw anything for other duties ?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : £50 as secretary to the Gatton College.

Mr. GLASSEY noticed that there was a large increase in the vote, and doubtless hon. members would have something further to say on it to-morrow.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : It should be thoroughly understood that this vote, after three and a half hours' discussion, had been fully discussed, and that they were not going to discuss it again. Other votes would, of course, be subject to full discussion.

Mr. GLASSEY : Some hon. members might desire to say something on this particular vote, but their remarks would not be lengthy.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : We must settle this vote to-night.

Mr. GLASSEY : Hon. members and the officers of the House were tired after the late sitting, and it would not be wise to prolong the discussion ; but probably there might be an opportunity of saying a few words at greater length on some of the other items.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : What other items ?

Mr. GLASSEY : It was not necessary to go into details, but perhaps there were some items that wanted more full discussion.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed ; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to 11 o'clock.