

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER 1899**

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THURSDAY, 19 OCTOBER, 1899.

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

#### PETITIONS.

##### MOUNT MORGAN GAS AND LIGHT COMPANY BILL.

Mr. CALLAN (*Fitzroy*) presented a petition from the Mount Morgan Gas and Light Company, Limited, praying for leave to introduce a Bill.

Petition received.

##### RAILWAY EXTENSION—KILKIVAN TO NANANGO.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW (*Maryborough*) presented a petition from residents of Maryborough and surrounding districts, praying for the extension of the railway from Kilkivan to Nanango.

Petition read and received.

Mr. KENT (*Burnett*) presented a petition from 208 electors of the Burnett district, of similar purport and prayer.

Petition read and received.

#### QUESTION.

##### AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE, GATTON.

Mr. JACKSON (*Kennedy*) asked the Secretary for Agriculture—

What is the total amount spent to date on the Gatton Agricultural College, including land, buildings, and equipment?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. V. Chataway, *Mackay*) replied—

Queensland Agricultural College expenditure to 30th September, 1899:—Land, £6,133 10s.; buildings, £213,479 9s. 7d.; equipment, £5,285 11s. 6d.; total, £218,898 11s. 1d.

Mr. JACKSON: If you would give us a mining school now we would be satisfied.

#### RELIEF FOR THE AGED POOR.

##### RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

On the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of the adjourned debate on Mr. Jackson's motion—

1. That the present system of relief for the aged poor is capable of much improvement, inasmuch as many deserving aged poor cannot, or will not, avail themselves of the assistance afforded by asylums, and others only accept such help by stern compulsion.

2. That the Government should introduce legislation providing for a system of old age pensions, and thus by Act of Parliament make provision for the deserving aged poor passing their last years in the society of their friends, and free from the restraints and monotony of asylum life—

Mr. DUNSFORD (*Charters Towers*) said: I suppose that in considering this question hon. members will not assume so much of that martial air as has been displayed in this House during the last day or two. It is a somewhat remarkable fact that considering this matter is of such vast importance to the whole population of Queensland, and I suppose to the civilised world, more public interest is not taken in it than is being shown at the present time. During the last few days we have had a discussion on the means to take life away, and the galleries have been crowded, and the public have taken a very great interest in the subject; but very little interest is taken in this proposal to make the end of life happier and more comfortable to old people than it has been hitherto.

We must remember that some of us have already grown old, and that others are growing old, as is also every unit of the public, so that this question is of vast importance to the whole community. As I have said, in considering this matter we are not likely to have so much of that martial spirit as has been displayed lately; we want more of the "milk of human kindness" and less of the martial spirit in discussing this subject. It is unfortunate that some little time has elapsed since the hon. member for Kennedy introduced this motion, and since his speech was replied to by the Premier, because under such circumstances the matter becomes disconnected, and we lose the thread of the speeches. There is nothing like following up a subject when the matter is fresh in our minds, and we are at a disadvantage in having to take up this discussion after such a lapse of time. However, it will be remembered that the hon. member for Kennedy in introducing the motion did not make a very long speech, but presented in a condensed form arguments which impressed the House at the time. I know they impressed me, and I believe they impressed hon. members on the Government benches. The Premier replied to those arguments, and showed to some extent that he sympathised with the motion, but said that he did not think it was desirable or probable that legislation would be introduced in the near future dealing with the matter. The motion is divided into two parts. The first part points out that our present system for the relief of the aged poor is not what it should be, that it is capable of much improvement, and that the aged poor cannot or will not avail themselves of the assistance offered at Dunwich, and that it is only when they are forced by stern compulsion that they will avail themselves of that institution. In short, it points out the existence of an evil, and the second part of the motion points out the remedy for that evil. The hon. member for Kennedy suggests that immediate legislation in a certain direction is the remedy for that evil. I suppose it will be agreed by hon. members on both sides of the House that there is much truth in the first part of the motion—that the provisions at present made in Queensland for the relief of the aged poor are not what they should be, and that they are capable of very much improvement. Those who have mixed with the pioneer class in Queensland, who have borne the brunt and heat of the battle in the early days, and who understand their feelings and aspirations, will know that those people do not care about being imprisoned—because that is what it means—at Dunwich, if they can by any possible means retain their liberty, and at the same time obtain sufficient of the necessities of life. Men whose business takes

them to the unsettled portions of the colony, either to the outlying goldfields or to the Western parts of the colony, continually come across that class of men, some of whom are carrying their swags and eking out a poor existence in isolated spots, and who do that in preference to burying themselves at Dunwich. I do not know why they dread Dunwich so much. The idea of going there is hateful to them, but we find that those who have become accustomed to the place do not seem to dread it so much as those who have never been there. Still, I can quite understand that life down there is not what it should be, and I believe that there is a desire on the part of aged persons to get away from the place. I do not think they are treated quite so well as they should be down there, but even if they are very well treated, there is a desire on the part of inmates to get away from the place, because the life there becomes very monotonous. There they are on an island, bounded on one side by a leper station, and on another by a sandbank and a lighthouse, and they are surrounded by the ocean. They are to all intents and purposes imprisoned for a stated period, and even if they could get away to the towns, they have not the necessary means of obtaining a livelihood, so that owing to their environments and circumstances they are compelled to remain there isolated. Their liberty is taken away from them to a certain extent, for they have not that liberty and means of recreation that are necessary to aged persons, that are in fact more necessary to aged persons than to young people who have health and vigour to carry them through. Apart from Dunwich altogether, there are a large number of people who do not care to leave the locality in which they have been accustomed to earn their livelihood. They may have no relations in the colony, but in the districts in which they have earned their living they have friends, and they would sooner put up with some inconvenience and even with semi-starvation there than go to Dunwich, when it means being removed from their friends and imprisoned, as they will consider it, in Dunwich. Another point is that aged persons down there, as I understand, have to mix with incurable persons cast out of consumptive and other hospitals. Aged persons who have no physical infirmities beyond that of old age, we can well understand may dread going down there to mix with these incurables. The State has done a great deal for these people, and is continually improving upon present methods, and that in itself shows that the State cannot afford to stand still and remain satisfied with what is being done at the present time. It is only within the last year or two that the Government has made any attempt at all to give small pensions to those who remain outside Dunwich. In some districts now quite a number are receiving their 5s. a week—in Charters Towers I know that a number are in receipt of it. There, fortunately, a number of ladies have banded together in the benevolent society, and are doing very good work indeed, and collect from the public of Charters Towers very large sums of money. Mr. Plant and other leading citizens, with the ladies of the society, have built cottages for the use of aged persons in the district. They have aids and opportunities there such as are not to be found I think in many other districts in Queensland, and I do not know that there is any other district in Queensland where the matter has been taken up to such an extent as to have cottages and homes built for the old-aged. The committee of the Benevolent Society of Charters Towers deserve very great credit indeed for the manner in which they have taken their work in hand. I think it was only this year they claimed

the 5s. per week for the old-aged people, and, thanks to the Home Secretary, they are now in receipt of that aid. But I think the 5s. per week is hardly sufficient in the North of Queensland when it is considered that the purchasing power of the money is small there as compared with other parts of the colony. It was one of the suggestions of the Committee of Inquiry in Great Britain that aged persons should receive an amount varying from 5s. to 7s. per week.

Mr. JACKSON: Cardinal Vaughan recommended 10s.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I believe he did, and, in my opinion 10s. a week is little enough in any portion of the British Empire. The amount the committee proposed to give varied from 5s. to 7s., and what I wanted to point out is that they took into consideration the purchasing power of the money in different districts. In some localities where rents and necessaries were high 7s. was recommended, and in country districts where rents were lower and provisions might be obtained at less cost a lower amount was to be paid. I point out also that in Denmark the same lines have been followed, a larger amount being given in Copenhagen than in the country districts. It is evident that it has become customary in Europe to take into consideration the purchasing power of the money. If that is taken into consideration it will be admitted that in the Northern, Western, and outlying portions of the colony, where the cost of provisions is comparatively high, 5s. a week is not sufficient, the Government could without legislation increase the amount in such districts to 10s. a week. Even in the South I think 10s. a week would not be too much to pay to these old-aged persons. The second part of the resolution expresses a desire that legislation should be introduced—I suppose this session is meant—to provide for a system of old age pensions, to make provision for the deserving aged poor passing their last years in the society of their friends, and free from the restraints and monotony of asylum life. That, in my opinion, is much to be desired, and I do not think we should postpone the matter by referring it to a Royal Commission. Royal Commissions seem to be the order of the day, and no doubt in some cases they do much good, but in this matter we have before us the results of the labours of other colonies where Royal Commissions have been appointed, and also the labours in Great Britain and in European countries where they have not only inquired fully into the matter by Royal Commissions, but have in some cases proposed practical legislation to meet the difficulty. Having this experience before us, I think we might wisely dispense with a Royal Commission; and if we once admit that the present system is not all it should be and it could be improved we should hurry up and improve it, and that can best be done by an Act of Parliament. The Premier thinks the time for that is not opportune, there is a considerable amount of business of importance to be done this session, and time will not permit of legislation being introduced on this subject. I think the hon. gentleman rather leans to the idea that further inquiry is necessary, but though that may be desirable from the hon. gentleman's point of view, I do not think it is necessary. It is so generally admitted now that old age pensions should be provided, that the time is passed for inquiry, and there is no necessity to make further converts to the proposal. The question really now is, How are we to provide the means for this worthy end? That is the crux of the whole question—Where are the means to be obtained?

Mr. STEWART: From the taxpayers, where we get the money to shoot the Boers.

Mr. DUNS福德: When we want funds for any purpose somebody must provide those funds, and if the old-aged are to be given

[4 p.m.] this right, or this privilege, it is necessary first that the money shall be paid by someone. We all agree to that. But I think it is a very unwise and foolish thing to say that because it will cost something we should therefore postpone the matter. Everything in this world that is worth having costs something. When we went in for our system of education, we did not postpone it because it would cost something. Of course it would cost something; but we came to the conclusion that it would cost more to allow our children to remain in ignorance. When we establish hospitals, we know that they will cost something; but we know that it would cost far more to allow the human family to suffer, and provide nothing by which their sufferings can be alleviated. And so it is with this. Of course it will cost something, but it will cost far more to allow our aged poor to go on living under the present system. The chief troubles of the labouring classes arise from the fact that they have the fear of the future before them. They cannot see their way clear to provide anything for their old age, or for those dependent upon them. They are continually troubled with this care which is eating out the very souls of the people. Therefore, I say, even if we do not view it from a pounds, shillings, and pence point of view, we are absolutely allowing these people to lose something by sliding along as they are now doing when we might see that their few remaining years were made peaceful and free from care. I do not know that there is anything so worthy of the immediate attention of Parliament as this matter—making the last few remaining years of the old people worth living. Now to come to the practical point of the matter. We must remember that we have an object lesson in New Zealand. They have already made an attempt by means of legislation to make provision for the aged poor, and have given them pensions to the extent of 7s. 6d. a week.

Mr. DAWSON: Five shillings.

Mr. DUNS福德: I think it is 7s. 6d. I believe in Victoria the measure which the Premier has introduced provides for the payment of pensions of £18 a year, and the sum varies from 5s. to 7s. 6d. per week. In Great Britain the sum proposed to be given varies from 5s. to 7s. a week, and that is the recommendation of the Royal Commission which inquired into the subject. In Denmark I believe the sum paid amounts to from 3s. 4d. to 6s. a week according to the district in which the persons live and the purchasing power of money. I do not think we should ask too much, if we asked for old age pensions to be universal, although if we introduce the subject we cannot expect to get it into working order all at once. We must introduce the system in a tentative form. All legislation of that sort must necessarily be subject to improvement; but still, I think, we might immediately find sufficient funds to provide for the payment of pensions of 7s. a week, or even of 10s. a week, to old persons throughout Queensland. That may and, I think, should be done. Of course, it is a matter of ways and means. We might possibly obtain the revenue in some way from the drink system, from a monopoly of the manufacture of drink or tobacco.

Mr. STEWART: A dynamite monopoly.

Mr. DUNS福德: Well, I do not know that that would be wise. I think the mining industry is pretty well taxed as it is, and if a dynamite monopoly means higher prices for explosives that would not tend to the advancement of the industry. I think the means might be obtained

from some monopoly of manufacture, or by a tax on wealth. There is plenty of room for the taxation of incomes.

Mr. DAWSON: We might put a tax on the Premier's un-deemed pledges.

Mr. DUNS福德: I do not think we should get fat upon that. However, I do not think we can afford to joke on this matter. It has been said by the Royal Commission in Great Britain that the system of old age pensions may to some extent raise rents, and therefore be a source of profit to the landlord. Well, that may be so, but if it increases rents there would be all the more justification for putting a tax on incomes.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Have you got that report of the Royal Commission?

Mr. DUNS福德: No; but I was reading a digest of it in *Reynolds's*, in which it was pointed out that if rents were raised, landlords would indirectly benefit. If that were so, I think we would be justified in demanding a little of the profit which they receive.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Can you explain the principle?

Mr. KERR: Life is too short.

Mr. DUNS福德: We have no time now to go into the question of ways and means. There are quite a number of means, and I am sure if hon. members on this side occupied the Treasury benches they would look upon it as their first duty to find the ways and means for such a good purpose as this. When the Government want to find money for other purposes they very rightly find it by increased taxation. If they want £50,000 for war purposes they find it. Very rightly, too. I do not blame them, and I think they should have no difficulty in finding the necessary amount of money for maintaining the aged poor. We are told that the poor are always with us. Whether that is so or not, the aged always are with us, and, unfortunately, a large proportion of the aged are poor; and, as the hon. member for Kennedy has pointed out, the earning period of a working man's life has been shortened by the introduction, I suppose, of labour-saving machinery, electricity, steam, and all the inventions and discoveries that are gradually taking away from him many of the opportunities which he had previously of working up till a very old age.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The duration of life is increasing.

Mr. DUNS福德: While the duration of life may be increasing, the earning period of life is decreasing. If that is the fact, there is a longer period during which he ceases to earn anything, showing, I suppose, that there is a longer period necessary, either for the State or the individual, to make preparation for. Going up the coast recently with another member of this House, we were talking to some old people engaged in the maritime business. One was an old captain. In fact, both were captains, and one, at the time, was acting as a pilot, and was slightly inclined to be grey. They pointed out that even on this coast, speaking generally, a man engaged in the seafaring business, no matter how capable he is, once he starts to get grey his opportunity for earning his living is lessened. They pointed out that there is an increasing demand for hair dye in our days—that it is becoming quite the custom amongst old men to dye their hair, not for the sake of their appearance, or looking young, or putting on any style, but because it is absolutely necessary to enable them to earn their daily bread that their hair should be red, or black, or any colour but grey. Talk about grey hairs being honourable.

Mr. DAWSON: How about the Premier's hair?

Mr. DUNS福德: This is a fact—that the young men, with a black beard and a curly black moustache, whether in the mining or any

other industry, are better able to obtain a livelihood and more in demand than the aged man. We know, as a matter of fact, that quite a large number of men—the majority of men—even when their hair turns grey are quite able to do service in whatever industry they may be engaged. In fact, when we consider that they have greater experience than young men, one would think they would be in greater demand, but that is not so. Whereas at one time men had individual masters, nowadays the general run of employers are not individuals, but joint-stock companies and syndicates, and they have no real sympathy with their employees. It is not their duty to take care of their employees at all. They use them. It seems to be nobody's fault. I do not blame the people for this. It just shows the tendency of the age. There is a board of directors and a manager, and the manager is told he must get as much as he can out of whatever it is. If it is a mine, he is told he must get a dividend, and, naturally, that man is going to employ those men whom he thinks will do a large amount of labour. He must do it in order to produce the dividend. Therefore, unfortunately, there is not that kind interest taken in the workman, or that amount of sympathy shown in him nowadays, as there was formerly, when an employer felt it was his duty to look after and treat his employee well. Then, again, we know that machinery has a tendency to replace workmen. I notice that the Premier of Victoria, Sir George Turner, also remarks this. For the information of hon. members opposite who may disagree with my statement that machinery has anything to do with it, or that the employers have anything to do with it, I will quote Sir George Turner. I am quoting from *Hansard* of the 22nd of August last. Speaking on the second reading of the Victorian Old Age Pensions Bill, Sir George Turner said—

No doubt there are many employers who do their duty to their old servants and keep them years in their service, but we must remember that at the present time many of our largest businesses are no longer in the hands of private individuals, but belong to companies, the directors and shareholders of which cannot be expected to have that personal sympathy with their employees that masters under the old system might have had.

I think that is a fact. Then, again, speaking on the effect of labour-saving machinery, he said—

In addition to that, the use of fast-working machinery has necessarily, to a great extent, reduced the amount of employment for workers.

There is a statement in which probably the Secretary for Lands will not altogether agree.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not think you scarcely agree with it yourself.

MR. DUNSFORD: Of course the hon. gentleman will show his reasons for not agreeing with that statement. At any rate, the remarks are worthy of consideration because Sir George Turner is not at all a socialist. He is an individualist, the same as the hon. member. Still, these are his impressions and what he said in the Victorian House on these questions. When the Premier was replying to the hon. member for Kennedy he said, among other things—

If people will not, or are too proud, to accept the care of the State in its charitable institutions, such as Dunwich, relief is given to an extent that will enable them to maintain a respectable appearance outside.

One would think that the Premier looks upon the payment of 5s. a week as quite sufficient for a man to keep up a respectable appearance as well as obtain the necessities of life, but on calm consideration I think he must agree that it is impossible for any man or woman to exist and keep up a respectable appearance without they have some other means of supplementing their income. That income in itself is not sufficient. Here in a city

they have to pay rent. How can they pay rent, and live, and buy clothes on 5s. a week? I think the Premier must admit he made a mistake in uttering those words. At any rate, I am not satisfied that they can keep up a respectable appearance on such a sum. While I am not satisfied with the amount, I give the Government and the Home Secretary credit for certainly going a long way further than was formerly done in meeting the needs of these destitute aged. I know of many cases where the payment of 5s. a week has done a great deal of good by permitting individuals to remain with their families and their friends, still I think the Government might even without legislation go a little further than that, and increase the amount to something like 7s. 6d. a week, which will be found small enough in any part of Queensland. The Premier said he did not think "anyone should be allowed to be absolutely destitute, at the same time we should not encourage a certain class of men to live on the bounty of the State without any exertion on their part to provide for their declining years," and the hon. member for Bundaberg, Mr. Glassey, interjected: "That applies also to the rich as well as to the poor." I think it very truly does apply to them. We know that a number of comparatively rich persons are in receipt of pensions from the Government, and I do not say they should be repudiated, but I say that if you can justly call upon the taxpayers to provide pensions for those aged persons, many of whom are making very little exertion on their own behalf at the present time—

THE HOME SECRETARY: But who generally pay for those pensions out of their own salaries.

MR. GLASSEY: Nothing of the sort. The ex-Commissioner of Police gets a pension of £14 a week.

THE HOME SECRETARY: I did not say all.

MR. GLASSEY: It is a positive scandal.

MR. DUNSFORD: I only want to point out that the large majority of the aged poor do make some exertion on their own behalf; but of course we have to make some allowance for those who get past the age of sixty or sixty-five, because the incentive to labour in their case has been removed. Perhaps they are physically incapable—very often they are mentally and physically incapable—of making any great amount of exertion; but it is unfortunately too true that whilst a large number of those persons are unable to earn much money to assist themselves, we often find them making very great exertions indeed in the Western country, and even in the sugar and mining districts. We unfortunately see men bent almost double with age and care carrying their swags, thus showing that they are capable of very great exertion indeed, because there is nothing in my estimation so wearying and requiring so much exertion as carrying a swag in the tropical parts of Queensland.

MR. DAWSON: The Secretary for Lands knows all about that.

MR. DUNSFORD: I suppose the hon. gentleman must have seen aged persons in different parts of the colony "humping their drums," or, as it is called in some parts, "waltzing Matilda." It is not a nice kind of a waltz for the old people to be engaged in, and they do not do it to the tune of any music but their own weary footsteps. The question arises whether this State assistance does prevent thrift or remove the incentive to make provision for old age. I do not think so, if it was once understood that a man received it not as a charity but as a right, and if it was universal—because I believe we should ultimately have a universal system under which everybody would receive as a

right from the State a certain amount of assistance on arriving at a certain age; but I qualify that by saying that in initiating a system we could not expect anything like that. I do not think the payment to individuals as a right will take away the incentive to exertion on their part, I believe it will add to it. When once a man gets a nest-egg—when once he has saved a small sum, he does his level best to add to it. Once you make the future appear less hopeless, and make matters look a bit bright for a man, he is very willing to make further exertion on his own behalf. I think that will be generally admitted. When we find so many aged persons demanding assistance, it is nonsense to give them nice lectures on thrift. I do not think that will satisfy them. Lectures on thrift are very good in their way, but when persons are aged and in poverty that is not the time to inflict lectures on them. If lectures on thrift do any good it can only be when a person is in full possession of all his mental and physical faculties and is a comparatively young man. I do not think the Premier or the Government need fear that a man is going to hurry up and get old and poor because he is likely to get 5s. or 7s. 6d. a week as a pension—I think he is going to delay getting old and poor as long as he can. I do not think the Premier need fear that at all, though the fact remains that a large number of poor people will not avail themselves—even if pensions are offered—of assistance if it comes from the State in the shape of charity. It must come as a matter of right, as a recognition of the labours they have undergone for the State in the past, as a reward for past exertions. We must look upon them as soldiers of industry, and if we give them as a right that which is now doled out to them as a charity, I believe we will not only not remove the incentive to exertion, but will make better citizens of those people in every way. Those poor men who receive this allowance as a right can be depended on to do the best they can for themselves. Of course, when I speak of the men I include women as well. I believe that legally the term “man” includes “woman.”

Mr. Dawson: “Man embraceth woman.”

Mr. DUNSFORD: I believe that the masculine embraces the feminine, and very properly so too. I do not think it is necessary for me to say much more, but I will just say this: The proposal in Great Britain is to cost, I believe, something like £10,000,000 a year. That is a large sum, but, of course, there is a large population, and the amount is only a drop in the ocean considering such a large population. I think the amount estimated by the hon. member for Kennedy is £80,000 a year.

Mr. JACKSON: I said it would take from £60,000 to £80,000 to initiate the system.

Mr. DUNSFORD: I hardly think that will meet the necessary expenditure; [4.30 p.m.] but whether it does or not, whatever amount is necessary should be found on the same basis as New Zealand. £150,000 is required there, and I think it is the same in Victoria. The basis of pay in New Zealand and in Victoria is 7s. a week; in Great Britain the pay ranges from 5s. to 7s. a week. When we consider the purchasing power of Great Britain compared to that of Queensland, we cannot say that this amount is very small. I have not much more to say on the matter, as there is a lot of private members' business on the paper, but still I think we should give full consideration to the question. I hope the Premier will make no delay, and that there will be no necessity for a Royal Commission. The question of the desirableness of introducing old age pensions has been pretty well thrashed out. The only question now is that of ways and means,

and that is a matter for the Cabinet. The Government should put their heads together and provide the necessary amount, whatever it is, this session, if possible.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*): I think the motion which the hon. member for Kennedy has introduced now is very similar to the one he introduced last session, and then I expressed my opinion that this was one of the most interesting subjects that it was possible for any statesman to approach. Certainly, it is a matter which will loom up in the near future to be grappled with, not so much on its intrinsic merits, as on the fact that there are rival schemes in different parts of the civilised world, not excluding Great Britain's scheme in this category. Some of these colonies have adopted this scheme as a means of “tickling the ears of the groundlings” for political support.

Mr. DIBLEY: You might say the same thing about any other measure of reform.

The HOME SECRETARY: I cannot bear the hon. member's interjection. As I said last session, this question had already received a considerable amount of attention in an elementary way in this colony, and I wish to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that this colony was really the first in Australia to endeavour to grapple with the question in a practical way. Other colonies, and especially New Zealand, however, in dealing with this question, have gone far beyond the stage in the matter that we have arrived at. It may be said that New Zealand is setting us an example, but I will say that New Zealand is by no means out of its difficulties with regard to this very question. There are difficulties cropping up there from day to day, as the official reports will show, which will have to be dealt with, and probably a very large expenditure will become necessary to grapple with these matters. One hon. member says that the amount in New Zealand is 7s. a week. I have not the New Zealand Act in my hands, but I think there must be some modification of that.

Mr. DUNSFORD: No.

The HOME SECRETARY: I think something has been omitted. The hon. member said the amount to be paid was 1s. a day there. That would amount to £17 2s., and that is the average amount received in New Zealand.

Mr. JACKSON: Some of them don't get £18. It depends on the amount of their private income.

The HOME SECRETARY: The New Zealand Act came into force on the 1st November, 1898, and during the first five months that that Act was in force that colony became committed to an expenditure of £130,000.

Mr. JACKSON: The obligations were all in then.

The HOME SECRETARY: They might have been in, but they had not all been dealt with. At all events, up to the 31st March the liability of New Zealand in this connection was £130,000 a year. I have said that there are other difficulties surrounding this question there, and one most important matter that that colony has omitted to grapple with, and which they will find it necessary to grapple with, is this: How far the relatives of these destitute poor, whom we under our law make responsible for their aged relatives, should be made to contribute to the support of these pensioners, and so relieve the State in some degree from the large amount it has now to pay. If we in Queensland had plunged into a scheme of this sort, as New Zealand has done, we would find ourselves confronted with these and other difficulties; and if New Zealand can solve these problems that

colony will be doing a great service to us and to many other communities, for it is really an experiment on the part of that colony.

Mr. JACKSON: Is not that a matter of detail? Some colonies may not think it desirable to hold relatives responsible.

The HOME SECRETARY: Undoubtedly it is desirable, but it all depends on what sort of a scheme you are dealing with. We have not got the elaborate scheme of the last Royal Commission in Great Britain—at any rate I have not yet obtained a copy of that scheme. Other hon. members may have it. I have only very condensed notes on it.

Mr. JACKSON: A synopsis of it appeared in *Reynolds's*.

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, but that was not official, and it may not be correct. There are many difficulties in this matter, such as have arisen in New Zealand, and if that colony is successful in solving them they will be doing a great service to us and other countries. I do not think we can lose anything by waiting and seeing how these difficulties are grappled with by other communities. All the colonies have taken their share in experimental legislation with regard to the ballot and in other ways, and some of the schemes in Australia have been adopted by the old country, and possibly by other countries. I think it is only fair that we should rest on our oars for a time and see what other communities are going to do in the way of experimental legislation. By so doing I don't think we shall lose much time, and to show that it is not absolutely necessary to have such a scheme as is in force in New Zealand, I will give this information to hon. members as to what we are doing in Queensland in this respect. At present there are over 350 persons, mostly, if not all, over the age of sixty-five, in receipt of a pension for life of 5s. per week. And that number is increasing every day as the different districts become aware of the provision which is made. And the amount for which we are now responsible, and which we are spending, is at the rate of about £5,000 a year; and I do not anticipate that this time next year it will be very much less than £8,000 or £9,000 a year. When one realises what these figures mean, one must see that, in our small way, and without legislation, by a very simple process, we are doing a very great deal towards meeting the demand which is being sought to be brought about by legislation in other parts of the world for old age pensions.

Mr. JACKSON: Have you not reduced the subsidies to the benevolent societies?

The HOME SECRETARY: No; they are exactly the same. We have taken a number of the permanent pensioners who were receiving aid from the benevolent societies under the Government, and they now are really only called upon to deal with cases of immediate and urgent distress. If a case becomes chronic it is quite possible for the society to make a representation to the Department of the Home Secretary, and to obtain 5s. a week. The question has been raised as to whether 5s. a week is enough or not. Possibly as our experience grows it will be found desirable to increase that amount. I hesitate to express an opinion as to that until the matter has been thoroughly considered; but the principle we have gone upon up to the present time is that we pay by way of allowance, or old age pensions, or pensions without old age as the cause, as the case may be, in lieu of going to Dunwich, as much as, or possibly a shade more, than it costs to maintain an individual in Dunwich.

Mr. JACKSON: The cost at Dunwich is 5s. a week, and that does not allow for interest on capital invested in buildings, and so on.

The HOME SECRETARY: If you do not send an individual to Dunwich, you cannot very well make that a charge. But you will always want Dunwich, whether you have old age pensions or not. Some hon. members have declined to admit that, but I tell them there are certain persons whom it will be only safe to give assistance to when they are under control; that is to say, persons who have no control over themselves. Cases of that kind are constantly coming before me, and the reports of the officer charged with making inquiries are very interesting. Anyone reading those reports would see that it was quite impossible to entrust some of those persons with 5s. a week to do just as they liked with. They would go to the first public-house, spend every penny, and starve for the rest of the week.

Mr. JACKSON: We all admit that.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am only combating the statement which has been seriously put forward in this Chamber that with a complete system of old age pensions we could do away with Dunwich. The hon. member who last spoke inferentially implied that Dunwich was a place which was a blot upon our system, and ought to be done away with. I say that, as far as I am aware, there is no place in Australia like Dunwich; there is no institution which is equal to Dunwich in the whole of Australia as far as I know, where the same kind treatment is meted out to those who have spent their best days in building up our community, and who are certainly entitled to the respect, whatever their sphere of life may have been, which is due to old age. And here comes in the question as to whether it is not desirable to have another institution such as Dunwich in the North. I do not think it is necessary at present to consider the question of one for the Central district, because when a man is sent from Clermont, or Springsure, or Barcaldine, or it may be 200 or 300 miles away from the railway line, it does not matter very much whether he is at Dunwich or at Fitzroy Island or somewhere else where they are isolated if they have to leave their homes. They may as well go to some distance within reasonable limits. But with regard to the North there is no necessity to bring those people down here. There are places there, such as Townsville and Charters Towers, where large populations are congregated, and if an institution such as Dunwich were established at or near Townsville it would be possible for the people located there to receive visits from their friends, which would be a source of great solace and joy to them, and also to their relations, who would be able to see them occasionally, as is done here. I am sure nobody begrudges the use the Government steamers are put to in conveying as often as possible persons who desire to visit or entertain the inmates at Dunwich. It keeps them in touch with persons who are in the stream of our national and social life. I think myself that the time has come when it is desirable that an institution such as Dunwich should be established at or about Townsville. With federation, which, I suppose, we may look upon as almost realised, we shall no doubt to get what the representatives of this colony at the Federal Council have been endeavouring to get for some time—namely, federal quarantine. In that case there would probably be no further need for quarantine purposes of the buildings on Magnetic Island, which, in my opinion, would make a most admirable site for a Northern Dunwich. In order that hon. members interested in the North may not run away with the idea that the matter has been overlooked, I wish to mention the fact that I have my eye on those buildings as a place which I think will be available for this purpose in the near future. It is

quite possible that such an institution as is maintained at Dunwich would be a little more costly per head than would Dunwich itself; but that is a matter which can only be ascertained from experience. Taking the basis which we have adopted with regard to the whole colony, as deduced from the cost per head at Dunwich, it would, perhaps, be necessary in the Northern portion of the colony, if the cost per head were greater than here, to make a differential allowance with regard to the North. But, until we have such an institution, and are able to ascertain whether the cost per head would be greater there than here, it is impossible to make any such differentiation.

Mr. JACKSON: The Government have adopted such a differential system in regard to Civil servants now with respect to allowances for extra cost of living.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know that; but, in order to establish such a scheme, we should have to alter the basis upon which the allowances is now made—that is, the cost in Dunwich. I do not say that is the only possible basis. Possibly, it may be desirable in the future to modify that, but that is one of those matters which we can only learn by experience. We are learning by experience, and we are, in an unostentatious way—and have been for some years—establishing a complete system of old age pensions by what might be called a system of evolution; and, instead of plunging, as New Zealand did, into a ready-made scheme, which may or may not have to be seriously modified—and, perhaps, there may have to be repudiation over it yet, in order to bring it into line with what it ought to be; instead of doing that, we are gradually creeping on, feeling our way, in this great reform.

Mr. HIGGS: Yours is a system of Government patronage.

The HOME SECRETARY: What is the other but a system of Government patronage? I do not think the hon. member, when he uses that argument, has considered this question in all its bearings. I do not think he can even have read the debate which took place on this question last year, because he must see that, unless you are going to make it a compulsory contribution all round by a tax, or by some other way, and also to make it that every man and woman—no matter what or who they may be—shall be entitled to a pension, you have to discriminate. And who is going to discriminate? The moment you begin to discriminate, you must have some discriminator. Up to the present moment I have not been able to find anyone—I say it with all humility—who is better able to perform that discrimination than myself. I do not hesitate to say that, because I feel that I can confidently say that I have exercised my powers of discrimination as the Minister administering the department, without the slightest tinge of political bias whatever.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. JENKINSON: We are perfectly satisfied of that.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is none in this community who can say otherwise. I have an inner consciousness that that is so. Although this entails an enormous amount of work on myself—I am never free from arrears of these applications, and it takes a great deal of time wading through all the report—like the poor, they are always with us—still it is necessary to discriminate, and I have felt that I should not be doing my duty as the Minister responsible for this system, if I did not take upon myself the trouble of wading through these things myself in order to see that every deserving person who applies for assistance gets it, and that those who

are not deserving, or who have relatives who are able to support them and will not, do not get it. Therefore it is necessary to discriminate. Hon. members will see that provision is made on the Estimates for the salary of an inspector of charitable institutions. I hope that that officer, if he is appointed, will be able to relieve the Home Secretary of a great deal of the personal supervision of this business. He should necessarily be a man of high character. I think he should be a medical man, in order that he might conduct his own examinations, and thereby save the delay which is caused by having to send—as is done in many instances—applicants to be cross-examined by this person as to his or her means, relatives, and so on, and then have to be sent to somebody else for medical examination as to whether he or she is capable of earning his or her own living. As long as you have to discriminate, it will be a matter for State patronage. You cannot get away from it, unless, of course, you throw it on the local authorities, and give them powers of local taxation. That is a scheme which has been put forward in the old country. In fact I am not sure that it was not embodied in the Bill which was introduced quite recently in the House of Commons.

Mr. JACKSON: It was suggested by the last select committee that the local authorities should bear half the expense.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is a very grave objection to that. I mention this to show hon. members that there are objections to whatever scheme is put forward.

Mr. JACKSON: That scheme might work well in England and not work well here.

The HOME SECRETARY: It might work better here in some respects than it would work in England. That is with regard to the pecuniary phase, but it is the pecuniary phase which is so difficult to work out. Such a scheme would assume that all local authorities were on a level with regard to the pauperism within them. But that is not so. It might happen that a very poor locality was chock full of paupers, thereby throwing upon that local authority a far greater burden than was imposed upon a suburban locality in which there were none but fine villa residences, and where there was little or no pauperism. Take the East and West Ends of London, for instance. Take any large city in Australia, and you will find exactly the same state of things. There are certain localities where there is plenty of poverty; there are others where there is little or no poverty to be found. If you make it a charge upon the local rates, and bring it under the jurisdiction of local authorities, you at once run foul of a very serious difficulty; and I am quite sure, if we adopted such a system, we would very soon have to alter it.

Mr. JACKSON: The New Zealand scheme is the best—it all comes out of the consolidated revenue.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member is perfectly correct. I believe that is the only practicable way to do it. But, notwithstanding that, I believe there are difficulties which they are meeting with, and which we, if we adopted their scheme as it stands, would also have to grapple with and surmount. By the method we have adopted we have none of those difficulties. We have not made it a complete old age pension scheme, but it may develop, with experience, into that. It is better, in some respects, than an old age pension scheme, because it takes into consideration the cases of those who, although they may not have reached the age of sixty-five years, are yet debarred by some unfortunate circumstance—disease, accident, deformity, or what not—from earning their own living;



or those who are able to earn their own living in a small way, but have large families dependent upon them, such as poor widows whom it is

absolutely necessary to assist if [5 p.m.] their children are to be properly cared for and brought up. A Bill was introduced in the House of Commons the other day which, like our own scheme, was not an ambitious one. It proposed to do something towards this end, but did not purport to be a complete provision for old age pensions. It took under its wing, so to speak, friendly societies, and in that respect was condemned by Mr. Chamberlain, who has made this question peculiarly his own, and some remarkable statistics were mentioned. Certain friendly societies had adopted old age pension schemes, and to show how little those schemes are approved of where contributions are required over a long series of years for the purpose of securing annuities, it was pointed out that out of 800,000 members in the Manchester Unity Order of Oddfellows, there were only eighteen members who had taken advantage of the old age pension scheme, and out of 720,000 members in the Order of Foresters, there were only three who had taken advantage of that scheme.

Mr. JACKSON: Does that not show that they have enough to do to make provision for sickness?

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite so; and that is what I was leading up to. This Bill provided that any person who had insured against sickness and funeral expenses—that would include persons belonging to friendly societies—from the age of twenty-one, should be entitled on attaining the age of sixty-five years to a pension of 5s. per week. Provision was also made in the Bill for allowing persons who on the Act coming into force were over the age of twenty-one years to come in on certain modified terms. There was one modification to the effect that any person who enjoyed an income of £40 a year should not participate in the scheme. It was pointed out that this was largely legislation for the future, for forty years hence, because it only applied to those persons who had insured from the age of twenty-one years up to sixty-five.

Mr. JACKSON: That is a very serious objection.

The HOME SECRETARY: A very serious objection indeed, although of course other persons could come in, as it might relate to persons who had insured fifteen or twenty years back and had remained insured up to that time. Still that would narrow down the whole scheme so tremendously that it could not rank as a complete scheme of old age pensions. It could not stand alongside our modest scheme in that respect, because our scheme does not refer to the future; under it a pension of 5s. a week may be paid within a week after the application is received, and that can be done without any legislation at all. And there are other matters to be thought out in connection with old age pensions applied indiscriminately, as apparently the hon. member for Portlough Valley would desire. One is that if the scheme is to apply to persons who have attained the age of sixty-five years and require a pension, but who are in the receipt of wages, the tendency would be to give those persons an advantage in their calling which would not be enjoyed by those who were immediately below that age.

Mr. JACKSON: The select committee in England said that would not have any effect on wages.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know that, but I think the question is one that is well worthy of consideration.

Mr. JACKSON: An old man of sixty-five cannot earn much.

The HOME SECRETARY: Can't he?

Mr. JACKSON: In any case there are only a small proportion of men over that age.

The HOME SECRETARY: There are many men over sixty-five in this colony who are earning good wages. I do not say there are thousands, but I unhesitatingly say that there are many men, hale and hearty men, in this colony over sixty-five who are earning good wages. Then there is the question as to whether this should be applied to breadwinners only, and that is a very serious question. We should have to consider whether extra discrimination should not be exercised in those cases, because wives who have nothing of their own, but have husbands to maintain them, may be over the age of sixty-five, and therefore in a position to claim an old age pension unless very careful discrimination is exercised. Of course there is always the objection, which was mentioned last year, that there is a tendency to treat assistance of this sort as a charitable allowance, and you cannot help that when once you begin to discriminate. But it does not follow that because a system of old age pensions has not been adopted in England, there is no assistance given to the aged poor there. I was rather startled to find that in London one person out of three over the age of sixty-five was in the receipt of poor law relief, and that in the whole of England four out of nine over that age were in receipt of such relief. I think the Commission of 1893 reported that there were nearly 30 per cent. of the population of England over the age of sixty-five receiving relief, and that if you deduct one-third of the population for those who are in affluent or moderately competent circumstances, there would be three persons in every seven over that age, or nearly 50 per cent., receiving relief. So that after all, although the question as to how the money is to be raised for such a scheme as this of old age pensions is really an important one, yet when it is grappled with it will undoubtedly relieve the State from other charges to which it is now liable, directly or indirectly, through local rates, whatever they may happen to be called. At present our expenditure in this direction is not more than £5,000 per annum for these pensions, quite irrespective of course of the cost of charitable institutions maintained at the expense of the State, and which involve a very large proportion of our charitable expenditure, but if we were to adopt the New Zealand scheme in its entirety we should become responsible for considerably over £100,000 a year.

Mr. JACKSON: Oh, no! Compare our population with theirs. I worked it out and gave the figures in my speech. It would not amount to more than £80,000, on the New Zealand basis.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is assuming that New Zealand has reached the end of its tether in regard to its liability on its present population. I am allowing for further developments in New Zealand.

Mr. JACKSON: They gave five months for all the applications to come in, and it was assumed that all came in within those five months. Of course there will be fresh applications every succeeding year.

The HOME SECRETARY: But does not the hon. member see that there are bound to be developments in New Zealand? Once you make a concession to a particular class you must draw a hard-and-fast line somewhere, and I venture to predict—and I am quite sure the hon. member's experience as a legislator will satisfy him that I am right—when a concession has once been made to a class like that, persons closely allied to that class will have been shut off from the benefits of the concession, and there is bound to be an extension. An agitation will be commenced, and

there will be a further extension. I am quite certain that before long the expenditure in New Zealand will be not less than £150,000 a year.

Mr. JACKSON: I do not think you have any authority from official sources for saying so.

The HOME SECRETARY: No, but I have a knowledge of human nature, and of the nature of legislative bodies, and the political influences at work by which hon. members, and those who seek to be hon. members, desire to ingratiate themselves with those whose suffrages they are seeking; and these considerations lead me to the conclusion that whenever you make a concession of this sort, there is always a demand for some further concessions. Witness the fact that it is now asked that this 5s. which we pay shall be immediately raised to 7s. I do not care where it comes from, there is bound to be a request for some further extension of the principle, and I need not say why; but the tendency will always be on the part of those who have anything to do with the conduct of public affairs to give in to any such demand as that. Of course, it may be a perfectly legitimate demand.

Mr. HIGGS: What means have the outside public of knowing that the Government allow a certain sum per week, distributed, as it is now distributed?

The HOME SECRETARY: It is now very well known all over the country.

Mr. HIGGS: I am sure a lot of people know nothing about it.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member is mistaken. We receive applications from all parts of the colony.

Mr. JACKSON: Principally through members of Parliament.

Mr. HIGGS: Through supporters of the Government mostly.

The HOME SECRETARY: No; it was principally through members of Parliament. But I have endeavoured, as far as I could in the administration of the system, to discourage the parliamentary element altogether. Any respectable person may recommend applications, but it is especially to benevolent societies, I think, the Minister should look in this matter. A large number come through members of Parliament, but not so many now as previously.

Mr. W. HAMILTON (Gregory): I never knew it myself until I came down this year.

The HOME SECRETARY: Well, it is not very old, and the system has only grown to its present proportions during the last couple of years.

Mr. JACKSON: Has it not been forced upon you really by the over-crowding of Dunwich?

The HOME SECRETARY: It has not been forced on the Government at all. Of course we should have had to make larger provision at Dunwich as we had to do heretofore. The necessity for increasing the accommodation at Dunwich is not now found to exist to the same extent. A new ward has lately been put up there, and had it not been for the existence of this system I am quite sure two more new wards would have been required. It has not been forced upon the Government, but is simply a matter which has attracted the attention of the Government not only here but elsewhere. The question of old age pensions, and the necessity of appointing commissions to inquire into it, has attracted the attention of Governments elsewhere, but the Government here have by a simple administrative act inaugurated a system of old age pensions under more or less strict supervision and police inquiry. So far as I can see the basis has been laid for a very practicable scheme

indeed, and one, in the development of which we shall probably be able to avoid the pitfalls and difficulties which must necessarily beset such schemes as that which have been adopted in New Zealand. I do not know that I have anything more to say. I do not desire to weary hon. members. The question is one upon which I could speak at very much greater length, but I do not want to go over the ground I traversed last session. The question is one which must force itself upon anyone holding the position of Home Secretary in this colony, or a similar position in any of the other colonies. I desire to point out that there have been developments since this question was discussed in this Chamber last year. This is one of the questions which has been relegated by the Commonwealth Bill to the Federal Parliament. It is true that some of the other colonies that will be in the federation are proposing to legislate or are legislating upon the subject, but I fail to see that they are really doing very much good, because after all the schemes which they inaugurate to-day may not meet with the approval of the Federal Parliament when it comes to deal with the question eighteen months or two years hence. In the meantime we have a tentative scheme which is working well and developing day by day. It is gradually being spread all over the colony and is giving relief to many of the aged deserving poor, and to many who are not aged as well. It may to a very large extent be superseded by any legislation on the subject which takes place in the Federal Parliament. It seems to me that we are not doing at all badly in this matter at the present time. It is quite possible that by this time next year, as the knowledge of the provision made continues to spread as it is spreading all over the colony, a very large number of applications will have come in. There has been a large number received lately, and the attention given to them is as prompt as possible. The inquiry made into each case is an ample inquiry into the position of relations and their willingness to contribute where they are able to do so. It seems to me that while this is so it would be folly for us to put an end to that scheme, to try something else which can only continue for a short time, as it will again be superseded by the legislation which is sure to take place in the Federal Parliament at no distant date. That, I think, would be unnecessarily disturbing the whole question. I think, therefore, that the hon. member for Kennedy might be content with the discussion which has taken place and which has yet to take place—as no doubt other hon. members desire to speak on the question. He might be satisfied with the attention the question is attracting and with the assurance that the Government will do nothing whatever to discourage the increase, but will on the contrary, by every possible means, encourage the legitimate increase and spread of the principle we have in operation here. I think the hon. member should be satisfied with that, as it is certainly not desirable to disturb the institution we have at the present time merely for the sake of trying something else until a third scheme can be put forward by the Federal Parliament. I really trust the hon. member will look at it in that light, which is the really practical way in which to look at it. I suggest that the hon. member should be satisfied with what was done last year. I am not quite certain, but I think an amendment was moved and carried last year. At all events, I know that one was moved. He should be content with carrying the first part of his resolution, which commits this House to nothing more than a pious expression of opinion that something should be done in the way of providing old age pensions. The resolution then

does not become an instruction to the Government to introduce legislation which possibly, before it actually became law, would be superseded by some federal legislation to which our legislation would have to give way.

Mr. T. B. CRIBB (*Ipswich*): I do not intend to make a lengthy speech on this motion, but I think the hon. member for Kennedy has the sympathy of both sides of the House in his endeavour to provide old age pensions for the people of this colony instead of throwing them on the mercy of the ordinary charitable institutions. Not very long ago I had an instance of a man who had been working for some years on the railway, and during the flood of 1887 he became altogether incapacitated from earning his own living. He was unable to do anything for himself, although he would gladly have done so, and he was not sufficiently well educated to enable the Commissioner for Railways to give him employment as a gatekeeper or anything of that sort. I endeavoured to induce the man to accept the use of Government aid on behalf of himself, his wife, and family, but he had a great reluctance to accept such aid. My own opinion was that he was rather too sensitive, and I told him so. I approve of the first part of the resolution moved by the hon. member for Kennedy, but I would like to suggest an amendment to the 2nd paragraph. I agree with a great deal of what the Home Secretary has said with regard to the difficulties which surround the whole question. There are many difficulties; we have a fair index of them in reading over the report of the English Royal Commission which sat to inquire into the matter. We had there the evidence of capable men who dealt thoroughly with the subject, and it was found that it was bristling with difficulties. I do not mean to say that we should ignore or not endeavour to meet those difficulties. I think we should meet them. The Home Secretary pointed out very rightly that the Commonwealth Bill provides for this matter of old age pensions to be dealt with by the Federal Parliament, and any legislation on the part of our Parliament at the present time would only lead to confusion, because it would only be in operation a very short time before possibly an entire change might be made by the Federal Parliament. At present we have practically a system of old age pensions which is administered by the Home Secretary, and I quite acknowledge that he has administered it with a great deal of ability. There is one thing that I disapprove of in the present system, and that is the relieving of children of all responsibilities in the maintenance of their parents. I think myself that children should never be entirely relieved of their responsibilities. Of course we know that in many cases there are old people who have children who are unable to support them, and therefore they may have a fair claim on the State, but unfortunately there is no provision in the law by which children can be compelled either to keep or do anything towards the maintenance of their parents, no matter what the position of those children may be. An instance came under my notice not very long ago. An old lady about eighty years of age was quite unable to maintain herself. She had a son who was in fair circumstances and well able to keep his mother. Of course, in endeavouring to get a pension for the old lady I had the difficulty to contend with that she had this son who could support her, and, recognising that principle, the Home Secretary did not consider that he would be justified in relieving the son of his responsibilities. I quite agree with that; but I think our law ought to be altered so as to give the Government the necessary power to force upon children the responsibilities which they

ought to recognise for themselves. What I would propose is the omission of the 2nd paragraph—

That the Government should introduce legislation providing for a system of old age pensions, and thus by Act of Parliament make provision for the deserving aged poor passing their last years in the society of their friends and free from the restraints and monotony of asylum life;

and the insertion of the following words :—

That the Government be requested to obtain all available information, and place the same before the Federal Parliament, which, under the Commonwealth Bill, is directly entrusted with legislative action in this matter.

In reading the report of the debate which took place in this House on a former occasion, I notice that the mover of the resolution was followed by the Premier, who referred to the question of whether it would be advisable to appoint a commission to inquire into the question. The amendment I propose,

[5.30 p.m.] while confirming the advisableness of improving the present system, will give direct instructions to the Government to make such inquiries and get such information as can be sent to the Federal Government. We have a system in operation at present, and I know that the amount which is expended under that system is considerable, and is increasing. The aged poor are not absolutely destitute. There is some provision for them. I think it is far better to continue the present system rather than initiate another system and have it altered again by the Federal Parliament. I have much pleasure in moving this amendment.

Mr. JACKSON (*Kennedy*): I am sorry I cannot accept the amendment, moved by the hon. member for Ipswich. I think that whilst it is possible, of course, that the Federal Parliament may legislate some time or other on this important question, I do not think it is at all likely to deal with it for a considerable number of years.

**THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why?**

Mr. JACKSON: Particularly when we remember it is not in existence yet, and that after it does come into existence it will have the very important question of the tariff—over which it is not impossible there may be a deadlock—to deal with. We can scarcely tell what other business the Federal Parliament will take up; but there will be a tremendous amount of preliminary work to do; and I may say that the Federal Constitution does not provide that the Federal Parliament shall deal with this question. It only says it may. As I pointed out in my speech, in anticipating the objection which might be made by the Premier that the Federal Parliament would probably deal with this matter, I do not think there is the slightest likelihood of it dealing with it for a considerable number of years. In support of my contention, I pointed out that New South Wales and Victoria were both taking action, although those colonies are strongly federalist, and are coming into the federal union, and that Sir George Turner had a Bill before the Victorian Parliament at present.

**THE SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Does he mean to pass it?**

Mr. JACKSON: I should say so; it looks very much like it. If we take Sir George Turner as an authority, we must assume that the Victorian Parliament does not assume that the Federal Parliament will legislate in connection with this matter. In my opinion it would be absurd on my part to accept an amendment of this sort to the effect that we should instruct the Government to get information to lay before the Federal Parliament. The Federal Parliament, if it is going to deal with the question

at any time, will not wait for the State Parliaments to send them information as to how it should act. It will act on its own initiative if it acts at all. My motion says the Government shall introduce legislation. It does not say it shall introduce legislation at once, this session. It is simply a general instruction. It may mean next session. Objections have been urged by the Home Secretary and some other hon. members. There are principally two. One is that the present system of giving 5s. a week is working very satisfactorily; the other is that the Federal Parliament will deal with the question. I think there is very little in these two objections. I do not wish to speak at any length, because I am anxious to get my motion wiped off the business-paper. Other members have business they wish to bring before the House, not specially to-day, but later on. If this motion goes over other private members' days, it will exclude other private members' business, and I do not wish to monopolise too much time. I am only one man, and I do not like to see my motion coming up Thursday after Thursday. I like to see it wiped off the paper. If hon. members wish to vote against it, let them do so; but let us have an expression of opinion from the House on the question.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*): The hon. member says that his motion does not imply, if carried, a direction to the Government to introduce a measure this session. It is not at all likely the Government will introduce any legislation on the subject this session, whatever shape the motion may take; but it is a direction to the Government to introduce legislation, and for that reason I think it is objectionable, because it does not lay down the lines upon which that legislation should run. I know it has been argued that this will make a beginning, and lead to the introduction of something which can be licked into shape; but the suggestions which have been made are so opposed to each other, and so antithetical in every respect, that it would be quite impossible to engraft them into a Bill introduced by the Government in a form which would be acceptable to the House. It is necessary that more information should be got. I do not care whether it be information in this colony or whether it be information to be derived from inquiries instituted by other communities; undoubtedly it is desirable we should have very much more information than we have before we give up a scheme which, so far as it goes, is working admirably, for one which may be full of very serious objections that would only be discovered in the working out of the scheme after it was passed. For these reasons, I do not agree with the hon. member in his opposition to the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Cribb; nor do I agree with him in the view he takes, when he says he believes it would be many years before the Federal Parliament would deal with this question. I do not think it will be many years. The hon. member must remember that the Federal Parliament will not have its time occupied as the States Parliaments will have their time occupied. There are very few subjects which fall within the sphere of legislation allotted to the Federal Parliament. So far as I can see at present, there are three large questions which will probably occupy the Federal Parliament during the first session or two. One is, as the hon. member has mentioned, the question of the federal tariff; another is the question of a uniform Defence Act; and the third is a Postal Act. Really, the federal tariff is the only one which would occupy very much time; the others are cut and dried almost already, and it is merely assimilating the various schemes where they do not already coincide.

Mr. McDONNELL: The tariff would take a couple of sessions.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not see why it should occupy more than one session. It may take a good part of a fairly long session, but that having been got rid of there is very little of what may be called controversial or debatable legislation to be dealt with by the Federal Parliament.

Mr. KERR: What about alien labour?

The HOME SECRETARY: I take it that it won't take them very long to deal with that.

Mr. JENKINSON: I am afraid it will.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not see why it should. Like the other questions to which I have alluded, it is merely assimilating the various Acts already in force in points where they do not agree. But hon. members must bear in mind when they say it will be many years before the Federal Parliament will be able to deal with it, that the Federal Parliament will not have to deal with general questions such as crop up here from day to day.

Mr. DIBLEY: Sir George Turner said they might not deal with the question for ten years.

The HOME SECRETARY: He may have said that for political purposes. He wants to introduce his Bill.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why do you impute motives?

Mr. JACKSON: I believe he is actuated by the best motives.

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not imputing motives. I did not say the political purposes were of an evil character. I never intended to imply that. Perhaps they have not in Victoria—I do not think they have—any such system as we have in Queensland. We are in advance of them, and I say we shall keep in advance; but I am sure that whatever schemes may be suggested they will be found to be beset with very great difficulties. This is a very apt illustration of the practical futility to a very large extent of these Thursday afternoons. Here we are all anxious to get on to practical business, and are taking up the whole afternoon—I do not say it is wasted—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Can't you let it go to a vote?

Mr. HIGGS: Don't be stonewalling.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do protest against being told I am stonewalling. Hon. members were kept here all night last night—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You went home at 10 o'clock.

The HOME SECRETARY: I know that hon. members were kept here till daylight this morning, because hon. members opposite would not allow the question to go to a vote. And now they have the effrontery to tell me that I am stonewalling when I am doing my best to debate this question. I protest against the imputation, that because any hon. member of this House presumes, forsooth, to discuss a question of this sort at any length, that he is therefore stonewalling.

Mr. JACKSON: I am not accusing you of stonewalling.

Mr. HIGGS: Wasting time.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member is not accusing me of doing so, but members with whom he is associated are—members who are not so well advised as the hon. member is, members with less experience in the House, who should refrain from making these interjections.

Mr. KERR: Don't lecture.

The HOME SECRETARY: I shall lecture as much as I like. All I am doing is protesting against the invariable practice hon. members indulge in of accusing those who speak from this side of the House of stonewalling and endeavouring

to talk out a question. This is not a practical question; it is a question which is raised for academical discussion.

Mr. TURLEY: No.

The HOME SECRETARY: The hon. member says so—he says that he does not anticipate or expect for a moment that legislation can ensue.

Mr. TURLEY: He said it might not.

The HOME SECRETARY: He does not expect it. He knows it cannot, and we all know it cannot. We know we cannot possibly get through the legislation we have already set ourselves to endeavour to pass this session. I am most anxious to get on with the work. We have lost a week over a discussion which might have been fairly well contracted into a day, and I am most anxious to get on with other business, such, for instance, as the Elections Bill, and hon. members will tell me later on probably that we have wasted the time, and that we are not sincere in introducing that measure. Perhaps I shall be told that because we are not able to pass it this session; but I shall be able to point back to the wasted week—last week. I have no hesitation in speaking now, and perhaps digressing, Mr. Speaker, in this way, because I know that I am not dealing for a moment with anything which is practical—until 7 o'clock comes to-night we do not get down to practical politics.

Mr. HIGGS: You are not prepared to take a vote, are you?

The HOME SECRETARY: It is immaterial whether we come to a vote to-night or not, because there is no business in this question, and nobody expects that any business can come of it, whatever may be the result of any decision to which we may come.

Mr. HIGGS: Question!

After a pause.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. D. H. Dalrymple, Mackay): Mr. Speaker—

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Oh, oh! Talk it out.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If it had not been for the accusations made by hon. members opposite—

Mr. TURLEY: Talk it out.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: There are some hon. members on the other side who will talk on a question some days, and then shirk having their names down on a division.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: After keeping the servants of the House up all night they would not vote.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I consider that this question is one that is worthy of discussion, and there is no particular reason that I am aware of why it should be pushed through, as some hon. members seem to desire, without any discussion at all. I think this is a matter of a very great deal of importance, and I venture to say that the address just delivered by the Home Secretary was a very informing address. He has detailed the methods which he is pursuing, and has pointed out that a considerable departure has been made in this connection. He has also advised hon. members of something that they did not appear to know anything at all about.

Mr. HIGGS: Ministerial electioneering patronage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This is really a charming instance of what occurs when the Government endeavours to do anything. The moment it is discovered that the Government are practically putting into effect some of the schemes which hon. members opposite are in the habit of dangling before the public, at that moment it is discovered that it is Go-

vernment patronage. Why does the hon. member advocate old age pensions if he sees such a terrible drawback? How are we going to deal with a system which involves the doling out of money by the State without Government officials? The hon. member must have been living in dreamland for some time, as he must see that the employment of Government officials must mean Government patronage. How is a system to be worked which involves the distributing of money, if there is no one to distribute it? In the proportion to the increase of State systems, so will State officials necessarily be multiplied, and probably State patronage will be multiplied. The hon. member wants more State systems, but he does not want more State officials. I say that when you draw money from the community by the organised force generally called "the Government," you must have State machinery. I don't see why hon. members opposite should grumble or be apprehensive of what in my opinion will be the natural consequences of the system that they are in favour of, because it provided that the individuals should do less and the State more, and if the State is to do more, then the State will require more arms and more hands to do that more.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member appears to be addressing himself to the main question, and I would call his attention to the fact that there is an amendment before the House. The discussion must be confined to the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: As a matter of fact, I was only replying to an interjection made by a very intelligent member of this House, and one who takes a great interest in this question. If I have been drawn astray, I submit that I am in the position of one who has been beguiled.

Mr. McDONALD: You mean to talk it out.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No, not at all. If I start to talk matters out I will only be following the example of seventeen hon. members on the other side. It has been recognised by the Press that their action this morning was only useless stonewalling, and the persons who engaged in that stonewalling were unwilling that their names should be published; otherwise, why did they not call for a division? Their action then only resulted in inconvenience to the officials of the House, and did not benefit anybody. The amendment appears to me to be very reasonable. For some time past, the Government have been trying to do something of the kind, in a practical way. If they are not introducing legislation in this respect, they are at all events acquiring knowledge—knowledge which I think is very desirable to obtain. I say it is quite reasonable to ask the Government to obtain all necessary information on the matter, but some hon. members opposite seem to disdain the acquisition of knowledge. Is it not desirable under all circumstances of human existence that our amount of knowledge should be increased?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: We don't want too much talk.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We talk about our grammar schools and education—exceedingly important subjects—but what is the end of all these long and tedious processes? I believe we should get more information on this question of old age pensions, and I think we will get it, from New Zealand and other countries. We will also find that more money will be required than is expected at present, and we should remember that when we make inquiries into the circumstances of the aged poor, we cause them great pain in many cases. All sorts of questions are put to them, and they have to produce a baptismal certificate or give evidence

of the date of their birth. I am sorry hon. members take so little interest in the debate, and are leaving the House before the time of adjournment.

Mr. DAWSON: Are you stonewalling?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No. I have only spoken for about ten minutes, and I have been subjected to a series of what I may call disorderly interjections. Even the leader of the Opposition, who is generally a brilliant example of peace, has interjected. I do not see why I should not be allowed to talk for ten minutes on this important matter. I know that I was kept here this morning for hours and hours, when no possible benefit could result from the remarks of hon. members opposite. What was I listening to? I am not going to characterise what I was listening to, but the results were absolutely nil. And, again, why did hon. members opposite not call for a division? I may point out that many hardships will be caused if we endeavour to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving among the poor. How would hon. members of this House be situated if they were ruthlessly asked, "Are you of the deserving poor?" It will be putting too great a strain upon the testimony any individual has to give before any tribunal.

*At 7 o'clock the House, in accordance with Sessional Order, proceeded with Government business.*

#### ELECTIONS TRIBUNAL.

##### PRODUCTION OF OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS.

The PREMIER: I desire, with the consent of the House, to move, without notice, a certain motion, which I will explain before asking the House to approve of it. It appears that the Clerk of the Assembly is desired by the Elections Tribunal to produce certain records and documents next Monday in connection with one of the inquiries now pending before that body. Under our 330th Standing Order it is provided that—

The custody of the journals and records, and of all documents whatsoever laid before the House, shall be in the Clerk, who shall neither take nor permit to be taken, any of such journals, records, or documents from the offices of the House without the express leave or order of the House. Provided, however, that in the event of the House being adjourned for any period longer than seven days, or prorogued, such leave may be given by Mr. Speaker, who shall report the same to the House upon its re-assembling.

I think it would be wise, under those circumstances, that the House should agree to the following motion, which I move:—

That leave be given to the Clerk to attend before the Elections Tribunal, and to produce any records or documents in cases now pending before that tribunal, for the production of which he may have been duly subpoenaed.

I do not think it is necessary to make any further explanation; the urgency of the case will commend itself to hon. members.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be put without notice?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question put and passed.

#### ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for despatch of business at 3 o'clock p.m. on Friday in each week, in addition to the days already provided by Sessional Order; and that Government business take precedence of all other business after 7 p.m. on that day—

said: I think it is necessary for me to point out to hon. members that at this late stage of the year, and with the desire to conclude the session before the year terminates, it is absolutely

necessary that we should now proceed with business on an additional day in the week. And with the desire that hon. members who have private business on the paper should participate in the increased time which will be available under this motion, the Government have decided that from half-past 3 to 6 o'clock on Fridays, in addition to the similar period on Thursdays, shall be devoted to private members' business. I may say I think that, considering the position in which we are placed with regard to public business at the present time, it would not have been asking too much of my hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, to have surrendered the whole of Friday to Government business. The hon. member knows that, from circumstances which have come under his notice and have met with his approval, the ordinary session of Parliament this year is extremely limited in time, and that it will take us all our time to get through the necessary public business if the session is to terminate before we enter upon another year. I have no wish to say anything which will annoy or irritate hon. members. At the same time, I think I may very fairly urge that considering the advanced stage of the year, and the limited period for parliamentary business, hon. gentlemen might be asked to restrain their loquacity, and that we might proceed to tackle business. I would also say that while the Government have not the slightest desire to restrict the business of private members, yet I do think a good deal of that business now on the agenda paper is more of an academic character than anything which can lead to practical legislation during the short interval between now and the end of the session. I make these remarks with no desire to annoy hon. members who have business on the paper, but really we should consider whether the short remaining period of the session should not be devoted to the consideration of practical measures. While desiring that the additional time obtained shall be to a certain extent shared by those hon. members who have practical private business on the paper, I think I am justified in claiming that, under the circumstances I have mentioned, every hour of the time at our disposal will be required, if we are to deal deliberately with the legislation which has already been submitted for consideration, and others, not to mention the Estimates, which will have to be considered immediately. I trust, therefore, that this motion will be considered by hon. members opposite as exemplifying a desire, not only to proceed with the business of the country by the Government, but also to give private members an opportunity to proceed with such practical private business as they may think necessary for the welfare of the country.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): I beg to second the motion. While I quite concur with nearly everything that the Premier has said with regard to the Friday sitting, I wish to say that it is a perfect farce for private members to bring forward business in the hope of getting it through. We have academic discussions, which are put into *Hansard*, and are perhaps read by a great many people outside, but it is absurd for us to expect to arrive at any practical result. We might very well give way and allow the Government to have the whole of Thursday and Friday, because it is only a waste of time devoting the time to private business. One or two members on either side of the House get up and talk till 6 o'clock, and the question under discussion has then to take its chance of coming forward on some future occasion. However, I rose to second the motion, because I believe the Government are anxious to give members on both sides every opportunity of bringing forward any private business they may wish to pass. Still, we have this staring us in the face—that

we have only two and a half hours on Thursday and Friday afternoons, and no member has the least chance of passing any Bill or motion. Under the circumstances, I would like to see at least four days a week entirely devoted to Government business, to enable the Government to pass their measures as quickly as possible. It is simply absurd for private members to attempt to pass any Bills or motions.

Mr. BRIDGES: You got a division on yours.

Mr. PETRIE: I did; but I must say that, so far as hon. members on both sides are concerned, I consider I was to a certain extent sold. I thought I was going to have another day—I had no wish to rush my measure through—and hon. members opposite agreed to a certain thing which they did not carry out.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: No, no!

Mr. PETRIE: And hon. members on this side too did not carry out their promises.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PETRIE: I would not have referred to that matter had it not been for the remark of the hon. member for Nundah. I am here to support the Government so far as I think they are right, and when I think they are doing wrong I am against them. We had a proof of that last night, when I remained here all night. I had not an opportunity of getting a sleep. If I had, I might have been better able to talk now; but I remained here to help the Premier, and I believe I did the proper thing, although I never opened my mouth on the question one way or the other. (Laughter.)

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PETRIE: Wise men sometimes keep their mouths shut, and I believe I was a wise man in that respect. I remained here till half-past 4 this morning, I am happy to say—

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is digressing from the question before the House.

Mr. PETRIE: If I have been digressing, I apologise; but it is hon. members on both sides—particularly those on the other side—who put me wrong. I never said a word on the question last night; but I say decidedly that I did what I considered the correct thing.

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. PETRIE: I, as a member of this House, had a perfect right—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in continuing to discuss that question upon the motion before the House. The motion is for an extra sitting day.

Mr. PETRIE: I must apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, and to the House, if I have digressed a little; but, when hon. members on both sides interject, it is no wonder that some members of the House—myself particularly—depart from the usual practice. While I am in perfect accord with the Government in regard to sitting on Friday, it is perfectly absurd for private members to bring forward motions and Bills. If we sit four days a week we are doing ample duty for our country. If I could see that we would gain anything by sitting on Fridays, I would support it. (Laughter.) Hon. members laugh. I am not against sitting on Friday. I am willing to sit on Saturday and Sunday, too, if it is necessary; but so far as private business is concerned, it is a farce, as we only have academic discussions, as one or two members can talk till 6 o'clock, and we get no further forward. It is a very hard thing for a private member to carry any business through unless the Government is at his back. If we do sit on Friday, I hope the Government will render private members some assistance in passing their motions or Bills, but I am afraid they will not.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. PETRIE: I apologise for having taken up the time of the House.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Don't bring forward fireworks.

Mr. PETRIE: I am not in the habit of bringing forward fireworks, like the hon. member for Lockyer. At the commencement of each session we waste month after month, and then at the close of the session we have to rush legislation through, with the result that it has all to be undone in the following session, as it is not properly done. If the hon. member for Lockyer fires fireworks, I am not firing fireworks, and I say that if we are going to do business we should do it in a proper and straightforward manner. However, I wish to expedite business—(laughter)—and I hope that the Ministry will have the assistance of the House in whatever they may bring forward, and that the Premier will give private members an opportunity of discussing fairly and squarely every matter that they bring before the House.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*): I am rather sorry that the hon. member for Toombul has decided to support the Government on this motion. I understood from what the hon. member said that he considered the time allotted to private members, that is, from half-past 3 to 6 o'clock in the afternoon, was quite insufficient for the purpose; and when the hon. member says that, and then states that he will support the motion, he is putting himself in an absurd position. What the hon. member for Toombul, and other members outside the Ministry, no matter on which side of the House they sit, should do, is to endeavour to get a fair and reasonable amount of time allotted to private members, in order that they may have an opportunity of fairly and squarely discussing the business they bring forward. This is not the first time this question has been raised, and I emphatically protest against this limitation of private members' time. We fully and freely recognise that the Government have been sent here to conduct the business of the country; but while we recognise that, they should recognise that there is a party in opposition, a party outside the Government, who have been sent into this Chamber to transact certain public business. In pleading for more time for private members I am not pleading only for members sitting on this side of the House, but also for hon. members opposite outside the Government who put business on the paper, and want to get it fairly discussed, and to have an intelligent vote taken on it. But in giving private members two and a-half hours on a Thursday and two and a-half hours on a Friday, we are not giving them a fair deal at all. I remember that on one occasion the Government absolutely refused to touch a question which was a burning question in the country, or, at any rate, a question on which a very large number of people in the colony desired this House to express its opinion upon, and what was the result? The result was that the hon. member who was then leading the Opposition, my friend, the hon. member for Bundaberg, introduced a Bill in order to elicit the opinion of the House on the subject, but owing to this paltry two and a-half hours' limit to private members' business three months elapsed before the Secretary for Lands, who was then Secretary for Public Instruction, finished his second-reading speech on the Bill. Any system which allows the possibility of one member who may desire to prevent the House expressing its opinion on a subject taking up three months of private members' time is an absolutely bad system, and it is about time that private members, no matter on which side of the House they may sit, made a very determined stand against such a system.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He did the same with regard to old age pensions.



Mr. DAWSON: I do not say that the hon. gentleman did the same with regard to old age pensions, but I do say that if any one member wants to prevent hon. members from expressing an opinion on the question all he has to do is to get up and talk against time until 6 o'clock, and he will accomplish his object. So far as the records of this Chamber go we do not know whether they are for or against the system of old age pensions. One hon. member can prevent the House expressing an opinion on any question introduced by a private member, and it would be quite easy for two members to do it. I can imagine that the Secretary for Lands—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Why the Secretary for Lands?

Mr. DAWSON: Because he is the most talkative member on the Government side. I say I can easily imagine that if the Secretary for Lands and the hon. member for Rockhampton North put their heads together they could block any private business from being transacted in this Chamber for the remainder of the session. It is now proposed that we should sit four days a week, and in order that private members may have a fair opportunity of transacting their business, instead of giving them two and a-half hours on Thursday and two and a-half hours on Friday, the Premier should agree to give them one whole sitting day. Whether that day is Thursday or Friday I do not care, but I object to two half-days; I prefer that private members should have one whole sitting day devoted to the transaction of their business. While agreeing to the fullest with the plea of the

Premier that as it is now late in the [7:30 p.m.] year, and we have a large amount of business to transact which ordinarily is transacted long before this period, he should be given any amount of opportunity in order that the House may transact that business, at the same time I point out to him that private members' business has also been put back, and they should be given opportunity to pull up for lost time as well as the Government. If the Premier thinks four days a week necessary to transact Government business, that is no reason why private members should not have an extra day, because there is nothing in the world to prevent the hon. gentleman asking the House to sit on Mondays, and that day could be given to private members if necessary. I would be willing to sit also on Saturdays, if necessary, but at the very least one day in each week should be devoted to the transaction of private members' business. I would remind the Premier that private members of this House have been very generous and considerate indeed to him, and when he made an appeal for their forbearance, it was cheerfully listened to and his request granted. The hon. gentleman was anxious, as I admit I was myself, that during the special session private members' business and grievances should not be allowed to cloud the federal issue. The hon. gentleman's request in that respect was cheerfully granted, but hon. members certainly did expect that when the House reassembled for general business, their forbearance would be taken into consideration, and they would be given ample time for the transaction of private members' business. I do not say this by way of a threat, but I may say this, that if some members, certainly some on this side of the House, had known for a single instant that when the House reassembled to transact the general business of a session they would be prevented from transacting private business, they would never have allowed the special session to go through purely on federation, but would have insisted upon their rights as members of this Chamber to transact their private business. If I had thought that they were to be denied a fair

opportunity of transacting private business in this way, I would not have counselled them to wait for the reassembling of the House, but I would have encouraged them to go right on with their private business. But we have shown our consideration, and we are getting our reward now. We deserve it for our simplicity. I do not intend to move any amendment on the motion, but I put my most emphatic protest on record against the very unfair action of the Premier.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I think it is my business to say that I am not aware that I have taken up an exceptional amount of the time of the House. I am sure if *Hansard* is looked up it will be found that a great many members of the House, and on the other side too, spoke at three times the length I did. I think it necessary to point out that if in some particular speech of mine the time for the discussion of the subject came to a close at some particular moment on three occasions it does not necessarily follow that I was endeavouring to protract any debate whatever.

Mr. DAWSON: You lie in wait for private members to talk them out.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is merely an assertion which is not borne out by the facts. I unhesitatingly assert that the loquacity of hon. members on the other side is three times as much for each one as that of members on this side. Before the hon. member is at liberty to lecture myself or other hon. members with regard to the time we take, he should look to himself, and I point out to the hon. member that he could have said what he has taken so long to say this evening in five minutes.

Mr. DRAKE: In connection with what has been said by the leader of the Labour party and the Secretary for Lands, I may point out that the difficulty referred to has been due to the fact that the Sessional Order, providing that private members' business will close at 6 o'clock, offers special facilities to any hon. member who wants to talk a motion out.

MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. DRAKE: It may not have been through the length of some of his speeches, but time after time private members' business has been blocked by the Secretary for Lands, and the point is that the hon. gentleman must have known at the time he was making those speeches that if he talked up to 6 o'clock he would block that private member's business. Knowing that the hon. gentleman knew that it is not uncharitable to suppose that the hon. gentleman spoke deliberately with the object of talking that business out.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: What is the object of men who talk until 4 o'clock in the morning habitually?

Mr. DRAKE: When the hon. gentleman talks about 4 o'clock in the morning he must see that that is just where my point comes in. The discussion may go on to 4 o'clock in the morning and then to 5 or 6 o'clock the next afternoon upon a general subject, but under the Sessional Order the discussion of private members' business must stop at 6 o'clock, and the motion is blocked for that day, and further, if the member speaking before 6 o'clock likes to be cantankerous and refuses to sit down for a minute before 6 in order that the hon. member in charge of the business may give notice for the resumption of the debate on his motion, it must go down on the business-paper and it may never get to the surface again.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. DRAKE: I am sure that some gentlemen have on occasions shaped their action with a perfect knowledge of what was going to take place. We had a system some years ago by



which private members used to have half of Thursday and the whole of Friday, and so far as my recollection goes that arrangement gave satisfaction all round.

MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no !

Mr. DRAKE: I never heard the Government of the day express any dissatisfaction with it. It was satisfactory to private members for the reason that it gave them an opportunity of getting their business through two stages instead of one in the week, and if they had any specially important business they got time to have it thoroughly well discussed, as no hon. member could talk it out by speaking until 6 o'clock.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: To discuss it at all is called "talking it out."

Mr. DRAKE: I do not know that the system gave any dissatisfaction to the Government, because under it hon. members were in the habit of using their opportunities to get their business through early in the session, and as soon as a congestion of Government business occurred requiring more time the House quite without exception always granted the Friday to the Government to deal with it. I think it would be a good idea to revert to that old arrangement allowing private members half of Thursday and the whole of Friday, until the state of Government business requires that Friday should be devoted to it.

Mr. FISHER (*Gympie*): I have embraced almost every opportunity since I have been in Parliament to advocate that a larger amount of time should be allotted to private members for the transaction of their business, and I would submit that by allowing more time to private members the Government would save their own time, because private members often bring forward motions for adjournment to deal with questions which otherwise would be dealt with on private members' day.

Mr. COWLEY: That would be a violation of the urgency clause.

Mr. FISHER: What is urgency? If the paper is filled with private business for two or three months ahead, is it not the duty of members to bring forward their business at once. Is that not urgency? The paper is in that condition now. Another objection to the present arrangement is that there is no consecutiveness in the debate on private business. Motions are brought forward that might possibly be of some benefit to the country if they could be debated outright; but, under our present arrangements, there is an interval of at least two weeks between each two hours' debate. I enter my emphatic protest against a continuance of the present practice, which has utterly failed and has been subversive of all good. It has for many years been the means of taking away more Government time than would otherwise be the case if private members were allowed one whole day in each week in which to transact their business. The leader of the Labour Opposition has stated that we abstained during the special session from introducing private business. That is quite true, and I can assure the Premier that he is indebted largely to the leader of the Labour Opposition for that state of affairs, and I do not think the hon. gentleman has met him in a spirit which is calculated to expedite business in general.

Mr. McDONNELL (*Fortitude Valley*): I have no very strong objection to the limitation of the time of private members if the Government will introduce some of the legislation which is most urgently required. There have been deputations which waited on the Premier, asking him to deal with matters in which a great many people are

interested, and the hon. gentleman has made the excuse that there is no time. I therefore think, when he asks the House to give him an extra sitting day, he should be prepared to make some effort to deal with such legislation as I have mentioned. I was one of those who deputised the hon. gentleman last week on a question that has come before us a great many times, and if we grant this extra sitting day the Government should be prepared to introduce some legislation of a practical nature, which I believe would take up very little time. The leader of the Labour Opposition has referred to the action of certain members when legislation by private members is introduced. This very afternoon a question which has occupied a great deal of attention, not only in Queensland, but throughout the world, was under discussion, and it was talked out by the Secretary for Lands. I refer to the question of old age pensions which was introduced last session. It occupied the time of private members for five sitting days. It was exhaustively debated, and the Secretary for Lands spoke twice upon it in the session of 1898. I think, instead of blaming private members for wasting time, the Government should try to expedite business by letting us have a definite vote on that and other matters. We were prepared on this side to take a vote, but were prevented by the Secretary for Lands. I say that when there is a deliberate attempt to block business which emanates from this side of the House, very little consideration should be shown to this motion which the Government have proposed. Members on this side are always prepared to come to a definite conclusion by voting on the motions which they place on the business-paper. In reference to the legislation I refer to, the Government say they are not prepared to introduce it, in consequence of want of time; but we, on this side, are prepared to introduce legislation if there is any opportunity of coming to a definite conclusion on it. With only half a day at our disposal we can make very little progress, but if we could get Bills through their first and second stages there would be a better chance of getting them through Committee. I hope that the Premier will consider this matter favourably, and I would remind him that when he was a private member it was through the assistance he got from this side that he was able to pass his motion in reference to freeing the Victoria Bridge from tolls. At that time he expressed his gratitude to hon. members for their assistance, and, recognising that fact, I trust he will show a desire to assist private members at this juncture.

Mr. JACKSON (*Kennedy*): There may be some excuse for the hon. member for Toombul feeling rather annoyed at the short shrift he got in connection with the Bill he introduced, but there is no excuse for the hon. member ridiculing the waste of time involved in private members' business. Parliament exists for other purposes than the transaction of Government business. It is well recognised by parliamentary authorities that Parliament exists for the discussion of abstract questions just as well as for concrete business. It is recognised that Parliament exists for the purpose of educating the public on public questions, and private members are perfectly justified in demanding a fair amount of time on that score. I thank the leader of the Labour party for the vigorous protest he made, and I am only sorry that he did not think fit to move an amendment on the motion to test the feeling of the Chamber. The only possible excuse the Government can have in favour of insisting on giving private members only two half-days a week, is that the session is now—well, not drawing to a close, but will be a very short one. There is no doubt it

would be a very great advantage to private members to have one whole day a week given to them on the same terms as the Government have three days a week to do their business with some amount of continuity. I am sure it cannot be very interesting to the readers of *Hansard* to read a debate on a certain question—a debate that has taken over two or two and a-half hours—and the question not come up again in the course of a month or two months, when probably they have forgotten all about it, or perhaps does not come up again at all. There is no certainty that the motion that was before the House this afternoon will ever come up again, on account of the way private members' business is transacted, and I venture to say that that motion is one which is agitating the public mind, not only in this colony, but in all other countries in any part of the world. It has been a common objection urged against us, when we complain of the Government not undertaking business, "Why don't you bring in legislation?" It used to be thrown at us continually by hon. members on the other side. How can we bring in legislation? How can we do anything when we have only two and a-half hours per week, or, towards the end of the session, two half-days per week? It is an impossibility. Hon. members can easily talk out private members' business. I do not say that they could not talk it out if they had one whole day per week; but they will not so easily set themselves to do so. It would be discerned, and the public would see the object they had in talking out questions. When there is only one half-day per week, the onus is not so great. I am sorry the hon. the leader of the Opposition did not see fit to test the feeling of the House on the question; but as he has not thought fit to do so I will not venture to move an amendment.

Mr. TURLEY (*Brisbane South*): I think it is just as well we should have an expression of opinion from hon. members on this subject. I was going to move in the matter, but I have refrained from doing so as there are a large number of motions on the business-paper which should receive fair discussion, and on which we should have an expression from the House. The hon. gentleman tells us in his remarks that it is simply academic discussion that we require. It is nothing of the sort. The hon. gentleman says there are motions on the paper that there is practically no business in, and which have been put there simply with the object of discussion. The hon. gentleman has not told us what these motions are. The motion under discussion to-day was not for academic discussion, but was there to be dealt with in a practical manner. The motion in the name of the hon. the senior member for Gympie is a question of live importance to thousands of working men in Queensland to-day, and the hon. gentleman knows it. It is not put there for academic discussion, but with the object of having it dealt with. What is public business that the hon. gentleman tells us so much about? It is business that the Government think necessary to introduce. I contend that, oftentimes, business put on the business-paper by private members is of just as much importance to a very large section of the people as business put there by gentlemen on the front Treasury benches. We are told we are wasting time on this. If hon. members will just look at the business which has been set down for Thursday, the 26th of October, they will see who is causing the waste of time. There are two motions there which, in my opinion, simply ask for information, and should have been allowed to go as formal, but which have been objected to by the Government on two different occasions. These motions will probably cause long discussions. Why? Simply because the Government do not think it is

necessary or wise to supply the information to the hon. gentleman who inquires for it. Is that waste of time by hon. members on this side of the House? The hon. gentleman will tell us by-and-by that we do not want to do business. That is the sort of business by which live business put on the business-paper by private members is being continually blocked, and it seems to me that the best way to do is for the hon. gentleman to give fair time for private members' business to be discussed. Suppose we take the case as practically illustrated by the hon. member for Enoggera? Suppose Government business had to close at 10 o'clock every evening, where would the Government be? Members on this side, if they chose to combine as hon. members on the other side can, and sometimes do, they could simply get up and talk down Government business, and there would practically be no business done. At present hon. members can go on until 3 or half-past 3 o'clock the next day. There is no limit to the business the Government can force through the House so long as they possess a majority. I contend it is not fair to members who are returned to this Chamber, knowing perfectly well that there are matters which deserve the best consideration of the House, which are asked for by large numbers of people outside this Chamber, and which, in my opinion, should receive discussion and fair treatment from members of the House. Not only members on this side are subject to that sort of treatment, but members on the other side, and, unless they are prepared to stand up for their rights as private members, it will be the case, as it has been for years past, that members on this side will protest in vain. It seems to me that that is the duty of every private member whether he has a motion before the House or not, because the time may come when he may have business that he requires to be considered by the House. He should support the demand of members on this side of the House to fair time being given to private members for the consideration of matters that they may feel inclined to put on the business-paper.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (*Lockyer*): The conflicting opinions expressed by the two hon. gentlemen who have just addressed the House leads me to think that there is not a very decided opinion on the other side as to what hon. members opposite really do require. I can understand the contention of the hon. member for Brisbane South that there is not sufficient time under this motion; but the hon. member for Kennedy stated, as his reason for objecting to this motion, that we do not have sufficient time at our disposal to carry on academic discussions which would be, perhaps, of an educational character to the country.

Mr. DAWSON: He did not say that.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Most decidedly he did say that. I am not in the habit of making statements that are not correct, and the hon. gentleman can correct me if I am wrong.

Mr. JACKSON: The first reason.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That was the main reason.

Mr. DAWSON: No, not the main reason.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: I understand that our business is to represent the opinions of those who sent us here, not to take up the position of educating them—and prostituting Parliament by discussing matters that the constituencies have not dealt with, but to deal with matters in a practical manner, knowing what the opinions of the various constituencies are. I hold, from my experience of the House, that the proposal of the Government is a fair one, that all necessary or useful business that is likely to be brought forward by private members is likely to be

enacted or dealt with under this resolution giving us two evenings a week. I shall certainly support it.

Question put and passed.

#### RAILWAY WORKS COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. R. Dickson, *Bulimba*): I beg to move—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide for the appointment of a Parliamentary Standing Committee on railway works, and for other purposes.

Mr. DAWSON (*Charters Towers*): I desire to

ask the hon. gentleman whether

[8 p.m.] he means business or not in moving this motion? I do not think it

will be a good practice to prevent any hon. member from taking a motion even beyond this stage without discussion. At the same time, I would like to point out that I am not willing that time should be wasted in taking subjects as to which there is no business intended beyond any stage. There are a number of rumours about that the Government, in an unfortunate moment, put this notice on the paper, and that they intend to do nothing further. I would like to have a definite expression of opinion, if the Premier will be kind enough to give it, as to whether he intends to proceed any further with this particular business. If he does not, I shall support him in knocking it off the paper.

The PREMIER: I must express my surprise at such a deliberate insult being offered to me by the hon. member, as to attribute to me the idea of moving for the introduction of a Bill with the view of making it a formal matter and not dealing further with it hereafter.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: My answer to the hon. gentleman is that he has no right to ask me that question. It is a most unusual procedure when a Bill is being introduced according to the forms of the House for the member introducing the Bill to be asked as to his intentions. I assume that every hon. member introducing a Bill intends to proceed with it as far as he may be able to do so. I am not going to reply to rumours which may have reached the hon. gentleman's ears—that would occupy the whole time of the House. I do not want to say anything offensive, but I say it is an insult to the *bona fides* of the hon. member entrusted with legislation of this or any other character to ask such a question as has been asked by the hon. gentleman. Of course I do not know what the opinion of the House may be on this matter, but in the meantime I submit it so that the House may be in a position to consider it.

Question put and passed.

#### NEW BILLS.

##### ELECTIONS BILL.—LICENSING BILL.

Motions made and agreed to—

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to consolidate and amend the laws relating to Parliamentary elections.

That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the laws relating to the sale of intoxicating liquor.

#### CRIMINAL CODE BILL.

##### RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On clause 667—"Whipping"—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge, *Maranoa*) expressed his obligations to hon. members, particularly hon. members on the other side, for the assistance they had given him so far in dealing with the Bill. He regretted that they had not been able to finish the Bill on

the last occasion when it was under consideration, but hoped they would be able to get through very soon now. He thought they would then have made a record by having passed the longest Bill in the shortest session.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 668—"Levy of fine and costs on conviction for defamation"—

Mr. GIVENS (*Cairns*): The matter dealt with in this clause was very important, as under it perfectly innocent persons might be severely punished—their whole stock-in-trade might be taken away from them. Take the case of some newspapers in Brisbane. Those papers were printed at some printing offices the proprietors of which had nothing whatever to do with the conduct of the newspapers printed there; and if they were going to be held liable for any libel contained therein they must employ some competent barrister, and pay him a high salary, to give his opinion as to whether there was anything defamatory in the papers they printed. After the libel was published, and the printing presses were sold, an innocent buyer, who knew nothing whatever about the libel, might have his property levied upon. He did not ask for any drastic change in the law, but there should be some safeguard against innocent publishers being punished.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said cases of prosecutions for criminal libel were very rare, and a very few of them were successful. The law provided that the Crown should not conduct any prosecutions of this sort; the only duty of the Crown Prosecutor was to decide whether a bill should be found. The person who alleges that he was libelled had to provide a prosecutor at his own expense, and if he failed to obtain a verdict he was liable to pay the costs of the trial.

Mr. GIVENS: But innocent persons may suffer.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL thought any such danger was very remote, so remote that it was not necessary to make any alteration in the existing law, which had been found to work very satisfactorily.

Clause put and passed.

On clause 669—"Reservation of points of law"—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The whole of chapter 67 dealt with procedure, which it would not be wise to attempt to alter, and he asked leave to put the whole chapter.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Chapter 67, embracing clauses 669 to 678, put and passed.

On clause 679—"Summary jurisdiction of justices in case of indictable offences committed by children not more than twelve years of age"—

Mr. GIVENS asked the Attorney-General if it was desirable that a child of twelve or under should be punished in this way, because he thought that a child of twelve could not be held responsible for his actions.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL admitted the correctness of the hon. member's contention, but he had known cases where children of this tender age, had shown most vicious dispositions. In ordinary cases young children would not be prosecuted, but extreme cases might arise which would render a prosecution necessary. He did not think this clause would operate harshly, but it would show boys and girls that they could not commit serious offences with impunity. He could assure the hon. member that in ordinary administration there was no likelihood of his feelings being outraged by seeing a child put into the dock and treated as a grown-up criminal.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 680 to 698 put and passed.

On clause 699—"Committal of fraudulent debtors"—

Mr. GIVENS said it seemed to him that under the clause it was still possible to imprison a person for having the misfortune to get into debt. Almost every creditor looked upon his debtor with a certain amount of suspicion when he found he was not in a position to pay up, and was nearly always inclined to say that he had obtained credit by fraudulently representing his position. If the clause was left in they would have the old punishment of imprisonment for debt existing in a certain form and degree. It was pretty well accepted by everybody that the time when a man should be imprisoned because he was too poor to pay his debts had gone by. He should like to see some alteration made in the clause whereby absolute fraud would have to be proved before there was any danger of a debtor being imprisoned.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that very often a debtor was required to appear before an examining court for the purpose of giving an account of his transactions in business matters, and it frequently happened that a debtor was proved out of his own mouth, and by the evidence of the witnesses, to have been guilty of the grossest fraud. When that happened the law allowed the judge who presided at the examination, if he was satisfied that a case of fraud had been made out in that way, to commit him to take his trial at some future sitting of the criminal court, just in the same way as if he had been committed by a magistrate on precisely the same facts. But it was the jury, not the judge, who would have to deal with him on his trial, when he would have an opportunity of defending himself. If found guilty at all it would be on the evidence. He might add that the law as it existed was very sparingly taken advantage of. In his twenty-one years' practice at the bar he had not known half-a-dozen cases, and there was not the slightest chance of its being abused. The hon. member need not be afraid that it would revive the old law of imprisonment for debt.

Mr. GIVENS said that if the law was obsolete, or seldom put into effect, it was unnecessary to cumber the statute-book with it. Why should a man who sought the protection of the insolvency court be further harassed by the law at the instigation of a greedy creditor?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He will not unless he is a rogue.

Mr. GIVENS: He had in his mind's eye a case of real persecution by a creditor of a debtor who had sought the protection of the insolvency court. In that case the debtor and his family had spent £50,000 in an enterprise, and because they happened to get into the debt of a certain firm to the extent of £2,000 they were persecuted in every way, and all the forms of the law were exhausted in order to punish them for no crime of their own. The fact that they put

[8.30 p.m.] £60,000 or £70,000 of their own money into the enterprise showed

that they had sufficient faith in it. He objected to any provision being placed on the statute-book which would give any such creditor an opportunity of harassing and persecuting an unfortunate debtor. If such provisions were obsolete, or if they were capable of being made instruments of oppression, they should be wiped off the statute-book. He supposed that the hon. gentleman knew of many cases of hardship which had occurred under that provision, and he entered his protest against its retention, especially as the hon. gentleman admitted that it was obsolete, and that it was rarely put in force.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL thought the hon. member misapprehended what he had said. If the clause was not there, a creditor would be able to pursue an unfortunate debtor by laying an information before a justice of the peace, and harass him in that way. He knew there

were creditors who sometimes had a "down" on a debtor, but that clause would not help an unjust creditor to persecute an unfortunate debtor in the least. Nor was the clause obsolete in the sense that it was ancient law. If a gross case was made out before a judge, he would have the right, if he pleased, to commit direct for trial.

Mr. GIVENS: Could a creditor not make an application through counsel for the committal of the debtor?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes, and the judge might or might not comply with the request. He had been refused on one occasion. Judges were reluctant to commit, but the provision was not obsolete, and it was very useful. The judge could not send a man to gaol—he could only commit him for trial.

Clause put and passed.

The remaining clauses in the first schedule were put and passed; and the schedule, as amended, was put and passed.

Schedules 2, 3, and 4 put and passed.

The House resumed; and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

REPORT STAGE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge, *Maranoa*) said: I was requested by an hon. member to re-commit the Bill for the purpose of reconsidering certain clauses. The hon. member is not here, otherwise I could have demonstrated to him that he is quite wrong in regard to those clauses. I have satisfied myself that he is wrong.

Mr. GIVENS: Who is the hon. member?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Higgs. I therefore move that the Bill, as amended, be now taken into consideration.

Question put and passed.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I move that the third reading of the Bill stand an Order of the Day for Tuesday next. My reason for not taking it to-morrow is that the Clerk of the House, and his assistants, have some work to do in altering the clauses in consequence of our having omitted one clause, and in consequence of the index requiring to be amended in accordance with alterations we have made. By taking the third reading on Tuesday next time will be given to get the Bill into proper form for transmission to the Council on that day.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at nineteen minutes to 9 o'clock.