

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 15 AUGUST 1901

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The SPEAKER (Hon. Arthur Morgan, *Warwick*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

DEATH OF THE EMPRESS DOWAGER OF GERMANY.

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS OF CONDOLENCE.

The SPEAKER announced that, pursuant to the Order of the House, made on the 13th instant, he had presented to His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor their resolution expressing sorrow at the news of the death of the Empress Dowager of Germany, and sympathy with their Majesties the King and Queen, and the Royal Family of Great Britain and Ireland, and with their Imperial Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Germany.

QUESTIONS.

MAINTENANCE OF STATE RAILWAYS.

Mr. BOWMAN (*Warrego*), for Mr. Kerr, asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Is it true that the Minister requested the recent conference of engineers to report on the advisableness of letting out by contract portion of the maintenance of the State railways?

2. If so, has the report been submitted?

3. Will he lay the report on the table of the House?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Leahy, *Bulloo*) replied—

This is a question dealing with the management of the department, as between the Minister and his officers. I will not answer such questions in future. The answer to this question is "No."

HINDOOS IN OBSERVATORY PARK, BRISBANE.

Mr. LESINA (*Clermont*) asked the Home Secretary—

1. Is he aware that eight Hindoos have been encamped in the Observatory Park, Brisbane, during the past three days?

2. If not, will he cause inquiries to be made into the matter, and have said Hindoos removed?

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*) replied—

1. I have ascertained that some coloured men have been in the park for a few days.
2. Further inquiries are being made.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of Mr. RYLAND, this Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Thursday, 5th September.

MINING ACT OF 1898 AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. F. G. Foxton, *Carnarvon*), in the absence of the Secretary for Mines, leave was given to introduce a Bill to amend the Mining Act of 1898.

At a later hour,

The Bill was read a first time, and the second reading made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

CONDITIONS OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS.

Mr. TURLEY (*Brisbane South*), in moving—

That, in the opinion of the House, it is desirable that in all conditions of contract for the performance of work undertaken to be done for the Government, there shall be attached a schedule containing the names of the different trades or occupations necessary for the performance of such work and the minimum rate of wages to be paid to the operatives of such trades or occupations, such rates to be fixed by the Government, and to be determined by the ruling rate of wages paid for similar work in the district in which such contract is to be carried out; such rates to be observed till the completion of the work. The schedule to be attached to and form part of the conditions of contract to be signed and be binding on the contractor and upon any person who may take a sub-contract under the contractor. That a clause be inserted in the conditions of all Government contracts that eight hours shall constitute a day's work for which such wages shall be paid. That the schedule and all clauses relating to employees, contained in the conditions of contract be posted up in conspicuous places wherever such work is being performed—

said: Before I move this motion I would like to explain the reason why I called "Not formal" to it. I did so because I considered a discussion on a question of this sort is necessary, inasmuch as that there are a number of members here who were not in the House when the discussion took place previously. I may say that the Hon. the Secretary for Railways was courteous enough to inform me that they would get a division upon it if possible this afternoon, if we took it as a formal motion. The only reason why I did not accept the hon. gentleman's offer was because I thought the matter worthy of discussion, and that it would be better for hon. members who were not here on the previous occasion to have an opportunity of discussing it before they gave their votes. I may say that this matter has been brought on on two previous occasions. It was first brought in in 1896, when it was defeated by 25 to 17 votes. Again the matter was brought up in 1897, and on a vote being taken it was once more defeated. I may say that what induced me in the first place to bring a motion of this sort before the House, was the fact that there was work being carried out under the auspices of the Government of the time—that is to say, the Government had let contracts to men who were

carrying on the work and taking advantage of the necessities of those who were not in a position to help themselves, with the result, as stated at the time, that work was being done by able-bodied men in Queensland at the rate of 4s. and 4s. 6d. a day. Those men had come from a neighbouring colony, where they had been engaged on similar public works—railways—and had been receiving no less than 6s. 6d. a day, because there was at that time, and there is now, a clause in all their contracts providing that there shall be a minimum rate of wages paid. There was another case which came under my notice at that time, and that was of two contractors tendering for a public work, and one, I was given to understand, in fixing his price had based it on wages at the rate of 6s. a day, thinking that that was a fair wage to pay men who were able to do the work that he required. The other contractor thought he could get men at 5s. a day, and the result was that he was to some extent able to cut under the man who was willing to pay a fair wage to the men he was employing.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What contract was that?

Mr. TURLEY: I am not exactly sure which contract it was, but it was a contractor in Brisbane who informed me of the fact at the time. He said he had put in for a contract, but another man, by adopting a lower rate of wages, had been able to cut under him, with the result that a lower rate of wages was being paid to the men who were employed. I may say that when I came to look into the matter I found that it was prevalent throughout the whole of the Australian colonies and England to a greater extent than I had thought. I found that in England, as far back as 1891, Mr. Sydney Buxton, Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, brought forward a resolution in which it was affirmed that it was necessary to do away with subletting in Government contracts and to make every effort to secure the payment of such wages as are generally accepted as current in each trade for competent workmen. Later on there was another resolution applying the same sort of thing to the men who were employed in the Government dockyards and other places. Another body, the London County Council, also brought in a motion—it was moved by John Burns, and seconded by Sir Thomas Farrer—as follows:—

That all contractors be compelled to sign a declaration that they pay the trade union rate of wages, and observe the hours of labour and conditions recognised by the trade unions in the place or places where the contract is executed; and that the hours and wages be inserted in and form part of the contract by way of schedule, and that penalties be enforced for any breach of agreement.

That was carried and was followed out, and, I may say, is strictly adhered to up to the present time whenever contracts are let by that body. In Victoria they have a schedule attached to their contracts, which forms part of the contract, and has to be observed by those who take up the work. That schedule is to this effect—

The several rates of wages, as set out in the schedule hereinafter stated, shall be paid by the contractor (or, in the event of the Board of Land and Works approving of the subletting of any portion or portions of the works, by the sub-contractor, for the various services to be performed under this contract.

So far as I know that has worked well. The only evidence I have with reference to that, except what is furnished by the heads of departments, is in a speech which was made by a member of the House of Representatives of the Federal Parliament on 28th June last year. He pointed out that a similar resolution had been moved in the Victorian House of Parliament in

1894, but it was not carried in that year. The following year it was again introduced, and there was not one solitary member of the House who raised his voice against it. It was unanimously carried. Mr. Maugher, speaking on the 28th of June this year, said—

The principle had been in operation ever since in the State of Victoria, with the happiest results, one of the first of which was the abolition of subletting of contracts, which in the past had been so detrimental to the interests of the worker.

As far as New South Wales is concerned, we find that the system was brought in by the Minister for Works, and applied to contracts of a small amount in the first instance, as they thought it was an experiment. It had not been working very long before they realised that it was very successful, and that it should be applied to all contracts for public works let by the State. I shall probably be told that the system has not been such a great success in New South Wales, even among the men. I have been told before, when I have brought this question forward, that men who have been employed on public works in New South Wales have objected to the condition, because it had the effect of lowering wages, and I have previously adduced evidence to show that that is wrong. I pointed out that, at one time, a deputation waited upon the Minister for Public Works in that colony, and represented that they thought the wages on a certain contract were not sufficiently high. The Minister said, "If you are not satisfied, I am prepared to exempt you from the conditions on this contract altogether as far as wages are concerned." They replied, "No."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Was that Mr. Hume?

Mr. TURLEY: No, I fancy it was the present Minister for Works, Mr. O'Sullivan.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That was not a cold morning.

Mr. TURLEY: I do not know whether it was a cold morning, but I know that as soon as that offer was made to the men they said they did not wish to be exempt from the conditions in the schedule which formed part of the contract. Then, there is other evidence that the men do not object to the condition. Only last month a committee of working men, representing a large number of men who had been employed on public works in different places in New South Wales, waited upon the present Minister for Works in that colony, and presented him with a gold watch and chain, and a purse of sovereigns. On the watch was inscribed—

Presented to the Hon. E. W. O'Sullivan in recognition of his efforts in connection with day labour and the minimum wage.

That presentation was made on the 18th of July last, and I think that is sufficient evidence to show that the workmen of New South Wales, who had been employed on public works under the conditions I propose, are satisfied with those conditions. Working men are not usually stupid enough to go round collecting money for presentations to people who are in the habit of letting contracts where the contractors have a free hand to employ men at starvation wages. If they were, we should have had a testimonial presented to the Secretary for Public Works in Queensland some seven years ago, because the wages paid on a Government contract at that time were about as low as or lower than were ever paid on any Government contract I have heard of in Australia. In South Australia they were some time before they got the system in vogue. I am not sure when the motion was passed, but I am taking the statement of Mr. Batchelor, who was not long ago elected as a

member for that colony in the House of Representatives in the Federal Parliament. As reported in the Federal *Hansard*, he says—

There is a provision exactly similar to this inserted in all Government contracts in South Australia.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Similar to what?

Mr. TURLEY: Similar to the motion which was moved in the Federal Parliament, and which was then under discussion. I was not previously aware that a resolution had been carried in the South Australian Parliament, although I knew that under the conditions of contract a contractor had to abide by the decision of an arbitration which would be summoned to deal with any disputes regarding wages or the conditions of labour that might be brought up during the currency of the contract. I stated that the reason I brought this matter up in the first instance was because at the time things had been and were then very bad in Queensland, and contractors were taking advantage of the necessities of those who were least able to protect themselves. I hold that if there is any duty which appertains to the Government it is that of endeavouring to protect that portion of the community which is weakest and least able to protect themselves. The condition of things which I described as then existing has not been disputed by any member of the Government. The statements I made cannot be contradicted, because they are absolutely true. And when we see that practically the same conditions are looming ahead now in Queensland I think it is time that something was done to protect the people employed on Government contracts. After 1893 times were very bad, and now we see looming in the distance a very similar state of things. According to a report which appeared in the *Courier* of the 9th of August, Mr. Curtis, the member for Rockhampton, stated at a deputation which waited on the Secretary for Public Works, that—

The Harbour Board employed about 100 men, but that the chairman of that body said there were some 200 more looking for work. If Mount Morgan had to close down through want of water there would be about 600 more men thrown out of employment. The position was very serious.

Mr. Callan, the member for Fitzroy, said—

Already 270 or 280 men were knocked off at Mount Morgan, and, if they did not get rain, they would not be more than 200 kept on the works altogether while they were short of water.

As evidence that it is realised that it is some portion of the duty of the Government to see that those people get something to do, I may quote a remark of the Minister, who in replying to the deputation, said—

He had gone on with the work by day labour, as the plans for the lines were not ready to call tenders, and 1,300 men would have had to wait months if they followed that course.

That shows that it is recognised by the Government that something must be done with the object of endeavouring to enable the people to tide over the bad times we are going through. If that is so, I contend that while it is recognised that there must be a certain wage paid by the Government in carrying out their own works, the same principle should apply even when such works are carried out by contract. It is as great an evil to sweat men through a con-

[4 p.m.] tractor as it is to enable the Government to offer men the low wages which contractors will pay. I say there is no difference between the Government offering men 4s. a day and allowing a man to get a contract and pay 4s. a day. The same responsibility rests upon those who are at the head of affairs, and who should see that a fair day's wage is paid for

a fair day's work. Then we should take into consideration another fact—the cost of living. The cost of living all through Queensland has gone up enormously. I know that rents, as far as Brisbane is concerned, have gone up considerably.

Mr. CALLAN: They have gone down in Rockhampton.

Mr. TURLEY: I do not know about Rockhampton, but I know they have gone up in Brisbane. I know a house very near where I am living, the tenants of which were paying 7s. a week, and they got notice that the rent would be raised to 12s. because there were people waiting to go in at that price. And outside the question of rent the price of provisions has gone up considerably. We know that to-day we cannot live in Brisbane as cheaply as we could five or six years ago. Meat, bread, and everything that a person requires for daily consumption has gone up in price.

Mr. FORSYTH: Not bread; it is cheaper.

Mr. TURLEY: I do not know whether it has come down, but I know it was up not very long ago.

Hon. E. B. FORREST: There has been no change in bread for a long time.

Mr. BRIDGES: Bread is dear enough.

Mr. TURLEY: I think it is dearer than it was some time ago. I know there was a considerable rise within the last eighteen months.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It was never cheaper than it is now.

Mr. TURLEY: I know it did go up, and taken all round the cost of living is considerably higher than it was four or five years ago. The cost of provisions has gone up in many cases from 15 to 20 per cent.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Flour is £6 10s. a ton in Toowoomba. It was never cheaper.

Mr. FORSYTH: You can buy it at £5 15s.

Mr. TURLEY: At all events, some time ago it went up, but whether it has come down again or not I do not know. Taken all through, the cost of living is greater.

Mr. McMASTER: That is not so.

Mr. TURLEY: I think if you ask the average working man whether he can live as cheaply to-day as he could five years ago, he will tell you that he has to pay considerably more for his provisions. He has to pay more for butter.

Mr. McMASTER: No.

Mr. TURLEY: What has he to pay for it now?

Mr. McMASTER: About 1s.

Mr. TURLEY: About 1s. 4d.

Mr. McMASTER: No, he does not.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You do not eat butter evidently.

Mr. TURLEY: Yes, I do eat butter, and I know within the last two or three days butter has been bought for my house straight from a factory at 1s. 3d.

The HOME SECRETARY: You were got at.

Mr. TURLEY: I know that what I state is a fact, because the butter was got for my own house. I do not know whether that is the ruling rate, but I take it that the price charged by the people who make the butter is the ruling price as far as the retail market is concerned.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: Eggs are only 8d.

Mr. TURLEY: Only a week or two ago they were considerably higher, and I am sure that taken all through the cost of living has gone up considerably. Now, if there is no clause in Government contracts providing for a minimum wage, what will be the result? There will be no protection whatever for the men who may be employed. I know it may be said that if men do not choose to work for 2s. 6d. a day they

need not. That is so, but there is nothing that presses so hard upon one as hunger. There is nothing like starvation to compel men to do a great many things which under other circumstances they would not dream of doing. I contend that it is no part of the functions of Government to take advantage of the necessities of the poorest and weakest part of the population, or force others to do so, which they practically do by allowing contracts to be taken without providing a clause under which a definite wage should be paid to the men employed by the contractors. If there is no such provision made we shall on the one hand have the Government paying directly for the construction of railway works a certain rate of wages, and contractors under the Railway Department doing exactly similar work and paying a much lower rate of wages.

Mr. ANNEAR: What about Mr. Henderson's remark about the Government stroke?

Mr. TURLEY: I am not responsible for Mr. Henderson's remark or for the Government stroke. I believe there is good work done by the men employed directly by the Government on the railways as well as by the men who are working under contract, although it may be, perhaps, that the Government do not pay certain men an extra 1s. a day with the object of driving men to the uttermost of their ability. I myself have seen that system in operation on works carried out under contract. I may say that I think nearly every class in the community is in favour of some sort of protection being given to men employed under contract. The Builders and Contractors' Association some years ago had a deputation to the Government, in which they asked that there should be a minimum rate of wages inserted in Government contracts. I think that was only about four or five years ago. They gave as their reason—and I think it is a good reason—that while there were members of that association who were prepared to pay a fair rate of wages, there were unscrupulous people who came in and took advantage of the workmen, with the result that the men who were prepared to deal fairly with their employees were rushed out of the market. I do not think we make a law against stealing to apply to honest people. The law against theft applies only against persons who steal. So in this case the law would not be made to compel men who were in the habit of dealing fairly and honestly with their employees to do anything more than they do at present, but it would prevent unscrupulous people coming in and cutting underneath the fair and honest employer, and doing everything they could to make as big a profit out of wages as is possible. I think we can also escape a good deal of what we have seen going on in connection with public works. Not long ago we had an inquiry into the Department of Public Works, and that inquiry simply showed that a good deal of the work was being scamped at that time. I do not know what rates of wages were being paid, but it seems to me that, if there is a fair rate of wages paid, a contractor would be able, and would probably be inclined, to do better work than he would under a system where, being closely pushed, he would engage the cheapest labour available with the object of carrying out his work successfully. I think I have given sufficient evidence of the fact that workmen are in favour of this, as workmen do not generally present testimonials to Ministers or anyone else whose object has been for years to keep wages as low as possible. If, on the other hand, they see that a man is honestly endeavouring to do something which will hold the balance squarely between themselves as citizens and those who employ them, then very likely they recognise that, and the spontaneous recognition of it will show that men who have been employed under this system

are altogether in favour of it. The majority of the community generally I think are in favour of a system such as this. I remember not long ago, when the elections were going on in New South Wales, looking up the opinions of the Sydney Press, which at that time was most decidedly opposed to the Government, and, if opposed to the Government, they were more strenuously opposed to the gentleman at the head of the Works Department. Yet they had to admit, even before the elections came off, that if there was anything which would tell in favour of the re-election of a majority of the supporters of the Government it would be the promise of an Arbitration and Conciliation Act in New South Wales, and the fact that the public works had been carried on by day labour, or that there had been a minimum wage clause inserted in all their contracts. And even after the election was over, when the Government had polled an enormous majority in the country, and had a very large majority in the House, even the Press of Sydney was prepared to admit that it was mostly due—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They have a very small majority in the House. The Labour party make up their majority.

Mr. TURLEY: That is very funny of the hon. gentleman, because I know very well that the whole of the Labour party are in favour of the minimum wage clause being inserted in all contracts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes, but they are not members of the Government party.

Mr. TURLEY: That is quite possible, but, at any rate, they are supporting the Government, and the Press of Sydney admitted that it was on account of these two things principally, as far as the workers of New South Wales are concerned, that the Government and the Labour party—if the hon. gentleman prefers it that way—were able to secure such a large majority of the seats in the Assembly.

Mr. ANNEAR: The Labour party put themselves up for sale.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Hear, hear!—a kind of "cheap jack" auction.

Mr. TURLEY: The hon. member can say what he thinks fit—

Mr. ANNEAR: I mean the Labour party in New South Wales.

Mr. TURLEY: The Labour party in New South Wales did not put themselves up for sale so far as I know. They went to the country, and they were able to win a considerably larger number of seats than they had before the election. If that is the way that they put themselves up for sale, and if the fact that they were strongly in support of a minimum wage clause to prevent sweating by contractors proves anything, it proves that the majority of the electors of New South Wales were prepared to support a policy of that description.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The leader of the Labour party in the Senate, speaking for the Labour party, said they were put up for sale.

Mr. ANNEAR: That is so.

Mr. TURLEY: He is not the leader of the Labour party in New South Wales.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; he was speaking for the lot.

Mr. TURLEY: He was not speaking for anyone but himself, so far as I know.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Labour party in the Senate represents the party in all the States.

Mr. BROWNE: Then Mr. George Reid represents all the Ministerial supporters on that side.

Mr. TURLEY: Decidedly. He must represent all the freetraders in Australia. Is the hon.

gentleman prepared to admit that all the intelligence of the Ministerial party in this House is centred in Mr. George Reid in the Federal Parliament? I do not think so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There is no analogy.

Mr. TURLEY: At any rate, we deny that what is said by any one man who is connected with the Labour party shall be applied to all the party throughout Australia.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It was not disputed.

Mr. TURLEY: I deny that the Labour party in Queensland has ever been put up for sale. They have never offered their services to the Government at any price that the Government might think they were worth.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Nobody disputed Mr. McGregor's statement.

Mr. TURLEY: No one has disputed a great many statements that have been made that have reflected to a great extent upon the Government. Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that because a statement appears in print it is the duty of every Labour man in Australia to run round and refute that statement? That is not so. The hon. gentleman would not think it worth his while, if his little tin-god down in the Federal Parliament, Mr. George Reid, made a statement that the hon. gentleman did not believe in, to immediately rush into print and say that it was not right, and that he did not agree with it. Is that the position the hon. gentleman takes up?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; but this was from the leader of the Labour party.

Mr. TURLEY: I admit this was said by the leader of the Labour party in the Senate; but, so far as I know, the Labour party in New South Wales were not up for sale, and the Labour party in Queensland are not up for sale to the Government or to anyone else.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The leader of the New South Wales Labour party ought to know what he was talking about.

Mr. TURLEY: The leader of the Labour party in New South Wales never said any such thing, and the hon. gentleman is only acting as a sort of phonograph for the Secretary for Works at the present time. There is another thing I wish to point out. We will take the Federal Parliament, and we will find that those who compose that Parliament—and who presumably represent the electors of the whole of Australia—have come to the opinion that this particular question, so far as the principle is concerned, is not worth debating at the present time, because they see that it is generally recognised throughout Australia as a safe and sound principle to adopt. On 28th June last there was a motion moved in the House of Representatives—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is the duty of the Government to make provision in all contracts for the payment of a minimum rate of wages and for the fixing of a maximum number of hours of labour.

The Federal Premier agreed to this with a slight alteration which did not alter the purport of the motion at all, and Mr. Batchelor—who, I may say, gave up a Ministerial seat in South Australia to stand for election as a representative of that colony in the Federal Parliament—said in his speech on the motion—

The principle is so generally conceded to be right that it is hardly worth one's while to discuss it.

And that seemed to be the opinion of the whole of the members who spoke. I may say that there were very few members—only some eight or nine—who thought it was worth while discussing the question, seeing that the principle had been

adopted in all the colonies with the sole exception, I believe, of Queensland. I believe that this is the only colony which gives contractors a free hand in sweating men when they are engaged in doing Government work.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Has Western Australia got it?

MR. TURLEY: I believe it has, and if it has not, the greater part of its work is done by day labour—a thing which has only just been inaugurated in Queensland.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Is there a minimum wage in that?

MR. TURLEY: I do not know whether there is a minimum wage in that. The hon. gentleman is trying the experiment now, and I do not know whether he has a minimum wage; but I have not heard of his offering 4s. or 4s. 6d. a day to men for their work.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You won't, either.

MR. TURLEY: That is all right. I am glad the hon. gentleman is in favour of a minimum wage.

MR. ANNEAR: Where were people paid as low as that?

MR. TURLEY: They have paid it in Queensland; and I have proved on the floor of this Chamber that men working in railway cuttings were paid as low as 4s. and 4s. 6d. a day on the Fairfield deviation; and that is why the State should do something to protect people who may be again taken advantage of. As I have said, there were only a few members who spoke on the question in the Federal Parliament, and it was eventually carried in the following form:—

That, in the opinion of this House, provision should be made in all Government contracts for the payment of a minimum rate of wage, such rate to be in accord with the ruling rate of wage in the district in which the work is carried out, and for the fixing of a maximum number of the hours of labour.

The motion I have on the paper not only provides for a minimum wage, but also for maximum hours of labour, because it would be useless to say that there should be a minimum rate of wages fixed unless we stated that it should be for a maximum number of hours. If it is recognised that eight hours is a day's labour, a contractor cannot then take advantage of a man receiving a minimum wage by making him work ten hours a day.

MR. ANNEAR: That is what I wanted to do last session, but your side prevented me.

MR. TURLEY: The hon. member's name always appears in the division list as opposed to this motion.

MR. ANNEAR: My amendment in the Factories and Shops Bill was voted against by your side.

MR. TURLEY: That did not apply to contracts, as far as I know.

MR. ANNEAR: It applied to eight hours, anyhow.

MR. TURLEY: We had the junior member for Portitude Valley doing that sort of thing about three years ago, and stating deliberately that, with the object of killing a certain Bill, he was prepared to move all sorts of what he termed progressive amendments.

MR. McMASTER: I was never prepared to do anything of the kind.

MR. ANNEAR: That was not my object.

MR. TURLEY: The hon. member is so erratic that no one knows what his object may be; but, when one sees the hon. member's name in the division list always as an opponent of a measure like this, I think there is some reason why one is prepared to doubt the hon. member when he submits a motion which would go a great deal further than that against which he had previously voted. In England, this has been adopted by a large number of local authori-

ties—some of them having as large, or a larger, population than there is in the whole of Queensland, and many of them carrying out a great many public works. I have here a return furnished to the House of Commons—which will be found in the English parliamentary papers for 1898, volume 79—which contains a list of about 208 local authorities in England that have adopted a clause something similar to this. First we have Birmingham, with a population of over 514,000. There is a clause in their conditions of contract to the following effect:—

The contractor shall, during the continuance of this contract, pay, or cause to be paid, to all workmen engaged upon the works the subject of this contract, not less than the recognised minimum standard rate of wages current in the district or districts where such work shall be carried out, and if it shall be found to the satisfaction of the corporation that the contractor or sub-contractors have paid less than the minimum standard rate of wages as aforesaid, the contractor shall pay to the corporation as for liquidated damages a sum of 20s. for each and every case in which such underpayment shall be proved.

The next town we have is Liverpool, with a population of 634,000, and carrying on a great many public works.

MR. BROWNE: There is the London County Council.

MR. TURLEY: The London County Council adopted it years ago. The Liverpool authority has this—

If any tender which . . . may submit shall be accepted by the corporation, . . . undertake to execute the work or supply the materials required in accordance with a contract to be prepared by the town clerk, and to give such security for the due performance of the contract as the corporation may require, and . . . hereby undertake, in carrying out any contract between . . . and the corporation, to pay the rate of wages and observe the hours of labour recognised and agreed upon between the trades unions and the employers respectively in the locality in which the work for carrying out the contract is to be performed, or such rate of wages and hours as are equivalent thereto.

And if we take Manchester, with a population of considerably over 500,000, we find that they have the following condition inserted in all contracts for works:—

The contractor declares that he now pays, and he hereby undertakes that he, his executors, administrators, assigns, or sub-contractors, or any other person who may for the time being be bound or authorised to execute and perform the obligations of the contractor under this contract, or any part of it, shall and will continue to pay during the subsistence of this contract to his or their workpeople the regular standard wages obtaining in the city of Manchester or the district in which the work is executed, as the case may be.

There are over 200 different local authorities—county councils and urban councils—included in that return, which have as part of their contracts some provision for the protection of the workmen that may be employed; and there is one thing which goes to prove that this, having been carried out in other places, has been found to be successful. I do not think it is possible for any hon. member to quote a single instance of any Government, any local authority, or any public body, having once adopted this system, that has gone back upon it. I have endeavoured to do so, and I cannot find a single instance where a public body, having adopted the principle, has repented and gone back on having the conditions inserted. There is only one thing more I have to say. I trust that before this session closes we shall be able to get a division on this question.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You could have had it to-day if you had liked.

MR. TURLEY: Yes, if I had let it go as a formal motion, but I do not consider that is wise. I am only expressing the hope that we shall be able to get a division on the question some time at least during the session. I hope it will not be

dragged out as the usual Thursday afternoon motion, because I think it is of great importance at the present time. I hope it will not be attempted to be buried by an amendment which will practically shelve the question. I think it is a fair thing, seeing that times are such as pointed out by the deputation that waited on the Minister, and seeing that advantage may be taken of the large numbers of people who, through no fault of their own, have been thrown out of employment, and who may try to obtain employment on works carried out by the Government—I think it is a fair thing to get a straightforward expression of opinion, as far as this House is concerned, by a vote as to whether we are prepared to see that some provision is made for a fair rate of wages being paid to those people for a fair day's work.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS
(Hon. J. Leahy, *Bullooh*): The motion proposed by the hon. member for South Brisbane [4.30 p.m.] bane, stripped of its trimming, resolves itself into two or three cardinal features. The first is that there should be a minimum rate of wages in all Government contracts. The next is that there should be a statutory day, so to speak, of eight hours. The third relates to the machinery binding the contractor to carry out those objects. Well, Sir, the motion is nothing new in this Chamber, though it may be new to some of the members of it. It has been proposed for a great many years, but it is a most remarkable thing that it always comes before us with renewed energy as we are approaching a general election. We have heard nothing about this for the last couple of years. If it was a right thing some years ago I do not think it should have been allowed to slumber all this time. The hon. member has sat silent on the subject on the opposite bench for two years; there has been nothing to hinder him from bringing it forward, but now we have it dragged up again on the eve of a general election. I am not going to insinuate that that is the reason that animated the hon. member. I am more charitable, I hope, than some hon. members on the other side, and am not going to make any insinuation.

MR. TURLEY: Don't put him under the pump.
THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: But the fact remains, and it is for hon. members opposite to explain it as best they can. The hon. member does not like that, but he ought to be thankful to me for giving him an opportunity to explain that it is not done for political purposes.

MR. TURLEY: I'm not interested in it.
THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I like to give him something easy to do, and he will have no trouble to do that. This question involves a great many things. If we go fully into all its ramifications it involves the whole of the forty-four planks of the Labour party's platform.

MR. LESINA: Rubbish!
THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I can quite understand the hon. member making a remark of that kind. Light things can only come from light minds. With regard to the first contention which the hon. member raised—and it is the general contention—that because this would benefit the labouring classes, or a portion of the labouring classes in this State, the resolution should be given effect to, the hon. member pointed out what had occurred to persons engaged in certain classes of work in the other colonies, but he did not show us how this resolution has any application whatever to the present condition of things in Queensland. He showed us in a kind of abstract way how a certain condition of things existed here some four, five, or six years ago. To those conditions

his resolution may apply in some form. I, by interjection, asked the hon. member to give a single concrete instance of the condition he was referring to, and the hon. member was not able to say any more than that somebody had told him so.

MR. TURLEY: We all know that cases of the kind have occurred.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I asked the hon. member to state a concrete case so as to enable me to contradict him, but he refused to state such a case, and I presume from that that he is unable to do so.

MR. TURLEY: I said I had stated a case before, and the hon. gentleman knows it very well.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have nothing to do with what the hon. member said in the last Parliament. I am dealing with the case which the hon. member puts forward now. He said that some contractor tendered for certain Government works, that he did not get that contract, and that he came and told the hon. member that it was for a particular reason, some other contractor having tendered lower because he was going to sweat his men and pay them a lower rate of wages. He did not tell us who the contractor was, or what the contract was, or give us any information whatever about it. I do not care to reply to a bald statement of that kind. What will the country think of an hon. member who, rising to discuss a great question of this kind, does not go beyond the region of vague generalities, to say nothing of details. I am prepared, and the House is prepared, as far as possible, to see justice done to the whole of the working classes of the colony to the fullest extent.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TURLEY: Since when?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Always. I venture to say that I could point to a dozen members on this side of the House who have done more for the working classes of the country than all the lot together on the other side.

MR. LESINA: What did they do for the working man?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They paid good wages—

MR. LESINA: Did he not give his labour in return for that?

MR. TURLEY: I suppose they sweated him.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What the hon. member evidently wishes to convey by this resolution is that the party to which he belongs desire, by legislation, to enforce a proper rate of wages for the working classes, and that the party on this side is opposed to it. He does not say it in that particular form, but that is what he is driving at.

MR. TURLEY: They have always opposed it. *Hansard* speaks.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He has not compared the conditions existing in the other colonies with the conditions existing here. If he could show that the condition of the men in the other colonies engaged in this particular class of work is better than is the condition of the same class here he would have to some extent substantiated his case, assuming that the conditions are equal. Before I sit down I will show that the isolated instances which the hon. member has singled out, during five, ten, or fifteen years, do not fit in with the condition of things as they are in the colony at the present time. As practical men we have to deal with practical questions as they are at the present time, not in the shape they may assume ten or twenty years hence. I presume that that contention is not disputed. Now, what is the condition of things at the present time? Before I go further, I may

say that I fail to see why a man engaged on a Government contract should get more wages, or less wages, than a man engaged in doing exactly the same kind of work on the opposite side of the street, working for me or for the leader of the Labour party. If the State has any duties in that respect, it is a duty which they owe not to any particular class wearing the cockade of the Trades Hall, but to the whole of the labouring classes of the State—the people who pay the taxes, and directly or indirectly maintain the State. Why should the hon. member single out any one particular class of people?

Mr. TURLEY: I did not say they were of the Trades Hall—that is the first I have heard of it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I did not say whether they should get low or high wages. I said Trades Hall because—

Mr. BROWNE: Because you could not help it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Because I never heard the hon. member or the hon. members on his side of the House, raise their voices in favour of any class of men that were not under the dominance of the Trades Hall.

Mr. LESINA: Do you believe in a minimum wage? That's the point.

Mr. TURLEY: No, he does not.

Mr. BARTHOLOMEW: You are in a hurry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I prefer to be judged from my acts, rather than any abstract opinions. I believe in paying a man what he honestly earns. Nature does not make anything alike. She does not make two engineers alike, and she does not make two workmen alike; and if there is a workman who, by his superior intelligence, his energy, his industry, and his pluck, is capable by a combination of all these things to do twice as much work for me as an ordinary workman will do, I do not see why that man should be reduced to the ordinary level.

Mr. TURLEY: This motion does not say you shall not pay 14s. a day.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We have to deal with things as they work out in practice. I believe in liberty. (Opposition laughter.) The hon. gentlemen preach liberty, but in the name of liberty they want to practice slavery.

Mr. BROWNE: Do try to be genuine.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member for South Brisbane said something to the effect that it was the class of persons least able to protect themselves that were entitled to the consideration of the Government. I have a higher opinion of the working people of the colony than the hon. gentleman. I do not think they are the class least able to protect themselves. I do not hold that they are inferior in intelligence to other people. I think they are particularly well able to protect themselves.

Mr. W. HAMILTON: Only let them try to.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I say that if a regulation is to apply to any particular class of men, we must in the first place apply it to all classes in the community. Why should the man who works on a farm on the Darling Downs be taxed to find a higher rate of wages for some other person? I do not say that that would be the case—I do not think it would—but that is the contention.

Mr. TURLEY: No. I did not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Well, if the object is not to secure a higher rate of wages, what is the purpose of the hon. member's motion? Is it to lower the present rate of wages?

Mr. TURLEY: I did not say that either.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then what is the object of the hon. member's

resolution? That is exactly the point where I join issue with the hon. member. I also join issue with him on nearly all the other things that he said, and I say distinctly that he sat down without telling us exactly what he wanted. Now, if the State is to extend its protecting wing and its influence to the men who labour by their hands, why should not we extend the same beneficent influence to the men who labour by their heads?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Hon. members say "Hear, hear!" What is the use of bringing forward a paltry and pettifogging resolution of this kind, which will protect only one single class in the community? Is not the man who has got a small shop in the Valley as much entitled to legislation to secure a certain return for his labour as the ordinary working man? I submit that the application of the principle to any one particular instance is absurd. Why, the Utopia of Sir Thomas Moore was a fool to it!

Mr. HARDACRE: Do you know anything at all?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If I do not know anything, I am different to the hon. gentleman, because I hold my tongue, but the hon. gentleman is always talking. I was proceeding to say that the hon. gentleman has not shown us that if the system were introduced here, it would place even the particular section that he represents, or those who work on Government contracts at the present time, in any better position. Experience shows that if a minimum rate of wage is used at all, it results practically in its adoption as the maximum. I asked the Under Secretary for Works this morning to prepare me a schedule of the rate of wages so far as he could obtain them in the other colonies. In New South Wales there is no fixed schedule rate. The sum is left to be fixed—as the hon. gentleman wishes it to be—according to the wages paid in the particular district in which the work is being carried on. I have therefore been unable to get the figures relating to New South Wales; but I have the figures relating to Victoria and Queensland, and three of the principal towns—Brisbane, Townsville, and Rockhampton. The rates paid in Queensland, I think, are incomparably 20 per cent. higher than the schedule rates paid in Victoria.

Mr. TURLEY: I did not say the hon. gentleman should adopt the Victorian rates.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What is the object of the motion, then.

Mr. LESINA: To prevent sweating; that is the object of the resolution.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. gentleman has not shown that in the period he referred to, the last four or five years, that any sweating has been going on.

Mr. LESINA: I can tell you of five or six contracts where it is going on.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am dealing now with the hon. member who moved this resolution, and I say that in the course of his speech he gave us no arguments likely to assist us in coming to a right conclusion on this matter. The Under Secretary informs me that there is one rate of wages for the whole of Victoria, and that is given in the schedule to the contracts. I shall give in parallel columns the rate of wages in different trades in Victoria, and the rate in Brisbane, which the Under Secretary states is uniform in the city. I wish to impress upon the House that I am taking the lowest figures in Queensland. There is a rate in Central and Northern Queensland which in some instances is from 20 to 25 per cent. higher than that which I shall quote for Brisbane, so that from my own point of view I am taking the less

favourable figures. The rates of wages for Victoria and Brisbane, as furnished me by the Under Secretary, are as follow :—

	Victoria.	Brisbane.
Carpenters ...	8s. 0d. per day	10s. 0d. per day
Masons ...	9s. 4d. "	11s. 0d. "
Bricklayers ...	8s. 0d. "	11s. 0d. "
Plasterers ...	8s. 0d. "	9s. 0d. "
Blacksmiths ...	10s. 0d. "	10s. 0d. "
Boilermakers and riveters	10s. 0d. "	10s. 0d. "
Engine-fitters, &c.	10s. 0d. "	No quotation for Government contracts in Brisbane.
Painters ...	8s. 0d. "	8s. 0d. per day
Plumbers ...	9s. 0d. "	11s. 0d. per day
Shipwrights ...	12s. 3d. "	No quotation for Government contracts in Brisbane.
Copper and brass workers	10s. 0d. "	13s. 0d. per day
Moulders ...	10s. 0d. "	9s. 0d. per day
Engine-drivers ...	8s. 0d. "	No quotation for Government contracts in Brisbane.
Labourers ...	6s. 0d. "	6s. to 8s. per day
Planers, borers, slotters	8s. 5d. "	No quotation for Government contracts in Brisbane.
Woodcarvers ...	8s. 0d. "	8s. to 9s. per day

There are other trades mentioned, such as tin-smiths, ironworkers, etc., who are not employed by day labour on Government contracts in Brisbane. The schedule in New South Wales is not filled in, but has to be filled up according to the portion of the colony in which a contract is to be carried out. I shall come to that point directly. But I wish here to quote a few figures showing the difference in wages on Government contracts in Brisbane and Townsville. In Brisbane carpenters are paid 10s. per day and in Townsville 12s. per day; in Brisbane masons are paid 11s. and in Townsville 13s. per day; in Brisbane bricklayers are paid 11s. and in Townsville 14s. per day; in Brisbane plasterers are paid 9s. and in Townsville 13s. to 14s. per day.

Mr. BROWNE: There is just the same difference in wages between Brisbane and the far North as there is between Brisbane and Victoria.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Very well, if that condition of things which exists in Victoria is so very superior, as the hon. member alleges, how is it that we do not find our Queensland labourers going to Victoria? The cost is only 30s. Every day almost there is a deputation waiting on the Secretary for Public Works protesting against men being introduced here from the southern colonies, where the system the hon. member refers to is so much in force. Hon. members will recollect seeing in the newspapers a report of an interview and deputation of working men, headed by the Hon. T. Macdonald-Paterson, then member for Brisbane North, had with me, asking that the work on the new Lands Office should be reserved for Brisbane men. They did not say a word about the rate of wages, but they objected to men from the southern colonies, though they might be more expert workmen, coming here and taking the work from Brisbane men. They never said a word about wages. I ask any hon. member who is accustomed to generalisations and deductions, and who practises his common sense, whether any man, be he a labourer or business man, would go from one condition of things to a place where the conditions were less to his interest or profit? In all

my experience I have never known a case where such a thing was done knowingly. Labour in any industry, like water, seeks the line of the least resistance or the line of the greatest profit, and if there is a rise of wages anywhere there is a rush to that place at once. Then, how is it that with our better climate those persons in Victoria and other places are continually coming here, if, as is asserted, the rate of wages is higher in the other colonies? I say ours is a better climate. The Victorians do not admit that, but argue that it is a worse climate. That is, however, because they are accustomed to their own climate. I want to take it from their point of view. (Opposition laughter.) I differ from most hon. members opposite inasmuch as I like to get both sides of a question, and be absolutely fair. I say ours is a better climate. However, I am not prepared to follow out this argument in all its ramifications. There are other members who desire to speak, and I shall be as brief as possible. But I say that under these circumstances it is a marvellous thing to me why our people do not rush down to the other colonies, and get the higher rate of wages prevailing there, if such is the case.

Mr. TURLEY: Did anyone say they were higher?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: If they are not higher, what becomes of the principle which the hon. member wishes to see in force in this colony? They have an ideal Minister for Works in New South Wales, according to the hon. member for South Brisbane. I am not going to say a word against that gentleman, because, personally and privately, he is a friend of mine, but he does many things which I would not do. The policy of New South Wales has been controlled for several years by the Labour party, and if they have not ideal legislation in that colony it shows how impracticable is the platform of that party. The hon. member says he did not say that wages were higher there than here. Then, what becomes of his theory? It is a fallacy and a fraud.

Mr. TURLEY: Do you believe in a minimum wage?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member asks me do I believe in a minimum wage. I do. I believe the minimum wage should be what a man honestly earns, and that he should not be deprived of one penny he honestly earns. But as different men are capable of earning different sums, there should not be one minimum wage. If 100 men are employed on a job there might be 100 minimum wages. If fifty men are equal, the minimum wage for those fifty men should be the same.

Mr. LESINA: Who is going to settle that question?

Mr. TURLEY: The employer.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am much obliged to the hon. member for asking that question. There are times when the hon. member for Clermont makes intelligent interjections, and if he would only conform to the usages of society he would be an acquisition to the House. However, that is one of those interjections for which I am obliged to him,

because it applies very strongly and [5 p.m.] aptly to the proposition of the hon. member for South Brisbane.

He says there should be a separate rate for each district. Now, supposing a contract is let at Charleville or Adavale, where there is no ruling rate of wages, who fixes the rate to be applied there?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Government consists of whom? Not of the body of men sitting on the front benches for the

time being. They only represent the concentrated opinion of the House. The Government represent the members of the House, and I venture to say that as soon as that rate of wages was fixed a motion would be tabled having for its object the affirmation of the fact that the rate of wages being paid at Adavale was not a proper standard. It simply comes, then, to the old dispute between the Trades Hall and the contractors. This is no new question. It is a question that has been agitating the colony for years past. Why should certain men, because they happen to be employed by the Government rather than by a contractor, get a higher rate of wages than those ruling in the trade? I say distinctly that they are not entitled to more, and I say equally distinctly that they should not get a penny less. If they render equal service, whoever the employer may be, their wages should be absolutely equal. Does the hon. member deny that?

Mr. GIVENS: Why do you not advocate the payment of pensions to everyone, as well as the highly paid civil servants?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: There are a great many men who would like to get pensions—men constructed on principles which no one advocates more than the hon. member for Cairns.

Mr. GIVENS: We want fair treatment all round.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I should like to remind the hon. member for South Brisbane of a deputation which was introduced to me the other day by the leader of the Opposition and himself. I say the bringing of men under Government patronage or supervision appears to have a demoralising effect. Those hon. members introduced a deputation headed by a Mr. Henderson. I do not know exactly who he is, though I believe he is a trustee of the Trades Hall. Is that so?

Mr. TURLEY: It is very likely. But it does not matter; we will say he is.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He is one of the trustees of the Trades Hall, and among other things he told me was that at the present time a great proportion of the men employed by the Government at the Ipswich workshops consisted of the ragtag and bobtail. Are we going to introduce a system such as this, which is advocated by the hon. member for South Brisbane, and which will reduce the workers of this colony down to the condition of the ragtag and bobtail? I told that gentleman that I positively declined to believe him, and that the men in the Ipswich workshops belonged to no such class. He told me further that it would be much cheaper for the Government to get rid of them.

Mr. TURLEY: In the first place he never made the statement.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: All I can say is that I took the statement down in writing at the time it was made, and the hon. member came to Mr. Henderson's rescue, and to get him out of his difficulty, said he only applied his statement to the 6s., 7s., and 8s. a day men.

Mr. TURLEY: That is what he said.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Well, this motion applies to the 6s., 7s., and 8s. a day men—the very class to which he says his friend was referring.

Mr. TURLEY: The motion does not say so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We have before us the schedules of the other colonies, to which the hon. member referred. I have quoted the Victorian schedule, and I contend that the men referred to in that schedule are the 6s., 7s., and 8s. a day men, and, therefore, what the hon. member apparently wishes to establish is this principle of employing what his

friend calls the ragtag and bobtail at a certain minimum wage. I am opposed to that principle, and I am opposed to his friend who enunciated that principle the other day.

Mr. TURLEY: He did not enunciate it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He did not enunciate it as a principle, but he laid it down as a fact.

Mr. TURLEY: He applied it to the men of his own trade who were taking a particular rate of wages.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member says it is so?

Mr. TURLEY: He applied it to the engineers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Now we come to the next point. The same gentleman told me that what we wanted was to get the best men; that the men who were at the Ipswich workshops at present were being paid more than they were worth; and he objected very strongly to that. But the hon. member for South Brisbane wants a particular rate to be paid whether a man earns it or not. What is to be the outcome of such a proposition if we put it into force? What is the contractor going to do? Naturally enough he will pick out the young, athletic men of twelve or thirteen stone who have the physical prowess and capacity for doing a large quantity of work. He will select that class of men, and if no others are going to be employed what is going to become of them? How will this minimum wage business apply to the men of fifty or sixty years of age? How are they going to live? What becomes of the humanitarian principles so loudly advocated by hon. members opposite, both in this House and on the public platform?

Mr. TURLEY: What do they do now?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: What they do now is this: There is no minimum wage except the wage that a man earns.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: It ought to be better to earn something than nothing, surely.

Mr. TURLEY: They will be sweated.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Hon. members opposite talk in a very high-sounding way about many things, but when they come to spend their own money the state of affairs is quite different. I could quote several instances in which they have ground down men by 6d. a day.

Mr. TURLEY and Mr. LESINA: Men in this House?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: And I know others belonging to that party who never gave a day's employment in their lives to any man, and never will, and yet are prepared to lay down the conditions under which all employers should employ their men.

Mr. LESINA: You never found anyone on this side lambing-down shearers' cheques, anyhow.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then there is another class of labour to which this motion will apply. Suppose there is a boy who enters the Ipswich workshops, learns his trade, and has served his time when he has reached nineteen or twenty years of age, although he is not yet a full-grown man. Where is he going to get employment? Does this resolution leave any room for him? Not only does it exclude from employment the aged, and infirm, and debilitated, and physically incapable, but it applies to the young men also. What will happen to the farmers' or workmen's sons who might be very usefully employed at a certain rate of wage; but this schedule provides that only a very small percentage of them shall be employed, and the rest will be driven to the street corners to join the loafers and unemployed, and give work to the police. That is what the motion will lead to. I do not

say at all that that is the hon. member's intention, but that will be the result. Hon. members opposite never see where their policy is going to lead them.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They do not care, either.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am not prepared to say that they do not care. I dare say there are hon. members on the other side who are quite as anxious as members on this side to see the country progressing; but, so far, all the legislative schemes that they have brought forward in this or any other colony have only landed them in a hopeless mess. There has been nothing practical about them at all, even for the class that they are supposed to labour for and legislate in the direct interests of.

Mr. TURLEY: That is only your supposition.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member brings in a second portion of his resolution, which says that the number of hours during which men shall be employed shall not be greater than forty-eight hours per week.

Mr. TURLEY: It says nothing of the kind in the resolution.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; it provides for an eight-hours' day.

Mr. TURLEY: Yes, for that wage.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Now, what do we find in the schedules in Queensland? The Under Secretary for Works assures me—I have it in writing from him—that in Queensland persons working for contractors on Government works only labour forty-four hours per week.

Mr. TURLEY: I am not asking for eight hours.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: In Victoria, under this resolution, they work forty-eight hours a week; and yet the hon. member holds up to us that the condition of things in Victoria is superior to what it is here. My objection to the resolution is not because it imposes a minimum wage, but because it would place the labourers of this country in a far worse position than they are in at the present time.

Mr. TURLEY: They do not get forty-eight hours' pay for forty-four hours' work.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member does not care so long as he can make capital out of the question. The hon. member can clear out, like King O'Malley went from South Australia to Tasmania, and become member for a mining district there; but there are a great many of us who cannot do that, and he would saddle us with the responsibility of his fads, and we would have to pay the taxes and the interest on the national debt that may be created by the condition of things that he would force upon the country.

Mr. LESINA: His heart beats for the labourers.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member covered a great deal of ground. He went to England, and quoted some 200 or 300 local authorities or municipalities there. He told us about the London County Council, and what they did in matters of this kind. I am sure the hon. member has studied the proceedings of the London County Council. If he has not studied the question he has at all events read something about it, and it is apparent to anyone who has studied the proceedings of that body that the grossest jobbery and the most infamous transactions with regard to workmen that were ever perpetrated have taken place under the London County Council. I am not prepared to say that such is the condition of affairs to-day, but I know it was a few years ago, and the most glaring scandals were exposed in connection with this system which the hon. member is advocating.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Bogus figures.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Bogus figures and everything else.

Mr. TURLEY: I think I know a good deal about it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Does the hon. member dispute that?

Mr. BROWNE: One of the leading statesmen in Great Britain, at any rate, was chairman of the London County Council.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member quoted from the Sydney Press about the excellent system of public works that is in force in New South Wales. I would ask him whether he has read the *Daily Telegraph* of 21st June last?

Mr. TURLEY: Yes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Has the hon. member read those eight columns of matter which were contained in that paper, showing that under the system in force in New South Wales with regard to public and other works in connection with the unemployed, and in connection with a class which is springing up of professional unemployed, that system has driven New South Wales into a condition of insolvency, so to speak? (Opposition laughter.) The article showed that under this system certain works, which are enumerated—the cost of which is specified—chapter and verse given, and the plans and sections given, if necessary—that under this heaven-born system, which the hon. member wishes to enforce in this country, those works have cost 25 per cent., 30 per cent., and even 50 per cent. more than works which were conducted on economical and commercial lines.

Mr. TURLEY: That is a statement made by the Builders and Contractors' Association.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Chapter and verse are given, and all the works are specified; it has never yet been contradicted, and I challenge the hon. member to contradict it now. I like to descend from these theoretical realms to the plane of common sense, and to view things in an ordinary common-sense manner, just as we do in connection with our own transactions. If we all did that it would be better for the working classes of the community. If there are unemployed and they come to me—if the hon. member for Fitzroy wants me to employ some man, I would like to be able to pay him full wages, or a little over, if possible, rather than cut him down. But if I have to hire a man and I do not know whether he is good, bad, or indifferent, and have to give him 8s. a day, whether he loafs all the time or does something else—that I disapprove of, and the result is that I will not employ a man at all, but will go without. I believe that this motion is opposed to the very best interests of the class of people whom the hon. member proposes to serve. The hon. member said that on the Fairfield deviation men were only paid 4s. a day. Well, I regret very much that 4s. a day should ever have been paid in this colony. It was a very poor wage, if it was paid, and I hope that such a condition of things will never arise again in this country as will cause such a rate to be paid.

Mr. LESINA: It is being paid in Government contracts now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I do not think it is. I asked the Under Secretary to-day, and I have his written statement here, and I have read it to the House. The Under Secretary assures me that these are the current wages paid to persons employed on Government contracts in Queensland. If the statement is wrong, the Under Secretary has to take the responsibility of it. If it is wrong, I

would like to know where anyone has paid a lower rate. I now come to the question of a daily wage. I have had a great deal to do lately with employing persons in connection with the two departments which I have the honour to administer—the Railway Department and the Department of Public Works. At present there are three railways which are being constructed by day labour. I have heard it said that on one of those lines—the Nerang-Tweed Railway—3s., 4s., and 5s. a day are being paid. That is absolutely false. I gave no instructions whatever to the engineer in charge of the work beyond that if a man got 7s. a day he had to do 7s. worth of work for it, or else he had to go.

Mr. BROWNE: Nobody expects that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: People do expect that, and the result is that a great many people who expected to get 7s. for 3s. 6d. worth of work have gone across the border into New South Wales.

Mr. TURLEY: You have a minimum wage then?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; there is no minimum wage, so far as I know.

Mr. LESINA: You adopted one in the Factories Act last session—2s. 6d. a day.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I was speaking of the contracts covered by the motion now before the House. I have had some conversation on this subject with the hon. member for Enoggera, the member for Wide Bay in the House of Representatives, Mr. Fisher, and with some others, and probably with some hon. members who are now here. I asked them if they could devise some means by which a man who did not know anything about navvying, or who was absolutely unfitted for the work, could be dealt with. The only means I could devise—and I may say that the gentlemen I have referred to agreed with me—was by the adoption of what is called the “butty-gang” system, by which some of the work could be given to a gang of men, and by which any ordinary navvy, who was able to work, would be able to earn, say, 7s. per day. If any man was not able to work, or if he was an old man, rather than throw him on the charity of the country and make him a pauper, or have him rambling about the country, or dying in the bush, this system would enable him, if he could do 5s. worth of work in a day, to get that amount, or, if he could work only half-a-day, he would get 3s. 6d., while a good man would get perhaps 8s. a day. It was based on the average standard, which the engineer told me was about 7s. Now, if a man only works one or two hours a day, or if he drinks, or if he is only prepared to work at the “Government stroke,” and he only earns 4s. or 5s. a day, and then it is said that that is the rate of wages paid by the Government or by contractors, it will be absolutely absurd and false.

Mr. LESINA: We do not say that.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It has been said, and it has been said that this is the rate of wages that this country is paying. I have spoken longer than I intended. I did not refer to New Zealand. Probably I might if I had time, but notwithstanding the rate of wages paid in New Zealand—notwithstanding their Arbitration and Conciliation Acts, I do not think the people there are as well off as the people here at the present time. I looked up the list of unemployed in New Zealand in one of their labour journals—there is a list of the unemployed in the different districts—and I find that they have a good many. They say that the people came down to see the Duke and the Princess—that was the excuse given for the great number of unemployed when this was written last month. They came several hundred miles to see the Duke and Duchess. Of course, we

can take that excuse as we like. I looked down the columns to see where they came from, and I did not see a single Queenslander among them, showing that, notwithstanding the great conditions existing there—though it is supposed to be “a land flowing with milk and honey”—the condition of things is better in Queensland. If we look down the columns of the labour bureau here, how many people do we find from the other colonies?

Mr. LESINA: How many families do you feed in Brisbane now? Several hundred.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I will tell the hon. member about some of those families. I know some cases where the Government are feeding a man with a wife and family of six children, and the man refused 30s. a week and rations, and said he would make the Government feed him. There are a great many other cases like that. I hope the Home Secretary will take a note of it; and when men can get work but will not work, I hope he will not allow them to be fed at the expense of the honest hard-working men of this country.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. BOWMAN: Why do you feed them if they refuse work?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I would not feed them; but the Government feed them—and feed them often on the representations of members on the other side for political purposes.

Mr. TURLEY: Absolutely untrue.

Mr. BOWMAN: You cannot mention one case.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member for Balonne will tell you a great many cases.

Mr. STORY: In my district it is not their business to get work, but to stay there for the election.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have spoken longer than I intended, and I do not think I need say any more. I think the Secretary for Agriculture has something to say on this question, and I am sure the House will be very glad to hear what that hon. gentleman has to say. He will say it a great deal better than anything I could say on the subject, and he will put it in a more interesting form. I wish to say in conclusion, that if I thought the hon. gentleman's motion was calculated to benefit the working classes of this country, without sacrificing the interests of the other classes of the community, no person would more readily support it than I. Everything in this world is connected, more or less, with something else, and when we speak about doing something for any particular class, whether it affects their material interests or their liberty, we must see how it affects or reacts upon other classes of the community.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: But it is characteristic of the hon. members who sit with the mover of this motion that their range of politics is limited. I ask him to withdraw the motion and consider whether he cannot devise some scheme which would be of universal application—which would improve the lot not only of the working classes but of every other class in the community, without injuring any class. If he can do that he will be conferring a benefit not only on this House and the people outside, but on the whole of the civilised world. If he can do what I have indicated he will do something which the greatest intellects in the world have not succeeded in doing yet; and if he does that there will be nobody more ready than I to support the hon. gentleman.

Mr. BROWNE (Croydon): I do not think the Minister for Works need have apologised for the length of his speech. I am sure there is no one

but would have been very glad to listen to him if he once touched on the question before the House, but when the hon. gentleman is beating all round the bush and deliberately trying to keep away from the question, I think there is an excuse for getting somewhat tired of listening. I was very sorry that the hon. gentleman when rising on the first occasion as a Minister representing the Government on the front Ministerial bench should have forgotten that he is now a responsible Minister, and that he is not outside electioneering and trotting out the same old bogey as usual. The speech made by the hon. member for South Brisbane was one made by a man who knew what he was talking about, in contradistinction to that made by the hon. gentleman, who got up and accused the mover of this motion of electioneering. Of course the hon. gentleman said he did not mean it, but it looked very much like the case of one of his own countrymen who said, "Paddy, I have lost my shovel, and you stole it, and that's a broad hint for you, be jabbers!" The hon. gentleman then went off into the same old tirade, and I think it is one of the leading faults of the Ministerialists that they seem to have no originality. When I came here in 1893, every time you saw anyone on the Ministerial side speaking on a question like this, there would be the same old bogey—Trades Hall, Trades Hall—trotted out. The hon. gentleman this afternoon mentioned the Trades Hall just seventeen times, and in doing so he was insulting the whole of the working men of the country, because he said that the men on this side never brought anything forward except what would affect the men under the dominance of Trades Hall, which meant they were practically led by the nose. It is just as well, as the hon. gentleman is doing a bit of electioneering, for the people to know that the head of the Government this afternoon has said distinctly that he believes all the manual labourers of this colony are a lot of unthinking animals led by the nose by that bogey, the Trades Hall.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: He did not say so.

MR. BROWNE: He said the men on this side never brought anything forward unless it was for the crowd under the domination of Trades Hall.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I argued they never brought anything forward for the persons who most require protection; and I am not the leader of the Government, anyhow.

MR. BROWNE: The hon. gentleman was in the position of leader of the Government this afternoon.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No.

MR. BROWNE: As Minister he was replying to the mover of the resolution; in fact, the other Ministers were all away at the time, so he must have been the head of the Government for the time being.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They were all in the building.

MR. BROWNE: They may have been here. In this instance I am something like Sam Weller. If I could see through two pine doors and a shutter I might have seen them; but having only eyes, or only one that is of any use, my vision was limited. I could not see them when they were not here. I take no notice of this Trades Hall bogey.

MR. ANNEAR: Why do you refer to it then?

MR. BROWNE: I said that the Minister mentioned it seventeen times, and it seems to be about the only stone he has to throw.

THE PREMIER: Do you want to disown the Trades Hall?

MR. BROWNE: I have no more interest in it than hon. gentlemen opposite, perhaps not so

much, because some of them are, probably, connected with the institution that lent money to the Trades Hall on mortgage.

MR. LESINA: It doesn't stink as much as the Q. N. Bank, anyhow.

MR. BROWNE: From that point of view he has perhaps more interest in the Trades Hall than I have. I am a member, and [5.30 p.m.] I hope I shall die a member, of a trade union; and the particular union to which I belong at Croydon—the Miners' Association—is affiliated with the Australian Labour Federation, which meets at the Trades Hall. Apart from that I have no more to do with the Trades Hall than the Pastoral Association, which meets in the *Courier* building, has with the *Courier* newspaper. When the hon. gentleman accuses people of being under the domination of the Trades Hall, I would ask what is to be thought of a gentleman administering one of the biggest departments in the State, and at the same time running a great financial institution in the *Courier* building, where he does a good deal of the work of the country, and where, no doubt, many articles abusing us have originated?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Can you show that I have done anything wrong?

MR. BROWNE: I am not concerned to show what the hon. gentleman has done wrong; I know he seldom does what is right in my opinion. The hon. gentleman in his speech not only slated this party but he spoke in very contemptuous terms of some of the leading statesmen of Great Britain, for whom most of us have a great respect. The London County Council he would not touch with a pitchfork. And yet the chairman of that body was at the time the Earl of Dufferin, and amongst its members were Lord Rosebery, Sir John Lubbock, Lord Farrar, and some of the most eminent statesmen and scientists of the day.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They were in the minority.

MR. BROWNE: After this any praise we receive from the hon. gentleman should be taken as an insult, and any insult as praise. With regard to the question itself, it is a very simple one, and was very clearly put by the hon. member for South Brisbane. The first complaint made by the Secretary for Public Works was that the hon. member had not brought forward a concrete case. But do we, when passing laws against murder, wait for somebody to be killed before affixing a penalty for the crime? No concrete instance was needed. It was sufficient for the hon. member to show that in every one of the Australian colonies, excepting Queensland, this system has been in force for many years, and that in none was there any desire to go back upon it. It is also in force in the London County Council, which governs a population larger than that of all the Australian colonies, and has a tremendous revenue at its command, where it has worked with complete success. It is also in force in Birmingham, where the present Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Chamberlain, began an agitation for it as far back as 1874, and ultimately carried it through. Of course, that is only Joe Chamberlain. It is not the hon. member for Bulloo, the Secretary for Works and Railways, who, with his chest swelled out, informed a crowd of people the other night that he was an employer of more labour than any other man in Queensland. He happens to be for the time being Minister of a Government department, paid by the taxpayers to perform certain duties, and yet he tells them that he is employing more of them than any other man in Queensland. The proposed system is

better for the contractors as well as better for the men, and it is also better for the professional men in the service who have to prepare the estimates for public works, whether it be the Chief Engineer or the Government Architect. A part of their estimate of cost is based on the current rate of wages. The contractors do the same. Under the existing system, if there is only one sweating contractor out of twenty he comes along, bases his tender on 1s. a day less wages or an hour a day more work, and gets the tender away from the honest contractor, and the officer who drew up the estimate looks very foolish when the contract price is seen to be a long way below his estimate. Then we had the old argument trotted out—if a minimum wage is fixed what is to become of the little fellows, the young fellows, or the very old fellows. I would like to ask what becomes of them now? If wages were only 2s. 6d. a day, and I and the hon. member for Cairns, who is fifteen or twenty years my junior and three or four stone heavier, went at the same time to apply for a job of manual labour, the employer would not choose the little chap getting on in years, but the big, strong young fellow. No doubt that is one of the evils of the existing competitive system. As a man grows older the less chance there is of his getting employment in manual labour, and every day that chance becomes smaller and smaller. The very fact of a minimum wage would give the older men a chance if it was done in the way the Minister said he did with regard to certain contracts. Supposing the minimum wage is fixed at 5s. a day—

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Do you not think it may become the maximum wage?

Mr. BROWNE: I certainly do not. Among the 200 local governing bodies in Great Britain which have adopted the system is Glasgow, the council of which consists of about as hard-headed a body of Scotchmen as you will find anywhere. Glasgow has been made the model municipality of the world, and this was one of the first things they started. Then they decided to dispense with the contractor, and do as much work as possible by day labour under their own officers; anything they did by contract had the minimum wage clause inserted. That should be evidence enough in its favour. And there is the fact, which I stated before, that it is in force in all the colonies but Queensland; but they are all satisfied with it, and would not dream of doing away with it. When I was in Sydney during the Commonwealth celebrations, I spoke with many leading politicians of the south about it, and without an exception they all spoke highly in its favour. I may say that I met some men, even among those who generally voice labour or democracy, who do not altogether believe in conciliation or arbitration, and some other measures; but every man I met, who was at all conversant with the public works of the colony, spoke in the highest terms of the minimum wage on Government contracts. The Secretary for Works, of course, said he did not see why a man working on a Government contract should be paid any more than anyone else. The resolution does not ask for that. It simply asks that the Government shall insist upon Government contractors paying the current rate of wages—that is practically the same rate as other people are paying, and as the Government themselves are paying to the men in their own employ. The hon. member for South Brisbane did not intend to say that every contractor, or the majority of contractors, are sweaters. All he said was that in contracting, as in all other trades or callings, there are men who will cut other men down, and will take advantage of the necessities of others.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That is human nature.

Mr. BROWNE: Well, knowing it to be human nature and that we cannot change it, we are trying to guard as much as we possibly can by means of Acts of Parliament against the ill-effects that may be brought upon the inhabitants of this State or any other State. So far as this State is concerned, the hon. member says "why should the State do it?" I think that every political economist has always contended that it was the duty of the State to set the example so far as these things are concerned. I remember a passage in the works of Harold Rogers, the great political economist—of course he may not have said as much as the hon. member the Secretary for Works, but he has written more and he has been listened to by more—and he points out that employers will get labour cheap if they can—that is their business; and the business of the State is to see that they do not cut wages down to that extent that it will do harm to the people of the State. I think that is a very good line to go upon. That is all that is being asked by this resolution. The hon. member went on to read a schedule of the wages in Victoria and Queensland, and he brought that in as having something to do with this question, but it has nothing to do with it at all. I may just as well say that because the wages are lower in Victoria than they are here, it is because Victoria is a great deal older, or because Victoria is a great deal smaller colony. Wages must always be lower in Victoria than they are further north, and I hope they will always be higher in the Northern part of this colony than they are in Victoria. I do not think anyone would say that because they have a minimum wage in Manchester the labourers get the same wages as they do in Victoria, where they have a minimum wage too. There is nothing in that argument; no comparison at all. If we have higher wages here that is one of the reasons why we should pass this resolution, because if, as the hon. gentleman says, there are lower wages in the other colonies, that is all the more temptation to people to come here and pay lower wages, and it shows the more necessity for a resolution such as this, because there is all the more inducement for contractors to come up here and bring up low-paid men to compete with the local contractor.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: What are wages?

Mr. BROWNE: Well, the wages that we are discussing—

Mr. ARMSTRONG: When you are discussing the question of wages you should define what wages are.

Mr. BROWNE: Well, wages are what a man can get for his labour at any rate, but I am not going to enter into a discussion with the hon. member as to what wages are. What we are concerned with is the current rate of wages. I believe the current rate of wages being paid to labouring men may be taken at 7s. per day, and we say that the Government should place in their contracts a provision that the contractor who comes here to do the work shall pay something like the same rate of wages as are being paid by other employers of the same class of labour in the district in which the work is situated.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That is a fair conclusion.

Mr. BROWNE: I do not think there is any injustice in that. Suppose we have a big contract to let such as the new Lands Office in Brisbane. We know that the present contractor for the new Lands Office is a very good employer of labour and all the rest of it, and is paying a certain rate of wages—supposing there is another contract such as a new post office to be tendered for, and some other man comes along from some other place, knowing that at the present time there are lots of unemployed about, and tenders

for the work allowing for a lower rate of wages than is being paid by the local contractors? If the local contractor tenders for that new building at the same rate as the contractor for the Lands Office has done, and another comes along knowing that we have got a lot of unemployed here, and puts in a tender for about 10 per cent. less in the belief that he will be able to get labour at 1s. a day less, would that be fair to the local contractors or to the working men? I say it would not; it is carrying the cut-throat system a little too far. Where the danger of this resolution comes in I do not know. The Secretary for Railways raised another bogey in connection with the eight-hour system. Does he mean to tell me that, because there is an eight-hour system, a man is compelled to work eight hours a day for forty-eight hours in the week? That system recognises that there shall be an eight-hours day of labour, but it does not say that a man shall not work less. Does not the hon. gentleman know that, under the Mining Act, it is compulsory that engine-drivers shall not work more than eight hours a day? Still there is not an engine-driver in the North who works more than forty-four hours a week, although the Act of Parliament says that his hours shall not be more than forty-eight hours. In some other cases the Act says that men shall not work more than eight consecutive hours a day, but that does not say that they shall not work less than that. That is merely one of the bogeys that the hon. gentleman has brought up against this resolution. The hon. gentleman at the present time is a large employer of labour, and I believe he is honest when he says that he intends that the men employed on the works being carried out by day labour shall get a fair wage. But what possible chance has the Government to make that system a success if contractors are allowed to come here and pay men as little as they like. The hon. gentleman is carrying out one or two of these works by day labour now, and is paying the men employed somewhere about 6s. or 7s. a day in ordinary cases. Accounts will be kept, and after that work is finished, the cost will be reckoned. Suppose a contractor takes another work of a similar character, and gets a big crowd of men to work for him at 4s. 6d. or 5s. a day—when times are bad and men are unemployed they are glad to accept almost anything—and suppose the contractor completes the work for a great deal less than the works cost which are carried out by day labour, will the day labour system have had a fair trial?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I am not trying it, I am doing it.

MR. BROWNE: I am aware that the hon. gentleman is carrying out work by day labour, but I ask what chance will there be of proving the success or non-success of that system if a contractor builds another railway and gets men to work for him for 5s. a day? Will the hon. gentleman have any chance of making the day-labour scheme appear a success on paper?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: On one contract the Government have in hand now for a railway the contractor is paying his men 7s. a day.

MR. BROWNE: I have not a word to say about what any contractor is paying. The contractor in that case may be paying that amount, but if another contractor competing against him paid less he would be penalised.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: We will not accept his tender if he is one of those men.

THE PREMIER: Another contractor is paying 8s. a day.

MR. BROWNE: I am quite aware that some contractors pay reasonable wages, but there are

others who do not. I know that generally in the North it is recognised by the Works Department that a higher rate of wages is paid there, more especially in the Gulf country, than in the South, and, generally speaking, we have not had much trouble in that connection. I know one contractor who, knowing nothing about the conditions of the North, went up there and took a contract. He took with him one or two men, who were engaged here at 8s. 6d. a day. At that time the wages for carpenters in that district was 15s. a day, and when those men found that, they left the contractor, and he had to do the job as best he could, with the result that he lost a great deal of money by the contract. He had tendered for a small Government work, but he would not go on with that. If there had been bad times up there and a lot of unemployed about, which there was not, that contractor would have gone on with both contracts, and have cut down the wages in the district and have hunted the local contractors, who had spent a great deal of money on plant and material, out of the place. But the conditions being favourable to the workmen and not favourable to the contractor, he did not do that. I do not see what need there was for the Secretary for Public Works to make this so strongly a party question. The question is one which hon. members on the other side should look at with just as much interest as we on this side do, because the establishment of a minimum wage on Government contracts is just as much in the interests of the contractor and the business man as it is in the interest of the working men. Do not hon. members know how, when some of our railways were being constructed by contractors and sub-contractors, business men and boarding-house keepers were let in? That was the result in most cases of the work being let at a price which could not possibly pay at the current rate of wages. The adoption of this proposal cannot hurt anybody. According to the evidence we have of the working of the principle in large towns at home and in the other colonies, it has been a success. From the reports made by Mr. John Young, when he was at home the year before last—that is the last year he was in office—it appears that the enforcement of a minimum wage in contracts has worked satisfactorily, and he favoured the day-labour system of carrying out public works.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: And the working men passed a vote of censure on him.

MR. BROWNE: I do not know that they did.

MR. TURLEY: They did not.

MR. BROWNE: I do not think they would pass a vote of censure on a man for introducing a minimum wage.

MR. McMASTER: Yes, they did; I quoted it in this House.

MR. BROWNE: I do not think any evidence has been adduced to show that working men passed a vote of censure on anyone for introducing a minimum wage. At any rate, it seems very strange to me how contractors or business men can oppose a motion of this sort, considering that the principle it embodies has been adopted and worked with success in London, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, and Birmingham, and that it was brought forward and advocated by leading business men in those communities. It was not working men, but leading men of experience, who had most to do with the adoption of the principle in those places, and it has been the same in the other colonies. The system has passed its experimental stage, and we have the experience of other places to guide us in the matter. I hope that, if the motion goes to a division, hon. members on both sides will

look upon it as a question in which we are all equally interested, and not make it a party question.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I did not make it a party question.

Mr. BROWNE: Many of us have earned our living as workmen. I was just as good when I used a pick and shovel as I am now, and I am not ashamed of the work in which I was engaged. The Secretary for Public Works was also every bit as good when he followed another occupation as he is now, if not better. I have nothing more to say. I shall support the motion.

Mr. ARMSTRONG (*Lockyer*): Recognising the importance of this matter, as we have only about four minutes left for further discussion, I hope the House will allow me to move the adjournment of the debate.

Question put and passed; and resumption of debate made an Order of the Day for Thursday, 19th September.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—DEBATE ON FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

Question—That there be granted to His Majesty, for the service of the year [7 p.m.] 1901-1902, a sum not exceeding £300, to defray the salary of the aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Governor—stated.

Mr. FOGARTY (*Drayton and Toowoomba*): I should not have troubled the Committee by speaking during this debate if it had not been for the proposed reduction in the endowment to local bodies, which is a very drastic measure, and which will inflict a considerable amount of hardship upon all classes of people. I think myself, notwithstanding the necessity for economy, even at the eleventh hour, the Treasurer should increase the amount of endowment, and restore it to what it was last year—£105,000. It is perfectly true that during last session increased obligations were thrown upon local authorities. A Health Commissioner was appointed at a very large salary and with very large powers. That gentleman is exceedingly active in the discharge of his duties, and is compelling local authorities to perform very expensive works. It is possible that in the interests of the health of the people sanitary reform should be put into operation as early as possible, but we were given to understand that although considerable powers would be given to the local authorities, financial assistance would also be given to them. One gentleman in speaking pointed out that divisional boards had a much stronger claim to assistance than municipalities or shires. I think quite differently. If a divisional board has been extremely extravagant in the past, those local bodies who have been careful in the expenditure of their revenues should not be penalised. The member for Mackay, Mr. Paget, in speaking last night, pointed out that the Pioneer Divisional Board, of which he is the chairman, had met all its obligations, and he protested against a reduction of the endowment as the revenues of that board were, comparatively speaking, very small.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: They are only relatively small. As a matter of fact, the board has one of the largest revenues in the colony.

Mr. FOGARTY: I think if it is necessary for the Pioneer Board to have a greater revenue, there should be no difficulty in attaining that result. If the case of the Seaforth Estate is a fair criterion of the values assessed by that board, then I say the division is certainly undervalued, and those districts which have struck the maximum rate should receive more assist-

ance than the Treasurer contemplates giving. I know of several local bodies who are unable to meet their present engagements, and in the event of the Health Officer compelling those bodies to carry out certain sanitary reforms, which may be very necessary, it will be utterly beyond their means, and the consequence will be that the places will get a bad repute, and people will possibly flee from them as from plague-stricken districts. Hence a very considerable reduction in the value of property will naturally occur. I am of opinion that all should be assisted. I have no hesitation in saying, as far as the expenditure of public money is concerned, the local bodies show more for the moneys they have expended than any other branch of the State—moneys expended to very great advantage—but, as I pointed out, unfortunately the revenue is too limited. Dr. Ham, the present Health Commissioner, who is a most excellent officer, is exceedingly vigilant just now, and he calls upon the local bodies to immediately construct heavy sanitary works and waterworks, which run into hundreds of thousands of pounds. Well, I think it nothing but fair that these bodies should receive some kind of assistance. If the municipalities do not receive the assistance they absolutely need, it will have a tendency to reduce the municipal population. It is well known that people who are alive to the interests of their pocket live in the suburbs, and invariably the taxation of the suburbs is considerably less—less even by more than one-half—than in the municipalities. They reap all the benefits of municipal expenditure and improvements, and pay nothing in return. Therefore, I say if any persons have a special claim it is the municipalities and shires of Queensland. I understood the hon. member for Mackay to say that in the past money had been squandered as far as his district was concerned, and as an illustration he pointed out that roads were formed at a cost of 1s. 4½d. per chain. I have a little knowledge of local government administration, and I certainly would not care to term any highway a road that was improved at that cost. In some districts that expenditure would scarcely disturb the virgin soil, and it would be almost impossible to even align the channels, without going into any permanent work at all. Unfortunately for some of the local bodies, although the land is of a useful and fertile nature, and exceedingly good for the production of wealth, it is equally as bad for road-making purposes. If the country is barren the expense of forming and establishing roads is not so very great. In country such as that on the Downs the soil is first-class, but not for this purpose, and hence it entails the expenditure of a very large sum of money on the local authorities. In the municipality that I have the honour to share in the representation of we have been extremely careful in the past. I will say that the members of the council in the early days were men who laid the foundations of almost a model city. They borrowed very cautiously. It is very true that their borrowing powers have been considerably extended by fresh legislation in the direction of not considering money obtained for waterworks purposes, but we have borrowed a considerable sum of money for waterworks purposes, and the town has grown to such an extent that we are endeavouring to provide a further scheme. The Hydraulic Engineer's Department has reported from time to time, and at very considerable expense to the corporation—it has cost us some £200 or £300. I believe it was money well spent, but the lowest estimate, and that which the Hydraulic Engineer recommended, was to cost £200,000. Now, that is a very large sum of money indeed, and, if it had been borrowed two

or three years ago, the money would have been expended now, but hardly any water would have fallen from the heavens. The consequence is that the burden would have fallen very heavily upon the municipality of Toowoomba. Some of the neighbouring shires are small and their revenues are small likewise. The values are fairly good, and they are not at all niggardly in the valuations. The people cheerfully submit to the values that are placed upon their properties, but still the revenues are small. I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is no part of Queensland, and no part of the continent, in which money has been more judiciously expended than in the shires surrounding Toowoomba. It is not a matter of boasting. I am simply pleading for worthy and deserving bodies, and I regret that the Treasurer has thought fit to reduce the amount of endowment to such a considerable extent.

Mr. McMASTER: He could not help himself.

Mr. FOGARTY: Federation is likely to still further reduce our revenue. The probability is that intercolonial freetrade will have that effect. Before I depart from the question of the endowment to local authorities, I desire to say that I think that this cheese-paring is unworthy of the reputation of the Treasurer, and unworthy of the reputation of the State of Queensland. I know perfectly well that in a very short while appeals will be made to the Treasurer with a view to restoring this £45,000. Several local authorities already, in public meetings assembled, have carried resolutions protesting against this cheese-paring policy, and any person at all acquainted with the great resources of Queensland will admit that £45,000 is a very small item indeed, and, instead of assisting the Treasury, the chances are that it will be a direct loss in this way: If the unfortunate ratepayers are burdened to such an extent that their purchasing powers are seriously diminished a loss will accrue through that channel, and a loss to the State probably much greater than the proposed reduction in the endowment. I hope that the Treasurer will see his way to restore the £45,000, especially in the face of the proposed amendment of the Local Government Act. I believe the Home Secretary has a Local Government Bill on the stocks, and, according to His Excellency's Opening Speech, it is likely to become law this session. If it becomes law it will certainly extend the powers of the local bodies considerably, but unfortunately there is no financial assistance proposed to be given to carry out those extended powers, and it is utterly impossible for them to carry on unless they are assisted in some way. In the Bill the Government are extremely careful in guarding Government property, which is to be exempt from local taxation. Well, I hope the House has sufficient good sense to remove an objectionable clause of that sort in the new Bill. The people form the Government, they are the country, and any injury done to the people is a direct injury to the State. The Treasurer is reported to have seen the error of his ways in connection with the imposition of a penny stamp duty upon all accounts from 10s. up to 20s. If the original proposal were carried into effect it would be a very serious burden upon small traders—a burden they would be unable to bear, as the competition in mercantile life is so keen that they could not by any possible means recoup themselves from their customers. But the Press has reported that the Treasurer intends to confine himself to the original payment of 1d. on 20s. and upwards. I think that from £2 upwards duty is to be 2d. Well, we may term that a very handsome sum, and receipts of £2 and upwards will not bear so heavily upon the poorer portion of the com-

munity as the original proposal. Apart from the disastrous drought and unforeseen expenditure in connection with the trouble in South Africa, things are not at all promising, and it does not appear to me that the usual caution has been exercised in the administration of the affairs of the State. However, an unforeseen legacy fell into the hands of the Treasurer through the death of the late Hon. James Tyson. Millionaires do not die every day, but the chances are that the revenue derived from the Tyson estate will more than counterbalance any loss incurred in connection with the sending of troops to South Africa, so that we cannot consider that a loss at all. The Treasurer states that debentures are to be issued with a currency of ten years, carrying, probably, 3½ per cent. interest. I think that the hon. gentleman should make arrangements for retiring these debentures annually, retiring first those for which he has to pay the highest premium, and leaving those which are issued at a reasonable rate to continue for the ten years if necessary. With a return of good seasons, combined with careful administration, there should be no necessity to wait ten years for a return of prosperity, provided that federation has not the disastrous effect that I am sadly afraid it will bring upon this State. Some hon. members who have spoken advocate additional taxation. Well, if additional taxation is necessary, certainly a land tax should not be one of the forms which it should take. We have already a land tax in operation in the shape of the local authorities, and, with the extended powers it is proposed to give them, if they use those powers to their fullest extent, we will have a very severe land tax. True, there is a land tax in Victoria, but that State is developed to the very fullest extent, and is populated to its utmost carrying capacity. We are not yet in that position; but when we have reached that stage—perhaps fifty years hence—our taxation will be very small when distributed amongst such a large population as we shall have then. I approve of an income tax, but I am of opinion that salaries under £300 a year should not be touched, and that as they increase beyond £300 a year they should be taxed in proportion. I believe also in an absentee tax. I have personal knowledge of two very valuable properties returning a princely revenue to the fortunate owners, who escape taxation except that imposed by the local body, which is not very heavy.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Does not the dividend tax touch them?

Mr. FOGARTY: Not in any way. They have benefited largely by the unearned increment in consequence of settlement and the expenditure of public money, and I say that those gentlemen can very well afford to pay an absentee tax, and I hope the time will come when a tax upon absentees will be imposed. I may say that I make this suggestion in no unkind spirit. If the burden of taxation is to be borne, it should be placed on the strongest and broadest shoulders, and if placed upon the shoulders of such men as those referred to in my illustration, it will not be at all felt. There is another tax—one that has not been mentioned up to the present—and that is a bachelor tax.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FOGARTY: I believe the Treasurer might very well put that tax into operation. I understand that some hon. members have anticipated a tax of this nature and have changed their condition and become respectable members of society. But I approach this matter with bated breath, because I am standing on dangerous ground, and the *Darling Downs Gazette* will probably slate me.

Mr. TOLMIE: It is very reasonable.

Mr. JENKINSON: He is getting married as quickly as he can.

Mr. FOGARTY: I am glad to hear it. I hope the hon. member for Croydon, the leader of the Opposition, will follow the example.

Mr. BROWNE: I would rather pay the tax.

Mr. FOGARTY: The Government have spent a very large sum of money—about £500,000—in connection with the sugar industry, and it is proposed to supplement that amount with another £25,000. Like other hon. members I would like to see the sugar industry prosper, but there are other branches of the agricultural industry to be considered, and they are quite as important as canegrowing. I do not see why the wheat and barley farmer should not be protected and assisted as well as the canegrower. If the Government are anxious to give assistance to agriculture in general, I would like them to give effect to the report of the Chief Engineer for Railways, Mr. Stanley, by constructing light lines of railway to the different agricultural centres which are now thickly populated.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FOGARTY: The hon. member for Wide Bay reminds me that the House has consented to a motion for giving effect to Mr. Stanley's recommendation, and I would ask why did not the Government give effect to it?

Mr. JACKSON: And why did not they provide for old age pensions?

Mr. FOGARTY: I have no doubt that in the near future that will be an accomplished fact; but it will run into a very considerable sum of money. The only feasible proposal I have heard in regard to the cost of providing old age pensions fell from the Hon. J. G. Drake when seeking the suffrages of the electors of Queensland. He said that a fund might be provided by leasing the land in connection with the federal city, and the money used for the purpose of providing old age pensions. Notwithstanding the large amount paid on account of pensions in New Zealand, the people there are in a prosperous condition. Referring again to the question of light lines of railway to agricultural centres, I consider that it is the bounden duty of the Government to give the agriculturists in West Moreton, on the Darling Downs, in the Wide Bay district, and in other closely settled parts of the colony, facilities for reaching the Brisbane market, because there is a larger population in Brisbane and the consumption is greater than in the remainder of the State. I have no doubt that early next year when we are compelled to approach our masters, the electors, the question of these light lines of railway will play a prominent part in the programme addressed by the different candidates to the electors. Mr. Stanley's report has been a considerable time in hand. He was sent to Europe at considerable expense to get the information to make that report, and we were given to understand, prior to his leaving, that all the Government needed was information, and that if that information was of a desirable nature, effect would be immediately given to the recommendations made by Mr. Stanley. Though he has strongly recommended the construction of light lines of railway, up to the present that recommendation is simply confined to his report. I am of opinion that there should be at least half-a-dozen of these lines in actual operation at the present time. Therefore, although I agree to money being advanced to the canegrowers, I think that it is high time some other portion of the agricultural industry should receive some assistance. It is possible that some hon. members representing cane-growing constituencies

[7.30 p.m.] may point out that there has been a fairly large sum of money expended in the repurchase of land. True; but the

money expended in the repurchase of land entails no loss to the general taxpayer, or rather it entails no risk. I will not be so unkind as to say that the £500,000 advanced to the canegrowers will not be returned; but I will say, without fear of contradiction, that it is a very open question, and that a very considerable risk is placed upon the general taxpayer of the State. I hope it will be returned in full, and I am satisfied that those who have had this assistance are as anxious to see the money returned to the State as I am myself. Another matter to which I will refer is one which I ventilated when I first came into the House, and that is, that in my opinion we are not receiving sufficient revenue from our lands. If the pastoralist in the West, in the possession of large tracts of land—as large as some of the countries of Europe—at 2d. per acre cannot get on, the grazing farmer with 20,000 acres, for which he is compelled to pay 2d. an acre, is apparently able to make both ends meet.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: No, he is not.

Mr. FOGARTY: Well, so far, the wail has only come from the large holders, for whom I have the greatest sympathy, and am prepared to express that sympathy in a practical form when the proper time arrives. They can only restock by breeding up. There is no place that I am aware of where stock can be purchased. If the large areas I am speaking of are suitable for grazing farms settlement, it would be far better to have thirty, forty, or fifty people upon a run, with their families, than to have it in the hands of one person. And what is more, the natural increase of stock would be at a much greater rate than under the present condition of things. It is well known that the percentage of natural losses is not nearly as great on a grazing farm as on large pastoral holdings.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: Why?

Mr. FOGARTY: For this reason, that there is much more care and attention bestowed by the small man upon his stock.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: No; because the one breeds stock and the other buys it. The grazing farmer does not breed stock.

Mr. FOGARTY: I admit that the hon. member for Lockyer has an intimate knowledge of the pastoral industry; but I have not gone about the world for the last forty years with my eyes closed. I also know something about it; and I repeat that the losses are much greater on large holdings than on small ones.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: That is quite true, but why?

Mr. FOGARTY: The hon. member and myself are apparently agreed upon that matter. If the large holdings were cut up, and fifty persons with their families were settled upon them, it would bring in an enormous revenue—very nearly £1,000,000 more than we are receiving from pastoral rents—and there would be a considerable increase of population of a permanent nature, and more employment would be given. There are certain improvements that are absolutely necessary for a grazing farmer to effect. He has to fence, to put up buildings, and soon, and if his capital is limited, as his banking account increases he will increase his holding. From almost every point of view the grazing farmer is more desirable to the State than the large runholder, and I trust grazing farmers will receive a considerable amount of encouragement and attention. I know of one gentleman who selected some 9,000 acres in the Springsure district—a friend of my own of nearly thirty years' standing—who assured me the year before last that off this 9,000 acres he received a net return of £1,275 for his clip of wool, irrespective of the increase of stock.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: What was his debt?

Mr. FOGARTY: His debt was nothing. He went on to the land with a certain amount of capital, and was in a position to fence, buy stock, and erect the necessary outbuildings independent of any outside financial assistance. I also know of another case of two brokers who took up a grazing homestead, and who cleared £900 the year before last. This conclusively proves that if a grazing farmer has a little capital to start with, is careful, has a knowledge of his business, and does not over-stock, his future is assured. And when the time arrives at which to surrender his holding, it will be very considerably enhanced in value, and the State will reap the benefit. Another matter I wish to draw attention to is the cumbersome means we have of reaching Toowoomba—that is, the tremendous mileage we traverse between Helidon and Toowoomba. Mr. Stanley points out that if the elevation is so great that it is impossible to reach Toowoomba in the ordinary mode of railway construction a rack line should be substituted for the roundabout line we have at the present time. With that, and the Drayton deviation, the journey from Brisbane to Sydney and Melbourne would be considerably decreased in duration.

Mr. GIVENS: Would not the *via recta* suit you better?

Mr. FOGARTY: I know nothing at all about the *via recta*. A very considerable saving may be effected by shortening the distance between Toowoomba and Helidon. I know the distance as the line travels is something like 28 or 29 miles, and the distance by road is nearly 12 miles, and as the crow flies, only about 8. I know the country very well, and I would undertake to leave Toowoomba at 9 and reach Helidon at 10 o'clock.

Mr. ARMSTRONG: You could not do it now, the road is too bad.

Mr. FOGARTY: In the Chamber of Commerce, I think the question was raised by Mr. Paterson, that if the Government—I may say I advocated exactly the same thing in this House in 1895—erected sheds for the purpose of storing agricultural produce, in the event of an advance taking place in the market, the farmer would be in a position to reap the benefit of that advance. That idea has been considered by the respective Chambers of Commerce throughout the State, and as far as I know one and all approve of it. Well, the cost will be very small, and as the Government up to the present do not seem desirous of constructing the light line of railway that I advocate, I say that they should give some small assistance in the erection of these sheds, and if it is necessary to make them self-supporting, a very small charge should be made for storage. I know the farmers would willingly pay it, as the black soil of the country is utterly impassable to wheeled traffic after it is thoroughly saturated. After a heavy downfall for two or three days in succession, I know a number of blacksoil plains that are almost impassable for wheel traffic of any weight for at least three weeks. The consequence is, that if there is an advance in the market meanwhile, they have no chance of obtaining the benefit of it, because all their produce reaches the market at once, and the market becoming glutted, instead of making a profit they probably lose. Therefore, I hope the Minister will see his way clear to recommend the assistance that I speak of. Now, a gentleman, speaking in connection with the colony of New Zealand, pointed out that, owing to radical legislation, they were not making the progress that we are led to believe. Well, I believe that it is owing to the radical legislation and the excellent administration that New Zealand occupies the proud position of being by far and away the

most progressive colony of the Australasian group. The growth of New Zealand has been marvellous; it has not been brought about by any artificial means, but by wise laws and effective administration.

Mr. LESINA: Honest administration.

Mr. FOGARTY: Yes, honest administration. The net return in New Zealand per head for 1891 was £230, and in 1900 the net return per head was £296, a clear gain of £66. Well, that is an enormous gain. Since 1891, enormous increases in land settlement have occurred. The people passing money through the savings bank and other banking institutions had to their credit in 1891, £13,000,000, and in 1900, £22,000,000—that speaks for itself; it requires no explanation on my part to show that the growth of hard cash deposits has been marvellous. The increase in the value of property, according to the latest statistics, from 1891 to 1900 was £18,000,000. The land under cultivation has also increased. In 1891 it was 8,400,000 acres; in 1900, 12,600,000—a very large increase indeed. The increase in revenue between 1891 and 1900 was no less than £12,000,000. The exports in 1891 amounted to £9,500,000, and in 1900 to £13,240,000. The factory hands—that is the industrial section of this progressive State—have increased, from 1891 to 1900, from 25,000 to 200,000, notwithstanding the failure of the flax crop. Had the flax crop been as good as usual the number would have been considerably more than it is at the present time; but even at this stage I think that you will agree that this particular section in the industrial portion of that State has made very great progress, while the wages paid in the State of New Zealand are greater than any other State in Australia. However, they are not at all anxious to embrace federation; they know perfectly well that the only market they have is that of the old country, and for this reason—they occupy the position of being able to supply all their own wants, and hence any compact entered into in connection with the Commonwealth would be disastrous to their best interests. If they attempted to throw in their lot with ours it would be wholly and solely with the object of flooding the markets of Australia, and particularly those of the State of Queensland, with their produce. I know the seasons are regular there, and it requires no greatly scientific agriculture to produce crops. With the ordinary system of cultivation, the rainfall being regular, there is not the slightest difficulty in calculating the probable return from the acreage under cultivation. But, unfortunately, we are not in that position. We meet from time to time with adverse seasons. Taking the history of the colony from that time up to the present, I do not think we have anything to be alarmed about. The Treasurer points out that there is no particular reason why we should become alarmed. I am exactly of the same opinion. I have no hesitation in saying that, with two or three years good seasons, without additional taxation, we shall recover the position that we occupied prior to this disastrous drought and the pest, in the shape of ticks, which has inflicted a considerable amount of injury upon the leading industry of the colony—to wit, that of the pastoralists. I certainly am not in sympathy with the proposal to sell large blocks of lands. I do not think there is any necessity for selling land. When good seasons return the revenue will increase to such an extent that there will be no necessity to sacrifice the public estate. If that is done we shall have a repetition of what occurred in the early days on the Darling Downs. Probably after I have passed away the seasons may change, and the climate also. (Laughter.) Even if I got into a more sultry climate than that of Queensland I believe I should

meet some very good friends there. However, as I said, the seasons may change, and it will probably be found that the lands which it is now contemplated to sell at 10s. per acre have been sacrificed, and the second generation, if not the present generation, will agitate in the same way as we are doing now for the repurchase of land for close settlement. The Government are simply trustees for the people, and if they play fast and loose with the public estate by selling it they will prove unfaithful to their trust. It may not be possible for us to bring them to book, but posterity will certainly not send prayers aloft for their benefit. Even last year a considerable quantity of land was sold in excess of the area alienated in the preceding year. The Treasurer says—

The area sold by auction during the year was 39,517 acres in excess of the previous year's sales, the respective areas being 11,118 acres and 50,635 acres, the prices realised being £23,552 0s. 10d. and £47,202 12s. 3d.

Notwithstanding this huge sacrifice, we find that we have now a deficit of £528,000, which is a very large sum. I entirely disapprove of the Government continuing to sell land in this way. What is needed is this: When the present leases of Crown lands expire, if the lands are at all suitable for close settlement, those leases should not be renewed, but the land should be thrown open to selection. I remember a letter appearing in the *Courier* in relation to certain leases in the coastal district, and the writer stated that if the Government could see their way clear to extend those leases for another fourteen years—I think they have six years to run from the present time—the lessees would be quite prepared to give a considerable increase on the present rentals. That would be a disastrous policy. We have scarcely half a million of people on our territory at the present time, but if these runs fall in and they are at all suitable, I think it will be the very best means of increasing the population of a permanent nature if the land was thrown open to selection. It is well known that permanent settlers enhance the value of the State and also of their own respective holdings. I have shown that notwithstanding the sales of last year the deficit is a very large one; but there is nothing to be alarmed at, for it is only a matter of time when things will adjust themselves. If the Government, however, continue selling lands for the purpose of meeting extravagant expenditure, then it is only a matter of time when they will reach the end of their tether, and they will then be compelled to impose additional taxation. Additional taxation is not desirable in any shape or form, and I myself am perfectly satisfied that there is no necessity for it. The Treasurer concluded as follows:—

We consider that, if by the alienation of a small portion of our estate which is never likely to be required for close settlement we can tide over our present difficulty, it will be wise, in the interest of the State, to do so rather than to burden the people with additional taxation which might not be necessary, and would tend to retard our progress. On the whole, the cloud which at present overshadows the State, is not so dense that we cannot see the sunshine beyond. We have every confidence in the resources and recuperative powers of Queensland, and in the courage and energy of its people, which have been proved by experience; and we are satisfied that, with economy in expenditure, a reasonable tariff, and average seasons, we shall soon resume our former prosperous condition, and take our position as one of the leading States in the Commonwealth.

The latter portion of that I thoroughly agree with, and I believe this desirable condition of things will be reached without selling land. I certainly would very much like to know how it will be ascertained that the land they contemplate selling by public auction will not be needed for close settlement. They possibly will say the rainfall is scanty, and a number of other lame

excuses may be offered. But as our railways extend, and as close settlement extends, what is now looked upon as not being absolutely necessary for close settlement, may five years hence be as much needed as the land in the vicinity of Warwick, Dalby, or Toowoomba. Therefore, I will not be a party to the proposal submitted to the House that a certain portion of land should be sold for the purpose of providing money to meet this deficit. I think we are on the turn of the tide of prosperity, and if so, long before the debentures mature, there will be no need at all to sacrifice a single perch of land. The revenue will be so great, with increased population through land settlement and the increase of land revenue, that I am satisfied that we shall by that time have a credit balance of at least £1,500,000.

Mr. RYLAND (*Gympie*): I wish to say a few words with regard to the proposed curtailment of the endowment to local authorities, which I think is the most cruel aspect of the Financial Statement. Now, the local bodies have struck

[8 p.m.] their rates for this year, and conse-

quently even if they had increased power to make higher rates they cannot do so for this year; they cannot or will not reduce their expenses in connection with their offices, and they cannot get increased accommodation by way of overdrafts. Consequently the whole effect of this reduction will come upon the wages man. The wages man who is working with the pick and shovel will suffer most severely. I think it is not at all desirable that this state of things should be brought about, because it will do more than anything else to increase the number of the unemployed. We are told that, at the present time, there are a large number of unemployed in the different parts of the colony, and it is very undesirable that we should do anything which will add to their ranks. Instead of reducing the endowment, I think it would be far preferable to continue it on last year's basis. In his Statement the Treasurer says that the endowments to local authorities are reduced from £105,000 to £60,000, and that, if the Government struck off the whole amount, it would have been equivalent to putting on a fresh land tax. Now, I contend that the rates raised by local authorities are not, in the right sense of the word, a land tax, and that a land tax would be far more equitable instead of reducing the endowments. In going into this question we find that the local authorities get very much of their rates from the small holders of land, the Act compelling them to adopt a minimum valuation. By a land values tax, as advocated by this side of the House, these small holders would not be taxed at all, because there would be an exemption. I should say that £200 or £300 would be a fair exemption, and even with that exemption we should get a fair return from the large centres of population, especially in the city of Brisbane, where large land values exist. Now, I would just point out one particular instance of the way in which a land tax would work in opposition to the rating of local authorities. I will refer to the divisional board with which I am best acquainted, which is in a farming district, and thickly populated. The valuation in the Widgee Division amounts to £194,000. Exempting the pastoral and other lands, the valuation is £130,000 on freehold land. Well, if we exempt up to £300 we have a ratable value of £30,000, which, on 1d. in the £ basis, would give £125. The Widgee Division, therefore, by striking a land tax, would pay £125 to the State, and upon the basis of last year's endowment would receive £625. Now, take another example from the large centres of population—the North Brisbane Municipal Council.

We find that its valuation is nearly £6,000,000. If we exempt the first £300, the valuation is brought down to something like £5,280,000, and at 1d. in the £, that would bring in £22,000. Last year the North Brisbane Council drew in endowment a little over £17,000; so you see that by striking a land tax, and keeping up the present endowment, the outside districts would pay in less and receive more. In the case of the Widgee Division, for every £1 they paid in land value taxation they would receive in endowment £5, while in North Brisbane municipality for every £1 they paid they would draw 15s. 8d. in endowment. That is the way in which a land value tax would work in opposition to the rates. It would collect a fund from the large centres of population and from the large holders of land, and distribute it over the country districts where the small holders and struggling selectors live. Continuing the illustration in connection with the Widgee Division, it only received endowment last year on two-thirds of its rates. It only received endowment on 1½d. in the £, although they had to levy special rates in the division to meet their requirements. Consequently they received no endowment whatever on the special rates. They only received endowment on £1,200 of rates, and there was £841 which they collected on which they received no endowment. In Brisbane, on the other hand, they received endowment on the whole of their rates. They found in North Brisbane that, by striking a rate of 1d. in the £, they could get enough revenue, not only to do their general work, make their streets, and do their lighting, but it also gave them sufficient to pay interest on their debentures. In connection with this, there was a great objection raised some time ago when one of the Brisbane municipalities, by conniving at the Local Government Act, not only got endowment on the rate struck for general purposes, but also on their loan rates.

Mr. McMASTER: No!

Mr. RYLAND: I have their balance-sheet here, and it shows that they have no other source of revenue than their rate of 1d. in the £, and they get endowment on the whole of that, and paid in interest over £14,000. I contend that, in justice to the local authorities, especially those in outside districts, the endowment should be continued, and that a land value tax should be struck to meet it—say at the rate of 1d. in the £. I do not think that it is fair at all that the endowment should be distributed on the present basis, because we find that the poor local bodies have to impose high rates, and have also to impose special loan rates, and they get no endowment on such special rates at all; while a wealthy municipality is able to pay interest on its loans out of its ordinary rate, and hence gets endowment on its loan rate as well as on its general rate. The total valuation on freehold lands in Queensland is something like £31,000,000, and, if we exempt £7,000,000 for properties of less than £300 in value, that would leave £24,000,000, and a tax of 1d. in the £ on that amount would yield a revenue of £100,000 a year. Now that would be a very fair beginning, although I believe that it would be more just to have a graduated land-value tax, putting on an additional ½d. or 1d. on estates of a greater value than, say, £5,000. There are some very valuable estates in Queensland, especially in the city of Brisbane, and those values have been chiefly produced by the public works of the colony. Money has been borrowed and invested in public works and in railways, with the result that money flows into this city, and enhances the value of these properties very considerably. Now, this unearned increment does not belong to the individual owners, but to the State as a whole. I believe we will not have

justice done until the Federal Government comes in and strikes a land-value tax for the whole Commonwealth, because the people of Queensland are producing some portion of the values of properties in the large southern cities, as they go down from Queensland and spend their money there. These values are produced, not by the people who live in these cities, but by the people in the whole of the Commonwealth.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Say the world.

Mr. RYLAND: The principle holds good for the whole world, because some of the values in the city of London are produced by the people of Queensland. But we are not now dealing with anything outside of Queensland. Some hon. members on the other side the other night told us that if we computed interest and compound interest on the price paid for some of our lands from the time they were purchased from the State, it would amount to more than the present market value. Now I hope that there are none in this Committee who are so unpatriotic as to buy lands for the express purpose of keeping them out of use for so many years. Those who bought those lands surely made use of them for agricultural or pastoral purposes, and, consequently, they brought in an annual revenue, otherwise they would be doing a great injustice to the colony. I think it was in 1892 that the then Treasurer, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, when delivering his Financial Statement, made use of the following words:—

The temporary prosperity created in all directions by large and abnormal expenditure encouraged and promoted, if it did not induce, the speculation in land which has proved so disastrous to the various colonies. Everywhere productive industries have been neglected for the industry of borrowing and speculating in land. Such a course was sure to end badly in the long run, and its evil effects are now being experienced throughout the length and breadth of the Australian colonies, although fortunately for Queensland, mitigated to some extent by the best seasons we have enjoyed for many years. Our labour troubles, brought about by the causes I have mentioned, have added greatly to the difficulties of the situation.

That is to be found on page 1007 of *Hunsford* for the year 1892. If those gentlemen bought land chiefly for speculative purposes, they were doing an injury not only to themselves but to the whole community at large. It was that speculation which brought about the crisis in financial institutions, and it was the crisis in financial institutions that brought about the labour troubles and the strikes.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The strikes took place before the financial crisis.

Mr. RYLAND: The financial institutions saw the crisis coming, as Sir T. McIlwraith pointed out in his Financial Statement. There was over-speculating. Every man was trying to borrow and buy property with the object of selling at an enormous gain. Look at the way speculation in property brought Victoria—and particularly Melbourne—to the verge of bankruptcy some years ago. I repeat that those men who bought land for speculative purposes were not only doing injury to themselves, but were also doing a great injury to the community at large. The hon. member for Leichhardt pointed out the other night that a piece of land in the city of Brisbane bought for £25, is now valued at £25,000. Another objection raised to a land tax is that it would depreciate the value of Crown lands. I do not see how that can be, because the Crown lands are leased, and the land value tax would not fall on leased lands, but would fall on the large freehold estates, and would consequently make leaseholds more desirable. Instead of the Crown lands becoming less valuable, they—the Crown—would get more rents for those lands, because, by keeping up the

endowment to divisional boards, there would be less taxation in connection with the leased lands. I think the hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Paget, said last night that on account of the limited area of land that was alienated it would not be wise for us to have a land tax. I say that the area has nothing to do with it. It is a matter of value, not area. North Brisbane alone represents one-fifth of the valuation of the whole colony, although the municipality is all contained within an area of $2\frac{1}{2}$ square miles. As to a land tax driving the people off the land, I say that it will keep the people on the land, because it will reduce taxation in the country districts and increase it in the large centres of population. By reducing taxation on the small owners and small farmers, and putting it on the centres of population and the large freehold estates, the tendency will be to break up the large estates and encourage a peasantry in the country, as small freeholders who will be able to sit under "their own vine and fig tree, none daring to make them afraid." I say: Let us have a land value tax, let us have an income tax, let us have an absentee tax, and let us continue the endowment to local authorities. I wish to say one thing to raise the spirits of hon. members on the other side. There appears to be a foreboding amongst them as regards the action of the Federal Government in connection with the sugar industry. I do not think there should be any fear in this respect if you read the report furnished by Dr. Maxwell. There is nothing there that should lead us to suppose that, if coloured labour in connection with the sugar industry goes, the industry has to go also. We see by that report that in 1890 there were over 9,000 kanakas engaged in the industry, with the result that there were over 68,000 tons of sugar produced. Nine years later there were over 8,000 kanakas engaged, or about one-tenth less, with the result that there were about 123,000 tons of sugar produced. Now I think this goes to show that the fewer kanakas we have in Queensland the greater the sugar production. (Laughter.) If you reduce the number of kanakas by one-tenth and the production of sugar is doubled, I am certain that can argue nothing else but that the sugar industry would be better without the kanaka. Another cheering part of Dr. Maxwell's report is that the kanakas cost on an average about £36 per year, while the white men only cost about £80 per year. In other words, one white man only costs as much in connection with the sugar industry as two kanakas. I do not think any reasonable man, who has had any experience of cane cultivation, [8.30 p.m.] will say that one white man will not do more work than two kanakas in the canefield. My experience when working on a sugar plantation was that a white man was expected to do as much as any half-dozen kanakas. As to the assertion that the industry will not pay for white labour, I am quite satisfied that it will. That question of the industry not paying is an old cry. It has been raised in connection with every industry we have. Whenever reductions are made, wages are the first thing to be cut down. The sugar industry at present is paying enormous interest, enormous rents, and enormous dividends in connection with the refining of sugar. During the federal election I happened to be in the sugar district of Gin Gin, and I met a number of small farmers who pointed out what a great disadvantage they would be under if kanaka labour was done away with. It came out that the real reason was that they would be unable to pay so high a rent by royalties for their land. That was the great question with them; the bulk of their money leaked out in rent and interest. We want to reduce some of those leakages. If we had a State sugar refinery and

more central mills the sugar industry could be worked by a peasantry owning the land themselves, and not paying high rents to large landowners. Even admitting that kanakas work the sugar plantations better than white men, it does not follow that all the plantations are going to be left idle. It only shows that the margin of cultivation will be narrowed to a certain extent. On some estates now growing sugar it may be found unprofitable to employ white labour at higher wages. But there is plenty of land in the Northern portion of the colony not yet opened up, and there is a large opening there for the extension of the industry. When I was in the Isis Scrub a gentleman told me that the market value of some uncleared land suitable for sugar was £20 an acre. If the kanaka is taken away such land, instead of being worth £20 an acre, may only be worth £15, and those Gin Gin farmers instead of being able to pay £1 an acre in annual rent, by working with white labour may be only able to pay 15s. That is the way it would work out. Less money would go in rent and more to labour. It is said we want not only to produce enough sugar for Australia, but we also want to compete in the markets of the world against the other sugar countries. Mr. Gibson, when in Melbourne, said in the Chamber of Manufactures that if Queensland got a free market for its sugar all over Australia, and a fair protection was put on the importation of outside sugar of £5 a ton, he, speaking on behalf of the planters of the Bundaberg district, said they would be quite prepared to pay a fair wage and employ nothing but white labour. What do we find? After having got those two things, they now say they want the kanaka also. I do not think that is a fair deal. They say they cannot compete with other countries where labour is cheaper. Let them first be satisfied with producing enough sugar for the Commonwealth, and leave the other parts of the world to produce sugar for themselves. By and by conditions may improve, and they may find themselves able to compete in the outside markets. What we want in connection with the sugar industry is a State refinery, more central mills, and more rotation of crops. Under the present system, crop after crop is taken year after year off the same land, to its eventual impoverishment. With white families resident on small areas, and cultivating sugar by white labour, they would have a rotation of crops, and contribute to a large extent to fertilising the soil. But whatever happens to the sugar industry—and its outlook in my opinion is not so dark as some people seem to imagine—the public voice has determined that Queensland and Australia shall be white in the future. I thank hon. members for having so patiently listened to me.

Mr. PLUNKETT (*Albert*): I have a few remarks to make on the Budget Speech, which will be very brief. The first matter that I wish to refer to is agriculture. The Treasurer says—

Though our means of communication with South Africa and other parts of the world where good markets are to be found are not as good as can be desired, yet our surplus agricultural produce is favourably received, and, as far as can be judged by the steady increase of the items of export, is disposed of to the advantage of the exporters.

We want better communication with the markets of the world, as the want of that communication is one of the greatest drawbacks to agriculture at the present time. The want of communication with the markets of the world has a very bad effect upon the industry, the result being that we do not realise as much for our products as we would do if we had better communication. It is not very long since I had the honour of introducing a deputation to the Secretary for Agriculture in connection with a better service for

the export of butter between here and London. The result was that an arrangement was made with the Adelaide Steamship Company which did not prove satisfactory either to the ship-owners or the shippers. We had another deputation, and the Secretary for Agriculture, I must say, was most sympathetic, the result being that better arrangements are likely to be made. In connection with this industry, not only are we handicapped by not being able to get our produce off, but also in the want of a proper system of distribution. I do not know whose fault it is, but ever since we have arranged to send butter home there has always been an unsatisfactory system in vogue. I do not know whether it is the fault of the Agent-General, but there was a promise made when he went home that he would make it his business to find a market for our products. With regard to the dairying industry, the Treasurer says—

It would reasonably have been expected that the drought would have affected this industry to a greater extent comparatively than other branches of agriculture; for, though some farmers now cultivate feed for and house their stock, there are many dairymen who still rely upon the natural pasture for their stock. As a matter of fact, however, this industry was in a healthy condition during 1900; the trade was good, and the quantity of butter manufactured was within 250,000 lb. of the production of 1899, a small difference when the adverse conditions that prevailed are considered.

What we do require is a better means of getting our produce distributed. The only feasible way is to have an arrangement with the Peninsular and Oriental or Orient boats, making Brisbane their terminus. If that were done we should have a better opportunity of getting dairying products—bacon and hams, and all those things which are produced by a prosperous agricultural population—to market. According to the Treasurer's Statement—

The export of butter in—

1897	was 188½ tons,	valued at £16,805
1898	" 391 "	" 37,586
1899	" 511 "	" 49,017
1900	" 620 "	" 51,729

This shows that the output of the industry is increasing, and I believe that in a very short time it would be increased tenfold on the output of the past two seasons if we had better means of transport and distribution. Then, again, the Treasurer says—

The combination of pig-raising with dairying continues with profitable results. The manufacture of bacon and hams during 1900 amounted to 7,685,448 lb., an increase over 1899 of 537,656 lb., and the export shows an accretion of £14,764—i.e., from £31,067 to £45,831. In the face of these figures it seems somewhat anomalous to find from the returns published by the Registrar-General that pigs in this State were less by 16,391 than in 1899, the number being respectively 122,189 and 139,118. The number slaughtered was also 16% by 10,096.

One of the reasons, and the principal reason, for this decline in the raising of pigs was that maize was very high during those times. It does not pay to give pigs maize at 3s. 6d. a bushel, and that was the principal cause of the decline in pig-raising. The Treasurer also says that "the principal place to receive our exports of bacon and hams is the State of New South Wales." That is quite true. But it is also true that New South Wales supplies Queensland factories with pigs. There are nearly as many pigs coming from New South Wales as are supplied by Queensland, the reason for that being that we can make a better article than they can manufacture. With regard to mining, the Treasurer says—

Our mines continue to maintain their output, the value of last year's mineral production being more than £3,000,000.

I consider, and have always considered, that gold could very well pay an export duty. I remember

that at one time there was a duty of 2s. 6d. per oz. export duty on gold. It was afterwards reduced to 1s. 6d. per oz., and later was abolished altogether. But I think that gold is a product which should pay an export duty. In 1899 946,894 oz. of gold were produced in Queensland, and in 1900 the output was 963,189 oz. An export of 1s. per oz. duty on that output would realise a sum of £48,000, and I think no fairer tax than that could be imposed if it is necessary to have further taxation, and I am afraid it will be necessary. I cannot for the life of me see how we are going to jump clean from depression this year to prosperity next year. I am afraid that we shall have a deficit next year, and that additional taxation will be necessary, and as we exported last year gold to the value of £3,000,000 it is only a fair thing to impose a tax on that product. A great deal has been said about a land tax during this debate, especially by the hon. member who preceded me. He gave us to understand that if we imposed a land tax all would be well. We have already a very heavy land tax, and the fact that the Government are going to take away from local authorities the large sum of £45,000 in the shape of endowment means that we shall have to put more taxation on ourselves. I would much rather that the Government imposed a reasonable amount of taxation on the gold exported from the colony than reduce the endowment payable to local authorities. That, indeed, is the worst feature of the Statement. I contend that a land tax under present circumstances is not a fair tax, and if the idea of the hon. member for Gympie were carried out, and all freeholds abolished, then there would be very little derived from a land tax. I myself believe in freeholds. I contend that if it were not for the prospect of obtaining possession of land in fee-simple many of the people we now have in the colony would not be here. There is no doubt that when a man holds the freehold of his land as a rule he puts it to much more profitable use than when it is only leasehold. At the present time there is only 18 per cent. of the Crown lands alienated, and it is only reasonable to suppose that before people purchase land they will inquire what obligations in the shape of taxation it carries with it. There can be no question that a land tax would seriously depreciate the value of land, and in that way the benefit derivable from land taxation would be counteracted. I do not think there can be any doubt, if we compare a land tax with an income tax, that the latter is the least objectionable. Certainly we have to meet our obligations in some shape or other, and the fact that we have given away so many sources of revenue to the Federal Government will make taxation a greater necessity than ever. We have a deficit of £528,000 staring us in the face, and the question is how are we going to meet it. Personally I cannot find very much objection to the proposals of the Treasurer. If the land which it is proposed to sell is not wanted for close settlement, it would be well worth while parting with it in order to tide over our present difficulties.

Mr. HARDACRE: What land?

Mr. PLUNKETT: Land in any district which is not required for close settlement. I do not believe in the Government selling land in the settled districts along the coast, or within 30 or 40 miles of it. That would be very objectionable.

Mr. HARDACRE: That is exactly what they have done.

Mr. PLUNKETT: They have done it to a small extent, I admit, but it does not follow that they will repeat that mistake in the future.

Mr. JACKSON: Don't the people in the West require grazing farms?

Mr. PLUNKETT: Yes, and no man is more anxious than I am to see the small men settled upon the land. However, this £528,000 deficit has to be met, and we must look at the matter from a business point of view. Let us look at it from the point of view of a private individual who has got into difficulties. Let me suppose that I have got into debt; I must get out of it in some way or another, and I must adopt the best method of accomplishing that purpose. I must of necessity part with some of my property. There is no other way of getting out of the difficulty. And if that method is right in the case of the private individual, surely it is right in the case of the State. I do not see that any better method could be adopted for dealing with the present deficit; and I think that with economy and the judicious sale of land, there will be no difficulty in accomplishing the purpose the Treasurer has in view. I would like to think that there is no prospect of a further deficit next year, but I am sorry to say that I have my doubts upon that subject. I am afraid that we shall find that the deficit next year is as large as the present one. I have nothing further to say upon the statement which the Treasurer has delivered except that, in my opinion, he has made the best proposals that could be made under the circumstances. We are told that we are to have an income tax in the future, and when it does come I can only say that I intend to vote for it. I hope, however, that when that tax is imposed the exemption will be fixed at a fair limit. I can only repeat that I believe the Treasurer has adopted the best method of meeting the deficit in a manner least objectionable to the people of the colony at the present time.

Mr. CAMERON (*Brisbane North*), who, on rising, was greeted with cheers, said: It is not my intention at this stage to inflict on the Committee any lengthy criticism of the Financial Statement. I certainly compliment the Treasurer on the admirable manner in which that Statement has been put before the House. There are, however, one or two matters in it on which I wish to make a few observations. I am thoroughly in accord with the proposals of the Treasurer for the liquidation of the present deficit. I wish to say that most distinctly. I do not in an ordinary way advocate the wholesale alienation of the Crown lands for the purpose of raising revenue, but I think the most legitimate method of meeting our difficulties has been adopted by the proposals to sell Crown lands, both out West, if purchasers can be found, and on the coast.

Mr. HARDACRE: You could not get in out West if you advocated that.

Mr. CAMERON: I am not trying to get in out West, but probably I could do so if I wanted to. The alienation of Crown lands has not for me the same terrors that it appears to have for some hon. members on the other side. The public estate, after it is alienated, still remains an asset of the State, from which, when necessity arises, revenue can be derived in the shape of taxes. There is no getting away from that. That has been said before, but I repeat it again, because, it is an axiom worth repeating. The purchaser is simply a perpetual tenant. What I am afraid of, however, is that there may possibly be no purchasers for the lands out West. That is what is troubling me. So far as my own experience goes, I must say that I am not an owner of land, and I am not going to try to become an owner of an acre. My belief is that the most suitable conditions under which a stockowner can carry on his business in the Western country is to get a good and equitable lease from the Crown, and if he cannot make a

success of his business by that means he cannot make a success of it by purchasing land. I am pleased to see in the Financial Statement that it is proposed to deal with land legislation. I hope it will be legislation that will give adequate relief to the unfortunate pastoralists. I do not wish to make any lengthened reference to the subject now because I do not know what the proposals of the Government are, but I hope when they are brought forward they will be adequate proposals. With regard to the proposed stamp duties that is a matter which I do not think it is necessary now to refer to at any length because if effect is given to the proposals the House will have an opportunity later on of discussing the matter. I should like now to refer to the operation of the Factories and Shops Act. It appears to me to inflict very serious injury upon a certain section of the community. I believe the matter is now under the consideration of the Government, and I hope

[9 p.m.] the Government will see its way to introduce such remedial legislation as will remove what is felt to be a great injustice at the present time. I do not propose to take up the time of the House further. The proposal to do away with the local government endowment will no doubt press very hardly upon a great many divisional boards out West, and probably upon some inside, and that is a matter which I hope the Government will take into their serious consideration.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. TOOTH (*Burrum*): Before the debate closes I desire to say a few words, and in doing so I must congratulate the Treasurer upon the full and able Statement that he has laid before the Committee. Possibly the most pleasing feature in his Statement is the extreme confidence and hopefulness of the Government in the resources of the colony. It gives me great pleasure to see that. Certainly the hon. member for Wide Bay seemed to think that the Government were keeping something back. I do not know whether he was sincere, or whether it was one of those innuendoes that hon. members opposite sometimes fire at us on this side; but, at all events, I for one have no hesitation in saying that if I for one moment thought that the Treasurer or the Government were keeping anything back from this House that we ought to know, I would no longer sit behind them. I should certainly change my seat. No doubt in a debate like this we feel the want of a constitutional Opposition. Hon. members on this side have the right to expect a fair, unbiassed criticism of the proposals made from this side. Unfortunately we do not get that. In all the speeches from the opposite side, unfortunately, there seems to be a kind of aggressiveness towards members on this side, and they do not give us credit for good motives or good intentions. We are told—and I really believe it—that hon. members on the other side do not give expression to their own honest convictions, but rather mouth the opinions of a power that is behind them. At all events, if we boil down all the speeches that have been made from the other side during this debate, they simply amount to this—"I told you so. Why didn't you take my advice?" But we know how very easy it is to be wise after the event. Possibly the most astounding statement that was made from the other side was made by the leader of the Labour Opposition, who is reported to have said in winding up his speech, "By wise economy and the development of our resources we will soon be to the front," etc. What does this mean? Does it mean that the Labour members have at last seen the error of their ways; that at last they are going to assist this

side of the House to develop the resources of the colony? What have the Government been doing for the last ten years? Nothing else but trying to develop the resources of the colony; and no doubt they would have done so to a far greater extent had it not been for the factious opposition that we have met with from the opposite side. They say now that they will assist us. We will very gladly welcome their assistance, but will they give it to us? Have their actions in the past shown that they are very anxious to assist this side of the House? What have they always done? What are they now doing? Take the Chillagoe Railway. Have they not always opposed that, and has not that helped to develop the resources of the colony? Take again the private lines of railways. Only last year we saw that £4,000,000 of capital was prepared to come into this colony to develop one of our resources. Still hon. members opposite did their level best to throw out those proposals. Even now, when perhaps one of our greatest industries is in jeopardy of being strangled, we hear hon. members opposite saying, "Let the sugar industry go." Is that assisting to develop the resources of the country? But still the leader of the Opposition winds up his speech with these words: "By wise economy and the development of our resources, Queensland will soon be to the front." I hope that he will act up to what he has said, and that in future hon. members opposite will assist us on this side to develop those resources.

MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

Mr. TOOTH: It is peculiar to hear hon. members opposite blame the Government for extravagance, and then immediately afterwards slate the Government for not spending more money. So far as I am concerned, I say honestly that I should be very well pleased if the deficit was even £30,000 more than it is, so long as the Government spent that £30,000 in my own electorate.

Mr. JENKINSON: You would not say that if it was your own money.

Mr. TOOTH: Members opposite also say that the Government should stop expenditure; but where could they commence to stop the expenditure?

Mr. JENKINSON: At the top of the tree.

Mr. TOOTH: Take one little item. I see that only last year they spent £550 more than the previous year in relief for the unemployed. Would hon. members like to stop that expenditure?

Mr. GIVENS: That had a lot to do with the deficit.

Mr. JENKINSON: £500 extra to the Railway Commissioner is another item.

Mr. TOOTH: How ridiculous then is it to blame the Government for not stopping expenditure! Look at the shrinkage in our purchasing power, amounting to £2,250,000. Is the Government responsible for that?

Mr. JENKINSON: Yes.

Mr. TOOTH: Well, that goes to make up our deficit. Wool and sugar alone are responsible for a shrinkage of £1,600,000. Is the Government responsible for that? No; but still that is an item in making up the deficit. I find that the banks during last year increased their liabilities by something like £707,000, while they only increased their assets by £50,000. That shows the immense amount of idle money that was lying in the banks, and we know that when money is not in circulation things are not going on as well as they should. If there is one department more than another that has helped to cause the deficit it is the Railway Department. There is no doubt that the Railway Department has been working

on a decreasing revenue and an increased expenditure; but the expenditure could not be curtailed, because for years our railways have been worked on a system of false economy, and the safety of the travelling public demanded that the department must spend this money on the permanent way and on rolling-stock. I have no hesitation in saying that the direct cause of the deficit is the party opposite. (Laughter.) They opposed a line which we would have had running but for them, and I am sure that the terrible loss in connection with our stock would have been reduced by at least two-thirds. The question now is how to make up the deficit. I do not profess to be a financier like some hon. members on the other side, but I know that if I owe £100, and have neither cash nor property to pay, I am in a very bad way; but if I owe £100, and have thousands of pounds worth of property, I do not think I need fear the future very much. The State has property, and the Government very properly, in my opinion, intend to sell some of that land to wipe out the deficit; and while they are about it I only hope they will sell another million or two, and spend the proceeds in building lines of railway in agricultural centres.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TOOTH: There is one matter which I do not understand, and I would like the Treasurer to enlighten the Committee on the point. We have handed over some millions worth of property to the Commonwealth in the shape of lands and buildings. We know that the improvements were put up with loan money, and we must be paying interest on that money. I would like to know whether the Commonwealth Government are going to pay the interest on that money while the federal capital is in abeyance. The State has to pay this interest, and I do not see why it should not be refunded by the Commonwealth. Another thing is the reduction of endowment, which I very much regret the Government have considered necessary; at the same time I would far rather see that than I would see a land tax in any form. Once you put on a land tax it is there for ever, and you cannot get rid of it. Although the Government, in their wisdom, have seen fit to reduce the endowment to local authorities on account of the present deficit, I trust that when we have experienced a few good seasons they will see their way to go back to the old endowment, or at any rate to give a larger endowment than they propose to give this year. As one who has been connected with local government for many years, I would rather see the Government wipe out all endowment, and let the State be treated as ordinary ratepayers in every part of the colony. A good deal has been said about the future of the agricultural industry. I will say nothing about the sugar industry, because that question has been handled by members more able to do so than I am. I think the future of the agricultural industry will depend largely on the legislation about to be passed. I am sorry that some hon. members, including one of my colleagues, seem to have made a set on our central mills. I am not speaking for my own district in this matter, because we can snap our fingers at the Government so far as our mill is concerned. We have always paid our way, and always will be able to pay our way as far as the Isis mill is concerned. I hope, therefore, the Government will be lenient with regard to mills that have got in arrears, and not insist on them paying this year, so that they may be in a position to give the farmers the best possible price for their cane. I feel sure that, after the late bad seasons, if the farmers do not get a full price this year it will take all the heart out of them for the future. With respect to the proposed

advances to farmers, I hope the terms of the Bill will be such that it will assist the small farmers, and that it will not be a Bill to make large advances to large farmers. We are also promised a Dairy Bill; and there is no doubt that such a measure is wanted. At the same time I hope it will not be so drastic as to do harm to the industry instead of doing it good. We have heard a great deal about the tank engines made in Maryborough. I do not know why they should have been brought into the debate, but I happen to know something about them, and I have no hesitation in saying that these engines, as engines, are perfect pieces of mechanism. They have been turned out from Walkers' Limited in their best style, and that is sufficient to prove what their manufacture is. But, as far as the design is concerned, I have no hesitation in saying they will be a great success when one or two bridges are strengthened and heavier rails are put down where the engines are going to run. We have known for a long time the necessity for strengthening these bridges, and that heavier rails were to be laid; and if that had been done—as it ought to have been done—the line would have been ready for the engines, and nothing but praise would have been heard from one end of the country to the other. I am sure anyone who takes the trouble to look will see the ease with which these engines will take one of the heaviest train loads that could possibly be put behind a locomotive, and must admit that they are likely to be a great success. As I understand it is desired that the debate should finish to-night, I will say very little more. I cannot understand the cry raised by some hon. members with regard to Queensland, of what I may be permitted to call “stinking fish.” I do not see what we have to be afraid of. Certainly there is a deficit of £500,000. But what is that to a colony with our resources? One good season would wipe it out. Therefore I do not agree with those who seem to take a pessimistic view of the State. Neither do I agree with those who say we ought at once to reduce the number of members of this House. I can see that for the next two or three years the State Parliament will have to struggle for its rights. For those two or three years Queensland will feel the bad effects, if you will allow me to use the word, of federation. After a couple of years I have no fear whatever; but there are signs even now cropping up that it will be necessary for this State Parliament to fight the Federal Parliament, and I am glad to say that we have a man at our head at the present time who is quite prepared to fight the Federal Parliament for the State if he thinks it is necessary.

Question—The aide-de-camp's salary—put.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Burke*): I am sorry to break the rule that members should speak only once during this debate, but I think this is some of the gilded trimming that we can very well cut off our expenditure. We shall want every shilling, and I should like to hear some remarks from the Treasurer on this one vote.

Mr. BARBER (*Bundaberg*): I have a word or two to say before the debate closes. I should like, first, to refer to the way in which the junior member for Maryborough attacked the hon. member for Cairns last night.

Mr. GIVENS: The hon. member for Cairns can take care of himself; don't you bother.

Mr. BARBER: The junior member for Maryborough used the same old gag yesterday that was going round during the federal elections. He stated that there were 50,000 or 60,000 people in this colony who were depending for a livelihood upon the sugar industry. I asked one of the federal candidates at Bundaberg, who had made the same absurd statement—the hon. mem-

ber was there at the time—if he would figure out, while he was on the platform, what the amount would be if 50,000, or even 30,000 men received an average wage of £1 a week. He declined to do so. Taking even 30,000 men at £1 per week, it would amount in wages alone to more than the whole of the sugar industry was worth last year. I do not think people growing sugarcane, or commercial men running sugar refineries, juice-mills, and so on, would do so for the mere pleasure of the thing. When people go round the country trying to stuff us guileless, innocent bumpkins with such statements as that, I do not think they should go unchallenged. The hon. member also said one or two things, in his usual pugnacious way, about the successful candidate, Mr. Fisher. He said everything went on swimmingly, but he himself while careering around was guilty of some disorderly conduct, although he tried to smooth it over here. On one occasion he was nearly the cause of a man getting his arm or his neck broken. Probably he has forgotten that little unconsidered trifle. A day or two before the election the hon. member was perambulating the street lifting his hat to every individual he met. One gentleman, who was riding a bike at 15 knots an hour, was foolish enough to try to lift his hat to the hon. member with the consequence that the bicycle capsized and the man fell. When the hon. gentleman goes round at election times he should not lift his hat to everybody, as it may result sooner or later in very dire consequences. The hon. member forgot to mention that.

Mr. LESINA: Did he draw the colour line in lifting his hat?

Mr. BARBER: I could not say. After all the barracking and heckling the hon. member got at Bundaberg we parted good friends.

Mr. ANNEAR: I gave you as much as you gave me.

Mr. BARBER: I am doubtful about that. The hon. member certainly got bogged at East Bundaberg. He went for me on the wrong tack altogether. He should have gone for me on the starboard side instead of on the port side. There is one matter in connection with the sugar business I should like to mention, and that is the great discontent that exists in the Bundaberg district among the small canegrowers. There are about nine crushing mills in the Bundaberg district. Those mills have been in the habit of paying, at the outside, 10s. per ton for cane, and they have paid as low as 7s. 6d. per ton. I contend that no cane farmer can afford to spend his time, and throw all his energies into the cane-growing business, and then

[9.30 p.m.] only get the trifling amount of 7s. 6d. a ton for his cane. That is not a sufficient margin to allow him to employ a kanaka, let alone a white man. From the juice mills the juice is forwarded to the refinery, and the refinery people contend that it takes about 15 tons of cane to make 1 ton of juice. It takes 9 tons of cane to make 1 ton of sugar, so that the crushing-mill owners have really to supply 800 or 900 gallons of juice more than they should do. The hon. member for Herbert laughs, but I can tell him that I know a little about what I am talking about. During the last five or six years I have had some thousands of tons of raw sugar pass through the department of which I was manager. To show the discontent which exists in Bundaberg I shall quote from a speech delivered by Mr. R. S. Aitken at a meeting of the Bundaberg Council of Agriculture held last week. This gentleman is one of the oldest cane-planters in the district, and he said—

We have been growing cane and receiving such a low price for it that our farms are practically exhausted—for what—simply to pay kanakas and to help the mill

owner who knows as well as we do that the price offered is not enough. In fact, he also knows that he cannot grow it at the price himself. We have been told that the reason why the farmers in Northern Queensland receive more for their cane than we do, is that it takes less cane to make a ton of sugar there than it does here. By the returns of the different central mills this has been conclusively proved to be all stuff and nonsense, and the very essence of bluff; in fact, a tale to which we are not inclined to give credence, but that our cane is as good as theirs, and if theirs is worth 14s. per ton, so is ours, and not this paltry 10s., which has almost made us beggars. Again, we are making a tremendous fuss about what the colour of our labour shall be. If we cannot get a better price for our cane, I do not think that it would concern us much if the kanakas were cleared out to-morrow. The probabilities are that we should exist, which is just about all we are doing now. Another point to which I wish to draw your attention is this question of bonus or import duty that we are offered in lieu of kanaka labour. I am given to understand that should the abolition of kanaka labour unfortunately be decided upon, we will be offered the sum of £5 to enable us to employ white labour, which is equivalent to receiving 2s. for every £ offered; or, in other words, an increase of 10s. per ton for our cane, which seems to sound very well, but I am informed that it is the intention of the manufacturer to commandeer one-half of the amount—thus making our share only 5s. I now ask in all sincerity if we cannot grow cane profitably with kanaka labour at 10s. per ton, shall we be in any better position if we are offered 15s. and have to grow it with white labour? Gentlemen, the proposal is ridiculous, and now is our opportunity to meet the manufacturer and tell him that we are not satisfied. Failing a satisfactory reply, we should combine and take such measures, based on the justice of our claims, and place the matter before the Federal Parliament.

That confirms what I said just now—namely, that there is a large amount of discontent prevalent among sugar-growers in the district which I have the honour to represent. They know very well that the refineries or the manufacturers are really the individuals who have reaped the large benefits accruing from the sugar industry, and it is these individuals, or corporations, or financial institutions, or the directors running those institutions, who are the staunchest advocates of alien labour to-day. I say the kanaka has to go.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: That settles it.

Mr. BARBER: I was blamed a good deal for supporting federation; but I do not regret it, seeing that for years and years the State Parliament has snapped its finger at the aspirations and desires of the white people of this colony, because you must remember that kanaka labour has always been a very troublesome factor in this State, especially at election times. It was not only at the federal elections that this matter was brought to the front, but at every election it has been the one troublesome factor, particularly in the sugar-growing districts. Kanaka labour was never looked upon, as far as I know, by the majority of the white workers in Queensland as anything more than legalised slavery; and that is the light in which we look upon it to-day. I remarked here the other week, when speaking on the Address in Reply, that we did not wish to destroy the sugar industry. I believe there are ways in which the sugar industry can be worked by white labour. The opinion of Dr. Maxwell, as embodied in his report, simply confirms what we in the Bundaberg district who have taken an active part in labour-in-politics have advocated, and that is, that cutting up the large estates and placing small sugar-growers on the land is about the best solution of the kanaka labour problem that can be devised.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: And a central refinery.

Mr. BARBER: Yes, and a central sugar refinery. The hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Paget, a gentleman who, although he takes quite

the opposite view to what I take on this matter, has, I believe, given a good deal of attention to it, and he says that he does not think the industry could be carried on without alien labour. The contention of that gentleman, as I understood it, was that white men could not do the work on account of the humidity of the climate. I have been in different parts of the globe, and I know of districts, especially on the west coast of America, where the climate is just as humid as in any part of Queensland, and yet there are plenty of white men who work there very hard.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: Is any country in the world growing cane by white labour?

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Do you refer to North or South America?

Mr. BARBER: The west coast of America. I do not say they are growing cane; but, because it has not been a great success in the past, that does not prove that it cannot be done now. Because the Racecourse and other mills have failed to do it years ago, that is not to say that it cannot be done to-day.

Mr. GIVENS: They never gave it a proper trial.

Mr. BARBER: The Secretary for Works to-day, in dealing with the motion of the hon. member for Brisbane South, said it was no use bringing under the notice of the House conditions that existed five, ten, or fifteen years ago; he wanted something up to date. If that will apply to the hon. member's motion, I say it is possible that it will apply in the case of growing sugar. Because they failed years ago to grow sugar solely by means of white labour, it is not for us to say that it cannot be done without coloured labour to-day. We have learned a great deal since then. I can take any member of this Chamber to the Bundaberg district to-morrow, and show him a cane field where white men are trashing the cane. I know not only of one instance, but of several instances. I know of 120 acres being worked by five white men, who are ploughing the ground, planting, hoeing, and trashing the cane and carting it. I went into the cane field on Sunday, and saw how the thing worked out. That is being done in a number of cases.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: Can you tell us the area in Queensland that is being cultivated solely by white labour?

Mr. BARBER: I cannot give that just now; but I say that is being done. I know one old gentleman—a Dane, seventy-two years of age—who has been growing cane for a number of years, and he reckons to-day, old as he is, that he cuts 10 tons of cane a day.

Mr. COWLEY: Ten tons of cane? We pay 3s. 6d. a ton for it.

Mr. BARBER: That is not the only instance. We had a gang of Hindoos taken on there the other week in connection with one particular plantation—twenty-one of them. They are getting 5s. a day for loading cane. The overseer himself is a white man, and he told a friend of mine the other night that he believed that twelve men could do the same amount of work that twenty-one Hindoos are doing; and I maintain that if they are paying the twenty-one Hindoos 5s. a day, and a white overseer to look after them—if they paid twelve white men at the rate of 7s. per day, that firm would look after its own interests better than it is doing. The contention advanced by most of us, who are looked upon as would-be destroyers of the industry, has been this: I have investigated and gone about among the small sugar-planters in my district, and they tell me that two men, if they cultivated

40 acres of ground, that would be as much as they could fairly look after, and they could make a very good living out of it.

Mr. LESINA : They have done that without the kanaka.

Mr. BARBER : They would not employ a kanaka. I wish now to speak a little bit on behalf of the rights of the kanaka. We have legislation here bearing on the question of the Polynesian Islanders, which is supposed to be for the protection of their interests; but I can tell you that these laws are being broken every hour of the day, and every day in the week. There are kanakas who, in the slack season, are sent off to fell timber, to crosscut it, and cut it up into firewood, which, as I understand the reading of the Act, is altogether a breach of the Act.

Mr. GIVENS : The Act is broken every day.

Mr. PAGET : Not in the cultivation of sugar.

Mr. BARBER : It is not in the cultivation of sugar—I understand that—but my contention is this : That when they are sent on to the land that is not fit for planting, and on which there is no intention of planting cane—when they go and fell timber, and cut it, and split it up into billets, and load it and cart it on trucks to the mill, and the kanakas drive the drays on the road, then the law is broken in that respect. The week before last I understood that this was going on—in fact I have seen it over and over again—and I said to a friend of mine in Bundaberg : “Now, you go over there to-morrow and take one or two witnesses with you, and see about this matter.” He went out on the Monday morning to a place within 5 miles of the Bundaberg Post Office—and there were thirteen kanakas at this business, and five others driving drays. That gentleman came in and lodged a complaint with the inspector at Bundaberg; but the inspector declined to take action because he did not see it himself. The man who saw it had recently been summoned for trespassing on Fairymead Plantation, and he said : “Mr. Young, of Fairymead, upon whose plantation these kanakas are working, will say, if I lay an information against him, that I am doing it out of spite.” This business should be stopped, because, if kanakas are allowed to cut timber, they are doing work that white men are entitled to do. They are robbing them of a job. In the slack season, when our labour market is congested, as it is very often, that is a job that white men could do, and it would relieve the labour market, too.

Mr. JENKINSON : They are supposed to do it, too.

Mr. BARBER : They are supposed to do it. It is all very well for gentlemen who live down here, away from the sugar districts, to console themselves with the idea that the law is being kept, and that the poor kanaka is being looked after like a poor lost black sheep. Those gentlemen know nothing at all about the business. There is another thing that I would like to bring under the notice of the Committee. When I was speaking on the Address in Reply I stated that the kanaka was objectionable to me as coming into competition with white workers. Still, I contended that he should be looked after while he was here, and that he should be treated like a human being.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY : Hear, hear !

Mr. BARBER : Some hon. members on the other side could almost cuddle the kanaka—they love him so dearly. I wish they would demonstrate their affection by looking after his rights. In all the towns situated in the sugar districts there are what are termed “nigger” or “kanaka storekeepers.” Many of the kanakas make these kanaka storekeepers their bankers, and that is a thing that the Government ought to squash right away.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : Hear, hear !

Mr. BARBER : About two years ago a man named Williams in Bundaberg did the “disappearing trick.” He came down Brisbane way. His wife and family followed him about a fortnight later, and there was a great rush of kanakas to the shop to find out where Williams was; but it was a case of—“He don’t know where ‘e are.” That man got away with some £1,500 or £1,600 belonging to kanakas, and I understand that he is still somewhere in the Brisbane district, and yet the Government has never arrested him or tried to make him disgorge his ill-gotten gains. The same year another man ran away with about £900, and now I see that a gentleman in the Mackay district has got away with £900 belonging to kanakas.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : One or two labour secretaries ran away, too, with a large amount of money.

Mr. BARBER : We are able to look after our rights, and, if we get hold of them, we can have them punished.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE : But you did not catch them.

Mr. BARBER : The Government pretend to have such a fatherly affection and care for the kanaka, and I say that, when they are able to put their hands upon these individuals, as they could very often, they ought to arrest them and punish them.

MEMBERS on the Government side : Hear, hear !

Mr. BARBER : Hon. gentlemen say “Hear, hear !” but it does not sound sincere. To show the tameness and docility of these kanakas, we are told that by coming to this State they are brought under good influences; but Scripture says, “Can an Ethiopian change his colour ?” A friend of mine has had to move from the scrub where he lived into the town for the protection of his wife and family. About six months ago a girl of his, twelve years of age, was insulted by a kanaka in a gross manner; and he is now “doing” three years. They happened to catch him. But, so far as good influence goes, it is simply a farce. It is a good thing for the missionaries, and that is about all—they do very well out of it. We had an example of the docility of the kanaka only on Friday last, when six of them attacked one of the overseers not far from where I live, and, had it not been for the proprietor coming along, the man would certainly have lost his life. We who live in the sugar districts object to them being there for that reason. While publicans and others sell grog to the kanakas, and while the publicans and others are let off so easily, it is a wonder there is not more murder committed by the kanakas than there is. If I was at the head of the Government, and a publican was convicted of having sold liquor to a kanaka, I would cancel his license at the next licensing court.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY : Hear, hear !

Mr. BARBER : I am glad to hear the hon. member say that. I believe that, like myself, he is not a very good friend to the liquor trade.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY : Hear, hear !

Mr. BARBER : I wish to point to another aspect of the question—that is, the kanaka considered on his moral side. Away down in the district represented by the hon. member who spoke last, there is a small Yokohama.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY : Equal to Charters Towers.

Mr. BARBER : I know this is a very delicate matter to touch upon. However, it is an evil that exists, and an evil that has no right to exist in any self-governing, civilised State. There are about twelve Japanese prostitutes there; they live in the main street, and the children in going to school are very often compelled to see them, well—in their native clothing—that is as

nice as I can put it—nothing better to clothe them than the sunshine. The system that makes these evils possible is a bad one, and a rotten one at that. I have seen the same state of affairs exist in the centre of the town of Bundaberg.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: And in Charters Towers, too.

Mr. BARBER: I know that; and I say—seeing that kanakas are brought here in such a

[10 p.m.] disproportionate way as regards the sexes—the system that makes this possible is altogether wrong. While there are some things that I would like to make some remarks on here, I do not like to touch on them—I might be a bit too rough. I say that the Government should take steps to clear out those prostitutes. It is all very well for people who live away from those centres, and whose children can go to school without being compelled to look upon the immoral scenes and actions which our children have to see in going to Sunday school and to the State school—it is all very well for them to tolerate coloured labour; and although I am not a saint myself—far from it—yet I consider that our children should not be compelled to look upon Japanese prostitutes or any other kind of prostitutes. In looking over the Budget Speech I notice that the Government expect to make a great haul by the sale of land. They received about £555,000 on account of land sales and revenues last year, and this year they expect to receive about £700,000, but I hardly think they will manage to do it. I am sorry to notice the reduction in the amount of endowment to local authorities. In our district there is a lot of very heavy work, especially in the busy season, on the roads, and it requires a large amount of money to keep those roads in good repair.

Hon. A. S. COWLEY: You are fortunate in having good material.

Mr. BARBER: We have some good material. I believe we have the best roads of any in the colony; but there are roads which the planters and others are continually agitating for to make their lands more accessible, and I am afraid that unless the Government reconsider the matter of endowment and make it up to the amount voted last year there is a lot of work in our district that will be stopped in a half completed condition. I suppose I shall not be looked upon as a member of the Labour party by hon. members opposite unless I blame the Government for the deficit. I think the Government are to blame to a great extent for the deficit. It seems to me particularly so in connection with the military and jingoistic business, over which they completely lost their heads, and I say that the expense they rushed into last year in connection with the Defence Force was not justified. I figure out that in the Defence Force there is one officer to twelve or fifteen men. It may be asked what we can suggest to get out of the difficulty. Well, it is a difficult matter to suggest a pleasant way to get out of it, but I do not think the Government are doing right in the interests of the State in selling the land which they intend to sell. There is an old story that I have heard somewhere about a country that was in a very prosperous condition, but the rulers of that country were very thriftless and extravagant. One day a man had a dream. Now, the Labour party has been twitted with being dreamers, and with holding principles that are impossible and impracticable. This particular dreamer, advised the Government officials of this particular country that there was a bad time coming, and that it would be advisable for them to save some of the grain and stock for the days of adversity, and they did so—they sent an individual into that country to look after the grain and stock.

That gentleman's name, I am told, was Joseph. Now, if these people had not taken notice of that dreamer, they would have been in a starving condition when the time came. Now, the Labour party for several years past has been advocating certain principles.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Dreamers, are they? I thought you said your friend was Joseph.

Mr. BARBER: So hon. gentlemen on that side say. I say the Labour party have for several years been advocating certain democratic and progressive principles, and they have continually pointed out to the Government that, unless they govern this country on more progressive and enlightened lines, the time would come when they would find themselves in a tight place. Had the Government accepted the advice of the members of the Labour party, the country would not have been in the almost insolvent condition in which it is to-day. I would apply this little story, and offer this suggestion: Let the leader of the Labour party be the Joseph to guide this country into success.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: You have to be bought and sold first.

Mr. BARBER: Although we have been twitted over and over again with not having the ability to run the Government of this country, I contend we have. And I contend that had the Labour party been running the country for the past seven years they would have legislated on the same principles as New Zealand and other advanced States have done, and instead of having a deficit of over £500,000, we should have had a surplus like the other colonies that rejoice in the advanced and progressive legislation under which they have worked for the last few years.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

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