

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 1907

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QUESTIONS.

TIMBER FOR GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS.

Mr. MAUGHAN (*Ipswich*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

Having regard to the fact that the Railway Department suffers much inconvenience by not having a sufficient supply of seasoned timber to meet its own requirements, will he discuss with Mr. Commissioner Thallon the desirableness of securing certain areas of Crown timber lands from which the Railway and other Government departments could draw supplies as required, without the intervention of private contractors?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. G. Kerr, *Barcoo*) replied—

Yes.

COAL-BEARING DEPOSITS ON BRIBIE ISLAND.

Mr. MAUGHAN asked the Secretary for Mines—

1. Has the Geological Department made any report upon the coal-bearing deposits on the southern or any portion of Bribie Island, Moreton Bay?

2. If so, what was the name of the geologist engaged thereon, and the date of his report?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. J. W. Blair, *Ipswich*) replied—

No.

LEASE OF BRIBIE ISLAND.

Mr. MAUGHAN asked the Secretary for Public Lands—

1. Whether it is correct that Mr. James Clark has leased the whole of the southern portion of Bribie Island, Moreton Bay, for coalmining purposes?

2. If so, will the Minister be good enough to lay upon the table of the House all papers connected therewith?

The SECRETARY FOR MINES replied—

This question should be addressed to me. The answer is: No.

ALLEGED SCARCITY OF LABOUR ON DARLING DOWNS.

Mr. MAUGHAN asked the Secretary for Public Works—

1. Has he received any reports from the officers of the various labour bureaux on the Darling Downs in respect to the alleged scarcity of labour?

2. If so, from what towns have they been received, and when?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. T. O'Sullivan, *Warwick*) replied—

No.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

TUESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER, 1907.

The SPEAKER (Hon. John Leahy, *Bulloo*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

- (1) The Immigration Agent's report for the year 1906.
- (2) Fifth annual report of the Commissioner of Income Tax.
- (3) Report upon the working of the Queensland Government Savings Bank for the year ended 30th June, 1907.

[*Hon. A. A. Davey.*

FREE RAILWAY PASS TO "CATHOLIC PRESS."

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

1. Has a free railway pass been issued by the Chief Secretary's Department to a representative of the *Sydney Catholic Press*?

2. If so, what is the name of the representative?

3. For what purpose was the pass issued?

4. The duration of pass?

The PREMIER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*) replied—

1. Yes.

2. Mr. Ryan.

3. For advertising purposes.

4. I regret to say the pass was not used, as Mr. Ryan ad to return to Sydney.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—"Short title and construction"—put and passed.

On clause 2—"Amendment of section 4"—

HON. E. B. FORREST moved the omission of the words "In the definition of 'Shop,' after the word 'retail,' the words 'or wholesale' are inserted"—lines 13 and 14. He had already presented a petition to the House from the employees in wholesale warehouses, stating that they were averse to being included in the provisions of the Bill, as they considered that they were better off than if they were included; they were satisfied with present conditions as between employer and employee; and there had been no request on their part for legislation of the nature contained in the Bill. The reasons he had assigned against this provision on the second reading were, first of all, that the employees in wholesale houses had much shorter hours than those prescribed by the Bill, inasmuch as they opened their offices or stores at 9 o'clock in the morning, and closed at 5 or half-past 5; in other words, they worked forty-one or forty-one and a-half hours, as against the fifty-three provided in the Bill. That was a manifest advantage to them. Then all holidays were observed without any deduction of pay, and, in addition, there was no deduction for sickness or for any absence from business that could be satisfactorily explained.

MR. KENNA: Is that so in every case?

HON. E. B. FORREST: Yes.

MR. KENNA: I do not think so.

HON. E. B. FORREST: They said so, and he did not know a single instance in which it was not so. There was a difference practically of twelve hours per week. The question of overtime had been referred to, but those twelve hours would make up for a lot of overtime. He trusted the Government would accept the amendment.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. T. O'Sullivan, *Warwick*): Last year the Bill was brought in to apply only to retail shops, and he himself moved an amendment to include wholesale warehouses. That amendment was accepted practically by the other side without discussion, and the matter was not given much consideration at that time. The object of including wholesale houses in the Bill was principally to benefit the employees, and personally he attached a great deal of importance to the fact that 947 employees out of about 1,100 considered that they would be worse off if they were included in the scope of the Bill than they were at present. A deputation of employees had waited on him. He knew some of them personally, and he had no reason to doubt their statement that they would be better if left outside the scope of the Bill, and, under those circumstances, he recommended the Committee to accept the amendment.

MR. MANN (*Cairns*) would have no objection to the amendment if it would not apply outside Brisbane. In other parts of the State wholesale houses also did a retail business; and, if the amendment was accepted, the employees in such wholesale houses would suffer.

HON. R. PHILP: No; they will be treated as retail shops.

MR. MANN would like to be clear on that point, because it was not what the Committee intended, but what the Act would actually say that would determine the decision of any tribunal in the future which might be called upon to

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interpret the Act. If the amendment was confined to Brisbane, he would not mind voting for it, because, if the people affected by it in the city did not wish to be brought under the Bill, he would meet their wishes in the matter.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The point raised by the hon. member had been considered. The definition of "Shop" was any building or place, etc., in or from which goods are sold or exposed or offered for sale by retail. If a wholesale house also sold by retail, it came under the definition of "Shop."

MR. MACARTNEY (*Toowoong*): Did he understand that the Government were prepared to accept the amendment and exempt the employees in wholesale houses from the operations of the Act?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: At their own request.

MR. MACARTNEY: When the hon. member for Brisbane North presented a petition from the employees in wholesale houses the other day, the Premier and the leader of the Labour party questioned the *bona fides* of the petition, and insinuated that the signatures were obtained by pressure on the part of the heads of departments.

MR. BOWMAN: So they were last year.

MR. MACARTNEY: Believing that, were the hon. gentlemen going to exempt the employees in wholesale warehouses from the operations of the Act? If they did not believe that the signatures were improperly obtained, then they should withdraw the grave insinuations they made. (Laughter.)

The PREMIER: Are you not satisfied?

MR. MACARTNEY: It was not a question of whether he was satisfied or not. The hon. gentleman was called upon to admit that his insinuation was unwarrantable, or else he was called upon to insist upon those men getting the protection afforded by the Act.

MR. KENNA (*Bowen*) was one of those who rather doubted the authenticity of the petition presented to the House. Everyone knew how easy it was to get such petitions signed when they were engineered by the "boss." If the head of a place of business deputed his right-hand man to get the names of his assistants to a petition, he ventured to say every assistant would sign, whether he believed in it or not. The inference was that every assistant was free to sign or not, but the reality was very often something very different.

MR. BARNES: That is not at all correct.

HON. R. PHILP: Is that what you would do?

MR. KENNA: It was not what he would do; but what he would do and what was done were two very different things. The hon. member for Brisbane North had not advanced any very cogent reasons for exempting the employees in wholesale warehouses from the provisions of the Bill. One reason the hon. member gave was that they would have to work twelve hours longer if they came under the Act; but there would be no necessity for that. The competition would be the same as at present. If they were working twelve hours less than retail shop assistants at the present time, the Bill could make provision to give the wholesale employees twelve hours less than the retail shop assistants, and then everybody would be satisfied. Then, again, if at present the wholesale employees were paid during sickness, where would be the necessity for doing otherwise if they were brought under the Bill? If the Bill proposed to increase the hours worked in wholesale warehouses there

Mr. Kenna.]

might be some cause for complaint. But it was not proposed to take away any of the privileges at present enjoyed by those employees.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Do you pay no attention to the arguments of the men engaged in the wholesale houses?

MR. KENNA: He had already referred to the petition, and as to the public meeting, he was reliably informed that most of those who attended it were heads of departments, and in most cases the heads of departments acted as their employers dictated, and their interests were very often not the interests of the assistants. He should like better reasons to be advanced before he could agree to the amendment.

MR. LENNON (*Herbert*): Following on what he said on the second reading, he thought it his duty to oppose the amendment. It might be very desirable to accept the amendment so far as wholesale places of business in Brisbane were concerned, but it was not desirable so far as other parts of the country were concerned. Some wholesale houses in country towns carried on a retail trade, while another objection to the amendment was that it would wipe out the benefits enjoyed by wholesale houses in connection with the weekly half-holiday. They would not be bound by the holiday arrangements made in the various country towns, where they had the right to select their own half-holiday, and wholesalers would continue to regard themselves as superior persons. The object of having a weekly half-holiday in a country town was to give those engaged in offices, wholesale houses, and retail shops a chance of coming together on the half-holiday for sport and recreation. If the wholesalers were exempt from the operations of the Act, they would revert to the old system. If the amendment was confined to Brisbane, he would support it; but, failing that, he could not see his way to accept it. He would like to see people do away with class distinctions, and not have the wholesaler regarded as superior to the retailer.

MR. DOUGLAS (*Cook*) was pleased to see the Minister accept the amendment, and if it came to a division he intended to support it. The petition presented by over 900 employees in wholesale houses should be regarded with every possible consideration. The hon. member for Bowen argued that the petition had been got up by a number of heads of departments.

MR. KENNA: I did not argue that at all.

MR. DOUGLAS: The hon. member did. Even if the petition had been got up by the heads of departments, it should be received with every consideration, because those who signed it doubtless looked forward to being the heads of departments themselves sooner or later. Perhaps in country towns it would be difficult to say whether a place was wholesale or retail, so that probably the amendment would better apply to the city of Brisbane.

HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*) did not think employers cared whether the amendment was made or not. The first Factories and Shops Bill that was introduced made provision for the inclusion of wholesale houses, but the Upper House rejected them. As a matter of fact, the employees in wholesale houses were better off as they were. They worked shorter hours, they got far more holidays, and they were invariably paid in case of sickness. If the clause were passed in its present form it would have a tendency to bring the hours in wholesale houses up to the hours worked by retailers. There was not the slightest fear of there being any [4 p.m.] trouble about houses that conducted both a wholesale and retail business, as such people would come under the

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provisions of this Bill and be treated as retail houses. In reply to the hon. member for Bowen, he could tell him that the employees were no more bossed by the men above them in wholesale houses now than that hon. member was bossed when he was an employee himself.

MR. MCINTYRE (*Aubigny*): He had been carrying on a retail business for some time, and from inquiries he had made at the wholesale houses he could say that the petition signed by nearly 1,000 employees in one day, which had been received by the House recently, had been got up wholly and solely by the employees, and the employers were not consulted in the matter at all. The Bill was to improve the condition of the employees, but if the amendment were rejected, and the employees of wholesale establishments brought under the Bill, it would make their condition a great deal worse. He intended to support the amendment.

HON. E. B. FORREST: The hon. member for Bowen seemed to have some doubt about the genuineness of the petition, and he also spoke about the heads of departments being instrumental in getting up the petition, and said that they considered themselves very superior sort of people.

MR. JENKINSON: It was the hon. member for Herbert who said that.

HON. E. B. FORREST: He would give the names of these men. They were known to most hon. members, who would be able to say whether they considered themselves superior persons or not. Some of them had learned their business in the retail shops, and if there was any necessity for them to go back to work in the retail shops they would not hesitate to do it. There was no pretence of superiority about them at all. The names on the committee included Mr. E. J. Beard, of E. Rich & Co. Mr. Beard did not consider himself above his position at all.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: He is a real good sport.

HON. E. B. FORREST: Of course he was. Why should the heads of departments engineer such a petition? If the employees wished to be kept out of the provisions of the Factories and Shops Act, they had a perfect right to ask to be kept out. Then there was Mr. W. Norton, of Taylor and Colledge, and Mr. G. Millard, of George Myers and Co. There was nothing superior about these people. Then the others were G. Augstein, of S. Hoffnung and Co.; A. E. Driver, of D. and W. Murray; H. Robinson, of Robert Reid and Co.; G. Hughes, of Quinlan, Gray, and Co.; and A. J. Simmons, of Thurlow and Co. If anyone could be entrusted with a petition of that sort to ask the employees to sign it, those were the very men who would be asked to do it. So far as the employers were concerned, not one of them had seen any of those signatures. The employers had not taken the slightest interest in it, and never made the slightest effort either to secure a signature or not to secure one. He would read a list of the firms the whole of whose employees signed the petition. They were—Messrs. Thomas Brown and Sons, A. Stewart and Sons, A. M. Kirkland, Taylor and Colledge, A. M. Hertzberg and Co., Geo. Myers and Co., Smellie and Co., E. Rich and Co., R. W. Thurlow and Co., Elliott Bros., Queensland Agency Co., Webster and Co., Engineering Supply Co., Edwards, Dunlop and Co., D. and W. Murray, S. Hoffnung and Co., R. Reid and Co. Was it conceivable that that was not a *bona fide* petition? The employees in those houses signed it to a man. It was all done in one day, and the reason that these 1,000 men gave in their petition justified their being left out of the Bill, and he hoped the Committee would leave them out.

Mr. KEOGH (*Rosewood*) congratulated the Minister for accepting the amendment, but regretted that other hon. members were not willing to extend the same courtesy to country store-keepers which they granted to those in the towns.

Amendment (*Mr. Forrest's*) agreed to.

Mr. PAULL (*Charters Towers*) asked why the definition of "year" was made as the period of time from the first of April to the 31st of March. There was a tendency to alter the popular form of year, as it was in legal documents—namely, from the 1st of January to the 31st of December. Was there a reason for making the alteration?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The reason why they wished to make the year expire on the 31st of March was purely a departmental one. The year used to end on the 30th of June, but as that had been found inconvenient, the year was now made to run from 1st of April to 31st of March.

Mr. MAUGHAN: We will be able to get the reports earlier.

Mr. BOWMAN (*Fortitude Valley*) drew attention to the advisableness of inserting the words "Chief Inspector" after the word "Minister" on line 18, to make the clause read—

But this provision shall not apply to any person of the Chinese or other Asiatic race, unless he holds a license from the Minister or Chief Inspector to so conduct two or more descriptions of businesses.

Some difficulty might arise in connection with getting the consent of the Minister, as that hon. gentleman might be away from Brisbane electioneering or on other business.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The main object of the clause was to deal with Chinese or any other Asiatic race so far as those establishments were concerned. This clause was before the House last year, and the amendment was introduced by the then hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Frank McDonnell, but it could not be accepted in the form in which it was moved, as it was found that it would interfere with treaty obligations, and, if it were inserted, there was some doubt as to whether the Royal Assent would be obtained to the Bill. It would be better to leave the granting of the licenses to the Minister, as he would be able to exercise personal discretion and say whether the person for whom the license was asked was attempting to evade the Act or not.

Mr. MACARTNEY would like to know when the annual report of the Chief Inspector of Factories and Shops would be available to hon. members?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The report will be ready next week.

Clause, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4 put and passed.

On clause 5—"Amendment of section 24"—

Mr. BOWMAN asked whether something could not be done to secure a more accurate table of the earnings and hours of work by employees than was at present noticed in their returns. He knew there was some difficulty in getting at the actual rates of wages that were paid.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is what this amendment is for—to make the returns more complete.

Mr. BOWMAN: The clause did not go far enough. He knew there was a difficulty in getting the right rates of wages, and he wanted to be able to get them without any difficulty.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The amendment of section 24 by this clause was for the very reason pointed out by the hon.

member for Fortitude Valley. The returns were not quite satisfactory as far as giving the information as fully as possible was concerned. Subsection (1) of the 2nd paragraph of section 69 said that the report shall show as nearly as possible—

The whole number of persons engaged in factories subject to the provisions of this Act, classifying them according to their sex, age, and average weekly earnings, whether in wages or by piecework, or both in wages and by piecework in each branch.

The Chief Inspector did not get these returns in as full a manner as he would like, and that was the reason for the amendment.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 6 and 7 put and passed.

On clause 8—"Amendment of section 23"—

Mr. JENKINSON (*Fassifern*) asked if it were possible to carry out the portion of the clause on line 32 which stated that water "free from all impurities" must be supplied. The employer might be dependent on the water supply provided by the Brisbane Waterworks Board, which they all knew was not free from all impurities, and even if it were filtered it could not be guaranteed. There ought to be some safeguard, and he suggested the addition of the word "apparently."

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Under the original Act the only obligation on the employer was to supply water for drinking purposes. That was not enough. It was better to put an obligation on the employer to supply water that was free from all impurities. So long as the employer provided drinking water in a reasonable way he did not think the construction would be put upon the clause as was imagined by the hon. member for Fassifern. It did not say the water would have to be chemically free from all impurities. It just said free from all impurities so far as it was necessary to insure water fit for drinking purposes.

Mr. JENKINSON suggested that the word "apparently" might be added, and would meet the difficulty. Like himself, many employers provided filters for their employees to get their drinking water from, and he gave instructions that no water was to be used by any employee unless it was taken out of the filter. Therefore, all reasonable precautions were taken. As the clause stood there would be an opportunity for an employee, for the sake of "getting home" on an employer, to lodge an objection against the water, and that might put an employer to a great deal of expense if an action were brought against him.

Mr. KENNA: Scratch out the word "all," and leave it "free of impurities."

Mr. JENKINSON was willing to do that. The clause as it stood was altogether too stringent, and there should be some safeguard.

Mr. SUMNER (*Nundah*): It was necessary that the employees should have good drinking water—(hear, hear!)—and he was very sorry to see that the Brisbane Water Board did not supply the employers with good drinking water to give to the employees. At the present time the factory inspectors almost invariably required that employers should have a special tank for drinking water for their employees, which showed that, in the opinion of the inspectors, the water supplied by the Brisbane Board of Waterworks was not satisfactory. But tank water was not always free from impurities, even though the tanks were cleaned out periodically. It was, however, a very easy thing for employers to provide filters or water-bags. He thought it was better to leave the clause as it was, even if it was a little stringent.

Mr. Sumner]

Mr. JENKINSON believed that most employers provided filters, but he challenged any hon. member to prove that water, after coming through a filter, was "free from all impurities." He did not see why the Minister should not accept an amendment inserting the word "apparently," so as to make it read "apparently free from all impurities."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Do you want the word "all" omitted?

Mr. JENKINSON: Either that or insert the word "apparently."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Move the omission of the word "all."

Mr. JENKINSON: Very well; he would move that as an amendment.

Mr. NEVITT: The clause seemed somewhat stringent, but, if amended as proposed, its stringency would be minimised to some extent. If an employer provided for drinking purposes water supplied by the local water authority, that was all that should be expected of him. As to filters, scientists of to-day maintained that the majority of filters were only storage reservoirs for impurities.

Mr. MACARTNEY did not see that the omission of the word "all" would make any difference in the clause, as it would then read, "free from impurities," which meant free from any impurities. If the hon. member for Fassifern was accepting that amendment, then all he could say was that the hon. member was accepting nothing.

Mr. COWAP (*Fitzroy*): Nowadays they could get a class of filter which was fixed to the water main. If such a filter were obtained, then it could not be interfered with by an unscrupulous employee, as the hon. member for Fassifern seemed to fear.

Mr. JENKINSON: I did not say that.

Mr. COWAP: Yes, the hon. member said that some unscrupulous employee might tamper with a filter. If a filter were attached to the water main, then the water would to all intents and purposes be free from impurities, though, of course, they could not get water absolutely free from impurities. With regard to tank water, he thought that the use of such water in a city like Brisbane, where sparrows and pigeons lodged on the roofs of the houses, should be stopped, as it was much more contaminated than the water from Enoggera.

Mr. LESINA considered that the omission of the word "all" was a reasonable amendment. It was impossible to carry out literally any particular provision in an Act of Parliament, and it was utterly impossible to supply water which was absolutely "free from all impurities."

Mr. MACARTNEY: It is just as impossible to supply water that is "free from impurities."

Mr. LESINA: Quite so; but if the phraseology were "free from impurities," that would be taken to mean free from obvious impurities, as dead cats or dead rats, while if it were required to be free from "all impurities," that might be construed to mean absolutely free from all impurities known to scientists. Anyhow, this discussion would probably discourage the labours of their temperance friends, seeing that it had been stated that the supply of water in Brisbane was of such a bad character that it was unhealthy. If they had only lived in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, then employees could get away from that difficulty, as the employers would supply them with nut brown ale instead of impure water. He thought the spirit of the clause would be better understood if they omitted

[*Mr. Jenkinson.*

the word "all," but he should like to hear the hon. member for Toowong and other legal members on this point.

Mr. MACARTNEY suggested that the hon. member for Fassifern, instead of proposing the omission of the word "all," should move the insertion after the word "impurities" of the words "so far as the same may be reasonable and practicable."

Mr. JENKINSON: All he was anxious to do was to secure protection to the employer as long as he took reasonable precautions to [4.30 p.m.] insure a supply of pure water to his employees. An employer who took such precautions should not be liable to have to defend an action brought by a discontented employee for not having supplied water "free from all impurities." The amendment which had been suggested by the hon. member for Toowong would meet his objection, and if the Minister would accept that amendment, he would withdraw the one now before the Committee.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I would prefer the original amendment.

Mr. KENNA thought they were splitting straws over this matter, and that they should dispose of it and get on with the more important parts of the Bill. With regard to the argument that, if the clause was carried in its present form, some litigious person might bring an action against an employer for not supplying water "free from all impurities," he would point out that such action might be possible under almost any provisions of the Bill. Leaving out the word "all" made no difference to the clause. It was better to have a high standard to work up to than to lower the standard. It was, of course, impossible to get water which was absolutely "free from all impurities," but they must not allow the impossibility of getting absolutely pure water to be an excuse for any employer providing his employees with water which was unfit to drink.

HON. R. PHILIP thought it would be far better to strike out the clause altogether. Every member who had spoken had shown that it was impossible to get water "free from all impurities." What, then, was the use of inserting a provision in the Bill which could not be observed by anybody? Under the principal Act, which the Minister for Works wished to show was a very bad Act, employers were compelled to provide filters, and he believed that filters were provided. But under the clause now under consideration an employer might be put to the expense of defending an action brought by employees because the water supply was not "free from all impurities."

Mr. HUNTER (*Maranoa*) admitted that it was very hard to get pure water, but considered that it was right that there should be some provision in the Bill requiring employers to supply good water for drinking purposes to their employees.

Mr. JENKINSON: Filters are provided now.

Mr. HUNTER: They were far better without filters; scientists said that filters were nothing more than breeding grounds for impurities. There were employers who did not take proper precautions to provide pure drinking water for their employees, and it was therefore necessary that they should have legislation on the subject. He thought that the interpretation of the clause would not be so strict if the word "all" were omitted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member for Fassifern was afraid that an employer might be unduly harassed unless the clause was amended. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) did not think there was any justification for

alarm, because no prosecution could be laid under the Act without the consent of the Minister, and hon. members would agree with him that a Minister would not be likely to give consent to a prosecution against an employer for not providing pure water on the ground that it was not scientifically pure. Subsection (2) of section 66 of the Factories and Shops Act provided that—

When an owner or occupier is charged with an offence against this Act or the regulations, he shall be entitled, upon information duly laid by him, to have any other person whom he charges to be the actual offender brought before the justices at the time appointed for hearing the charge, and if after the commission of the offence has been proved the owner or occupier proves to the satisfaction of the justices that he used due diligence to enforce the provisions of this Act and the regulations, and that such other person committed the offence in question without his knowledge, consent, or connivance, such other person shall be convicted of the offence and the owner or occupier shall be exempt from any penalty.

Therefore the Minister had first of all to be satisfied that the prosecution was warranted, and then, if it was shown that the person against whom the information was laid was not to blame, but that somebody else was at fault, the employer would be exempt from penalty. He hoped the hon. member for Fassifern would be satisfied with that explanation.

Mr. JENKINSON was not at all satisfied with the explanation. What the Minister had read simply fortified the case he had placed before the Committee, inasmuch as the principal Act contemplated that workmen would bring frivolous actions against their employers. The Minister said that the great protection employers would have was that the consent of the Minister was necessary before any prosecution could take place; but the Bill proposed to transfer that power to the inspector.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: No; what clause gives that power?

Mr. JENKINSON: He would show the Minister later on. He wished to guard against an employer having to protect himself against a frivolous action. It was all very well for a man of straw to bring an action against an employer. He risked nothing whatever. There were members of the legal profession, who, on the off chance of winning a case, would take it up for any Tom, Dick, or Harry. That was a well-known fact, in Brisbane particularly. The employer stood to lose, whatever happened. If he won the case, he was the loser, inasmuch as he had to fee a man of the profession which was represented by the Minister. He objected to that method of finding work for the lawyers. They were doing altogether too much for that profession. The Minister had admitted that it was absolutely impossible for any employer to provide water that was free from impurity, let alone "free from all impurities;" and every member who had spoken admitted the same undeniable fact. That being so, why make an Act burdensome with provisions that it was impossible for an employer to fulfil. If the Minister would accept the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Toowong it would meet the case.

Mr. MACARTNEY did not propose to take any notice of the very friendly remarks which the hon. member for Fassifern had made with regard to the legal profession. They were rather unworthy of the hon. member.

The HOME SECRETARY: We take them for what they are worth. We know the value of them.

Mr. MACARTNEY was not going to say anything about that.

Mr. JENKINSON: I can tell you the names of half a dozen who would take up a case on the

off-chance of winning. You can bring them under the notice of the Law Association if you like.

Mr. MACARTNEY: It was exceedingly objectionable to have such remarks made. He quite agreed with the remarks made by the hon. member about the clause. They ought to make legislation as reasonable as they could. The Minister had power to make the clause clear; but, unfortunately, the suggestion had not emanated from the right corner of the Chamber.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Then, why don't you send it to the right corner?

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. gentleman must see that it was quite a reasonable proposition to make. A few words would put the matter beyond question. The hon. gentleman suggested that the employer was fully protected by the fact that no prosecution could be commenced without the consent of the Minister. But the Minister might not always be in a position to control it; and none of the Ministers might have power to control it. After all, they were not the powers that be. They must take their instructions from the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, and, if that hon. member said that a prosecution must take place, then it would have to take place.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have not seen the amendment yet. What is it?

Mr. MACARTNEY: It was only a suggestion. He was only discussing the hon. gentleman's arguments just now. The next protection the employer had, according to the hon. gentleman, was that the offence might be committed by some other person; but the pure water had not to be provided by some other person, and, therefore, the hon. gentleman's argument fell to the ground. If water was impure, and those words were allowed to remain in the Bill, it followed that the employer would be found guilty. He hoped the hon. gentleman would be reasonable.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I have had a look at the amendment in writing, and will accept it.

Mr. JENKINSON asked leave to withdraw the amendment before the Committee.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. JENKINSON moved that after the word "impurities" the words "so far as the same may be reasonably practicable" be inserted.

Amendment agreed to.

HON. R. PHILP pointed out that in subsection (vi.) the floors were to be constructed "of concrete or other material impervious to moisture." A concrete floor was the coldest floor they could have.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is inserted on the advice of the Chief Inspector.

Mr. KENNA: Concrete is easier to keep clean. The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: You can have wooden gratings on the floor.

HON. R. PHILP: A wooden floor was good enough in most cases.

Mr. SUMNER: There was certainly something in the remarks of the leader of the Opposition. He had taken up a concrete floor because it was unhealthy, and he had put down asphalt, which was much warmer for the men's feet. A good wooden floor was the best floor they could have.

Mr. KENNA: The clause did not necessarily mean that they must have concrete floors. The condition was that the floor must be impervious to moisture; and wood might be made impervious. The object was to prevent moisture

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getting through the floor and forming a nuisance in the earth below. It was admittedly a good thing that the floor of a factory should be impervious to moisture, because there was no more unhealthy thing than the accumulation of moisture below the floor of a building where young people had to work.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS thought the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Bowen had overlooked the important fact that the subsection which was being amended applied to laundries only, and not to factories.

Mr. MACARTNEY: It may be extended to any class of factory or shop.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: "And also when the inspector so requires with respect to any other factory or shop." Primarily it applied to laundries. Some hon. members seemed to think that the clause debarred a wooden floor from being used; but that was not so, the only condition being that the floor must be impervious to moisture. It might be asphalt, concrete, or anything else, so long as it was impervious to moisture. It had been found absolutely necessary in the case of laundries, where a lot of moisture caused unhealthy conditions to arise, to insist upon the floors being impervious to moisture. It was purely a departmental suggestion, and that being so, he hoped the leader of the Opposition would not press his objection.

HON. R. PHILP: The fact that it was applied to laundries made it all the worse. Fancy women standing all day on a concrete floor! A wooden floor was the healthiest floor possible. Another objection was that this provision might be extended to any factory or shop that the inspector liked. All over Queensland factories had wooden floors, and the inspector might insist on those floors being torn up and concrete floors substituted. Employees might well say "Save us from our friends."

Mr. McMASTER: It would be cruel to ask young people to work on a concrete floor. He knew one warehouse in Brisbane where the inspector compelled them to put down a concrete floor. The young people working in the establishment could not stand it in the winter time, and they had to put a wooden floor on the top. It might be desirable in a laundry to have a concrete floor, but the inspector had power to compel people to put concrete floors in every place. A wooden floor was very much healthier. Water falling on it got away much easier than from a concrete floor.

Mr. LESINA: It appeared to him that this was a case of "Much Ado About Nothing." It was unquestionable that to stand all day on an unyielding concrete floor was injurious; but to stand on a wooden floor for a number of hours was also injurious. It was stated that motor-men on the trams died after five years from varicose veins; and only recently the Tramway Company had supplied small rubber mats on which the men stood to give them a spring, and prevent the jarring of the muscles, which ultimately resulted in varicose veins. In New South Wales they permitted the tram men to sit on a one-legged stool when they felt tired, but the company here would not permit that. Where an employee could shift his position sometimes he was not likely to suffer to the same extent from standing on a concrete floor. Laundrymen, who put in concrete floors to allow the poisonous suds to run away, might provide their employees with wooden gratings.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is done under the Act.

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Mr. LESINA: If a small rubber mat, or a movable wooden grating, or a bit of cocoanut fibre matting was placed under the feet of employees, encouragement would be given to some of their industries. The junior member for Fortitude Valley was a strong protectionist, and he ought to be prepared to give protection to those engaged in the importation of rubber mats, or to those engaged in the timber trade. It was better for women to stand on a bit of matting or on a wooden grating on a concrete floor than to stand on a wooden floor under which might be gathered poisonous matter resulting from the business carried on in the factory. The laundries in Brisbane were constructed on the most approved scientific principles. The idea was to stop any poisonous, filthy water from accumulating under the floors, and a concrete floor filled the bill nicely. He did not know of any place that would be injured by insisting upon that provision. It had been voluntarily adopted in many places. Besides, concrete made a much cheaper and more lasting floor than wood. Then, again, heavy duties were proposed by the Federal tariff on timber, and many people might be anxious to put down concrete floors.

HON. R. PHILP: The floors are down already, and the inspector may make them tear them up and put down concrete floors.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He will act as a reasonable man.

Mr. LESINA did not think it would cause any hardship at all, while it would do a great deal of good. The only argument so far was the sentimental one offered by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley that poor women might suffer; but there was a way of preventing that.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): The clause might very well be left as it was. The best floor for a laundry was concrete. It was preferable for

cleanliness and for preventing water [5 p.m.] soaking into the ground. In every case they used wooden gratings on such floors. Another reason why concrete was preferable was that, where floors were close to the ground, and particularly where the ground was damp, white ants were very troublesome. He knew of a church in Brisbane where the wooden floors had to be taken up on account of white ants, and concrete floors put in. Cocoanut fibre was put down the aisles, and they had wooden gratings beneath the seats, so that nobody suffered from the cold floor. It was quite right to look after the health of the people, but they could not have anything better than concrete floors for a laundry. It would be better to allow the clause to remain as it stood in the Bill, but he hoped that the Minister would not interfere with those businesses where wooden floors now existed.

Mr. KEOGH was of the same opinion as the leader of the Opposition—that concrete floors were most injurious to health. He once had concrete floors in his establishment; those who occupied those rooms complained that they were unhealthy, and they could not stand the cold floors in the winter, and he (Mr. Keogh) then had to put down wooden floors to cover the concrete. How much worse must it be where there was continual washing carried out and the employees had to stand in the wet. With reference to the interjections made that matting should be put down, there was nothing to compel an owner to put down matting or wooden gratings.

Mr. KENNA: Yes; the next clause provides for that.

Mr. KEOGH: If they took a poll they would find that the people concerned were decidedly in favour of putting down wooden floors in preference to concrete floors.

Mr. KENNA pointed out that in a subsequent clause suitable gratings had been provided for. What was the difference between a wooden floor and a wooden grating? It said that suitable grating should be provided, so that it might be either of rubber or of wood, and they were only beating the air.

Mr. G. P. BARBER (*Bundaberg*) did not see any objection to the provision for concrete floors. The inspector was to use his discretion as to whether a factory should have a concrete or wooden floor. In a raw sugar factory or store a wooden floor would be about the worst kind of floor they could have. There was a considerable amount of sugar knocking about, and in dry weather it hardened on the floor, and it became a nuisance and made the work harder for the men. They could not keep the premises in a proper clean condition with a wooden floor. In a sugar refinery, where the workers had to stand, the concrete or asphalt floors were provided with wooden gratings. The floors were either concrete or asphalt in a dairy. In the case of factories where a considerable amount of manure was made up, a wooden floor would be of no use whatever. It was the same with a distillery. There were many industries regarding which it could be demonstrated clearly that a wooden floor would not be suitable. The concrete floor would only be demanded by the inspector where it was absolutely necessary, and for that reason they should let the clause go as it stood.

Mr. MACARTNEY: When it was proposed to put on a tax of 10s. on everybody there was a howl raised from one end of the country to the other, but under this clause an inspector was empowered to put a man to the expense of £50 or £100 and nothing was said about it. The clause gave the inspector power to make an owner or employer go in for large expense. It was a simple little clause as it stood, but it was a serious matter so far as the employer was concerned.

Clause 8 put and passed.

Clauses 9 and 10 put and passed.

On clause 11—"Repeal of section 34"—

Mr. PAULL asked why it was proposed to repeal section 34 of the original Act, as it seemed to him to be a very desirable section?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is already covered by the Health Act. It is out of place in this Act.

Mr. PAULL said he accepted the explanation. Clause put and passed.

On clause 12—"Remuneration of factory workers"—

HON. R. PHILP: They had already passed a Wages Board Bill, yet in this clause it was provided that the wages should be so-and-so. He had in his hand a list of the wages paid under the Shirt Wages Board in Victoria. Some were higher than the wages paid in Queensland, and some were lower. In Victoria, apprentices and improvers over eighteen years of age received for the first year's experience 8s. per week; for the second year, 10s.; and for the third year's experience, 12s. Under the Queensland Wages Boards Bill they would get 5s. a week in the first year, which was 3s. less.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: That is the minimum. They might get more than 5s. a week.

HON. R. PHILP: They always found that the minimum was the maximum.

Mr. BOWMAN: Not necessarily.

HON. R. PHILP: Under this clause persons under twenty-one years of age were to get 5s., 7s. 6d., and 10s. a week. In Victoria the

apprentices and improvers under eighteen years of age received for the first six months 2s. 6d. per week. After that girls commencing at thirteen years received 4s.; at fourteen, 6s.; at fifteen, 8s.; at sixteen, 10s.; and at seventeen years, 12s. If they passed the Wages Boards Bill in Queensland they should leave it to the wages board to say what wages they should fix. They ought to fix all wages or none at all. They were really passing two Bills to do the one thing. If they could not trust the Wages Boards Bill they had better drop it altogether.

Mr. BOWMAN: We are not through with it yet, and it is just as well to have "two strings to your bow."

Mr. LENNON: Will you guarantee the passage of the Wages Boards Bill in the Upper House?

HON. R. PHILP: If he could guarantee a majority in the Upper House he would alter a good deal of the legislation they were passing nowadays. Since he had been a member of the Assembly he had not interfered with the Upper House in any way, and he did not intend to do it. When the Upper House was constituted it consisted of a body of sensible men, but when the Premier had done with that House they did not know what it would be like. (Laughter.)

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

HON. R. PHILP: If the Chairman would only keep those hon. gentlemen from interjecting, he would not have referred to the Upper House at all.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member knows it is impossible for the Chairman to prevent interjections being made. If the interjections are irrelevant, hon. members should ignore them.

HON. R. PHILP: He was asked if he would guarantee the passage of the Wages Boards Bill in the Upper House, and he was giving his reasons why he could not do it. It looked as if they were bringing in two Bills to accomplish the one thing. They did not want two Bills to deal with the one object. Last year it was all in one Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Look what happened to it.

HON. R. PHILP: The hon. gentleman was only repeating the mistake he made last year. He hoped the Minister would withdraw that clause, because it would minimise his chances of passing both Bills.

Mr. KENNA: We might lose the Wages Boards Bill, and it is better to keep this clause in.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It was quite clear to him that if the wages board system was in existence now, it would not be a reason for dispensing with a clause like the one before the Committee. But the wages board system was not yet in existence. In New South Wales they had a tribunal for fixing the rates of wages. A minimum rate was not fixed under the Factories and Shops Act, and the result was, as he had quoted from the *Sydney Morning Herald* when he introduced the second reading, that it was shown that the most terrible sweating had gone on in certain trades which the tribunal had not been able to meet. The same thing might happen here. In New Zealand they had a tribunal for fixing wages, and yet they had a similar provision to that under discussion for fixing a minimum wage. In Victoria, also, they had a provision in the Factories and Shops Act fixing the minimum wage. This clause would be of general application in the case of all apprentices in factories and shops, and it would take the place of an award until the wages board had dealt with that particular trade. In the Wages Boards Bill there was a provision that no special

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arrangement in regard to wages should be allowed to tie up the hands of the wages board, so that if the wages board dealt with the trade in which the minimum wage of apprentices was fixed at 5s. a week, and they considered that was not enough, they could raise the wage; if they thought the amount should be below 5s., they could reduce the wage. The matter would be absolutely in the hands of the wages board. The clause was on similar lines to the provision in the Act which was passed by the leader of the Opposition, and which stipulated that an apprentice should be paid not less than 2s. 6d. per week. That provision had done an immense amount of good, and it would be a great mistake to do away with the minimum wage. He was reminded that the very clause now under discussion was inserted in the Victorian Factories and Shops Act in 1905, when wages boards had been in existence for many years.

Hon. R. PHILP: The same rates?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He was not certain about the rate; but he thought the hon. member would see that even if the Wages Boards Bill were passed, that would be no reason for dispensing with the minimum wage provision in that Bill.

Mr. GRANT (*Rockhampton*) pointed out that in New Zealand, where wages were fixed by the Arbitration Court, the Act provided that the annual increase to apprentices should be 3s. per week and not 2s. 6d. per week. He thought that it would be better to substitute 3s. for 2s. 6d. in that clause.

HON. R. PHILP argued that it was not fair to make Queensland manufacturers pay a higher rate of wages than was paid by Victorian manufacturers. At the present time there was far more stuff coming from Victoria to Queensland than was going from Queensland to Victoria. And it would be unwise to handicap manufacturers by compelling them to pay higher wages than were paid in Victoria. He should like the Minister to tell the Committee what was the minimum rate of wages paid in Victoria.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The minimum wage paid to shop assistants in New Zealand was 5s. per week, with an increase of 3s. per week during each year of the apprenticeship of employees under eighteen years of age.

HON. R. PHILP: The minimum rate paid to apprentices in New Zealand did not affect the question, because no manufactured goods worth speaking of that were made in New Zealand were sent to Australia. But the Victorian manufacturers sent a great deal of stuff to Queensland. He was talking to a big factory man in Brisbane the other day, and he asked him why it was that though it was said Victorian manufacturers paid higher wages than were paid in Queensland, still they sent so much more stuff to Queensland? This gentleman replied that that might be so, but he did not know that it was true. He also said: "There is one thing certain, and that is that Victorian manufacturers get far more work out of their employees than we get out of ours here; they work them much harder."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: They pay them better.

HON. R. PHILP: This gentleman said the employees might get more money, but they were worked harder than the same class of employees were worked in Queensland. Yet, at the present time, for every shilling's worth of stuff in the boot trade that was sent out of Queensland, one pound's worth came into Queensland. If our manufacturers were placed at a disadvantage as

compared with Victorian manufacturers, the result would be that our factories would be closed, and the whole of our supplies imported from Victoria. This Bill, if it brought about that result, would do the employees a great deal of harm instead of benefiting them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The minimum wage in Victoria is 2s. 6d. per week.

Mr. BOUCHARD: There was no provision in the Victorian Act, as far as he was able to discover, for an annual increase to apprentices, such as was provided in this Bill.

[5.30 p.m.] Only the other day he was speaking to a manufacturer who employed between forty and fifty small children, and that gentleman stated that such an increase as that proposed in the clause would mean to him no less a sum than £700 per annum, and that would mean that he would be carrying on his business for the benefit of the employees only. The Committee should consider those persons who were engaged in manufactures in Queensland, and not do anything that would unduly handicap them in competing with manufacturers in the Southern States. He was informed that manufacturers in Melbourne were sending up goods here and underselling the same class of goods manufactured in Queensland, and it seemed to him that by passing such a provision as this they would be unduly handicapping Queensland manufacturers. The matter of wages was one for determination by the wages boards when appointed, and they had no reason to assume that the other Chamber would reject the Wages Boards Bill. He hoped and believed that wages boards would be established in Queensland, and that being so, he did not see any necessity for retaining this clause in the Bill.

Mr. BOWMAN: The leader of the Opposition had said that he had been credibly informed that the wages paid in Victoria were higher than the wages paid here, but that men in Victoria were worked harder than they were in Queensland.

HON. R. PHILP: No, I did not say they were paid higher wages; you said that.

Mr. BOWMAN: At any rate, there was no doubt on the point, as the reports of the inspectors showed that wages in Victoria were higher than in Queensland. He thought that the employees in Victoria were driven quite as hard as ever employees in Queensland were driven, and he spoke as one who had had experience in both States. At the present time some Victorians who had acted as foremen in Brisbane factories had told him that there was no difference as regards the work in the two States. The bulk of the apprentices in Victoria whose wages were determined by the wages board received a minimum of 5s. per week for the first twelve months; but there were certain industries—the clothing industry in particular—in which the minimum was as low as 2s. 6d., while in others it was as high as 10s. per week. Employers in Brisbane had pointed out that if they had to pay the minimum rate stipulated in the clause they were now considering there ought to be some provision made whereby they could get a fair rate from the firm that gave out the work to be manufactured. Such a provision was urgently asked for by some employers. Whether they could make it in that Bill he did not know, but if they could it would be a very good thing. With regard to the wages paid in Victoria, he found that bedstead workers' apprentices received 7s. 6d. per week of forty-eight hours during the first year, 10s. per week during the second year, 12s. 6d. per week for the third year, 15s. per week for the fourth year, 17s. 6d. per week for the fifth year, £1 2s. 6d.

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per week for the sixth year, and £17s. 6d. for the seventh year. There were different grades in that trade, and the minimum wage for journeymen ranged from £1 16s. to £2 10s. per week. Female apprentices in the polishing trade, japanned work, received 10s. per week of forty-five hours for the first year, 15s. per week for the second year, and £1 per week for the third year. In the boot trade, apprentices got 5s. per week for the first year up to £17s. 6d. per week in the sixth year. Females were paid at the rate of 5s. per week for the first year, 7s. 6d. per week for the second year, 10s. per week for the third year, and their minimum wage after they attained the age of twenty-one years was £1 per week. Apprentices to brassworkers, ranging from fourteen to fifteen years of age, received 10s. per week of forty-eight hours for the first year, and they got an increase of 2s. 6d. per week every year. All persons engaged in the breadmaking business started at 7s. 6d. per week of forty-eight hours, rising to £1 7s. 6d. per week in the fifth year. Brushmakers apprentices were paid 5s. per week in the first year, and 7s. 6d. per week for the second year; the third year their pay was half-earnings on piecework; it was the same in the fourth year, and in the fifth year two-thirds earnings on piecework, in the sixth year two-thirds earnings on piecework, and thereafter they received the minimum wage paid in that business. The only difference he could see was in the clothing trade, where apprentices received 2s. 6d. per week during the first year, 5s. per week during the second year, 10s. per week during the third year, 15s. per week during the fourth year, and £1 2s. 6d. per week during the fifth year. With regard to tailoresses, during the first six months of the first year they were paid 2s. 6d. per week of forty-eight hours, and during the second six months 3s. 6d. per week; during the first six months of the second year they were paid 5s. per week, and during the second six months 6s. 6d. per week; during the first six months of the third year they were paid 7s. 6d. per week and during the second six months 8s. 6d. per week. The first year the apprentices received 7s. 6d. for a week of forty-eight hours, and the fifth year they got up to £1 5s. a week, with a minimum wage of £2 10s. a week. The wages of the females were in proportion to those of the males. He did not think there was very much to complain of in the rates as stipulated, as far as the competition of the Southern manufacturers was concerned, as in all cases, except in the clothing trade, the wages paid in the South were equally as high, and in some cases higher, than was proposed by the clause.

Hon. R. PHILP: The whole of that is proposed for under the Wages Boards Bill.

Mr. BOWMAN: They had an opportunity to come under the provisions of the Bill, but if the employees and employers in any particular trade declined to come under, there was no power in the Act to compel them to do so. He believed that the bulk of the factories would come under the provisions of the Wages Boards Bill, and that the rates of wages would be regulated according to the decision of the board. This clause would not apply to any decision after an award had been given by the board. The shirtmakers' board in Melbourne fixed the rate of wages for apprentices for the first year at 2s. 6d. for a week of forty-eight hours, 4s. 6d. a week for the second year, 7s. 6d. a week for the third year, the fourth year 11s., and the fifth year 14s. 6d. a week, but the bulk of the trades were equally as high if not higher than what was proposed in this clause. There were many other cases that could be cited, but he had quoted sufficient to show that, so far as the trades generally were concerned, the

manufacturers here would have nothing to cavil at in the way of competition from a wages standpoint.

HON. R. PHILP asked the Secretary for Public Works if he could inform the Committee what quantity of stuff had been imported from the other States?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The figures for 1906 were: New South Wales, £71,854 worth; Victoria, £39,431; South Australia, £136; Western Australia, £82; Tasmania, £26; total £111,529. That was the total value of wearing apparel imported into the State. The exports of wearing apparel to the other States were: New South Wales, £35,899; Victoria, £2,554; South Australia, £548; Western Australia, £2,262; Tasmania, £236; making a total of £41,519 worth exported, as against £111,529 worth imported—not much over one-third.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Is that wearing apparel only?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Wearing apparel and attire.

HON. R. PHILP: For every pound's worth of stuff they were sending away to the other States there was £3 worth of stuff coming here. That was in wearing apparel only; but he was certain if they took the other manufactures they would find there was much more coming here. The wages board fixed the rate of wages in Victoria. They had passed a Wages Boards Bill, and now they were asked to pass a Factories and Shops Act, under which apprentices would be paid double the wages to what the Victorians paid.

Mr. BOWMAN: You cannot say that after reading the reports.

HON. R. PHILP: If the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had any confidence in the wages boards in Victoria, why should he not have the same confidence in the wages boards in Queensland? The clause was only inviting opposition. Let them fix the wages either in the Factories and Shops Act or under the Wages Boards Bill. This Bill would make the wages double to what a similar Act did in Victoria, so that our factories would have no chance of competing with Victorian factories. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley was telling the people of Queensland he was doubling their wages under the Shops and Factories Act.

Mr. BOWMAN: I did not say anything of the kind.

HON. R. PHILP: Under the Wages Boards Bill the rate was fixed at 2s. 6d., and now it was to be made 5s.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The Victorian report states it is 5s. It is 5s. a week in New Zealand.

HON. R. PHILP: In New Zealand they only made stuff for their own people. If there was a Factories and Shop Act for the whole of Australia, they could make it 10s. a week. But stuff made up in Victoria came into this State free of duty, and if the wages in Victoria were half of what they were in Queensland, Victoria would get all the trade; and that clause fixed the rate of wages at double what it was under the Victorian Act.

Mr. BOWMAN: We are simply dealing with the apprentices, and the average apprentice in Victoria is paid equal to anything asked in this Bill.

HON. R. PHILP: That might be, but the Act said different, and, as they had a wages board, they should have the same wages as they had in Victoria. He knew of some apprentices who

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paid a large premium to be taught their trade, and he knew of others who got as much as 10s. a week.

Mr. BOWMAN: Some get nothing at all.

HON. R. PHILP: In some establishments they could get plenty of people for nothing to learn their business. If the clause were passed, they would be penalising the people of Queensland. It was not a question as to whether it was 2s. 6d., 5s., or 7s. 6d. a week—if they were going to have a minimum, let them fix the minimum the same as it was in the Victorian Act, because he understood the bulk of the imports came from Victoria. They should make the rate of wages the same in both States, so that the people could compete on equal terms.

Mr. G. P. BARBER: He would give the rates of wages fixed in South Australia, which was much nearer Victoria than Queensland. In the South Australian Shops and Factories Act of 1900, they fixed the rate of wages for apprentices at 4s. or 5s. a week, but during the past few months the wages boards had fixed certain rates in connection with the various trades there, and, seeing that the Victorian rates had been given, he would like to give the South Australian rates, which came into operation on the first of the present month. The rates were—Furniture trade: Apprentices for the first year received 6s. per week; for the second year, 10s.; for the third year, 15s.; for the fourth year, 17s. 6d.; for the fifth year, 22s. 6d.; for the sixth year, 27s. 6d.; and thereafter the minimum wage. Improvers received for the first six months, 10s. per week; for the second, 12s. 6d.; for the third, 15s.; for the fourth, 17s. 6d.; for the fifth, 20s.; for the sixth, 22s. 6d.; for the seventh, 25s.; for the eighth, 27s. 6d.; for the ninth, 30s.; and for the tenth six months, 32s. 6d.; and thereafter the minimum wage. In the baking trade the journeymen bakers received 50s. for a week of forty-eight hours, and the apprentices for the first year received 7s. 6d. per week; for the second year, 10s.; for the third year, 15s.; and for the fourth year, 22s. 6d. per week. Improvers received for the first year 10s. per week; for the second, 12s. 6d.; for the third, 17s. 6d.; and for the fourth year, 25s. per week; and thereafter the minimum wage. The Shirtmakers and Whitework Board fixed the rate of wages as under: Apprentices and improvers receive for the first six months' experience 4s. per week; for the second six months, 5s.; for the third, 6s.; for the fourth six months' experience, 8s. a week; for the third year's experience, 10s. a week; and for the fourth year's experience, 12s. per week; and after that the minimum wage of 16s. per week of forty-eight hours. Then, in connection with the boot trade, the board fixed the rates of wages as follow: Male apprentices, for the first year's experience, received 6s. a week; the second year, 9s. a week; the third year, 12s. a week; the fourth year, 17s. 6d. a week; the fifth year, 25s. a week; and the sixth year, 30s. a week. The female apprentices or improvers received for the first year's experience, 5s. a week; the second year, 7s. 6d. a week; the third year, 10s. a week; the fourth year, 15s. a week; and after that the minimum wage. In the clothing trade, the board fixed the rate of wages for the first year at 10s. for a week of forty-eight hours; the second year at trade, 15s. a week; the third year at trade, 20s. a week; the fourth year at trade, 25s. a week; and the fifth year at trade, 30s. a week. The female apprentices the first year received 4s. for a week of forty-eight hours; the second year, 6s. a week; the third year, 9s. a week; the fourth year, 12s. a week; and the fifth year, 16s. a week. The female improvers the first six months received 5s.

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for a week of forty-eight hours; the next six months they received 7s. 6d. a week; the second year's experience, they received 10s. a week; the third year, 14s. a week; the fourth year, 16s. a week; and the fifth year, 18s. a week; and after that the minimum wage. If the manufacturers in those trades in South Australia could pay the rates of wages enumerated, he thought the manufacturers in a great State like Queensland, which was far more wealthy, should be able to pay the proposed rate of wages.

Mr. JENKINSON: The point had been raised by the leader of the Opposition as to the position brought about by the establishment of the wages boards and the action that might be taken under the clause the Com-
[7 p.m.] mittee were discussing, and it appeared to him that the clause would in all probability cause a good deal of trouble.

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

ESTIMATES-IN-CHIEF FOR 1907-8.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, transmitting the Estimates of the Probable Ways and Means and Expenditure for the year ending 30th June, 1908.

Ordered to be printed and referred to the Committee of Supply.

TREASURER'S FINANCIAL TABLES.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. Kidston, *Rockhampton*) presented the tables relating to his Financial Statement, and moved that they be printed.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

OPENING OF COMMITTEE.

The TREASURER: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that you do now leave the chair.

HON. R. PHILP: Before you leave the chair, Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few remarks. At one time it was customary on every occasion before the House went into Committee of Supply that you were moved out of the chair. That practice was abused. Very often a whole day and a whole night were wasted over the imaginary grievances of members. Now we have only the one opportunity during the session of bringing forward grievances. That is when you are moved out of the chair on the opening of Supply. I have a few grievances to ventilate. I do not wish to keep the House long, or those who are waiting for the Treasurer's Financial Statement. The first grievance I have is more by way of personal explanation. It is not a grievance against this House, but against a member of the Federal House of Representatives, Mr. McDonald, the member for Kennedy. Mr. McDonald is reported in the *Courier* of the 6th instant as saying—

It being "grievance day," Mr. McDonald was afforded an opportunity of supporting his colleagues in the Queensland State Parliament in their opposition to postal votes. He referred specially to the last Townsville State election, in connection with which he maintained that postal votes had been corruptly made use of. For the future he would vote against postal voting in any form.

Then he was asked to prove his statement. Of course he had no proof. He said he had it on reliable authority. I do not think Mr. McDonald would make a wilful misstatement.

Mr. MAUGHAN: He only said what you said about Ipswich.

HON. R. PHILP: No, he did not. I was in Townsville for a week after the election, and I heard no mention of such corrupt practices as are alleged to have taken place there. Mr. McDonald goes on to say—

The successful candidates at Townsville got in by the postal votes, and it was a very serious thing that persons sat wrongly in the Queensland Parliament through the fault of Commonwealth officers.

As a matter of fact, the two Townsville members had a big majority without the postal vote at all. If the postal votes had all been bad they would still have been returned.

The TREASURER: I rise to a point of order. I am not very sure that the point of order has ever been stated before in a formal way like this; but references to something that has been done in the Federal Parliament are certainly not conducive to good business, and I ask your ruling whether the hon. member is in order. It has nothing to do with the Government or the Parliament of Queensland. It would certainly be out of order if the point was raised in connection with something that was said in the other Chamber; and it should be equally out of order to refer to what is said in another Parliament, although there is no Standing Order to that effect. It must be a matter of good sense and good taste on the part of members of this House whether it is desirable to fall into the habit of criticising what members of the Federal Parliament say. I think it is bad precedent itself. However, I take your ruling.

The SPEAKER: The Treasurer has stated correctly that this point is raised authoritatively for the first time, and, so far as I know, there is no precedent for it. The only precedent that can apply to it—if such a thing can be called a precedent—is the precedent of good usage and good taste. I do not think there is a well-defined parliamentary rule. In the House of Commons it is not in order to speak disrespectfully of the members of other Legislatures. If the occasion arose and somebody criticised—not adversely, but disrespectfully—members of other Parliaments, I should feel inclined to rule similarly, but in this case I do not think there is any disrespectful criticism. As the hon. member stated, this is to a large extent a personal explanation; and, so far as the hon. member has gone, I do not think he is out of order. At the same time, I lay it down that, if any hon. member does refer disrespectfully to a member of another Legislature, it will certainly be out of order. But I do not think the hon. member has gone as far as that.

HON. R. PHILP: So far, it is only a personal explanation. I do not think Mr. McDonald would make a wilful misstatement. I said so before, and I say so now. He has been misinformed, but he has led the people in Melbourne to believe that there were corrupt practices, and that my colleague and I are sitting here by virtue of the postal vote. I deny that altogether. We had a clear majority before the postal votes were counted at all. The postal votes, of course, gave us a big majority. I want to make it clear, not only to this House but to the people in Melbourne, that Mr. McDonald was wrongly informed. If Mr. McDonald has a right to libel members of this House, certainly we have a right to reply.

The PREMIER: Not here.

HON. R. PHILP: We have a right to do it here. The hon. member told us the other day we had no right to discuss Federal matters. He has a right to go to a conference and talk about

them; but the members of this House, by whose leave he goes to that conference, have no right to speak at all. I think the hon. gentleman is altogether wrong.

The PREMIER: If two Parliaments start criticising one another they will not do much else.

HON. R. PHILP: This statement was made publicly, and I want to deny it publicly. I want to deny that there was any corruption in Townsville, and I also want to deny that the two members for Townsville are sitting here by virtue of the postal vote. Mr. McDonald was always an opponent of mine, but I do not believe he was making a wilful misstatement. I think he made an incorrect statement, and I want to correct him.

Mr. KENNA: Have you seen the statement in the *Federal Hansard*?

HON. R. PHILP: No.

Mr. KENNA: You are only reading it from a newspaper? Are you sure that is authentic?

HON. R. PHILP: I am quoting from the *Brisbane Courier* of the 6th instant, and other papers have exactly the same statement. As the hon. member refers to the *Federal Hansard*, I shall read that, too, before I sit down. But I am satisfied this is a fairly correct report, because the same thing appears in other papers, and I am taking the first opportunity of denying it. That is as far as the personal explanation goes. But there are several other matters which I might refer to. When the Address in Reply was going through, I made no reference to the appointments made by the Premier to the Upper House. Some of his supporters offered very warm criticism on the appointments made by the hon. gentleman up till last week. But here we find an appointment made almost before the late member of the Council was in his grave. That is a thing rarely, if ever, done during a session of Parliament.

The PREMIER: Why, your leader, in 1894, appointed a batch of five all at once under the same circumstances while the House was sitting—while you were Treasurer.

HON. R. PHILP: I have now the *Federal Hansard*. Would you like me to read the whole speech?

Mr. RYLAND: Yes, read it all.

The PREMIER: We will take it as read.

HON. R. PHILP:

Mr. McDONALD (Kennedy).—Some little time ago I asked a question without notice as to who had issued instructions to the postmasters at Townsville and other places in Queensland to stamp certain postal ballot-papers with the previous day's stamp.

I may explain that in Townsville, if a letter was posted to-day, and was taken out of the box tomorrow morning, it bore the stamp of the previous day—that was the stamp of the day it was posted. As a matter of fact it was against our side, because there were 200 voters disqualified because their votes were posted on Saturday and were not opened until Monday. Mr. Crouch asked Mr. McDonald if he were referring to the last Federal election, and the *Hansard* report goes on—

Mr. McDONALD.—No; to the last State election in Queensland. It was not to be expected that the Postmaster-General would have at his fingers' ends the information I required, but since then I have had a communication from the Department in reference to the action taken at Townsville, though up to the present I have had no communication in reference to the action taken at Charters Towers. It is well that honourable members should clearly understand the importance of this matter, so that they may appreciate the seriousness of the action of the postmaster at Townsville. When the last Electoral Bill was before the Queensland State Parliament a clause

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was inserted to allow of women voting by post. I may say that that clause was accepted at the time in order to save the Bill; and though that fact may have nothing to do with us as a Commonwealth Parliament, I desire to say unhesitatingly that so corrupt were the practices under that postal voting section, that within the Federal sphere I, for one, shall vote against any form of postal voting. I am thoroughly convinced that postal voting has been used in Queensland by unscrupulous people to violate the secrecy of the ballot. My belief is that, no matter how we safeguard this class of voting, we shall have undue influence exercised.

Mr. McWILLIAMS.—Would it not be better to punish the guilty than to deprive the innocent of the privilege of postal voting?

Mr. McDONALD.—I see much difficulty in carrying out the system; and, by way of illustration, I shall cite one or two instances. Justices of the peace in Queensland go about and ask the women voters to vote by post, and, when the women decline to do so, those justices call round with the manager of the mine at which the women's husbands are employed and intimate that voting must be by post. What is a woman to do under the circumstances? If she refuses to vote by post, she feels that her refusal may injure the prospects of her husband and her family; and I say unhesitatingly that in 90 per cent. of the cases in which people vote by post it is known how they vote.

Colonel FOXTON.—No, no!

Mr. McDONALD.—I can give another instance to show how unscrupulous people have been in reference to these postal votes. When people desire to vote by post, those who are interested supply each one with a small piece of clean blotting paper for the purpose of blotting the signatures, and this blotting paper is carefully put away for future reference.

Mr. SALMON.—Why did the honourable member not give information and put the Electoral Act into force? The honourable member was not doing his duty.

Mr. McDONALD.—The honourable member for Laanecoorie knows as well as I do the difficulty which would face an outsider like myself in putting the law in operation.

Mr. SALMON.—Then why make these statements?

Mr. McDONALD.—Because I know that what I say is true—the people who informed me would not tell me deliberate lies.

Mr. SALMON.—Then the honourable member ought to have given information to the authorities.

Mr. McDONALD.—There is a case now proceeding in Brisbane in connection with the matter.

Mr. THOMAS BROWN.—What was the purpose of using this blotting paper?

Mr. McDONALD.—So that it might be known how persons had voted.

Mr. JOHNSON.—What about invalids and others unable to go to the poll?

Mr. McDONALD.—In such cases voting by post would be legitimate, and I am not now speaking of electors so circumstanced. However, even in the case of invalids and others, it is known how they vote. As a justice of the peace in Queensland I have witnessed a number of signatures in connection with postal voting, and I do not hesitate to say that I knew how each elector cast his vote. I say that honestly and candidly—it is of no use saying that we do not know. I might look out of the window or at the pictures on the wall, but I should be a hypocrite to say that I did not know how those people had voted.

Colonel FOXTON.—Perhaps the honourable member would not have been there had he not known how they would vote.

Mr. McDONALD.—I do not say that, because the people were strangers to me. For instance, I was taken to one place to witness signatures, and the electors voted dead against the two candidates I favoured.

Mr. SALMON.—Did the honourable member get this information against the will of the electors?

Mr. McDONALD.—I could not help myself; I did not try to ascertain, but I could not fail to see how they voted.

Mr. SALMON.—The honourable member could not have seen how they voted if the electors had not desired him to see.

Mr. McDONALD.—I admit that if the electors had taken the matter seriously, and had desired to keep me from knowing, I probably could not have seen

how they voted. In Victoria, when the honourable member for Echuca was returned, notwithstanding all the restrictions, there were 2,000 postal votes. However, I am getting away from my point. Under the Queensland Act postal ballot-papers, when signed by the electors, must be stamped with that day's post-mark; and this is where the Commonwealth and the Post and Telegraph Department are affected. The post offices close at 8 o'clock at night, and after that hour ballot-papers which came in were practically informal, because, in the ordinary course of events, they would not be stamped until next morning, and would, therefore, bear a post-mark dated the following day. After a number of such ballot-papers had come in at Townsville, there was an interview between the returning officer and the local postmaster. Permission was asked to leave the ballot-box at the post office so that ballot-papers which came in might be placed in it. There was no objection to that suggestion; but it came to the knowledge of some people—I do not know how—that certain postal votes were informal owing to the date upon which they were signed not agreeing with the post-mark or date, and then there was another interview between the returning officer and the postmaster. This seems to be the serious part of the story; because the returning officer was led to believe that owing to the date on which they were stamped certain ballot-papers were rendered informal. How that came to the knowledge of the returning officer I do not know, but according to a letter I have received from the Department he went to the postmaster and suggested that an arrangement should be made to have the post office kept open for the receipt of those postal votes until 12 o'clock at night, as it was not likely that there would be any received between that hour and 5 the following morning. As a matter of fact, I believe that only one postal vote was received within those hours; but, on the other hand, between 8 o'clock and midnight, there were a great number sent in. The postmaster said he could not keep any of the officials there, but he would remain himself until midnight and stamp the papers. Why should those postal voting-papers be treated differently from any other postal matter? If it is possible for a postmaster to make such a distinction, it is possible for him to make a similar distinction in regard to any document posted. Another brilliant idea conceived by the postmaster was to attend to these postal voting-papers at 5 o'clock next morning, and use the previous day's stamp, which by that hour had not been altered. I maintain that the postmaster had no right to follow that course, and, in doing so, he took upon himself a very serious responsibility. This is more apparent when we realize that in those elections the candidates who were returned were beaten by an overwhelming majority, so far as the ballot-box was concerned. In one case, the candidates were beaten by over 600 votes in the ballot-box, though they secured a majority on the postal ballot-papers.

Mr. McWILLIAMS.—Is that the real reason why the honourable member refers to the matter?

Mr. McDONALD.—I do not say so, but it is a serious matter if certain members of Parliament now hold seats owing to the negligence, or whatever we may term it, of a public official.

Colonel FOXTON.—To what electorate is the honourable member referring?

Mr. McDONALD.—To Townsville. I do not refer to the Charters Towers election, because that is a subject of a case before the Court. The communication I have received from the Department states that the postmaster at Townsville told no one outside his office, not even the returning officer, of the action he had taken, and that he was actuated by the purest motives, having no idea of partiality for either side. I do not wish to accuse the postmaster of desiring in any shape or form to show partiality; I at once dismiss that idea. But the fact remains that he took upon himself a serious responsibility in stamping the voting papers in the way I have indicated, and the House should let the Postmaster-General know that in its opinion it is undesirable that there should be a recurrence of the incident. No action has been taken in Townsville for the reason that those concerned have not the necessary funds at their disposal. But for this further litigation would probably have ensued. A postmaster should not attempt to go beyond the ordinary routine of his office without consulting either the Postmaster-General or his deputy. Many people might be involved in expensive litigation and caused much inconvenience by such proceedings. I think that I have shown ample justification for bringing this

matter before the House, and I hope that the Postmaster-General will take action to prevent a repetition of such proceedings.

That is practically what the *Courier* says: that the members for Townsville sit here by the postal ballot, and that is not correct. I have got in all I have to say. I do not wish to keep the Premier from delivering his Financial Statement, but every hon. member in this House has a right to say anything he likes at this stage if he chooses to do so. I have said all that I have to say, and I shall now resume my seat.

Question—That the Speaker do now leave the chair—put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

The TREASURER, who was received with cheers, said: Mr. JACKSON.—The presentation of my Financial Statement this year is indeed a very pleasant duty, and I again congratulate the Committee and the country on the continued prosperity which we are enjoying. Good seasons and the wonderful recuperative powers of Queensland have resulted in an increased output of wealth, an increased industrial and commercial activity, and an all-round prosperity that is, perhaps, unequalled in the history of the State. It is exactly four years to-day since the present Government took office. At that time Queensland had reached the nadir of depression, our workmen were idle, our business men were despondent, our Treasury was empty.

Hon. R. PHILP: That is not true.

The TREASURER: To-day, labour is in universal demand, trade and commerce are expanding, and the Treasury shows the largest genuine surplus ever recorded in our history. (Hear, hear!) Our present prosperity should be all the more gratifying because it is no fictitious boom bred by borrowing, but has resulted from the better seasons—

Hon. R. PHILP: That is true.

The TREASURER: The industry of our people, and the wise restraint that has been exercised during the last few years. Four years ago we decided to refrain from borrowing, to cut our coat according to our cloth, and the result has amply justified the wisdom of such a policy. To-day, Queensland is perhaps in a sounder financial position than ever before, and on every hand we see the promise of further expansion and still greater prosperity.

I invite the attention of the Committee, in the first place, to—

LAST YEAR'S ESTIMATES AND RESULTS.

—	Esti- mated.	Actual.	—
	£	£	£
Revenue ...	3,841,200	4,307,912	Over the esti- mate ... 466,712
Expenditure	3,837,897	3,911,797	Over the esti- mate ... 73,900
Surplus ...	3,303	396,115	

Mr. JENKINSON: You were a bit out of it.

The TREASURER: The above table shows at once how greatly the estimate both of revenue and expenditure was exceeded, and I will ask the Committee to examine them somewhat more

in detail. But I may say here that it is undoubtedly a sound principle in finance to avoid over-estimating your revenue, for a too sanguine estimate of revenue at the beginning of the year is a sure precursor of disaster and deficit at the end of the year.

Here is a table showing the revenue under the usual six general headings, with the increase as compared with the estimate—

REVENUE, 1906-7.

Head of Revenue.	Esti- mated.	Actual.	Increase.	De- crease
	£	£	£	£
Commonwealth	744,800	942,569	197,769	...
Taxation ...	485,000	540,737	55,737	...
Land ...	538,900	568,934	30,034	...
Mining ...	43,500	48,836	5,336	...
Railway ...	1,650,000	1,821,946	171,946	...
Miscellaneous ...	379,000	384,890	5,890	...
Totals ...	3,841,200	4,307,912	466,712	...

Last year, for the first time since federation, our revenue exceeded £4,000,000. Indeed, the revenue raised last year was greater than in any previous year if we add to the State revenue that raised and retained by the Commonwealth.

It will be seen that there is a marked improvement under every heading, aggregating a total of £466,712 over the estimate, more [7.30 p.m.] than two-fifths of that total being due to the great increase on the amount estimated by the Federal Treasurer to be returned to the State. I pointed out last year that I considered the estimate of the Federal Treasurer was too low; the estimate being £744,800, and the amount received £942,569—a difference of £197,769.

The State revenue proper shows a healthy expansion under all the main heads, evidencing how general and widespread is the improvement in our affairs. The £55,737 increase under the head of "Taxation" is chiefly made up of £24,476 from income tax, and £30,796 from stamps. The improvement of £30,034 shown on the estimated revenue from lands is wholly due to the fact that £31,072 of deferred payments on sales made prior to the passing of the Act of 1906 came to hand last year. As the Government had decided to stop the practice of raising revenue by the sale of land by auction, I did not include in the Estimates any sum from this source, and, as I have said, the deferred payments on previous sales coming to hand during the year correspondingly swelled our land receipts. Mining shows an advance of £5,336, chiefly from increased returns from rents of leases. The magnificent return of £1,821,946 from railways is an improvement of £171,946 on the estimate, although that estimate itself was an increase of £115,120 on the receipts of the previous year. Such a development is unprecedented in our railway revenue, and could not well be anticipated when the Estimates were framed. Only on two previous occasions—1883 and 1884—have our railways shown a profit. Every other year shows a loss of from a few thousands to over £500,000 a year, and amounting in the aggregate to over £6,250,000. Last year, therefore, was a notable one in the history of our railways, as the revenue, after providing for working expenses and interest on the cost of construction, left a profit of £8,481, and it is to be hoped, in the interest of the general taxpayer, that we shall be able to continue to work our railways without calling on him to make good further losses.

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Here is a comparison of last year's revenue with that of the previous year—

	1905-1906	1906-1907	In-crease.	De-crease
	£	£	£	
Commonwealth	857,048	942,569	85,521	
Taxation ...	494,165	540,737	46,572	
Lands ...	558,946	563,934	9,988	
Mines ...	44,039	43,836	4,787	
Railways ...	1,534,890	1,821,946	287,066	
Miscellaneous ...	364,445	384,890	20,445	
Totals ...	3,853,523	4,307,912	454,389	

The above figures show a gratifying growth in every branch of the public revenue. But the

outstanding feature is undoubtedly the increase of £287,066 shown in railway receipts; and when it is remembered that the receipts of 1905-6 exceeded those of any previous year by £100,000, it will be realised how great and unprecedented has been the advance in our railway revenue.

I refer hon. members to Budget Table A for fuller details of the comparison of the revenue of the last two years.

Turning now to—

LAST YEAR'S EXPENDITURE.

Here is a table which shows the estimated and actual expenditure for each department, and the totals—

	Appropriation for 1906-1907.	Expenditure.	Saving.	Excess.
	£	£	£	£
Schedules ...	88,333	84,805	3,528	...
Interest on the public debt	1,546,883	1,546,881	2	...
Executive and Legislative	13,677	13,959	...	282
Chief Secretary ...	53,097	52,397	700	...
Home Secretary ...	445,731	473,536	...	27,805
Public Works ...	53,034	68,426	...	15,392
Justice ...	65,232	70,158	...	4,926
Treasurer ...	129,057	138,513	...	9,456
Public Lands ...	96,388	133,801	...	37,413
Agriculture and Stock ...	33,650	37,403	...	3,753
Public Instruction ...	358,141	351,548	6,593	...
Mines ...	28,535	29,732	...	1,197
Railways ...	926,139	910,638	15,501	...
	£3,837,897	£3,911,797	£26,324	£100,224
Net Excess ...		£73,900	£73,900	

It will be seen that the expenditure for the year exceeded the estimate by £73,900, an increase large in the aggregate, but which, after all, does not amount to 2 per cent. of the total. The abnormal growth of public business and revenue is at once its cause and, to some extent, its justification. The expenditure of £37,413 by the Lands Department in excess of the estimate was chiefly owing to increased activity in surveying and other services consequent on the great demand for land by selectors, and to a grant of £7,147 to the Central Rabbit Board in addition to the ordinary endowment of £10,000 under Schedule C. The Home Department shows the next largest increase, exceeding the estimate by £27,805, the principal excesses being £9,725 for Dunwich and hospitals and about £7,000 on account of the general election. An extra £3,770 was needed by the Health Department, chiefly on account of epidemics. There were also lesser increases for various purposes in other branches of the department. In the Works Department £15,392 over the estimate was spent, as it was felt justifiable, with our expanding revenue, to devote a larger sum to buildings and repairs. The increases in the other departments are hardly worthy of special mention. But I call the attention of the Committee to the fact that our railway expenditure was £15,501 below the estimate. This was an actual increase of only £49,282 over the expenditure of the previous year; and when it is remembered that railways earned £287,066 more revenue, it is evident that our thanks are due to the Commissioner and his officers for their careful management and its excellent results.

While the expenditure for the year exceeded, as has been said, the estimate by £73,900, it will be found to have exceeded the actual expenditure

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of the previous year by £186,085. As was pointed out last year, a large part of this increase was caused by additions to the salaries and wages of public employees, which received very hearty approval from Parliament. Some £27,000 additional was expended on hospitals and charities, and an extra £49,282 was required by increase of business in the railways.

The following table summarises last year's transactions:—

Revenue ...	£4,307,912	9	5
Expenditure...	£3,911,797	2	8
Surplus ...	£396,115	6	9

This surplus was paid over to the trustees of the public debt reduction fund on the 17th of July, and was invested by them in the purchase of a debenture, which has since been cancelled, thus increasing by nearly £400,000 the fund available for public works without any addition to the public debt of the State. (Hear, hear!)

THE LOAN FUND.

The loan expenditure during the year was £683,570. Of this £554,783 was spent on railways, £20,280 on buildings, and £36,761 on wire-netting under the Rabbit Boards Act; in addition, some £69,000 was advanced to local bodies.

Including the cost of new railways, a larger loan expenditure is contemplated this year. And as some doubt has been expressed as to whether the Government is able to carry out any great amount of public works without resorting to borrowing, it may be well that I should show

clearly what we have already done in regard to loan fund expenditure, and what is now the position of the loan fund.

When the present Government took office, the credit of Queensland was at a very low ebb—

Hon. R. PHILP: That is not correct.

The TREASURER: Judging by the heavy price paid for the small loan of £750,000 raised in July, 1903, and it was clearly impossible to raise at that time any considerable amount of loan money except at exorbitant rates. In addition, the burden of our annual interest bill was already so heavy, in comparison with our revenue, that on both grounds it was deemed desirable to call a halt, and the Government decided to attempt to finance Queensland without further borrowing for some years at least. I am glad to say that, despite all predictions of failure, this policy has been carried out with marked success. In October, 1903, I pointed out that in the two previous years, after deducting the total receipts from loan works and services from our interest Bill, the actual charge on revenue amounted to from 27 to 28 per cent. of our total income. If hon. members will consult Budget Table K, they will find that the actual charge on revenue has now fallen to 10 per cent. of our total income. It is evident from these figures that Queensland is in a much stronger financial position than was the case four years ago.

Mr. JENKINSON: So is every other State.

The TREASURER: Indeed, we have recently refused several offers of large sums tendered to us on better terms than were obtained for the last loan in 1903.

Never before did Queensland refrain from borrowing for four years, and never before was Queensland in so strong a financial position. We have carried out during the last four years a fairly large amount of public works, and propose to continue our works policy this year without borrowing—

GOVERNMENT and LABOUR MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The TREASURER: As we have done during the last four years.

To make the present position of the loan fund quite clear to hon. members, I give a statement of the total transactions from 1st October, 1903, to 30th June, 1907—

	Cash at Call or Short Notice.	Extended Deposits.	Total Credit.
	£	£	£
Cash balance at credit, 30th September, 1903	476,756	1,690,945	2,167,701
Balance proceeds of £750,000 stock sold	660,000
Repayments by local authorities, sugar-mills, railways, etc., etc.	523,831
Repayments of extended deposits by banks	405,373	405,373	...
Balance surplus 1905-6, in purchase of loan debenture (since cancelled)	92,080
	2,158,040		
Expenditure	1,639,590		
Cash balance at credit, 30th June, 1907	518,450	1,285,572	1,804,022

As will be seen, we had on 30th June last loan

money on hand, or on call at short notice, amounting to £518,450. If we add to that £396,200 surplus revenue, we have at the beginning of this year a total fund of £914,650 now available for public works; so that the actual condition of the loan fund at the beginning of the present year is as follows:—

	Cash at Call or at Short Notice.	Extended Deposits.	Total Credit.
	£	£	£
Cash balance as shown in above table	518,450	1,285,572	1,804,022
Add surplus	396,200	...	396,200
	£914,650		£2,200,222

Now, taking the sum noted above as "at call or at short notice," and adding the probable payments into loan during the year, the sum we are likely to have available for public works this year, without fresh borrowing, is as under—

Now available, as shown above ...	£914,650
Sundry adjustments from revenue to loan to be made during year ...	125,148
Repayments from local bodies, etc. (estimated)	120,000
Expected repayment from Queensland National Bank	86,097
Total	£1,245,895

GOVERNMENT and LABOUR MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The TREASURER: I think I have now made it quite clear to hon. members of this Committee that, after four years without borrowing, during which we have spent £1,639,590 on public works, we are in a stronger financial position than we were at the beginning of the period—(hear, hear!)—and that we have still sufficient funds available to enable us to continue a public works policy on a fairly liberal scale during the current financial year without resorting to the money market.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

TRUST FUND.

The TREASURER: Last year I called the attention of the Committee to the great increase in our transactions under trust account, and this year I note that it still continues. In the year ending 30th June, 1904, our total transactions under trust account were £615,349. Last year they rose to £1,063,586. This is due chiefly to the operations under a new account in connection with the central sugar-mills, under which the transactions last year amounted to £380,573.

It will also be noted that there is an increase in the general debit balance of the trust account of £87,991. The accounts which chiefly contribute to this result are the agricultural bank fund by £17,475; Closer Settlement Acts account by £43,832; and the pacific islanders' fund by £17,300. I refer hon. members to Budget Tables D to D5, where very full details concerning the trust accounts will be found.

Before leaving the trust accounts, however, I will refer briefly to our Savings Bank account, because we can see in its fluctuations as in a mirror the waning or growing of our prosperity

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Here is a table which shows, at a glance, the great improvement that has taken place during the last five years—

Year.	Excess of Withdrawals over Deposits.	Excess of Deposits over Withdrawals.	Number of Depositors.	Total Amount Deposited.
	£	£		£
1902-3	452,250	...	80,043	3,772,686
1903-4	131,005	...	80,959	3,741,967
1904-5	...	30,140	84,165	3,875,197
1905-6	...	162,099	88,026	4,142,791
1906-7	...	286,329	92,912	4,543,104

These figures show that we have about 93,000 depositors in the Government Savings Bank—that is, about one for each family in the State; and that the amount deposited averages about £48 18s. per depositor. It will be seen that in 1903-4, while there was an increase in the numbers of depositors, the total amount deposited fell off slightly. But during the last three years the improvement has been very marked. Last year there were about 12,000 more depositors than in 1903-4, while the amount deposited had increased by over £800,000 in the three years; an average increase in the amount at the credit of each depositor of about £2 13s. 6d.

PRESENT POSITION AND PROSPECTS.

Before proceeding to estimate the probable revenue for the year, it is well to review briefly the industrial and commercial prospects, as the conditions there obtaining must guide our forecast of the probable revenue to be received.

There is every appearance of a continuance of favourable climatic conditions, and consequently we have good reason to hope for a continuance of the swelling tide of our prosperity.

PASTORAL.

The improved conditions experienced during the last four years with respect to the pastoral industry still continue, although recently in a few localities drought conditions prevailed to some extent, slightly checking the general advance. Through the reoccupation of abandoned country, there is, for the third successive year, an increase in the areas held under pastoral lease or temporary occupation. For the past three years the revenue from pastoral occupation has been practically stationary, but with the determination of the rents of the best sheep country in the State now proceeding an increase of rentals may reasonably be expected. Although our cattle have increased from 2,481,717 in 1903 to 3,413,919 in 1906, they are still 2,675,094 fewer in number than they were ten years ago. The high prices still ruling and the competition from the Argentine in London prevented our meatworks from being fully employed last year, and we are compelled to recognise that similar conditions must obtain for some time to come. The careful Government supervision under which our packers and freezers work has, I understand, been lately favourably commented on by inspecting officers from both the British and American armies, with probably beneficial results as our herds increase. As regards the wool industry, the rapid increase in the number of our flocks still continues, although we are still far short of the number we had in 1892—namely, 21,708,310. At the end of 1902 the numbers had fallen to 7,213,985, but by the end of 1906 they had risen to 14,886,438; that is, the numbers of our sheep had more than doubled in four years. Last year alone the increase was 2,351,207. And

not only has there been a large increase in the number of sheep and in the output of wool, but, as will be seen from the following table, the price of wool has greatly improved:—

	1902.	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.
Greasy wool (average)	per lb. 8d.	per lb. 8½d.	per lb. 8½d.	per lb. 9½d.	per lb. 9½d.
Clean " "	14½d.	16½d.	16½d.	17d.	18½d.

AGRICULTURE.

The wheat crop last year was a comparative failure, but the conditions this year promise much more satisfactory returns, and, as we do not yet produce one-half of what we require for our own consumption, there is still ample room for development. Dairying continues its great and healthy expansion. The value of butter alone has increased from £313,982 in 1903 to £909,864 in 1906. (Hear, hear!) Efforts are being made to improve the quality of our dairy cattle by importations of stock from Britain and the Southern States, while the conservation of fodder by ensilage and other means is receiving increasing attention from our dairymen. It is becoming apparent that within a very few years dairying will have become our most important agricultural industry.

As regards sugar, though the acreage under crop in 1906 was slightly under that of 1905, yet the quantity of sugar produced amounted to 184,377 tons, or 31,655 tons more than in the previous year.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The TREASURER: Climatic conditions are favourable for another exceedingly prosperous year in this important industry. But the production of sugar in Australia seems to have overtaken the demands of the home market, and it is doubtful whether any further increase in production will not simply mean a diminution in the profits of those engaged in the industry. There seems to be a slight decrease in the area planted this year. I notice that in the dry year of 1902 it took only 8'38 tons of cane to make 1 ton of sugar, whereas in 1906 it required 9'38 tons, owing probably to the increased moisture in the good seasons.

On the whole, the prospects for all branches of our agricultural industry are eminently satisfactory.

MINING.

The prospect of a substantial increase in our mineral production foreshadowed in last Financial Statement has been fully realised. Last year's output, of a value of £4,198,647—an excess over that of the preceding year of £472,372—was the largest in the history of the State. (Hear, hear!) The advance was mainly due to the sustained high prices obtaining for most of the industrial metals, and

[S p.m.] whilst values approximately maintain their present level it is from our tin, copper, lead, and wolfram rather than from our goldmines that any immediate augmentation of our mineral output may confidently be expected. The vigorous prosecution of railway construction to some of our mining fields and the prospect of the speedy commencement of other lines have also conducted to the interest latterly displayed in most branches of metalliferous mining. In coalmining likewise a prolonged period of depression is being followed by a distinct accession of activity. The demand for both coal and coke is growing, sales and contracts show a tendency towards higher rates, and

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with the expansion of trade new mines are being opened and new machinery is being installed. With the continuance of existing conditions, the close of the present year should witness a still further increase in our mineral production.

I may here mention that, as regards the sample of coal from the Government mine on the Dawson, the Admiralty report on the test made at Garden Island was unsatisfactory, as it showed that the coal was exceedingly difficult to burn and left an abnormally large amount of ash. Similar tests were made, with somewhat similar results, by our Engineer for Harbours and Rivers and by the Railway Department. Another sample sent to Mount Morgan, used in the ordinary way, also gave similar results; but later tests seem to be more satisfactory, as a recent wire from Mr. Richards says: "Tested in sawmill boiler in furnace designed to burn sawdust, and, with forced draught, burnt excellently with intense heat. Every prospect of coal being valuable with similar or improved furnaces." The analysis of the coal is highly satisfactory, and shows a high calorimetric test. On the whole, the indications are that this is a

coal similar to some of the American anthracites, requiring a forced draught for its proper combustion. (Hear, hear!)

SELECTION.

An important factor in our development is the settlement of our lands, and hon. members will be pleased to learn that the area selected last year shows nearly a 50 per cent. increase on the previous year, although 1905 itself furnished a record in the matter of agricultural settlement. I may just note, in passing, that the area of the land selected was more than three times as great last year as in 1903. It is the desire of the Government to accelerate still further the rate at which closer settlement is taking place by building railways to open up fresh areas of country, and by properly advertising abroad the great advantages Queensland offers to intending settlers. (Hear, hear!)

By way of giving a comprehensive view of our present position, I subjoin the table I gave last year, but brought up to date. One intelligent glance at this table will show how prosperous and progressive Queensland is at the present time—

	1903.	1904.	1905.	1906.
Railway receipts... .. £	1,256,027	1,364,186	1,483,535	1,663,336
Tonnage of shipping inwards... .. tons	902,670	949,601	1,067,741	1,309,934
Tonnage of shipping outwards... .. tons	895,785	958,792	1,062,566	1,313,001
Quantity of sugar produced... .. ton avoird.	91,828	* 146,484	* 152,722	* 194,377
Value of sugar produced... .. £	1,066,732	1,860,225	1,920,048	2,249,161
Quantity of butter produced... .. lb.	7,717,325	17,538,473	20,319,976	22,746,593
Value of butter produced... .. £	313,982	635,409	786,744	909,864
Quantity of wool produced... .. lb.	34,997,076	46,058,482	53,072,727	66,938,101
Value of wool produced... .. £	1,883,752	2,280,924	2,649,751	3,388,929
Value of minerals... .. £	3,686,084	3,704,241	3,726,275	4,198,647
Exports... .. £	9,514,974	11,153,383	11,939,594	12,754,289
Imports... .. £	6,731,207	6,052,164	6,699,345	8,311,466
Number of cattle... ..	2,481,717	2,722,340	2,963,695	3,413,919
Number of sheep... ..	8,392,044	10,843,470	12,535,231	14,886,438
Savings Bank deposits... .. £	1,588,544	1,630,774	1,743,877	1,974,755
Savings Bank withdrawals... .. £	1,961,257	1,639,516	1,615,108	1,774,631
Area of land selected under the Land Act, 1897... .. acres	1,061,528	1,658,128	2,273,094	3,190,257
Excess of departures over arrivals (recorded) white	...	323
Excess of arrivals over departures (recorded) white	424	...	1,222	2,610

* 94 per cent. net titre.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATES.

Before I proceed to discuss the Estimates for the current year, it is perhaps desirable to say something on the present aspect of the financial relations existing between the Commonwealth and the States.

I dealt very fully with this matter last year and it is hardly necessary that I should now do more than briefly refer to the present position of this vitally important question. At the conference held in Melbourne in October last year, a general resolution was agreed to, embodying the principle which, I think, is essential to a satisfactory settlement of this important and difficult question—namely, that any scheme should provide for—

- (a) Giving financial security to the States;
- (b) Leaving the Commonwealth and the several States financially independent, each within its own sphere. (Hear, hear!)

In my opinion this is certainly the ideal we should seek to attain, nor do I believe that any settlement will be satisfactory or final that fails to realise this ideal. (Hear, hear!)

The Melbourne conference also adopted Sir John Forrest's proposals concerning the proportion of Customs and Excise revenue to be paid to the States after 1910, with the important amendment that the new arrangement should be embodied in the Constitution, and should not be revocable at the will of the Federal Parliament after 1920, as Sir John proposed. Another conference was held in Brisbane, in May last, at which Sir John Forrest, speaking on behalf of the Federal Government, stated that he could not agree to the amendment of his proposals, as adopted by the State representatives at Melbourne. This statement by the Federal Treasurer induced a majority of the State representatives to withdraw their amendment, although they still believed that amendment necessary to

secure the financial independence of the States, and they only agreed to surrender the point in the hope that their acceptance of the Federal proposals would ensure a settlement of the question. As the Hon. J. M. Davies said, "I think a settlement upon a less satisfactory basis would be better than no settlement at all." For my own part, I did not agree with this contention. I felt strongly that it was our duty to the States we represented to abide by the resolution arrived at in Melbourne on this point. As events have turned out, this important concession has had no effect whatever in inducing the Federal Government to agree to a settlement, for Sir William Lyne, in his Budget Speech, on 8th August last, stated that "Such an arrangement, however desirable to the States, will be quite impossible in view of public expenditure which must be carried out by the Commonwealth."

There are, as everyone recognises, inherent difficulties in the way of a satisfactory settlement of this question, but these difficulties become impossibilities when we have one Federal Treasurer on behalf of the Federal Government agreeing with the State representatives, and less than three months afterwards another Federal Treasurer repudiating the whole arrangement. (Hear, hear!)

Such measure of protection as the States now enjoy under the Braddon section may terminate at the close of 1910, and, unless some settlement of this question can be arrived at before that time, we shall then be entirely at the mercy of the Federal Parliament as to whether any and, if any, what proportion of our Customs and Excise revenue will be available for State purposes.

ESTIMATE OF REVENUE.

I now submit my estimate of revenue for 1907-8—

	£
Amount from Commonwealth	949,554
Taxation—	
Income tax ...	200,000
Stamp duty ...	210,000
Licenses ...	57,000
Totalisator tax...	12,000
	479,000
Land revenue ...	580,950
Mining receipts ...	50,700
Railways ...	2,016,700
Other receipts ...	370,500
	4,447,404
Total ...	£4,447,404

This shows an estimated increase of £139,492 on the revenue actually received last year. At first glance, that may seem too small an increase to expect, considering the manner in which the revenue has expanded during the last two years and the favourable prospects of the coming year. But allowance has been made in the estimate for reducing railway rates and fares to the extent of £100,000 per annum—(hear, hear!)—and for a further loss of from £95,000 to £100,000 consequent on a readjustment of the income tax and an extension of the exemption to £200. (Hear, hear!) It is thus evident that, but for this surrender of £200,000 of revenue, my estimate would have shown an increase of some £339,492 on the revenue of last year, which will, I think, be admitted to be a fairly optimistic anticipation of the probable increase this year.

Taking the first item in the above table, it will be seen that the Federal Treasurer estimates he will return £949,554 to Queensland this year. This is larger than any amount yet received from the transferred services since federation. Although it is impossible to calculate yet how the new tariff and the unwarranted penny

postage scheme may affect the balance to be returned to Queensland, at present it seems likely that the Federal Treasurer's estimate of £949,554 will be fully realised.

Sir William Lyne, in his recent Budget Speech, made a remark about the Post Office which he seemed to consider would justify the adoption of a scheme of penny postage. He said, "It is a matter for congratulation that the Post Office Department, managed as it is for the whole continent by one central office, is proving a source of revenue instead of a drain on the finances." But, while the Post Office may be managed "by one central office," it is not managed "at the charge of that one office." That "one central office" makes whatever arrangements it pleases for whatever expenditure it pleases in particular States, but it is the States which have to pay. The Post Office might be worked at a profit over the Commonwealth as a whole, and yet one or more of the States might have to make up a heavy loss consequent on the way in which the Post Office was worked in such State or States. The "one central office" is, therefore, in the happy and irresponsible position of being able to adopt expensive and uncalled-for alterations for which the State has to pay.

As to the statement that the Post Office, taken over the whole Commonwealth, is "proving a source of revenue," the net result for seven years is a loss of £414,457, as may be seen on page 70 of the Federal Budget papers. It is true that the Post Office shows a profit in several of the States, but, so far as Queensland is concerned, these seven years show an aggregate loss of £668,921. While the Post Office is entailing so heavy a drain upon our finances, Queensland is, I think, justified in protesting against the hasty adoption of a scheme which will entail upon us a further drain of £42,000 a year. (Hear, hear!)

From taxation I expect to receive £479,000, or £61,737 less than last year. Due allowance has been made for considerable increases under each subhead; but the reduction to be proposed in the income tax will, it is expected, exceed those increases by some £61,000. A Bill has been prepared, and will shortly be introduced, for the purpose of exempting from the tax the first £200 of all incomes—(hear, hear!)—reducing from 1s. to 9d. the tax on incomes from property—(hear, hear!)—and making it optional for owners of stock to defer paying the tax on increase of stock until it has been sold. (Hear, hear! and laughter.)

Mr. BOWMAN: Where are the farmers now? You can give us some industrial legislation now.

The TREASURER: These alterations will, as I have said, involve a loss of revenue of about £100,000. But I hope they will be adopted by Parliament.

In land revenue the first item is £11,200 from sales by auction. This does not imply that we are proposing to sell land, the amount set down being wholly due to deferred payments on sales effected before the passing of the Land Sales Proceeds Act of 1906. The next item of £7,000 is somewhat similar, being chiefly deferred payments falling due on account of land sold under the Special Sales of Land Act of 1901. When in 1901 £530,000 4 per cent. Treasury bills were authorised to cover the preceding year's deficit, a special Land Act was passed authorising the selling of land to provide funds for paying the interest on those Treasury bills and redeeming them at maturity. However, land has not been sold in sufficient quantity even to meet the annual interest. As will be seen from the above estimate, only £7,000 is expected to be received this year, the balance of the

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£21,200 required falling as a direct charge on revenue, and no provision whatever is being made for the redemption of the bills at maturity. As to the £600,000 of Treasury bills authorised in 1902 to cover deficits, no provision was made either for interest or redemption, so that the whole of the annual interest of £24,000 falls directly on the revenue.

Hon. members will, I am sure, be pleased to see that increases are anticipated this year in two important items of our land revenue. First, an increase of £18,714 from rents of selections, the natural result of the expansion that is taking place in land settlement. The other item is a small increase of £9,346 from pastoral rents.

Mr. MAUGHAN: Not half enough.

The TREASURER: For the last eleven years there has been a steady and continuous decline in these rents. This year we are at last promised a small increase, and we may well hope that this is an indication that we are likely to receive in the future a much more adequate revenue from our pastoral country. (Hear, hear!) On the whole, I anticipate to receive from lands £580,950—an increase of £12,016 on last year's lands revenue. (Hear, hear!)

Mining shows a small increase of £1,864, which calls for no special comment.

The railway revenue has been estimated at £2,016,700—an increase of £194,754 on last year's revenue, or an increase of £269,000 on the basis of last year's rates and fares. When it is remembered how large the increase of railway revenue has been during the last three or four years, the anticipation of a further increase of £269,000 may seem over sanguine, but I claim that our prospects fully warrant such an anticipation. This year is likely to be one of unparalleled prosperity in Queensland, and we are justified in expecting an unparalleled railway revenue, and if this estimate is realised our railway revenue will for the first time exceed £2,000,000.

Miscellaneous services show a decrease of £14,390, chiefly attributable to the fact that some large non-recurring items were received last year.

ESTIMATE OF EXPENDITURE.

I now submit to the Committee the estimate of expenditure for 1907-8—

	£
Schedules	87,456
Executive and Legislative ...	14,622
Chief Secretary	120,970
Home Secretary	521,612
Department of Works	133,287
Department of Justice	68,187
The Treasurer	283,741
Department of Public Lands ...	139,398
Department of Agriculture and Stock	44,249
Department of Public In- struction	380,990
Department of Mines	34,712
Department of Railways	1,064,193
	2,893,417
Interest on the public debt...	1,546,883
Total	£4,440,300

As hon. members will see, I am anticipating an expenditure of £4,440,300 this year, an increase of £528,503 on the expenditure of last year. This seems an abnormally large increase of expenditure in one year, but, although fairly liberal provision has been made for increases to salaries, particularly to the less highly paid officers of the public service, this only accounts

for a small proportion of the great increase in expenditure. Almost the whole of the increase is caused by including in our Estimates this year a large number of new or greatly increased services, and also by including a number of large but non-recurring adjustments.

I now give a list of the principal of these for the convenience of hon. members in discussing the policy underlying so abnormal an increase in the public expenditure—

EXTRAORDINARY EXPENDITURE.

NEW AND INCREASED SERVICES AND ADJUSTMENTS.

New Services—	£	£
Old age pensions (six months)	60,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Immigration	50,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Franco-British Exhibition	20,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Adoption eight-hour day	25,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Conservation of water	10,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Reward for destruction of prickly pear	10,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
Public works—buildings	51,000	
New steamer, Thursday Island	5,500	
(Hear, hear!)		
State farm, Central district	3,000	
Hear, hear!)		
Special grant to reserves	3,000	
Loans in aid of deep sinking in mines...	4,000	
(Hear, hear!)		
	241,500	

Mr. LESINA: The loans for deep sinking ought to be £10,000.

The TREASURER:

Increased Services—	
Advertising	5,000
Endowments to hospitals	8,500
Fees to licensed surveyors	13,000
Relaying lines with heavier rails	28,500
(Hear, hear!)	
Public works—buildings	21,000
Orphanages	6,000
	82,000
Adjustments—	
Loss on 1903 loan of £750,000	52,337
Cost wooden buildings, adjusting loan account	31,770
Transfer, loans in aid of deep sinking	41,041
	125,148
	£448,648

On looking at this table, hon. members will easily realise that the policy which I am now

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submitting for the approval of the Committee does not involve a mere reckless increase of public expenditure calculated to cripple us when bad times occur. On the contrary, it is in large measure storing the corn of the fat years to save us from distress should lean years return. (Hear, hear! and laughter.) For instance, the items under the heading of "Adjustments," totalling £125,148, are non-recurring, and virtually conserve that amount of revenue against a possible decline in our income next year. These old-standing debtor balances are made a charge on revenue, and, at the same time, the fund available for public works is augmented by an equal amount. The item of £52,337, the loss on the loan floated by the Philp Government in 1903—(Government laughter)—is, I consider, as properly a charge on revenue as the yearly interest on that loan. It is part of the price we have to pay for the money then raised. The custom hitherto has been to include such losses on loans in a subsequent Loan Bill—that is, to borrow the same sum over again, and to do the same with any loss on the second or subsequent borrowings; so that there are portions of our public debt which we have actually borrowed over and over again—

Mr. MAUGHAN: That is high finance.

The TREASURER: Paying interest on each separate borrowing, and yet never handling one penny of the principal. I therefore propose to pay the sum of £52,337 from revenue into loan, so that as regards the last loan at least we shall have available for public works the full sum on which we are paying interest. The next item, £31,770, cost of wooden buildings, is simply repaying what may be called a temporary advance from the loan fund, which enabled us to construct several needful public buildings during the depression. The remaining item of £41,041 for loans in aid of deep sinking is simply a transfer, and does not in any way affect the liability of the individual borrowers to the Treasury.

It will be seen that I have set down £50,000 for immigration—(hear, hear!)—which for many years past has been charged to loan or trust funds. That, under certain circumstances, may be quite legitimate, but, at present, I think we should meet this expenditure from revenue.

Mr. LESINA: That is, that this generation must pay for the next.

The TREASURER: The £20,000 for the Franco-British Exhibition is, of course, a non-recurring item; and, indeed, we may, at pleasure, vary almost all the other items on the list so as to make them recurring or not as we may wish or as our circumstances require. £10,000 has been set down for the conservation of water. The intention is to have a careful examination made of several of our river basins, and thus secure reliable data on which to base future action. Another non-recurring item is the £10,000 which we propose to offer as a reward for the discovery of a satisfactory method for the destruction of prickly pear. In view of the serious consequences likely to follow the continued spread of this pest, I hope we may be called upon to pay this reward before the close of the financial year. (Hear, hear!) The unusually large sum of £114,850 is being provided out of revenue for buildings this year, and when we add to that sum the £31,770 to be refunded to loan to make good previous advances, we have a total of £146,620 charged to revenue this year for buildings, being £1,029 more than the total amount expended on buildings from revenue during the last five years. In this matter we are simply taking advantage of this season of prosperity to overtake arrears of much-needed work, and to lighten our task in the future.

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For old age pensions £60,000 is being asked, and a Bill is being prepared to provide for the payment of a pension of 10s. per week to all persons requiring it who are over sixty-five years of age—(hear, hear!)—and have resided the requisite time in Queensland, or whose claims have been accepted in accordance with reciprocal arrangements with the other States. (Hear, hear!) Provision for six months only is being made this year, as it will be January before arrangements can be completed to begin the payments under this scheme. The £60,000 appropriated for this purpose and the extra £25,000 required by the adoption of an eight-hour day in the Railway Department are the chief permanent charges in the above list, and I believe that the great majority of the members of this Committee are in hearty accord with both of these proposals. (Hear, hear!)

In addition to what I have called extraordinary expenditure for the year there is an increase amounting to £79,855 consequent on increases to salaries and the making of more liberal provision for contingencies and services necessitated by the expansion of public requirements.

We have considered it desirable to make larger provision in the Lands Estimates to enable the department to cope with the growing demand for land.

The increase of £153,555 in the railway expenditure, although large in itself, is relatively very moderate, considering the amount set down for increased relaying, the amount required for the adoption of the eight-hour day, and for certain increases in wages. When in addition to these items we consider that provision is made for working 42 miles more railway, and that a great increase of railway revenue is expected, it must be admitted that the proposed increase of expenditure is by no means unreasonable.

SUMMARY.

Bringing the estimated revenue and expenditure together, the anticipated result for the year may be summarised thus—

Estimated revenue for 1907-8	£4,447,404
Estimated expenditure for 1907-8	4,440,300

Estimated surplus ... £7,104

In conclusion, Mr. Jackson, I have again to congratulate this Committee, and Queensland generally, on the sound condition of our public finances, and on the prosperity so generally diffused over the State. In framing the Estimates this year I have sought to give some relief where relief is most needed, to make ample and generous provision for the wants of the public service, and at the same time to provide a buffer which will enable us to withstand, without inconvenience, the first shock, at least, of adverse fortune. (Hear, hear!)

I move that there be granted to His Majesty, for the services of the year 1907-8, the sum of £300 to defray the salary of the aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Governor. (Cheers.)

HON. R. PHILP: Before that question was put he would like to know to what date the debate was to be adjourned. Did the Premier propose to go on with the debate to-morrow night?

The PREMIER: It was a matter for the convenience of hon. members. They could go on with the debate to-morrow night or else adjourn until Tuesday next.

Hon. R. PHILP: Make it next Tuesday.

The PREMIER: If it was more convenient for hon. members he would adjourn the debate until Tuesday next.

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

LOCAL AUTHORITIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. A. G. C. Hawthorn, *Enoggera*): In moving the second reading of this amendment of the Local Authorities Act of 1902, I would point out that this measure is largely based upon the Bill which was brought in last year, but which was not proceeded with owing to want of time.

[8.30 p.m.] That Bill included a good many of the provisions of this measure. In this measure are embodied certain suggestions which have been made by the Local Authorities' Association at their conference, and certain amendments that have been found in practice by the Home Secretary's Office to be necessary. It was anticipated in 1902, when the Local Authorities Act was passed, that as it was a consolidated measure, and was founded upon the report of a commission which had sat in the year 1896, under the presidency of Sir Arthur Morgan, it would entirely cover local government throughout Queensland. But during the five years that it has been in force numerous defects have been found in its practical operation, and in order to try to bring the Act up to date and to remedy those defects the present Bill is submitted to the House. The Government recognise that in many instances—in most instances, I may say—the local authorities at present are carrying out a very good work, and we propose in this Bill to do our best to assist them by providing the necessary machinery to carry out that work. I do not say that this Bill is perfect, and here I may state that it is quite open to amendment in Committee if the amendments proposed are reasonable and are within the scope of the Bill. There are two or three points that I have been spoken to about, and I think we shall be able to make amendments in the Bill which will meet the difficulties that have been raised. For instance, there is the question of the leasing of land after the first lease has expired and the local authorities have had to take possession of the land. Then there is the question of noxious weeds. I have had a few intimations from different local authorities that they are not satisfied with the present law in regard to noxious weeds. That law may possibly be altered when we get into Committee on this Bill. Then there is a further amendment which has been suggested, and that is, that when a part of an area desires to get a loan, the poll should be taken in the particular portion of the area benefited by the loan, and not in the whole area.

Mr. LESINA: You are not absolutely married to every clause of the Bill?

The HOME SECRETARY: I am not absolutely wedded to any clause. The Bill is brought in to assist local authorities, and if during its progress through the House it is found that amendments may be made which will meet and remedy various difficulties that local authorities have to contend with, I shall be quite willing, if they are within the scope of the Bill, to accept those amendments and to assist in having them put in proper order. The Bill is largely a Committee one. It is not so much a matter of principle as a matter of detail. I propose, therefore, to go through the clauses in detail, which is not quite usual on the second reading of a Bill,

so that I may be able to give the House a full knowledge of the different ways in which we propose to amend the Act. I shall take the clauses now in detail, and compare them with the provisions in the existing Act. The 1st clause deals merely with the short title and construction of the Act. The 2nd clause is inserted in order to remove a difficulty in regard to what is the position of a councillor who may supply a small quantity of stationery or other goods to the local authority of which he is a member. Under the present law a person supplying one shilling's worth of goods to a local authority is disentitled to sit on that local authority—he is disqualified, and will have to leave the council. We propose to provide that any person who is a member of a local authority in a small country town shall not be debarred from selling small quantities of goods to that local authority. The 3rd clause amends section 15 of the principal Act. Section 14 provides that—

Every male person of the age of twenty-one years who is a natural born or naturalised subject of His Majesty, and who is a ratepayer of an area and is not under any of the disabilities hereinafter specified, shall be qualified to be elected or appointed and to act as a member of the local authority of such area.

The Act enacts that a ratepayer shall not have a vote unless his rates are paid up; but, strange to say, a ratepayer can be elected a member of the local authority although his rates are not paid up. Clause 3 simply provides that unless a ratepayer has paid his rates he cannot act as a member—

And if any such sum remains unpaid for a period of thirty days after it became payable, he shall thereupon cease to be qualified to act as such member.

Mr. BOUCHARD: It goes further than you say.

Mr. BLOCKSIDE: Why do you treat him differently from any other ratepayer?

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not treat him differently from any other ratepayer, but under the present Act he is treated differently, and we propose to remedy that by making it clear that a ratepayer cannot become a member of a local authority unless all his rates are paid up.

Mr. BLOCKSIDE: He is not treated differently now, but he will be under this Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY: I think it is proper that a member should have his rates paid up. I have heard of a case where the chairman of a board owed a large sum for rates, and, merely because he happened to be chairman, he used his power to prevent steps being taken to compel him to pay those rates. Precautions should be taken to prevent a recurrence of that kind of thing. Clause 4 amends section 17 of the principal Act, which provides for the annual retirement of members, and enacts that where—

It is not apparent under the foregoing part of this section which of such members ought at any time to go out of office, the member or members who has or have attended the meetings of the local authority the least number of times in the preceding year shall go out.

The question has arisen in some cases which member should retire. In one case it was contended that the year closed on the 31st December, 1904, and that the retiring member should be decided by lot. Another member of the local authority contended that the year ended on 31st of January, and that the member who had attended the least number of times up to the date of the nominations should go out of office. Clause 4 of this Bill decides distinctly what time the member shall retire, as it provides that the expression "preceding year" means the year ending on the 31st day of December last past. Clause 5 gives power to the Governor in Council to dissolve a council. That, I think, is a power

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which is very necessary. It may be that in the case of a shire like Rosewood, where the books have been kept and the business conducted in such a manner that it is impossible to have a proper roll of ratepayers prepared, the member elected under such circumstances would be ousted. Such a case has arisen in the shire, and it is at present before the Supreme Court, who will have to determine whether members are properly elected. This clause 5 gives the Governor in Council full power to deal with a case like that, and I think it is a provision that I may fairly ask the Committee to pass. Clause 6 assimilates the time for holding elections in shires with the time for holding elections in towns. Clause 7 repeals section 26 of the principal Act. The ratepayers' list is in reality a copy of the names in the ratebook, and its preparation causes unnecessary worry.

Mr. LESINA: Do you disqualify ratepayers from voting who have not paid their rates?

The HOME SECRETARY: That is the case under the present law. I may point out that in clause 8 there has been an omission in the printing of the Bill. A line at the end of the clause has dropped out in the second printing in the Government Printing Office—a most unusual thing, I understand. The line dropped out reads as follows:—

Subsection two of the said section is repealed.

And I shall ask the Committee to allow me to amend the clause so as to rectify that omission. Clause 11 amends subsection (3) of section 37 of the principal Act, which provides that in every town on the third day after the conclusion of every annual election, or on such other day as may be appointed by the by-laws, and in every shire on such day as may be appointed by the by-laws, the local authority shall hold a meeting at the hour of 12 o'clock noon. It is not always convenient for members of shire councils to meet at 12 o'clock noon, and a motion was passed at the last conference of the local authorities to the effect that the first meeting should be held on such day and at such hour as may be appointed by the by-laws. The necessary provision to give effect to that proposal is embodied in this clause. Clause 12 provides that all books, documents, papers, and writings shall be open to inspection by any member unless in any case the local authority otherwise directs. There has been some question raised as to whether certain documents were open to inspection, and this clause removes all doubt on the subject. Inspection has been refused in some cases, and it is therefore proposed to give the necessary power to compel the officers concerned to submit all books and documents for inspection of members, except in cases where the local authority otherwise directs. The 1st paragraph of clause 13 provides—

In the first paragraph of section sixty of the principal Act, the words "alter or" are repealed.

Section 60 of the principal Act provides, amongst other things—

The local authority shall be charged with the construction, maintenance, management, and control of all roads, bridges, culverts . . . and may from time to time open a new road, or divert any road, or alter or increase the width.

And so on. The words "alter or" in this connection have led to some confusion, and it is therefore proposed to strike them out. Clause 14 makes certain alterations in section 74 of the principal Act, which provides—

If at any time before the due alignment of a road any person desires to erect any building or to make any alteration of or addition to any existing building abutting on such road, he shall give at least thirty days' notice to the Minister and to the local authority of his intention so to do; and upon payment of a fee to be fixed by

the Minister, shall be entitled to receive from the Minister a certificate of alignment of the road.

It will be seen, therefore, that if any person desires to build he must give thirty days' notice to the Minister and the local authority of his intention so to do, and on payment of the fee he is entitled to a certificate. In practice, it has been found they give the notice, but they do not pay for the certificate, and the building has gone on without a certificate. The Government has been put to the cost of surveying the road, and when they have gone to collect the money they have found that the owner of the land would not pay, and there is no provision to make him pay. Under this clause the amount of the fee paid may be deducted from the amount of any special rate for the alignment of roads, and the entire cost shall be borne by the local authority concerned—shall constitute a debt due by the local authority to the Crown, which may be recovered by action in the name of the Minister in any court of competent jurisdiction. The Minister, before proceeding to comply with any application by a local authority under section 73, may require the local authority to give security for the due payment of the cost to be incurred in complying with such application. Clause 15 provides that the words "forty-two" shall be inserted in place of the words "twenty-one" in the 1st line of subsection (3) of section 76. It makes the necessary provision to meet the suggestion of the local authorities in that respect. Clause 16 repeals section 86 of the principal Act, which was a re-enactment of a clause in an old Act. It was unnecessary, because the Land Act makes sufficient provision. It puts towns in the same position as shires as regards the closing of roads. Clause 17 relates to the use of pounds. It is a debatable question whether one shire or one area has the right to use a pound in another area. This clause makes ample provision for one local authority to use a pound in another local authority. The 2nd paragraph provides—

The second paragraph of section one hundred and twenty of the principal Act is repealed, and the following provision is inserted in lieu thereof:—

The poundkeeper shall, within ten days after any sale, transmit the proceeds of such sale to the clerk, together with a detailed account of the several animals sold, and of the amount realised upon each lot, of the moneys due to the persons impounding in respect of damages and charges for leading or driving, and of the fees, rates, and charges due in respect of each animal.

It is further provided that—

Upon the expiration of two years after the sale of any impounded animal, all moneys remaining in the possession of the local authority in respect of the sale thereof and unclaimed by the person impounding or by the proprietor of the animal shall become the absolute property of the local authority.

The principal Act fixes no limit during which an appeal might be made. Subclause (4) of this section provides that the limit shall be thirty days, so that if no appeal is made within thirty days the right of appeal is lost. Section 154 of the principal Act relates to the question of the destruction of noxious weeds. This is one of the clauses that may possibly be altered. The local authorities passed a resolution that it was desirable to have a clause of this description, but it has been considered in Warwick and Clifton that it is not right that this burden should be put upon the ratepayers. The question was discussed at the conference of local authorities in 1905, and the Jondaryan and Tarampa shire councils proposed that owners of property should be compelled to destroy the noxious weeds or grasses fronting their property, but if the roads were more than 2 chains in width it was proposed that the owners should be responsible for the clearing of 1 chain in width. That has been objected to, and probably in Committee this may be altered, if a suitable amendment can be arranged.

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Mr. GUNN: Wipe it out altogether.

The HOME SECRETARY: Clause 19 provides that a copy of all by-laws shall be kept at the office of the local authority, and sold at a reasonable charge. The amendment makes this necessary in respect to all by-laws, including by-laws that may be made under the Health Act or any other Act relating under which they have power to make by-laws. Clause 21 provides for an amendment of section 215, which provides—

A special rate may be a separate rate, or may be made and levied equally upon all rateable land in the area.

Clause 21 provides that the Governor in Council shall, from time to time, cause a special rate to be levied equally upon all rateable land in the area. That provides what at present it is unable to do in a local authority—that is, a differential rate to be put on a subdivision of any area. In practice it has been done on one or two occasions, but as a matter of fact it is not legal. This clause in the Bill will legalise that, and enable any areas to put different rates on different portions of that area. Clause 22 provides that the loan rates shall be levied in a certain manner, and it refers to an old clause—section 13—of the Local Works Loans Acts, 1880 to 1890. Section 222 of the Local Authorities Act only gives the Treasurer power to levy a special loan rate if the revenue from special or separate rates is insufficient to provide the annual instalment payable in respect of loans. If only a general rate is levied he has no power to levy a loan rate. It is proposed to repeal section 222 and substitute clauses giving the necessary power. Clause 25 makes certain alterations in section 230 of the principal Act. That section provides—

When any rates have remained unpaid for a period of twelve months from the first day of January after the same became due and payable, such rates shall thereafter bear interest at the rate of five pounds per centum per annum, calculated at simple interest, and such interest shall be recoverable in the same manner as rates are recoverable under that Act.

As an instance of that, if a rate is levied in February, 1906, and is not paid until 31st December, 1906, interest can only be charged at present after it has remained unpaid for a period of twelve months from 1st January, 1907—that is to say, January, 1908. This clause provides a remedy—that interest will be charged from the 31st December in the year in which the rate is made, instead of waiting for eighteen months as at present.

Mr. PAGET: They do not wait—they charge interest straight away.

The HOME SECRETARY: It is not legal. Clause 26 makes certain provisions in connection with power of sale given to local authorities for arrears of rates after seven years have elapsed. This section has been found to be defective, and it is proposed in the new clause to give the local authorities ample power, in case they have to sell, by giving notice to the District Court. Further provision is made so that the local authorities may place a reserve price on the land, and if this price is not realised, they may buy it in. In the past, if the local authorities put land up for sale they had no power, if the land were not sold, to buy it in. This clause gives the necessary power. Clause 28 provides that any surplus arising from the sale of such lands shall go towards payment of all rates due to the local authority in respect of any other land within its area for which the person named in the aforesaid certificate of rates unpaid is rated. At present there is no provision of that kind. If a person owes rates on two pieces of land and one piece is sold, there is no provision to provide for putting the balance against the piece unsold. This clause will meet that case, and give considerable assistance to the local authorities.

Clause 29 deals with the manner in which accounts are kept. It gives the Auditor-General power to direct the manner in which the books and accounts shall be kept, what are the duties of the clerk, chairman, and auditor. It also provides for the nomination of auditors. Clause 254 of the principal Act provides for the appointment of auditors and their remunerations. At the 1906 conference a motion was moved, and carried unanimously, asking that the local authorities might be consulted on the appointment of auditors. It is now provided that the Auditor-General shall have the nomination of auditors, and I think it will be more satisfactory. He knows what he wants and what should be carried out. He knows the different auditors, and I think it should be far better for him to have the nomination than for it to be in the hands of the local authorities or the Minister.

Mr. RANKIN: They have to pass an examination.

The HOME SECRETARY: They have at present to pass an examination, but the actual practice is for the Home Secretary to nominate them, and it has given rise to a very great deal of friction. The local authorities naturally have their likes and dislikes with regard to the men nominated, and I think it is better to take it out of the power of the Home Secretary and the local authorities, so that there will be no dispute at all about it. The Auditor-General will appoint them, and his decision will be final. Difficulties

have arisen with regard to auditing [9 p.m.] the accounts of water authorities whose areas are co-extensive with the areas of local authorities. The clause provides that those accounts shall be audited with the accounts of the local authorities. Clause 30 provides for a special audit. There was provision in the old Divisional Boards Act for a special audit. It was seldom found necessary to make a special audit, and it was not included in the 1902 Act; but circumstances have arisen in different places where a special audit has been necessary, and it is desired to take the necessary power under this Bill. Clause 31 is one of the most important in the Bill. It relates to financial separation, and repeals section 265 of the principal Act. That section provides, amongst other things—

When an area is divided the local authority shall, in all cases, keep a separate and distinct account of all moneys received in respect of general rates levied upon the rateable land in the several divisions, and of any moneys received by the local authority by way of endowment upon such rates respectively, so that the moneys so received shall be credited to the same accounts as the rates in respect of which they were respectively received.

And save as hereinafter provided all moneys expended upon works within the limits of a division shall be debited to the account of that division.

Section 265 also specifically provides that no other source of income than general rates and endowment may be credited to the separate ward account, that general expenditure shall be defrayed out of general revenue, and that, unless the local authority has directed, under section 261, that a certain part of the salaries and office management shall be debited to a separate account, the expenditure in respect of salaries and office management shall not be debited to the separate account of any division. The provisions of the Bill provide that as soon as possible after the annual election the local authority, before levying a general rate for the year, must make an estimate (a) of the gross income; (b) the expenditure in respect of loans, contributions, precepts, or other liabilities charged upon the local fund, after deducting any portion proposed to be paid out of the proceeds of any special rate; (c) the expenditure in respect of salaries, allowances, and office management;

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(d) the expenditure in respect of works and undertakings which the local authority consider to be of such importance to the whole of the area that they may reasonably be a charge upon the local fund; (e) the total amount, after deducting the estimates of expenditure in respect of the abovenamed services, which will be available for expenditure within the limits and for the benefit of the several divisions. The estimate must be laid before a special meeting of the local authority, and after approval, with or without amendment, must be entered in a book to be kept for that purpose, which shall be sealed with the seal of the local authority; provided that in no year shall any estimates be approved in which the amount which will be available for expenditure in the several divisions is less than one-half of the anticipated receipts of general rates. When the estimate has been approved, the total amount shown to be available for expenditure shall be apportioned among the subdivisions in proportion to the amount of general rates expected to be received therefrom during the year. It was thought that was the best apportionment that could be made. The amount so apportioned shall be credited to the particular division and shall be available only for expenditure on works within the limits and for the benefit of that division. At the yearly balance and audit of the accounts an adjustment shall be made of the accounts of each division so as to make them conformable with the amounts actually received and expended during the year. The amounts standing to the credit or debit of each of the separate accounts shall be carried forward from year to year. The proposal is practically that each division shall be a separate local authority under the Act, and it is about time we had some separation of that kind, so that each subdivision shall know exactly what it is likely to have during the current year. It should be easy for the local authority to make up a rough estimate of what is likely to be received in each subdivision, what the general expenses are likely to be, and what will be available for expenditure in each subdivision. That will be strictly adhered to, and I think it will work out very effectively for the assistance of those divisions which in the past have had less spent upon them than they should have had.

Mr. PAGET: As a matter of fact, that system has been carried out in places for many years past.

The HOME SECRETARY: It may have been done, but it has not been legal. We now propose to make it legal and compulsory.

Mr. RYLAND: It will work against the poor divisions.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not see that it can. Each division will get its proper proportion of the general rates.

Mr. PAGET: And be debited with its proper share of the expenses.

Mr. BLOCKSIDE: How will they debit the general expenditure?

The HOME SECRETARY: I think the hon. member will see that everything is provided for in the clause. The Parliamentary Draftsman considered the clauses fully, and I consulted gentlemen concerned in local authorities work, and particularly well up in the financial working of local authorities. Clause 32 provides for an amendment of section 341 of the principal Act. When a poll is taken for the constitution of a joint local authority, it is to be taken in all the area affected instead of, as at present, in all or some of the areas affected. In practice that has been found to work very badly. Clause 33 amends section 396 of the principal Act. A local authority compelled to do work for any owner shall in future be entitled to charge the cost of that work to the land. At present they cannot do so, and

frequently local authorities have been mulcted for work they have had to do for an owner, and which they were not able to make a charge upon the land. Subsection (1) of clause 34 provides that the chairman shall be *ex officio* returning officer in an election. Subsections (3), (4), and (5) make alterations in the Third Schedule following on the assimilation of the dates of elections in shires and towns. Subsection (6) provides that every voter shall vote for the full number of candidates to be elected. That is to do away with plumping, which in the past has been found objectionable. I think the explanation I have given will enable hon. members to see what we propose to do. Of course when we get into Committee I shall be able to enlarge on the various clauses and to meet objections which may be raised. We hope that with these amendments the local authorities will be able to go on for some considerable time without any amendment of the Act. I would point out that the Bill does not embody all the suggestions which have been made by the Local Authorities' Association. Some of them we thought impossible to work out, and others it was not advisable to insert. But those that we thought reasonable I have endeavoured, with the assistance of the Parliamentary Draftsman, to work in, and I hope that by the time the Bill becomes law it will assist materially in enabling local authorities to work more smoothly. We recognise that they are doing good work in the majority of instances; but there are instances where that is not so. To meet those exceptions we propose to give the Governor in Council power to dissolve a local authority at any time, and we think that clause will meet with the approval of hon. members.

Mr. MAUGHAN: That is a Rosewood clause.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is one of the cases which it is proposed to deal with, but it is not the only one.

Mr. MCMASTER: The local authorities did not ask for that.

The HOME SECRETARY: I do not think that is one of their suggestions, but the clause is a very wise one to put in. Three or four local authorities have not been working at all satisfactorily, and there is no provision for dissolving them. What we want is to make the Act a workable one, both for councillors and ratepayers. We do not want councillors to be able to defy the ratepayers, and we want the ratepayers to have a proper deal and get the full benefit of the money received from them. Local authorities get no endowment, and the whole of the money which they have to expend is raised within the area, and under these circumstances we should make the working of the local authorities as easy and as little burdensome as possible to the ratepayers. I do not know that there is any necessity for me to enlarge any further on the Bill. The Bill is not supposed to be perfect, and it will probably be amended in Committee. Personally, I shall be glad to consider any suggestions, and if those suggestions are reasonable and within the scope of the Bill, I shall be pleased to accept them. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Hon. members on this side of the House scarcely expected that after the Treasurer had delivered his Financial Statement the Home Secretary would proceed with the second reading of this Bill. I think I am right in saying that members on this side were scarcely prepared for the second reading. Before we rose for tea we were in Committee on the Factories and Shops Bill, and we naturally assumed that the Government would proceed with that Bill when the Treasurer had delivered his Financial Statement.

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The HOME SECRETARY: How could they under the Standing Orders?

Mr. BOUCHARD: However, the Government did not see fit to do that. But they have seen fit instead to proceed with this measure. They are not satisfied with the hon. gentleman moving the second reading of this measure to-night, and then adjourning, because they would not accede to the request of the Opposition, who asked them to adjourn when the Home Secretary had delivered his second-reading speech. However, I propose to offer a few remarks upon the second reading of this Bill. I am very glad to hear the Minister admit that it is not a perfect measure. I can quite agree with the hon. gentleman in that statement. It is by no means a perfect measure. There will be considerable room for improvement in various matters when the Bill goes into Committee. I am glad to hear the hon. gentleman say he is not committed to the particular clauses of the Bill as it stands. I believe that in Committee we shall be able to show the hon. gentleman some good and substantial reasons why there should be some amendments made in some of the clauses as they now stand. It is not so much what is contained in the Bill as what is omitted from it. Considering the magnificent surplus which we have achieved, and about which the Government have been boasting during the last three or four months, I thought they would have seen fit to do justice to the local authorities by restoring, in some measure, the endowment which was withdrawn from them during the hard times which the State passed through, and especially in view of the fact that the Premier, in the course of the late election, endeavoured to cast discredit on the leader of the Opposition by saying that he was the gentleman under whose Government the endowment was withdrawn from the local authorities.

The HOME SECRETARY: And did they not do so?

Mr. BOUCHARD: No. The hon. gentleman admitted that the other night.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: They left it off the Estimates, anyhow.

Mr. PAGET: You accepted our Estimates.

Mr. BOUCHARD: It was not the late Government who took off the endowment at all.

The HOME SECRETARY: Who knocked off the endowment in 1901-2?

Mr. BOUCHARD: I have here the financial tables which were circulated with the Treasurer's Statement this evening, and upon page 14 will be seen the various amounts which have been paid to local authorities since local government was established in Queensland. These tables will be very interesting to hon. members in this House and to the country. They will be instructive to hon. members, and will enlighten them as to the amount which has from time to time been granted to local authorities by Governments in the past. Upon the faith of that endowment local authorities were, as I have said before, actually established. There was really an implied contract by Parliament with the local authorities when they were established that they would, from time to time, endow the local authorities to enable them to carry on their affairs.

The HOME SECRETARY: Who committed the first breach of contract?

Mr. BOUCHARD: Hon. gentlemen will see that from the figures which I will read from the Treasurer's tables. In 1879-80 the total endowment given to municipalities by the Government was £26,754. In 1880-1 the total endowments paid to local bodies—including municipalities and divisional boards—was £78,564; in 1881-2 the endowment paid to all local bodies was

£108,267; in 1882-3 the amount was £118,843. Now, I will miss out a few years and go on till 1887-8. The total endowment paid to local bodies in that year was £266,045. In 1888-9 the total endowment was £273,870. In 1889-90 the total amount of endowment was £279,041. That was the year when the largest amount, by way of endowment, was distributed amongst the local authorities by the Government of the day. Then in 1892-3 the total amount of endowment was £112,730. Then there was a considerable falling off in the amount which was voted by Parliament for distribution amongst the local authorities. In the following year, 1893-4, the sum distributed was £63,696; then in 1898-9 the endowment was £79,785. In the following year, 1899-1900, the amount was £103,935. In 1900-01 the Government distributed in endowment £106,031. Then it fell away in the following years.

The HOME SECRETARY: Take them in succession. Read out the figures for 1901-2.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The figures for 1902-3—

The HOME SECRETARY: Give us the figures for 1901-2.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The endowment for 1901-2 was £59,988, and for 1902-3 it was £29,990.

The HOME SECRETARY: That shows a drop of £40,000 in one year, and a drop of a further £30,000 in the next year.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Quite so. Will not the hon. gentleman admit that it was owing to the state of the finances of the country brought about by the drought which existed at that time?

The HOME SECRETARY: What has that got to do with the contract?

Mr. PAGET: Why, the railway revenue dropped by over £400,000.

Mr. BOUCHARD: That was what caused the Government to reduce the amount distributed to the local authorities.

The HOME SECRETARY: But was there not a breach of contract in 1901-2? You say there was a contract, yet the Government knocked off £40,000 that year.

Mr. BOUCHARD: They were forced to do so.

The HOME SECRETARY: But was it not a breach of contract?

Mr. BOUCHARD: It was really a breach; but it was excusable under the circumstances.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Do not commence to make excuses.

Mr. BOUCHARD: But since then the state of the finances has been such as to warrant the Government restoring the local authorities this endowment, and it was their bounden duty to do so. Indeed, during the late election, the Premier attempted to throw discredit on the leader of the Opposition by stating that that hon. gentleman was responsible for taking away from the local authorities the endowment which they formerly enjoyed.

The TREASURER: Who was responsible?

Mr. BOUCHARD: The hon. gentleman during the late election told the electors that the leader of the Opposition had taken away from the local authorities the endowment which they formerly enjoyed.

The TREASURER: I told them more than that. I told them that the Philp Government took it off and I quite agreed with them.

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Mr. BOUCHARD: I read the reports of the meetings of the hon. gentleman in the newspapers and they never reported him as having said any such thing.

The PREMIER: Yes, and a much abler man than myself—Sir Hugh Nelson—said the same thing.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The fact remains that at that time the endowment was withheld from the local authorities in consequence of the State of the finances brought about by the drought. But since then we have had a recurrence of good seasons, our finances are in a really good condition, and the Government have not seen fit to restore any amount of endowment to the local authorities, although they have from time to time been casting burdens on the local authorities, which I think were never intended at the time local government was granted. I fully expected that if the Government did not now propose to grant any endowment to the local authorities that they would have authorised them to levy rates upon improved Crown lands. (Hear, hear!) I think that is a power that should be granted to local authorities.

Mr. PAGET: It would not help us much in the country.

Mr. BOUCHARD: There is no earthly reason why private owners of land should be taxed for the purpose of constructing and maintaining roads, providing drainage, and all that sort of thing, which is participated in by the Government.

The TREASURER: Suppose we shifted all these places to Rockhampton. What then?

Mr. RYLAND: Bring them up to Gympie.

The TREASURER: They would be very glad to have them.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Supposing the hon. gentleman were not Premier to-morrow. What then?

Mr. MAXWELL: We would send for you.

Mr. MULCAHY: No; he would not be appointed.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I certainly think the Government should have inserted in this Bill some provision such as has been provided in the Local Government Shires Act of 1905 in New South Wales, which provides—

All land, whether the property of His Majesty or not, shall be rateable except the following descriptions of land, and land occupied by and used in connection with the buildings hereinafter mentioned—commons, public parks and reserves, cemeteries, hospitals, benevolent institutions and buildings for charitable purposes, churches, public libraries, unoccupied Crown lands.

The TREASURER: I am afraid that will end the New South Wales surplus.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Not at all.

Mr. PAGET: Their surplus amounted to £1,300,000.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The New South Wales Government, in common with the other Governments in Australia, recognise that it is a fair thing to afford some pecuniary assistance to the local authorities.

Mr. PAGET: Especially in the country districts.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I am much disappointed the Government have not provided for some relief to local authorities in the way I have indicated.

The TREASURER: Are you speaking as a member of Parliament or as a member of the South Brisbane Municipal Council?

Mr. BOUCHARD: I am speaking as one of the representatives of South Brisbane in this House. If I were not doing so I would not be entitled to stand here and speak at all. I am

[*Mr. Bouchard.*]

surprised that the hon. gentleman does not know better than to interject such a silly remark as that. I say the local authorities throughout Queensland will be considerably disappointed that the Government has not accorded them any relief in the way I have stated.

The HOME SECRETARY: Very many of them would not take the endowment if they could get it. (Laughter.)

Mr. BOUCHARD: Is the Home Secretary serious? He is not serious. (Laughter.)

The SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. BOUCHARD: These interjections are at all times disorderly, and they put a man off. I was saying that the local authorities throughout Queensland will be considerably dis-

[9.30 p.m.] appointed that the Government have not afforded them some relief in the way I have indicated. I am not one who contends for one moment that a local authority in whose area a portion of improved Crown lands is situated should be taxed and the whole of the rates of those properties should be devoted to that area. I do not think that would be a fair thing. For instance, I do not think it would be a fair thing to allow the city of Brisbane to have for its own purposes the whole of the rates which might be derived from improved Government lands within the city. I think the proper course would be for the various local authorities to tax improved Crown lands, and to pool the rates which were derived in this way, and then, at the end of the year, apportion them in some reasonable way among the local authorities in whose areas the Crown lands are situated.

The PREMIER: Will you suggest a reasonable way?

Mr. BOUCHARD: Yes; I should be prepared to suggest a reasonable way. As the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill stated, this is purely an amending Bill. There are several clauses to which I desire to make a passing reference, in the hope that when the Bill is in Committee the hon. gentleman will consider the observations and suggestions that I offer in regard to those provisions, because I believe I shall be able to show that it will be advisable, in the interests of the local authorities in whose behalf the Minister states this Bill has been brought forward, that those suggestions should be considered and embodied in this Bill. Clause 2 proposes to alter the present law, and to make legal the sale of goods by a member of a local authority to that local authority. That is entirely in contravention of what has been regarded throughout Great Britain and other British States as a proper safeguard against a tendency to corruption, and in my judgment the proposed change in the law is extremely undesirable. The present law should not be interfered with. I would not even give a colour of suspicion to anything in that direction, and I, as a local government man, should be extremely sorry to see an amendment of the law such as is indicated in this clause.

The HOME SECRETARY: That was inserted at the request of the executive of the Local Authorities' Association.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Well, I differ from the Local Authorities' Association in that matter. I know of instances in which there has been a great abuse of the practice of members selling goods to the local authority with which they are connected.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Has it not been done by dummies?

Mr. BOUCHARD: The Minister for Railways points out that the present law has been evaded. Well, if it has been evaded in the past,

that only goes to show that if we make legal dealings of this nature between a member of a local authority and the local authority, the practice will become more rampant in the future, and very likely corruption will creep in. Clause 3 provides that if the rates owing by a member of the local authority are not paid up his seat shall become vacant. I do not think that is altogether a fair thing. If it is desired that there should be some provision made in the Bill whereby a member of a local authority should be compelled to pay his rates, then a reasonable time should be allowed him for that purpose—say a period of three months. The proposal in the clause is that he should be allowed only one month. Anybody who has any knowledge of local government affairs—and I know that the Minister in charge of this Bill has—knows full well that some local authorities only meet once a month. It may be that the rate notice has been delivered at the member's residence, but that he is absent from home, and it might not come to his knowledge on his return. It might be overlooked by those with whom it was left, and, in consequence of that, through no fault of his own, the seat of the member would become vacant.

The HOME SECRETARY: As a member, he knows exactly when the notices go out.

Mr. BOUCHARD: Not necessarily. I am sure the hon. gentleman, who has been a member of a local authority for many years, would not say that he knows the date when the notices go out.

Mr. PAULL: They are often not delivered until thirty days after the rates are payable.

Mr. BOUCHARD: It would be a fair thing to provide that the rates should be paid within three months, and that if they are not paid within that time his seat should become vacant. It must be borne in mind that local authority members are not paid for their services.

The PREMIER: It would be much better if they were paid.

Mr. BOUCHARD: That may be, but they are not paid; and they give up a large amount of their time and go to considerable expense in representing the ratepayers, and it would not be wise to attempt to penalise members in the way proposed in this Bill. The hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill has only instanced one case where a member had not paid his rates for about six months.

The HOME SECRETARY: That was a particularly glaring instance.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I think such cases are few and far between. There are several clauses to which I do not propose to refer, as they can be more fittingly dealt with in Committee; but there are two or three points upon which I should like to make a few observations. There is a very necessary provision in the Bill regarding inspection of books, papers, and documents. That is necessary not only in the interests of members but also in the interests of the local authorities themselves, because it has happened in the past that in cases of litigation where a local authority has taken a legal opinion a member of that local authority has actually divulged that legal opinion to the other side. It is therefore necessary, while facilitating the conduct of the affairs of local authorities, to also protect local authorities by enabling them to withhold from the inspection of any one of its members a document which a majority or a section of the members of local authorities think fit not to leave open to inspection. The provision in this Bill with regard to the alignment of roads will prove rather burdensome to local authorities. It must be remembered that

the Government were responsible for the survey of roads in the first instance. If, by reason of want of method in the Government departments, the data of those surveys have been lost, then it would be unreasonable to expect that the local authorities who are affected by this provision in the Bill should bear the burden of the cost of a new survey. It is an unnecessary burden which they ought not to be asked to bear. This provision states that it shall not be lawful to erect any building or to alter or add to any building until a certificate has been obtained.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is where it is necessary. Where an alignment has been asked for it should be paid for by those making the request.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I could understand this provision referring only to alterations to the frontage, but I fail to see that the making of an alteration to the back portion of premises should be prohibited.

The HOME SECRETARY: The alteration may be such as would bring the new building on the front of the road.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I say that while we might restrict an alteration made to the front of a building, it is necessary to impose such restriction in regard to alteration to the back portion of the building.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is not necessary under the clause. Read subclause (3).

The PREMIER: All this can be discussed in Committee. This is just discussing it over again, and it is wasting time.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I have no desire to waste time, but I claim my right to refer to certain provisions in this Bill which are of interest to local authorities.

The PREMIER: Discussing details like that, which must be discussed again in Committee, is merely wasting time.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I pointed out to the Minister in charge of the Bill that I proposed to refer to certain provisions in the Bill, and I think it is customary on the second reading of the Bill to do so, in order that the Minister may, between the passing of the second reading of the Bill and the time it goes into Committee, have an opportunity of giving consideration to the matters discussed.

The SPEAKER: Order! I do not think that, even for the purpose of informing the Minister what he proposes to do, the hon. member will be exactly in order in discussing details. At the same time, it is very difficult for a Speaker to lay down what is a detail and what is a principle, because what to one member may appear a detail to another may appear to be a vital principle. I understand that the hon. member is not dealing with the clauses in detail, but with principles, and, if that is so, he is in order. But he will not be in order in discussing details, which are matters to be dealt with in Committee.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I am referring to what I consider to be vital principles in this Bill. The proposal to repeal section 265 of the principal Act I regard as a vital principle. The object of that section was, I think, to achieve financial separation where an area was divided into wards.

The HOME SECRETARY: But it does not do it properly.

Mr. BOUCHARD: I think that was the object of the section. There is also a provision that it shall be competent for a local authority, where they are of opinion that a work is of such importance to the whole area that the cost of its construction and maintenance may be reasonably

Mr. Bouchard.]

charged to the whole area, it may pass a resolution accordingly. In this Bill that provision is proposed to be repealed, and I think it is a mistake.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is provided for. Mr. BOUCHARD: I do not think it is sufficiently provided for, and it is a very important thing where a local authority is divided into wards. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that it is divided into four wards. It may be that there are an equal number on one side, and an equal number on the other; and the mayor, or chairman of the local authority for the time being, has the casting vote. In that case it is very likely that an injustice might be worked upon one or two wards, in favour of the other two. That is a thing that is very likely to happen. There is a safeguard in section 265 of the present Act, because it is in a sense conjunctive, inasmuch as it provides for the cost of "construction and maintenance." But the provisions of this Bill only deal with the cost of the work—without defining what the work or undertaking is. That is a very important matter which I would ask the hon. gentleman to take into consideration. If he desires to perfect a system of financial separation, he is not going to do so by passing the clause as it is in this Bill.

The HOME SECRETARY: I differ from you there.

Mr. BOUCHARD: We find in this clause it is the duty of the local authority, before it strikes a rate, to make out a summary—on the one hand, of all the gross income from all sources, exclusive of special rates, or tramway rates, or loan money; then, on the other hand, an estimate of the total amount of probable payments for the year in respect of loans, contributions, or other liabilities; the total amount of probable payments in respect of salaries and allowances, and probable payments in respect of works and undertakings, whether constructed or to be constructed, in which the authority considers improvements to the whole area, and the expenditure in respect thereof may be a charge on the whole area.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is general work.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The desire the hon. gentleman hopes to achieve would be frustrated for the reasons I have pointed out. If there are four wards, three of the wards may combine against the one, or two against two. Assume, for the sake of argument, that there were two against two. The two in whose area the chairman was a representative could carry the work to be done in his particular ward, and make the charge upon the whole area. I say that has happened, and it is likely to happen again. If the hon. gentleman desires to do justice to local authorities and see that the money which is raised in a ward should be expended in that ward—subject to certain exceptions, which are embodied here—if he proposes subclauses (a) and (b), then I am with him; but if he includes (c) without some amendment I think he is going altogether too far, as it is calculated to do an injustice to some portion of an area. Then there is a provision that no estimate of revenue and expenditure is to be approved of in which the amount available, or the probable expenditure within the limit benefited, is less than half the gross total amount of general rates expected to be received in that year. I think, as a matter of principle, that it is altogether too much to expect a local authority to raise exactly one-half of the amount allowed, from its general rates, for the construction and maintenance of general improvements. I do not think the hon. gentleman can be aware of the position of the local authorities in the city and South Brisbane, because if he were, I am quite certain he would have made some exception with regard to those

local authorities. For the information of the hon. gentleman, I will give the position of how such a provision would affect the city of Brisbane, and I take the figures from the last returns of receipts. The receipts by way of general rates in North Brisbane were £50,200, other receipts £16,200, making a total of £66,500. The expenditure—I am giving them under the headings as they appear in the clause to which I have referred—is as follows:—A, £32,940; B, £70,565; C, £15,722; making a total of £56,227. Those three items would comprise the actual fixed liabilities or earmarked expenditure without allowing anything in the shape of maintenance and construction.

The HOME SECRETARY: Do you mean to say five-sixths of their income goes in paying their debts?

Mr. BOUCHARD: That leaves a shortage of £15,000 on the rate which the Brisbane Municipal Council has levied for the current year. The difference between the £56,227 and the £66,500—receipts—is £10,273. The effect of the provision to which I have referred is this: In the case of North Brisbane—and to a certain extent in South Brisbane—it would compel the city of Brisbane and the city of South Brisbane to increase their rates. That is not a desirable thing. Surely the aldermen of those local authorities are the best judges as to what rates should be imposed, and what amount should be expended in works—both maintenance and improvement! The Government surely do not pretend to know the interests and wants of the cities, nor the ability of the ratepayers who contribute the rates, better than the local authorities! And if the members of the local authorities for the time being saw fit, in their judgment, to economise, why should they be compelled, under the provisions of a Bill such as this, to increase their rates? Yet that would be the effect of the provision to which I have referred. I trust that the hon. gentleman will consider this. I am aware that under the clause there is a provision that the Governor in Council may remove or suspend the operation of this clause in favour of a local authority where its provisions may act unjustly. But I say the local authorities should not be called upon to go to the Government, cap in hand, and explain to the Minister the position of the area, and ask him, as a matter of grace, to absolve them from the provisions of this clause.

The HOME SECRETARY: In most instances the Government is a very large creditor.

Mr. BOUCHARD: The Government do not pay rates, and if the local authority is forced, as it would be in the case of the cities of Brisbane and South Brisbane, to increase its rates in order to provide one-half of the amount of the general rates in construction works and maintenance, then I say it is not fair—it is a hardship on them. The Government does not pay rates, nor do they propose to authorise the local authorities to charge them with rates. I do not think it is a fair thing to the local authorities that such a provision as this should be passed—to operate to their detriment. There is another matter to which I desire to refer. I think some provision should be made in this Bill in the case of a local authority borrowing money to pay off an overdraft. It is well known to most people who take any interest in local government affairs, that it is not unusual for a local authority to borrow money to pay off its overdraft, and then immediately proceed to pile up another overdraft. I think a provision should be embodied in this Bill to prevent that, and I hope the hon. gentleman will give it consideration.

The HOME SECRETARY: There is a restriction under the present Act.

[*Mr. Bouchard.*]

Mr. BOUCHARD : When they borrow money for the purpose of paying off an overdraft there is nothing in the present Act to prevent the local authority from immediately starting to pile up another overdraft.

The HOME SECRETARY : Have not the rate-payers got the remedy in their hands ?

Mr. BOUCHARD : I am surprised the hon. gentleman does not know better than that.

The HOME SECRETARY : That is the law.

Mr. BOUCHARD : It is well known that local authorities do certain things without authority. I think it is advisable in the interests of the local authorities that they should be protected against themselves. I can assure the hon. gentleman that this is a matter which the rate-payers of South Brisbane, and I believe of the city of Brisbane, are greatly concerned about. Both those cities

[10 p.m.] have very large overdrafts, and they propose to borrow money for the purpose of paying them off. If they do, their power of overdraft in the future should be restricted—reduced by the amount which they borrow for the purpose of paying off or reducing the amount. I do not wish to take up any more time now. There are other matters to which I shall refer in Committee.

Mr. BLOCKSIDGE : I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

The HOME SECRETARY : I think it is advisable to go on for a little longer. It is early, and I want a certain amount of progress made.

Mr. PAGET : We have made a lot of progress.

The PREMIER : I do not wish to be unreasonable in this matter, but this is really a Committee Bill. There is no leading principle to discuss on the second reading, but simply a series of amendments. Hon. members cannot discuss the Bill now without going into these amendments. We cannot have an interminable discussion of details on the second reading, and then discuss them all again in Committee. The second reading of the Bill might be disposed of in an hour.

Hon. R. PHILP : It will not be now.

The PREMIER : The time to discuss these things is in Committee. It is not desirable to do it now.

Hon. R. PHILP : We are told that all the Bills are Committee Bills. Of course they are. Before tea we were discussing the Factories and Shops Bill ; then we had the Financial Statement ; and then we were asked to go on with another Bill. Here we have three things unfinished. Why should we not have gone on with the Factories and Shops Bill in Committee instead of taking the second reading of this Bill ? Many hon. members who take an interest in local government want to speak on the second reading, and it will not lessen the work on this Bill if the Premier attempts to stifle debate.

The PREMIER : You can go on and speak now if you are anxious to do so.

Hon. R. PHILP : We can go on all night if the hon. gentleman likes.

Mr. BOWMAN : Oh, spare us !

Hon. R. PHILP : Well, let the House adjourn at a reasonable hour, instead of forcing people to speak when they do not want to speak.

The PREMIER : I do not want to force anybody to speak. I do not want them to speak at all.

Hon. R. PHILP : I can promise the hon. gentleman that he will not get this Bill through to-night. It will be better to adjourn now, and give hon. members an opportunity of speaking on the second reading. As a rule, members of

the Opposition do not speak at great length, and they have not tried to prolong the debate at all. The hon. gentleman's own followers on this side and on that side of the House have done far more speaking this session than the Opposition. This is a very important Bill. We have had a conference in Brisbane discussing it, and I understand it is now being discussed by people interested in it. We have all this week to discuss it. If the Minister in charge is prepared to receive amendments, as he says he is, I do not suppose it will take a long time to pass. I would again ask the hon. gentleman to adjourn now.

Mr. BOUCHARD : I think the hon. gentleman might well adjourn at this stage. There are several members on this side who are directly connected with local authorities, and they are very desirous of being afforded an opportunity of expressing their views on the Bill, but they never expected the Bill to come on to-night.

The PREMIER : They were told it would last Thursday night.

Hon. R. PHILP : We were told to-night by your "Whip" that we would adjourn after the Minister made his speech.

Mr. MAXWELL : That is not so.

Hon. R. PHILP : You afterwards said you would go on till 10 o'clock.

Mr. BOUCHARD : There are several hon. members who are desirous of speaking.

The PREMIER : Have you not said all you want to say on it ? What complaint have you to make ?

Mr. BOUCHARD : I am advocating the cause of those hon. members I speak of.

The PREMIER : Let them advocate their own cause. You are only wasting time.

Mr. BOUCHARD : I have no desire to waste time. If the hon. gentleman says that, I will sit down.

The HOME SECRETARY : I think this is "a storm in a teacup." It is reasonable to ask that we should go on to half-past 10 o'clock, and I am willing to adjourn then. I do not wish to stifle debate. This is an important Bill.

Mr. BLOCKSIDGE : May I withdraw my motion ?

The PREMIER : No. You must not try those little games on here.

Mr. MAXWELL : I would like to say that the leader of the Opposition came to me after the dinner-hour, and I went to the Premier and asked him when he was likely to adjourn. Then I went back to the leader of the Opposition, and, in the presence of the hon. member for Bulimba, I told him that the Premier intended to go on with the Bill until about half-past 10 o'clock. I told the hon. gentleman the same thing before tea.

Mr. BOUCHARD : You certainly led the hon. member for Bulimba to believe that we should adjourn as soon as the Minister made his speech.

Mr. MAXWELL : Before the hon. member for Bulimba left the House he knew exactly what the position was. It is just as well to stick to a bargain when we make one. The leader of the Opposition knew exactly the position that the Premier intended to take up, because it was not once, but I think three times, that I went to the Premier about the matter ; and I told the leader of the Opposition, in the presence of the hon. member for Bulimba, just exactly the position which the leader of the House intended to take up.

Mr. PAULL : I would like to ask the Premier to reconsider this matter.

The PREMIER : If you go on wasting time until half-past 10 o'clock you may have the other discussion afterwards.

Mr. Paull.]

Mr. PAULL : Since I have been here I have delayed the House very little indeed. I have helped the Government, although I am sitting on the Opposition benches.

Hon. R. PHILP : Too much.

Mr. PAULL : Yes, too much ; and as this is the first time I have ever asked the Premier to do anything of the kind, I think he might do it. I know my colleague is anxious to speak on this matter. He has not spoken before, and he is away to-night. I understand other hon. members are totally unprepared, and I would like to speak myself.

Mr. RYLAND : Go on till half-past 10 o'clock.

Mr. PAULL : I have not got my notes here they are at home. This matter has come upon us unexpectedly, and I certainly think that the Premier ought to adjourn.

The PREMIER : I announced on Thursday night that this would come on.

Mr. PAULL : Well, I can only say that if the Premier does not accede to my request, I shall have to reconsider my position. (Laughter.)

Question—That the debate be now adjourned (*Mr. Blocksidge's motion*)—put ; and the House divided :—

AYES, 12.

Mr. Blocksidge	Mr. Paget
" Bouchard	" Paull
" Campbell	" Petrie
" Creagh	" Philp
" Hanran	" Stodart
" McMaster	" White

Tellers: Mr. Bouchard and Mr. Paull.

NOES, 28.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Mann
" Bell	" Maughan
" Bowman	" Maxwell
" Gunn	" May
" Hamilton	" Mitchell
" Hardacre	" Mulcahy
" Hawthorn	" Nevitt
" Herbertson	" O'Sullivan
" Kerr	" Payne
" Kidston	" Rankin
" Land	" Redwood
" Lennon	" Roberts
" Lesina	" Ryland
" McIntyre	" Sumner

Tellers: Mr. Maughan and Mr. Ryland.

PAIR.

Aye—Mr. Stephens. No—Mr. Blair.

Resolved in the negative.

The PREMIER : In view of the serious consequences to the Government, threatened by the hon. junior member for Charters Towers, I should be exceedingly sorry if that hon. member reconsidered his position. (Laughter.) To prevent him from doing that I would rather move the adjournment of the debate. (Laughter.) I would just like to say this, however: When an hon. member moves the adjournment of a debate like this, at so early an hour of the evening, it has been customary, as a matter of courtesy, to ask the leader of the House to agree to the adjournment. No Government can sit here and permit an Opposition member to take the conduct of the business of the Government out of its hands, and I hope this practice will not be continued. I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr. BLOCKSIDGE : May I be allowed to explain that I understood the House was to adjourn at 10 o'clock. In moving the adjournment of the debate I was under that impression ; and if I have transgressed in any way, I express my regret. I did not rise with any intention of lengthening out the debate.

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

[*Mr. Paull.*]

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER : I move that the House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the resumption of the second reading of the Local Authorities Bill. After that we will take the second reading of the Technical Instruction Bill.

Hon. R. PHILP : I would like to know when we will have the report of the Auditor-General for the year?

The PREMIER : Very shortly now.

Hon. R. PHILP : We ought to have it before we have the debate on the Financial Statement.

The PREMIER : That is very desirable, but we seldom get it before discussing the Financial Statement. I will try to hurry him up as much as possible.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-one minutes past 10 o'clock.