Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 17 DECEMBER 1915

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

FRIDAY, 17 DECEMBER, 1915.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. McCormack, *Cairns*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

MUNRO HULL CATTLE TICK REMEDY.

REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

Mr. GILLIES (*Eacham*): I beg to present the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the alleged discovery by Mr. G. W. Munro Hull of a remedy for cattle tick, and move that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

PAPERS.

The following paper was laid on the table:—

Return to an Order relative to the steamer "Mutlah," made by the House, on motion of Mr. McMinn, on 11th November last.

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

(1) Return to an Order relative to tenders by Australian firms for wheat.

(2) Vital Statistics, 1914.

(3) Statistics of the State of Queensland for the year 1914.

QUESTIONS.

FARM PRODUCE CONSIGNMENTS.

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. What was the total amount of farm produce consigned from the stations of Milton and Toowong during the month of November?

"2. By whom was it consigned, and to what stations?"

THE SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. J. Adamson, *Rockhampton*) replied—

"1. 5 tons 6 cwt. from Milton, and 4 tons 6 cwt. 1 qr. from Toowong.

"2. That from Milton was consigned by Henry Carr, Limited, to Ipswich, and that from Toowong by Mr. Fenton to Dutton Park (3 tons 5 cwt.), and by Mr. Patterson to Moore (1 ton 1 cwt. 1 qr.)."

COST OF PRINTING "SOME BULLETIN STORIES."

Mr. CARTER (*Port Curtis*), in the absence of Mr. H. J. Ryan, asked the Treasurer—

"1. What was the cost of printing a book entitled 'Some Bulletin Stories,' by James A. Philp, printed by the Government Printer?

"2. How does this price compare with the prices charged by private printeries?

"3. Is the author, James A. Philp, identical with the gentleman associated with the 'Courier' proprietary?"

The TREASURER (Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"1. £40 3s. 3d.

"2. I have no information on this matter.

"3. Yes."

BLIND, DEAF, AND DUMB INSTITUTION.

SELECT COMMITTEE—LEAVE TO SIT DURING RECESS.

On the motion of Mr. McMINN (*Bulimba*), it was formally resolved—

"That the Select Committee appointed, on 2nd December last, to inquire into and report upon complaints re the working and management of the Blind, Deaf, and Dumb Institution, have power to continue its inquiry during the ensuing recess, and to bring up its report in the next session of Parliament."

ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The PREMIER (Hon. T. J. Ryan, *Barcoo*), in moving—

"That, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for the despatch of business on Monday in next week, in addition to the days already provided by Sessional Orders, and that Government business do take precedence of all other business on that day"—

said: The leader of the Opposition called "Not formal" to this motion, and, no doubt, he desires to have some idea conveyed to him as to what our impressions are as to the likelihood of finishing the session. I am hopeful that, with reasonable progress, we shall be able to wind up on Monday.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I desire, first of all, to say that I am very glad to see the Chief Secretary back in his place, and hope that he has quite recovered from his recent illness. (Hear, hear!) When he was last in the House I know that he was suffering from a very severe cold. I am sorry that I feel disposed to oppose the motion for meeting on Monday, as it is highly inconvenient to members of my party that we should meet on that day. Very short notice has been given in regard to this, as well as to quite a number of things which have happened recently, and as a consequence members on this side have made no preparation whatever for coming here on Monday. We realise that it is quite impossible for the House to finish its business on Monday, and I, therefore, see no reason why the ordinary course should not be followed and we meet on Tuesday and proceed with business.

The PREMIER: We met many times on Monday last year—five days a week.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Yes, but due notice was given in regard to that. We have not had an opportunity of discussing the Estimates as we would like to have had. They had not been brought on in such an order as to give us an opportunity of doing so. Last night the Railway Estimates were brought on late, in an objectionable manner, and discussed till nearly 2 o'clock this morning, and the reason given was the desirableness of allowing the railway men to get the emoluments that might be coming to

them. A long and prolonged attack was made and charges were levelled against the administration of the department by hon. members on the other side, and we on this side refrained from discussing the Estimates, just the same as we refrained from discussing the Estimates of the Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Mines, in order to give an opportunity for the session being brought to a close, but there was no disposition on the part of Government supporters to do that, and we do not feel that we are bound to do other than endeavour to proceed on the lines on which we have been doing. If we take the arrangement of to-day's business, we find there are certain small measures to be brought on, and then the Chief Secretary's Estimates. It is necessary to discuss those Estimates at some length, and if we do not close at the usual time, and those Estimates are carried on as was done last night, it might mean an all-night sitting for the purpose of getting them through. The "Hansard" staff are off after 12 o'clock, and members do not get fully reported. Business should have been arranged so as to give an opportunity for full discussion of the Estimates of the Chief Secretary's Department, and the discussion should have terminated at half-past 10, and gone on again the next day. But there has been no effort on the part of hon. members opposite to meet the Opposition in this matter, so they cannot expect the Opposition to meet them. We are not over anxious to close the session on Monday or Tuesday; we are quite prepared to go on into the New Year if it is desirable.

The PREMIER: There is no intention of going beyond the usual hour to-night. You will get reported; you need not be afraid of that.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That will be very different from our experience last night in regard to the Estimates. The difficulty with our men is that they have made their arrangements to go home, and most of them live on the Downs and in the Burnett district, so that, if they go home to-night, it will not be possible for them to attend to their business and get back here on Monday morning. If notice had been given of this motion, they could have made arrangements to stay the week end in Brisbane, as they probably would have done, in order that matters might be fully discussed. Seeing that there is a strong probability that the business can be finished on Tuesday, I see no reason why we should meet on Monday. One item on the business-sheet is the consideration of the Council's amendments in the Land Act Amendment Bill. The amended Bill has not been put in our boxes.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Look at the precious moments you are wasting now.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The Government have had opportunities for so arranging their business that there should be no necessity for this discussion.

The PREMIER: Surely you will accept my assurance that we will adjourn at the usual hour to-night.

HON. J. TOLMIE: I accept that assurance, but I do not see any possibility of the House finishing on Monday; and, that being so, some consideration should be shown to the members of this party who will not be able to get here on Monday, except at extraordinary disadvantage to themselves. I am sorry that I must disagree with the motion.

Mr. BEBBINGTON (*Drayton*): I am glad to see the Premier back in his place, but I do not think he has considered the country members in the way he usually does. I believe that if he had considered us, he would have acted differently. I will get home about 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and the way things are now, with cattle and horses dying, it is necessary that one should be home for a day or so in order to encourage those who remain there fighting with the difficulties we have to face. I should have to leave again at 3 o'clock on Sunday to get here on Monday. Is it fair that I should get home at 3 o'clock on Saturday afternoon and be compelled to return at 3 o'clock on Sunday, when the business before us is not urgent? It would be quite time enough to get back on Tuesday, but if the House meets on Monday I want to be here. There was a rumour here yesterday afternoon—I will not say that it was correct or that the Minister had anything to do with the matter—that certain Estimates were to come on after 12 o'clock at night when the "Hansard" reporters had gone. I made the statement that if those Estimates were gone on with after that hour—after the "Hansard" reporters had left—that I would be one to ask the "Courier" to send a special reporter—(loud Government laughter)—to report the debate, so that the people in the country might know what was going on, and what was said here. The people of the country have lost thousands and thousands of pounds through the action of the Chief Secretary, and if his Estimates are gone on with when there is no "Hansard" staff present, we should ask the "Courier" to arrange for a special reporter to report the proceedings of the House.

Mr. VOWLES (*Dalby*): It comes rather as a surprise to everybody that we are going to meet again next week. There was a certain amount of assurance given by the Premier, according to the newspaper reports, that the business of the House was going to be expedited, and that we should finish to-night. As far as the expedition of business is concerned, the leader of the Government has been away and he does not know how his own followers have trespassed on the time of the House. The members of the Opposition could not be blamed for delay in connection with the Mines Estimates. Therefore, it is not a fair thing that the public understanding that the business should be closed to-night should be extended to next week. Would it be a fair thing to ask us to rush through the business on the paper? If the Premier was on this side of the House, would he consent to do that?

The PREMIER: That is why we want to sit on Monday.

Mr. VOWLES: Why the Government want to sit on Monday next is because their own followers have delayed the business. We want to go home, and if I go home it will be impossible for me to get back on Monday, because the Secretary for Railways does not give us the necessary railway service.

The PREMIER: You have no intention of going home, or on Tuesday either.

Mr. VOWLES: I am going to Sydney on Tuesday. But if I went home for the

week-end I could not get back on Monday. Of course, as long as the Opposition have not got as many members as there are on the Government side of the House, everything they do is futile; but we are here to criticise what is being done. Last night grave accusations were made against the administration of the Railway Department. If those accusations had been made at an early stage of the session, we would have carried on the discussion for a very long time; but, when accusations are hurled at the Government on the last day of the session, we have not an opportunity of dealing with them or of hearing the answer to those accusations. Moreover, we are asked to rush through a lot of legislation, the details of which we have not had an opportunity of considering. The whole thing is wrong. If the hon. gentlemen on the Treasury benches had been sitting on this side of the House under the same conditions, they would have occupied the whole of the time until the end of the session in hurling accusations against the Government for the way they were being treated, and would have let the legislation sweat. In view of what the Premier said regarding the Wide Bay election, which was, in effect, that the Government was on its trial, we should have expected different action on the part of the hon. gentleman.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member may not refer to that matter.

Mr. VOWLES: The hon. gentleman, instead of tendering his resignation this afternoon—(laughter)—moves that the House should meet on Monday next week. I wish to goodness the hon. gentleman would carry out the threat he made and go to the country; but he is not game.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. VOWLES: It is not a fair thing to force measures on us at this late period of the session when we have not had an opportunity of studying them. We have not been given proper opportunities for studying measures this session. Legislation—novel legislation—has been forced upon us, and many mistakes in the Bills passed here have had to be rectified by the Upper House. Would that have occurred if we had had an opportunity of going through those Bills in detail? I think not. Yet members opposite talk about there being no need for the Upper House.

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. VOWLES: The very fact of those amendments coming back to us emphasises the necessity for the other Chamber.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*): I wish to protest against sitting on Monday. It is almost impossible for those of us who live on the Western line to get back on Monday. We cannot get back before Tuesday morning. If we stop down here to attend to our duties in Parliament, we shall be under a cloud of suspicion at home. (Loud laughter.) I think Tuesday is a reasonable time to meet again. The people of the country want to get an explanation from the Chief Secretary concerning many things which have happened, and we should sit on a day when country members can attend, so that they may hear his explanation.

Question put and passed.

INCOME TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

REPORT STAGE.

On the motion of the TREASURER, the report of the Chairman that the Committee had come to a resolution, after [4 p.m.] considering the amendments of the Legislative Council in the Income Tax Act Amendment Bill, was adopted, and the Bill ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

"Mr. President,

"The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the amendments of the Legislative Council in the Income Tax Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Disagree to the insertion of the new clause to follow clause 1, and to the omission of clause 3—

"Because both these amendments encroach upon the right which is possessed solely by the Legislative Assembly to impose pecuniary burthens upon the people, the first by limiting the duration of the tax, and the second by deleting the proposal to tax those profits which accrue from speculation in real and personal estate, which are not at present taxable.

"The Legislative Assembly trust that no further reason is required, and that the Legislative Council will no longer insist upon these amendments.

"Disagree to the amendment to clause 4—

"Because it is unnecessary, as no information will be furnished by the Commissioner under this Bill, except to those Commissioners who enter into a reciprocal arrangement with Queensland.

"Disagree to the amendments on clause 5, page 5, lines 35 and 36 (now page 6, lines 6 and 7), and on page 5, lines 41 and 42 (now page 6, lines 14 and 15)—

"Because, when a question arises as to whether a company is a public utility company or a monopoly company, and the decision on the matter brings such company under the higher rate of tax, or exempts it from the higher rate of tax, such decision should be left to the representative Chamber.

"Disagree to the amendment on page 6, lines 9 to 23 (now 37 to 50)—

"Because it is necessary to have a provision in the Bill to prevent companies controlling monopolies from passing on the tax to the general public.

"Disagree to the amendments on page 7, line 5 (now 41), and on page 7, line 8 (now 44)—

"Because the declaration of the law contained in the clause should be held to be a declaration of the law under the old Act as well as under the new Bill; and

"Agree to the other amendment in the Bill.

"Legislative Assembly Chamber,

"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

JOINT COMMITTEES.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from the Legislative Council, inviting the concurrence of the Assembly in a

resolution to the effect that the Buildings, Refreshment-rooms, and Library Committees should continue their functions during the recess.

On the motion of the PREMIER, it was ordered that a message be returned to the Council intimating the concurrence of the Assembly in their resolution.

RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.

(Mr. Coyne, Warrego, in the chair.)

On clause 3—"Amendment of section 10"—

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS moved that the Council's amendment be agreed to.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The hon. gentlemen on the front Treasury bench ought to have more consideration for members of the Opposition than to give them such shocks as this. Ever since the session had started members of the Government had been fighting for the principle that they were going to rule the country without the Legislative Council. They were going to make inroads in the Constitution itself in every way they could. They fired shrapnel into it and bombarded it with shells made in the Ipswich workshops; yet here, at the tail end of the session, they had the Government saying that they were going back to the old order of things.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: Were there no poisonous gases used too?

HON. J. TOLMIE: Yes; poisonous gases were used too. (Laughter.) Now, at the end of the session, hon. members opposite said that they must rule under the provisions of the Constitution. That was just what the Opposition had been contending for all along—that so long as the Constitution was what it was, then the legislation and the government of Queensland should be carried out under the Constitution. He was exceedingly pleased to find that a change had come over the Government and that they were adopting something like sane principles in the latter days of the session. Of course, they could not do anything but approve of the amendment, and compliment the Minister on his wisdom in accepting it. Still, there was a little soreness so far as the Opposition party were concerned, because they had been fighting for that principle in every Bill, but the Government had not on one single occasion allowed them to have the credit of getting the amendment accepted.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Look at the other important amendments we allowed you to bring in.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Yet, when the Bill went to that detestable place—perhaps he should not use that word—he would say the Chamber stigmatised as being impertinent—and was amended and sent back to the Assembly, it was accepted. He noticed in a journal that supported the Government an exceedingly well-written article this morning, and it practically told the front Treasury bench that it had grown so tame that they were now eating out of the hands of the Legislative Council. That seemed to be borne out by motions such as the one now before them. However, he was exceedingly glad that the Council's amendment was accepted.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to the Council's amendment, and the report was agreed to. The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

On clause 6—"Partnerships"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said it was not his intention to agree to the Council's amendment in this clause, because if the amendment were accepted it would open the door widely to dummying. It was not the law at present, although frequent attempts had been made to make it the law. He moved—That the Committee disagree to the Council's amendment.

HON. J. TOLMIE said although there was a possibility that the inclusion of the amendment might lead to dummying, he did not think the risk was very great, as there were many safeguards. The amendment was a very reasonable one, more particularly when it was applied to pastoral leases. There were in the Land Act provisions by which partners might take up a selection. When a selection was taken up by two individuals, in ninety-nine cases out of one hundred, the one person was earning money to help to keep the selection going. They did not take up, in the first place, two men's ground; they simply took up one man's ground and worked it co-operatively. The means at their disposal were small and they worked in partnership. They had seen partnerships of that kind carried out before. If he took up a selection with a partner he would be allowed, so long as he was a member of Parliament, to remain away from the selection and earn something to help to keep the selection going, and he would not be called upon to perform the residence conditions. When members of Parliament were concerned they widened the scope of the Act. There was no statute law why it should be done, but they found cases work out satisfactorily where there were genuine partnerships, and such an arrangement allowed two families to make a living. The object for which the legislation was framed was to settle people on the land, and surely the amendment would be the means of settling a great many persons on the land who had not much capital. The risk had to be taken of proving whether there was dummying or not, but there were sufficient safeguards in the Act to prevent dummying in most cases. After all said and done, as far as pastoral leases were concerned, he did not know why they should be wrapped up so carefully and tenderly at this stage of Queensland's development. They had in the past allowed half a dozen partners to take up an area, and so long as they worked it, put on the improvements, and employed labour, and made the area reproductive they were thoroughly satisfied. The Government gave them all possible encouragement to do it, and no one knew better than the Chairman that the conditions prevailing in the far Western districts were such that that

system required to be followed now. There were still scores of pastoral leases waiting to be taken up in the far South-west, areas up to 1,000 square miles. There was no shortage of land, and the rental was a mere bagatelle It was shocking to hon. members on the other side that some of those large areas could be taken at from 6s. to 8s. per square mile. Just think of it; 80 acres or 100 acres for 1s. Was not that shocking to hon. members on the other side who were thirsting for the opportunity to get on the land? The land was there, and they wanted people to go on it. Was it not possible that land of that kind could be worked under conditions such as provided by the amendment, where one man put in his capital and the other man put in his experience—experience gained over a great number of years over those far western districts. He might have a large experience but a small capital, and wanted to make a rise, and surely the party with which the Minister for Lands was associated was not standing in the way of him making that rise. Why should not he and the Home Secretary go to the Minister for Lands and ask him to come in with them, they finding the capital and the Minister the experience.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: It might finish up with him having the money and we having the experience.

HON. J. TOLMIE: That might be so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Your Government in 1910 would not accept a similar amendment.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He did not own the Government in 1910. The hon. gentleman was fond of interjecting, "Your own Government." He did not own any Government. Did the hon. gentleman own the Government on that side? Did he own the party? If he made such a statement, he was sure that there would be ructions, because the caucus owned the Government.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It shows the hypocrisy of your speech now.

HON. J. TOLMIE: It showed nothing of the kind. It showed the weakness of the intellect of the hon. gentleman who made assertions of that kind. Did the hon. gentleman think that, because he happened to be a member of the Cabinet, that he was going to dominate that Cabinet? Did the whole of the members of the Cabinet bow down to the hon. gentleman when he brought along a recommendation? The hon. gentleman knew very well that he (Mr. Tolmie) might not be in sympathy with half the legislation introduced by the Cabinet with which he was associated. On important principles there would not be any difference of opinion on the part of members of the Cabinet, but that might not be so in connection with minor matters. He supposed that the present Cabinet agreed on every occasion where every principle was cut out rectangularly—all the sides equal, everything exactly the same—and so long as it went into the platform and was heavily loaded, so that it might be sunk whenever the opportunity arose, it was all right. They had known that occur during the present session—that principles were good enough to get in on and were then thrown overboard. That was the position so far as hon. members on the other side were concerned. Every opportunity should be given for two or more persons to come together in partnership if they felt so disposed if they could work it better by one man earning money and putting in his capital and the other man remaining on the place.

Mr. BEBBINGTON was sorry the Minister would not accept the amendment, because, when he was travelling in the West a great deal, he found that one of the biggest questions in Western Queensland was the matter of providing shearers' homes between the shearing seasons. Under the amendment it was quite possible for three or four men shearing or doing other work in the West to take up a piece of land and allow one of the partners to reside on it and the others go out to work, and help in that way. Surely that would be the best settlement they could have. Why not allow working men to become graziers? Why not allow three or four working men to take up the same area of land that a rich man could take up and live on? Apparently, it was part of the Government's policy to prevent anyone from getting rich. His idea was to give everybody an opportunity to get rich, and it was very necessary that they should hold out opportunities such as given by the amendment. He could not see how the present Government could claim to be the representatives of the working man when they put everything in the way of him owning anything at all. He was surprised that the Government should offer any objection whatever to the amendment. With regard to the provision not being in the present Act, surely they were going to advance a little! He had certainly never voted against a clause like that, because it was the very thing he had had in his mind, in order to allow shearers to make homes out in the West and give them an opportunity to make a little money between the shearing seasons. The actions of the Government this session had proved that the real friends of the working man were on the Opposition side of the House, as the Government had done everything they could to prevent the working man bettering his conditions.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*) had every sympathy with people living on selections or grazing homesteads, because he thought the man who lived on his own holding was a better colonist than the man who lived out of the country. He had known of several instances where two or three single men had taken up a grazing farm and worked it successfully. He had in his mind's eye one instance where two single men took up a grazing farm and lived very happily, but after a time one of them went away and got married, and brought home a wife. Then, some time afterwards, the other man went away and got married, and brought home a wife, too, and the consequence was that there was not the same harmony as previously, and it was necessary that one of them should go, or that they should build two homesteads and two everything else. There would be every safeguard against dummying, so long as one man was compelled to reside on the holding. If, in the first instance, one man took up the pastoral lease, he would be able to carry out the conditions by personal residence; but if two or three took it up, what was it to the community generally if one resided on the grazing holding? To compel all of them to reside there for the whole of the period was too much of a good thing.

Mr. FORSYTH (*Murrumba*) said he could not understand why the Minister could think that the clause might lead to dummying. Two or three could apply for a holding jointly as tenants, and they could not get more than the aggregate area fixed. If two or three men liked to join together, they must be tenants in common, and their names would have to be given. Some blocks of land that had been taken up in the far West and far North were in a god-forsaken country for men to live in, and a man would want company in some part of the year if he had to live there continuously. If two men applied for one piece of land, they could get a quantity that was applicable only to one man, and if the conditions were carried out by one living on the land and the other away earning a little money to buy stock or make improvements, the Government should try and assist them, as this would not be dummying, and it would not block settlement. Of course, the big man with a pastoral holding would not want it, but the small man certainly was deserving of some little consideration. If the small man took a partner and they became partners in common, there was no reason why one of them should not fulfil the conditions—because one man could do it—and the other man go away for a spell, and when he came back he could give his mate a chance of getting away for a holiday. If they had to live seven years on the holding in order to fulfil the conditions, the Government should try and make those conditions as easy as possible. He hoped the Minister would accept the amendment, because he could not see much chance of any dummying taking place.

Mr. GRAYSON (*Cunningham*) contended that, if the amendment were not inserted, it would debar farmers' sons from banding together in order to carry on a grazing farm. There was also the case of station managers, overseers, shearers, and rouseabouts—men who saved their money and were anxious to secure a grazing area—who joined together and applied for a grazing farm and ran it jointly. In the shearing season, one of the parties could go out shearing or do other work on the station in order to enable the partner to buy sheep and create improvements on the holding. The young men in the country should be encouraged to settle upon the western areas. He met a young man yesterday who had volunteered for the front. The young man had a grazing farm in the Winton district, and his uncle was his partner, and he had left his uncle to manage that farm while he went to the front. If that young man had not had a partner, he would not have been in a position to go to the front and help to defend the Empire. There were many similar cases. The Minister would be well advised to accept the amendment.

Question—That the Council's amendment be disagreed to—put and passed.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that the Council's amendment to clause 8 be disagreed to. He considered it inadvisable to fetter the Land Court in assessing rents. It was a clause that there had been a good deal of contention about when the Bill was going through the Assembly, but the Government were firm on the matter and had no intention of receding from the position they had taken up.

Hon. J. TOLMIE thought that, after the discussion that had taken place in this Chamber, and the fact that the Minister had had the benefit of the experience of the Legislative Council, and that he had had time to consider the matter, he would have receded from the position he had taken up. It was a very serious thing when a a Government repudiated the contracts into which it had entered, and that was the position at present in relation to the pastoral lessees, and he wanted it to be distinctly understood that grazing selectors were in exactly the same position under the provisions of the Bill. An erroneous idea seemed to be in the minds of hon. members on the other side that grazing selectors were not assessed in the same way by the Land Court as were the lessees. When the pastoral lessees took up their runs they did it with their eyes open, and the Government—also with its eyes open—entered into a contract in accordance with an Act of Parliament, and that in that contract were written the clauses from the Act of Parliament detailing how the rents should be assessed, and that the contract was signed by the lessee and signed by the representatives of the Government. There could not be a more binding contract than the contract that was made; and, simply because the Government had become inconvenienced, they wanted to get out of the position. Just let them apply that to the ordinary rules of life—to the ordinary contracts that were made every day. The Chairman, no doubt, had made scores of contracts, and, when he made those contracts, as an honourable man he expected that he would be held to the contracts, and he would be determined to hold the other person to the contracts, otherwise he would not have entered into the contracts. The size of the contract did not alter the principles that underlay it—the principle of truth and the principle of justice. These principles must be found in all contracts. There must be reliability. If they had pledged themselves to do certain things in the expectation that in return they were going to get something else, and, if there was very little margin of advantage in the contract they had made, they were satisfied with that small margin, and were determined, as honest men, to carry out the contract, and they expected the other party to do the same. That was the position in which the Government were placed to-day. It might be an inconvenient position, but the inconvenience of the position did not relieve them of the obligation. A contract was made by certain high personages in connection with the kingdom of Belgium, and that was regarded as a solemn and binding contract, since 1849, until within a few months ago: but one of those high contracting parties—like the present Government—came to the conclusion that the continuance of the contract was unfavourable to them, and the high contracting party endeavoured to get out of it by saying, "What is the contract? It is an arrangement, certainly, by all the crowned heads of Europe—they bind themselves to a certain course—but it is only something that is written down; it is a scrap of paper, and I feel strong enough to tear that scrap of paper up, and, feeling strong enough, I do not care the value of the scrap of paper for my pledged word." Exactly the same position had been taken up by the present Government—no more and no less. The contract made was solemn and binding upon

the Government, but they felt strong enough to take up the position of William Hohenzollern. That was the position—that, with the force of numbers on their side, they could override all the contracts that they had made and could say they were of no effect. Certainly, the Government represented a certain number of persons, but they did not represent the whole of the persons in the community. He would, indeed, be sorry to think that the majority of the people of Queensland held the same views with regard to a contract of this kind as were held by the gentlemen on the front Treasury bench. If those were the views of the majority of the people of Queensland, then their civilization was played out, and there was no honour in men and no honour in women. It was because he did not believe that such was the case that he was taking his present course. He had been Minister for Lands, and he knew the difficulties of the department in regard to the position, but it was a position into which the department entered, and, whilst this provision ought to be made in future contracts, it should not apply to contracts that had been made. He did not know of any body of men who regarded themselves as honourable who would not take the same view. He believed that in relation to all other matters in which hon. gentlemen opposite might be interested they would act differently. If they had a written contract between two persons before them and they had to deal with the conditions as laid down in that contract, they would, regarding their own characters as honourable men, decide that the contract must be carried out. What was the work of the judges in the Supreme Court of Queensland, in the High Court of Australia, and in the Privy Council? Cases might be taken from one court to another, but the object in each case was to sift the evidence and see that contracts which were made were honest, and that they were honestly observed. He asked the Government to honour the contract that had been made in regard to these pastoral leases, notwithstanding the inconvenience of the contract to the Government. When they were in possesion of lands and they decided to lease them again to pastoralists, let them make the conditions of the leases such as were proposed in this Bill, but they should honour the contracts already made and not break them by introducing a new and far-reaching condition. If the Government made the new conditions apply to future leases, the Opposition would help them in that direction, because they knew that the State ought to get more revenue than it was getting from these lands. But that risk was taken both by the State and the individual when the leases were made; both gambled with the future. The pastoralists who took up the land thought they were making a good bargain, and the department at that particular time regarded their position as a good one. When those conditions were laid down the department were doing everything they could to get men on the land. They were offering land at 3s. per square mile, practically a peppercorn rental, so that people might take up the land and utilise it. That went on for a number of years after the drought. Any arrangement that could be made for the purpose of inducing people to put capital into the working of the Western district was made by the Government, as it was considered that the progress of the State depended upon the development of the lands in far Western Queensland. They had heard members in that Chamber deploring the break down of certain industries, and urging that the Government should make some arrangement with the persons who were carrying on those industries, so that their operations might be continued and employment given to working men. Would it be a fair thing if after making an arrangement with those persons the State should abrogate that arrangement as soon as prosperity returned? He did not think that members opposite would subscribe to such a proposition. The Minister had given no reason why there should be an alteration in this matter, other than that the Government were not getting enough money out of the pastoralists. But that could not be regarded as a sound reason. Such a reason would be applicable to a lease made under new conditions, but not to leases entered into under existing conditions. He opposed the inclusion of this provision in the Bill when the measure was going through its second reading, and he was still opposed to it. He appealed to hon. members opposite, he appealed to their sense of justice and right, to maintain the contract as it was at the present time. He trusted that even at this late hour the Minister would see his way to accept the Council's amendment. He had no doubt that when the Bill went to the other House and came back again the hon. gentleman would be disposed to accept the amendment. They had seen a report in the public Press of a gathering of financiers in London who were at the present time holding Queensland in the hollow of their hand. They were men who were giving assistance to the State, men from whom members on the front Treasury bench wanted assistance for the State, men who provided the sinews of war for the development that was taking place in Queensland. It was their money which was helping to keep our industries going, and when there was a slackness in the capital coming into the country, its effect would be felt among those who were working in the city, and who were dependent for the sustenance of themselves and families in some degree of comfort on industries being carried on. They were told that when a certain mine closed down it threw 600 people out of employment and had an indirect effect upon the employment of a considerable number of other persons. If legislation of this kind affected prejudicially the credit of Queensland and prevented capital coming here, the blow would fall, not where hon. members opposite thought it would fall, but on a class of the community that could least bear the blow.

Mr. GUNN: This was the most important clause in the whole Bill. He spoke on the provision on a former occasion, and did not wish to repeat what he said then to any great extent, nor did he wish to repeat what the leader of the Opposition had just said, though he agreed with every word the hon. gentleman uttered. This provision was the crux of the whole Bill. It meant repudiation, nothing more and nothing less; and once they began to repudiate they never knew where it was going to end. Under certain provisions of the Act they allowed people to take up prickly-pear selections at a peppercorn rental. For all they knew it might be discovered at some future period that prickly-pear was a valuable asset, and why should not the Government, if they passed this measure, come down then and

say, "We will cross out the peppercorn rent and substitute £1?" That would be repudiation. They were renting those lands at a peppercorn rental, and they should stick to their bargain. The repudiation proposed in this clause affected the pastoral lessee, but later on in the measure it was applied to 4,000 grazing farmers. Surely 4,000 grazing farmers were worth considering. He knew that it was fashionable to abuse the pastoral lessee and say that he was a pest who should be hunted out of the country, but when Queensland was younger, people were glad to welcome the pastoral lessee and to have him go out and pioneer the country. In many cases the pastoral lessee was an intelligent and successful bullock-driver or drover. He served a good purpose some years ago when he settled the lands of Queensland and Australia, but now, because he had gone on and had made a good living out of the business and was in some cases wealthy, or had sold out to another man who happened to have money, the Government came down with this repudiation clause introducing a new condition into his lease. Were they going to increase the revenue to any extent by doing so? No! These pastoral leases would soon fall in, and the Government would then be able to do what they liked with the land. Up to the present time the Land Court had only in a very few cases raised the rent by 50 per cent., as allowed by the Act. This repudiation would do harm to the fair fame of Queensland and to the workers of Queensland, because it would frighten away capital in other directions. If they repudiated under the Land Act, why not repudiate under other Acts? He sincerely hoped that the other Chamber would stick to the position they had taken up, and that this would be one of the questions that would be referred to the people. If the people decided on repudiation, then farewell to Queensland's prosperity.

Mr. BARNES (*Warwick*): He was exceedingly sorry that the fair name of Queensland should be likely to suffer as the result of legislation such as that included in the Land Bill. The amendment proposed by the Upper House was strictly in [5 p.m.] favour of safeguarding Queensland as a State and as a nation. If the Bill as it was first introduced was made law they would be annulling all that was good in connection with the legislation of Queensland, because it was striking at fundamental agreements made between man and man. The result would be that they would have great dissatisfaction and distrust in the minds of the community, and other communities who had to do with Queenlsand. Nearly all of the laws were made to ensure the carrying out of contracts made. They met in Parliament from session to session, and their business was largely made up of seeing that the laws of the land were enforced, and that people must keep their bargains with each other. In ordinary life the relationships were such that if a man attempted to do what the Government was trying to do, he would be turned down and be unable to look his friend in the face. He knew people, and the Minister also knew them, who had stuck to their bargains to their own disadvantage. He had never yet come across a man who, having made a bad bargain, wanted to get out of it in the same way as the Government wanted to do. The Government were bringing down a Bill to practically legalise repudiation. The Government should set an example in the community of rightdoing and the preservation of honourable agreements. If the Government insisted on the clause in the Bill they were going to place on record one of the greatest blots that had ever been enacted in connection with any legislation in the State. In ordinary life, agreements were never broken. When an agreement was made one man reaped the reward to the disadvantage of the other. No one could object to an enactment being made with regard to future leases, but the Government had no right to break agreements that existed now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You know that there is no agreement.

Mr. BARNES: He knew that there was an agreement, and so did the Minister. Even if a great deal of the leasehold country in Queensland was held too cheaply, the bargain was made by the State increasing the term of the lease and limiting the extent of the appraisement to 50 per cent. more than the rent for the preceding term, and the State should stick to that bargain. He knew that members opposite had talked about the leases not paying enough rent, and whilst they could not achieve their end by fair means, they were now attempting to do it by foul and wrong means. Members in opposition were not going to agree to carry out means unfavourable to individuals in the State and to the detriment of the fair name of Queensland.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): His chief reason in supporting the amendment was that he considered it was a matter of repudiation. If they could make the graziers or pastoralists pay a higher amount of rent under the existing law it was all right, but they should not seek to repudiate any agreement which had been made. They had no right to come along with an amending Land Act with a provision for a wholesale increase in rent when the holders of land had to contend with troubles of one sort and another both in leasehold and freehold tenure. The Minister would agree that it was a matter of repudiation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not agree with anything of the sort.

Mr. CORSER: The Minister knew that the leases were taken up under a certain Act and under certain conditions, one of which was that the rent for the succeeding period should not be more than 50 per cent. over the rent of the preceding period. The Minister now wanted to break that contract and go in for wholesale repudiation. If the Minister could legally increase the revenue and do it fairly, he would not object, but they did not want to bring any hardships on any people or on any particular individual.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You want to grant a favour to some particular individual.

Mr. CORSER: He had never issued any union tickets to make it possible for people to get relief nor did he commandeer any brisket beef.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Mr. CORSER: The Minister was talking about favours and he was replying to his interjection.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not take any notice of interjections.

Mr. CORSER: When the leaseholder and freeholder were having such a bad time the State had no right to come along with an Act of repudiation. They knew the Government were not sympathetic with anyone who held a piece of land. The action of the Government would have the effect of getting an increased rent out of certain people by unfair means. If they could increase the revenue by fair means, let them do so, but the Government had no right to come forward with a provision like this one. The amendment of the Council was a more reasonable one. When they fixed the rent that the leaseholder had to pay, and then wanted to increase it to a higher amount, it would mean that the people would lose confidence in the State. Money had been subscribed in England to develop lands in Queensland. Managers were sent out with workers and the shearers followed, and they all helped to develop the Western country. They were the pioneers of Queensland, because they made the lands available in the Western country. Perhaps there might be some reason to make the lessees pay as much as the selectors, but they should not go in for repudiation at the present time. He trusted the Minister would see the reasonableness of accepting the amendment and not allow any increase to be imposed on the leaseholders at a time like the present.

Mr. SOMERSET (*Stanley*): He drew the attention of the Minister to the 15th Psalm, which he would read from "Blunt's Annotated Common Prayer." It read as follows:—

"1. Lord, who shall dwell in Thy tabernacle, or who shall rest upon Thy holy hill?

"2. Even he that leadeth an uncorrupt life and doeth the thing which is right and speaketh the truth from his heart.

"3. He that hath used no deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbour, and hath not slandered his neighbour.

"4. He that setteth not by himself, but is lowly in his own eyes, and maketh much of them that fear the Lord.

"5. He that sweareth unto his neighbour and disappointeth him not though it were to his own hindrance.

"6. He that hath not given his money upon usury nor taken reward against the innocent.

"7. Whoso doeth these things shall never fail."

Hon. J. TOLMIE: They are words of wisdom. (Laughter.)

Mr. SOMERSET: He always tried to live up to that psalm himself, and he tried to persuade the Minister to live up to it also. By refusing to accept the amendment of the Council, the Minister distinctly departed from the principle laid down by the psalmist. There was not the slightest doubt but that the Bill as it stood meant repudiation. It would be a bad thing for Queensland to allow it to go forth that any Government in power in Queensland was willing to be guilty of repudiation. On those grounds he earnestly begged the Minister to accept the Council's amendment.

Mr. SWAYNE did not think there could be anything more discouraging to investors in Queensland than legislation of this kind. The Minister stated that there was no agreement with those people—that there was only an Act of Parliament. What did investors generally inquire into when investing money in any country but the laws of that country? They relied upon a continuance of the principles contained in those laws, and when they introduced legislation making such drastic alterations as those contained in the Bill, it meant that those who had invested their money in the country would feel that they had been taken down and exploited. That was a very unenviable reputation for any country to acquire. That sort of thing was not going to help them in the days to come, when they asked people outside to invest money in Queensland to develop its resources. What would be the position of the State if it had not been for the assistance of outside investors? Measures such as that were certainly calculated to check anything in the nature of enterprise in regard to Queensland's affairs.

Mr. VOWLES: He was very sorry to know that the Government had refused to accept the amendments of the Legislative Council. Those amendments were simply a refusal to accept the principle of repudiation. If they read the terms of the leases, whether it be the terms of the pastoral leases or the terms of the ordinary leases, it would be seen that there was no doubt that an agreement had been entered into between the Crown and the lessees which should not be varied by legislative enactment. The lease for a pastoral holding read as follows:—

"Whereas, , of , in the State of , is entitled to a piece of land described in the schedule endorsed on these presents for the term and at the yearly rental hereinafter mentioned, and with, under, and subject to the conditions, stipulations, reservations, and provisos in the said Act

* * * *

"Yielding and paying unto us, our heirs and successors, for the first period of years of the said term the yearly rent or sum of being at the rate of per square mile per annum on the total holding, and for the second and each succeeding period of the said term, respectively, such yearly rent or sum as shall be assessed and determined by the Land Court in accordance with the Land Act of 1910."

That was the agreement. That was the main point, and the other portion referred to mineral reservations, and so on. When a man took up a lease under agreement with the Crown, he usually went to a financial institution and got accommodation. That financial institution gave him money, not on the value of his lease, but of his personality, taking into consideration what his capabilities were. They gave him stock to put on the land, and they took into consideration that the stock was capable of producing certain moneys. If they were going to allow all those profits to be taken away, what on earth were the financial institutions to do? Legislation such as that would mean that large areas of land in the West would be allowed to remain idle, because there would be no hope of stocking it unless somebody went to the assistance of the selectors. Only the financial institutions did that. He trusted that the Chamber would be reasonable, and would agree to the Council's amendment. The Government should not be actuated solely from party methods; they

should study the interests of the individual. When they were introducing legislation such as that, they were injuring their own friends. Many of those people were sympathetic with the Labour movement; they were not all what were called "Tories." By putting on all forms of taxation on the primary producer the Labour movement was going to suffer, and they would find that out at the next elections. If the Government passed legislation such as that, they were going "to kill the goose that lays the golden egg;" they were going to penalise the primary producer and make it impossible for him to carry on. There was no incentive to create production; there was no encouragement for thrift, and when they destroyed ambition in the man in the country, then they were going to do a lot of damage, not to the individual, but to the State of Queensland. He could give the Government many instances where taxation generally was going to cripple the means of production, and if they did that, what on earth was the good of the towns?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He was not surprised to hear hon. members opposite supporting the people who were strongly interested in this matter. They were there to protect those interests, but the Government was there to protect the interests of the general public. With the Government the people's interests at all times took first place and the individual interests must necessarily take second place. When any attempt had been made to interfere with the pastoral industry in Queensland, which was a very good industry—there was no reason why it should have special privileges over other industries, such as it had enjoyed—the cry of repudiation had always gone up. To listen to the speeches delivered by hon. members opposite, one would think that no such thing as repudiation had ever taken place in the House. However, he contended that that Bill was not repudiation, that it was a restoration to the people of their rights which were taken away from them by Act of Parliament in 1905, and Parliament had a perfect right at any time to restore those rights to the people. If they came down to repudiation, hon. members opposite might plead guilty of repudiation of the most drastic character. Only last year, when sitting on the Government side of the House, hon. members opposite repudiated the agreement entered into with the public servants of Queensland—the cadet clerks, typists, and school teachers.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he was talking of repudiation.

Hon. J. TOLMIE: That is what you are doing this year.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That was what the hon. gentleman had done. Hon. members opposite, when sitting on the Government side of the House last year, practised repudiation; they did not give the automatic increases. If that was an offence against the law or against the morals of hon. members opposite, why did they go in for repudiation last year, deliberately repudiating an agreement entered into?

Hon. J. TOLMIE: Wait until the Chief Secretary's Estimates come on.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said the hon. gentleman wanted to go on to something else. Was not that a greater act of repudiation than anybody, by any stretch of imagination, could say the clause was? Again, had not the Opposition, years before, repudiated the endowment which it was agreed to pay to the hospitals?

Hon. J. TOLMIE: No.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Were not the hospitals built and committees formed on the understanding that they would get a certain endowment, and did they not repudiate that and refuse to give the endowment?

Mr. MACARTNEY rose to a point of order. Was the hon. gentleman in order in discussing the question of endowment to hospitals and automatic increases?

The CHAIRMAN: I have been following the Minister very closely, and I have come to the conclusion that he is endeavouring to refute an accusation that has been made from the Opposition side of the House that this clause, if left in the Bill, means repudiation of something which has taken place, and he is trying to point out that repudiation—if this is repudiation—has taken place by acts of this House. I am following the Minister very closely, and if he wanders away and says anything that may be the means of causing an argument on something foreign to the question before the Committee, I am not going to permit it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said the Chairman had correctly interpreted the object of the parallel he was endeavouring to draw. Hon. members opposite held up their hands in holy horror and said it was something that had never been done and never should be done. He was pointing out to the other side where repudiation of the most dastardly character had taken place when the hon. gentlemen were on the Government side of the House, repudiation of a character which seriously interfered with young men and women who were starting in life.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I would inform the hon. member, if he wishes to discuss the subject, he may state that certain things had been done, but must not elaborate on them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He did not wish to elaborate. In the illustration he had given so far he did not think he had exceeded his rights in that respect. But it was rather annoying to find hon. gentlemen on the other side endeavouring to charge the Government with repudiation, when they were men who had been guilty——

Mr. BARNES: Wholesale repudiation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The hon. member for Warwick, who had made such an excellent case for the friends who stood behind him, sat behind the previous Government and saw them robbing poor boys and girls of their just rights under contracts that were entered into with them on the day that they entered the service. That was repudiation of the most heinous description, whilst what the Government was doing was a right enjoyed by Parliament to from time to time amend Acts of Parliament so far as they might deem it to be necessary.

Mr. LAND: It should have been done years ago.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Hon. members opposite attempted to do it

in 1910, and they would have done it but for the powers behind them. Their political influence and support would have gone, and, therefore, they refused to do what they wanted to do, and what should have been done in the interests of the general taxpayers of Queensland. He hurled back the charge of repudiation, and said it was repudiation which would never have taken place in 1905. It was only fair to the other tenants that these people should be put on the same footing with regard to the Land Courts. Under the amending Act every class of settler would come to the Land Court, and that court, on the evidence, would say whether the rents should be raised or whether they should be reduced. Could they get anything fairer than that? Was it not because of the powers that had been held by these people, who had occupied the Treasury benches for fifty years, that a special barrier was built up for the protection of the pastoral lessees over everybody else, and that the barrier was kept up? And because it was proposed to lift that barrier they cried "repudiation" and "a cruel act of injustice." They had instances where some men were paying 6d. per acre for land, whilst others were paying not more than 1d. per acre. They had to compete equally in the same markets; the one man got no more for his product than the other, and yet one paid five times more for his land than the other. Under these conditions it was right for the Government to allow the courts of the State to deal fairly between the tenants and the Crown, and to fix the rents at what was fair and reasonable. He had no intention of accepting the amendment.

* Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowong*) said he did not intend to say anything on the question but for the somewhat violent and inaccurate speech made by the Secretary for Public Lands. The hon. gentleman had said that the previous occupants of the Treasury benches had raised barriers for the protection of their friends, including this barrier, which he proposed to remove by this amendment of the Land Act. The hon. gentleman appeared to have forgotten that this particular enactment was enacted at the time that the party of which he was a member—the Labour party—represented the majority behind the Government in 1905. The very contract about which the suggestion of repudiation had been made was entered into by the Labour party. If that party had not supported the then Government in the amendment of the Land Act in 1905, it would not have been amended, and the Labour party must accept the responsibility for the particular clause. It was a clause that was badly wanted in 1905, but never more wanted than it was at the present time, with the indications of the future that they had before them. The hon. gentleman made a statement that it was not repudiation. But it did not follow that it was not repudiation simply because the hon. gentleman said so.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Nor because you say so.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Perhaps not. The difference between himself and the hon. gentleman was that he proposed to show how it was repudiation, but the hon. gentleman was unable to show that it was not repudiation.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Prove first that you have not been guilty of repudiation.

Mr. MACARTNEY: He had had nothing to do with the question of the automatic increases or the endowment to hospitals, and his mind was not quite so irrelevant as that of the hon. gentleman. He did not believe in defending himself against a charge by saying the other fellow was guilty of the same thing. He preferred to rely on the actual facts and logic of the position. The position was this: Acts of Parliament were subject to alteration—one Parliament could unmake the acts of another Parliament—but this did not apply to contracts entered into with the authorisation of an Act of Parliament. Not only did the Land Act contain a statutory contract between the Government—the Crown—and its lessees, but the written contracts which had been entered into in pursuance thereof constituted a definite written contract with the lessees. The lease incorporated in clear words all the provisions of the Act. It was stated in the lease—

> "That the lessee was entitled to a lease of the land described in the schedule endorsed on these presents for the term and at the yearly rent hereinafter mentioned, and with, under, and subject to the conditions, stipulations, reservations, and provisoes in the said Act,"

etc. That was the recital in the lease, and it showed that the person who applied for the land was entitled to have the land with and subject to all the conditions, stipulations, reservations and provisoes in the Act. The particular condition that the rent should not be increased over and above 50 per cent. at any one time was one of the conditions referred to in the form of lease. The lease was issued by the Crown, and he understood it was signed by His Excellency the Governor on behalf of the State. Not only was the alteration of the law which the hon. gentleman was supporting an alteration of the statutory contract, but it was repudiation and alteration of the written contract entered into between the Crown and the tenant. The Chief Secretary, when referring to this matter, asked a question as to whether the provisions were embodied in a written contract, and he seemed to indicate that, if they were written contracts, it might be repudiation. The provision was in the written contract beyond any question, and he failed to see how the hon. gentleman could say it was anything else but repudiation. Would it be allowed between two citizens—a landlord and a tenant? A landlord having granted a lease to the tenant under certain conditions, would the latter permit the landlord to abrogate the conditions that were in his favour? Hon. gentlemen on the other side would hold up their hands in horror and cry out about injustice, landlordism, and that sort of thing, if a landlord attempted to do that. What more was the Government doing at the present time? If the conditions of the lease could be altered in this way, the conditions of the lease of an ordinary selector could be altered in any particular. The conditions of a prickly-pear selector could be altered in any particular.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: So they have been, as you know.

Mr. MACARTNEY: He did not justify it in the slightest. There was no justification in the case of the small man any more than in the case of a big man; but to say it was not repudiation was just the height of

impudence, nothing more nor less, and the Government that would attempt to break its contract with its tenant would descend to any depth. They could not be expected to get the confidence of the people in the State and to get the confidence of the people beyond the State, on whom the State was more or less dependent. It was a disgrace to any Government to repudiate a solemn contract entered into in the name of the Government and signed by the Governor.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: No more disgraceful than the thing you did last session.

Mr. MACARTNEY: When the Bill went for the Governor's assent, it ought to be specially pointed out to His Excellency that it was repudiation of a contract which he himself or his predecessors signed on behalf of the Government.

HON. J. TOLMIE said that the Minister, in trying to justify himself, had stated that the late Government had broken contracts into which they had entered with the public servants, and because the late Government had broken contracts, he was justified in breaking these contracts.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You have no right in charging us when you were guilty of the same thing yourself.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Perhaps the Opposition had reformed, and, having reformed, would they not be justified in pointing out a wrong that had been done? The cases quoted by the Minister were not parallel. The one was a written contract entered into between two parties, and the payment of salaries of public servants was always contingent upon the House passing them.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: This one is rich, and the other is poor.

HON. J. TOLMIE: It was not a question of richness or poverty. He had asked the Secretary for Public Instruction on the previous day whether the Government were breaking a contract with the public servants, and the Secretary for Public Instruction said he had not heard of it. When the estimates dealing with the Public Service Board were being considered, the Opposition would be able to show that the answer given by the Secretary for Public Instruction was absolutely incorrect, and that hon. gentlemen on the other side were doing this year what they accused the Opposition of doing when in office last year. If the Opposition broke contracts last year with the public servants, the Government were breaking the same contracts, and, in addition, they were breaking the contracts with the pastoral lessees.

Mr. FORSYTH said that the Act of 1905, when brought in by the Labour party, passed its second reading stage without a division. The members of the Labour party were then absolutely in favour of this particular clause, which was not in the Act of 1902. It was put in by their own special wish, and not even a division took place.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That was the Coalition Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: A portion of the members of the Coalition Government were members of the Labour party, and hon. members opposite could not deny it. This clause was introduced by the Minister's own party, and he wanted to repudiate their action.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: It was not his own party.

[*Mr. Macartney.*

Mr. FORSYTH: The Labour party was supporting the Government at that time. The Act of 1905, with the amendment restricting the extent to which rents might be raised, was brought in and passed in order to encourage pastoral lessees to come under the 1902 Act, and yet the Minister said that the provision repealing that condition was not repudiation. It was pure and absolute repudiation. The hon. gentleman said, "Why not leave the matter to the Land Court?" He did not think the Land Court would fix the rents at the figures the hon. gentleman anticipated, because in some cases they had reduced rents, and he believed that they could depend upon that body to act fairly in their appraisement of the rents. The Hon. Mr. Hamilton, when discussing this matter in 1905, said that there was any quantity of land in the Western districts unoccupied, and that it would pay the Government to give those lands to people who would utilise them; and it was conditions such as these which led the Government and the House to agree to the conditions which were contained in the present leases. With regard to the remarks of the Minister concerning repudiation, he would point out that while members of the present Government had frequently accused the late Government of breaking their word by refusing automatic increases to public servants, the present Administration were doing exactly the same thing with respect to employees in the Education Department. Under those circumstances the remarks of the Minister about repudiation were not worthy of any consideration. If an agreement was made between the Crown and the pastoral tenant, the Government had no right to interfere and break that agreement without the consent of the lessee. The hon. gentleman talked about grazing farmers paying 6d. per acre rent and pastoralists about 1d. per acre. If the hon. gentleman looked up the records he would find that in many cases the rent paid by grazing farmers was 1½d., 2d., and 3d. per acre. Sixpence an acre was practically 5 per cent., and that was too high a rental to demand from grazing farmers. The large majority of pastoral leases had been held for the last forty years, and after the land was taken up the Government said to the pastoral lessees, "If you will agree to the resumption of certain portions of your holdings at specified periods we will give you an extension of your lease," and an agreement was made to that effect. In those early days pastoralists were not making a great deal on wool. He had known of squatters carting their wool a distance of 400 miles and paying £20 a ton to get it brought to a seaport, and now that the price of wool was higher and the conditions of the pastoral industry improved, the Government wanted unlimited power to increase the rents. The Minister knew that the whole of these pastoral lands would soon fall into the hands of the Crown, and that they could be then cut up and made available for selection by grazing farmers, and he ought to recognise that it was an unfair thing to make a change in the conditions of the lease under which pastoralists were now working. During the past twelve months many pastoralists had lost 50 per cent. of their stock, and others a much greater percentage, and it would take them many years to recover themselves. People in that position deserved some consideration at the hands of the Government, and the Minister ought to agree

to the Council's amendment. If the hon. gentleman did not accept the amendment, he sincerely trusted that the Upper House would continue to regard the matter from a high moral standpoint and stick to their amendment.

Question—That the Council's amendment in clause 8 be disagreed to—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Jones, A. J.
,, Armfield	,, Jones, T. L.
,, Barber	,, Kirwan
,, Bertram	,, Land
,, Bowman	,, Larcombe
,, Carter	,, Lennon
,, Collins	,, May
,, Cooper	,, McLachlan
,, Dunstan	,, McMinn
,, Fihelly	,, McPhail
,, Gilday	,, O'Sullivan
,, Gillies	,, Payne
,, Gledson	,, Pollock
,, Hardacre	,, Smith
,, Hartley, H. L.	,, Stopford
,, Hartley, W.	,, Theodore
,, Hunter	,, Winstanley
,, Huxham	

Tellers: Mr. Cooper and Mr. Kirwan.

NOES, 19.

Mr. Armstrong	Mr. Hodge
,, Barnes	,, Macartney
,, Bayley	,, Moore
,, Bebbington	,, Somerset
,, Bell	,, Stodart
,, Bridges	,, Swayne
,, Corser	,, Tolmie
,, Forsyth	,, Vowles
,, Grayson	,, Walker
,, Gunn	

Tellers: Mr. Barnes and Mr. Bebbington.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Mr. Wellington, Mr. Free, and Mr. T. J. Ryan.
Noes—Mr. Stevens, Mr. Appel, and Mr. Morgan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

On clause 27—"Agistment"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that the Council's amendment in line 39, inserting the word "grazing" after the word "every" be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

On clause 31—"Amendment of section 109"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that for the reason given for rejecting the amendment in clause 8, the Committee insist on the retention of the first paragraph of clause 31, and insist on the retention of the second paragraph, but with [7 p.m.] the following amendments, namely, omit the words "and the proviso is repealed" and insert in lieu thereof the words "and in the proviso after the word 'homestead' the words 'applied for or held prior to the 1st day of January, 1916' are inserted." It had been held by the other Chamber that residence on homesteads would not be held to be necessary if this were passed in its present form; therefore, to make it clear he proposed to make the alteration as indicated.

Question put and passed.

On clause 38—"Amendment of section 130"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that the Committee do not agree with the Legislative Council's amendment, because if they accepted the amendment it would probably lead to a large amount of illegal practices.

HON. J. TOLMIE was sorry the Minister could not accept the amendment. The person concerned would have all his improvements taken away from him, and that ought to be sufficient punishment. He might have £3,000 or £4,000 of improvements, and, as he would have to forfeit them, why punish him more. They did not want to follow him down to the last penny he possessed. It was stated in the clause—

> "The improvements thereon shall, notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, be forfeited to the Crown, and the lessee shall have no title to compensation in respect of them."

Surely that was sufficient without imposing a penalty. When the present Minister was in Opposition he made a most piteous appeal for the reduction of a penalty of £2, which was inflicted for a grievous offence. In this case, however, the poor man was to be stripped of all he possessed so far as property was concerned, lease and all, and he had to pay a penalty as well.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: You must remember he must be a guilty man.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Of course, he must be a guilty man. It was only a man who was guilty who needed any person to plead for him. When anyone did wrong he required someone else to put in a plea for him. If the Minister were in Opposition he would make the same plea, and, perhaps, his eloquence would make his plea stronger. Punishments ought not to be too drastic. They ought to be in proportion to the case. If they made the punishment disproportionate, then it would do more harm than good. Punishments were inflicted for the purposes of reformation, but if they made it too harsh, instead of reforming, it would embitter, and then harm was done. He asked the Minister to agree to the amendment and clear the way for the passage of the Bill.

Question—That the Committee disagree with the Legislative Council's amendment on clause 38—put; and the Committee divided—

AYES, 34.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Huxham
,, Armfield	,, Jones, A. J.
,, Barber	,, Jones, T. L.
,, Bertram	,, Kirwan
,, Bowman	,, Larcombe
,, Carter	,, May
,, Collins	,, McLachlan
,, Cooper	,, McMinn
,, Dunstan	,, McPhail
,, Fihelly	,, O'Sullivan
,, Gilday	,, Payne
,, Gillies	,, Pollock
,, Gledson	,, Ryan, H. J.
,, Hardacre	,, Smith
,, Hartley, H. L.	,, Stopford
,, Hartley, W.	,, Theodore
,, Hunter	,, Winstanley

Tellers: Mr. Pollock and Mr. Stopford.

NOES, 19.

Mr. Armstrong	Mr. Hodge
,, Barnes	,, Macartney
,, Bayley	,, Moore
,, Bebbington	,, Somerset
,, Bell	,, Stodart
,, Bridges	,, Swayne
,, Corser	,, Tolmie
,, Forsyth	,, Vowles
,, Grayson	,, Walker
,, Gunn	

Tellers: Mr. Bell and Mr. Moore.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Mr. Wellington, Mr. Free, and Mr. T. J. Ryan.
Noes—Mr. Stevens, Mr. Appel, and Mr. Morgan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

On clause 50—"Amendment of Schedule II"—

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that the Council's amendment omitting clause 50 be disagreed to. The Committee had already dealt with the principle contained in the clause, and it was unnecessary to discuss the matter further.

HON. J. TOLMIE: He was not going to labour the question. The matter had been discussed earlier in the afternoon, and the Opposition had pointed out that it was repudiation of a solemn contract entered into by the Crown with its tenants, and he could only repeat what had already been said. In order to show their disapprobation of the vicious principle, the Opposition would vote against the question.

Question put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Mr. Adamson	Mr. Jones, A. J.
,, Armfield	,, Jones, T. L.
,, Barber	,, Kirwan
,, Bertram	,, Land
,, Bowman	,, Larcombe
,, Carter	,, May
,, Collins	,, McLachlan
,, Cooper	,, McMinn
,, Dunstan	,, McPhail
,, Fihelly	,, O'Sullivan
,, Gilday	,, Payne
,, Gillies	,, Pollock
,, Gledson	,, Ryan, H. J.
,, Hardacre	,, Smith
,, Hartley, H. L.	,, Stopford
,, Hartley, W.	,, Theodore
,, Hunter	,, Winstanley
,, Huxham	

Tellers: Mr. Barber and Mr. Dunstan.

NOES, 19.

Mr. Armstrong	Mr. Hodge
,, Barnes	,, Macartney
,, Bayley	,, Moore
,, Bebbington	,, Somerset
,, Bell	,, Stodart
,, Bridges	,, Swayne
,, Corser	,, Tolmie
,, Forsyth	,, Vowles
,, Grayson	,, Walker
,, Gunn	

Tellers: Mr. Barnes and Mr. Vowles.

PAIRS.

Ayes—Mr. Wellington, Mr. Free, and Mr. T. J. Ryan.
Noes—Mr. Stevens, Mr. Appel, and Mr. Morgan.

Resolved in the affirmative.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to one amendment of the Legislative Council, disagreed to others, and disagreed to an amendment, and proposed a further amendment, and the report was adopted.

The Bill was ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council with the following message:—

"Mr. President,

"The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's amendments in the Land Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Disagree to the amendment in clause 6, lines 44 to 46—

"Because it is considered that the amendment, if carried, will open wide the door to dummying.

"Disagree to the amendment in clause 8, lines 43 to 55, page 5, and lines 1 to 7, page 6—

"Because it is considered inadvisable to fetter the Land Court in assessing the rents of Crown tenants.

"Disagree to the amendments in clause 31 for a similar reason, but propose to amend the clause by omitting the words 'and the proviso is repealed,' on line 29, and inserting in lieu thereof the words 'and in the proviso after the word "homestead" the words "applied for or held prior to the first day of January, one thousand nine hundred and sixteen," are inserted.'

"In which proposed amendment they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

"Disagree to the amendment in clause 38, lines 20 to 24—

"Because, if accepted, there would not be sufficient deterrent to illegal practices.

"Disagree to the omission of clause 50—

"Because it is consequential on the amendment in clause 8.

"And agree to the other amendment in the Bill.

"Legislative Assembly Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

GAS BILL.

COMMITTEE.

On clause 1—"Short title and commencement of Act"—

* Mr. MACARTNEY moved the omission of the word "January," on line 8, with a view of inserting the word "July." He pointed out that they were now within fourteen days of the 1st January, and the Bill, if carried in the form in which it stood, would very seriously interfere with the business carried on by the various companies in Queensland, and it would be unfair and unjust to those companies to bring the Bill into operation so soon. Another reason was that the Bill would involve alterations and additions in plant, and, inasmuch as it would be impossible for any company to obtain the necessary plant in six months, or probably even in twelve months, it was a reasonable thing that the operation of the Bill should be delayed in order that the company could get the necessary equipment and plant together to give effect to the conditions of the Bill. The Brisbane Gas Company at present had a contract for the supply of plant for the carrying on of its business. That contract was made some time ago with an English firm, who found it impossible to carry it out for reasons connected with the war, included in which were the facts that workmen had enlisted, workmen had been withdrawn for the making of munitions, and the fact that the firm itself had been called on to perform work in connection with the manufacture of munitions. He had read a letter from the West Gas Improvement Company, Limited, with regard to the contract he had referred to, showing that what he had said was absolutely correct. Surely the hon. gentleman would see that it was not an unreasonable request to ask that the operation of the Bill should be postponed for at least six months. He did not put the amendment forward for the purpose of making any difficulty for the hon. gentleman, but merely for the purpose of seeing that justice was done to the enterprises which provided the people of the State with lighting. The

Minister must also recognise that the conditions of the Bill would immediately operate to upset the financial arrangements of the company, and it would not be unreasonable on that ground alone to give the companies a few months' grace in order that they might put their financial arrangements in order.

HON. J. HUXHAM: He would be very pleased to meet the hon. gentleman in the matter if he could see his way to do it. He had discussed this clause with the gas companies and it had been an open matter between the gas companies and himself. He thought the hon. member might very well leave the matter open, as the gas referee would take into consideration all the conditions operating at the time. Inasmuch as the gas referee had to deal with the Bill, the hon. member might very well set his amendment aside, because it was not intended to unduly harass the gas companies, but rather to place the relations between the companies and the consumer on an equitable footing. He could not accept the amendment, but he would give the assurance that nothing would be done to harass the companies between now and the time that they got the necessary plant.

Mr. MACARTNEY thought it was unfair to ask the companies or anyone else to rely entirely on the kindness or consideration of the Minister rather than on the protection of the law. The Minister would probably do the fair thing, but he might not always be the Minister. It was fair to the companies to give them this protection. The hon. gentleman said that the matter was in the hands of the gas referee, but he was not quite right in that, because it was not for the gas referee to say when the Act was to come into operation. This clause decided that question. Surely they were not going to get into that condition of things when the law was to be carried out or not carried out according to the decision or whim of some subordinate official. Would it not be better that the Act should be postponed for six months in order that there might be the decision of the gas referee as to price? He thought the suggested postponement was reasonable and eminently fair. It would give the Minister all he desired—that was, to settle a fair basis between the manufacturer of gas and the consumer.

Mr. FORSYTH pointed out that, according to clause 10, the gas companies might be ordered to supply gas at the instance of twenty occupiers or owners of premises. That being so, he thought the Minister should accept the amendment. The gas companies were very short of pipes. They could not get supplies from the old country because a large number of men had been employed for war purposes, and, as a matter of fact, some of the works were now munition works.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: The gas referee decides that.

Mr. FORSYTH: There was nothing in the Bill to that effect. If clause 10 were brought into operation, there might be no mains, and how then could the gas companies supply the gas? The hon. gentleman said that the companies would be able to advise the referee that they were not able to supply the gas.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: And the gas referee will not compel them.

Mr. FORSYTH: It could not be imagined what the gas referee would do. He thought the companies were entitled to some little consideration so that they could get their house in order before the Act applied. If the Minister was not prepared to give an extension of six months, he might allow three months in order to give the gas companies time to make necessary arrangements to carry out the conditions laid down in the Bill.

HON. J. TOLMIE pointed out that gas companies were scattered all over Queensland, and some of them might not be aware that legislation was being introduced. It might be the 24th of December, or even later, before the Governor gave his assent to the measure, and the news would not travel out to some of these people that the Bill had become law; and yet, because an offence was committed on the 1st January, they were liable to be punished. It was not a question of party tactics; it was a question that affected the commercial relationships of perhaps some thousands of persons.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: I will accept three months.

Mr. FORSYTH referred the Minister's attention to the Act passed in New South Wales in 1912. He said it was passed on 20th December, and it did not come into operation until the 1st July following.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: I am willing to give you three months.

Mr. MACARTNEY reluctantly withdrew his amendment, as the Minister would not accept it, and under the circumstances the only thing to do was to accept the best they could get. He still adhered to the opinion that six months was a reasonable time. He moved that the word "January" be omitted, with the view of inserting "April."

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

Clause 2—"Operation of Act"—put and passed.

On clause 3—"Definitions"—

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that the word "any," on line 21, be omitted, with the view of inserting the word "coal."

Amendment agreed to.

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that the word "proclamation," on line 9, page 2, be omitted, with the view of inserting the words "Order in Council."

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

Clause 4—"Application of Act"—put and passed.

On clause 5—"Illuminating power, heating power, and purity and pressure of gas"—

Mr. MACARTNEY moved that the words "its illuminating power." on line 15, be omitted. He pointed out on the second reading of the Bill that the information he had been able to obtain showed that the test by candle-power, which was an old process, had been superseded in Canada by the heating test, pure and simple. He understood that the heating test was absolutely in favour of the consumer, because the necessary heating power could be provided at a cost less than that of candle-power, consequently there was a margin for a reduction in the cost of

the production of gas, and a margin for an allowance to the consumer. He believed that the heating test would be applied to 90 per cent. of the consumers in Brisbane as against the other 10 per cent. for whom the illuminating test might have some value. He had information showing that the heating test had become a recognised thing in Canada and Great Britain, and would read to the Committee extracts from a statement made by Mr. Arthur Howitt at a meeting of the New England Association of Gas Engineers. Mr. Howitt was the general manager of the Toronto Gas Company, and he put the position in these words—

> "We have been working in Canada for four years with the Government. I am convinced that we were right in our contention that the candle-power standard should be abolished and a reasonable standard of calorific value substituted. The recent decision in the case of the Gas Light and Coke Company of London makes a calorific standard of 540 British thermal units, but a variation of 7½ per. cent. is allowed, which brings it down to 499½ as the real standard of the company, and this should weigh heavily with those who are considering this matter from the commission standpoint. How will the consumers get the benefit of the saving brought about by the lowering of the standard? If you are able to economise in the manufacture of gas, the public will eventually get the benefit of it. In Toronto they get it all. From a purely public standpoint, it seems to me there is nothing to be gained by setting the standard very far above 500 British thermal units. I contend that we were right, and that we were working in the public interests in seeking a lower standard rather than the high standard that had prevailed so long, and which had produced so much economic waste."

There was no doubt that the question had received a great deal of consideration in Canada and England, for he held in his hand a large number of extracts from well-known papers in connection with gas business, showing conclusively that the calorific standard was now well recognised as the economic method of testing. He did not know that it would be any use to read those extracts, and would content himself with stating that they were in favour of the heating test. The Bill was of a highly technical nature, and should have been referred to a committee of experts, or to a committee which could take the evidence of experts before it was introduced in the House. But since they were attempting to regulate the relations between gas companies and gas consumers, they should endeavour to do it on a proper scientific and economic basis. It was a pity that the measure was introduced at such a late period of the session, and that they were deprived of that expert opinion which was necessary to enable them to deal with the matter satisfactorily. He hoped that the hon. gentleman would accept the amendment, or that, if he did not accept it and the passage of the measure was delayed, he would have the matter closely inquired into, so as to put it on a proper footing before the Bill became law.

HON. J. HUXHAM: The hon. member had referred to the desirableness of deferring this matter to experts. The only expert to whom they could refer it would be officers connected with the gas companies, and, naturally, he could not refer it to them, as they would be prejudiced in favour of their companies. Consequently, he had to get outside information, which was equally as valuable as that which those gentlemen could supply, and which was absolutely unbiassed; and he was advised that, at the present juncture, it was advisable that they should adopt the illuminating standard. This standard would protect the consumer, and it would do no injustice to the producers of gas. He was sorry that he could not accept the amendment.

Mr. FORSYTH: As far as he could understand the matter, the candle-power test was all right so long as the whole of the gas was used without incandescent burners, but that since the new incandescent light process with a mantle had come into operation there was a great difference.

Mr. MCPHAIL: There are a considerable number of old burners still in use.

Mr. FORSYTH: Not more than 10 per cent. of the burners in use were of the old type. With the incandescent light and mantle they got a much better light than they got with the 15 candle-power under the old form of illumination. The incandescent process gave a glorious, soft, and bright light, and was produced at a reduced cost. That was the reason why both in Canada and Great Britain they were dispensing with the illuminating test altogether. The amendment was not proposed with the object of preventing the Bill going through, but with the view of making the Bill as good a Bill as possible. He was told by people who knew more about it than he did that to fix the candle power where the incandescent lights were used was of no use at all. In the old days, when the open gas jets were used, then it was all right to compare it with the candle light, but it [8 p.m.] should not apply to incandescent burners at all, because the incandescent lights were better and purer and softer. He did not think that part of the Bill was required. The gas companies did not wish the candle power to be retained, but it was not because of any sinister motive. The gas companies were working under an Act that came into force before the incandescent burners were used, so that the people were getting the good light now from the incandescent burner. Other new processes would come to light which would improve the light and also reduce the cost to the consumers. He hoped the Minister would accept the amendment.

* Mr. MACARTNEY: On making inquiries, he understood that the objection to the amendment was so that it could apply to other places in Queensland outside Brisbane where the incandescent burners were not used much. There might be something in the argument of the hon. gentleman if that were so, because it could be made to apply to other places. He noticed in the Bill there was power reserved for the Governor in Council to alter the schedule at any time. Was it possible that the Minister, after making further inquiries, might see his way by virtue of that power to alter the schedule in favour of the city of Brisbane.

HON. J. HUXHAM: He would be pleased to have the schedule altered at any time if

he found that by doing so it improved the illuminant. The Governor in Council had power to alter the schedule by giving due notice. He was acting on the advice of Mr. Henderson, who gave an unbiassed opinion in regard to the matter, and that gentleman thought that for the time being it was advisable to keep the provisions relating to the illuminating power and calorific properties in the clause. He therefore could not omit those words from the Bill.

Mr. MACARTNEY asked if the Minister was prepared to alter the schedule so as to limit its application to places outside Brisbane?

HON. J. HUXHAM: He could not alter the schedule. He was acting on the advice of Mr. Henderson, who was a competent adviser. Mr. Henderson thought it inadvisable at present to omit the references to the illuminant and calorific tests.

Amendment (*Mr. Macartney's*) put and negatived.

* Mr. MACARTNEY: He had another amendment on the same clause. He moved that on line 13, after the word "prevented," the words "by unavoidable cause or" be inserted. There might be some unavoidable cause, such as a flood, which would prevent the company carrying out the provisions of the section. He did not know if the Minister was prepared to accept the amendment.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: That will be covered by "accident."

Mr. MACARTNEY: An unavoidable cause might not be an accident, and no one would call a flood an accident.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: I think the hon. gentleman is really straining it a little.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If the Minister referred the question to the Parliamentary Draftsman, he would find there was no objection to the inclusion of those words, and it would make a doubtful point clear.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: I think the hon. gentleman is stretching it rather far, because "accident" should cover "unavoidable cause."

Mr. MACARTNEY: With all deference to the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Minister, he thought it did not cover it. The Bills they passed in the House usually included an interpretation clause when a word got anything like a strange interpretation. If they looked in the interpretation clause they would not find the word "accident" as giving a definition of anything outside the ordinary meaning. It would prevent any misunderstanding, and as it would do no harm to the Bill and was quite reasonable, he thought the Minister should accept it.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: "Unavoidable cause" might be very elastic.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If the company were prevented from carrying out the provisions of the clause from some unavoidable cause, they should be exempt from any liability. The Bill should be made a reasonable one, and they could do that by accepting the amendment.

Mr. FORSYTH: There is really nothing in it.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: If there is nothing in it, we had better leave it stand as it is.

Amendment (*Mr. Macartney's*) put, and negatived.

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that on line 37, after the word "meter," the words "or at any prescribed place" be inserted. It would make the clause more comprehensive.

Amendment agreed to; and clause 5, as amended, put and passed.

Clauses 6 to 8, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 9—"Cost of pipes to be defrayed by company and owner of premises"—

HON. J. HUXHAM: He had given notice of an amendment, but he would pass it over and allow the other clause to stand.

* Mr. MACARTNEY moved that subclause (2) be omitted and the following subclause inserted in its place:—

> "(2.) Every owner or occupier of premises entitled to and requiring a supply of gas by meter shall serve a notice upon the company at the office, specifying the premises in respect of which such supply is required, and the day not being earlier than thirty days upon which the supply is required to commence, and shall, if required by such company so to do, enter into a written contract with such company to continue to receive and pay for a supply of gas for a period of at least twelve months thereafter, and give to the company, if required by it to do so, security for the payment to it of all moneys which may become due by such owner or occupier in respect of such supply of gas as may be registered by meter, and of any pipe to be laid upon the property of such owner or in the possession of such occupier: Provided that the company may discontinue to supply gas and may remove the meter and fittings the property of the company in the event of damage or injury to the meter or fittings, or of the customer neglecting or refusing to pay the charge for gas supplied or for hire or rent of meter."

The amendment was a reasonable one, and became necessary on account of the operation of this Act in place of the existing Act, under which the company had got certain rights and protection against the consumer for the value of the gas supplied. The conditions laid down in the subclause were very much on the lines of paragraph 2, section 27, of the New South Wales Gas Act of 1912. If they left the clause as it was, then every owner or occupier of premises requiring a supply of gas by meter upon serving a notice upon the company would have to be supplied. The company was bound to supply the gas, notwithstanding the existing Act which gave the right of stoppage against the consumer under certain circumstances. Under the circumstances, it was necessary that some clause should be included if those rights were to be continued. The companies clearly had the right under the existing Act to discontinue supplying, and in the words of the subclause it seemed to him a company would be bound to continue to supply whether the conditions with regard to payment were carried out or not.

HON. J. HUXHAM said he had an amendment to move on line 29, and he would ask the hon. member to withdraw his amendment so that he (Mr. Huxham) could move his.

Mr. MACARTNEY, by leave, withdrew his amendment.

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that after the word "they," on line 29, the word "service" be inserted. As the clause stood, it might mean any pipe, and the amendment would make it more secure for the companies.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. MACARTNEY again moved the omission of subclause (2) with a view of inserting the new subclause.

HON. J. HUXHAM: He could not accept the amendment, because he looked upon the clause as drafted as giving an equitable deal all round. Where the company got the privilege of supplying gas, it must also have some obligations to the consumers. The paragraph which the hon. member wished to eliminate was essential to the Bill, and, therefore, he could not agree to its deletion.

Mr. MACARTNEY: He understood the hon. gentleman to suggest that the Bill did not affect the provisions of the existing Act. Was the hon. gentleman in a position to say that a company could shut off the supply of gas if an individual did not carry out his obligations?

Hon. J. HUXHAM: That is quite correct.

Mr. MACARTNEY: That might be the hon. member's opinion and the opinion of the draftsman, but it might be—unless it was made perfectly clear—that the company would be put to the necessity of litigating. It was contrary to the idea of legislation there there should be any room for doubt where the matter could be made perfectly clear. Could the hon. gentleman suggest an amendment that would make the matter plain?

HON. J. HUXHAM: The clause had been very carefully drafted and very carefully considered. The Government had gone over the ground again and again, and the Bill had been redrafted so many times that he would be very glad to get rid of it. There might be some doubt about the provisions in the clause, but he had it on the authority of the draftsman that the companies were protected. However, in order to meet the hon. member, he was prepared—if the hon. member would withdraw his amendment—to insert after the word "continues," on line 49, a new paragraph, as follows:—

> "Nothing herein contained shall be construed to deprive a company of any security it may have under any other Act for securing the due payment for gas supplied by it to consumers."

Mr. MACARTNEY asked leave to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment withdrawn accordingly.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Before the Minister moved his amendment, he wished to move the insertion after the word "continues," on line 49, of the words "unless the Minister is satisfied that such default has arisen through unavoidable causes." That seemed a reasonable amendment under the circumstances. It gave discretion to the Minister, and he would ask the hon. member to accept it.

HON. J. HUXHAM: It might be a remarkable thing for him to say, but he did say it, that he did not believe in giving the Minister too much power. He did not see why the Minister should step in in matters such as that and have to adjudicate. If any trouble arose, it should be settled by the gas referee, who would be a man of legal training. He was not prepared to accept the amendment, and he preferred that it should not be enforced.

* Mr. MACARTNEY: The Minister took up a very extraordinary position. He, of all men, did not believe in giving the Minister too much power! Right throughout the Bill he indicated that he would prefer to have power to enforce or not to enforce the provisions of the Bill rather than have the lines of enforcement laid down in the Bill itself. Surely that was an unreasonable attitude for a Minister to take up. The clause provided—

> "Whenever the company wilfully neglects or refuses to give a supply of gas to any owner or occupier of premises entitled to the same under such pressure as is prescribed, it shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings for each day during which such default continues."

He realised that the amendment was somewhat inconsistent with some of the words in the clause, but, at the same time, the object of it was quite obvious, and he suggested the Minister accept an amendment in some form.

Mr. FORSYTH called the attention of the Minister to clause 11 of the New South Wales Act, which was passed in 1912, from which the Bill had been drafted to a very large extent. That clause in the New South Wales Act provided—

> "No penalty shall be incurred by a gas company for defect of illuminating power, excess of impurity in gas supplied by such company, or insufficiency of pressure in any case in respect of which it is proved that such defect or excess or insufficiency was produced by any circumstance beyond the control of the company."

That was practically what the amendment moved by the hon. member for Toowong asked for. It was put there in very simple language, and if such a clause was in the New South Wales Act, he could not see why the Minister could not accept the amendment. The New South Wales Act said distinctly that those penalties should not be imposed if the circumstances were beyond the control of the company.

HON. J. HUXHAM said that paragraph 2 of subsection (2) of the clause was very clear. It stated—

> "Whenever the company wilfully neglects or refuses to give a supply of gas to any owner or occupier of premises entitled to the same under such pressure as is prescribed, it shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings for each day during which such default continues."

Mr. FORSYTH: Why not accept the clause in the New South Wales Act?

HON. J. HUXHAM: He did not think the hon. gentleman would follow up anything that any other business man did if he thought that it was a bad principle. If they could improve on the New South Wales Act, why should they not do it?

Mr. FORSYTH: This Bill is taken from the New South Wales Act to a very large extent.

HON. J. HUXHAM: Where there were advantages in the New South Wales Act,

they were glad to take them, but it was not good that they should slavishly follow any line that was included in any other Act if it were not advantageous. It was not intended to penalise the companies unduly. The fact that the companies might appeal to the gas referee went to prove that they were given just as much right as was given to the consumer. What better could be done if they had an impartial tribunal to say what was a fair thing for the company and what was a fair thing for the consumer? The main principle of the Bill was that that which affected the companies and the consumers particularly was to be decided by the gas referee.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If the penalties were recoverable before the gas referee it would be perfectly fair, but the Bill did not say so, and it appeared that the penalties provided in the clause would be recovered in the ordinary way. While there might be some objection in the case of wilful neglect or refusal, when it was mere neglect owing to an unavoidable cause or refusal owing to an unavoidable cause, it was hardly fair that the penalty should be imposed. The amendment sought to guard against the prosecution for doing something which the company could not prevent. It seemed to him to be matter that was in consonance with justice.

Amendment (*Mr. Macartney's*) put and negatived.

HON. J. HUXHAM moved to insert, after "continues," on line 49, the following words:—

> "Nothing herein shall be construed to deprive a company of any remedy it may have under any other Act for securing the due payment of gas supplied by it to consumers."

Amendment agreed to; and clause 9, as amended, put and passed.

Clause 10—"Company may be ordered to supply gas"—

* Mr. MACARTNEY moved that, after the word "him," on page 5, line 10, the following words be inserted:—

> "Provided that the returns from such extension shall show a fair profit on the outlay."

The amendment appeared to him to be a reasonable one under the circumstances. The effect of the clause as it stood, imposing on the company the necessity of doing work out of proportion to revenue produced thereby, practically took the management and control of the company's business out of its hands, and under these circumstances there ought to be such limitations of the obligations placed upon the company as would enable the company to secure a fair profit on the outlay which they were obliged to make.

HON. J. HUXHAM pointed out that if at any time a demand was made for an extension of the service, the company, if they thought it was unprofitable to make the extension, could refer the matter to the gas referee, and he might say that an unreasonable request had been made, and that he declined to insist upon the company carrying out the extension. It was a matter that rested more largely with the gas referee.

* Mr. MACARTNEY thought it was a reasonable thing that the lines on which the referee should act should be indicated to him. It was not an unreasonable thing that the Legislature should say to the referee that he must not impose upon the company an obligation to construct extra work which would not be revenue-producing. It was all very well to say that the referee would not act in a certain way, but the referee must decide a matter according to the statute. Then again the Minister would submit or not submit the request to the referee. The Minister ought to consider the amendment a reasonable one under the circumstances.

HON. J. HUXHAM: The hon. gentleman ought to see the meaning of the clause far more clearly than an ordinary man. It said—

> "Any twenty occupiers or owners of premises situated in a defined locality within the limits wherein which a company is authorised to supply gas may address a memorial in the prescribed form to the Minister setting forth that the said premises are not supplied with gas, and could conveniently be so supplied and ought reasonably to be so supplied by such company, and undertaking to become consumers of gas upon its being so supplied.
>
> "Thereupon the Minister may refer such memorial to a gas referee."

The gas referee would hear both sides of the case, and if he decided that the consumers were making unreasonable demands, he would turn the request down. On the other hand, if the company had certain privileges, it also had certain obligations, and these obligations must be carried out if the gas referee decided that a reasonable demand was made. If the gas referee did not do a fair thing to a company, he would be wiped out, and somebody else would be put in his place. Nothing unreasonable would be demanded from a company.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Take the case of the South Brisbane Gas Company, which had a large area. Twenty consumers in an isolated suburb, far away from the present mains, might call upon the company to extend their mains to that suburb, and the Minister and the referee might consider that, as the gas company had such a large area, it was a reasonable thing to extend their lighting to these particular people, irrespective of whether or not they were likely to get a return on the money expended. There was no limitation to that.

HON. J. HUXHAM: They recognised that there must be a reasonable return on the money expended. If the South Brisbane company's mains would go on past Fairfield, it would be unreasonable to expect that any consumers who might be living in Sherwood could demand an extension there without an obligation to see a reasonable return on the money so expended. The South Brisbane Gas Company had laid pipes, and were open to supply gas to the residents of Yeronga and Sherwood, but they had not done so, although they had expended something like £20,000. If the referee found that any company stood in to prevent the people from getting good gas, he could insist upon the company carrying out its obligations. On the other hand, the referee had to see that a company got a reasonable return for its money. So much dead capital was lying idle in the mains to Sherwood and Yeronga, and it was the consumer who had to pay that capital. If the present Government were in power, and if any referee played

ducks and drakes with a reasonable provision of the Act, the Government would see that the company was protected as well as the consumer. They were not out to exploit the companies, but where the companies had special privileges, their obligations should not be overlooked, and that was what the Bill provided for. He thought the hon. gentleman would recognise that the clause as it stood was sufficient to safeguard both the consumers and the companies.

At 8.35 p.m.,

Mr. BERTRAM relieved the Chairman in the chair.

Mr. FORSYTH: They were now dealing with the clause which provided that twenty occupiers of premises might apply to the Minister to order a gas company to lay down mains in their locality and supply them with gas. It was quite possible that a certain section of the community might want to have a main laid in a locality where the actual revenue the company would receive for the gas supplied would not pay interest on the money expended in laying down the mains, and it would be unreasonable to expect a company to incur the cost of laying mains in such a case. The Minister stated that he would not insist upon gas being supplied to occupiers under such circumstances, and he believed that the hon. gentleman was sincere in making that statement, but, that being so, why did he not accept the amendment? The company were entitled to a fair return on the capital expended in laying down mains, and, as the amendment simply provided that the interests of the company should be reasonably safeguarded, he thought the Minister should accept it. The company should be safeguarded as well as the consumer, and that safeguard should be placed in the Bill.

Mr. McMINN: There was some misunderstanding on the part of hon. members opposite, or they had not read the clause. The first paragraph of the clause contained these words "and ought reasonably to be so supplied by such company," and he thought that that provision would safeguard the interests of the company. If it could be proved that the application of twenty occupiers was not a reasonable application, it would not be granted. The whole thing depended upon the reasonableness of the proposition. If the laying of mains would not prove a paying concern to the company, then it would not be a reasonable proposition.

Mr. MURPHY: He had always advocated that the intention of the Legislature should be as clearly stated in the Bills which were passed as it was possible to state it. They had had quite a diversity of opinion as to the meaning of this particular clause. The Minister told them that the Government intended to treat the gas companies fairly, and the hon. member who had just resumed his seat had explained that the whole question depended upon the interpretation of the word "reasonable." The Minister had told them what he proposed to do, and what he would insist upon the gas referee doing. Why could not the Legislature tell the gas referee in this Bill what his particular duty was in connection with the laying of extra mains? They were told that the matter could be referred to the Judge of the Industrial Arbitration Court. What did they want to go to that expense for when they could state the thing clearly, concisely, and definitely in the clause?

Mr. McMINN: You cannot state it in clearer language than it is stated here.

Mr. MURPHY: The hon. member thought that the whole thing depended upon how the referee interpreted the word "reasonable," and the Minister said that if the applicants were not satisfied with his decision they could appeal to the Judge of the Industrial Court. The lawyers made quite enough money without the Committee making it easier for them to make money under this particular clause. Members opposite, like himself, had for years urged that Bills should be so drafted that "he who runs may read"—so that the ordinary individual who had not studied law could read their statutes and tell what they meant. The Minister did not know exactly what this clause meant; the hon. member for Toowong, who was a lawyer, did not know exactly what it meant; and the hon. member for Bulimba was, like himself, somewhat mixed about the matter. It seemed to him that, after the Bill came into operation, a large sum of money would have to be expended in order to ascertain what this particular clause meant. The hon. member for Toowong had suggested an amendment which would give effect to what the Minister said was his intention in administering the Bill. Would it not be wise, in the interest of the gas companies and gas consumers, and to the detriment of the legal profession, to accept the amendment and make the position absolutely clear? They wanted to cheapen law. That used to be a plank in the Labour platform when he belonged to the Labour party, but he supposed that, since so many lawyers had joined the party, it had been wiped out of the platform. He still believed in it. Lawyers had had quite enough out of him in his time, and he wanted to protect the general public against having to obtain the advice of lawyers with reference to every little provision in an Act of Parliament. They had now a new Government in office; let them adopt a new method with regard to the framing of their measures and make them as clear as they possibly could.

Amendment (*Mr. Macartney's*) put and negatived.

Clause 10 put and passed.

On clause 11—"Testing of meters"—

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that on line 26 after the word "months," the words "or such further time as the Minister deems necessary" be inserted.

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

On clause 12—"Price of gas"—

* Mr. MACARTNEY moved the addition of the words "and sixpence" on line 43, after the word "shillings." It would then read that the price to be charged by the Brisbane Gas Company for gas would be at the rate of 4s. 6d. per 1,000 feet. He thought that the more just provision would have been to provide that the current rate should continue, and it should be left to the referee to decide, within a reasonable time, whether that should be altered or not. Primâ facie, the rate charged at the present time was a reasonable one, because the history of the Brisbane Gas Company showed that the price of gas commenced at 15s. per 1,000

cubic feet. From time to time, with the increase of consumers and the methods of producing gas becoming cheaper, the cost to the consumer had been reduced in a reasonable degree. Having regard to the extra taxation, increases in wages, and other factors that went to make up the cost of production, and also the abnormal times we were passing through at the present time owing to war conditions, it was not a fair thing on the part of the Government to take the company by the neck and reduce the price of the gas and produce effects which the Government did not really realise. The Government were appointing under the provisions of the Bill a tribunal in the person of a gas referee, who, the Minister said, must be a legally qualified man. It would have been perfectly just to have let the price stand and refer it to that tribunal to say, within a reasonable time after the commencement of the Act, whether there should be any alteration in the existing charge or not.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: The referee can decide the matter between now and the 1st April.

Mr. MACARTNEY: It would not be too much to place in the Bill that the charge should remain as at present, or fix it according to the price mentioned in his amendment, and then leave it to the gas referee to fix the charge by the 1st April, or within a limited time thereafter. The Minister provided the best argument possible in favour of the amendment when he referred to the old country. The prices charged in the old country and in Sydney and Melbourne were no guide as to what the prices should be in Brisbane or South Brisbane. The quantity of gas consumed in the old country and in Sydney and Melbourne was so great that there was no parallel on that point alone so far as Brisbane was concerned. What was more, the cost of production and the elements that went to create the cost of production were different in Great Britain, Melbourne, or Sydney to what they were in Brisbane. The elements that went to make up the cost of production consisted of several, in which might be included the capital cost of the undertaking, the cost of renewals and repairs, the wages of the workmen, the price that could be obtained for the residual product, and the population to be supplied with gas. He need only take the first item, the capital cost of the undertaking, and make a comparison. They would find that it cost twice or three times as much to establish an undertaking in Brisbane as it did in the old country.

Hon. J. HUXHAM: Coal is cheaper here than in the old country.

Mr. MACARTNEY compared the rates of wages paid in Brisbane and in the old country and the cost of working, which, with the other elements he had referred to, showed a difference equal to 2s. 9d. per 1,000 feet in favour of the old country. They had to put on the initial charge of 2s. 9d. in Brisbane first. It was no use saying that the cost of gas in England was 1s., 2s., or 3s. more than it was in Queensland, because that provided no parallel at all.

Mr. MCMINN: What about the Melbourne cost?

Mr. MACARTNEY: The price of gas in Melbourne was 4s. 4d. per 1,000 feet, which was only 2d. cheaper than the price mentioned in his amendment. The consumption was much greater in Melbourne, and the number of consumers were greater, so that there was no parallel there.

Mr. PETERSON: What about Bathurst, where they only charged 3s. per 1,000 feet?

Mr. MACARTNEY: He did not know the circumstances connected with Bathurst. If the hon. member could give him particulars and show that there was a parallel between Bathurst and Brisbane, he would be pleased to accept the argument.

Mr. PETERSON: You referred to the population.

Mr. MACARTNEY: That was one element. The element of coal was an important one. In England they might establish a gas company and get the coal from underneath the gas works and only have to lift it up. That would make the coal cheaper. They had to consider all the elements in fixing the price. There were thirteen companies in London and suburbs which charged 3s. 5.15d. per 1,000 feet, and the rents which had to be paid for meters brought the charge up another 2.29d. That made the price 3s. 7.44d. per 1,000 feet. If they added the 2s. 9d. to that which he had previously referred to it would bring the charge up to 6s. 4d. Yet they found the Brisbane company only charged 4s. 8d. whilst his amendment suggested 4s. 6d. It was idle to make any arbitrary statements in regard to these things without having all the figures and all the elements that went to make up the cost of production. It was not reasonable at the present time to reduce the charge in Brisbane by 8d. per 1,000 feet. He suggested that it should be referred to the referee before fixing an arbitrary price like that.

HON. J. HUXHAM pointed out that the Brisbane Gas Company received a very good return on the capital invested in the business. The company evidently knew there was something of this sort coming on, because only six months back they transferred from reserve account £108,000, as well as other incidentals, totalling in all £130,000 odd, to capital account. One would imagine that the dividends would have been decreased very considerably, but they were not. On a capital of £240,000 the company declared a dividend of 12 per cent. per annum. At the end of the next six months, on a capital of £130,000 extra that had been transferred from reserve and other sources, the company declared a dividend of 10 per cent. per annum. There was a very big transfer of reserve capital, but, notwithstanding that, there was not a big drop in the amount of dividends. In reducing the price of gas by 8d. per 1,000 feet, they were still allowing the company a fair return on their money. If he were to get 7½ per cent. profit in connection with his business he would be doing remarkably well. The position in regard to South Brisbane was this: They had fixed the price there at 4s. 6d., and at that rate they had made provision that they should get a return of 7½ per cent. on their capital. In addition to that they got an amount from residuals which would bring it up to 8¾ per cent. The clause simply fixed the price at 4s. per 1,000 feet for North Brisbane, and 4s 6d. for South Brisbane. Then the gas referee stepped in, and if he considered these prices were not fair, he would raise the price to what was a reasonable return on their capital. The hon. member would recognise from the figures he had given, that the companies were well protected. The Government were making provision for a

return of 7½ per cent. on the capital invested, on plant used in the production of gas, and if the companies by good business management could make it greater they could do so.

Mr. FORSYTH: They cannot pay more than 7½ per cent. unless they make it out of their residue.

HON. J. HUXHAM: They could do that by economical management. The price would be fixed for at least two years, and the hon. member must recognise that 7½ per cent. return on the production of gas was a very fair return, and on top of that they got a reasonable return from their residues; in fact, they got more than a reasonable return.

Mr. FORSYTH: The hon. gentleman must bear in mind that there were several things to take into consideration apart altogether from the price of gas. The amendment fixed the rate at 6d. per 1,000 more than the amount placed in the clause, but it did not matter what they did, the companies could not pay more than 7½ per cent. A considerable number of people, in fact, some friends of his own, had bought the Brisbane Gas Company's shares at £13, and he knew some people who had bought those shares immediately before the introduction of the Bill at £9 15s. and £10 a share. Those people were basing their calculations upon the fact that while the company was paying 10 per cent. upon its original capital, they would only get a fair average return of 5 per cent. on their money, but under the measure those people, if the rate was reduced to 7½ per cent., would not get more than 3¾ per cent. When they were discussing the question before, some members asked what were the rates charged in the old country. There were some companies in the old country that charged as low as 2s. for 1,000 feet, and some even lower. He knew the price was exceptionally low, but they must bear in mind that there were conditions attaching to them which did not apply to Queensland at all. For instance, the wage paid to the men in the old country prior to the war was 5s. 6d. to 5s. 7d. per day, while the rate here was 11s. a day; just about double. Then, when they came to the plant, it must be borne in mind that the cost was also very much greater than in the old country. Then, again, they were continually putting down mains which absorbed an enormous amount of capital. The cost of the pipes laid in North Brisbane and South Brisbane must represent a huge sum of money, and those pipes cost infinitely more in Brisbane than in the old country. All those things must be taken into consideration when comparing the price of 4s. 6d. per 1,000 feet as against 2s., or whatever it might be. The fairest test they could have as to whether the price charged by gas companies here was higher than it reasonably should be was a comparison between here and places such as Sydney, Melbourne, and other cities of the Commonwealth. He would very much like to be in the position of getting 3s. 10d. in Sydney as against 4s. 6d. in Brisbane, because it would pay the gas companies in Sydney infinitely better upon a 3s. 10d. basis than it would pay in Brisbane at 4s. 6d. That was on account of the enormous turnover. In Sydney the consumption of gas was twelve times at great as in Brisbane. In Melbourne, where the consumption was nine times greater than in Brisbane, the price was 4s 4½d.; and in Adelaide it was 5s. 3d. gross, as against 5s. 10d. gross in Brisbane less 20 per cent. While they wanted to get the gas as cheap as possible, they should do the fair thing to the people producing gas. As a matter of fact, the price of coal was going up very considerably, and he understood that it would cost from 2s. 3d. to 2s. 6d. more from the end of the year than it was costing now. He did not think 4s. 6d. was an extortionate price. The Minister must recognise that the present price of 4s. 8d. was not out of the way, and until they saw how the thing worked it would be very much better to accept the amendment. The question that occurred to him was: How did the Minister arrive at the 4s.? Did he simply say, "The price is 4s. 8d. and we will make it even money?" What rule did he go by when fixing the price at 4s. as against 4s. 8d.?

Mr. T. L. JONES: The same rule by which you arrived at 4s. 6d.

Mr. FORSYTH: No. When the Minister was asked how it was he fixed the price in South Brisbane at 4s. 6d. as against 4s. for North Brisbane, he said it was because of the lower consumption. If they went on a consumption basis, the places down South would be in a very much better position than Brisbane. He thought the amendment was a reasonable one, and hoped the Minister would accept it.

Mr. T. L. JONES (*Oxley*) pointed out that, notwithstanding the cost of plant in Australia, the cost of labour and other considerations, the price of gas, compared with prices in Great Britain, left a margin in favour of Great Britain. The figures which he had were rather startling, showing, in the case of various towns in Great Britain—towns somewhat similar to Brisbane in size, but certainly with more population and where more gas might be used—the extremely high rates that were charged here; and he did not think that the hon. member for Murrumba could argue that the difference was accounted for by the extra cost of material and the extra cost of labour. In the figures he would quote, he would take the expenditure of capital, compare it with the Brisbane expenditure, and show that it was somewhat similar. In Brisbane the gas consumers laboured under a severe disability by reason of the fact that there were two companies. The hon. member for Murrumba has said that the smaller undertaking must have dear gas, consequently the people of Brisbane were suffering because there were two undertakings, which, added together, only amounted to a decent undertaking of ordinary commercial size in Great Britain. When anything was left in the hands of private enterprise, they had to "pay the piper" all the time. In Coventry (England) the capital expended was £479,780, and of that sum £61,031 had been repaid or put into a sinking fund, and the price was from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 10d. per 1,000 feet for private lighting, and that showed a profit of £23,670 in the year 1911-12. In addition to that, street lighting was done without charge. This was a municipal undertaking, as against the two private enterprises in Brisbane. In Halifax, the capital expended was £659,672, and the amount repaid out of profits, or put to the sinking fund, was £170,109—accumulated profits which, with the Brisbane companies, would be divided amongst the shareholders—and the rate there was 2s. 1d. per

1,000 feet, with 1d. discount, and the profit in 1911-12 was £44,828.

Mr. FORSYTH: Big profits with low rates.

Mr. T. L. JONES: That did away with the hon. member's argument entirely that the price in Queensland was justified by the extra cost of the things that he had referred to. He admitted that the cost of material and labour were higher, but that was not sufficient to account for it.

Mr. FORSYTH: The margin of profit is not so great here.

Mr. T. L. JONES: The margin of profit was great.

Mr. FORSYTH: They do not make £40,000 a year with all their profits.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Never mind what they made on their balance-sheets. They all knew that the companies distributed their profits in shares. They knew that the stock had been watered all along. In the city of Aberdeen the capital expended was £457,536 —which was smaller than the two Brisbane companies—and they had repaid a sum of £11,078; their rate was 2s. 3d. per 1,000 feet, and they made profits in that year of £27,017. He would not quote any further figures, but he had a book with him showing the figures for 200 undertakings, and almost every one of them made profits, although their rate was 50 per cent. of the rate paid in Brisbane. The hon. member for Murrumba had referred to the price of coal, but the price of coal in Great Britain, compared with Australia, was 30 per cent. in favour of Australia. That was something that set off very largely the extra cost of labour. The price of coal in 1898 in Great Britain was 6s. 4½d. at the pit's mouth, and in Australia the average price was 5s. 9d. at the pit's mouth. In 1907 the price in the United Kingdom increased to 9s. per ton, and in Australia to 6s. 10d. at the pit's mouth.

Mr. FORSYTH: The Brisbane Gas Company is paying 12s. 9d.

Mr. T. L. JONES: The hon. member was talking about the present day, but he was showing that, from 1898 to 1907, the average price in Great Britain had been 30 per cent. higher than in Australia. Consequently the Brisbane gas companies were in a very strong position, because coal was cheaper here than in any other part of the world, and it was adjacent to the gasworks, with river carriage, which was the cheapest in the world. The figures which he had quoted were from the "New Dictionary Statistics" of 1911, and some of the undertakings were as small as the Wynnum gasworks, where the price was down to 3s. There was "something wrong in the State of Denmark" with regard to coal that required a little more explanation than that given by the hon. member for Murrumba. Hon members of the Opposition side who had spoken on the question were prepared to bring the price down to 4s. 6d., and the net price at present was 5s.

Mr. FORSYTH: You are wrong there. It is 4s. 8d.

Mr. T. L. JONES: Hon. members were prepared to stand a fairly substantial reduction, at any rate. He pointed out that the Bill did not fix the price arbitrarily at all, as the price was subject to immediate revision. The Minister had as much right to say that a fair price was 4s. as the members of the Opposition had to say it was 4s. 6d. The Bill said that the price should not be arbitrarily fixed, and immediately the Bill came into operation the companies could send in their returns, and if the price fixed did not return them 7½ per cent. on the capital value, the price could be readjusted immediately.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is fixed for the time being.

Mr. T. L. JONES: But it might be reviewed immediately. It would be some months before the Act came into force, and the company could send in their returns, and the price might be reviewed within a month of the Bill's becoming law. The Bill was head and shoulders above the legislation in New South Wales in fairness to the companies concerned. It was all very well for the hon. member for Toowong to smile. It stopped their little game of watering their capital, but it was absolutely fair, and the hon. member told them that that was all they wanted. He defied any member on the opposite side to show that it was not fair in the method of fixing the price of gas. When it was fixed for two years, the companies could use all their energies in management in the matter of saving and using the residuals, which they would have over and above the profit of 7½ per cent.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MACARTNEY: He had listened to the very interesting speech of the hon. member of Oxley, and he did not propose to follow him in all that he said and the volumes of figures he quoted, but he ventured to say that the remarks he made in the first instance went to show that even the companies he mentioned as supplying gas at 2s. or 3s. were practically supplying gas on an equivalent to the prices charged here. All that they were asking for was fair. The Government were appointing a tribunal to say what was a fair price, and they could fix it within a week, within a month of the passage of the Bill. Yet they took upon themselves, without investigation—without knowledge, perhaps—to fix a price which exceeded the price which was being charged at present.

Mr. T. L. JONES: The companies have been fixing the price all along without inquiry, and the consumers have been "paying the piper."

Mr. MACARTNEY: Would the hon. member like the Government to fix the price of his commodities?

Mr. T. L. JONES: If I had a monopoly, and was assured of 7½ per cent., I would not object; but you have no more right to ask me that than I have to ask you whether you would like to have legal fees fixed.

Mr. MACARTNEY: He only wanted to appeal to the hon. member's sense of fair play. What was right in one case was right in another. The hon. member was appointing a tribunal to fix a price after investigation, and then took it upon himself to make an arbitrary decision as to price, without waiting for the results of their investigation. Was that a fair thing, seeing that the Bill provided the machinery to do what the hon. member for Oxley said he wanted to do? It was the wrong way of going about it. He could see that the

Government were out for what they might call "the reduction of prices." They had failed to reduce prices in many instances, notwithstanding their representations, and they wanted to have at least one thing in respect to which they could go to the country and say, "We have reduced prices." The referee might come forward in a month's time and say that the prices the companies were charging was reasonable, and yet the Government wanted to reduce them to 4s. or 4s. 6d. They had wrecked the interests of a large number of women and children in the community by their attack. They were only asking that a fair deal should be given to the companies and the people interested in them. What the Government were doing against those companies to-day the Government or any other Government could do against any other section of the community to-morrow. The Bill not only reduced prices, but it also imposed heavy responsibilities on the companies of a financial nature and otherwise. He did not care a dump what the referee fixed the price at, so long as it was done on equitable lines. Like the rest of the community, they were interested in getting good gas under reasonable conditions and at a reasonable price, but leaving the price as it was till the tribunal had an opportunity of fixing it was only reasonable and just, and would remove the stigma that the Minister was arbitrarily fixing the price without adequate knowledge or sufficient investigation, or, perhaps, for political purposes.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MACARTNEY moved the omission of the word "four," on line 45, with a view to inserting "five." He did not know whether 5s. 6d. was actually equal to what was being charged. He understood that the South Brisbane company charged one rate for lighting and another for heating, but, at any rate, the 4s. 6d. in the clause was a considerable reduction on the present charge, and he thought, for the same reasons that he had moved the last amendment, it should be increased to 5s. 6d.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause 12 put and passed.

On clause 13—"Provision for fixing price of gas from time to time"—

Mr. MACARTNEY moved the omission of the words "either of such companies," in line 3, page 6, with a view to inserting "their respective companies." He was not prepared to say that the words were absolutely necessary, but there was a considerable doubt in the minds of many as to whether it would not mean that the request of a number of gas consumers on the South side might be construed to operate as an application against the company on the North side. If the hon. gentleman thought the amendment was not necessary he did not intend to press it.

HON. J. HUXHAM: He was quite satisfied, if the hon. member thought the words "their respective companies" covered more than the words "either of such companies," to accept the amendment.

Amendment agreed to.

HON. J. HUXHAM moved the omission of (iii.), on line 19, and the insertion of (ii.). The amendment was purely verbal.

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

On clause 14—"Charge for gas supplied by means of prepayment meters"—

Mr MACARTNEY moved the omission of subclauses (1) and (2), and the insertion of the following words:—

> "In addition to the price charged by any company for gas supplied by it, such company may charge for the hire of any prepayment meter and fittings to be used therewith, a price calculated at a rate not exceeding tenpence per thousand cubic feet of gas supplied, such price to include the hire of one meter and the fittings used therewith."

HON. J. HUXHAM: They maintained that it was not competent to lay down what should be charged, and the referee should decide. He regretted that he could not accept the hon. member's amendment.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. MACARTNEY moved, after subclause (3), on line 9, the addition of the words "except the deposit for rental."

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

Clauses 15 to 17, both inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 18—"Amendment of schedules"—

Mr. MACARTNEY moved the insertion, after the word "shall," on line 23, of the words "be served on every company affected and."

HON. J. HUXHAM: He would accept the amendment.

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

On clause 19—"Regulations"—

HON. J. HUXHAM moved the insertion, after the word "thereof," on line 51, of the words "and may impose reasonable fees to be paid for any services rendered under this Act."

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

Clause 20 put and passed.

At 10 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

On Schedule I.—

Mr. MACARTNEY proposed to move the omission of the words "fifteen-tenths of," on line 33, with the view of inserting the words "eight-tenths." In New South Wales the provision was six-tenths.

HON. J. HUXHAM had a previous amendment. He moved that Schedule I. be omitted, with the view of inserting the following:—

> "SCHEDULE I.
>
> "STANDARDS.
>
> "(A)—*Of Illuminating Power.*
>
> "The quality of gas shall with respect to its illuminating power be such as to produce, at a testing-place provided in conformity with this Act, when burned at the rate of five cubic feet per hour, a light of fifteen-candle power.
>
> "(B)—*Of Heating Power.*
>
> "The quality of gas with respect to its heating value shall be not less than five hundred and forty British thermal units per cubic foot total heating value.

"(C)—*Of Purity.*

"Gas shall, when tested in accordance with this Act, contain—

No hydrogen sulphide.

Ammonia—Not more than four grains per one hundred cubic feet.

"(D)—*Of Pressure.*

"Gas shall be supplied at such pressure as to balance a column of water not less than fifteen-tenths of an inch in height."

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the Bill—put and negatived.

Mr. MACARTNEY moved that the word "fifteen" in the last line of [10.30 p.m.] paragraph (D) of the proposed new schedule be omitted with the view of inserting the word "eight."

Amendment negatived; and new schedule, as amended, put and passed.

On Schedule II.—"Testing of gas"—

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that the schedule be omitted with the view of inserting the following new schedule:—

"SCHEDULE II.

"*Testing of gas.*

"1. The apparatus for testing the illuminating power of the gas shall consist of the improved form of Bunsen's photometer, known as Letheby's open 60-inch photometer, or Evan's enclosed 100-inch photometer, together with a proper meter, minute clock, governor, pressure gauge, and balance.

"The burner to be used for testing the gas shall be the Metropolitan Argand Burner No. 2.

"The standard of light shall be the Harcourt 10-candle pentane lamp and the pentane used therewith, and the methods of testing thereof shall be such as are prescribed in the regulations:

"Provided that gas companies may, with the consent of the Minister, use Lowe's jet photometer for ascertaining the illuminating power of the gas in standard candles.

"2. The apparatus for testing the heating power of gas shall be the Simmance-Abady Calorimeter.

"3. The apparatus for testing the presence in the gas of sulphuretted hydrogen shall be a glass vessel containing a strip of bibulous paper moistened with a solution of acetate of lead, containing sixty grains of crystallised acetate of lead dissolved in one fluid ounce of water.

"4. The apparatus for testing the presence of ammonia shall consist of a glass vessel filled with glass marbles moistened with standard sulphuric acid, and the test shall be carried out so as to show the proportion of ammonia contained in the gas.

"5. For the purpose of the test of pressure, the examiner shall use a recording pressure gauge, known as King's pressure gauge."

New schedule agreed to.

On Schedule III.—"Directions to be observed in determining the price of gas"—

HON. J. HUXHAM moved that after the word "meter" on line 43 there be inserted the words "less ten per centum allowance for leakage."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. MACARTNEY moved that the figures "7½," on line 65, be omitted with the view of inserting the figures "10."

Amendment negatived.

Mr. MACARTNEY moved that after the word "meter," on line 68, there be inserted the words "less ten per centum allowance for leakage."

Amendment agreed to; and schedule, as further amended, put and passed.

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

The report was agreed to, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for Monday.

LAND TAX BILL.

MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL—PROPOSED FREE CONFERENCE.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:—

"Mr. Speaker,

"The Legislative Council having considered the Legislative Assembly's message of date the 16th December, intimating that they disagree to a certain amendment made by the Council in the Land Tax Bill, request a free conference with the Legislative Assembly with a view of arriving at a mutual agreement with respect to the said amendment.

"The Legislative Council appoint the Hon. W. Stephens, the Hon. P. J. Leahy, and the Hon. E. W. H. Fowles to be the managers to represent them at such conference.

"The Legislative Council name No. 1 Committee Room, Legislative Council, to be the place, and 11 a.m. on Monday the 20th instant to be the hour and time, of meeting of such conference.

"ARTHUR MORGAN,
"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

The TREASURER moved that the following message be transmitted to the Legislative Council:—

"Mr. President,

"The Legislative Assembly agree to the free conference requested by the Legislative Council in their message of this day's date, relative to the amendments in the Land Tax Bill. The Legislative Assembly appoint Hon. E. G. Theodore, Hon. H. F. Hardacre, and Hon. Wm. Lennon to be the managers thereof on their behalf.

"Legislative Assembly Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

Question put and passed.

INCOME TAX ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

MESSAGE FROM COUNCIL—PROPOSED FREE CONFERENCE.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council:—

"Mr. Speaker,

"The Legislative Council having received the Legislative Assembly's message of date the 17th December, intimating that they disagree to certain of the Council's amendments made in the Income Tax Act Amendment Bill, request a free conference with the Legislative Assembly, with a view of arriving at a mutual argeement with respect to the said amendments.

"The Legislative Council have appointed the Hon. W. Stephens, the Hon. T. M. Hall, and the Hon. P. J. Leahy to be the managers to represent them at such conference.

"The Legislative Council name No. 1 Committee Room, Legislative Council, to be the place, and 12 o'clock noon on the 20th instant to be the hour and date, of meeting of such conference.

"ARTHUR MORGAN,
"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

The TREASURER moved that the following message be transmitted to the Legislative Council:—

"Mr. President,

"The Legislative Assembly agree to the free conference requested by the Legislative Council in their message of this day's date, relative to the amendments in the Income Tax Act Amendment Bill.

"The Legislative Assembly appoint Hon. E. G. Theodore, Hon. H. F. Hardacre, and Hon. W. Lennon to be the managers thereof on their behalf."

"Legislative Assembly Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

Question put and passed.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COUNCIL'S MESSAGE No. 2.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council intimating that they insisted on their amendment in clause 8, etc.:—

"Mr. Speaker,

"The Legislative Council having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Assembly of date the 17th December, relative to the Land Act Amendment Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Insist on their amendments in clause 8, and clause 31, lines 25 and 26, and on the omission of clause 50—

"Because—

1. This House refuses to repudiate any lawful contract lawfully entered into by the Crown.

2. This House cannot associate itself with any policy that would tend to destroy that security of tenure on which the development and prosperity of our pastoral industry so intimately depend.

"Do not insist on their amendment in clause 31, lines 27 to 31; and

"Agree to the Assembly's amendment proposed therein; and

"Do not insist on the other amendments in the Bill to which the Legislative Assembly have disagreed.

"ARTHUR MORGAN,
"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

Ordered that the consideration of the Legislative Council's message be made an Order of the Day for Monday next.

TRADE UNION BILL.

COUNCIL'S MESSAGE No. 2.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following message from the Legislative Council, intimating that they insisted on their amendments in clause 36, etc.:—

"Mr. Speaker,

"The Legislative Council having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Assembly of date 15th December, relative to the Trade Union Bill, beg now to intimate that they—

"Insist on their amendment in clause 36, to which the Legislative Assembly have disagreed—

"Because—

1. The so-called 'peaceful picketing' clause has not given general satisfaction wherever tried.

2. The industrial conditions in the United Kingdom are not the same as the industrial conditions in Queensland, and comparison is therefore misleading.

3. The so-called 'peaceful picketing' is open to grave abuse, and may result in industrial terrorism rather than industrial peace.

"ARTHUR MORGAN,
"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,
"Brisbane, 17th December, 1915."

Ordered that the consideration of the Council's message to be made an Order of the Day for Monday next.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Coyne, Warrego, in the chair.*)

EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATIVE.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £1,965 be granted for "His Excellency the Governor." The total vote was £2,265, but the item "Aide-de-Camp, £300" had already been passed by the Committee.

HON. J. TOLMIE said there was not very much in connection with that Estimate, but he noticed an item of £1,175—"Rent of Country Residence" for His Excellency. That was practically an increase of £575 on the amount voted last year. He would like to know whether it was proposed to provide a country residence for His Excellency and where it was proposed the residence should be situated? Then again, it would be just as well for the Government to consider, if they were going to retain the Governor, the

advisability of increasing the salary of His Excellency, because, although the previous Government had recently increased the salary it was still very inadequate. He had discussed the matter with Sir William MacGregor when here, who had pointed out that, unless a fair salary was paid, Queensland was not likely to get a man of very wide experience in the future, because, under new rules obtaining, the amount of the retiring allowance to any Governor was dependent on the salary he had received in the position which he vacated. If the salary was small, then the retiring allowance must also be small, and, consequently, they could not expect to get a man of great ability unless he was financially strong himself. It did not follow that the men of the greatest ability were the men endowed with a large share of this world's wealth.

Mr. FORSYTH said he did not object to the increase, because he found that the amount spent last year was the same as that asked for, although it had not been put on the Estimates last year. As the Governor was not too well paid, they should not restrict him in regard to the rent of a country residence.

Question put and passed.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £340 be granted for "Executive Council." That was £20 more than voted last year, which was required for printing and stationery. There was a good deal more work now on account of the war.

Question put and passed.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £1,320 be granted for "Legislative Council." That was an increase of £45, there being an increase of £15 to two messengers, and £30 extra for postage, telegrams, and incidental expenses.

HON. J. TOLMIE said he was glad to know that the messengers had received slight increases. There was an amount of £50 for a sessional messenger. That sum had been put down for a good number of years, but, by arrangement, that officer was retained for the whole year. He drew the Minister's attention to the matter in the hope that the services of that messenger would be retained for the current year, as was the custom.

Question put and passed.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £3,738 be granted for "Legislative Assembly." That was an increase of £75. Provision was made for an increase of £20 in the salary of the second clerk assistant, Mr. Dickson, an increase of £30 to the messengers, and £25 increase in postages and incidental expenses.

HON. J. TOLMIE: Members of Parliament retained their positions until their successors were appointed when an election came round, but the practice was, that in that event the Speaker ceased to be Speaker and was not paid. During the last recess, when the President of the Legislative Council was not in Brisbane, the late Speaker had charge of the Houses. He had to come there regularly for the purpose of carrying out the duties of President in connection with the House from the time of the election till the time that the new Speaker was appointed. An application was made for the salary attached to the position, under the circumstances, but he was told that precedent was against him. He had brought the matter up because he did not think that the Committee was desirous that the Speaker should perform those duties for some months without receiving the remuneration that was usually paid.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: The matter had been before the Cabinet, but no payment of that description had been made to a Speaker since 1887, and it was not considered that the present was the most suitable year to revert to a practice that had been dropped for so long.

HON. J. TOLMIE: The present year was different, and he had to discharge the functions discharged by the President.

Mr. MURPHY: The leader of the Opposition had referred to the sessional messengers in the Legislative Council, and he hoped that some consideration would be given to the corresponding officers in the Assembly. It had been an exceptionally heavy session, and there had been more late sittings than for many years past, and he hoped that the Government would not turn those men off after working such long hours. He thought that the messengers at Parliament House should follow the usual course, and form a union—(hear, hear!)—and affiliate with the Trades Hall, and insist on an eight-hour day. He believed that the Speaker had been sympathetic, and had tried to make things as comfortable as he could in the matter of hours. Previous Governments had done something for them at the request of members.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: We will find something for them.

Mr. GUNN thought that if it was going to be fashionable to have an eight-hour day, the messengers should have it, too. He was seriously thinking of starting out as an organiser, before next session, of a union of members of Parliament, and if a member did not join, or did more than eight hours, he would be a "scab." (Laughter.) Why should they not have a union as much as prisoners or anyone else?

Question put and passed.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £11,774 be granted for "Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly." There was a net increase of £398. There were increases for the assistant librarian and junior assistant in the library, an increase of £50 in the vote for library books, binding, and periodicals, an increase of £25 for library contingencies, an increase of £250 in the vote for "Hansard" and other printing, etc., and another £50 for lift and switchboard attendance, but there was a decrease of £20 in the amount required for hall porter.

Mr. FORSYTH: The same amount was down this year for the Parliamentary Refreshment-rooms as last year, but, as a matter of fact, the Auditor-General's report

showed that no less than £1,742 was spent last year, or £742 more than was voted. He did not know whether they proposed to carry them on for the amount stated. They all knew that the cost of living had gone up, and he did not see how they could provide meals at 1s. He did not suppose that they could get such a meal in Queensland for the money.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Last year a considerable sum was required for the purchase of crockery and other material, which would not occur again this year. Of course, the vote was under the control of the Speaker and the Parliamentary Refreshment-room Committee.

HON. J. TOLMIE: They had a very fine library, and for quite a number of years it had been kept up to date and respectable-looking, but now it was beginning to wear a piebald appearance. The books were not being bound in some cases, and others were beginning to display a worn appearance. He would like the hon. gentleman to say whether the Government would take into consideration the question of allocating another £200 for binding the books in the library and bringing them up to date.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes.

Question put and passed.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT.

CHIEF OFFICE.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS moved that £7,770 be granted for "Chief Secretary's Department—Chief Office." There was an increase of £230 on the amount asked for last year, made up of small increases in salaries of various officers in the department.

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

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