Queensland

# Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

## Legislative Assembly

**THURSDAY, 31 JULY 1913**

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THURSDAY, 31 JULY, 1913.

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

## PAPER.

The following paper, laid on the table, was ordered to be printed:—

Regulations under the Navigation Act of 1876.

## QUESTIONS.

### PEARL DEALERS' LICENSES.

Mr. WILLIAMS (*Charters Towers*), on behalf of Mr. Douglas, asked the Treasurer—

"How many licenses to deal in pearls were taken out yearly under the Pearl-shell and Beche-de-Mer Fisheries Acts for the years 1901 to 1913 inclusive?"

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Bulimba*) replied—

"1901, 4; 1902, 6; 1903, 4; 1904, 5; 1905, 5; 1906, 5; 1907, 9; 1908, 4; 1909, 7; 1910, 5; 1911, 7; 1912, 5; 1913, 4. Total, 70."

### MOUNT MOLLOY RAILWAY.

Mr. WILLIAMS, on behalf of Mr. Douglas, asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. Has the Commissioner for Railways reported upon the condition of the Mount Molloy Railway and its prospects of being a useful asset if taken over by the Government?

"2. If so, will the report be made available for public information?"

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. W. T. Paget, *Mackay*) replied—

"1 and 2. Not yet."

### VANCOUVER SHIPPING SERVICE.

Mr. FIHELLY (*Paddington*) asked the Premier—

"1. In view of the change of Ministry in the Commonwealth Parliament, does he anticipate any difficulty in having Brisbane made a port of call for the Vancouver shipping service?

"2. Has there been any correspondence with the Hon. J. Cook on the matter?"

The PREMIER (Hon. D. F. Denham, *Oxley*) replied—

"1. Yes.

"2. No."

### WEENGALLON AND NORAH PARK ARTESIAN BORES.

Mr. FIHELLY asked the Treasurer—

"The amount expended to date, the length of time working to date, and the present depths of—(*a*) Weengallon Bore; (*b*) Norah Park Bore?"

The TREASURER replied—

"(*a*) Weengallon Bore—Expended to date, £6,795 15s. 10d.; time working to date, two years two and a-half months, including stoppages totalling approximately six months; depths on 19th July, 1913, 3,240 feet. (*b*) Norah Park Bore—Expended to date, £7,891 10s. 1d.; time working to date, two years four months, including stoppages totalling approximately three months; depth on 19th July, 1913, 3,507 feet 10 inches."

### BRISBANE TRAMWAYS SERVICE.

Mr. GILDAY (*Ithaca*) asked the Premier—

"1. Is he aware that alarming dissatisfaction exists in the metropolis in regard to the tramways service in the following respects:—(*a*) Neglect to extend the service in accordance with the wants of a rapidly growing community; (*b*) exorbitant fares; (*c*) overcrowding of cars; (*d*) disgraceful state of permanent way?

"2. Will he submit the following question to a referendum of the electors of Queensland or the electors of the metropolis:—Is it desirable that the Government should adopt summary methods to compel the Tramways Company to conform to the reasonable desires of the people?"

The PREMIER replied—

"1 and 2. The action necessary to make the Brisbane tram system better adapted to existing circumstances is receiving the serious attention of the Government."

### NAMBOUR AND HEALTH DEPARTMENT.

Mr. GILLIES (*Eacham*) asked the Home Secretary—

"1. Have the recommendations of the Health Department concerning the town of Nambour been complied with?

"2. If those recommendations have not been complied with, will he, in the interest of public health, carry out the promise contained in his reply to my question on this subject on 28th November of last year?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. G. Appel, *Albert*) replied—

"1. Yes, as regards general sanitary matters; but the main sewer has not yet been constructed.

"2. An inspection was made in June last."

## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH LAND SALES BILL.

### REFERENCE TO SELECT COMMITTEE.

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

"1. That the Roman Catholic Church Land Sales Bill be referred for the consideration and report of a Select Committee.

"2. That such Committee have power to send for persons and papers, and leave to sit during any adjournment of the House; and that it consist of the following members—namely, Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Williams, Mr. E. B. C. Corser, Mr. Adamson, and the mover."

## RABBIT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. J. Tolmie, *Toowoomba*) this Bill was read a third time, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form.

## MINIMUM SALARY FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS.

Mr. MAY (*Flinders*), in moving—

> "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that all public servants (both male and female) upon reaching the age of twenty-one (21) years, after three (3) years' service, should receive a minimum salary of not less than one hundred and ten pounds (£110) per annum,"

said: I have brought this matter up before the House for the past two years. In the first instance the motion was lost by a very narrow majority. Last year we were beaten badly, and when one considers the cost of living, it was surprising that we should practically lose the ground which we had gained the year before. It only shows that there is not that freedom of spirit, that freedom of determination, which there should be amongst members of this House. They are all whipped into line on the other side, and there is no chance of carrying anything we bring forward, because the matter is dealt with on party lines, and not on its merits. The Premier has got them all whipped into line. I thought he was not a strong man, but he appears to be stronger than I thought, because he can whip them up whenever he wants to. Owing to the extra cost of living, I think that our public servants should receive better remuneration than what they are getting at present. The Federal Government have seen fit to do this, and they have lost nothing by it. If you are trying to squeeze a man down, or to squeeze a woman down, she would do the best she possibly could with the amount of money she has, whichever way you take it. The cost of living is far greater than it was a few years ago. If you pay anyone a remunerative wage, they will do their best, either for the department or for a private employer—an employee will always work to the best advantage if he is paid well. You can get more out of them in an indirect way than by squeezing them down, as I have just mentioned. I think the Premier might accept the motion this time. If we do not get it with a Conservative Government, we will get it when a Labour Government occupy those benches.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MAY: As long as I have the honour of being a member of this House, I am going to bring the motion forward every year until it is passed. There is no need for me to belabour the question by recapitulating the arguments which I used before. I hope the Premier will see the utility of this motion. I would impress upon all the Government departments that the better the employees are paid the more interest they will take in their work, and the acceptance of this motion would do no harm, but would do the State an illimitable amount of good.

[*Mr. May.*

Mr. THEODORE (*Chillagoe*): I have very much pleasure in seconding the motion of the hon. member for Flinders. I think it is time that the Government should see its way to establish a minimum salary, below which no person in the public service should be paid—no person who, at least, is of the age of twenty-one years and can show three years' service. I know the Government have done something in the matter of increasing the minimum salaries, particularly in regard to the Department of Public Instruction, but still I think there is room for improvement. I think there is a necessity also to equalise, as far as possible, the salaries paid to male and female members of the public service who are doing similar work. It is a good thing to establish the principle of equality of payment for equal work, no matter whether the payment is made to male or female members of the public service. Of course, at the same time, it will have to be seen that the services will not be entirely feminised. In the Department of Public Instruction it would be a good thing to see that not too many female teachers are appointed—not a disproportionate number, anyhow—although it might be advantageous to the department, if the salaries are equalised, to appoint female members of the service in preference to males. I think, seeing that our services are extending, and the responsibilities in each department are becoming greater, and that the prosperity of the State is now well assured, we can afford to pay public servants an adequate remuneration, and that the amount which is now being asked for by the hon. member for Flinders is not too great. Therefore, I think it is a wise principle to establish, and one which this House can without any hesitation lay down. I hope the Government will see the wisdom of it, and, by allowing the motion to be carried, indicate to the members of the public service that their interests are being looked after.

The PREMIER: The hon. member for Flinders remarked that twice previously he has introduced this motion, and that the year before last the majority against it was very slight, but last year it was greater, and he wondered why that was. It was merely because, in the interim, the position of the public servants had very greatly improved, and hon. members recognised that a fair thing had been done to the members of the service. The hon. member also referred to the action of the Federal Government. I have not instituted a comparison this year, but last year I did so, and I found that, on the average, the Commonwealth public servants in Queensland were receiving 6s. only per annum more than our own State public servants. I apprehend that our position this year has rather improved than otherwise. The deputy leader of the Opposition, with his usual prescience, saw at once the difficulty in connection with the Education Department. In that department there is a very great proportion of females, and, if there were equalisation of salaries, what the hon. member has indicated would inevitably follow—that is, the feminisation of the department. That has happened to a large degree in the United States of America, and, as all interested in public education know, not to the benefit of the State. The hon. member last year improved his motion by introducing the three years' condition, and, if he had

further improved it this year the motion might have gone on the voices. He still has a confused idea of the service, and has made no distinction between classified and unclassified servants, but desires his motion to apply to all classes. There are very few classified members of the service who entered at sixteen years of age and are now twenty-one years old who are not getting £110 per annum. If the hon member includes all public servants, that includes all the girls and boys who are employed in the Government Printing Office, and anybody who is in the neighbourhood of the Printing Office when the employees come out will notice what a large number of girls are engaged at folding and other light duties. If the hon. member's intention is to comprise all such, then I do not think he is doing any good to those girls, because the strong probabilities are that, as they reach the age of twenty-one, they would simply be passed out; and it is far better that they should be retained at fair remuneration than have nothing to do. Then, the motion also covers cooks, laundresses, lift lads, night watchmen, and nurses. Surely this House is not ready to say that all such who have three years' service should receive at least £110 per annum? If the motion is meant only to apply to the classified service, it is quite needless, as there are very few classified officers who would be affected by it. Before I resume my seat, I shall indicate the precise number who would be affected by the resolution. I recognise that it is increasingly desirable to attract intelligent and capable youths and maidens into the public service, and suitable lads, at any rate, will only be attracted if the service is made attractive. We are increasingly making the service attractive. We have before us now a scheme for the further improvement of the service. At present we can see a yawning gap in revenue and expenditure, but we may be able so to make the figures come together as to enable us to carry out our scheme for making the service attractive. Under that scheme everyone who has been three years in the service, who are twenty-one years of age, will be getting £110. We find that boys are becoming growingly independent, and at twenty-one or twenty-two years of age they expect to be going out "on their own," and unless we can show them that they are going to get at least £110 per annum, we are not likely to attract the best boys to the service.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: You lost a good few last year in the Education Department.

The PREMIER: Not males.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Yes.

The PREMIER: We find occasionally that both male and female teachers ask to be transferred to some other branch of the service because of throat troubles, but I am not aware of resignations. Admission to the service, as hon. members know, is by competitive examination, the minimum age being fifteen years and the maximum twenty-two years. If the scheme for the improvement of the public service which we have under consideration eventuates, this motion will become of no effect whatever. We find ambitious youths are taking outside service in preference to the Government service, because there is more scope for their ambition, as well as far greater reward for exceptional tact and ability. We try to recognise that in the preparation of the Estimates. First of all, we are very careful not to let one get ahead of any other in classification, and, after having made out the Estimates for each individual officer, we have a committee which reviews the Estimates, and, wherever there is special merit or special qualifications, we even exceed the ordinary classification increases. I think it may be generally said that the public service is contented and doing fairly well. The following figures show the special increases going on every year, in many cases amounting to a kind of automatic rise:—

SPECIAL INCREASES, 1911-12.

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Home Department— | |
| Insanity—Increasing classification salaries ... ... | 3,300 |
| Prisons ... ... ... | 1,377 |
| Public Instruction— | |
| Teachers—Increasing minimum salaries ... ... | 13,150 |
| Railways— | |
| Amending classification ... | 94,526 |
| Special increases ... ... | 4,558 |
| Promotion to drivers and firemen ... ... ... | 9,761 |
| Total ... ... | £126,672 |

I am assured that there is no able-bodied man in the railway service twenty-one years of age who receives less than £110 per annum. It will be noticed that this £126,672 is made up of special increases, and does not include the ordinary increases for that year. In the Railway Depart-
[4 p.m.] ment alone the ordinary increases for that year amounted to £23,430. For the year just passed—1912-13—the special increases were as follows—

| | £ |
|---|---|
| Home Department—Police ... | 31,278 |
| Public Instruction—Increasing teachers' classification salaries ... ... ... | 27,340 |
| Railways— | |
| Special increases to the lower-paid men ... | 15,000 |
| Promotion to drivers and firemen ... ... ... | 11,362 |

That is a total of £83,180 of special increases for the year just closed coming on top of special increases for the year before amounting to £126,672. The increases which I have mentioned for the year just closed do not include the ordinary increases in the Railway Department, which alone amount to £32,051. It is, therefore, perfectly clear that the public service in recent years has shared to a very marked degree in the general prosperity. The special increases which I have enumerated are in themselves large, but they have become particularly large when they are placed on top of the ordinary increases which were allowed to go forward in an unchecked manner. Not only have the classified officers shared in the increasing benefits, but the artisans, of whom quite a number are employed by the Government now, and the firemen and seamen and dredgemen, have all had their salaries increased in

accordance with the wages board's determination, and in some cases they have received a higher rate than such determination. Gardeners, farm hands, and all such like men employed at the Agricultural College, and in the Agricultural Department generally, have also shared in the increases; consequently, the service is contented, and there is no demand for a resolution such as this. The supply of male and female applicants has considerably increased of late, and all the time we find more females applying than we can utilise. From my knowledge the females in the public service—at any rate, those in the Chief Secretary's Office—render as efficient work as any man. But there is such a thing as supply and demand, and the females offering are quite in excess of what we can possibly absorb, because we find it difficult to move them about as we can the men. They are not able to take up offices in the country, where perhaps only one officer is required, and where they are required to perform multifarious duties in the one office. But such duties as are allocated to the female officers they discharge with great efficiency. If we are going to allow the rule to obtain of placing the females on the same classification as the men, then we shall not be able to employ so many females as we otherwise would. There are many things that are attractive in the service. The annual leave is satisfactory, the sick leave is considered good, the long service leave is good, and on top of that we have introduced a satisfactory scheme of superannuation. Then, surely this House serves as a kind of wages board. Every year when the Estimates come up for review, there is a very careful consideration of each department, and it may be generally admitted that this House is jealous to see that the officers of the public service are favourably and honourably remunerated. I indicated that before I resumed my seat I would give the details of the exact position in the service. Hon. members will admit that there has been a very great improvement. The number of classified officers in the service who are not getting £110 per annum, and who are twenty-one years of age, is so few to-day—and in many cases it is because of having entered the service late in life—that perhaps the question might be allowed to go on the voices.

Mr. RYAN: Do you suggest that it should go on the voices?

The PREMIER: I have no desire to block a division if hon. members wish for a division; but I thought, perhaps, after what I have said with regard to the position, that it might go on the voices. I shall resume my seat if the hon. member thinks I am endeavouring to block a division.

Mr. RYAN: No, no. I only wanted to know what you said.

The PREMIER: There are 106 males and 497 females in the public service of not less than twenty-one years of age who are receiving less than £110 per annum, after a service of three years or more. At first glance that looks rather bad, but we have to analyse it. Of those 603 officers twenty-six males and thirty females are classified. Of these fifty-six classified officers thirty-two entered the service when they were nineteen years of age, and some of them were twenty-four years of age when they entered the service, and, consequently, they had to enter as probationers; so that really there are very few of the classified division who are twenty-one years of age who have been in the public service three years and who are not in receipt already of £110 per annum. Of the eighty unclassified male officers, thirty-four are porters, cleaners, etc., in the Railway Department, four are teachers in provisional schools, and the remainder are junior messengers, lift attendants, hospital attendants, night watchman, etc. Surely it will not be contended that these should have a minimum salary of £110 at the present time. Of the 467 unclassified female officers, the majority—339—are State school teachers, seventeen are typists in receipt of £100; but, if they pass the examination in shorthand in November next, their salaries will be raised by two yearly increments to £120, and the remainder are female workers of all sorts—nurses, domestic servants, cleaners, laundresses, etc. One satisfactory feature is the great diminution in the number of public servants that come within the hon. gentleman's motion. Last year out of 17,497 there were 1,269 such; now, out of 18,235 there are only 603. So that during the past year there has been an increase of some 800 public officers, and there has been a decrease of 666 in the number of those of twenty-one years of age not getting £110 per annum. I think that this in itself affords a reasonable prospect that by the end of next year there will be very few in the service twenty-one years of age who are getting less than £110 per annum. It is interesting to note what a vast number there are now in the public service in relationship to the adult population of the State. I inquired this morning of the enrolment which gives us an idea of the number of adults in the State. There are now about 310,000 voters on our State electoral roll, and, according to our public service sheet, 18,235 of these are employed in the public service, so that we have one in about every seventeen of the total adult population of the State of Queensland in the employ of the Government. We are gradually—I should not say alarmingly—but very seriously increasing the annual payment to public servants.

Mr. BOOKER: Do those figures include Federal officers?

The PREMIER: No, it does not include Federal officers; only State officers. We are very largely piling up our liabilities, and whilst I recognise quite readily the argument of the hon. member who moved the motion—that good pay ensures good men—yet I think under all the circumstances, seeing the advantages that the service gives compared with the mercantile or industrial service, we are dealing honourably and fairly with our public servants. And I think the very fact that there are only 603 out of 18,235 who are twenty-one years of age and are not receiving £110 per annum, indicates how very rapidly we are approaching the point when there will be no need to have a motion of this sort, and the hon. member, if next year he moves a similar motion, in the event of this being defeated, may find that by that time there is no occasion for it.

Mr. FOLEY: That is a good argument why we should do a good thing whilst we have the chance.

The PREMIER: I say we have been doing a good thing for years past, and any-

body who will analyse the payments for years past will recognise that we have been doing well by our public servants.

Mr. BERTRAM: The Public Service Association does not think so.

The PREMIER: Then I am very sorry that they should be still discontented. I do not think it is possible for the State of Queensland to do much better for them. A very heavy liability attaches to the public taxpayer, and I think for the service rendered a very fair remuneration is paid. If Queensland can do so, I should be willing to increase it, but I should have no hesitation to-day, if a division is called, in voting "No" to the motion.

Question (*Mr. May's motion*)—put; and the House divided:—

AYES, 24.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Adamson | Mr. Kirwan |
| ,, Barber | ,, Land |
| Bertram | ,, Larcombe |
| ,, Bowman | ,, Lennon |
| ,, Coyne | ,, May |
| ,, Fihelly | ,, McCormack |
| ,, Foley | ,, Murphy |
| ,, Gilday | ,, O'Sullivan |
| ,, Gillies | ,, Payne |
| ,, Hamilton | ,, Ryan |
| ,, Hardacre | ,, Theodore |
| ,, Hunter | ,, Winstanley |

*Tellers:* Mr. Gillies and Mr. Gilday.

NOES, 30.

| | |
|---|---|
| Mr. Appel | Mr. Kessell |
| ,, Barnes, G. P. | ,, Luke |
| ,, Barnes, W. H. | ,, Macartney |
| ,, Bebbington | ,, Mackay |
| ,, Booker | ,, Mackintosh |
| ,, Bridges | ,, Morgan |
| ,, Caine | ,, Paget |
| ,, Corser, B. H. | ,, Petrie |
| ,, Corser, E. B. C. | ,, Somerset |
| ,, Cribb | ,, Stodart |
| ,, Denham | ,, Tolmie |
| ,, Grant | ,, Trout |
| ,, Grayson | ,, Vowles |
| ,, Gunn | ,, White |
| ,, Hodge | ,, Williams |

*Tellers:* Mr. Mackay and Mr. Morgan.

Resolved in the negative.

## APPOINTMENTS TO THE COMMISSION OF THE PEACE.

Mr. BERTRAM (*Maree*), in moving—

"That there be laid on the table of the House a return showing—(*a*) the names, occupations, and addresses of persons recently appointed to the commission of the peace; (*b*) the names and addresses of those on whose recommendation such appointments were made,"

said: In moving this motion, I have no desire to take up the time of the House in discussing a motion that may appear of no very great importance. My object in moving it is that when I spoke on the Address in Reply I stated that I had reason to believe that only one of the recent appointees to the commission of the peace had been appointed on the recommendation of a member of the Labour party. No attempt was made to refute that statement at the time, but a paragraph appeared in the Press a day or two later to the effect that my statement was not correct, and that ten of those appointed had been appointed on the recommendation of members of the Labour party. My object in moving for this return is to satisfy myself as to whether I was justified in making the statement that only one justice of the peace had been appointed on the recommendation of a member of the Labour party. I have still reason to believe that the statement I made was substantially correct. When speaking on the Address in Reply, I intimated that a gentleman whom I had nominated had not been appointed. I pointed out then that I nominated a gentleman on no less than three occasions, and that on each occasion my nomination was turned down, though there can be nothing said against the person I had nominated. The Premier stated last session that the persons nominated by members were invariably appointed to the commission, unless those who were responsible for furnishing a report with respect to the persons nominated reported adversely. I am satisfied that no adverse report could have been made with respect to the gentleman I nominated, because he is a gentleman against whom nothing wrong can be said, so that I am at a loss to understand why he was not appointed. I said on a previous occasion that I believed that appointments to the commission of the peace are political appointments, and I am still of that opinion. One of my objects in moving for this return is to satisfy myself as to whether justices are appointed for political reasons or not. The preparation of the return will not involve any trouble or expense. If it would, I should probably not move for it. However, for the reasons I have given I now formally move the motion.

Mr. RYAN (*Barcoo*): I beg to second the motion moved by the hon. member for Maree. I think he has advanced very sound reasons why this return should be laid on the table, or, at all events, why the Minister should give an answer showing whether the statement made by the hon. member is correct or not. It is rather a peculiar thing that when a member makes a statement inside this House to the effect that only one person included in the last list of appointees to the commission of the peace was nominated by a Labour member, a statement should be made outside that ten persons were appointed on the recommendation of the Labour party, if such is not the case. The Minister can give the information asked for on this point without giving the names of the parties concerned, and if he does not give the information he should be able to say something which justifies him in keeping it back. Possibly the Minister will give some information which will satisfy the hon. member who has moved the motion, but in the absence of such information I think the motion should be carried.

The PREMIER: The hon. member who moved the motion certainly did so with great moderateness, and he shall get the fullest satisfaction in reply as far as I am concerned; but I shall vote against the motion. As a matter of fact, I hope it may go on the voices. Naturally, the Government must oppose such a motion as this. I can hardly conceive of the hon. member being serious in proposing it, because it should be the object of every sensible man to keep the commission of the peace as free from political influence as possible. The hon. member said that as far

as he could discover, there was only one person appointed to the commission of the peace on the recommendation of a member of the Labour party. Subsequently it was announced that there were ten appointed who were so recommended. I made that announcement. I did not analyse the list myself to ascertain whether the statement I made was accurate, but I was satisfied that it was accurate because my Under Secretary gave me the information. Certainly there was more than one. I remember one person who was nominated by a respected member of this House not sitting on the right of the Speaker, writing and declining the honour, and saying that his age precluded him from accepting the honour. I say—and I say it advisedly—that the question as to whether a person is nominated by a member sitting to your right or to your left, Mr. Speaker, does not influence the Cabinet in making appointments to the commission of the peace. I know what is disturbing the hon. member for Maree, and I quite appreciate it. The hon. member nominated three gentlemen, two of whom were appointed to the commission of the peace, but the third was not. The only things which influence the appointment of justices of the peace are, first the necessity for another justice in the locality; secondly, the fitness of the person proposed for the position, and, in the case of competing recommendations, which of the persons nominated is the most fit. I think the gentlemen nominated by the hon. member all resided in his own electorate, which is not a large one, and in which there are quite a number of justices of the peace already. The gentleman nominated in this instance and not appointed I know, and I quite appreciate his personality, and if there was need for his appointment as a justice of the peace he would be appointed. There is no objection to that gentleman personally, and I should be very pleased to see him on the commission of the peace if another justice was required in that locality. Fully 90 per cent. of the nominations of persons for the commission of the peace are made by members of this House; others are nominated by progress societies and such like, and when they are so nominated I consult the member for the district and ask him if the nomination is one which he can endorse. Then the nomination goes through the usual channels of inquiry. Police magistrates in outside and newly-settled districts are somewhat active in making nominations. For instance, in the district of Nanango the police magistrate nominated quite a number of persons for appointment as justices of the peace, and a good many nominations come from police magistrates in the Western districts and the mining districts of the North, and invariably those nominations are accepted without question.

Mr. HUNTER: Mungallala wants one very badly.

The PREMIER: If Mungallala needs a justice of the peace it will get one. There was one case during the last six months in which a school teacher was nominated by a member of this House, and that school teacher turned out to be a female. (Laughter.) We have not yet reached the stage when females are put on the justice of the peace list.

Mr. GILLIES: Why not?

The PREMIER: I can hardly deal with that question this afternoon. Probably the day is not far distant when women will be on the commission of the peace, and when they will occupy higher positions than that.

Mr. RYAN: Become members of Parliament.

The PREMIER: They may become members of Parliament. At every quarterly revision there is a scrutiny of the nominations, but to say that they are scrutinised for political purposes is absolutely incorrect. It is very difficult, perhaps, to free the matter from political influence, but if this motion was carried it is probable that political influence would be manifest in connection with nominations to a much greater degree than is the case at present.

Mr. THEODORE: Do you give preference to the nominations of police magistrates over those made by the member for the district?

The PREMIER: Yes; no inquiry is made with regard to the persons they nominate—there is preference in that respect. Confidential inquiries are made with respect to other nominations, but if a police magistrate nominates a person for the commission of the peace, we accept that nomination as a matter of course.

Mr. THEODORE: If a member made a nomination for the same locality as a police magistrate made a nomination, and those nominations came before the Executive Council at the same time, would preference be given to the nomination made by the police magistrate?

The PREMIER: Under such circumstances I should certainly consult the hon. member. I took occasion, only yesterday, to consult an hon. member in whose district a nomination had been made of that character. Then, again, some persons do not wish their names to become known to the person nominated by them. I have known members of the present House who have said, "I would rather like to nominate so-and-so for the justice of the peace list; he is an excellent man and very well fitted for the position, but politically he is opposed to me, and if I were to nominate him, he might think I was 'smoodging' to him." I have known nominors indicate that they would like to see per-

[4.30 p.m.] sons politically opposed to them appointed to the list, and if we gave a full list of the names of the nominors, it would be an unsatisfactory and an undesirable state of affairs. I wish to say that the non-acceptance of a recommendation is no reflection upon the character of either the nominor or the nominee, and I want that fact to be carefully remembered—that the non-acceptance of a recommendation is no reflection on the nominor or the nominee. So many are nominated for the list that some selection must be made, and occasionally men fully qualified for the position have to be rejected, because there is no need to add to the list in the particular locality, and no political consideration has influenced the discrimination that has been exercised. It sometimes happens that the nominee is known to a Minister—there are, perhaps, several in one locality, and the Minister may happen to know one of them, and when the recommendations are before the Cabinet, this may determine who shall be selected. There can be no objection to this, so long as there is no party prejudice or feelings allowed to operate, and to my knowledge there have been no party influences

exercised when the revision of the justice of the peace list is under consideration. The only questions that influence the appointments are, the necessity for another justice in the district, the fitness of the person proposed, and, in cases where there are several nominations, who is the most fitted for the position. I hope, with these few words, the hon. member may be satisfied and allow the motion to go on the voices. I know what has moved him, and I do not blame him, and I again assure him that if he chooses to nominate the same individual again, that, as far as the personality and character of the man is concerned, it will be allowed to stand.

Mr. BERTRAM: After the satisfactory explanation of the Premier, I think the purpose of the motion has been served without pressing the matter any further. I felt it necessary to move in this direction because I thought a reflection had been cast on the character of a certain gentleman.

The PREMIER: I assure you not.

Mr. BERTRAM: He also felt that was so, and that was what prompted me in what I have done. As the Premier has given an assurance that it was not for that reason that the nomination was turned down, I beg leave to withdrawn the motion.

Motion withdrawn accordingly.

## AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT.

### PROPOSED AMENDMENT.

Mr. HUNTER (*Maranoa*), in moving—

> "That, in the opinion of this House, the administration of the Agricultural Bank is unsatisfactory, and that the Act must be amended in certain particulars before its general operations will meet with the requirements of the primary producers,"

said: When the present Agricultural Bank Act was introduced in 1911, this side of the House stated that they did not think that the Act as then submitted would meet the requirements of the settlers. We contended that there was not sufficient liberality to give scope to enable the bank to give an opportunity to the man who is desirous of going on the land and making a home for himself. We also stated then that considerable alterations were required in the administration of the bank, and predicted that unless the administration was more elastic, and the Government made the Act more liberal, we would be meeting with further trouble, and that at an early date there would be a demand for an amendment of the Act. That has all been fulfilled. Every prophecy that was made on that occasion has been more than fulfilled. I do not think any extravagant statements were made at the time, and events since have proved that we were quite correct in what we stated. It would seem that Queensland, from its inception, has not started out with the intention of making the Agricultural Bank a success, and evidence of that is at once noticeable by comparing the amounts that are set down by the Parliaments for the time being of the different States that are to be available in the shape of advances by the Agricultural Bank to the agriculturists and others who have power to obtain money under the different Acts. In Victoria the amount made available for advances is £3,000,000. In South Australia £3,000,000 is also set down for advances to selectors, and in Western Australia, whose population is something like half of ours, they also have provided a sum of £3,000,000 for advances to the men on the land, while we in Queensland have only provided £250,000 for the same purpose.

The PREMIER: A good deal more than £250,000.

Mr. HUNTER: I will read from Knibbs the amounts provided.

The TREASURER: What is the year?

Mr. HUNTER: For 1911-12.

The TREASURER: There are more recent figures than those.

Mr. HUNTER: I will give the figures I got from the hon. gentleman the other day. This is what Knibbs, the Commonwealth Statistician, says—

> "The Government was empowered to raise a sum not exceeding £250,000 by the issue of debentures bearing interest at the rate of not more than 4 per cent."

That is under the consolidated Act of 1911.

The TREASURER: What are the actual facts?

Mr. HUNTER: I am going to tell hon. members what advances have been made according to a return made up to the 10th July this year, which was tabled by the hon. gentleman himself in answer to a motion moved by me in this House. I asked for the amount of money that had been deposited in the Savings Bank for the year 1912, and the amount advanced under the Workers' Dwellings Act, and the amount advanced under the Agricultural Bank Act. My purpose in doing that was this: The Hon. the Treasurer has, during the last year or two—since the Commonwealth Government introduced a savings bank system—always appealed to this side of the House and also to the country to support the State Savings Bank—which I quite agree with—and one of the strong reasons laid down for doing so was that the money deposited in that bank was made available to the Agricultural Bank to enable settlers to get money to go on the land and make homes for themselves, and also to enable workers in the various towns and cities to obtain advances under the Workers' Dwellings Act to build homes. This was a sensible and worthy plea, and one which I think the people of Queensland have responded to. But I think that the people are entitled to know just how far the Government are fulfilling their pledges to the people, because they said: "Put your money in the Savings Bank, and we will see the money used for that, and railway building." Money for railway building is usually understood to come out of loan. Of course, the money is borrowed out of the Savings Bank, but one who is interested in land settlement naturally expects a larger sum to be made available for agricultural advances than is shown. The amount received by the bank in 1912 was £4,695,195. The amount advanced for workers' dwellings was £217,344, and the amount advanced by the Agricultural Bank £177,565. That does not show anything like a fair proportion.

The TREASURER: The amount now is over £600,000. Why not be fair, and quote the whole of the figures?

Mr. HUNTER: I have gone to the trouble of quoting Knibbs, which is the authority recognised in this Chamber. I am endeavouring to be as fair as I can, and I am quoting official figures. I have the figures given by Knibbs, and I have given the figures of the Treasurer himself.

The TREASURER: Do you deny my statement as to the correctness of the amount?

Mr. HUNTER: I will allow the hon. gentleman to make his own statement. I am making my statement now, and giving the figures which are available to me. If we allow that the Treasurer is right, and that there is £600,000 advanced by the bank, they have evidently exceeded the limitations placed upon them by the Act itself, for the law provides that the sum shall not be more than £250,000. We started out with our bank by limiting its advances to £250,000, while the other three States, who are prominent in agriculture in the Commonwealth, have £3,000,000 as the amount which they may advance. It is singular that the three States who are most successful in agriculture have the largest amount of money advanced, and offer it under the most liberal conditions. Surely, when we hear this continued cry about the reduction in the amount of land under cultivation, we may attribute some of it to the fact that our bank, which is supposed to exist for the advancement of agriculture, is not doing its part in that direction. That is the point I wish to make—the relative amounts that may be advanced, and the use for which the advance may be obtained. Perhaps I had better continue with the amount of money which has been advanced by the various States. Here are the figures, which I have taken from the same source:—New South Wales has advanced £1,948,855: Victoria, £2,954,618; Queensland, £430,403—those are the figures given last year; South Australia has advanced £2,064,583; Western Australia, £1,946,184—nearly five times as much as Queensland has advanced. It is rather noticeable, too, that the profits made by the different banks through the Commonwealth show that Queensland has made more profit in proportion to the amount of money advanced than any other bank, if we except Victoria. The profits made by New South Wales are £25,349; Victoria, £88,006; Queensland, £11,869; South Australia, £51,137; Western Australia, £45,892. New South Wales has advanced five times as much money as Queensland, and has made twice as much profit. New South Wales has made £25,349 on an advance of £1,948,855, while Queensland has made £11,869 profit on an advance of £430,403. Here we have shown clearly that not only does our bank not advance as much money but it is slow in making advances, and that it cannot advance as much money owing to the limitations placed upon it, and it sets out to make a profit out of the man it proposes to help.

Mr. RYAN: Fleecing the man on the land. (Government laughter.)

Mr. HUNTER: It is true, and that is the unfortunate part of it. I want to see our Agricultural Bank put upon such a basis that it will assist the man on the land, or else I want to see it wiped out altogether. It is a mere farce and a sham as it stands. The system of inspection is, to my mind, altogether wrong. The difficulty of placing applications and in lodging the amount of deposit for inspection lead to no end of delay. We asked, when the Bill was going through the House, that the Treasurer should consolidate the Savings Bank and the Agricultural Bank, on the same lines as had been done in New South Wales. The Hon. the Treasurer, since then, has brought in an amendment of the Savings Bank Act, and has established branches of that bank throughout the State. In all towns of any consequence he has agents or officers, and had these two banks been amalgamated, the Agricultural Bank would have had an agent in each centre who would have been able to receive deposits from persons applying, and the person in charge receiving the inspection fee and application for a loan, could have instructed the inspector to go straight away and inspect the property, and could have forwarded to the trustees the report of the inspector with the deposit for inspection and application, and the bank could have dealt with the matter right away, and the delay that is to-day experienced throughout Queensland would have been avoided.

Mr. KESSELL: How many inspectors would you have?

Mr. HUNTER: I dare say the Minister for Agriculture would answer that question.

Mr. KESSELL: How many would you have under your scheme?

Mr. HUNTER: I am not laying down a scheme, but setting down a principle. I am not going into details; I have not time, were I so desirous. There is a very tedious delay—months and months pass by before an inspection can be made. It has first to be sent down to Brisbane, accompanied by a cheque, with exchange, and, later on, instructions are sent back to get a report. Then the report of the inspector has to be reviewed by the trustees, and they may refuse to grant the advance asked for. The Secretary for Agriculture informed the House the other day that this system has been discontinued, but only a month or two ago the system was that, if a man applied for a loan of £300, and the trustees did not consider his security sufficient, they simply replied that his application was refused, and consequently he got no money at all.

Mr. MORGAN: He could apply again.

Mr. HUNTER: He could apply again at a cost of £3.

Mr. KESSELL: No.

Mr. HUNTER: Yes. Certainly the fee was refunded when his application was refused, but he had to send another £3 when he made a fresh application, and there was the usual delay over again. The only difference was that the report that was made before served for the second application. Now, instead of the trustees replying, as formerly, "Your application for a loan of £300 is not approved of," they announce that they are prepared to advance so much less on the security offered. Formerly that was not done, and it in itself was a fertile cause of delay. Another detail of administration in which I would like to see a change is that, when a borrower pays off the advance he should receive a clean deed, instead of receiving his deed with the mortgage endorsed on it, and having then to get it released. When a borrower asks how much money he owes with a view to paying off the bank, he should be advised of the balance of the loan still due

and the additional amount required to release the mortgage, and on receipt of the total amount, the bank should get the mortgage released and send him a clean deed. At present the deed is returned with the mortgage registered on it, and the borrower has to go to a solicitor and have the deed sent down to Brisbane to get the mortgage released.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That has been corrected for the last twelve months.

Mr. HUNTER: The hon. gentleman does not state the fact.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do.

Mr. HUNTER: As a matter of fact, within the last month there has been a deed lying in the Titles Office in Brisbane waiting for the discharge of the mortgage. I have had to go myself to the Crown Law Office and ask them to get the mortgage released, and, as a favour, it was done. What is more, the Crown Solicitor refused to endorse it as correct for registration. That could be avoided, and the Crown Law Officers could very easily endorse a deed as correct for registration, and have it sent back free from any mortgage. I have had several cases reported to me regarding some other delays and some of the troubles involved. I believe the Secretary for Public Lands knows of a case where a customer of the bank applied for a loan just before the Act was amended. Finding that the amended Act offered more favourable conditions, he asked to be brought under the new Act, and his request was refused. However, the loan was granted, and he proceeded to purchase wire. The wire arrived at his railway station, but the bank would not make any advance to enable him to pay for the cartage of the wire to his land. He also bought some horses. Dry weather set in, and he did not go on with his loan. Later on he was advised that the £100 standing to his credit would be written off unless he advised the bank to the contrary. Later on, when the weather changed, and he decided to go in for his loan and continue his improvements, he was told that it was written off and that he would have to make application for another £100.

Mr. KESSELL: That is good banking, isn't it?

Mr. HUNTER: The hon. member may call it good banking, but the man's property was still mortgaged for the total advance made to him. He had given a mortgage for £600, and there was only £500 of it received by him.

Mr. MORGAN: That case has been thoroughly investigated.

Mr. HUNTER: There was still £100 charged to him, although the money was not drawn. He was told that he could apply again, and he did so, and later on he was told that the advance would not be made. I hold that that is not the way to assist people who are anxious to go on the land and make the necessary improvements to make their farms profitable. The bank could be very much improved. For instance, there should be a central authority to receive applications and to whom inspection fees should be paid. When the amending Bill was going through this House it was proposed that the Savings Bank should be amalgamated with the Agricultural Bank, which would have placed the officers and offices of the former institution at the disposal of the Agricultural Bank. Then we should have had the very best inspectors obtainable, and when a farmer lodges an application for a loan, the inspection should be made promptly, the report of the inspector should be sent to the manager of the bank without delay, and the whole thing dealt with in a business-like way. At present months sometimes elapse between the time a man applies for an advance and the time he gets the money. If it is a question of buying horses and machinery, he frequently loses a season. If he cannot get his crop in at the right time and he misses the rains, he may lose a whole year, and that means a big loss. I am afraid the bank authorities do not realise how much the man on the land loses through the delays that they involve him in, otherwise I am sure they would be more prompt. Certainly the bank is not run on business lines. No private bank and no private individual who is out to do business with the public would be so slow and so careless in attending to the details of the business as the Queensland Agricultural Bank is. I contend that advances should be made on the security offered irrespective of the mortgage—on the value of the holding, on the land under cultivation, on work done, such as dams, bores, fencing, clearing, machinery, wire, stores, and other things. The hon. member for

[5 p.m.] Murilla made a complaint about a man who applied for a loan from the bank for the purpose of purchasing wire. Later on he changed the character of the wire, which involved an increase to the amount of £50. He acquainted the bank of this change and proceeded to order the wire which he had selected, but he did not get the consent of the bank to spend the increased amount. The consequence was that the bank refused to advance the extra £50, which was the difference between the amount agreed on by the bank in the first place and the cost of the wire which was subsequently bought, because the Act provided that no advance could be made where the purchase preceded the granting of the loan. When the amending Agricultural Bank Bill was going through the House we pointed out that this would be the difficulty which we would meet with. To confine the operations only to liquidating mortgages is a mistake. It frequently happens that a man going on the land may be worth £1,000 or £2,000, and he may proceed to spend the whole of his money in the improvements which he thinks are necessary, depending on his crop for the following year to carry on his business; but, through failure of the season, he finds himself without a crop and without the means of raising money. If he goes to the bank, what do they say? If he owes a storekeeper £100, or if he owes a contractor £100 for putting down a bore, or for doing fencing work, and even though they might press him for the money, and, although he may be worth £2,000, he cannot raise a penny on his farm to liquidate the liability. As a matter of fact, the people to whom he owes the money can force him into the Insolvency Court, and the Agricultural Bank must, under the present Act, refuse to advance him the amount of money he wanted. The bank will advance a man £300 to build a house, clear the land, or put a bore down, or do some fencing, but they will not advance any money on the

improvements which he put there himself. When the Bill was going through the House, we pointed out how it was going to operate —that it was going to operate in a way detrimental to the man on the land and not in the interests of Queensland. I also think that we should increase the amount which can be borrowed to the rate of £1 for £1. At the present time we have a system under which the bank can advance £1 for £1 for a man to erect a house, or do some fencing or clearing up to £200, but I think we should advance up to £400. In Western Australia they advance up to £400, and we should be able to go as far as Western Australia in that respect. In Western Australia they deal much more liberally with their people than we do as regards the operations of their Agricultural Bank. Here are some figures for the last few years, which show how the bank works in Western Australia. In 1908, advances to the extent of £743,599 were made in Western Australia on clearing, cultivating, ringbarking, fencing, draining, wells and reservoirs, and buildings. In the same year the improvements effected were as follows:—Clearing, £643,341; cultivating, £120,688; ringbarking, £44,363; fencing, £98,663; draining, £4,127; wells and reservoirs, £34,789; buildings, £82,325; making a total of £1,028,296.

The PREMIER: For how long a period was that?

Mr. HUNTER: For one year—for the year 1908. Then for 1912 there was an increase.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: The total amount advanced for the year you have just quoted was only £261,000, not £743,000.

Mr. HUNTER: I am quoting from page 424 of "Knibbs" for 1911-12, and it gives the following figures for 1912, showing the improvements effected in that year with the amounts advanced, namely:—Clearing, £1,194,750; cultivating, £124,752; ringbarking, £140,043; fencing, £361,637; draining, £5,660; wells and reservoirs, £103,519; buildings, £83,868; total, £2,023,259.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: That is the total for five years.

Mr. HUNTER: That is the amount advanced and the improvements effected in the five years. But I would point out that in those five years there was an increase of over £1,000,000; as a matter of fact, that increase is shown in four years, as it is since 1908. We want this House to see that a larger amount is made available for the use of the bank. The members of this House should say either one thing or the other, either that they are in favour of increasing the usefulness of the Agricultural Bank or else that they have no sympathy with the bank or agriculturists at all. If I knew that the Government were determined to have no sympathy with the bank—that to them the bank was simply a plaything to be talked about and not to be put into execution—then I should cease to say anything further about it; but until we have a declaration from the Government one way or the other, then I am going to try and have this bank made better than it is. If we can advance 15s. in the £1 for workmen's cottages in the cities, then we should also be able to advance 15s. in the £1 to the men who go out into the forest and hew a home for themselves there. We have nothing to be afraid of so far as advancing money to those who build homes in the country is concerned. They may have one or two bad years, but there are other good years ahead of us, and the value of our lands must always be increasing. (Hear, hear!) We cannot lose money by it. It is not like an individual or a bank. The land and the improvements are always there for the Government. If the man is a good citizen, the Government have nothing to fear about lending him the money. I consider that we should also make advances against a dairy herd. In Western Australia they make advances against the dairy herd up to £100.

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: He can get it here if he gives security.

Mr. HUNTER: Yes, in Queensland a man has to give good security first, and then give collateral security in the stock itself.

Mr. KESSELL: What is wrong with that?

Mr. HUNTER: There is a good deal wrong with it. If a man has a property worth £500, and he wishes to borrow £150 from the bank to buy stock, he has to give the security of his land, and there is a mortgage against his stock as well.

Mr. KESSELL: Surely he does not object to give security for the money he borrows?

Mr. HUNTER: The hon. gentleman forgets that he must give a mortgage over his property, and over his stock as well. Of course, the bank is all right. The bank has everything in its favour. The bank is prepared to take as security ten times the advance that is made; but is that all right for the borrower? Because a man is not in a position to go without an advance, they demand it. What right have they to say, "We are going to take security over your land and property, and we are also going to take collateral security over your cattle"? That man might want to sell some of his cattle to do some work later on, and he cannot do it because he discovers that there is the collateral mortgage to the bank. I hold that wherever there is sufficient security on which to advance the money, the bank should not demand that the stock should become collateral security under mortgage. For that reason I think the Government should, at any rate, look into this matter, because it is destructive to the farmer's credit, and see whether the limitations that we find in this Act should not be for ever done away with. If that is done I believe Queensland would make a big move ahead in the way of cultivation. We know that time and again members of this House rise and complain that we are going back in regard to agriculture, and, as I stated at the beginning, I believe that that is very largely due to the fact that we have not at the head of affairs persons with the sympathetic interest that there should be with the man on the land. We are openly declaring that we are limiting the amounts we advance, that we have less money at the command of the bank, that we are not prepared to advance him as much as the other States—that is, the total amount —and we give him less money per £1 than the smallest State in the Commonwealth. I hold that that is not in keeping with the importance of Queensland itself. Queensland has a population larger than that of Western Australia; its wealth and its resources are infinitely greater, and there is more good land. In my opinion, it is the finest State in the Commonwealth—(hear, hear!)—and in every way we can look at it

there is no reason why this Parliament should hesitate to be liberal in encouraging men to take land, understanding that the State is behind them, that the bank is prepared to advance money and encourage them in every possible way. We are quite different from other countries. We have large tracts of land which require a lot of work to be put on it before it can be used. It has to be fenced and cleared, water has to be found, and sometimes a bad season is met, and sometimes a second bad season on top of that, so that men cannot supply themselves the large sums of money necessary to go on the land. I know it is different in the settled districts, but I am pleading now for the unsettled districts, and these are the districts which we want to use every possible resource at our command to open up and settle. If we can do so, we are going to defy the pear, at any rate on the lands which are not already infested to-day; but while we are dilly-dallying like this more land is being infested, and acre after acre is being lost to the country, whereas by a little assistance that might be given to these men by a liberal administration of the bank, these means of combating the pest would be made available, and where we have small freights and so on our railways would be full, and our railway stations would be covered with produce of all descriptions. We would have larger amounts from fares and freights, and we could reduce them. Instead of that, we find our railways running for miles and miles through unsettled country, daily becoming thicker and thicker with pear, and nothing is done. We prate about how it is getting the best of us, and how our lands are not being cultivated and settled; but what is being done in a really business-like way to bring about a remedy? I do not intend to take up any more of the time of the House, and I have very much pleasure in moving this motion in the hope that something will be done in earnest to help the farmer in regard to advances from the bank.

Mr. LENNON (*Herbert*): I have very great pleasure in seconding the motion proposed by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat, and most heartily and sincerely to commend him for the very good case he has made out. When we had the Bill in this House some years ago, a strong attempt, as the hon. member has pointed out, was made by members on this side to improve the condition of things in relation to the Agricultural Bank. But our advice was ignored, and the old state of things continues. The hon. gentleman has pointed out the great saving that might be made if the Agricultural Bank and the Savings Bank were amalgamated, as proposed by hon. members on this side of the House. I would like to remind the House, and the Secretary for Agriculture particularly, as being most interested, that quite recently the Treasurer has found it necessary to appoint a large number of agencies of the Savings Bank in various centres of the State, which no doubt will add very considerably to the cost of management of the bank. Now, these very same officers would serve under the amalgamation suggested by this side of the House. Now we find that the Secretary for Agriculture, who has the administration of the Agricultural Bank, realising that it is not giving satisfaction in the country districts by reason of the delays in replying to applications, has determined to appoint a lot of local inspectors in various parts of the State, and facilitate the matter of reporting and dealing with these applications, and suggestions made by the hon. member for Port Curtis. To ask them to appoint an army of inspectors, when the very same officers who have been appointed by the Savings Bank would do——

The SECRETARY FOR AGRICULTURE: I doubt it.

Mr. HUNTER: They do in New South Wales.

Mr. LENNON: I notice it is proposed to appoint agents who are auctioneers——

The SPEAKER: Order! What has this to do with the Agricultural Bank? I ask the hon. member to connect his remarks with the motion.

Mr. LENNON: Everything. I wish to show that the condition of things is unsatisfactory.

The SPEAKER: It is the Agricultural Bank the House is dealing with, and not the Savings Bank.

Mr. LENNON: I am dealing with the Agricultural Bank now.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member is dealing with the Savings Bank.

Mr. LENNON: Nothing of the kind, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member distinctly stated within the last few moments that a large number of officers had been appointed to deal entirely with the Savings Bank, and I called him to order. If the hon. member does not see why I called him to order, it is my duty to point it out to him.

Mr. LENNON: I mentioned the fact that I have personal knowledge that in various parts of Queensland the Agricultural Bank is making inquiries as to the suitableness of persons to represent the Agricultural Bank in those centres, and thereby save a considerable time in correspondence and valuations and inspections. I say that one officer could discharge both the duties. Now, during my recent tour through the Northern part of the State on matters not directly concerning the State, on other matters, I came in contact with people who had had negotiation with the Agricultural Bank in the hope of doing business, and of all those whom I met I never came in contact with one man who had dealings with it who expressed himself as being satisfied with it. So that to say it is unsatisfactory is only saying what a great number of persons outside are saying

Mr. MORGAN: Some in the Maranoa electorate are satisfied.

Mr. LENNON: I know nothing of that. I never travel in the Maranoa district. I would also say that quite recently I have had considerable trouble over several applications, and some of the people concerned could not give any reason why their applications had been treated in the way they had been. In other institutions if a business man asks for a certain thing and his request cannot be granted, he is generally entitled to receive, and always, I think, receives, a reason why it cannot be done; but in the instances to which I refer it was not thought worth while to give any reason.

Mr. KESSELL: Does a trading bank give a reason why it refuses an overdraft?

Mr. LENNON: Very frequently it does.

Mr. KESSELL: It very rarely does, and you know it.

Mr. LENNON: I say it does so frequently, and I think I know more about it than the hon. member.

Mr. KESSELL: You know very little, if you don't know that.

Mr. LENNON: I say that in some cases people are at a loss to know the reasons why their applications have been refused, and they have concluded—I do not say they are justified in that conclusion, but merely mention what they say—they have concluded that the bank is run on political lines, and that some applications were refused because the applicants were not of the right colour politically. In some of those cases the Premier has been kind enough to interest himself, and in one case particularly he proved to my satisfaction, and I feel sure also to the satisfaction of one of the parties, that there was nothing of a political character in the transaction. I was trying to get to this matter when I was interrupted, and to give credit to the hon. gentleman, who is at present out of the Chamber. The hon. gentleman went into the matter I refer to and got a satisfactory reply, which dispelled the wrong impression made on people's minds, that there was some political influence in connection with the administration of the bank.

Mr. KESSELL: You ought to dispel that impression, you know.

Mr. LENNON: I have not got so much power to dispel impressions as the hon. member has; if he can dispel the impression in the minds of the electors of Port Curtis, he has greater ability in that connection than I think he possesses.

Mr. KESSELL: You tried to dispel me at the last election, but couldn't.

Mr. LENNON: My own experience is that the administration of the bank is unsatisfactory; it is absolutely swathed in red tape, there is too much formality about it. I have a case in my mind in which a man has been trying for the last nine months to get the balance of a loan originally granted to him, but owing to the circumlocutary methods adopted by the bank he has not been able to get any satisfaction. The balance of the advance promised him is £26, and he telegraphed about it and wrote about it, but there is so much trouble involved in doing business with the bank that it is enough to make a man's heart weary and sore with the whole business. Some time ago he asked me if it would be a good thing to give a couple of columns to the "Daily Standard" in Brisbane to see if it was possible to get that newspaper to shake up the bank and make it do the right thing. He said that when he spoke of the Agricultural Bank to his friends the very mention of the bank made him sick. I am only quoting what he said; I am not giving my own opinion, though I know from experience in connection with that particular case that he has reason to feel that the bank is not run on business lines. And unless something is done in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Maranoa, it will not be run on business lines. Possibly the trustees of the bank have not sufficient money at their command, but, in any case, the methods of the bank are altogether objectionable. A man who wants money to get on with his improvements cannot induce the trustees to get a hustle on, and he is irritated by the long delay in granting an advance. You cannot shake them up. I do not know why. Perhaps when the hon. member for Port Curtis becomes Minister for Agriculture he will infuse a little more life into the institution. In the last report of the trustees of the bank they say they had found it necessary to recommend the appointment of six more clerks. I am glad to learn that, because it is evidence that there is more business being done by the bank. Of course, it is possible that there may be too many clerks there; I am not saying that there are, but that it is possible. They go on to say—

> "Steps are being taken to establish agencies of the bank, and appoint local inspectors at various towns throughout the State. This will, to a great extent, decentralise the bank's business, and save a considerable amount of circumlocution."

That is exactly what we want to avoid—circumlocution. They also refer to the amount of business done, and say that the advances for the year amounted to £222,967. That shows a very satisfactory comparison with the business done in any one year for many years past, but it does not compare at all favourably with the business done by agricultural banks in other States, according to the information given by the hon. member for Maranoa. They further say that—

> "One hundred and seventy-four applications were either declined or withdrawn"—

It may, of course, be very necessary to decline some applications, because the securities offered may not be sufficient for the advances required. But they go on to say—

> "and 264 are in abeyance."

I venture to say that there is not a single trading bank in Queensland which has 264 applications for advances under consideration at one time.

Hon. R. PHILP: They may have all over Queensland.

Mr. LENNON: I venture to say that there is not a trading bank in Queensland that has 264 applications for advances under consideration or suspended, as this bank has. The bank should have those applications dealt with and cleared away; but the whole thing is hampered by regulations and conditions which render it absolutely unworkable. The report goes on to say that the bank made a profit of £1,723 17s. 3d. out of inspection fees during the year.

The PREMIER: Those loans and inspections go on for years.

Mr. LENNON: There is no other bank that charges any inspection fee, and to make a profit of £1,723 17s. 3d. out of such fees in one year is too stiff altogether.

The PREMIER: The loans go on for many years, and subsequent inspections are made.

Mr. LENNON: The trustees retain the £1 deposit when applications are refused, and that is a very heavy tax on the man who does not get the money.

The PREMIER: What about private persons and procuration fees?

Mr. LENNON: Procuration is practised by many members of the legal profession in Queensland, and it is a disgrace to the profession.

Hon. R. PHILP: Procuration is out of date now.

Mr. LENNON: Not among Brisbane solicitors. Dealing with the profit and loss account, this report refers to the fact that the profit on last year's transactions was £3,517 10s. 3d., and the balance to the credit of this account on the 30th June, 1912, was £11,868 18s. 9d. I contend that that profit is too great even as a set-off for [5.30 p.m.] losses that may occur in the future. It is not possible, if a bank is conducted with vigour, and with any desire to make it useful to the people—it is not possible to avoid making losses, and the bank manager who stands up and boasts that he has never made a loss is just like the man who never made a mistake—he has probably never made anything. Consequently we must have some reserve for possible losses, but this sum is out of all proportion, and it is much more a money-making concern than the Agricultural Bank in the other States. That applies to several of the State departments, and particularly the Lands Department—they want to make too much profit. There is a greater desire to make profits than to do good to the country. Is it not a most remarkable thing that Queensland is the one State in Australia that is not increasing in agriculture? It is a State, perhaps, more bounteously blessed by Providence than any of the other States in the matter of soil—certainly, we have not the regular seasons they have in the other States, but we can irrigate, and it is certainly most unsatisfactory from every point of view that Queensland has practically gone back. We have not even stood still. It seems to be a natural law that you must either go forward or go back—you cannot stand still—and Queensland, unfortunately, is going back in the matter of agriculture. We want to attract people here more particularly to settle on the land, and if we cannot show that our agricultural pursuits are profitable—that they are advancing—we have a very poor chance of enticing people to come here.

Mr. MORGAN: Is not dairying responsible for that?

Mr. LENNON: To a large extent it is responsible. Not only is dairying responsible for that condition of affairs, but another thing is even to a greater extent responsible, and that is the speculation in land. I regret to say that we have not really got the true farmer in Queensland yet; they are speculators more than farmers. I have said all I want to say, and, in conclusion, I sincerely hope that this motion will not be viewed as a party question simply because it emanated from this side of the House, and because an honest attempt was made to improve the Agricultural Bank, but which was defeated by the forces on the other side. I am sure the country party has taken a very great interest in the Agricultural Bank, and I hope they will not allow any party feelings to induce them to vote against the motion so ably moved by the hon. member for Maranoa, who is full of facts and figures to prove his case.

HON. R. PHILP (*Townsville*): I have every sympathy for the farmers, and some sympathy with this motion, but delays will always occur while there is only one bank situated in Brisbane. I suggest to the Government to do a little decentralisation, and have a branch in Rockhampton and another in Townsville, and have local inspectors. (Hear, hear!) Every bank in Queensland has numerous branches, and they give their branch managers power to advance loans up to a certain amount. Any application received is dealt with at once, and there is an end of it. Of course, I admit that the banks in Queensland and the finance companies have been lending money at very low rates for a long time past, but of late rates have risen, and in future few people will get their money at 5 per cent. At the present time the Agricultural Bank is lending money cheaper than any other bank in Queensland. The people who get money from the Agricultural Bank are mostly people who are not in a position to borrow from another bank, because they have land leased from the Government, and on Government land you cannot raise much money from a private bank, and the Government are justified in lending money to their own tenants. It might be a good thing to have a branch of the bank on the Darling Downs, although the Darling Downs are only a few hours from Brisbane, and you can always send a man there, but certainly we could do with branches in the North and in Central Queensland.

Mr. E. B. C. CORSER: We could do with one in the Wide Bay and Burnett.

HON. R. PHILP: I notice that the bank advanced £220,000 last year. That certainly is not as much as the other States have loaned, but it is a good deal for one year. Some of the cases quoted by the hon. member for Maranoa were not good cases. He said a man with £500 worth of property wanted a loan of £150. I do not think a man with £500 worth of property would go to the Government at all. He would go to a private bank.

Mr. HUNTER: Most of them do.

HON. R. PHILP: I am astonished to hear it.

Mr. HUNTER: He cannot get the money so cheaply nor on such long terms from a private bank.

HON. R. PHILP: There is one thing I would like to see in connection with the bank—that no member of Parliament should be allowed to go inside the doors of the bank. Keep politics out of the business altogether. I do not think members should interfere with the bank. Let the farmers deal directly with the bank, and if we had branches in the different districts there would be no occasion for members to interfere. That is how politics come in. I have received several letters, and I sent them on to the bank, as I would not like to say "Yes" or "No" to them. I think it is a wrong thing for members of Parliament to have any dealings at all with the bank on behalf of their constituents.

Mr. HUNTER: I quite agree with you.

Mr. LENNON: If you sent the letters to the bank, you were acting for your constituents.

HON. R. PHILP: I think I have only sent two in all my life, and to one I got the same answer back that I gave: One man had bought a piece of land for £500, and he

*Hon. R. Philp.*]

wanted £500 to pay for it. I did not think that was good business. In some instances the managers of the Savings Banks in the different districts could look after the business, but, of course, in some instances they could not. If there were branches throughout Queensland, the bank would give more satisfaction. Under the present system, loss of time is inevitable. If a man in Cairns makes an application for a loan, it has to be sent down here, and then it has to go back to Cairns for report, and it takes a very long time. Everyone knows that Government departments are not as prompt as private departments. You could go to any bank you like, and would very likely get a reply after the first board meeting—in a week it might be, or even on the same day. But as this is Government business, it has to pass through a number of hands, and consequently takes so much longer. Certainly our agricultural industry is more backward than it is in any other State in Australia. I think we have cheaper land and better land than in any State in Australia, and anything we can do to put the business on a better footing and give it a push ahead ought to be done. If by lending more money we can do it, we ought to do it so long as we are careful not to take too great a risk.

Mr. KESSELL (*Port Curtis*): I quite agree with the mover of the resolution that some improvement is necessary in the bank, and I suppose that that applies to every bank and every institution, but I must say that from my experience of the bank it is improving yearly. The methods of getting money are being made much easier for the settlers, and I think the settlers throughout the State are feeling that the bank is now becoming a friend of theirs. These resolutions which come up on Thursday afternoons have always to me an unbusiness-like aspect. If we are going to lend money to anybody in the community, the first thing to do before we lend is to get it. As far as members on either side are concerned, I believe we would all like to lend money to all deserving cases, and there are no more deserving cases than the man on the land; but the whole thing resolves itself into a question of pounds, shillings, and pence. This House votes certain sums of money for the Hon. the Minister for Agriculture to lend through the Agricultural Bank, and that is to be lent profitably. There has been a good deal of stress laid on the necessity for more inspectors, and I was surprised to see the hon. member for Herbert advocating that the officers of the Savings Bank should be the inspectors. It is bad enough for the mover of the resolution, who is not supposed to know much about banking, to make a remark like that, but it is more so for an ex-banker like the hon. member for Herbert to say it; he knows that a man who inspects land must have experience. In my electorate there is a very able and deserving young man, about twenty-one years of age, in charge of the Savings Bank. He is an estimable officer, but he is absolutely incapable of going out and giving ideas of the value of land. How can a young man who has had no experience in banking and valuations go out and give an intelligent report on the improvements on the various selections? I am surprised to see a man of the experience of the hon. member for Herbert making that statement.

Mr. GILLIES: He did not suggest that.

Mr. KESSELL: I listened to his speech, and he suggested that these officers of the Savings Bank could be the inspectors for the Agricultural Bank.

Mr. HUNTER: They are not all young men.

Mr. KESSELL: Some of them are schoolmasters, and, with all due respect to their ability, they are absolutely unfit to act as inspectors of farms.

Mr. HUNTER: He said they could act as agents.

Mr. KESSELL: He said they could act as inspectors.

Mr. HUNTER: They could not be in the bank and go and inspect too.

Mr. KESSELL: What nonsense! A manager of a bank goes and inspects properties. A man does not know what he is talking about if he argues like that.

Mr. HUNTER: How could he be in the bank and go out 50 miles from town?

Mr. KESSELL: The manager of a bank has other officials, and the Savings Bank has other officials. Like many other motions which come up on Thursday afternoons, hon. members know nothing about the practical details of their resolutions. It is sickening to see how Thursday afternoon is wasted in these discussions.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: Then sit down.

Mr. KESSELL: I am trying to put some people right. There has been a lot of talk about the other States. I do not take those figures given by the hon. member for Maranoa as reliable. He first said it was for twelve months, and when the Chief Secretary asked a question about it, he said it was for five years; but I noticed that, with that agility for which he is noted, he dodged the particular issue, and got as quickly as possible on to safe ground. I would like to see those figures myself, because I do not think the Western Australian amount is the same as the mover of the resolution referred to.

Mr. HUNTER: Turn up page 424.

Mr. KESSELL: I would like to refer to the losses in connection with other States. How does Queensland compare as regards losses? Does Western Australia lose a lot of money? If Western Australia lent that sum through the Agricultural Bank on that land—and it is not an agricultural State—they must have lost huge sums of money.

Mr. HUNTER: They have not lost it yet.

Mr. KESSELL: There is another thing: With regard to the advance the Agricultural Bank makes, the security is of quite a different nature to the security on which trading banks lend. Everybody knows that if you go to a trading bank for an advance, your deeds in the first place must be clear. Usually they like freehold security, but the Agricultural Bank takes collateral security over stock. There is another thing: the hon. member for Maranoa said that a man applied for an advance of £500, and used £400, and the bank wrote and said that if he did not take the unavailed balance of £100, they would cancel it; and he made a great song about that. Anybody who understands financial matters—I take it that the mover has had experience, and the seconder ought to also know that banking is

absolutely impossible if unavailed of limits are allowed to accumulate to the large extent that they do. When I was a banker we periodically advised the board that certain limits would not be availed of, and they were cancelled; otherwise, how could a financial institution be run, and I take it that we want to run our bank on up-to-date financial lines.

Mr. HUNTER: This man did not say he was not going to use it.

Mr. KESSELL: He was silent on the matter, and you made a complaint that the limit was not available, and that they cancelled it.

Mr. HUNTER: There was some dispute about paying interest on the £100 he had not drawn, and that was going on while that happened.

Mr. KESSELL: I say that trading banks do not charge interest on the unavailed of limit.

Mr. HUNTER: They do charge it.

Mr. KESSELL: To my knowledge no bank charges interest on an unavailed of limit; the only interest paid is on the amount that you draw.

The PREMIER: Perhaps that is also the rule of the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. KESSELL: I believe that may be possible. I quite sympathise with the trustees of the bank. They have to lend the country's money, and they have to lend it on business-like lines. I can quite understand what a howl there would be from the other side if the trustees lost some hundreds of thousands of pounds in a year; and quite right, too. The trustees are put there to lend money on sound lines under Act of Parliament; and to come here and find fault wholesale with the trustees of the bank——

Mr. HUNTER: You are finding fault with the Act itself.

Mr. KESSELL: As I said, the Act has improved a little, but we cannot rush these things. I would like to see local inspectors appointed, but we are up against this proposition if we appoint local inspectors: Everybody knows that the matter is fraught with very grave difficulties, and in some cases a good deal of risk. An auctioneer is very often a valuer and a seller, and it is a very awkward position for him to be in.

Mr. FOLEY: He knows the value of land as a rule.

Mr. KESSELL: That is perfectly right. I would like to refer to another matter. A man has to be very careful when he makes a remark in this House, as I have done in connection with the Elections Tribunal, when he is followed by men who have wilfully misconstrued the remark, and who have no regard to facts. When a man gets up here he has to be very careful. I would like advances to be made much quicker, if it can be done. As a financier, and as one of the custodians of the funds of the country —for we are all custodians of the public funds while we are here—I hold that, if we clothe the trustees with certain powers, we must abide by what they do. Supposing we lend large sums on the security of farming land, and advance at the rate of £1 for £1 —and I, for one, do not approve of the £1 for £1 business—the farmer has to pay the money back to the Government. He has to pay a very low rate of interest—as the hon. member for Townsville pointed out—the lowest rate of interest charged by any bank now, as no other bank is lending money at 5 per cent. If we should become a wheat-exporting country, and he should grow wheat, when his produce goes to the market it is up against the world's competition. If he is a dairy farmer, we are exporting hundreds of thousands of boxes of butter every year, and that butter has to compete with Denmark, Russia, and every other butter-producing country in the world. If the farmer has to get a certain return for his labour to pay his way, and he has to compete in the world's markets, we may find ourselves up against an insolvent farming constituency. We must see that we run the bank on business lines. Of course, this resolution is only so much paper; but I hope the House will not agree to any resolution whereby the finances of Queensland will be jeopardised.

Mr. HUNTER: You are not in favour of the resolution?

Mr. KESSELL: I am in favour of the resolution to a certain extent. (Opposition laughter.) Like all resolutions that are brought forward by members on the other side on Thursday afternoons, there is a certain amount of truth in it, but they are all traps. This is like another resolution which was brought forward this afternoon; it is reasonable to a certain extent.

Mr. FOLEY: You voted against that.

Mr. KESSELL: I did, because it was only a trap. I do not believe in political traps.

Mr. HUNTER: What about political promises?

Mr. KESSELL: Carry them out if you can. (Laughter.)

Mr. FOLEY: You have a lot to fulfil.

Mr. KESSELL: Let me tell hon. members that I am fulfilling a few of them. I am carrying out all I can. (Renewed laughter.) All the resolutions which are brought forward by the other side on Thursday afternoon are apt to lead inexperienced politicians like myself into deep water, and, with all due respect to the bona fides of the mover and seconder, I am quite certain that this resolution is not meant seriously at all.

Mr. HUNTER: That is nonsense.

Mr. KESSELL: It is introduced to get off a little cheap talk about the Government administration—possibly to let off a little cheap spite against the Agricultural Bank—or possibly to please some man who has made an application for an advance which should not be granted.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. KESSELL: There is a good deal of that in these motions.

Mr. GILLIES: That is very uncharitable.

Mr. KESSELL: It is not uncharitable—truth is never uncharitable. Instead of bringing forward resolutions to waste time, Thursday afternoons could be much better spent in discussing some of the business on the paper.

Mr. HUNTER: You have taken up half an hour.

Mr. KESSELL: I have, in pointing out the fallacy of the thing. I have my duty to perform here as well as the hon. member. Every time I say "Yes," hon. members understand what I mean, and every time I say "No" they understand what I mean. This is not even a "Yes-No" resolution. It is neither "Yes" nor "No." It is a dun-coloured sort of thing that is thrown on the floor of the House, and, if you are not very careful, you will trip over it and break your political neck. (Laughter.) I am afraid of making a slip. (Renewed laughter.) We lock our houses and take precautions to keep out thieves. (Laughter.) We have political burglars who come into an electorate and tell the electors all this sort of thing, and those of us who try to run elections squarely have to see that what we say in this House cannot be quoted against us. No doubt many of us have been misquoted, myself in particular. (Laughter.)

Mr. HUNTER: What a fearful nightmare you have!

Mr. KESSELL: No fear! You fellows do not disturb my rest. I would not have what members on the other side may say on my mind for ten minutes in my waking hours, much less in my sleeping hours. If this motion comes to a vote—as I suppose it will next week—I do not think it will this afternoon, now. (Laughter.)

Mr. FOLEY: If you speak for another three minutes it will not.

Mr. KESSELL: I will try to do that. (Laughter.) I hope there will be enough patriotism on the other side to turn down a resolution like this. I hope that such resolutions will be stopped.

Mr. HUNTER: What a good country party member you are!

Mr. KESSELL: Nobody with any respect for the truth could call the other side the country party.

Mr. HUNTER: I am talking about you.

Mr. KESSELL: We are the country party. The party in the country shows that by sending us here.

Mr. FOLEY: What about the Agricultural Bank—you have not referred to it for some time? (Laughter.)

Mr. KESSELL: I cannot get on with my speech for the interjections of hon. members opposite.

Mr. GILLIES: You have no originality at all.

Mr. KESSELL: No, facts are not original. Originality always comes from that side of the Chamber. Some of the greatest fairy tales on earth have emanated from the other side. (Laughter.) I am only stating facts now. The bank which has lent £600,000 to the settlers of this State must have done something for the man on the land. I hope that the finances of Queensland during the next twelve months will permit double or treble that amount to be lent to the man on the land, and I believe every hon. member has the same wish. But I hope that the door will not be opened too wide to slipshod advances. Everybody with any knowledge of banking knows that the biggest enemy of the man on the land is the bank manager who is prepared to make indiscriminate advances. Such men have wrecked more people in Australia than any other cause.

[*Mr. Kessell.*

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

## PEARL-SHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INTRODUCTION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. J. Stodart, Logan, in the chair.*)

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Bulimba*) moved—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Pearl-shell and Bêche-le-mer Fishery Acts, 1881 to 1898."

Mr. THEODORE pointed out that there was a considerable amount of dissatisfaction amongst those who were engaged in the pearl-shell industry in the Northern parts of Queensland, and he would like to know if the amending Bill proposed to do anything to remove the difficulties they were confronted with? The Commonwealth Government appointed a commission to inquire into the pearl fishing industry, and during their pilgrimage in the North they took evidence at a number of places. He would like to know if the Treasurer had profited by the evidence which was given before that commission, so far as the grievances of the men employed therein were concerned?

The TREASURER: The Bill which he proposed to introduce was not a long one. It was the outcome of the experience gained in the administration of the Act. The principal object of the Bill was to remove some of the disabilities from which the men engaged in it were suffering at the present time. It was essentially a Committee Bill, and he felt sure that when the hon. member saw it he would realise that it was going to serve a good purpose.

Mr. THEODORE: Will it have the effect of reducing the number of Asiatics employed in this industry?

The TREASURER: Indirectly it will.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, and it was agreed to.

FIRST READING.

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

## ELECTIONS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. RYAN (*Barcoo*), who was received with Opposition cheers, said: It behoves hon. members of this House to give the greatest and most careful consideration possible to any measures which are introduced having for their object either the fixing of the qualifications of electors in the State, or of the manner in which the franchise may be exercised after it has been obtained. The Home Secretary, in moving the second reading of this Bill last night, at the outset stated that he did not intend to deal in an academic way with the different electoral systems of the States of the Commonwealth, or of any other country where such existed. I am not at all surprised that

the hon. gentleman did not desire to deal with the electoral system of the Commonwealth, because it is so much ahead of the provisions that he proposes to have enacted in this measure. The modern tendency, as I understand it, is to make the franchise as broad as possible, and also to see that all those who are entitled to be upon the roll get their names on the roll.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: The latest development in Commonwealth legislation was in the direction of having compulsory enrolment. Well, we would not expect to see any proposal brought forward in that way by the present Government. The Home Secretary, immediately after announcing that he did not intend to deal with the Commonwealth legislation, made two statements which no doubt conveyed to the House, and I think to the people of Queensland, the two things that are really troubling the Government. Of course, he happens to be the Minister in charge of a measure of this sort, and in speaking he has to voice what are the opinions of the Government to which he has the honour to belong. He said this—

> "I should like to impress upon hon. members the fact that the broader the suffrage is the more opportunities there are for personation, double voting, bribery and other corruption, which unfortunately are incidental to voting by ballot."

He also said—

> "Furthermore, the greater the number of electors there are on the roll, the greater difficulty of detecting such impersonation and such corruption."

The two things in his mind were the broad franchise and the large number of electors on the roll, consequently he has to set about to narrow the franchise and to lessen the numbers on the roll. (Government laughter.) He did not put it that way, but these are the two dominant ideas—the two factors that he places before us. Anyone who reads through the proposed provisions of this Bill will see that that is what the framers of it have set about to do—to narrow the franchise and to lessen the numbers on the rolls. What a difference to the attitude of our National Parliament, that endeavours to broaden the franchise and to increase the numbers on the roll by having compulsory enrolment of electors! (Hear, hear!) Having said so much, I propose, as briefly as I can, to show how the Government have set about to do these two things, and I will try to do it as calmly and as reasonably as I can. I do not presume that any hon. gentleman in this House is necessarily going to support the provisions that are proposed in this amending Bill. Indeed, if I may judge by the actions of some hon. members in the past, I may hope that we will have them voting against what I call the substantive parts of these proposals. Those who previously voted, for example, against the postal vote, and who voted for the postal vote when it was introduced—I expect to see them come forward and assist hon. members on this side to have the objectionable features removed from this Bill. Consequently, in what I say to-night I want to address my remarks to the Government. I take it that this is their measure, and so far I do not know of any hon. member who has so expressed himself, at all events, in the House, on any of the motions moved by this side on the preliminary stages as to lead me to believe that he was in favour of the provisions which are contained in this Bill. And, moreover, I am of the opinion that the importance of this matter is such that it predominates over everything else. In other words, if I had to choose between a Government that insisted on narrowing the rights of the people as to their representation, and a Government formed of other members who had views objectionable to me, I should certainly have to choose against the Government which was in favour of placing such an enactment as this on the statute-books—(Government laughter)—because I consider a Government who will do this is an absolute menace to the people. And I approach this question without in any way condemning those who in the past have voted for Liberal candidates—without condemning those electors of Queensland who are responsible for placing hon. members in their places and returning them to this House, because I believe that the electors of Queensland, speaking of them generally—by and large—are an intelligent and fair-minded lot of people, and whatever their political views may be, they will not tolerate nor allow any attempt to deprive the electors of their rights to exercise their votes. They will be quick to see the attempt that is being made in these proposals to prevent thousands of electors, first, from getting on the roll, and then, secondly, when they are on, from exercising the franchise properly. Now, this party has always believed in an amendment of the Elections Act. There are parts of it that we think should be amended, but we do not approve of the amendments—of the main amendments—proposed in this Bill. When I read them through it occurred to me that, from our point of view, the Government had done those things they ought not to have done and had not done those things that they ought to have done. That is my summing up of the proposals that are here. (Government laughter.) The hon. gentleman smiles; he knows how true that is. They have proposed amendments that they ought not to have proposed, and they have not proposed amendments that they ought to have proposed. Now let me proceed. This Government is attempting to prevent persons from getting on the electoral roll, and I think it will be admitted—it ought to be admitted by all fair-minded people—that the qualification which is necessary to allow an individual to vote for a member of the State Parliament should not be greater than the qualification that is required to vote for a member of the National Parliament. In other words, the qualification for getting on the Commonwealth roll should not be less than that which is necessary for getting on the State roll. I do not think anybody will deny that. I venture to say that the present Liberal Commonwealth Government would not venture to amend their law in the direction of altering the qualification to get on the roll that is proposed by the present Government here. Now, let us examine those sections dealing with qualifications of electors. I am speaking of the Act as it now stands. We find that the qualifications to enable a person to get on the roll in Queensland are contained in section 6 of the Consolidated Acts, 1885 to 1908. A residence of twelve months is required in Queensland, and certain other requirements are made, but

for the purpose of my remarks to-night I am only calling the attention of hon. members to the period of twelve months. Now, you can get on the Commonwealth roll if you have been resident in Australia for six months. Why twelve months in Queensland? It amounts to this: That there are many estimable citizens in Queensland who will be entitled to be on the Commonwealth roll who will not be able to get on the State roll. And they propose to make that twelve months the twelve months immediately preceding their application to get on the roll. Now, the twelve months under the present Act is twelve months at any period of their lives, but if they make it the twelve months immediately preceding the application to get on the roll, it will amount to this: A person may have lived in Queensland for, say, twenty-five years, and then may go for a trip for twelve months, and consequently when he comes back he will not be entitled to be on the roll.

The PREMIER: They must have lived twelve months continuously under the present Act.

Mr. RYAN: They come back, and they are not entitled to be on the roll until they have been here for twelve months. That is correct, and I know it. I have had to argue it out in other places than this. I have heard it said that it meant the twelve months continuously immediately before, and not only have they to be here for twelve months——

The PREMIER: They qualify before.

Mr. RYAN: But once they are off the roll, they cannot get on it unless they have these qualifications.

The PREMIER: Oh, yes.

Mr. RYAN: They have to reside immediately previously to the application. Perhaps the Chief Secretary is surprised at the length to which they have gone.

The PREMIER: I am not.

Mr. RYAN: He has not had this brought before him.

The PREMIER: We were discussing it yesterday.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, the hon. gentleman may have been discussing it yesterday; but somebody in another place has been discussing this and thinking it over for months, and perhaps the hon. gentleman did discuss it yesterday with the Home Secretary. One of the questions proposed to be asked of a person applying to get on the roll is this: "Have you bonâ fide and continuously resided in Queensland for the last preceding twelve months?"

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: A person who lived for twenty-five or thirty years in Queensland and then left for twelve months and came back would have to wait for twelve months before he could get on the roll again. They are to be treated as foreigners, practically. Then they would have to reside two months in the electorate for which they applied to get on the roll. Why is it necessary, for example, that these immigrants whom the Government are bringing here should have to be here twelve months before they can get on the roll?

Mr. COYNE: It may mean sixteen months.

Mr. RYAN: Yes, it may mean sixteen months. It might mean longer. But why this restriction as against what is necessary under the Commonwealth? I believe that in New South Wales the period is three months, and I would suggest to the Government that some amendment should be grafted on to this Bill when we get into Committee to reduce the residence period to a period of six months, and if a person came from any other State, let it be three months. I would be inclined to shorten the period more, but still I am suggesting something that may not be acceptable to hon. members who have as conservative ideas as some hon. members on that side. Let me go a little further. These drastic requirements are placed on persons who are wanting to get on the roll, and then they go further and define residence. They say: "You should be resident for so long—twelve months," and then they make residence such a thing that it is almost impossible for a nomadic population to have a residence at all.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: Thousands of persons will not have any residence under the provisions of this Bill. It proposes that to be resident a person must be a bonâ fide inhabitant of the district or division, as the case may be; he must possess a home—that is, a place of abode—with a fixed purpose of remaining there and not merely for occasional purposes, either of pleasure or business. How can any of the navvies who work on the railway lines get on the roll under that provision? How can any other nomadic workers get on the roll? They cannot do it. Is that purifying the roll? Of course, it is purifying the roll, because, after all, the purity of the roll is a matter of opinion which depends upon what view-point you look at it from. The hon. gentleman who moved the second reading of the Bill no doubt considers that that is a pure roll which will return the Liberal party to power. Consequently, it is a good thing to have those people prevented from getting on the roll, and to prevent immigrants who come to Queensland from getting on the roll. But this provision with regard to two months' continuous residence in the district does more than that—it places in the hands of the Government the means of depriving those men of the opportunity of giving a vote at an election. If men are working on railway works in a particular district, the Government can shift those men to another electorate, and they cannot get on the roll for that electorate until they have been there for two months; and, assuming they can prove their residence—which I do not think they could under this measure—even that is not enough for the Government. The cordon is not thrown round them sufficiently tight to prevent them getting on the roll, and five additional questions are to be put to them—the five questions which the hon. gentleman read last night. I am surprised that he read them to the House. The first question is—

"What was the date of your birth?"

Many persons, of course, know the date of their birth, but there are plenty of people who do not know the exact date of their birth. Why ask that question? Then, assuming that they know the date of their birth, they are to be asked—

"What was your place of birth?"

They have only hearsay evidence for that; but what has that got to do with an application to get on the roll?

The HOME SECRETARY: The Commonwealth, when you make application for the old-age pension, take very great care that you give that information.

Mr. RYAN: That is a very different thing, because you are not entitled to the old-age pension until you have reached a certain age——

The HOME SECRETARY: And you are not entitled to be on the roll until you are twenty-one.

Mr. RYAN: Consequently, the date of birth is much more important in that case than it is in the case of a man applying to get on the roll. Supposing a man cannot give the place of his birth, is he to be prevented from getting on the roll? Supposing he says, "I do not know the place of my birth," what will happen?

The PREMIER: He may get to know the place of his birth.

Mr. RYAN: As I have already said, the place of one's birth is a matter of hearsay, and though a man may get to know the place where he is born, he may forget it. But, would it be sufficient to say that he was born in Western Australia, or must he give the name of the town in which he was born? Would it be sufficient to say that he was born in Germany, or must he give the name of the town or province in which he was born? But the Government go further than that, and put this question—

> "If you are not a native of Queensland, when did you arrive in this State?"

and then the further question—

> "If you are not a native of Queensland, by what means did you arrive in this State?"

That is a nice question to put to an applicant to get on the roll. What has that got to do with a man getting on the roll?

The PREMIER: It will be a check on the length of his residence in the State, anyhow.

Mr. RYAN: The next question is—

> "Have you bonâ fide and continuously resided in this electoral district for the last preceding two months?"

All those are questions which are to be put to an applicant for enrolment, and they are framed simply for the purpose of placing obstacles in the way of persons getting on the roll.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. RYAN: Well, I am quite prepared to leave that matter to the opinion of the people of Queensland, who will ultimately decide it, and let them say whether this is a step in the direction of purifying the rolls, or whether it is a step taken in order to keep the supporters of a certain party off the rolls. That is what it is, putting it in plain English. There is no use mincing matters.

Mr. KESSELL: Do you think they are introduced for that purpose?

Mr. RYAN: I am positively sure; I am positively convinced that those questions are introduced with that object. Perhaps before I leave this subject I should do the hon. gentleman the courtesy of replying to his argument with regard to this required two months' continuous residence. The hon. gentleman said that provision was introduced in order to prevent the swamping of an electorate, to prevent electors going from one electorate into another, out of a safe electorate into one which was not safe. What does our experience in the past show? Has our experience shown that there has been any inquiry or complaint on this matter, or that there have been reports from returning officers to the effect that large numbers, or that any numbers, of electors have transferred their residence from one electorate into another in order to swamp that electorate? In order to get on the roll for another electorate a man had to make application and go through the ordinary form provided for transferring his name from one roll to another. I consider that anyone who bonâ fide resides in an electorate with the intention of remaining there has a right to be on the roll for that electorate in a much shorter period than is allowed here. But how do the Government treat the property-holder? He need not change his residence at all, and he can transfer his name from one roll to another in twenty-four hours. I do not propose to refer to any matter that is now sub judice. As a matter of fact, I think the Government should not have brought in a proposal of this kind until any pending cases had been disposed of, so that we might feel more at liberty to express our views upon this particular property qualification. But I trust that hon. members will understand that none of the remarks I make on this occasion have any reference to any case now pending. Without reference to that case, I propose to show from sections of the Act how it is possible for a person who happens to be in the happy position of holding property to transfer his name from the roll of one electorate to that of another electorate in twenty-four hours, and to swamp the votes in that electorate. The Home Secretary does not propose amending that provision. No; this is one of the things that he ought to have done, but has left undone. The proviso to section 6 of the Elections Acts, 1885 to 1898, reads as follows:—

> "Provided that any elector qualified by residence as aforesaid in an electoral district, who—
>
> (*a*) Has a freehold estate in possession situated in another electoral district of the clear value of one hundred pounds sterling money above all charges in any way affecting the same; or
>
> (*b*) Has a leasehold estate in possession situated in another electoral district of the annual value of twenty pounds sterling money per annum which at the time of making the application as hereinafter provided has not less than eighteen months to run;
>
> may make application in writing to the electoral registrar of the district in which such estate is situated that the name of such elector shall be transferred from the roll for the district in which he resides to the roll for the district in which such estate is situated. The said electoral registrar, upon being satisfied of the facts stated in the application, shall forthwith enter the name of such elector in such roll, and shall give notice of the transfer to the electoral registrar of the district in which such

elector resides, and the last-mentioned registrar shall forthwith upon the receipt of such notice erase the name of such elector from the roll for the district in which he resides.

"Upon such transfer being made, such elector shall be entitled to vote at the election of members of the Assembly for the district in which such estate is situated, instead of for the district in which he resides."

Under that provision those who own property in a particular electorate—say, the electorate of Brisbane, so as to keep off any controversial ground—can have their names transferred from a place about [7.30 p.m.] the suburbs to the electoral roll for Brisbane. In twenty-four hours that can be done. What about those who actually come and bonâ fide reside in Brisbane? They could not get on the roll till they had resided continuously in the electorate for two months, and went through the formality of making application to get on the roll in the ordinary way. As the law stands on that matter, the property-holder is in a better position than the man who gets the qualification by actual residence. He is in a better position for "swamping" the electorate than the man who has qualified by residence. Now, what do the Government propose to do? Not satisfied with that security, they go further and place the man who gets a qualification by residence in a worse position than he is in to-day. Surely no fair-minded hon. member is going to allow that sort of thing? Surely the Government have a higher opinion of the intelligence of the electors of Queensland, including the property-owners, to whom they are giving the power to do this? Surely they have the intelligence to know that a proposal of that sort is done for no other purpose than to assist the political party that is now in power! I think the Premier is a man of a very high order of intelligence, and I think he will understand that.

The HOME SECRETARY: Don't "smoodge."

Mr. RYAN: It is not a case of "smoodging." It is a case of stating facts. So much for the manner in which persons get upon the roll. There is a distinct attempt made here to prevent people getting upon the roll, which will be an effective attempt, and the only thing that this side of the House can do to defeat it, if we cannot rely upon the generous and intelligent support of hon. members opposite, is to appeal to the electors of Queensland and say, "Do you believe in us not having a fair deal?" I have a very high opinion of the spirit of fair play that runs through all Britishers, and through all the people of Queensland, whether they vote Liberal or Labour, and I am inclined to think that many Liberal electors of Queensland will not tolerate this sort of thing, and they will say, "If the Labour party do not get a fair deal, we will vote for them." That sort of thing has happened before and it may happen again, and it might be that some hon. members opposite will become so seized of the unfairness of the thing that they may be returned to the Treasury benches, and, if they are, one would have to consider seriously what attitude they will take on the matter. Let us proceed further. When they get upon the roll—they have to run the gauntlet of getting on the roll first—now when they do get on the roll, how are they treated? Let us examine on the same lines and we will find that every provision of the Bill is framed in such a way as to assist those whom the Government think are their supporters. They make provision for the postal vote in certain particulars, and they make provision for the abolition of the absentee vote. I think, without covering the ground that we have covered during the discussion on the amendments in the preliminary stages, that I can show that the principles of this Bill, with regard to the reintroduction of the postal vote and the abolition of the absentee vote, are calculated and intended to defeat the Labour party. They are intended to do that. I do not think they will have that effect, because, in the first place, I do not think that any fair-minded House will allow such provisions to go through. I think hon. members will wipe them out. Let us see what the provisions with regard to the postal vote are. The clause proposes that persons—

"(i.) Residing within the electoral district and at least five miles by railway or by the nearest practicable road from the nearest polling-place appointed for the district for which such elector is enrolled; or

"(ii.) Who, by reason of age, infirmity, or ill health, will be unable on polling-day to attend at a polling-place to vote; or

"(iii.) Who believes that on polling-day he will be absent from the electoral district for which he is enrolled, and will not be within a distance of fifty miles by railway or by the nearest practicable road from any polling-place appointed for such district—

may, after the issue of the writ for the election and before polling-day, apply to the returning officer for a postal vote certificate."

Three classes of persons may apply for a postal vote certificate. People in the electorate who think they will be more than 5 miles away from a polling-booth on polling-day; people who are sick, or, by reason of age, infirmity, and so on; and those who believe they will be more than 50 miles out of the district on polling-day, will be entitled to a postal vote. When? After the issue of the writ. And where have they to vote? Within the electorate. They can only apply after the issue of the writ, and vote within the electorate. How many hundreds of electors are there in the Western parts of Queensland who will be away shearing and who will have left the electorate before the issue of the writ? They go away in large numbers, and shed hands too. I am speaking now about something I know. They leave before the issue of the writ, and they cannot vote at all. The Bill will absolutely deprive hundreds of electors, who are on the roll, of the right to vote. I propose to deal a little later in my remarks with what the hon. gentleman says is the substitution for the absentee vote. We know that when the postal vote was in operation in Queensland it was open to much abuse. The hon. gentleman says it does not apply now to all women, while before it did. But now it applies to men and women who are in the electorate and

will be more than 5 miles away from a polling-booth on polling-day. Are these votes not open to the same abuse as under the old provision? Then with regard to those who, by reason of sickness, age, or infirmity, are unable to attend a polling-booth. In order to vote, they must have a doctor's certificate, or a nurse may witness it. It is not every person who can afford to have a doctor or a nurse. Is that not favouring a particular class? That provision is only put in as a catch-penny affair. Hon. members opposite, when they get up to speak, the whole thing they will talk about will be the postal vote—would hon. members over here refuse a sick woman a vote because she is not able to go to the polling-booth? No. There is no hon. member over here who would refuse a sick woman a vote; but what hon. members over here object to, is having the door thrown open wide to corruption and malpractices during elections, which can be done by having that provision with regard to 5 miles within the electorate. But what about those who will be outside the electorate? They have to think that they will be 50 miles away before they will get a vote at all. Upon what logical reason has 50 miles been fixed for the man who goes out of his electorate? I will tell you: Liberal voters who would be likely to be away over 50 miles on polling-day are a class of people who may be travelling. If they go to travel by rail, and that sort of thing, it is very handy to make the limit 50 miles; but what about the shearer—the shed hand—in the West, who wants to leave my electorate—say, and go 40 miles into the Mitchell? (Hear, hear!) He cannot vote at all, because he has not gone 50 miles. If he was within the electorate, he could get his postal vote if he was only 5 miles away; but if he goes out he has to be 50 miles away, and then he has to be in his own electorate when the writ is issued, and to record his vote in his own electorate. It makes it impossible for such men as that to record their votes at all. Will hon. members opposite face the position with regard to that; will they show me how those people can get votes at all? We talk about our desire to give everybody the opportunity to vote. Who have a better right to vote than the men who work in that way? We here deliberately set about to deprive thousands of them of the opportunity of voting, and then we are told this is done to purify the roll.

Mr. WILLIAMS: Can't they apply for certificates by post?

Mr. RYAN: Have I not for the last five minutes been showing how they cannot do that? They cannot apply before the issue of the writ, and they have gone out of the electorate before the issue of the writ.

Mr. WILLIAMS: In Queensland still.

Mr. RYAN: They cannot apply unless they are in the electorate. The hon. member is himself astounded when I point this out—he is beginning to see what an iniquitous proposal it is. (Opposition laughter.) When I see hon. members like the hon. member for Charters Towers thinking that what I am saying cannot be correct—he thinks it is such an awful thing that he cannot believe it to be true—I am very pleased that the hon. member has an open mind.

Mr. WILLIAMS: There is an explanation.

Mr. RYAN: I hope that explanation will be given, backed up by a vote from the hon. member when we come to this particular provision. What does the Home Secretary say with regard to getting over this? He says that is got over by the fact that in the State you can appoint a polling-place outside the electorate.

The HOME SECRETARY: Hear, hear!

Mr. PAYNE: They won't do it.

Mr. RYAN: When he is pressed as to how they will know where to appoint polling-places, he says on the recommendation of the returning officer.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite correct.

Mr. RYAN: And how is the returning officer to know where a polling-booth is required, and for how many people will he give a polling-booth? Will he give it for five? In my opinion, there is no man or woman entitled to vote in Queensland who thinks Parliament should deliberately set about to deprive them of their vote. The Home Secretary does not say that he would put a polling-place for every one of them, but where the returning officer recommends. In my experience, the returning officer in the Mitchell electorate has not sent sufficient absent voting forms for the Barcoo electorate for men who were working in that electorate in the shearing-sheds; and if they did not know sufficient about the matter to send the proper number of ballot-papers when the election is close, how can they tell at the time of the issue of the writ?

Mr. PAYNE: It is impossible to judge.

Mr. RYAN: The thing is impossible, and it means if this clause is passed that hundreds of electors will be deliberately deprived of the right to vote by this House. I ask hon. members if they are going to do that? No wonder I feel very strongly on the point. No wonder that I say that I look upon a sin of this kind as a cardinal sin for a Government to commit.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: As far as I am concerned, it is a choice of two evils. I may have to choose between something which I do not agree with, and the man who does something I do not agree with; but I regard any attempt of this kind to deliberately deprive large numbers of electors of the right to vote as the cardinal sin of all.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. RYAN: The absentee vote is to be abolished, and what reason was given by the Home Secretary for that? It would avoid double voting, but it would not prevent personation; consequently, the absentee vote had to be abolished. Has any complaint been made of impersonation in connection with the absentee vote? I have heard no outcry from the people that there have been cases of personation in connection with absentee voting. In my opinion, there is much less danger of personation in the case of absentee voting than there is in the case of ordinary voters within the electorate; and why? In the case of an ordinary elector within his electorate he may be personated without leaving any writing behind, but if there is personation in the case of an absentee vote, the person who commits the impersonation has to sign a document, with certain particulars—they have to leave

their handwriting behind them. Has that to be done in the case of personation within an electorate? I have heard of no complaint or case—the Home Secretary has mentioned no case where such a thing took place. He says there may be personation. May there not be personation within the electorate itself—a far greater danger of impersonation when the electors vote in their own electorate? I would like the Chief Secretary, if he feels disposed to reply to my arguments, to deal with that phase of the question. Although I have no doubt as to the motives and the intentions of the Government in this matter, still I have some respect for their intelligence. I think they will not hang on to a proposal unless they can give some sort of explanation of it, no matter how thin it may be, that may look feasible; but so far the explanation given by the Home Secretary has been worse than useless. We see that he sets about deliberately depriving hundreds of voters of the right to vote upon a ground which has no foundation whatever. The men in the West know that it is to prevent them having an opportunity of voting, otherwise, why is this 50-mile limit put? Why is a man to think he will be 50 miles away? There are men in Western Queensland, and in other parts of Queensland, who will be determined to get over the 50 miles in order to record their vote. They will perhaps have to walk; but how are the old people to provide a conveyance to bring them to the poll? But what is the position? Take my own electorate. A man 5 miles from Barcaldine in my electorate can get a postal vote, but a man 45 miles from it who happens to be working in the Mitchell electorate has to ride 45 miles before he can vote. He has not got a chance of an absentee vote, nor of a postal vote. These provisions should convince any reasonable minded person of what the real object of the Government is. I think I have not shown any heat in dealing with these particular clauses. I regard them as of the essence of the Bill—as the reason why the Bill was introduced. There is a lot of minor details in the Bill, of which the Home Secretary made a great deal when he was speaking. I congratulate him on doing that. That is his business. He has got to make the little details appear the big things. He explained seriously to us how, if a candidate died after nomination, it would be unfair and unreasonable to allow the other man to be elected without a contest, consequently the Government considered it was urgently necessary to introduce an amendment providing in such a case for the issue of a new writ. Are the electors of Queensland going to be gulled by that sort of thing? I do not know of such a case happening in the history of Queensland. The hon. gentleman also laid a great deal of stress upon the numbering of the ballot-papers. He told us that the ballot-papers would be printed on paper a little thicker than the Commonwealth paper—a very important matter, in his opinion, that would prevent the practices which were carried out by the late Commonwealth Government. But we have not heard of any of those practices since the inquiry board has been appointed. It has turned out that there was nothing in it.

Mr. KIRWAN: A mare's nest.

Mr. RYAN: The hon. gentleman is well qualified to make a lot out of a little. What is lacking in argument he makes up in the loudness with which he speaks. A lot of these little things were referred to by the hon. gentleman. For instance, he referred to the amendment of the Legislative Assembly Act. That Act is to be amended in one particular, but it is only a minor amendment—a bit of a detail. Voting is to be done by making a cross—because the Commonwealth is the central authority, the hon. gentleman said, and the States ought to conform to their system. We agree on that—about the only thing in the measure that I do agree with. The Commonwealth is the central authority, and what is good enough to get upon the Commonwealth roll ought to be good enough to get upon the State roll. Now I have a word to say about the numbering of the ballot-papers. I must confess that I cannot see where the improvement is going to come in from this change; but, assuming that an infinitesimal advantage will be gained by it, are we quite sure that enough ballot-papers will be sent out? I know of an instance, to which I alluded a little earlier in my remarks, where a returning officer did not send out sufficient ballot-papers for absentee voters. I had to keep writing for them, telling him there were so many votes at such-and-such a shearing shed. I wanted to get as many votes as I could, although I had hundreds to spare. A constable at one place told me that he would have to ride a distance of 13 miles himself for these ballot-papers, and he was not able to do it, and I said, "Well, it does not matter. I will say nothing about it—there will be no complaint. I can afford to lose those five votes." But that sort of thing should not happen. Print twice as many ballot-papers as are required, rather than run the risk of it happening. I can quite understand ballot-papers will run out, and then they cannot write out others—they must have the proper water-mark and be of the right colour. Another way of preventing people from recording their votes! What is to prevent a returning officer sending out too few ballot-papers to a place? Not intentionally—I would not think that any returning officer in Queensland would do anything of that kind intentionally, but it might be done accidentally, or through carelessness, or through not knowing the number of voters. Then they cannot make other ballot-papers. These are all things that must be guarded against, and I hope that among the many things that we may have to bump up against at the next election, if this Bill becomes law, and over which people may break their political necks—(laughter)—we shall not have this additional danger of not having sufficient ballot-papers provided. I notice that in the machinery that is invented in this measure for preventing people getting on the roll and preventing a certain class of people from voting when they are on the roll, there is an additional power given of cancelling polling-places after they are appointed. I do not know what the object of this is. It might be that a polling-place would be cancelled where there were a number of Labour voters, or it might happen at a place where there are a number of Liberal voters. Would that not be unfair to the Liberal candidate? It might happen in the Port Curtis electorate that a polling-place would be cancelled. (Laughter.)

Mr. KESSELL: I will look after that.

Mr. RYAN: That is quite true. The hon. member will look after it, and that is why

I do not want that power there. A remark of that sort is a truism. It does not only apply to the hon. member for Port Curtis; it applies generally—"They will look after that." It opens the door to political influences. People might intend to vote at a particular place; the Liberal votes are got in by means of the postal vote, and the Labour voters find the polling-place is cancelled. That is also an effective method of preventing people from voting. As far as that portion of the measure is concerned, I think I have shown reasons why the Bill should be rejected, or, at all events, why the Premier should intimate to the House when he is speaking that the Government are not seriously going on with these particular proposals. They are panic legislation. We are told that this Bill was in hands months before the last Federal election.

The HOME SECRETARY: Quite correct.

Mr. RYAN: I quite believe the hon. gentleman; but was the Bill then in its present form?

The HOME SECRETARY: Yes, with the exception of the form of the ballot-paper. (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. RYAN: Some hesitation in the hon. gentleman's answer.

The HOME SECRETARY: Absolutely none.

Mr. RYAN: Some hesitation in the hon. gentleman's answer to that part of my question. But, if the Bill was in hand before the Federal election, it was because they got terrified at the result of the last elections about Brisbane. May I ask whether it was in hand before the last State election?

The HOME SECRETARY: Oh, no.

Mr. RYAN: I should think not. It has been in hand since the metropolitan seats went to the Labour party.

The PREMIER: They have not gone to the Labour party.

Mr. RYAN: They have gone to the Labour party, and they are going to remain with the Labour party, even if this Bill passes.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: No.

Mr. RYAN: But the machinery is left here by which property-owners in some electorates about the metropolis can vote, whereas the genuine person who changes his residence cannot do so. Before I conclude I have one word to say about a further amendment which is proposed by this Bill—that is the amendment of the Elections Tribunal Act—one of the little things to which the Home Secretary has directed a good deal of attention. No doubt it is necessary to amend the Elections Tribunal Act, and the amendment is to be made along lines that I cannot say I am opposed to. I think a judge is the proper person to try election petitions; but I cannot say that I agree that a practising barrister of five years' standing should have the right to be appointed to hear an election petition.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is the qualification of a judge of the Supreme Court.

Mr. RYAN: That may be, and I would not be opposed to a barrister being made a judge of the Supreme Court; but I do not believe in having a man a judge to-day and a barrister at the bar to-morrow —an in-and-out judge. It is not the right thing. I would not cast an aspersion upon the members of a very honourable profession, but I do not think the principle is right. I do not believe even in appointing acting judges. I do not think we should make an acting judge except in case of urgent necessity. The hearing of an election petition is a very important matter. Why should not a District Court judge take it if a Supreme Court judge cannot take it? The District Court judge has to try [8 p.m.] cases involving sums of £30 or £50 or £60 between litigants in actions, which it is not competent for any practising barrister to try. They have to try cases under the law, and they should also try cases under the election petitions. Perhaps this is a matter on which the hon. gentleman may be prepared to accept an amendment when the Bill gets into Committee. It is not a matter that will be of such vital importance to the hon. gentleman as other matters to which I have referred; but still, as showing the capitalistic feeling that is running through the propounders of this measure, I may mention the £200 security asked for in the case of an election petition—an increase from £100 to £200.

The HOME SECRETARY: That is to cover the cost between the litigants.

Mr. RYAN: Why should he have to give that amount of security?

The HOME SECRETARY: Why should the successful litigant be compelled to pay his costs out of his own pocket?

Mr. RYAN: How has it acted in the past? The successful litigant has had to bear his own costs. That has been the experience of the past. This means blocking the poor man from lodging a petition. The Liberal will have some organisation behind him to find the money if he cannot afford it himself, but the poor man will not have the money. I am opposed to that provision. I am detracting from the importance of the matter we are considering. I think I have detracted to get down to details of that sort, as I regard this as being the most important measure, from one point of view, that we have had before us this session, because it is actually attempting to deprive the people of Queensland of their right to say who shall rule them. That is what it amounts to. This Government is going to say who shall rule the people. I thought it was a case of one adult one vote in Queensland, but we find the Government are going to cut that down. It is not one adult one vote, but there must be some property qualification and some length of residence in order to get on the roll; and when they do get on the roll every obstacle is placed in their way to prevent them from remaining there or prevent them from exercising their votes. (Hear, hear!) In conclusion, I trust that every member of this House will approach the measure as coolly as I feel I approached it. I feel that I approached the matter quite dispassionately, and arrived at a dispassionate conclusion, and I give credit to every hon. member of this House of being capable of doing the same. I hope they will bear in mind that there is a greater court than Parliament outside. It is the court of the people of Queensland. (Hear, hear!) And if this Parliament is not going to do justice to the people of

Queensland, I trust that the people will do justice to themselves at the first opportunity we give them.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Question put and passed.

The resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

## MARSUPIAL PROOF FENCING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

*(Mr. J. Stodart, Logan, in the chair.)*

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive, put and passed.

On clause 4—

Mr. GUNN *(Carnarvon)*: When he spoke the other night he drew attention to the unfairness of the provision contained in this clause. It provided that, where a cattle man and a sheep man adjoined, if the sheep man wanted a marsupial-proof fence, the cattle man had to pay one-half of the cost of such fence. The cattle man did not want the fence at all, because the dingo was not the same menace to the cattle as it was to the sheep. The cattle man did not see why he should have to pay half the cost of a marsupial-proof fence when he did not want it. As a rule, the cattle man had poorer land than the sheep man, and it was country that could not be occupied with sheep. It was also country that was covered with grass seeds, and grass seedy country was no good to run sheep on at all. A small grazing farmer might take up a selection and run cattle on it, and he might be run into paying half the cost of marsupial-proof fence which would perhaps run into £80 altogether, and yet the fence was of no value to him at all. All he wanted was a cattle-proof fence. He had an amendment drawn out which provided that the cattle man would only have to pay one-half of the cost of the cattle fence, so long as he ran cattle on his selection, but if he ran sheep on his holding then he would have to pay his full share of the cost of the marsupial-proof fence.

Mr. HAMILTON: He has to pay half the cost of the skeleton fence now.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: He has also to pay half the cost of the rabbit-proof fence.

Mr. GUNN: He would move his amendment, of which he had provided the Minister with a copy. He moved the insertion of the following proviso after the word "aforesaid" on line 10—

> "Provided that if so long as any person required to contribute to the cost of such a fence does not graze sheep on his land, judgment shall not be given against him for a greater amount than one-half of the fair and usual cost of a cattle-proof fence; but if thereafter he or any successor in title grazes sheep on the said land, judgment may be given against him for an amount equal to one-half of the fair and usual cost of a marsupial-proof fence after allowing credit for any sum already paid or recovered in respect of such fence."

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Move your other amendment first.

Mr. GUNN: He had a small amendment on line 9, which was really correcting a clerical error. He moved the insertion of the words "one-half of" after the words "equal to" on line 8. He intended to let that amendment go, and would move the proviso which he had just read to follow line 10, because he believed it would get over the difficulty. He was a sheep man, and had suffered from the ravages of dogs, and he had complained about the cattle man who lived near him breeding dogs. At the same time, he must recognise that a cattle man had rights as well as anybody else, and they should not be carried away by their prejudice in favour of the sheep man, and so do an injustice to the cattle man.

Mr. MORGAN *(Merrilla)* suggested that, with the permission of the Chairman, they might discuss the whole matter on one question, so that two discussions—one on the amendment and one on the clause—might be avoided. He certainly thought with the hon. member for Carnarvon, that something of the kind he proposed should be done.

Mr. HARDACRE rose to a point of order. What question were they discussing?

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment has not been put. The question is that clause 4 stand part of the Bill.

Mr. MORGAN thought that something fairer and better than the clause should be done for the cattle man who owned or occupied country alongside the sheep man. It must be remembered, too, that it did not apply only to the big pastoralist, the man who had a pastoral run or a grazing farm, but it also applied to the small man who had an agricultural farm or a prickly-pear selection. The small selector might be going in for dairying, and might not desire to put a sheep-proof fence round his selection, whereas his neighbour might wish to go in for mixed farming and grow wheat and raise sheep, and he might want a fence to keep out the dogs. Most members who had spoken had been dealing with the question from the standpoint of the pastoralist. He thought, however, that something perhaps not quite so wordy as the proposed amendment of the hon. member for Carnarvon might be framed to meet the case. For instance, he thought that £80 was about a fair average price for the erection of marsupial-proof fence, and £26 might be put down as a fair average price for what might be called substantial cattle fence—three or four wires with posts 10 or 11 feet apart. They might state, in amending the clause, that the man who owned or occupied land adjoining the man who desired to fence his land with marsupial-proof fence, should be asked to pay a third of the cost of that fence. If they took one-third of £80, it came to £26 odd, so that by that means they would be arriving at a certain fixed price which would be fair to both of them, and would also be getting over the difficulty of what constituted a substantial cattle fence. The man who wanted to erect a marsupial fence would know what his neighbour would have to contribute, and the man who owned or occupied the land alongside would know what he had to contribute—that was, one-third. If it was an ordinary fence, of course, it would come under the Fencing Act, and each would have to pay half. It would be clearer than the proposed amend-

ment. The matter was deserving of very earnest consideration in the interests of the small man as well as the big man.

Mr. HARDACRE (*Leichhardt*): He was in favour of the Act as it stood, and he had an amendment to move. In the proposed new clause they were going to make one of the most far-reaching and sweeping alterations that had ever been made with regard to fencing.

Mr. HAMILTON: It is in the 1910 Act.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was a departure from the Fencing Act of 1861. It was quite true that in the 1910 Land Act an amendment was made so far as rabbit fences were concerned, but it was made on the distinct promise of the Minister in charge of the Bill that he would introduce a Bill consolidating the whole of the fencing laws.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I do not think there was a promise to that effect.

Mr. HARDACRE: It was an absolute and distinct promise. During the discussion on the Land Bill in Committee, the hon. member for Balonne asked the Minister for Lands—

> "Will you introduce a Bill to deal with these matters?"

The Minister replied—

> "Yes, but not this session."

Later on, the hon. member for Herbert said—

> "If the Minister would give an assurance that he would introduce an amendment of the Act next session, embodying the suggestions that had been made, it would very likely bring the discussion to a close."

The Minister then said—

> "He would give that assurance, because the whole thing was in a state of chaos at the present time."

On that assurance he (Mr. Hardacre) withdrew the amendment he had submitted to the Committee. Practically the question now at issue was the same as the one discussed on the Land Bill in 1910, and it would be better to deal with it in a comprehensive measure dealing with the whole subject of fencing. The existing law with regard to marsupial fencing was that, if the owner of land erected a marsupial fence round his land, he should bear the whole of the cost until the adjoining owner got some benefit from that fence; and he could only get benefit from it when he enclosed the whole of his holding with a marsupial-proof fence, because, until it was so enclosed, he could not keep out marsupials and dingoes. The new provision in the Bill before the Committee provided that immediately a man erected a marsupial-proof fence, the adjoining owner should become responsible for a portion of the cost, whether he benefited from that fence or not. That was not a fair proposal, and he would give an illustration to show how unjustly it would operate. He had in his mind a particular class of country, Downs country, which would carry sheep, and where sheep were the principal part of the stock. Adjoining that fine Downs country was mountainous, forest, and scrub country, upon which sheep could not be pastured, and round which it would not pay to put such a costly fence as a marsupial-proof fence. If the owner of the sheep country erected a marsupial fence round his holding which was stocked with sheep, he would get the benefit of that fence, and it was a fair thing that he should pay for that benefit, and bear the whole cost of the fence. It would also be a fair thing to provide that immediately the adjoining owner derived benefit from the erection of that fence he should contribute towards the cost of it, but it would not be a fair thing to compel him to contribute towards the cost of a fence from which he derived no benefit whatever. It had been said by some persons that cattle-owners encouraged dingoes. He did not think that was correct, because, while it was true that dingoes did not do so much damage among cattle as they did among sheep, yet they killed calves, and for that reason he could not conceive that anybody would encourage the breeding of dingoes even on cattle country. The fact that dingoes infested any country was not due to any action on the part of cattle-owners; the dingoes were there naturally, and cattle-owners who did not want a marsupial-proof fence should not be called upon to enclose their holdings with such fences for the benefit of sheep-owners. He thought it would be much fairer to leave things as they were than to adopt the proposal contained in the clause before the Committee. As the hon. member for Murilla had said, it did not concern large cattle and sheep owners only, but applied to every holding in Queensland, no matter how small or how large it might be—to agricultural farms as well as to small grazing farms. A man in the North might take up an agricultural block of 150 acres that was eminently suitable for cultivation, while another took up another block in the same district which was suitable only for grazing purposes, and yet, under this clause, if the man who took up the 150 acres did some cultivation and decided to protect his maize or potatoes by the erection of a marsupial-proof fence, he might call upon his neighbour who was breeding cattle only and doing no cultivation to bear part of the cost of that fencing, though he would receive no benefit whatever from it. That was not a fair thing, and he hoped they would leave the Act as it was until the Government fulfilled the promise of the Premier, made when he was Minister for Lands, and introduced a general amendment of the Fencing Act. The hon. member for Murrumba stated the other night that legal opinion had been obtained to the effect that under the existing law the adjoining owner could not be compelled to pay half the cost of rabbit-proof fencing. But it was doubtful if that opinion would be sustained by the court, as the Act appeared to be very explicit upon the point. According to the Fencing Act of 1861—

[8.30 p.m.]

> "If any dispute or difference shall occur between the owners or occupiers of any adjoining lands respecting the description and sufficiency of any fence erected or to be erected, it shall be competent for either party to apply to the court of petty sessions," etc.

They had to take into consideration what was a sufficient fence. When a sheepowner erected a sheep fence on his boundary, and a dispute arose, the court of petty sessions dealing with the matter invariably decided what was a sufficient fence for him. So far as a cattle-owner was concerned, a cattle fence was a sufficient fence for him. In the same way, dealing with a rabbit-

proof fence, it would be quite competent for the court of petty sessions to decide that an ordinary fence was a sufficient fence on the one side, though it might not be on the other; and it would be within the jurisdiction of the court to give judgment for half the cost of an ordinary fence. The Committee ought to leave the Act as at present until they had a consolidating measure introduced, and, therefore, he moved, in order to give the Committee a chance of spoiling the clause, the omission of the 1st line reading, "Section fourteen of the principal Act is repealed." If the amendment were not carried, he would move a further amendment providing that where a marsupial fence was erected, it would be left to the court of petty sessions to decide what proportion of benefit each owner would receive from the fence, and give judgment for an amount equal to the respective benefits. He hoped the Committee would not depart from the original Act in such a sweeping way, as it would be an injustice to selectors, large and small, all over Queensland, and would cause no end of trouble and disputes amongst the various lessees and others throughout the State.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he could not accept the amendment. The hon. member in moving the amendment said he did so with the object of spoiling the clause, and he would leave it to the Committee to say whether they desired to see the clause spoilt or not. He would point out that the law at present was that if a man put up a rabbit-proof fence around his holding, he could compel his neighbour to pay half the cost of a rabbit-proof fence.

Mr. GUNN thought something ought to be done to protect the interests of the cattle men in some shape or form. He was not a cattle man, but he wanted to see justice all round. Although they made a mistake when they passed the Lands Act and compelled the man who had no use for a rabbit-proof fence to pay half the cost of a rabbit fence, they should not perpetuate that system.

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

Mr. HARDACRE moved the insertion of the words—

> "against each of the owners proportioned to the respective benefit which each of such owners derive therefrom, but not exceeding conjointly an amount"—

after the word "amount" on line 8. At present, if a dispute arose as to what proportion of the cost of the fence should be borne by each owner, the matter would go before a petty sessions court, and the court could only decide what was an efficient fence. If it decided that a cattle fence was a sufficient fence, then the cattle-owner had to pay only one-half the cost of a cattle fence. If, on the other hand, it decided that a sheep fence was a sufficient fence, then the court decided that each should bear half the cost of the superior fence. What he proposed was that, when a petty sessions court dealt with the case, having the whole of the facts before them, they should be able to give a judgment proportionate to the benefit which each of the adjoining owners received from the fence. They might say the cattle-owner should pay one-third and the sheep farmer two-thirds of the cost, or allocate the cost in any other proportion which might be fair. He trusted something like this would be done; otherwise, a great amount of injustice might take place.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS regretted that he was not in a position to accept the amendment. The hon. member for Leichhardt might obtain what he desired in a more direct way by the amendment subsequently to be moved by the hon. member for Carnarvon. He thought the amendment was establishing rather a curious position in law, where a court had to give judgment both against plaintiff and defendant. The hon. member would be well advised if he would drop the amendment, and concentrate his efforts in securing the passage of the amendment of the hon. member for Carnarvon.

Mr. COYNE: It appeared to him that neither the amendment of the hon. member for Leichhardt nor that foreshadowed by the hon. member for Carnarvon would meet the case. The hon. member for Murilla mentioned the case of a man who was dairying on an area of 1,280 acres or 5,000 acres, and had no sheep, while everybody around were sheep people and surrounded him with a marsupial fence. That man would get all the benefit of the marsupial fence; and if either of the amendments were carried he would go scot-free from paying any portion of the cost, except the bare cost of the cattle fence which was there now. The Committee would be acting wisely if they negatived the clause altogether, and let the Act remain as it was. If necessary, he should vote against the clause itself, as he did not think they were doing justice to the cattle men or the sheep men by repealing the section in the old Act.

Mr. HARDACRE said that no valid argument had been advanced against the acceptance of the amendment. If an agricultural farm selector was surrounded by sheep country, and a marsupial netting fence was erected, at present he would only have to pay his share of the cost of a cattle fence; and the amendment provided that he should only pay such share of the cost of the fence as represented the proportionate benefit he derived from the fence. It was certainly unfair to make him pay as much of the cost as the owner of the sheep country. Again, in the case of a big cattle station, there might be 100 miles of boundary, and it would be very unfair to make the lessee pay for one-half of a fence which might cost from £60 to £80 a mile, when the fence was erected solely for the benefit of the adjoining sheep station. The sheep man would get a benefit from the fence in the shape of increased profits, but the owner of the cattle run would not get any increased profits from the erection of the fence. He might actually suffer loss through having the dingoes and marsupials fenced on to his holding. There was no fairness in the thing at all, and he desired to enter a strong protest against it. It would do an injustice to the big cattle station and to the small selectors as well. The amendment would enable the court of petty sessions to assess the benefits derived from a fence by all classes of settlers, and that was surely fair. It would also meet the case where there was a road between two properties. At present the man on the other side of the road had not to contribute anything

towards the cost of the fence, although he derived some benefit from it, and the amendment would enable the amount of benefit so derived to be assessed by the court of petty sessions. He sincerely hoped that hon. members would either go back to the old Act or else adopt his amendment.

Mr. COYNE was sorry that he could not agree with his hon. friend, the member for Leichhardt, that the cattle man would not get any benefit from a marsupial netting fence. The cattle man would not derive any advantage from it, and he would be a menace to the sheep man alongside him. He thought they ought to leave the Act as it was, because, if they were going to repeal a part of the Fencing Act, they might land themselves in a quandary that they would not be able to get out of in a hurry. There was no doubt about the good intentions of the hon. member for Leichhardt, but his amendment would not meet the case at all. There might be one man with 10,000 acres of cattle country, and all those around him might have sheep. If they fenced their holdings to keep the marsupials out, the cattle man would be the only one who had marsupials on his country. In fact, he would have a monopoly, and would supply everyone else with them, and yet he was not to contribute anything at all towards the cost of the fence. Surely, if he was a danger to his neighbours, he should pay in proportion to the amount of the danger.

Mr. MACROSSAN: What objection is there to it in dingo-infested country?

Mr. COYNE: The same thing applied to dingo-infested country. The cattle man would have a monopoly of the dingoes, and he would be a danger to his neighbours.

Mr. HARDACRE: He has not caused the danger.

Mr. COYNE: He did cause the danger, because he did nothing to destroy the dingoes. Even assuming that his country was open, with the exception of a marsupial-proof fence on one side of it, the dingoes and marsupials would be able to breed up on his holding to the injury of his neighbours. It would be wise to leave the Fencing Act as it was instead of tinkering with it in that way. He had not got the great amount of faith in courts of petty sessions that the hon. member for Leichhardt appeared to have. If the relative benefit to the various parties of a fence was to be assessed by any tribunal, it would be better to provide a better tribunal for the settlement of such a complicated question than a court of petty sessions.

Mr. HARDACRE: The Fencing Act leaves such questions to them.

Mr. COYNE: Well, if they left it to a court of petty sessions, they should allow an appeal to a higher court in case of an unjust decision.

Mr. HAMILTON: After listening to the arguments for and against, he had come to the conclusion that they should leave the law as it was at the present time, and omit the clause altogether, as it was not clear enough. He could quite under-
[9 p.m.] stand the principle underlying the amendment of the hon. member for Leichhardt. He thought that a man should pay according to the value of the fencing to his holding, but he would not like to see it left to the petty sessions court to decide what each man had to pay. He would much sooner see it left to the Land Court to apportion the value of the fence to each selector or runholder. If a cattle man adjoined a sheep man and a marsupial-proof fence were erected between the two areas, then each one would be liable for the cost of that fence if the clause were allowed to remain as it was now. Later on he intended to move an amendment to grant exemption from assessment to the man who netted the whole of his holding, and he believed that that amendment would be carried. In that case, if a sheep man asked the Government for marsupial-proof netting and fenced his holding, the sheep man would certainly get a benefit because of the exemption. Then came the question of the payment of one-half of the cost. Could the sheep man call upon the man adjoining to pay his half of the cost in ready cash? It might happen that the sheep man would get twenty years' terms from the Government for the netting he obtained, and in that case it was not fair to allow him to call on his neighbour to pay his one-half in ready cash. He would like to know from the legal men what was the position so far as that was concerned. He thought it better to wipe out the clause altogether, as it was too clouded as it stood. Would both men be responsible to the Government for the payment? Would the Minister tell him if the sheep man could claim the one-half ready cash from his neighbour?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: Yes.

Mr. HAMILTON: Then it was not a fair thing. It would be better to leave the law as it stood at present.

Mr. MORGAN thought it would be better to leave out the clause altogether. It did not seem right that a man with cattle should have to pay one-half of the cost of a fence which he did not want. In the case of a rabbit fence, adjoining owners had to pay one-half of the cost, and that was all right, because, whether they had sheep or cattle, the rabbits ate the pasture of both holdings, and both suffered from it; but it was different with dingoes, which did not injure the cattle at all. The trouble was caused because the Government were tinkering with one clause of the Fencing Act and with another clause of another Act instead of bringing down one measure to deal with the whole of their fencing laws in one Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. member will deal with the amendment before the Chamber.

Mr. MORGAN: He would not support the amendment, as it would not be any improvement whatever. He gave the hon. member for Leichhardt credit for wanting to do what he considered was the right thing, but to leave it to the petty sessions court to apportion the value of the fence was ridiculous, and was scarcely worth considering. How would they value the fence? If one man had fifteen cattle and his neighbour had twenty cattle, would the court say that the man who had the most cattle received the most advantage for the fence? If they did that because one man had more than the other, at a later period the man who previously had the fewest cattle might have the most, so that would be an absurd way to settle it. It would be like the cats and the cheese and the monkey, and the monkey, or solicitor, would get everything, while the poor unfortunate selector would end up with nothing. They should make their Fencing

Acts in as plain a language as possible, so that the man on the land could understand it without any trouble. They should reject the amendment, and also the clause.

Mr. HUNTER: It was clear the clause must be amended or ended. They must either improve it or wipe it out altogether. (Hear, hear!) As the clause stood, a distinct injustice might be done to a neighbouring selector who had cattle, and a claim for half the cost of a fence might be made against him, when the fence was no use to him at all. They recognised that the sheep man should be able to protect himself against an invasion of foxes or dingoes.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I hope the hon. gentleman will deal with the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER: He was describing the position under which one tenant would have to pay half the cost of a fence he did not want. To one the marsupial-proof fence was a necessary part of his stock-in-trade, and to the other it was not. All he wanted was a substantial fence, and it seemed to him that the clause was going to inflict an injustice on him. It was true that he could inflict an injustice on the sheep man who adjoined him, but that was the business of the sheep man. It would be better to have the clause deleted altogether. The Fencing Act, bad as it was, was better than that. For that reason, unless he saw some amendment that clearly set forth the solution of the difficulty, he would vote against it.

The CHAIRMAN: The clause is not before the House. We are dealing with the amendment.

Mr. HUNTER: He was contending that the amendment was not going to improve the clause, and unless they got something better he intended to vote against it and the clause too. As the clause and the amendment stood, there was a risk of one tenant being called upon to pay spot cash whilst the other could pay over a term of years.

Mr. BOOKER (*Wide Bay*): After carefully listening to the whole of the discussion on the clause and the amendment, he had come to the conclusion that the Committee was absolutely fogged—(laughter)—and he was satisfied they would not arrive at a solution of the difficulties of the cattle man and the sheep man until they had an entirely complete Fencing Act. (Hear, hear!) The discussion had also suggested to him the difficulties they were going to get into in connection with the Railways Bill that would come before them, so far as the trespass of stock on railway lines was concerned. Assuming that a railway line ran through a cattle property, and a cattle fence was erected to keep them out of the railway, but later on closer settlement brought about an altered condition of things and the cattle country became sheep country, who was going to erect a fence to keep the sheep out? Was it the Railway Department or the person who stocked the country with sheep? He could not see how the discussion was going to bring about a reasonable, just, and fair decision for the sheep man, who had to protect his sheep from dogs, and which would not inflict a certain grave injustice on the cattle man, whose industry, on the area, was not as profitable as the sheep industry and did not permit him to construct the same elaborate protection for his calves as the sheep man was able to construct.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he was not wedded to this particular clause. He quite agreed with hon. members that it was necessary that an amending Fencing Bill should be introduced. It was a long time since that Act had been amended. Of course, it was a ticklish one to deal with. It was bristling with difficulties, and he supposed that was why for the last quarter of a century it had not been amended. But they should endeavour to tackle it. He would not say it would be done that session, because they had a considerable amount of business to overtake, but he hoped that by next session it would be possible to introduce a Fencing Bill that would be up to date and meet with the approbation of the State. At the present time they had various clauses inserted in other Acts, and it was rather difficult to know what the position was. As the law then stood, the Land Act prevailed over some clauses of the Fencing Act, and, so far as this Act was concerned, a man might be able to get rabbit netting under the Land Act and then ask the cattle man to pay for it. They could not alter that. However, he rose to say that he was quite willing to let the clause go in view of the fact that they would be shortly introducing a new Fencing Bill. If the hon. member for Leichhardt withdrew his amendment they could allow the clause to be defeated on the voices.

Mr. HARDACRE: In consideration of what the Minister had said, he would withdraw his amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. HARDACRE: He did not think that the Minister had quite given them an assurance. As to the difficulty raised by the hon. member for Gregory, who had pointed out the difficulty that it might have to be paid in cash——

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: That is always arranged between the parties.

Mr. HARDACRE: That difficulty already was provided for under the present Act, whereby it should go towards the repayment of the amount borrowed from the Government.

Mr. FORSYTH: It is a first charge on the land of the man who gets the netting.

Mr. HARDACRE: The existing Act provided for that. He wanted to be sure that the Committee would allow the clause to be defeated.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Let it go; the clause is going to be negatived.

Mr. HARDACRE: How did they know it was going to be negatived?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: I invited the Committee to negative the clause.

Mr. HARDACRE: He was glad to hear that, and as that was understood he would sit down.

Mr. GUNN said he had an amendment to move, but after all the discussion they had had on the clause, he would not move it. He was not a legal gentleman, and was often sorry that he was not, because if he was a legal gentleman he might be able to understand what the hon. member for Leichhardt meant. After listening to the discussion all the evening, he was just as

wise as when they started. It seemed to him that they had been cooeeing through a sieve, and that they did not know where they were. They did not seem to be able to improve the clause. He thought he had a way of improving it, but apparently the Committee did not consider his suggestion acceptable, and he would not propose any amendment. The clause was defective, and it would be better to wipe it out altogether.

Clause put and negatived.

Mr. HAMILTON moved that the following new clause be inserted after clause 3:—

> "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Marsupial Boards Acts, 1905 to 1910, no assessment made and levied by a marsupial board under those Acts shall be payable in respect of stock depastured on a holding which to the satisfaction of such board is entirely enclosed with a marsupial-proof fence, and as to which for the year in question the board is satisfied that the fence is maintained marsupial proof, and also either that the holding is free from marsupials, or that adequate measures for the destruction of marsupials are being taken."

The same principle was embodied in the Rabbit Act. If a man went to the expense of enclosing his holding with a rabbit-proof fence, and maintained that fence in good repair, he was entitled to exemption from payment of the rabbit tax; and it was a fair thing that a man who enclosed his holding with marsupial fencing should also be exempt from the payment of the marsupial tax.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS asked if the proposed new clause was within the Order of Leave?

Mr. HAMILTON: It does not involve any fresh expense.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: If it is within the Order of Leave, I have no objection to it.

The CHAIRMAN: I am of opinion that the new clause is within the scope of the Bill.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS said he had no objection to the new clause. They had exempted the man who erected rabbit-proof fencing from payment of the rabbit tax, and he saw no reason why they should not apply the same principle in the present case, and exempt the man who enclosed his holding with marsupial-proof fencing from payment of the marsupial tax.

Mr. MORGAN: As one who had advocated the abolition of the marsupial boards, he welcomed the new clause, because the acceptance of it meant the wiping out of the marsupial boards. Men who had erected rabbit-proof fencing were exempted from payment of the rabbit tax, and without doing any more work—for a rabbit-proof fence was marsupial proof—they would now be relieved from the payment of the marsupial tax. All the big sheep men had fenced in their holdings with rabbit-proof fencing, and they would now be exempt from marsupial tax as well as from the rabbit tax, and the tax would fall more heavily on the smaller and poorer men, with the result that there would be a clamour throughout the State for the abolition of those taxes and of marsupial boards, and for that reason, and for no other, he would support the new clause.

Mr. HUNTER thought that the hon. member for Murilla was a bit optimistic in thinking that the acceptance of the new clause would mean the wiping out of marsupial boards. It was well to bear in mind that men holding 640 acres or 320 acres in districts like Murilla and Maranoa would have to pay the marsupial tax, even [9.30 p.m.] though there were no marsupials in their districts, and that they would have to pay that tax until the marsupial boards were abolished. He was not optimistic enough to believe that it was going to be a good thing for his district. He held the very opposite view, as large banks and other institutions who had large properties, where those pests were bred, would find it to their advantage to fence in to protect themselves from being eaten out or ruined by the pests, and would thereby escape assessments, but the assessments would still be levied on the small man. He would vote against the new clause, and until the boards were abolished altogether he would exempt nobody.

Mr. GUNN agreed with the new clause as it was a fair and just one. It was following out the lines of the Rabbit Act—that was, if a man enclosed his land with rabbit-proof fencing he was exempted from rabbit taxation; and likewise, if he enclosed his land with marsupial-proof fencing, he should be exempted from marsupial taxation. He would point out that, as far as he knew, there was no definition of what a marsupial fence was. A rabbit fence was a fence 3 feet out of the ground, and 6 inches in the ground, and he considered a marsupial fence to be a fence 5 feet about the ground.

Mr. FORSYTH intended to support the new clause as it was a good one. If they did not encourage men to spend money in enclosing their holdings with marsupial netting, what was the use of the Bill at all? The man who went to the expense of enclosing his holding with marsupial netting and killed the marsupials, would escape assessment; while the man who did not erect a marsupial fence would have to pay assessment. That would be a great incentive to people to fence in their holdings; it would assist in keeping the pests down. As regards a definition of a marsupial fence, it was generally understood to be a fence 2 feet 6 inches above a rabbit-proof fence—that was 5 feet 6 inches above the ground.

Mr. HARDACRE thought the clause was a just one, and was on the lines he had been arguing the whole night. Those who had gone to the expense of enclosing their lands would escape assessment, while those who had not done so would have to pay.

Mr. MORGAN pointed out that it was possible for the man who had his land enclosed with marsupial netting to kill all the marsupials on his own holding and take them to the board and get scalp money, and thereby make the other unfortunate fellow pay for killing the dingoes and marsupials on his holding.

New clause (*Mr. Hamilton's*) agreed to.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments, and the third reading was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at thirty-seven minutes past 9 o'clock.

*Mr. Morgan.*]