

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 4th February, 1891.

Message (No. 4) : Transmitting the Estimates for 1891—Financial Statement by the Treasurer—Amendment of Constitution Act, 1889—General Loan and Inscribed Stock Bill : second reading—Parliamentary Privileges Bill : in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

MESSAGE (No. 4) FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR—ESTIMATES.

THE SPEAKER notified the receipt of the following Message from His Excellency the Governor:—

"The Governor transmits to the Legislative Assembly the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the year 1891, and recommends an appropriation of the Consolidated Revenue Fund accordingly.

"Government House, Perth, 4th February, 1891."

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

(ESTIMATES, 1891.)

The House having resolved itself into committee for the consideration of the Estimates of Expenditure for the year 1891,—

THE TREASURER (Hon. J. Forrest) said:—Mr. Randell, before moving the first item on the Estimates of Expenditure it is my duty to make a financial statement to the House, showing, as clearly as I can, the present position of the colony, and also its future prospects; because on these two considerations entirely depends whether the colony will be justified in pursuing the policy the Government has already brought forward in the shape of a Loan Bill, by means of which to carry out the construction of certain public works. As hon. members are aware, I have not had much time at my disposal to deal with the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure, because it so happened that our coming into office at the close of the financial year rendered it impossible for the accounts to be placed even before me until a very few days ago. Still, I have given the matter as much attention as it was possible for me to do in

the time at my disposal, and I will now proceed to place before hon. members some observations, some facts, and some figures with reference to the present position of the colony. This I will endeavor to do in as few words as I can, although it will necessarily take up some little time. In the first place I would like shortly to compare the present position of the colony and its position at a period of its history some years distant. For my purpose (and I can assure hon. members that I take it with no other object than that of convenience to myself) I will take the period of 10 years previous to the year 1890. In 1880 the revenue of the colony was £180,049, and in that sum was included £11,250 from Imperial funds. In 1885, five years later, the revenue had increased to £318,713, and in that amount there was £4,500 from Imperial funds. The revenue last year, 1890, was £414,313, an increase (if we except the grants in the past from Imperial funds) of 145 per cent. in 10 years. The expenditure during that time has also increased from £204,337 in 1880 to £318,718 in 1885, and to £401,737 in 1890—an increase in 10 years of 96 per cent. At the end of 1889 we had a balance to credit of £33,023, and during the past year that balance was increased by £12,576; so that at the end of 1890 there was a balance to the credit of the colony of £45,600. These figures, I think, sir, show that at any rate during the period to which I have referred we have not been going on in any reckless and extravagant manner, but may be fairly said to have been living within our means. I now come to the Estimates that are before hon. members—those for 1891, which have been prepared by us in as careful a manner as possible. It is not my intention to go through them item by item, as has been customary on previous occasions, because by doing so I would only be telling hon. members what they can see for themselves from the Estimates before them. They will see where there are increases in some items and decreases in others, and, when we come to the consideration of each particular item, I shall be glad to supply all the information I can. We have estimated the revenue for 1891 at £439,165. The actual revenue received for 1890 was £414,314, so that our estimate

of the revenue for the year 1891 is £24,851 in excess of the revenue for the past year. The estimated expenditure for 1891 is placed by us at £435,303, the actual expenditure for 1890 having been £401,737, so that we propose an increase of £23,566. While, sir, I am personally sanguine as to the future prospects of the colony, I have not, I hope, taken too sanguine a view of the revenue for 1891, and I have, with the assistance of my colleagues, endeavored to keep the expenditure down as much as possible. Hon. members will notice several increases, not only under the head of salaries but also in other items. These, however, have been found unavoidable. The change in the Constitution, the promotion of certain officers of the Government who were formerly chief clerks to be permanent heads, necessitated a change of title and position, and it has not been found possible not to give them an adequate increase in their salaries, to which I may say they were thoroughly entitled. By our current Estimates there will be at the end of 1891 a balance to the credit of the colony of £49,461—a sum almost sufficient to pay the interest up to the end of next year on the loan we now propose to raise. I think, sir, when we can show that we have already an almost sufficient sum in hand to pay the interest on a loan of £1,336,000 to the end of 1892, we may well have faith in the colony, and, I believe myself that after that time the colony will be able to provide the requisite amount for interest. In our Estimates for this year, we have not taken any large credit for further expansion in consequence of the loan, because we know that increased population and increased development will take some time to bring about; and, although I believe an era of prosperity is before us, still I do not feel justified in taking too much credit for it during the present year. When we can show hon. members that even during this year we propose to live within our means, and have a substantial balance at the end of the year, I do not think anyone can say we are acting recklessly in asking the House to agree to a project for developing the resources of the colony by a system of public works. In reckoning up our liabilities, we must also take into account our assets, and in doing that we must

not forget the large landed estate we are now in possession of. Thanks to the good work and influence that was brought to bear by the delegates sent by this House, and with the assistance that was rendered by our late Governor, Sir Frederick Broome, who, I believe, worked most indefatigably from the time he arrived in England until our Bill was safely through both Houses of Parliament; thanks also to the assistance rendered by our present Governor, Sir William Robinson, the colony has obtained the entire control of the whole of its land; and I think we should now feel thankful, and appreciate the thoroughly good service that has been done by those gentlemen who went from this colony to the old country to look after our interests. While on the subject of the delegates, I may mention, with reference to the return laid on the table the other day, that the Government propose to place a sum of £600 on the Estimates in recognition of the services rendered in London by Sir William Robinson in connection with the Constitution Bill. [An Hon. Member: "What for?"] Hon. members will, as I have said, see that there have been some increases in the expenditure connected with the inauguration of the new Constitution, and there are also, as hon. members are aware, been increases in consequence of the schedules to the Constitution Act—Schedules B, C, and D, which include the civil list, the aborigines grant, also pensions to certain officers, as well as the interest and sinking fund on the previous loans. These fixed charges now amount to £89,639 6s. 8d. But, notwithstanding our increased liabilities, I am pleased to inform hon. members that we do not propose any extra taxation at the present time. The present population is estimated at 47,000. In 1880, 10 years back, it was only 29,000. The public debt is now under £30 per head (£27 or £28, I think); and if, while we are spending the proposed loan, our population reaches 60,000—which I think is a moderate estimate—the rate per head will be about £44. Now £44 per head is, I think, an amount that we in this country need not be frightened of. In Queensland the amount per head is £66, which is nearly equal to five years of the

revenue of the country. In South Australia the indebtedness per head is over £60, and nearly equal to 8 years' revenue; and in New Zealand it is £63, or more than equal to 9 years' revenue of the colony. In our own case at present it is only £27 or £28 per head; which, I think, is equal to about $3\frac{1}{2}$ years of our revenue. If, while we are spending the money of the proposed loan (as we may fairly hope) the population will increase to 60,000 people, we shall only then be saddled with a debt of £44 per head, including the fresh liabilities we now propose to incur. I will now, sir, refer to our existing loans, and I hope I may be able to give hon. members some little information in reference to our present indebtedness. The actual indebtedness of the colony on 31st December last was £1,284,079. That is made up in this way: the gross indebtedness is £1,367,444 less the sinking fund which is invested, £83,365; which leaves, as I have said, an actual indebtedness of £1,284,079. It may be interesting to hon. members to know how these loans stand; I have taken some little trouble in the matter, but it is not very easy to get quite at the bottom of these loans, and find out exactly how they all stand. Our first loan was raised in 1872, when £35,208 was borrowed at 6 per cent. The second loan was in 1873, when £101,770 was raised at 5 per cent. The third loan, for £26,128, was raised in 1875, also at 5 per cent. These three make a total of £163,106, and that amount is at present held in this way: £33,400 in debentures at 6 per cent., £94,900 in debentures at 5 per cent., £34,806 in inscribed stock at 4 per cent., and £72,488 is invested to meet the debentures when they mature from 1901 to 1905, and the stock at a later date. The next loan was in 1878, when £201,833 was raised at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Some of these debentures, £12,600 worth, have been redeemed, and an amount of £794 has been credited to the sinking fund. This loan is at present held thus: £126,300 in debentures at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. and £62,933 inscribed stock at 4 per cent., and there is a sinking fund of 1 per cent. The next loan was that of 1881, when £149,370 was raised at 4 per cent. £3,500 worth of these debentures have been redeemed, and £2,419 has been

credited to the sinking fund. This loan is at present held: in debentures £57,800, in inscribed stock £88,070, and both debentures and inscribed stock bear 4 per cent. interest, and there is a sinking fund of 1 per cent. The next loan was in 1882, and was for £252,735 10s. at 4 per cent.; £7,900 has been redeemed, and there is a sinking fund of £2,633. At present that loan stands thus: £116,200 debentures, and inscribed stock £128,635 10s. We now come to the big loan of 1884, when £525,000 was raised at 4 per cent. Most of that is held in inscribed stock; only £600 has been redeemed, and there is £5,037 to the credit of the sinking fund. This loan is now held: £68,400 in debentures, and £456,000 in inscribed stock. The last loan we floated was in 1888, when we raised £100,000. That is all in inscribed stock, and bears interest at 4 per cent., with a sinking fund of 1 per cent. As hon. members are aware, we have from time to time altered our mode of raising our loans, but in future we intend that all loans shall be raised by inscribed stock. After 1875 there were annual drawings, and a number of debentures were called in every year. That was not considered a good way for investors, because after a person had invested his money he had to submit to the chance of the annual drawing, and, as the result of the drawing, he might have to invest it over again. Hence we did not get as good a price for our loans with these annual drawings as we do when they are held in inscribed stock. As I have already said, all future loans will be raised in this way, and there will be a sinking fund invested at compound interest, which will be available to pay off the principal when it falls due. While on this subject of loans, hon. members may perhaps like to know the intentions of the Government with regard to raising the money provided by the Loan Bill now before the House. It is the desire of the Government to at all times give all possible information they possess to hon. members, and with regard to this loan I may say that we propose at first raising half a million; but if we find it more advantageous to raise the whole at once we shall of course do so. Hon. members will notice that we make no provision in the Estimates for the

interest on the proposed new loan, and this was done out of deference to them; because had we placed on the Estimates the interest on this proposed loan it would have looked as if we were anticipating the decision of the House as regards the passing of the Loan Bill. Until that Bill is passed there is really no fresh loan to provide for, but as soon as the Bill has been dealt with by the House I will then ask hon. members to provide a sufficient sum to meet the interest for 1891, and take credit for what we shall receive in connection with the loan. If the loan is floated at 4 per cent. £53,440 would be required for interest, in addition to the one per cent. sinking fund. With the last loan we obtained a premium of £8 15s. 6d. per £100, and if we receive as good a premium as that this time, less the expenses of floating, we shall realise £100,000. I propose now, sir, to place before hon. members some evidence that we see around us showing that we are progressing in all the elements of prosperity, and that we are not standing still, as we used to be. In the first place, until a very short time ago, gold as an item of export was unknown to us. To-day I have found out from the Collector of Customs that during 1890, 22,806 ozs. of gold, the produce of this colony, has been exported, and it was valued at £86,000. That, sir, is a very pleasing feature in our financial position—that we should be able during one year to export such a large amount of gold, the produce of the colony; and we must remember, too, that this gold industry is merely in its infancy. The amount we shall raise this year will probably be much larger, and we must remember that to the East of our settled country we have a large area of auriferous land, which although not yet developed will, in time, be productive of great benefit, to this part of the colony especially, and I believe to the colony generally. I have also made some inquiries from the principal gold mining companies as to their operations. I find that the Central Company has extracted 1,522 ounces of gold from 2,205 tons of stone; and that the Fraser mine has extracted 2,158 ounces of gold, averaging considerably over an ounce to the ton, and which has realised £8,031. Over £5,000 a year is paid in wages by

this one company. Another item which proves beyond doubt that we are progressing rapidly is the shipping returns. I find that during the period 1880-90 there has been a remarkable and highly satisfactory result. In 1880, 165 vessels were entered inwards, with a tonnage of 123,985. Ten years afterwards, in 1890, 257 vessels were entered inwards, with a tonnage of 481,289, and for the same time outwards there were, in 1880, 168 vessels, with a tonnage of 126,444, and in 1890, 265 vessels, with a tonnage of 478,965. As another evidence of the growing importance of this colony, hon. members are all aware that the days of subsidies to steamship companies are fast disappearing. In addition to the Adelaide Steamship Company we have the firm of Huddart, Parker & Co.—a well-known firm in the other colonies—sending their steamers here without subsidy. We have also the s.s. “Australind” and the “Saladin” running regularly between Fremantle and Singapore. Then, too, there has been a great improvement in the type of steamer used. When I went on board the “Saladin” to-day and saw all the conveniences and comforts provided for the passengers, I could not help bringing to my recollection the difference between that vessel and the old “Mystery” and other 20-ton boats which the pioneers of the North travelled by. All this shows that the things of the early days of the colony are passing away. I believe there are people in the colony who still believe that railways will not pay, and those who say that also do not believe that it will pay to run these beautiful steamships. I cannot, however, agree with that view; because steamship companies, like every other enterprise, are formed for the one object, and that object is profit; and unless it will pay them to run their vessels to this part of the world they will not do it. So much then for the evidences of progress and development which we can see around us. I will now come to the revenue. Our main sources of revenue in this colony at the present time are Customs, Land, Railways, Harbor and Wharfage Dues, the Stamp Act, and Post and Telegraphs. If we compare these with former years, we find that in 1889 the Customs revenue was £171,990; in 1890 £182,546; and in 1891 we estimate it at

£201,800. The land revenue for 1889 was £87,016; for 1890 £107,636; and for 1891 we estimate it at £100,000. Another great source of revenue which is fast mounting up, and which I hope will soon be our principal source is that of the Railways. I believe it is the principal source of income in the other colonies, and I see no reason why it should not be so here, especially as it is already increasing very rapidly. In 1889 the revenue was £41,151; in 1890 £45,814; and for 1891 we estimate it at £53,000. Although it may be attempted to be shown by some hon. members that these railways, constructed as they are out of borrowed money, do more harm than good—for I believe there are some people who actually go as far as that; still, leaving that out of the question, there are plenty of men amongst us who never expected that in a few years our short lines of railway—for really they are nothing in extent when you come to look at them—would produce a revenue of £53,000 in one year. Indeed, one may fairly ask, where is the money coming from? But there it is in black and white. These lines are worked under difficulties, they are expensively worked, and, with their steep gradients and from other causes, are difficult to work economically; still there is the revenue. In connection with our railways, and their contemplated further construction, I may here mention that the Government have placed a large sum on the Estimates to enable us to obtain the services of an Engineer-in-Chief to assist the Government in expending this money in an economical and satisfactory manner. Although the salary provided may appear high, still when compared with the great amount of money that will really be at the disposal of this officer—or rather I should say, spent under his direction—the question of a few hundred pounds a year extra in salary is, to my mind, of very little importance. The great thing to aim at is to get a reliable, economical, and competent officer; and if we do that, we can well afford to pay him a little more than we have been in the habit hitherto. As a member of the Government, I should feel the greatest anxiety in carrying out this large system of public works unless I had an officer of experience and well-known ability and

integrity to advise me—a man whose attainments were such that I could put down my foot and feel that I was standing on solid ground. Indeed, without such an officer, I would not attempt to carry them out. When we bear in mind the important undertakings we are now contemplating—undertakings involving the expenditure of hundreds of thousands—railways, harbor works, lighthouses, fortifications, &c.—the value of the services of a really competent and trustworthy Engineer-in-Chief is not to be reckoned by hundreds. We may waste the amount of his salary on one work; and, unless we have an officer of experience and a tried man to assist us, we shall always be in doubt whether we are going right. It is the intention of the Government, as I say, to secure the services of such an officer, and with that in view we have placed on the Estimates for 1891 a sum of £1,500. Our next source of revenue, I notice, is from Harbor dues; and that again shows how we are progressing. In 1889 the revenue from this source was £6,002; in 1890, £6,172; and we estimate for 1891, £7,700. The wharfage dues are also increasing. In 1889 they were £3,942; in 1890, £4,591; and for 1891, we estimate £5,200. The operations under the Stamp Act have been a little fluctuating. In 1889 the stamp duties realised £8,057; in 1890 they only yielded £7,637; which I can only account for from the complete cessation of all public works, the collapse of the land boom, the stoppage of the Midland railway, and other causes, which led to a period of commercial stagnation. This year, however, looking forward to renewed efforts on the part of the people of the colony, and a revival of trade, and taking into consideration the new arrivals we expect to get, we have estimated our revenue under this head at £10,000. In 1880, Postages yielded £13,330; in 1890, £15,460; and for 1891, we estimate to receive £15,400 from this source. We do not anticipate more than last year, on account of the reduction which has taken place in the rate of postage to England from 6d. to 2½d. This will necessarily reduce our revenue; but we hope that the number of letters will be increased, and that notwithstanding the reduced rate there will be only a reduction of £60 on last year's revenue. The receipts

from Telegraphs were £10,060 in 1889; £10,327 in 1890; and for 1891 we estimate £11,500. Another item of importance, as showing the progress of pastoral settlement, is the increase of stock throughout the colony; and there has been a very large increase. Taking the period from 1879-89, I find that in 1879 we had 1,109,860 sheep, while at the end of 1889 we had 2,366,681, and this number has largely increased during the past year, but for which I have not been able to procure the figures. During the same ten years the number of cattle has increased from 60,670 in 1879 to 119,571 in 1889. In 1878 we had 32,411 horses and in 1889 the number had increased to 42,806. Therefore, whichever way you look at the industries of the colony you see marked progress and increased prosperity. As to the Revenue of the colony, I have made a few notes, comparing the estimated with the actual receipts. In 1889 the estimated revenue was £438,643, while the actual revenue was £442,725. I must point out the reason of these figures being so large for 1889 is that £60,512 is shown on both sides from loan, so that in order to obtain the actual receipts you must take that sum off, although, as I have shown, it is included in the public returns. In 1890 the estimated revenue was £385,106, the actual revenue £414,314, so that there was about £30,000 received more than even the Government estimated. The estimated revenue for 1891 we put down at £439,165, or a sum of £24,851 more than was received during 1890. For 1889 the estimated expenditure was £402,255, and the actual expenditure £386,000. The estimated expenditure for 1890 was £394,677, while the actual expenditure was £401,737. We estimate the expenditure for 1891 at £435,303, and this of course is without the amount we hope this House will allow us to place on the Estimates to cover the interest on the loan. I have also, with the assistance of my colleague the Commissioner of Crown Lands, ascertained how much is due by the settlers of the colony to the Government for land which they hold on the deferred payment system, special occupation leases, and conditional purchases. Although it has not been possible within the short time at our disposal to get an absolutely accurate

return, still the figures I shall give are, I think, about correct. It is estimated that £130,000 is due to the Government by these holders of land at the present time. Of course with increased prosperity this item will be largely added to. The reason why the Land Regulations of 1887 have not been as successful as was anticipated by myself and others, is not in any way due to those regulations themselves, because after an experience of them of three or four years, I have scarcely any fault to find with them. The reason why they have not been very successful, so far, is that there have been few fresh people requiring land—there have been no people desirous of settling on the land. There have been very few persons who have come to the colony for the purpose of settling on the land, while to those who are already in the colony there are so many other occupations open to them. There are the Northern districts where boundary riders and foremen are wanted; there are the goldfields, the pearling industry, timber carting, and a number of other occupations which have really been more inviting to our young men than tilling the soil, for the reason that they pay better, and probably the work is not so hard. That is the reason, I think, why the young men of the colony, having so many outlets for their energy, have not gone in for the cultivation of the land, but have followed other occupations, which have held out greater inducements, owing to there being too few people to fill them. People, however, we may now hope, will soon come to us from other colonies, and will settle and live on the land. I think we may fairly expect, now that the colony has taken a turn in a prosperous direction, an influx of population, and an increase of settlement. I believe that the Land Regulations which were framed by this House, and which are now the law of the land, are thoroughly well suited to the settlers. I believe they will stand the test of time, and that it will be many years before we desire materially to alter them. Then, again, as to this item of land revenue, there is a prospective aspect which is very encouraging from the Government point of view. We may calculate upon a large increase under the head of rents from those pastoral leases which will soon be in their second term. In the

North-West and Kimberley divisions that increase will be 50 per cent.; in the Eastern Districts it is also 50 per cent., and the Gascoyne and Eucla divisions 25 per cent. I do not think that our pastoral friends will grumble at these increased rentals. Their flocks and herds will have so increased in number that they will not begrudge the Government this additional revenue. There are also signs of increase in the Lands Office as regards the sale of town lands. The total land revenue for 1889 was £87,160; for 1890, £107,637, but I should say that £27,000 of this was for land purchased at Hampton Plains, and did not form part of what I might call the ordinary transactions of the year. We estimate that for 1891 the land revenue will be £100,000. Coming to the Customs returns, the imports for 1889 were £318,127 and the exports £761,391. As compared with the ten years before there has been an immense increase, for then the imports were £407,299, and the exports £449,883. I now come, sir, to a matter that I should like to speak a few words to hon. members about. It is this: the Government propose to enter into an agreement with the banking institutions of the colony with reference to the Government deposits they hold on current account. I may say I have not consulted these institutions yet, but I intend to do so at the earliest possible moment. In South Australia the Associated Banks pay the Government 2 per cent. on the monthly balance, but on no greater amount than £120,000 in one Bank. In Melbourne they have a still better arrangement, the Banks giving 3 per cent. on the daily balance. This Government generally has a considerable amount to its credit at the Banks, and, if an arrangement such as I have referred to had existed here in the past, we should have had a considerable increment to our revenue, and I can see no reason why we should not have it in the future. Last year we should have had £1,000 for interest even on the small transactions of that period if such an arrangement had been in force, and in some years it would have been much more. While on this subject of the Banks, I have great pleasure in informing honorable members that I have had an offer from one of the greatest banking institutions in London—I may

say in the world—to do our London business for us, and to advance what money we require pending the floating of the loan. Sir, I have now gone through all the figures which I jotted down for the information of hon. members. They are probably tired of them by this time, but it is necessary that they should be placed before them. I am only sorry I have not been able to put them forward dressed in more flowery language, so as to make them more pleasant to hon. members. I hope, however, that I have succeeded in showing that our financial position is sound and satisfactory. I believe, and I hope hon. members believe, that with a vigorous public works policy we have nothing to fear as to the future of this great colony. What we have to do is to believe in our country—to be patriotic, and to look to the future with confidence. There is no doubt our population will shortly very materially increase. That increase of population will bring increased prosperity. We have now obtained our place among the self-governing colonies of Australasia, and I hope that now we are in that position—admitted on equal terms into the family, if I may so call it, of Australia—it will be the signal for us to buckle on our armour and push forward. I am sure we have all only one object in view. When I look round this House, and see old colonists, and sons of old colonists around me, I cannot but feel that we are actuated by a feeling of patriotism. I do not believe that we are actuated by any desire for place or plunder. Our one object is that of pushing the old colony ahead—making her not a bye-word and a reproach, but a colony where a good, honest livelihood, or even a fortune, may be made. The eyes of Australia—the eyes of the whole world—are upon us. Let us show that we are patriotic; let us show that we believe in the colony, and that we are all actuated only by one desire—that of promoting the best interests of our common country, the land of our birth or the land of our adoption. I now move the first item on the Estimates—"Governor's Establishment, £885."

MR. PARKER said as these Estimates had only been placed before them that evening, and as the only opportunity members would have of dealing with them generally was upon the first item,

he would move that progress be reported, and leave given to sit again another day.
Agreed to.

Progress reported.

AMENDMENT OF THE CONSTITUTION ACT, 1889.

MR. CANNING : I rise, sir, to move for leave to bring in a Bill to be intituled the Constitution Act, 1889, Amendment Bill, having for its objects,—(1) the abolition of the property qualification for members of the Legislative Assembly, and (2) the extension of the franchise for the electors of the Legislative Assembly. I do not know that I should be in order in making any remarks upon the object of the bill at this stage.

THE SPEAKER : The hon. member can do so if he likes.

MR. CANNING : Well, sir, I will simply confine myself to observing that it is well known that the general feeling of the colony is in favor of the objects of the bill that I have asked leave to introduce. Throughout the colony, I may say, there is a strong feeling in favor of these objects, and I think, sir, it is not at all too early a stage at which to introduce the bill. It is impossible for me at this stage to enter into the details of the measure, until it is before the House, but I think I may fairly ask the consideration of the House for the bill. I much regret that it has not fallen to some member who represented a constituency in the late Legislature to bring forward this measure ; but I think it is a measure that should not be delayed ; and if the members of this House can appreciate the feeling outside they will be quite aware that it is a measure that does not brook delay. There are many considerations, many reasons, why at this particular juncture this measure should be considered. We know that the colony is about—or it is proposed at all events that we should take upon ourselves a largely increased burthen of taxation, and, according to the principles laid down by men whose opinions are recognised as entitled to the very greatest consideration, those who bear the burthen of taxation should be fairly and fully represented in the Legislature that imposes this taxation. It cannot be said that at the present time the people of this colony

at large are fairly and fully represented here. It is impossible to affirm that the people of Western Australia are at present sufficiently represented in the Legislature. I therefore submit that (although it will not be possible for the people to be so fairly represented as they ought to be in the consideration of the questions that are to be brought before us at this session, questions entailing largely increased taxation),—I submit that at all events this House should show a disposition to give them, at the earliest possible opportunity, such increased voice in the management of their affairs as is possible. I was not prepared, sir, to speak to-night on the objects of the bill ; I was given to understand that in asking for leave to bring forward the bill I should simply have to confine myself to asking for leave to introduce it. However, I feel that I ought to say something, as you have been good enough, sir, to intimate that I am at liberty to do so ; I feel that in justice to my constituents and in justice to the colony at large, I ought to say something in support of the action I have taken in this matter. It has been said that it is unconstitutional to bring forward this measure at the present time. Well, I am open to conviction, and I shall be glad to be convinced that I am in the wrong, or at all events I shall be glad to be shown in what respect it is unconstitutional, for I do feel that this is a measure that ought not to be postponed. It has also been urged that we have many other matters of much greater importance and of more pressing importance to consider ; but I say there is no matter of greater importance than that the people of the colony at large should have a fair voice in the management of their affairs. It has been urged that the question of a loan and other matters are of more immediate importance to the country than the question of a fair representation of the people. Well, sir, from one point of view it may be ; but on the other hand, if we look a little ahead and consider that this loan is going to cast such a burthen upon the people as it is likely to do, I think it is but reasonable that the people should have the largest possible voice in the consideration of this loan question. If I shall be allowed to bring this bill to the proper stage for doing so,

I shall be prepared to show, I hope, most conclusively, that this is a measure which ought not to be delayed, that this is a question the solution of which ought to be attended to at the earliest possible moment. We all know that when the Enabling Bill was before the select committee of the House of Commons certain members of this Council who were then in England urged those who were opposed to the measure, as it stood, to withdraw their opposition, and pledged themselves that this matter of the property qualification of members above all should be dealt with at the earliest possible moment. There was a strong feeling of opposition to the measure on this very ground. It was urged by men whose opinions were certainly entitled to respect, men whose opinions were regarded with the greatest respect throughout the British Empire, that the measure was a very incomplete one, that its provisions were anomalous in many ways, and especially so in regard to the property qualification of members; and these gentlemen were assured by our delegates that if they would only withdraw their opposition to the bill passing as it stood, it would be amended at the earliest possible moment. Upon this assurance the opposition to the Bill was withdrawn.

MR. A. FORREST: They had no power.

MR. CANNING: Who had no power? The hon. member's interjection is absolutely meaningless. The gentlemen I refer to had a power which the hon. member has not, and is not likely to have in any circle whatever. Mr. John Morley's opinions, I may tell the hon. member, command attention and respect throughout the British Empire. He and others strongly objected to the Bill, and urged that it should be amended so as to give the people of the colony a complete measure of reform. And in order to overcome that objection they were assured by our delegates that at the very earliest possible moment the objections they raised would be removed.

MR. PARKER: Perhaps the hon. member will pardon me if I say he is rather misrepresenting what was said. If he will read the evidence given by the delegates he will find that they never pledged themselves to have these objections removed. I think I said more than

any other delegate; and all I said was that I felt sure this question would be taken into consideration at the earliest possible opportunity, and that I thought the property qualification of members would be done away with; I showed them the division that took place on the clause in this House, and pointed out that it was opposed by the majority of the elected members, and that no doubt the objection would be removed the first opportunity that offered. I also said I had no doubt we would reduce the franchise very materially, if we did not go to the extent of manhood suffrage. But really no pledge was given on the part of the delegates to strike out these provisions.

MR. CANNING: What the hon. member says does not alter the fact that the opponents of the bill were led to believe that these provisions would be repealed at the earliest possible moment. We know perfectly well that the hon. member could not pledge this colony to any legislative measure. But the hon. member implied a pledge. I need not tell him that there is such a thing in ethics as implying a fact and implying a promise; and when the hon. member said that certain steps would be taken to remove the objections to the bill, he implied that he would give the matter his uncompromising support. But we know he could not bind this Legislature—a body not then in existence—to do certain things; but we do know—and every reasonable man will conclude that when he made the statement which he admits he made, he conveyed the inference that he would do everything he possibly could do to have these objections removed at the earliest possible opportunity. That was what his words implied, if words have any meaning; and I say he cannot now evade—I do not use the word in an offensive sense—he cannot now evade the implied pledge he then gave to do all within his power to remove this blot upon our present constitution—for it is a blot, and is regarded so by the other colonies, and by all who have studied this question and taken any part in West Australian politics—a great blot and a great slur upon our Constitution. The hon. member laughs. It is very easy to laugh; but I may remind him that those laugh best who laugh last. Sir, when

the proper time comes—if the House proceeds with this bill—I shall be able I hope to adduce such arguments in its favor as will thoroughly convince every impartial member of this House who comes to the consideration of the question with a determination to consider it in a fair and impartial spirit, of the necessity of an immediate amendment of the Constitution in the direction I have indicated. At the present stage of the bill, it is impossible for me to deal with these arguments. I only ask members now—those who do not come to the consideration of the question with their minds made up to take a certain attitude towards it—I only ask members now to afford me an opportunity of laying these arguments before them, and of ensuring a full and fair consideration of the measure which I now ask leave to introduce.

MR. QUINLAN: I rise with pleasure to second the motion of the hon. member for East Perth. As I understand this is not the proper time to make any lengthened remarks, I reserve to myself that right until the second reading. I trust then to fulfil my promise to my constituents in regard to this matter, and to carry out their wishes to the fullest extent; and I hope that other members who pledged themselves on the same platform will do the same, and try to influence others who have not so pledged themselves.

MR. PARKER rose, but gave way to—

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), who said: It may be very unusual perhaps that the course I propose to take this evening on this question should be pursued by any member, and more so, it may be said, by a member of the Government. But I would ask the House whether the motion which is now before it is not of itself of a most unusual character, coming as it does from a private member in the first instance, and, secondly, supported as it has been by a long speech at this stage of the matter, when he is simply asking leave to introduce the bill. It is not usual, I believe, in asking for leave to introduce a bill of any kind to specify, as has been done on this occasion, the objects an hon. member is driving at.

MR. CANNING: I beg the hon. and learned member's pardon, but I may say in explanation that I placed the notice

on the paper before the present Standing Orders were in existence; and under the old Standing Orders it is distinctly laid down that in introducing a bill the object of the bill must be specified.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I will not say that the hon. member is wrong in his Parliamentary practice. I do not for myself claim much knowledge of Parliamentary practice as to these details; but he will excuse me for saying that I consider it most unusual, from the experience I have had in this House in the past, the course which the hon. member has adopted in this instance. I do not know that I ever before saw a motion for leave to introduce a bill, specifying the objects which the mover aimed at. It may have been done, but I have no recollection of it. At any rate, whether that be so or not, we can see by the Notice Paper that the hon. member seeks to introduce this measure for the purpose of doing away with the qualification of members generally, and also for the purpose of extending the franchise. We know from the Notice Paper that these are the objects he is aiming at. If this had not been the case, if we had been simply asked to allow a bill to be introduced to amend the Constitution, without specifying in what direction, it might have been said with some justice, why not wait until we see the bill on the table before we refuse leave to introduce it? Holding the opinions that the Government do on this subject of amending the Constitution, whether the objects in view were specified or not, it would have been our duty on this occasion to oppose the motion; but, with the objects in view specified, and after the speech of the hon. member in support of the motion, any possible doubt that I might have had as to the inexpediency of the motion and as to the best course to pursue has been taken away. The hon. member has also taken an unusual course, I submit, in this respect, that in lieu of asking leave to introduce a bill he might have moved an amendment with the same object in view upon the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech, or he might even this evening have asked the House to affirm a motion that it was desirable to amend the Constitution in the direction here indicated. That would have been a very different thing

indeed from the course adopted by the hon. member,—a private member to ask for leave, in the face of the Government, to bring in a bill to amend the Constitution. I do not know, sir—my experience has not been long and I am not very cognizant, as I have said, of Parliamentary practice—but I doubt very much whether the hon. member can refer me to a single instance in which a private member has sought to introduce a Reform Bill. And what is this but a Reform Bill? It is a bill to amend the Constitution, and I would ask members to consider what would be the result if this bill were passed through all its stages. It is a bill that has to be passed, if it passed at all, by a certain majority of both Houses, and then it would have to be reserved for the signification of Her Majesty's pleasure thereon. The Constitution Act provides for that; and if it became law it would entail a dissolution of this House and the resignation of the Government. More than that, it would work the installation of the hon. member for East Perth into office in the new Ministry. I trust that when that time does arrive, the hon. member may find himself with a somewhat larger following than he did on a recent occasion when he raised a constitutional point in this House. There can be no two opinions that if the hon. member's bill became law it would work the dissolution of this House, and entail a general election. The hon. member tells us himself that the people of the colony are not represented in this House at present, and he says the object of his bill is to give them that representation; and I would ask how can that be possibly brought about except by having a fresh election all over the country. I would ask the House to consider for a moment what that would mean. Have we not just started the ship of State which has been moored and idle for months and months? Is it not notorious that the late Government left everything for their successors to do, and that nothing has been done—nothing was pretended to be done—by the Government that has just gone out, beyond just keeping things quiet. I remember the last gentleman who administered the Government saying publicly that he was only holding the reins; he was not going to

attempt to drive the State coach. That holding the reins continued I think for about twelve months, during which the coach stood perfectly still; and now when we have just made a start the hon. member would arrest our progress, and have us go back again to the country, in order (as he says) that the people of the colony may be represented in this House. He says that members are pledged to amend the Constitution in this direction; some of them may be, but I have yet to learn that they pledged themselves to upset the work of the country, to oppose the initiation of public works, for the purpose of giving effect to what they may have promised to do in the direction of amending the Constitution. It is a matter of history the views which I myself hold on this question of the qualification of members, and the views that my colleagues (though not all of them) hold; but, the question having been threshed out so late as last year, as it is now in the bill, and, as we are just starting to work in earnest, I do say that the country would not back members, whether they are pledged or not, in any attempt to upset the coach at this early hour of our starting, by bringing about a dissolution and turning the Ministry out of office, simply in order that this question of the qualification of members may again be put to the country. Is not the country, I would ask, satisfied to wait? Have we not an assurance that the country is not much concerned about this matter, in the fact that at the late elections a considerable number of the members of this House were returned absolutely without opposition, and that the gentlemen who now hold office were not only elected without opposition, but also re-elected without opposition, each and every one of them. How, in the face of that fact, can it be said that the country is eager for this change in the Constitution, or that this is an opportune time to upset all that has been done within the last few months. Is this the time when the country would like to see their representatives redeeming their pledges to extend the franchise and to abolish the qualification of members? Is this the time, just as we are about to start on a career of public works, that we are to undo everything, and go back to the country, and through the turmoil

of another general election, with the possibility of another Ministry and another policy, and everything to be gone over again? When the time comes for dealing with these questions, when they can be dealt with without upsetting the work of the country, I think it will be found that the Government are quite prepared to deal with the subject. These being the views that we hold, I need not say any more on the subject than that the Government must of necessity, for the reasons I have already stated, oppose the introduction of this bill, at the present time, by a private member. It is our duty to oppose it, and to vote "No" in the division that may or may not take place.

MR. PARKER: I should like to say a few words with regard to this bill. I take it that the constitutional practice would have been for the hon. member to have moved a resolution affirming the desirability of an immediate change of the Constitution, if he deemed it desirable to bring about such a change. I cannot but think that it is highly irregular for any member sitting in opposition to bring in a Constitution Bill; I look upon it as the peculiar province of the Government to introduce Reform Bills. We do not find, so far as my reading goes, members sitting on the Opposition side of the House, however distinguished they may be, or however strong their feelings may be, taking upon themselves to bring in bills to alter the Constitution of the country. Very often a Government goes out perhaps on a question of amending the Constitution, or some great reform, and of course the Government that comes in seek to carry out the pledge by means of which they obtained a majority and got into power. But I certainly never heard of a private member, sitting in Opposition, taking upon himself to bring in a Reform Bill affecting the Constitution. Another thing: it appears to me of necessity that if this bill were carried in this House the Government must resign and give place to their successors. Where are those successors to come from? It appears to me that not only have we not formed any Opposition, but we find this bill introduced by a member who does not even sit on what may be called the Opposition benches, but has taken up a position on the cross benches. I ask the hon. mem-

ber, supposing this bill were to pass, is he prepared to form a Government, and to take a seat in the Ministry? If not, it appears to me he has no right to bring in this bill. Not only has there been no Opposition formed, but, so far as I am aware, there has not even been a conference of members on this side of the House as to this bill. No one that I know of has even been asked whether he would be prepared to support the bill. So far as I am concerned, it was not even mentioned to me until this evening. The hon. member in addressing the House harped upon the idea that I was going to evade what he called my pledges. I will ask members who know me whether I have ever attempted to evade any pledges I may have ever given on this question of the Constitution. From the very first time I ever addressed myself to the subject, either in writing or orally, I have felt myself personally pledged to do all I could to bring about a reform of our Constitution. I have always said so; and even this session, when I addressed the House in the debate on the Address in Reply I expressed myself to the same effect, that if no other member of the House brought the matter under the consideration of the House before the session was over, I should feel bound to do so myself. But I never dreamt of bringing in a bill. I am not prepared myself to accept the responsibility of turning out the Government and taking a seat on the Treasury bench. Not only am I not prepared myself, but I have no party with me to take office. Therefore it would be perfectly ridiculous for me to bring in a Constitution Bill and in the same breath express my inability to accept the position now occupied by the Ministry. What I desire with regard to this matter — and I should like to see the hon. member adopting my suggestion — is that he should withdraw the bill which he now proposes to introduce, that in fact he should not proceed with his motion. The reason I ask him to do this is that if the motion is now negatived, as I think very probably it will, the question cannot be again brought forward during this session. I think it would be most unfortunate if we were debarred from considering this question again. If the question is not pressed now, and the

House comes to no decision upon it, there is nothing to prevent its being brought forward at a later stage of the session, when we shall have disposed of the Loan Bill, the Estimates, and other matters of pressing necessity. The hon. member, as I understood him, said he does not think this bill if carried would lead to a dissolution. I cannot help thinking that unless it is intended to bring about an immediate dissolution, and a general election, there is no object in it. He says the country is not now represented in this House. If so, then I say we ought to have an immediate dissolution and a fresh election, so that the country may be represented here. But when I look around me and see those now occupying seats in this House, I doubt very much whether if this bill had been in full operation at the late election, the country would have been better represented than it is at the present time. I am sure that East Perth is admirably represented in the person of the hon. member himself. I am sure he does not think that if there had been no property qualification demanded at the late election, East Perth would have been more ably represented than it is now. I hope that when we do get an extended franchise and the property qualification abolished we may still find the hon. member representing the constituency that returned him to this House at the late election. So far as I am personally concerned, I cannot think that the electors of York, even if they had manhood suffrage, would have elected any other candidate but myself; and, looking around at all those who sit on the opposite side of the House and on the Treasury benches, can we for a moment suppose that under this reformed Constitution most of them, if not all of them, would not still have found seats in this House? Can it be supposed for a moment that if we added 10 or 15 per cent. to the number of electors, this small minority would have turned the scale against the 90 or 85 per cent. who are now entitled to vote? It appears to me that the argument will not stand the test of examination. I am quite in sympathy with the idea that the electors should have a free choice in the election of their representatives, and that the choice of the electors should be a sufficient qualification; I quite agree with

that, and also that every man who pays taxes should have a voice in the representation of the country; but I doubt very much that it would make much difference in the *personnel* of this House. What would be the result if we passed this bill now? The Government have just brought in a Loan Bill for £1,336,000, and they have just laid their Estimates of revenue and expenditure before the House, and the result would be that this Loan Bill and these Estimates would have to be dropped, and we should have the hon. member for East Perth at the head of another Ministry, who would have to formulate some other policy, and prepare other Estimates, and the colony meanwhile would be at a standstill. I am not prepared myself at the present time to take this responsibility. I think that the present Government, our first Administration under Responsible Government, having taken upon themselves the burden of office, ought to have a fair show. I am glad to give it to them myself. I am not in accord with them in all their views, especially with regard to their loan policy and their public works policy, but I should like to see them remain in office, and let them have a fair trial. To turn them out at the present time would be not only disastrous to our Parliamentary institutions but disastrous to the country at large. Therefore I am prepared to give them a fair show, and to discuss their proposals reasonably and fairly; and I believe that is the feeling on all sides of the House. I therefore ask the hon. member, if he will be guided by a member who has had little longer Parliamentary experience than he has, though I do not pretend to know more about Parliamentary practice than he does,—I would ask him if he would kindly be guided by me on this occasion and not proceed further with his motion this evening. By withdrawing it now it will enable us at any time before the close of the session to bring the matter forward again. If we find then that it would be an opportune time for bringing forward a resolution to this effect, if we find that the Government have carried out as much of their policy as they may reasonably expect to carry out, and that this question can be dealt with without materially interfering with the progress and prospects of the colony,

I shall be prepared to support the hon. member if he brings forward such a resolution, but certainly not if he brings forward a bill.

MR. COOKWORTHY said though it was the wish of his constituents that a change in the Constitution, in this direction, should take place at some future date, the electors of Sussex were entirely opposed to this change being brought forward until other questions of more pressing importance, such as public works, had been disposed of. This also was the prevailing feeling in the neighboring districts, as represented by their local paper; and he thought it would be disastrous to the colony if the present Ministry had to resign without being allowed to pass their Loan Bill for public works.

MR. DEHAMEL trusted that the hon. member for East Perth would adopt the suggestion of the hon. member for York, who was virtually the leader of the Opposition. He (Mr. DeHamel) supposed that he stood more pledged than any member of that House to the proposed change in the Constitution; but, though he was pledged to a change in the Constitution, he wished to see that change constitutionally carried out. For this reason, he was utterly unable to support the hon. member for East Perth in his attempt to bring in a Reform Bill on his own motion. It seemed to him that the only proper course was by a resolution calling upon the Government, when the right time for doing so arrived, to bring in a bill to amend the Constitution, by reducing the franchise and abolishing the property qualification of members. If that resolution were carried by a majority, it would then become the duty of the Government either to bring in a bill for that object or else resign, and allow the Opposition to take their place and do so. He was, as he had said, pledged to this change in the Constitution Act, but he was not pledged to harass the Government or attempt to interfere with them just as they were first starting the colony on a career of (as he hoped and trusted) progress and prosperity. He should certainly be bound to vote against the hon. member, if he would not withdraw the present motion.

MR. HASSELL said although he also was pledged to consider this question

of amending the Constitution, he could not support the proposal to do so now, when there were other matters of greater importance to the colony demanding their attention.

MR. SYMON said he also might be permitted to state that he promised his constituents to vote for the abolition of the property qualification for members, but he did not think the present an opportune time for bringing the matter forward. He simply wished to make this statement, as he did not want to be placed in a false position with his constituents. No doubt, when a more opportune time arrived for legislating in this direction, the Government would be prepared to move in the matter; but at the present moment there were other questions demanding their attention.

MR. CANNING: Sir,—as this discussion has assumed the character of a debate, I presume I am entitled to reply. The Attorney General in his remarks, and also certain other members, have proceeded on an assumption, and upon that assumption they based their argument; they built upon a very frail structure a very beautiful superstructure. The hon. and learned member for York stated that it was evidently my intention to upset the Ministry, and upon that assumption he proceeded to show what a very inconvenient thing it would be, and how very improper. The hon. member also stated that there was no Opposition in existence, although the hon. member himself has been referred to in the course of this debate as the leader of the Opposition; how he can be the leader of a non-existent body I am at a loss to discover. But the hon. member for Albany, who called him so, has a peculiarly metaphysical mind—that is the impression he leaves. Reverting to the Attorney General, if the hon. and learned gentleman, who indulged in a little rhetoric about the ship of State having just started on her voyage and being suddenly brought up by a motion of this kind, and so forth—if the hon. and learned gentleman and other members had taken the calm and impartial view which one had some right to expect they would on a motion of this kind, they would at all events have waited until the bill was before them, they would have given an opportunity to every member of the

House and the country generally to have considered the bill that I wished to bring forward; and then they would have been able perhaps to have spoken with some effect. The Attorney General lays it down, or jumps to the conclusion, that the adoption of this bill would involve the defeat of the Ministry and an appeal to the country. Nothing of the kind was intended, and I maintain nothing of the kind is necessary. I can speak positively that nothing of the kind was contemplated by me, nor do I think that anything of the kind would necessarily follow if this bill became law. In Victoria, in 1857, a very similar measure was passed and became law, and no change such as the hon. gentleman has mentioned followed. Some twelve months after the colony of Victoria received a Constitution, such as we have now, a measure was introduced and passed having for its object the abolition of the property qualification of members, and this constitutional change was effected without a dissolution following. That measure was a very simple one; the statutes of the colony are accessible to every hon. member; and the Constitution there was amended in this way without entailing a dissolution of Parliament or any appeal to the country. And I say distinctly that the measure which I contemplated was never intended to do anything of the kind here. The object of my measure is simply to give effect to the wishes of the people of the colony. It is the logical effect of the statements—the hon. member objects to the word pledges—the logical effect of the statements made by the hon. member for York and the other delegates when in England. The Attorney General said the question has been threshed out; if so, then where is the reason for any opposition? It has been admitted over and over again that the removal of the property qualification of members is desirable, and that the matter does not call for argument. If so, why not accept it at once? The Government, at all events, might examine the bill for themselves, and if they have any amendment to propose that in their opinion would render the measure less obstructive—and it is not intended to be obstructive in any way as regards their policy, I am quite sure I shall be prepared to accept it.

The two essential points I have in view is to carry out the wishes of the people of the colony and to remove the blots that now disfigure our Constitution Act. A great deal has been said about "Parliamentary practice" and "Parliamentary precedents." What Parliamentary practice and Parliamentary precedents have we in this colony? The people of this colony are people living here trying to do their best to live as honorable British subjects and do the best they can for themselves; and to talk about Parliamentary usages and Parliamentary precedents in a colony like this is the merest rhetoric. The colony is an abstraction; the colony really is simply the people living in it, and when they send members here to represent them and to administer their affairs, they have a right to have a full and fair voice in the matter. The colony is not its gum trees or its kangaroos, but the people who live in it; and we are here as the representatives of those people, and those who have sent us here expect that we shall do our best to promote their welfare, both present and future; and that is our duty. And if we allow ourselves to be led away from the main issue that should occupy us, by talking about Parliamentary precedents and Parliamentary procedure we are merely playing with the question. The whole question resolves itself into this: that the people of the colony generally do not believe that they are now fairly and fully represented in this House. [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Question.] I say this is a question that will be fully and decidedly answered by the people themselves before very long. It has been said, as an argument in support of the contention, that the people are satisfied with the way they are represented, that a number of the members of this House were returned without opposition. But why were they returned without opposition? Because opposition was impossible. [AN HON. MEMBER: Why?] Because those who passed the measure took good care that certain persons should be excluded—the hon. member may laugh!—I say they took very good care to guard against opposition; they took the best possible means to guard against any opposition.

The COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (the Hon. W. E. Marmion): Will the

hon. member say whom he means by "they?"

MR. CANNING: If the hon. gentleman wishes for an answer, I will tell him—those who are responsible for the existence of the property qualification clause in the Constitution Act. That is what I mean by "they." And I further mean this—not only those who were responsible for the introduction of that clause into the Act, but also those who are lending themselves to its perpetuation. Those are the people I mean. Returned without opposition! Of course they were returned without opposition; because opposition was virtually excluded! The choice of the electors was narrowed down so that opposition was impossible. I have already pointed out that in Victoria a similar bill was introduced and passed, without resulting in a dissolution; and the reason why that Act was passed, was because the choice of the electors—like the choice of the electors here—was limited to those possessing a property qualification. What are the words of the Amendment Act of Victoria? The preamble states: "Whereas the number of persons capable of serving in the Legislative Assembly is unduly restricted, &c." At that time in Victoria there were such men as Mr. Childers—about whom, possibly, the Attorney General may have heard—Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, Sir John O'Shanassy, Sir William Stawell, and men of that calibre; and it was said that the choice of the electors was restricted. I do not think, sir, it can be maintained that it is otherwise here; and the sole object of the bill I now ask permission to introduce is to remove that restriction and to give effect to the wishes of the people, and to give practical effect to the statements made by the delegates of the colony to members of the House of Commons, on the strength of which statements the Constitution Bill was allowed to pass as it stood. The hon. member for York acknowledges that he made that statement—that the clause would be amended at the first possible opportunity. And what did Governor Broome say before the same Committee? He said he believed that if the colony were polled, it would be found that there were five or six to one of the people of the colony who were opposed to this prop-

erty qualification. [The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We all know that.] Then why not give effect to it? [The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Because it is inopportune at the present moment.] Why is it inopportune? The hon. and learned member has told us it would turn the Government out of office. I deny it. The hon. member has brought no argument forward to show that that would be the case. He has simply made an assertion. I, on the other hand, deny it; and, if the bill is allowed to proceed, I hope to bring forward something more than mere assertion. The hon. member for York has referred to what he said on this question in the course of his speech on the Address. The hon. member, I must say, is a consummate master of words; he can deal with words; and—I am not using the expression in an offensive sense at all—twist them in a remarkable way. The hon. member says it is unconstitutional for a private member to bring in a bill like this. But I would remind the hon. member of what he himself said in the debate on the Address in Reply. The hon. member has given his own version of the words he then used, but what I understood him to say was this: that if the Government did not do something or the other with regard to this question of the property qualification of members, this session, he would himself take action in the matter. [MR. SCOTT: No.] I have a perfect recollection of what he said. He said, if the Government did not bring forward some motion to abolish this qualification he himself would do so. [MR. PARKER: No.] He said, if the Government did not move in the matter, he would himself bring forward a motion to that effect.

MR. PARKER: I said if no other member of the House would move in the matter I would mention the subject myself before the session closed.

MR. CANNING: My recollection is that he said if the Government did not bring forward a motion, he himself would bring forward a motion which would have the effect of at all events making an attempt to remove this qualification. I clearly understood—and I had some reason for understanding—that the hon. member had reasons of his own for not bringing forward a motion himself, but that he would

support a motion if anyone else brought it forward. I have good reason for stating that. I cannot really understand the fine distinction which the hon. member draws between the course he thinks ought to have been taken, and the course that I have taken,—simply to bring forward this motion with the object of removing the qualification of members, and extending the franchise, in such a way as to place the people of this colony on a footing of equality with the people of the other Australian colonies; and to do it in such a way as would not interfere with the general business of the country, and would, certainly, not have the effect of defeating the Government or hindering the consideration—I will not say the passing—but the full consideration of the measures brought forward by the Government.

Question put—That leave be given to introduce this bill.

MR. CANNING having called for a division, the numbers were—

Ayes	3
Noes	21

Majority against...	18
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AYES.
Mr. Quinlan
Mr. R. F. Sholl
Mr. Canning (Teller.)

NOES.
Mr. Clarkson
Mr. Cookworthy
Mr. Darlöt
Mr. Forrest
Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Harper
Mr. Hassell
Mr. Keane
Mr. Loton
Mr. Marmion
Mr. Paterson
Mr. Phillips
Mr. Piessé
Mr. Randell
Mr. Scott
Mr. H. W. Sholl
Mr. Symon
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Traylen
Mr. Venn
Mr. Burt (Teller).

Question—That leave be given—put and negatived.

GENERAL LOAN AND INSCRIBED STOCK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), in moving the second reading of a bill to amend the General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act, 1884, said the House might be aware or not that our loans were raised under that Act, which included various provisions relating to the raising of loans, and showed how

these transactions were to be carried out by the Crown Agents. The present bill, it would be observed, consisted of only two or three clauses, and for this reason,—the Act of 1884 made all necessary provision as to the course to be generally followed in the matter; but, inasmuch as the colony under the new form of Government would be in a position to dispense with the services of the Crown Agents in the matter of raising loans, and to employ its own Agent, the bill now before the House made the necessary provision for doing so. The bill consisted of two parts; the first portion of it authorised the Government to enter into an agreement with any bank in London for the inscription and sale of stock and all other matters connected with the raising of loans. This provision, he might say, was similar to that prevailing in the other colonies in regard to the raising of their loans; most of them, if not all, now employed Banks to inscribe their stock, etc. In a subsequent portion of the bill provision was made for the appointment of an Agent to represent the colony in London, to act in conjunction with the Bank authorised to act on behalf of this Government. As, under our present Constitution, the Crown Agents would not be allowed to act for us in future in these transactions, it was necessary that the Act of 1884 should be amended accordingly, and this bill made the alteration that was required to be made.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

PARLIAMENTARY PRIVILEGES BILL.

The House went into committee for the consideration of this bill in detail. The various clauses were agreed to without discussion.

The House adjourned at a quarter past ten o'clock, p.m.