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1901-11-19

House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker took the chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

PAPER

Mr. BARTON laid upon the table

Copy of a letter from the Prime Minister in reply to a letter from the Premier of Queensland on the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill.

Ordered to be printed.

QUESTIONS

MILITARY STAFF OFFICERS

Mr O'MALLEY

- I desire to ask the Prime Minister if there is any truth in the rumour that the Commandant, when selected, will have a free hand to secure in England gold-laced, aristocratic staff officers at the expense of the Australian people, while the Commonwealth is full of trained, fighting men in the ranks of the unemployed?

Minister for External Affairs

Mr BARTON

- I never before heard the rumour; of course there is no truth in it.

CHRISTMAS ADJOURNMENT

Mr PAGE

- Will the Prime Minister inform the House whether the Government have decided on how long they intend to ask the House to adjourn for the Christmas holidays, so as to allow honorable members to arrange accordingly?

Mr BARTON

- No decision has been come to on that question, but it will be decided speedily, and honorable members informed accordingly.

IMPORTS AND EXPORTS

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- Some time ago the Treasurer promised that we should have certain statistical information with regard to imports, exports, and other matters up to 30th June. I wish to ask my right honorable friend if he will put the House in possession of the facts. With regard to an announcement in the press yesterday of revenue received for the month of September, it might be well if we could get these statistics supplied regularly. We are in an awkward position - in a worse position than we were in in the State Parliament - because we have no statistician from whom to obtain the information. I think it is absolutely necessary, especially in view of the debate on the Tariff, that we should have the information.

Treasurer

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I thought that I had given all the information required in the financial papers submitted at the opening of the Budget. I did not know that my honorable friend desired to get a return of the imports and exports up to the 30th June. If the information is available, it shall be obtained at once. But with regard to the Customs revenue, we generally get the information once a month. It is obtained by the Customs department much more quickly than by the Treasury, and we generally publish it in the newspapers.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- Could we not have the details of the items for each; State for September] It was merely stated as ?800,000 odd.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- Yes. At the end of the month we get a telegram stating the amount received, and we do not get the details until about the 15th or 16th of the month, but there is no reason why they should not be published then. I shall be glad to hand them to the press for the information of honorable members and others as soon as they are received.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- Let us know the imports to the 30th June.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I shall get that information at once. Does my honorable friend desire the figures for all the articles ?

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I want the total, and as much detail as possible.

Sir GEORGE TURNER

- I shall see that the information is obtained with as much detail as possible.

WAR OFFICE CONTRACTS

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Sir MALCOLM McEACHARN

- I desire to ask the Prime Minister whether his attention has been called to the cable appearing in the press on 9th inst., to the effect that Russia is supplying 20,000 horses for use in South Africa ; and to the cable appearing on 12th inst. that 70,000 horses have been purchased by the War office also for use in South Africa; whether, in view of these cables, he will, in the interest of Commonwealth trade, communicate by cable with the Home authorities, asking that the re-mount officers in Australia be authorized to make selection of suitable horses for periodical delivery in South Africa ; and asking further that in all cases of War office contracts Australian producers of horses and food supplies should have every opportunity of supplying their full share of such contracts 1

Mr BARTON

- Without undertaking to communicate the proposal in the terms suggested by my honorable friend, I may say that the Government has not lost sight of this matter. Some months ago I opened up communication, in conjunction with the Premier of New Zealand, on the question of food supplies, and not more than an hour ago I authorized the despatch of a telegram on the question of the remount horses. This matter will be very actively watched by the Government.

POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES : GOLD-FIELDS

Mr MAHON

asked the Minister representing the Postmaster-General, upon notice -

Whether the post and telegraph offices at Mount Leonora, Mount Morgans, Kookynie and Laverton, on the West Australian gold-fields, are undermanned, and whether, in consequence, undue delay has been experienced by the public in transacting business.

Whether a return will be obtained of the transactions effected in the offices named, with a view to increasing the respective staffs.

Minister (without portfolio)

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- The answers to the honorable member's questions are as follow : -

The staffs at Mount Leonora, Mount Morgan, Kookynie and Laverton, while generally fully employed, are quite equal to the requirements of those offices. Only one complaint of any delay has been received, namely, at Mount Morgan, and this was due to the difficulty experienced in obtaining a messenger, owing to peculiar difficulties due to local conditions.

A return of the transactions effected in the offices named is being obtained.

TARIFF ALTERATIONS

Sir LANGDON BONYTHON

asked the Minister of Trade and Customs, upon notice -

Whether he will state the intentions of the Government in regard to the Tariff in the event of duties being reduced or struck out, as much uncertainty on the subject exists in mercantile circles in Adelaide and probably elsewhere.

Minister for Trade and Customs

Mr KINGSTON

- This matter will be dealt with by the Tariff Act, but the Government do not propose to provide for refunds of amounts paid before the reduction or excision of the duty.

COUNTRY LETTER-CARRIERS

Sir JOHN QUICK

asked the Minister representing the Postmaster-General, upon notice -

Whether the Postmaster-General has given consideration to the complaint made by and on behalf of

country letter-carriers, in Victoria, that their claims to promotion as letter-sorters have been ignored, whilst junior officers in the General Post-office, Melbourne, have been promoted as sorters over the heads of deserving senior men stationed in the country offices ; and whether he will give directions which will prevent the recurrence of such complaints.

Sir PHILIP FYSH

- The following answer has been supplied : -

The Postmaster-General has given consideration to the complaint made by and on behalf of the country letter-carriers' in Victoria, that their claims to promotion as letter-sorters, have been ignored whilst junior officers in the General Post-office , Melbourne, have been promoted as sorters over the heads of deserving men stationed in the country offices. He has given such directions as will prevent the recurrence of such complaints.

BRITISH NEW GUINEA

In Committee

Debate resumed (from 12th November, vide page 7092), on motion by Mr. BARTON : -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth, if His Majesty's Government are willing to place it under federal control.

That towards the expenses of the administration of the possession this House is willing, when called upon, to vote a sum not exceeding £20,000 per annum, as from the 1st July, 1901, subject to revision at the end of five years.

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Sir WILLIAM MCMILLAN

- The members of the Opposition have not had an opportunity since we became practically a sovereign Commonwealth of understanding all the tortuous ways of the higher diplomacy. In the case of the Alien Immigration Restriction BUI, we had a measure in which we were supposed to do what we did not intend to do, and even in these resolutions which are now before the House, matters are not put exactly in such a straightforward manner as to indicate the actual position. Certainly, my right honorable friend, the Prime Minister, has explained the situation very clearly up to a point- According to these resolutions we are supposed to take possession of New Guinea, provided the Imperial Government are willing ; but the fact is that the Imperial Government have been very anxious for us to take possession. In fact, they have repudiated the financial responsibility connected with it, and everything now is in a state of, more or less, financial and administrative chaos.

Mr Barton

- If the honorable member will pardon me for a moment, I am sure he will be satisfied when I explain that the words - " If His Majesty's Government are willing to place it under federal control," refer to the question of New Guinea becoming a territory of the Commonwealth. There was a question whether New Guinea should be placed under the control of the Commonwealth by a difference in the instructions to the governing authority. The desire of the Ministry is that it should be taken over, if at all, as a territory of the Commonwealth, so as to give us full control.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I accept the Prime Minister's explanation up to a point ; but as far as I have read these despatches - the gist of the despatches was contained in my right honorable friend's speech, but I saw the despatches themselves only this morning - it is very clear that from the beginning the plain intention and purpose of the Imperial Government was that New Guinea should actually become, as it is now geographically, a part and parcel of the Commonwealth of Australia, It is very unfortunate that we should have to discuss this most important and far-reaching proposal in the midst of our Tariff debate. I am as anxious as any honorable member of this House to get on with the Tariff discussion, but if we are to continue this debate now, it ought to be conducted carefully and closely, the fullest consideration ought to be entered upon, and we ought not to come to any decision until we are perfectly satisfied that we are proceeding in the right direction. It is also unfortunate that there should be any precipitancy arising out of the financial position. I think every honorable member will allow that even if the status quo were maintained with regard to this dependency, the subsidy or grant given by Australia towards the deficiency should be voted by the Federal Parliament, and not by the different States. I think everybody will agree with that, and that it would have been better and wiser if when the state of affairs was known a few months ago, this

Parliament had been asked to make an interim arrangement with regard to the financial position. Then the whole matter would have come up at a convenient time, instead of being intruded into the midst of the all important fiscal debate. Honorable members know that we are now discussing the interests and rights of innumerable trades and businesses, and most honorable members have to read up a large amount of literature in order to make themselves acquainted with the ramifications of this Tariff. How in the name of common sense, therefore, can we devote ourselves at this particular moment to the consideration of a new departure in our Australian national life, fraught with consequences which it is hard to conceive. While I think it my duty to make a few remarks, and to unfold one or two views of this question, it might be better if this debate were postponed for a considerable period. It would be better for the House to vote the necessary funds in order to carry on the Government of New Guinea in its present shape until, at any rate, the end of the year.

Mr Barton

- The honorable member has evidently not read the papers. The matter is so urgent that it must be decided at once one way or the other.

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Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I have read the papers, and I know well that in the first place there was a deficiency up to 30th June of £7,000, and that to that amount was added another £3,000, making a total deficiency of £10,000. I am aware that £7,000 has been practically guaranteed by the three eastern States, and that Queensland has taken upon herself the responsibility of providing the other £3,000. The financial situation is therefore clear, at any rate, up to the 30th June, but that does not affect the position I take up. The very fact of the financial position being so serious makes it necessary, before we enter into the larger question which requires such careful determination, to immediately vote the sum required, so as to relieve the situation. Even if we never paid another farthing towards the administration of this territory, I think the Commonwealth of Australia is bound to take this matter over as one of the responsibilities of the States. I desire to point out to honorable members the very grave position we are in in dealing with this question to-day. New Guinea, no doubt, geographically belongs to Australia. It belongs to Australia as much geographically as Tasmania does. On the other hand, however, it is separated from the continent by a considerable belt of water. In that way the position of New Guinea is very different from that of the Northern Territory, which I hope the Federal Parliament will ultimately control. The Northern Territory is absolutely part and parcel of the mainland of Australia. We have a port there which will no doubt be defended by fortifications, and probably in a short period there will be railway communication with the Northern Territory, and the whole of the continental system of defence will be carried on by a net-work of railways. Then, again, New Guinea is differentiated altogether from Tasmania, because in Tasmania we have a population of British people, who can defend themselves, and who are part and parcel of the Commonwealth people. We have an island that is fortified where necessary, and the conditions generally are totally dissimilar from those of New Guinea. According to the statement of the Prime Minister, there is in New Guinea a population of between 300,000 and 350,000 coloured people, and in all human probability the great mass of the inhabitants of that island will be coloured to the end of time. The number of white inhabitants will be comparatively small unless a system is pursued there - such as I am sure we have deprecated in other countries - under which the coloured man has been absolutely driven out by the white man's civilization and vices. All this leads up to the very difficult question of control. The navy is the outside line of the Australian defences. The next line of defence is our fortifications, and the next, of course, our volunteer army. Up to the present time we have no means of controlling the disposition of the naval forces connected with Australia. If we take up the government of this possession - as I believe we should do - we shall have to consider the question of its naval defence, not, I hope, in an independent way, but by some distinct arrangement with the Imperial naval forces. If I understand our position aright, the admiral in command of the naval forces of Australia is absolutely paramount in authority. He takes his instructions from the Imperial Government, and, save as a matter of grace, no Australian Government can influence the disposition of those forces. The moment we even touch this island, which is very close to the mainland, and which I consider is geographically part of Australia - because I am willing to confess that - we open up the whole question with regard to dealing with the islands off the Pacific. But there is another point in connexion with New Guinea which it is well for us to consider. Our peculiar heritage, owing to

the island character of our continent, is that we do not touch at any part any foreign country, and that therefore we stand isolated in our own civilization, without any necessity for embroiling ourselves in the troubles of any other country - except, of course, when the Empire to which we belong is in danger, and has a righteous cause. We are there in close proximity to the* territory of Holland and of Germany. We' are also dealing with an entirely native race, and there may be difficulties in connexion with that race as civilization advances which may require the use of force. Therefore, I" want honorable members to understand that the taking over of the administration of New Guinea is the beginning of a great policy with regard to the Pacific. We are told by the Prime Minister that the placing of the Solomon Islands under the protecting wing of the Commonwealth Government may form the subject of a subsequent proposal: There is a certain amount of reason in the despatches of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. Most honorable members will recollect that many years ago Mr. Service was the most prominent of all our statesmen! in urging upon the Home Government the necessity for taking up every unowned island in the Pacific, and, if possible, of doing away with those foreign elements which might create trouble in the future in Australian waters. For the last twenty years we have been pressing on the Home Government questions connected with the New Hebrides, and I am sure honorable members will agree with me that when we heard that the Island of Samoa, in the Pacific, which was essentially British, which was civilized and practically dominated by the British people, had been given over to the Germans, there was a feeling of shame and indignation throughout the whole of Australia. Therefore, when dealing with this subject, we should deal with it with a: thorough knowledge of the intentions of the mother country with regard to the operations of our fleet in Australian waters. We do not want to take up the liability of an Australian fleet at the present moment. We have a magnificent and economical arrangement with the British Government, and, in the near future, I think we might very well increase our annual subsidy towards its maintenance. But I do feel that the Prime Minister, or one of the Ministers, should tell us a little more clearly how we are to carry out our responsibilities with regard to New Guinea. I quite understand that special legislation must be enacted in regard to that possession. I quite approve of that. I do not think that we want to alter our Acts in order to include New Guinea. We want, rather to enact legislation which will be suited to the needs of New Guinea itself. I have simply spoken so far in order to elicit from the Government a little more information upon the particular point to which I have referred. I wish, also, to impress upon them that it would be much better to have some interim arrangement made in order to meet the financial position in connexion with New Guinea, and to leave the full discussion of the larger question till a later period. Of course we must recollect that the moment we pass this resolution - and I am in favour of passing it - we commit ourselves to all the consequential [results. Of course we are not committing ourselves to the details of its management, but we are committing ourselves to the first of a long series of acts, under which, besides taking up the management of the continent of Australia as a Commonwealth Government, we begin to exercise an outside Government in the Pacific. I fail to see how we can do this, unless we have some arrangement by which in case of trouble amongst the natives of these islands, or off any difficulty with the adjoining territory belonging to other nations, we are possessed of a certain amount of naval force in order to make good our claim. At the same time the British Government no doubt say rightly that any disjunction of New Guinea from the Government and territory of Australia would be a menace to us. We could not possibly allow for any length of time any foreign element to menace us from those shores.

Mr Sawers

- It is there already - the Germans and Dutch are in New Guinea now.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- But after all the New Guinea, of which we take possession, is the one that practically menaces our shores. I think also that it would be a very good thing if, when a little more time' is available, some broad and comprehensive scheme could be submitted through negotiation by the Federal Government with the Home Government for re-adjusting some of these matters in the Pacific. I was hoping myself that when Samoa, which was not German in any sense, was handed over to that country we should have had somequid 2»'o quo. I was hopeful that Germany would have given up to us what is, to a large extent, a useless territory to her, namely, her portion of New Guinea. I should like to see negotiations proceeding with regard to the whole of New Guinea, because, I repeat - and it is the crux of the whole discussion - that New Guinea stands out altogether from all the other islands of the Pacific. It is practically part and

parcel of the mainland of Australia ; and certainly, if the British Government are anxious that Australia should be console dated, that we should be free from those disturbing influences which have caused so much trouble elsewhere ; and if we take over willingly - as I believe we shall - that portion of New Guinea which is at present governed by Great Britain, we ought to hav& some word from the Home Government that the acquirement of the whole territory will form part of negotiations in the future. This is a matter that might be elaborated very much more, as one of far-reaching; results so far as Australia is concerned. But it would be better, instead of deciding hastily at the present moment, if the Government brought down some interim, scheme by which we could vote sufficient money to keep the status quo, say up to the* end of the year, and then debate the question carefully, with the fullest possible information to guide us as to future results.

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Mr HUME COOK

- It is a. very common phrase from the lips of the man in the street that parliamentary institutions, move too slowly, and that political ends are arrived at with less haste than might be the case. But in this particular connexion I think the very reverse is true. We have not yet completed one year of the Commonwealth. We have not dealt with our first Budget or our first Tariff, and there are a vast number of questions affecting the Commonwealth, as a Commonwealth, apart from outside matters, which have not even been touched. Yet; we are asked to carry a resolution which affirms what the honorable member for Wentworth has rightly termed a great national policy in connexion with the South Pacific. It may be - and I am inclined to think it is so - that this matter is thrust on us by considerations which arise out of circumstances over which we have no control. If one may judge from the despatches which are placed in our hands, it is abundantly evident that the Imperial Government do not any longer intend to continue financial assistance to that portion of New Guinea which is British, but that they expect, as is most clearly indicated in the despatches from the Home Secretary's office, the Commonwealth to take up this dependency and assume all financial responsibility. I have read these despatches as carefully as possible, and I can come to no other conclusion. There are at least two statements contained in them which are very significant. The first of these statements is in paragraph 2 of the despatch dated 3rd October, 1901, and reads as follows : -

I would remind your Ministers that, as was pointed out in the fourth paragraph of my despatch to the Government of Queensland, No. 23, of the 8th June, 1898, British New Guinea was annexed only in response to the unanimous demands of Australia -

And this is the important point of this statement - and on the understanding that the Australian colonies would pay for the administration of the new dependency, which was to be to all intents and purposes an Australian possession.

That, I repeat, is a very significant statement. It drives me to the conclusion that the British Government look to the Australian Commonwealth to assume financial responsibility and control, which, from the very initiation, the Imperial Government hoped would be assumed, if not by the Commonwealth, which was not then in existence, at any rate by the colonies of Australia. The second statement is in paragraph 11 of the despatch of the 8th June, which is referred to in the extract I have just read. The statement is as follows :

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While, therefore, I have no objection to the continuance of the existing administrative arrangements for a time, I feel that, as the Australian colonies will reap all the direct and immediate benefit from the development of the territory, and there are numerous and pressing calls on the Imperial Exchequer for the development of territories in which this country is more immediately interested, I am unable to recommend that any further Imperial grants should be made towards New Guinea, towards which "Her Majesty's Government have already contributed for seven years longer than they engaged to do. These two statements taken together are sufficient to indicate to those who read them carefully that the Imperial authorities have come to the conclusion that we in Australia should take in hand the control, government, and management of British New Guinea. I, therefore, repeat the statement that the considerations which press this resolution on the House at this juncture are not of our seeking, but rather arise out of facts and circumstances over which we have no control. Although it may appear that we are acting hastily, and putting aside legislation, which is of more immediate local concern, in respect to banking laws, divorce laws, patent laws, the constitution of a High Court, and all those powers named in

the Commonwealth Constitution, yet the importance of this particular subject is perhaps the best excuse for the Government's action at the present time, more particularly in view of the despatches to which I have referred. It is quite true that the proposals laid down in the resolution really contain nothing very definite after the expiration of five years. What we are asked to commit ourselves to at the present time is a five years term of government - I think I may use the phrase advisedly - and towards the expense of that government or management, this House is asked to guarantee £20,000 a year. But after the expiration of the five years period we are apparently not given any hint as to what is to take place or what is expected of us, and to a certain extent we are taking a leap in the dark. 'A contribution of £20,000 per annum for five years is comparatively insignificant ; and if that were all the Commonwealth were committed to, we might easily vote for the resolution without any qualms of conscience. But it is evident to those who have given any serious attention to the matter, that £20,000 over five years is not nearly the amount which will be demanded of us in the future if we are to deal justly and rightly with the territory we propose to assume. My own opinion is that if we are to do the right and proper thing with the territory, assuming we take it over, the cost will be not £20,000 a year, but possibly £100,000 a year at the expiration of the particular period named in the resolution. We have had experience of some sort with respect to another territory which it was hoped would do a great deal for the colony which took it over. I am none too hopeful of the immediate development of New Guinea, and I am inclined to be less hopeful because of the experience of South Australia with the Northern Territory, It is a matter of history that when the South Australian Government took over the Northern Territory, they anticipated an immediate return and some profits from the control and management of that great area of country.

Mr Bamford

- There is no comparison between the two cases.

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Mr HUME COOK

- To a certain extent there is no comparison, but, at the same time, we have a warning in the assumption of the management and control of the Northern Territory. The South Australian Government rather more than expected the Northern Territory would pay its way. As a fact, some gain was anticipated, but nevertheless the very reverse has been the case, so far as I have been able to learn. Very shortly the Commonwealth will probably be asked to assume the control of the Northern Territory, very largely, I believe, because the State of South Australia cannot do the justice which they feel is due to that portion of the continent. The same thing may prove true with respect to New Guinea. That territory has apparently nothing to depend on for its development except such moneys as may come from the customs - which sum is very limited if we judge from the figures presented to us - and there is every prospect of the Commonwealth being asked to find a much larger sum than £20,000 a year in the immediate future. It is true, and it is gratifying to know, that during the last few years there has been a steady increase in the customs revenue of New Guinea. Not only is that so, but apparently there is also an increase in the returns from the gold that is won from the soil there, from sandal wood, cedar, and other export timbers, and from the pearl shell and other industries. But these increases are not sufficient in themselves, taken in the aggregate, to warrant us in assuming that £20,000 per annum will be sufficient to cover all needs and demands after the period of five years named in the resolution. In view of all these facts, we ought not to disguise from ourselves - I do not disguise it from myself - that if the Commonwealth takes in hand the management and control of New

Guinea, we must recognise, to begin with that the financial responsibility, as pointed out by the honorable member for Wentworth, will be very much larger than we have, perhaps, been led to imagine by a cursory examination of the subject. If the territory is to be managed and developed, that can only be by the expenditure of large sums of money. Sir William McGregor has pointed out time and again that except by means of money expended by the Government - such as the Government is in New Guinea - there has been practically no development of any kind in the British possession, and that with the limited means at his command, and owing to the fact that he has not been able to obtain the services of many men of superior capacity, the exploration and initial work which he thinks necessary, has not been a* satisfactory as could have been desired. Practically no exploration has taken place except along the coast. Yet as we know - the Prime Minister has been careful to affirm and reaffirm the point - the area of British territory in New Guinea is some 90,000 square miles, or larger than the area of Great Britain. This means that if we

are to deal justly with this country, exploration and exploitation can only be carried on by means of a wise Government expenditure. So far as trading and internal development is concerned, possibly more money will be required. If we may judge from accounts we read in official documents and other data, the Germans in their portion of New Guinea have recognised that if they are to develop their territory properly, they must spend considerable sums of money. Sir William Macgregor was careful to point out in a lecture delivered by him at the British Colonial Institute in 1899 that the German people were spending a great deal of money in developing their territory, and that as much as possible the Imperial authorities should 'do likewise if they were to gain any benefit from dealing with that possession. I do not know whether it will be part of the policy of the Government in the future, if they take over British New Guinea, to make grants to prospectors with regard to mining, exploration, and matters of that kind ; but, if that island is to be successfully developed, some such methods will have to be pursued. Not only is that the case, but some control will also have to be exercised with respect to the timber resources of the island. It has been pointed out by those who have the right to speak with authority that something like wholesale destruction has been taking place, and that there is no proper conservation of the natural timbers of the island. So that really a vast number of subjects, apart from Governmental administration, will have to be considered, particularly with regard to the development and encouragement of the trade of this possession. I was struck also, in reading some literature on the subject, by a remark made by Mr. Hatton Richards, a gentleman who has had some considerable experience as a resident of New Guinea, and who affirms positively that one of the best things that the British Government could do would be to establish schools for the teaching of the English language to the children of the natives. He regarded this as one of the best means of civilizing some 300,000 odd British subjects, who are the natural inhabitants of that portion of the earth's surface.

Mr O'Malley

- If we civilize them they will die.

Mr HUME COOK

- That is one of the difficulties we shall have to face. If we are to take over an island inhabited by a large number of coloured people, and if we are to deal justly with them, and teach them our arts, our civilization, and our language - and possibly some of our bad habits - it may be that difficulties will arise in the future which we cannot even suggest at the present moment. Certainly the gentleman I have quoted thinks that one of the best means of civilizing the native races of New Guinea would be to establish State schools. But schools cannot be established and maintained without the expenditure of considerable sums of money.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- They are established there already.

Mr HUME COOK

- In a very small way.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- To a considerable extent, I can assure the honorable member.

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Mr HUME COOK

- The mission schools do a great deal of good, no doubt, but I am speaking of public schools, such as those which have been established and maintained by the various Australian States. Then there is a very large and important question concerning the lands administration of British New Guinea. I gather from the literature to which I previously referred, that part of the policy carried out with respect to New Guinea, has been to acquire by purchase from the natives, whatever land was required for white settlement. Whether that policy is to be maintained in the future I cannot say, because this motion does not pledge us to any policy of Government, nor could it be expected to do so. But the whole question of land administration, involving considerations of leasing or of sale, matters concerning titles and things of that kind, will demand a huge amount of consideration such as could not possibly be given in connexion with a motion like that before the committee. But these are questions which will have to be faced if the motion be agreed to, if the territory is ceded to the Commonwealth, and if our Government is to take entire control. They are questions which must necessarily be forced upon us, and they will naturally lead to the expenditure of an amount of money by no means covered by the sum already mentioned. There is also a

matter, upon which I am not sufficiently well posted to say whether it is too early or too late for settlement, but which might engage attention in regard to this subject, and that is the connexion of New Guinea by cable. I observe, from a very interesting address, delivered by a member of the Royal Geographical Society, before the British Colonial Institute, that he very strongly expressed the opinion that the Pacific cable should be connected with New Guinea and with the Solomon and Gilbert groups of islands. He urged this as one of the best means of developing the trade and resources of these three sets of islands. As I have intimated, I am not sufficiently well versed in the details and particulars of the Pacific cable scheme to say whether it would be possible or profitable to connect New Guinea by cable, but it is an important question, and one which the Government, if this motion be carried, might very well consider. A subject which will necessarily arise, and which, probably, will give us most concern, is the kind of Government which is to be adopted with respect to New Guinea. The Prime Minister has been careful to say that . if British New Guinea is to be controlled at all by the Commonwealth, it will be controlled as a territory; that it will be entirely in the hands of the Commonwealth to say what kind of Government it shall have, and to what extent that Government may go ; and that, with respect to its laws, they will be practically at the dictation of the Commonwealth, more especially with regard to the Customs taxation, which need not necessarily be uniform with the Commonwealth Customs taxation. I have no reason to doubt the right honorable gentleman's legal opinion upon that point. The matter .involves legal considerations, and I have every confidence in the Prime Minister's legal acumen, and believe that he is right in that respect. But if it be so, then there are considerations that necessitate the very -.gravest and most careful handling at our hands, or the hands of the Commonwealth Government; because if there is to be a differential Tariff, differential rates, and differential Government in connexion with New Guinea - which the honorable member for Wentworth has pointed out that is it geographically part and parcel of the Commonwealth - we do not know what difficulties may arise with respect to our trading and other operations in the territory. All these matters apart, however - and also setting aside the apparent undue haste which is manifested in connexion with the subject - the question which naturally arises is : Can Australia, in view of Great Britain's determination not to contribute any longer to the financial necessities of British New Guinea, or her resolve, it may be, to abandon it, afford to let the island go ; or must Australia take in hand the work of governing the territory? Those are the questions I have asked myself ; and I have no hesitation in saying that there is but a single answer so far as Australia is concerned. New Guinea can never be allowed under any possible conceivable circumstances to drift into the hands of a foreign power. The pity is that any portion of it should have ever become foreign territory ; that the Imperial authorities failed to act on the advice tendered to them by the late Mr., afterwards Sir Thomas, Mcllwraith, on behalf of his Government, and take over the whole island when there was a chance to do so.

Mr McDonald

- Queensland did annex it.

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Mr HUME COOK

- I have the greatest respect and admiration for the attitude taken up from the first by Queensland on this question. The Queensland Government have displayed a most patriotic and self-sacrificing spirit on every occasion upon which they have acted in matters relating to New Guinea. I admire and honour the statesmen of Queensland for the work that they have done in this respect. It is the result of their efforts that portion. of New Guinea is now British territory. The hoisting of the British flag on the island, by Mr. Chester, at the instance of the Queensland Government, was a patriotic act which now receives praise, and in the future will receive even heartier commendation from all those who claim to be true Australians. I regret with others that the whole of the island was not taken over by the British, and that a portion of it is now in the hands of a foreign power. If it be possible, as the honorable member for Wentworth has suggested, to enter into negotiations for the acquirement of the remaining portion of New Guinea by the Commonwealth, even though its acquirement may cost a large sum of money, I think for very many considerations that it would be well worth doing so. In no circumstances could the island be allowed to drift into the hands of a foreign power. In the first place the interests of Australian defence should render that impossible. The coast of British New Guinea appears to abound in harbours which might very easily shelter the warships of a foreign power, or be made the base for naval operations against the .

Commonwealth. On the occasion of the lecture delivered by Sir William' Macgregor before the British Colonial Institute - to which I have referred already - several gentlemen addressed themselves to the subject at the conclusion of his speech. Amongst others was Rear- Admiral D. H. Bosanquet, who said in the course of his remarks that- -

The coast abounds in harbors, which command important trade routes from China and the East to the Western Pacific. In the hands of an enemy these harbors would command the whole of the east coast of Australia and make it difficult for the colonies to get along at all. 8

That is a statement made by a gentleman who should speak with some authority on the subject, because he has had some experience on the Australian station, and knows what he is talking about. I find that this statement was endorsed, and strongly supported by Vice-Admiral Cyprian Bridge, another naval officer familiar with the subject. His speech was to the effect that in all the circumstances it would be extremely inadvisable to allow any portion of British New Guinea to be abandoned. That was the general trend of his remarks.

Mr Sawers

- That is not likely to take place.

Mr HUME COOK

- I am glad to say that now it is not even contemplated. Vice- Admiral Cyprian Bridge said also that New Guinea might be made a base for operations against the Commonwealth if it got into the hands of a foreign power. Not only are there reasons why, from a defence point of view, we should take over the control of New Guinea, but there are also the commercial and trading relationships to which reference has been made by others. There can be no doubt whatever that while, perhaps, for a considerable number of years the efficient control of British New Guinea will involve us in a large expenditure, the time must come inevitably when the island will be one of the best markets of the Commonwealth - when, together with the other adjacent islands, it will be peopled by persons of our own race and colour who will be large consumers of Australian products. These considerations lead me to say that although I would have preferred that this motion should have been delayed until we had had more information upon the subject - although, I think, it would have been better for Great Britain herself to have retained control over the islands for some years to come, and to have contributed to their management and government, and loath as I am to vote thus early for increasing the financial responsibility of the Commonwealth, yet I would be still more loath to allow British New Guinea to pass from the control of our Government. We may have to incur heavy expenditure in taking over the management, yet I think it would be better to do that -

Mr Poynton

- Is there any necessity to do it now?

Mr HUME COOK

- I think there is great necessity to do it now, for reasons which are shown in the despatches before us. I have quoted already two extracts from the despatches in our hands, which lead me to the opinion that the Imperial Government will contribute no longer towards the expenses of controlling New Guinea, and that they have anticipated from the very beginning that British New Guinea would be controlled by the Australian States if not by the Commonwealth. Those statements in the despatches are most definite and pronounced. In these circumstances, it appears to me that the Government had no other alternative than to submit these proposals to us. The apparent hurry, therefore, is only the outcome of a stern necessity, and while I am very loath to saddle the Commonwealth thus early with the expenditure of perhaps many thousands of pounds, yet I am fully persuaded that it is better to face all the difficulties rather than lose British New Guinea to the Commonwealth.

Mr SAWERS

- I wish to say, very frankly, that I shall find it impossible to vote for the motions as submitted by the Government. The first is -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth, if His Majesty's Government are willing to place it under federal control.

The honorable member for Wentworth has said that this proposal opens up a wide field, full of significance as to future action, and I entirely concur in his remarks. In opposing the first motion, I do not say that at some future time I would not see my way to vote for such a proposal if I were asked to do so ; but my judgment directs that on the present occasion I must oppose it. I agree with the honorable

member for Wentworth that the people of Australia should understand what they are doing before Parliament authorizes the Government to enter into this wide field of annexation. It is open to all kinds of possibilities, difficulties, and dangers in the future, and the people of Australia should enter upon this policy - if we are to enter upon it - with their eyes fully open to what they are doing.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- What are the dangers?

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Mr SAWERS

- Before I sit down I shall point out a few of them. The second motion is that -

That towards the expenses of the administration of the possession this House is willing, when called upon, to vote a sum not exceeding £20,000 per annum, as from 1st July, 1901, subject to revision at the end of five years.

I am willing to vote for that proposal if it be amended slightly so as to read that "towards the expenses of British New Guinea this House is willing," &c, to vote the money. Standing as I do, in the position of a friend to the Government, I do not desire to move an amendment, but if no other honorable member will do so I shall move that the first motion be expunged, and that the second be amended in the way I have suggested. I was somewhat disappointed with the speech of the honorable member for Wentworth. The whole tenor of it appeared to me to be in favour of a policy of expansion and annexation. The honorable member said he approved of acquiring possession of New Guinea, and he more than hinted that he would approve of a still further extension of this policy, probably to the annexation of the Solomons, and of the New Hebrides.

Sir William McMillan

- I did not commit myself any further. I spoke of an adjustment of British possessions.

Mr SAWERS

- The honorable member certainly did speak about an adjustment, and it would certainly be a very wise thing, if we are going to enter into a policy of this kind, to put ourselves in communication with the Imperial Government in order to induce them to come to some arrangement with France, Germany, Holland, and other powers that may be interested, to secure some adjustment in the matter of the possession of these islands before we enter upon any policy of acquiring islands scattered throughout the Pacific, and in proximity to the possessions of other powers. The passage of the second portion of the resolution, which I hope will be agreed to by the committee, will leave the policy of annexing New Guinea perfectly open for the consideration of the Australian people

Sir William Lyne

- Who is going to control it in the meantime?

Mr SAWERS

- Who is controlling it now?

Sir William Lyne

- Queensland.

Mr SAWERS

- There is no harm, then, in the Government of the Commonwealth coming to an arrangement with the Imperial authorities to administer the possession on behalf of the Imperial Government.

Mr Barton

- We are to find all the money and get nothing for it?

Mr SAWERS

- I am willing to vote the money necessary for the administration of the possession, but I do object to its being proclaimed as a territory of the Commonwealth. That is the whole point. The honorable member for Melbourne has asked what are the dangers. To begin with, a policy of this kind will lead us into an unknown field.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Are we not in it already?

Mr SAWERS

- The honorable member for Wentworth and the honorable member who preceded me have said that New Guinea is essentially part of Australia, and belongs to Australia. If it belongs to Australia, how is it that

three-fourths of the island is in the hands of other powers?

Sir William McMillan

- Geographically it belongs to Australia.

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Mr SAWERS

- The peculiar danger of our acquiring possession of the British possession in New Guinea is that it is not an island in itself bordered by the sea, but for many hundreds of miles, I do not know know the distance, but probably it is not far short of 1,000 miles along an unknown boundary line, we shall be fronted on one side by the territory of Germany, and on the other side by the territory of Holland. In the future, adventurers - speaking of them in the best sense of the term - exploring that country, are bound to come into conflict with the Dutch and Germans exploring their portions of the island, and in that way our people will come into conflict with the subjects of Holland or Germany. There are in this way possibilities of international conflict in the future. If we were going to annex the whole of New Guinea there might be something in the arguments used in support of these resolutions. We have now the sea as our boundary, but if we annexed this portion of New Guinea, we should have a common boundary line for at least a thousand miles with two European powers, and that would place us in a position of delicacy and possible conflict. I have read the speech of the Prime Minister, and while I agree that it is a good speech as far as it goes, I fail to find a single statement in the speech which would show that we should derive any advantage from the annexation of New Guinea. I know there is a possibility of many disadvantages arising, including an unknown expenditure which has already been referred to by the honorable member for Bourke. We know that throughout the world these islands peopled by coloured races are not profitable to the powers that hold them. I remember, when I was a young man, being very proud of the great possessions of Great Britain, of the many islands she had everywhere, and of the fact that her flag was flying over every sea ; but as I have grown older I have come to believe that many of those possessions are an embarrassment and a source of useless expenditure to the Home Government.

Mr FOWLER

- That is what some people in Great Britain used to say of all her colonial possessions.

Mr SAWERS

- The glory of an empire does not depend upon the great extent of its possessions. We know that in the old days Great Britain was proud to possess the West Indies, but we know now that they have become an absolute drag upon the Imperial Exchequer, and that Jamaica had to be financed last year by the British Government. There are other questions to be considered, such as the coloured problem, about which we have heard a great deal in this House, and if New Guinea and islands in the South Seas are to become parts of the territory of this Commonwealth, we shall have new phases of that problem to deal with. What are we to do with the productions of these islands ? Are we to treat them as the productions of our own people, and give them special advantages over the productions of other countries, to the detriment of our own workers within our own proper Australian territory ? Suppose that New Guinea becomes a great sugar producing country, is the sugar produced there to be introduced into the Commonwealth under special advantages, which may discourage the efforts of white workers trying to grow sugar within the Commonwealth ?

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Had we not better wipe the blacks off the face of the earth altogether ?

Mr SAWERS

- I wish to deal with Australia as Australia. I believe in what was called in America the Monroe doctrine, under which it was agreed that the United States did not need to enlarge her territory by the acquisition of territory outside her own borders. I am not sure that America would not be a greater America to-day if that doctrine had been adhered to.

Mr Deakin

- That is not the Monroe doctrine.

Mr SAWERS

- The great significance of this proposal seems to me to be shown by the question - Where are we to stop ? It is New Guinea to-day ; it will be the Solomons to-morrow, and, perhaps, the New Hebrides a little later on. I have been long enough connected with politics in this country to remember a debate in the New

South Wales Legislative Assembly on the everlasting quarrel which crops up between the French and the British in the New

Hebrides. I remember grave debates taking place there, and we were asked to petition the Imperial Government and to demand the annexation of the New Hebrides by Great Britain. I remember that one Premier of Victoria, in the course of a similar debate in this or the other Chamber, stated that if Great Britain did not possess herself of the New Hebrides, Australia would by-and-by take care that she took those islands. So we see that by proposals of this kind we are going to give Australian Ministers a chance of embroiling Australia in difficulties and complications with great European powers.

Mr Winter Cooke

- Would the honorable member abandon New Guinea 1

Mr SAWERS

- I never suggested for a moment that New Guinea should be abandoned. If the honorable member had listened to my remarks he would have heard that I was willing to agree to the second portion of the resolution, voting money for the administration of New Guinea, but allowing it to remain still under the control of the Imperial authorities. They might if they chose delegate its administration to the Government of the Commonwealth, but what I chiefly object to is that it should be made a territory of the Commonwealth. Any gentleman who looks at a map of the South Seas will see that great powers of Europe have acquired possessions or protectorates therein. We have everlasting trouble with the French in the New Hebrides ; we have the Germans at Samoa, and the Dutch and the Germans at New Guinea. I believe that there would be no greater act of statesmanship on the part of the Prime Minister and his colleagues if he could enter into negotiations with the Imperial Government and bring about a readjustment of the control of the South Sea Islands. We know that there have been treaties and arrangements made between the great powers of Europe and Great Britain. They have arranged spheres of influence which are clearly marked on the map, and we cannot depart from that arrangement without the consent of the European powers.

Mr Barton

- How much does the honorable member think our influence in the South Seas will be increased by the refusal of responsibility 1

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Mr SAWERS

- Where is the responsibility to end 1 That is the whole question.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- It should not end until the whole of the islands are under our control.

Mr SAWERS

- If there were no other great powers anxious to acquire the islands than ourselves it would be straight sailing ; but are we to ignore the great military and naval powers of Europe, to say that we have a vested right in the waste lands of the earth to the exclusion of all other peoples? We must have fair play; we must recognise the rights of other powers to some share in the waste places of the earth. The policy of mopping up the islands is a sort of Jingoism which I hope Australia will refrain from. My chief contention is that Australia should be given time to study this subject, and that the Australian people should make up their minds, with their eyes wide open to the full significance of the step, as to whether they should enter upon a policy of annexation in the South Seas or not, and if they do resolve to take that course, then I contend that it would be better to have a readjustment of the control of the islands than to have the different powers scattered amongst each other as they are. There could be nothing more detrimental to the interests of the islands, to the Commonwealth, and to the British people themselves than to have dual control, to have the French and English managing the New Hebrides, and the Germans and the English Samoa, when the islands should be in the hands of one power or the other.

Sir William Lyne

- If it had not been for the policy which the honorable member is advocating we should have had the whole of New Guinea.

Mr SAWERS

- If we had the whole of New Guinea there might be something in this motion worth supporting. We are running into danger in going into New Guinea, because we are throwing ourselves alongside the

boundaries of territory belonging to great European powers.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- But Great Britain is there, and surely she would stand by us.

Mr SAWERS

- We do not wish to bring Great Britain into difficulties, and if she meant to take any portion of New Guinea she ought to have allowed the whole of it to be annexed when she was at it. But she lost a great opportunity. What honorable members and the people of the Commonwealth should bear in mind is that it is not New Guinea, but less than a third of it, which we are asked to take as a territory. I object to the Commonwealth having a territory which adjoins countries belonging to European powers. We should have time to decide this matter. I do not say that it is my last word by any means. But I am not prepared at the present time to vote for this policy of annexation. It will lead us into an unknown expenditure.

Mr Kirwan

- But the honorable member is in favour of the Commonwealth administering the affairs of British New Guinea ?

Mr SAWERS

- I have no objection to the Commonwealth doing that at the request of the Imperial Government, but under their control and protection, so that there should be no trouble or difficulty. The policy of annexation is a policy full of possibilities of international conflict, and it will lead to unknown expenditure. I prefer, if we are to have these islands in the South Seas, that they should become protectorates under the Imperial authority, when we should have the British navy to keep order, or if they rose to a higher level than that, they might become colonies, but I am not prepared to make any of them part of the Commonwealth.

Mr Mahon

- The Imperial Government has refused to make British New Guinea a Crown colony ?

Mr SAWERS

- In what position does British New Guinea stand? It is annexed by the British. No foreign power dare to put a foot there and claim territory, because it is under the protection of Great Britain.

Mr Barton

- It is not a protectorate now. It was converted from a protectorate into an annexed possession, and since then there has been a refusal to make it a Crown colony.

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Mr SAWERS

- I think that the refusal means that the British Government do not want to find all the money, and if we are prepared to find it, I have no doubt that they will find gentlemen to administer the island and keep order. In view of the circumstances that Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria entered into obligations to find the money to help to administer the affairs of British New Guinea, I am perfectly willing for the Commonwealth to find the money.

Sir William McMillan

- The honorable member proposes to pass the second part of the motion and to leave the consideration of the other to the future ?

Mr SAWERS

- I would express no opinion, but leave it an open question. I do not think that the House should be asked to give a definite expression of opinion as to whether the Commonwealth should enter upon a policy of annexation, but it should be asked, and I hope it would be willing, to grant the money required. At the present time I must pause before I assist the Government in a policy of this kind. It is a doubtful policy ; it is full of all possible complications and of international conflict. No great justification has been shown for it. The Prime Minister showed no advantage to be derived by the Commonwealth, and I am very doubtful if any advantage is possible. I feel it to be my duty, until the people of Australia have had an opportunity of definitely making up their minds on the question, to oppose the main object of the motion.

Attorney-General

Mr DEAKIN

. - The chief points arising during the discussion this afternoon are practically two. The first is that made by the honorable member for Wentworth, who, at the outset of his observations, questioned the necessity for the consideration of this question at all at the present moment. Nothing but the belief of the

Government that it was a matter of extreme urgency would have led them to set aside, even for a few hours, the discussion on the Tariff; and it should have been apparent, I think, to the honorable member, from the perusal of the documents laid upon the table, as well as from the statement of the head of the Government, that in this matter we have, or believe we have, absolutely no choice.

Sir William McMillan

- I admitted the financial urgency, but not the urgency of committing ourselves at the present time.

Mr DEAKIN

- That I am going to treat as a second point, because although it was mentioned by the honorable member for Wentworth, it has been very much elaborated by the honorable member for New England. With regard to the emergency of the situation, I may say that it arises quite independently of any action of the Government. In fact, if a complaint might be brought against the administration, it would be on the ground that it has delayed as long as it thought possible before taking any definite action. The despatches before the House are not the whole of those which have passed, but they comprise all the material communications exchanged. They were led up to by others, which have been reaching the Government ever since it took office, calling attention to the position of New Guinea, and inviting action. If honorable members have these documents in their hands, and will turn their attention to the last part of them, they will find under date 2nd October, 1900, a cable from the Government of Queensland, calling attention to the fact -

That there exists no arrangement respecting future expenditure, or for the future control of the affairs of the possession.

And he adds -

I cannot give instructions.

Thus it will be seen that the financial question, although important, is not the only one. He says that no arrangements exist respecting expenditure, and that he cannot give any instructions. He proceeds -

I submit this most urgent matter for consideration of your Government. In the meantime Lieutenant-Governor of British New Guinea is much embarrassed, and quite unable to perform duty administering affairs of Government.

Mr Glynn

- Has not the Act of 1898 been extended? Is there a legal difficulty, or is the Governor embarrassed because he has no cash?

Mr DEAKIN

- The Governor has been provided with cash by one expedient or another until all expedients appear to have been practically exhausted - unless money is provided by this Parliament.

Mr Barton

- The Governor of New Guinea has been living on guarantees, and has been placed in a most unfair position.

Mr Glynn

- Then the difficulty is a financial rather than a legal one.

Mr Barton

- The honorable and learned member insinuated just now that it was a financial difficulty only.

Mr Glynn

- I inquired whether it was a financial or a legal difficulty.

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Mr DEAKIN

- If the honorable and learned member will look through the papers which he has in his hand, he will see the difficulties of the Governor of New Guinea, Mr. Le Hunte, indicated at length. On the 7th October there was another telegram, in which the cable to which

I have just referred was repeated to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. On page 24 of the printed correspondence will be found two statements. The first is from the Premier of Queensland, and is dated 10th October, and points out that the trust fund out of which the expenses of the possession had been paid, and out of which the working banking accounts had been fed, was exhausted, and that the Queensland National Bank had presented for guarantee cheques approximating to £700. Lower down will be found a cable from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Commonwealth Government stating

that the question of British New Guinea is most urgent, and expressing the hope that Ministers will deal with it as soon as possible. That was dated 18th October. If honorable members will glance at the despatches they will find from the Governor of New Guinea, and from the Governor, on behalf of the Administration of Queensland, and from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, statements that this is a matter of the utmost urgency, which cannot possibly be longer postponed. They will find also communications from the heads of the Administrations in New South Wales and in Victoria, calling upon the Commonwealth Government to take decisive action. We have, therefore, a situation in which all parties concerned unite first in a statement and then in a request. The statement is that this is a matter of the utmost urgency, calling for immediate treatment, and the request is that the Parliament of the Commonwealth shall deal with it. I fail, therefore, to find the slightest justification for the assertion of the honorable member for Wentworth that the settlement of the affairs of New Guinea can longer be postponed. References to these despatches will show that since 30th September the funds at the disposal of the Administrator of the possession have been absolutely exhausted. The consequence is that the honorable member's suggestion that we should find funds up to the close of the present year, 31st December, would mean - even if we did so - that then we should have another dead-lock such as at present exists. The wheels of Government would be unable to revolve, and unless this House happened to be sitting in the first week of January we should not be competent to deal with the same situation which would then have re-emerged.

Mr Glynn

- The honorable member did not make that proposition.

Mr DEAKIN

- The honorable member mentioned that as his first distinctive proposal. He said that we should ' make an interim arrangement. Now, our proposal, is an interim arrangement, and has not been submitted to this House in any other shape. It commits the House to two things first of all, to find the funds, as requested, up to £20,000 a year for five years Honorable members are perfectly aware that the term of five years continually recurs in the consideration of these questions. This arises from the fact that the book-keeping system has to be continued and the finances of the States dealt with out. of the total receipts and expenditure of the Commonwealth each in its own separate manner, and each with its own debits and credits. The hands of the Commonwealth are tied for five years, and for five years we can only hope to make interim financial proposals. There is a further five years beyond this during which we shall be affected hy the operation of what is generally known as the Braddon clause.

Mr Piesse

- The contributions will have.' to be made per capita.

Mr DEAKIN

- My honorable friend! speaks of the contributions being made percapita, but that will not relieve us from the operation of the Braddon clause. The circumstances in which we are placed are steadily eating up that one-fourth of the total amount raised by us which is available for the* Commonwealth - a sum which cannot be increased without raising by means of customs duties £4 foi' every £1 we require. Therefore the assumption of every burden, and especially this burden, has been regarded by the Government with the utmost anxiety. We see approaching nearer and nearer the time at which the Braddon clause will become operative and involve very serious consideration indeed at the hands of the representatives of the people in this House. It was for that reason that what appeared to be a reasonable and just request was made by us to the Imperial Government for a very small modicum of financial assistance in dealing with the circumstances of this territory during the next five years.

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Mr Conroy

- The request ought never to have been made - it placed us in a most humiliating position.

Mr DEAKIN

- I think it was a very honest, legitimate, and reasonable request, which under ordinary circumstances would have been granted without the slightest hesitation. This territory has in the past involved the consideration of Australian interests - so much the foremost that others can scarcely be mentioned with them - but it has also involved Imperial issues of great moment. The Imperial Government recognised this for a certain term of years, and every reason which operated in inducing them to grant assistance during

the first period of the development of this territory should still operate. The Commonwealth is having cast upon it an additional burden of some extra £5,000 or £7,000 a year, which may have to be provided for under the operation of the Braddon clause by raising four times that amount of money. We must remember that we have this question forced upon us from outside the Commonwealth, and- that our hands are not free to propose to this House anything more than an interim proposal at the present time. This proposal is more than temporary in character, in so far as it is intended that British New Guinea should be distinctly attached to the Commonwealth as a territory. That is the point upon which the honorable member for New England in his remarks to-day dwelt with so much force and so much emphasis. The honorable member's standing, as well as the manner in which he expresses his views, demand that his statement should receive the most careful consideration from honorable members of this House. It seemed to me, however, that he based his proposal in the first place upon the omission of certain important facts which cannot be ignored. He spoke continually of this acceptance of New Guinea as a territory as involving annexation. It does so far as the Commonwealth is concerned, if it be a proper word to apply in that connexion. Of course, in its strict acceptation, annexation implies the addition to the possessions of the British Crown of some territory which was not formerly within the bounds of the Empire. The honorable member is well aware that New Guinea for many years past has been annexed, and is part of the British Empire. Then comes the honorable member's proposition that we should find £20,000 a year, and couple that donation - for such it would be - with a request that the Imperial Government should control the island for us. First of all, I do not think the honorable member will submit that the British Government, considering the proximity of New Guinea to Australia, is in a better position either to control its affairs or to provide men more capable of conducting them than is the Commonwealth. The honorable member, I am sure, did not intend to convey any reflection upon those whom the Commonwealth may employ in New Guinea. Nor did he mean that, separated by half the earth's circuit, a Government in Downing Street would be likely to administer its affairs more efficiently in the interests of the Empire as a whole than would the Government of the Commonwealth with its much closer proximity.

Mr Sawers

- It would involve a larger British fleet in Australian waters.

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Mr DEAKIN

- I am not aware that the people of New Guinea, with whom we have to deal, are possessed of any fleet at all. It is true they have a few canoes, but they are possessed of no power with which Australia is not capable of dealing without aid. Such questions can only arise in regard to the neighbouring foreign powers - the Dutch, who have scarcely any settlement on the western part of the island, or the Germans, who as yet have only touched the north-east coast. The time when the progress of settlement will press upon those lines which divide British territory from territory which is not British is perhaps very far removed. Although on the north-west coast, where the Ply River closely approaches the point of the junction of English, German, and Dutch territory, there might conceivably be such a development in a short time, it is very improbable that for many years to come the settlers of the different nations will find themselves face to face. The honorable member for New England was looking very far ahead throughout the whole of his remarks. He must look many years ahead before we can conceive of the possibility of international complications across the boundary lines of New Guinea. When they do arise - if ever they do - there is no reason to suppose that they will not be as effectually dealt with by the British Government because the officials of the administration happen to be under the control of the Commonwealth, or because the settlers in New Guinea chance in some degree to be allied to the Commonwealth, as they would be if the Imperial Government were in control through its own agents. Consequently, whatever difficulty there may be in this respect attaches equally to any scheme. I do not disregard the honorable member's arguments. I am far from making light of them. But I submit that there is no greater danger to be apprehended from trusting our own officials than there is from trusting the ordinary officials of the British Government.

Mr Piesse

- If we were organized for it.

Mr DEAKIN

- I say nothing derogatory to the organization of the British Foreign-office. They are extremely hard to

move by our appeals, but, according to the testimony from all parts of the Empire, they are harder still to move by the officials of their own Government. If we look forward to a somewhat jealous shepherding of any rights which we possess in New Guinea, it seems to me that they are far more likely to be efficiently protected if we depend upon our own officials than if we depend on those appointed by the British Colonial-office. The honorable member for New England, when he dealt with possible dangers of the future, failed to show that they existed any more under our proposition than under his own. He had to take the ground that we should confess our incapacity to deal with this territory, or to control it equitably or in a business-like fashion. We are to continue to pay, and receive nothing for that payment. The honorable member said that the Prime Minister did not give any reason why territorial control by the Commonwealth would be preferable to Imperial control.

Mr Sawers

- I do not care which it is as long as we do not annex it as a territory.

Mr DEAKIN

- I will submit reasons why it should be made a Territory at the earliest possible date. What we must provide in New Guinea is first the maintenance of order, because the bold and adventurous spirits of whom our nation happily has been prolific in the past, and will be prolific in the future, have already found their way there.

Mr Glynn

- There were 27 murders committed there the year before last, and not one of the criminals was convicted of the capital offence.

Mr DEAKIN

- Those are not the adventurous spirits of whom I am speaking.

I suppose that those charged with the murders were natives of New Guinea.

Mr Glynn

- That rather points my interjection the more.

Mr DEAKIN

- If they had had the advantage of being defended by the honorable and learned member for South Australia, I should not be surprised at their immediate acquittal.

Mr Glynn

- Some of them received seven years for manslaughter, but not one suffered the capital penalty.

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Mr DEAKIN

- The maintenance of order in New Guinea is a serious consideration. If we could have turned the key in the door and excluded those adventurous spirits from making a settlement in that country, and if we could have protected the missionaries, who, as yet, we have been unable effectually to protect - if we could have kept New Guinea a closed territory for ten or twenty years till we were better fitted than we now are to cope with the task of its management - there might have been something in the contention of the honorable member for New England. " But the white men are in New Guinea. The adventurous gold-diggers are penetrating the recesses of that country. It has hitherto been a maxim which the Empire has not been able to afford to disregard, that where a British subject goes protection must follow him. Consequently we must have protection in New Guinea. We cannot afford to have that protection unless at the same time the resources of the country are enabled to be opened up by more settlers than have found their way there up to the present time. There can be no pause in New Guinea till its resources are sufficiently developed to yield a revenue to provide for its efficient administration. Proposals have previously been submitted for the exploitation of New Guinea. How have they been made? In the familiar form of proposals by chartered companies to acquire large areas of territory. The control of their dealings with native races would have been a task of unparalleled difficulty if maintained, or endeavoured to be maintained, under the ordinary regime of the Colonial-office. It is absolutely necessary, if the resources of New Guinea are to be developed, that there should be some authority on the spot competent to deal with questions of land settlement, and, at the same time, competent to afford guarantees, which every civilized nation ought to be anxious to give, that the native inhabitants of the country shall not be unjustly deprived of their lands, or excluded from lands which properly belong to them, by improper contracts supposed to be entered into on their behalf. They shall be protected from such bargains, and afterwards from cruelty

or inhuman treatment at the hands of those who settle amongst them for the purpose of reaping gain.

Mr Mahon

- It must not be forgotten that some of those natives are able to protect themselves.

Mr DEAKIN

- Many of those natives are able to protect themselves. They do so under the antiquated but sufficient principle -

That they should take who have the power,

And they should keep who can.

Mr McDonald

- Half of us act on that principle often enough.

Mr DEAKIN

- We are not so far separated from our forefathers with whom that was the confessed maxim as to have entirely eliminated the too well ingrained lessons. I am assuming that there will be found amongst men who live with savage nations, and who, often because of circumstances of their past lives, seek out of the way corners of the earth - men as capable of atrocious deeds as the savages with whom they mingle. I am urging on the honorable member for New England that this country, and the settlement of its lands, so far as settlement can take place for the purpose of tropical development, should be undertaken under efficient control, and not left to chartered companies 10,000 miles away from the British Colonial-office. Authority should not be deputed to bodies of irresponsible men who are a law unto themselves in their dealings with the natives. The only guarantee, or the most efficient we can have, that the settlement of New Guinea shall form as far as possible an exception in the history of the development of a tropical country inhabited by native races - that the settlement shall take place on the lines of peace, order, and good government, so that great land monopolies and injustice to the natives may be prevented - is that when we pay this £20,000 a year, the Commonwealth Parliament shall be able to impose its own conditions, and see to the administration itself. The proposals of the Government are dictated by no thirst for the acquisition of further areas. If the British Government had not practically renounced responsibility for the control of affairs in New Guinea, had not indicated their absolute unwillingness to spend another shilling in connexion with that territory, and had not urged on the Commonwealth that it was our duty to undertake this task, we should not now be pressing the consideration of this question on honorable members. It will be seen by the papers, which I do not desire to quote, that the Secretary of State has recently reminded us that New Guinea was originally annexed by the Crown, only on the faith that Australia desired the annexation, and would undertake the administration of the territory.

Mr Sawers

- New Guinea was annexed by proclamation. Does the Minister assume that the Imperial Government will abandon New Guinea if we do not support this motion.?

Mr DEAKIN

- I do not mean to assert that the British Government will haul down the flag again.

Mr Fisher

- They did so once.

Mr DEAKIN

- The British Government hauled the flag down once, and we are not likely to forget the circumstances. I hope the flag will never be hauled down again.

Mr Sawers

- It was said that the Queensland flag was unauthorized.

Mr DEAKIN

- It should have been authorized. The Imperial Government say now that they absolutely decline to take any further financial or other responsibility for this country.

Mr Piesse

- They must continue some responsibility.

Mr DEAKIN

- What is the choice left to us? Victoria and New South Wales have openly withdrawn from the agreement, and refuse to guarantee a single shilling.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- That agreement having come to an end.

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Mr DEAKIN

- That agreement having naturally come to an end, and those States being quite entitled to take that action, Queensland has been left to carry a burden which it cannot be fairly asked to bear for Australia as a whole. It is for the Commonwealth to assume such an Australian responsibility. Having to pay, we must pay either for something or for nothing.

Mr Piesse

- We will pay until we know what we can do.

Mr DEAKIN

- We know now what we can do. If we continue to pay, what is the consideration, to use a legal phrase, we shall receive t

Mr Mahon

- Taxation without representation.

Mr DEAKIN

- -That would be taxation without representation.

Mr McDonald

- Will the Minister think of that when we are paying for the Imperial squadron ?

Mr DEAKIN

- The matter of the Imperial squadron is not one on which it is now necessary to enter. We have the question of Samoa, the question of our Pacific interests, and the proposals for "adjustment" - a word which, so far as I understand it, means annexation. "Adjustment" implies the obtaining of more territory by negotiation. In the matter under discussion, however, we do not need to negotiate, because this territory is thrust into our hands. How, under the circumstances, the advocates of adjustment or annexation by negotiation can object to the proposals of the Government is more than I can understand as a matter of logic. We have heard it said that sermons and logic never convince.

Mr Thomson

- One method might be effective while the other was not.

Mr DEAKIN

- What might be effective?

Mr Thomson

- Adjustment, in getting a larger area.

Mr DEAKIN

- It might be of great advantage, but I do not intend to enter into any of these speculative matters. The question of naval defence will arise hereafter. I was no more satisfied than the honorable member for Wentworth with the naval defence arrangement, and I believe both parties to it are willing to reconsider it ; but, as Kipling says, " that is another story." The point is, when we pay this money what are we to have in New Guinea by way of exchange? We can pay and have the complete consideration of complete control, or we can have the partial consideration of partial control. We can have the complete responsibility which goes with complete control, or we can have the partial responsibility which goes with divided control. But here I part company with the honorable member for New England, whose reasoning often convinces me in other matters. I cannot see how it can be any advantage when we pay to stipulate that somebody else shall spend. Why should we not take care that the money we give is spent in accordance with our wishes ?

Mr SAWERS

- Apply that to the British fleet.

Mr DEAKIN

- I am prepared to do that when the time comes ; but do not want to be led away from the point. The honorable member for New England is willing that we should pay our money, but wants us to take a ' less consideration than we are offered. We say that if we are going to pay the whole of the net cost of the administration, we should have the whole control of the country.

Mr Sawers

- There is no objection to that.

Mr DEAKIN

- In regard to the black labour in New Guinea, there is no possible method of having it safeguarded according to the wishes of the Commonwealth, except by bringing it under the control of the Commonwealth. The one object we have in asking that British New Guinea shall be made a territory of the Commonwealth, is that we may have supreme legislative control. The honorable member put a variety of questions as to imports and exports as between Australia and New Guinea, and as to how the labour question and other matters should be dealt with. If we make New Guinea a territory of the Commonwealth, this Parliament will settle all those questions. Under the honorable member's proposal we do not know by whom they would be settled. They might be settled by the Colonial-office, or by chartered companies or other persons. Instead of our own control, of which we know the merits and demerits, we are to have some unknown and undefined control by unspecified persons. If the honorable member wishes to leave everything in uncertainty as to the future of New Guinea - to leave the labour difficulty, and that of imports and exports uncertain - he will follow his own proposal, but if he wishes to make all clear, he must support the proposal of the Government. Let us take the amplest authority possible under the Constitution. It seems to the Government that we ought to have nothing less than full control, seeing that we are to find the net cost of the administration of the territory. I have detained the committee much longer than I intended, but may I say, in answer to the thoughtful speech of the honorable member for Bourke, that his estimate of the probable expenditure in time to come leaves out of account the possibility of developing the revenue of the country.

Mr HUME COOK

- Because I say that to get that revenue we must first of all develop.

Mr DEAKIN

- But it is possible to have development, revenue, and expenditure, to a large extent kept in touch with each other, and to assure that the expenditure for each year shall not too far exceed the income for that year. We have it from Mr. Le Hunte, who appears to be a most capable administrator, that a practical survey of the country can be made in a steady and reasonable fashion which need not involve any great expenditure. But if the auriferous, or if the tropical resources of British New Guinea prove to be what we expect they will be, we may look forward to a steady increase of revenue. We are justified in that expectation by the increase of local revenue which has already taken place. It has risen from £2,674 in the year 1890-1 to £20,000 in 1901-2. While expenditure always dogs the heels of income, we must, remember that it will rest with this House to say to what extent in the future the two shall keep pace. After all, whatever expenditure may be incurred in New Guinea, can only be that which this House sees fit to authorize. We have the matter in our own hands. We may spend much or we may spend little, according as the judgment of the Parliament and of the people of the Commonwealth may decide. But if we take the proposal of the honorable member for New England, and that of the honorable member for Wentworth, what control are we to have over the expenditure, and what control are we to have over the revenue and the development of the country? I think honorable members will see that the proposal of the honorable member for New England is one which is most magnanimous and philanthropic, inasmuch as it proposes that out of the mere love of the act, so to say, the Commonwealth is 'to pay £20,000 a year for several years, to be expended in a country over which our taxpayers are to have a most indirect control.

Mr HUME COOK

- Will the Attorney-General answer the question of the honorable member for Wentworth with regard to the interim arrangement ?

Mr DEAKIN

- This is an interim arrangement, because, when it is proposed that New Guinea shall become a territory of the Commonwealth, that means, as the Prime Minister said, the passage of an Act of Parliament. It means that a proposal must be brought down in the form of a Bill, which, when it is passed as an Act, will define and settle the administration of New Guinea for such time as the Parliament of the Commonwealth may see fit. This is admittedly an interim arrangement indicating that in the opinion of this House, if such a measure is submitted, the House will be willing to find the money which such a measure involves, and pass a Bill that meets with its approval. Until this House takes over this territory, settles the terms and lays down the conditions of management, the administration of New Guinea will remain what it has hitherto

been. We know that the Imperial Government and the Government of Queensland wish to be relieved of the responsibility which rests upon them.

Sir Malcolm Mceacharn

- How will the financial affairs be conducted if this is to be merely an interim arrangement 1

Mr DEAKIN

- This resolution will enable the Treasurer of the Commonwealth to finance British New Guinea to the extent of £20,000 a year until the Bill of which I have spoken is submitted to Parliament : and I hope that will be very early in the new year. When the Tariff is out of the way there will be time to consider a measure of the complexity and magnitude necessary for dealing with the Government of this territory.

Mr Glynn

- Will the Government take into consideration the question of simply taking over the small amount of control that Queensland has at present ?

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Mr DEAKIN

- That must be done until we have a Bill dealing with the whole subject. Meanwhile the better course is to preserve the statu quo. As a matter of fact, a proposal has already been made to this Government - in very vague and general terms, by some of those who are familiar with the riches of New Guinea, which shows that there are men who are prepared to submit a proposal for the development of the territory. Their proposal would not involve the objectionable conditions proposed by the former chartered companies for dealing with British New Guinea. If the Commonwealth takes over this area as a territory, I have no doubt that proposals will be submitted which may have the effect of developing the resources of that country much more rapidly than has hitherto been accomplished, if the promoters are willing to work under reasonable conditions and can secure the necessary capital. At all events such a proposal is on foot. The plan of the honorable member for Wentworth, and that of the honorable member for New England, would, however, involve the absolute negation of such schemes. Otherwise, we should have the Colonial Office dealing, as it did on a former occasion, with speculators in a manner which was not satisfactory to the people of Australia, and which involved a considerable loss to the people concerned. The proposal of the Government, means the development of the country, and the establishment of law and order under the control of the Commonwealth. We shall be able to attain those ends if British New Guinea becomes our territory, but should certainly not be able to guarantee the same results if we leave it under the control of those at a distance who are less interested in its fortunes than the Australian people are, and always must be.

Mr FISHER

- I think that the honorable member for Wentworth did well in pointing out that we are discussing a subject of national importance, and that we ought to use the utmost care before we arrive at a conclusion upon it. So far as I am concerned, I am of opinion that as the Australian people have determined to become a nation, if they intend to build up a national character they are not likely to give up a territory or possession attaching to the Australian continent, for fear of the expenditure of a few shillings. The whole committee, in fact, is agreed as to the desirability of financing New Guinea. I think there are no two opinions upon that point. The difference of opinion arises from the fact that some honorable members think that it would be safer if we were not to undertake any responsibilities that Great Britain has taken up in annexing part of New Guinea as British territory.

Mr Deakin

- How can we avoid them ?

Mr FISHER

- I am not one of those members who think that we can possibly and honorably take up an attitude of non liability concerning any of the islands of the Pacific, and especially as to the British part of New Guinea. Are we at the very threshold of our nationhood to tell the whole world that we are afraid to come into contact with the other nations ? Are the people of this vast continent to tell the world that they are afraid to take their proper position as a nation, and are not prepared to defend any portion of our territory with the last drop of our blood ? That is really the position we occupy. We ought not to be afraid of our contact with any other nation so far as concerns our government of New Guinea. It would be better, I admit, if we could secure the whole of New Guinea. But I should like to know how it is possible to acquire the whole of

New Guinea by giving up that portion of it which we at present possess? It would be a new way of extending our acquisitions, to give up all that we possessed before making known what we desired.

Mr Sawers

- Who made that proposal ?

Mr FISHER

- The honorable member's argument had only one conclusion, namely, that the Commonwealth should not take possession of British New Guinea, or, in other words, if I understood him correctly, that the Commonwealth should provide for the cost of the administration of the possession, but that Great Britain should govern it.

Mr Sawers

-. - That has been the case for a number of years.

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Mr FISHER

- The Imperial authorities have announced through the Secretary of State for the Colonies that they desire to be free from the responsibilities of British New Guinea, and they are following up a line of policy which was not palatable to the Australian people in 1884. In 1888 they annexed only that part of the island now known as British New Guinea, after a guarantee had been given by colonial statesmen then in Britain that Australia would contribute to the cost of management. For this reason, I am entirely in favour of the Government proposals. I admit at once that I think it would have been much better if we had had fuller information before us. If it had been possible for the Government to grant an extension of time before calling upon us to enter upon this proposal, it would have been better, because it is the initiation of a great policy ; and if it were not for what would be the effect of a declaration at this stage that we were not anxious to take the full responsibilities of this possession, I should be inclined to support the proposal for delay. The advantages to be gained by this Parliament declaring, in its first session, that it is prepared to take all the responsibilities, and meet all the difficulties of national life, are greater than all the difficulties likely to arise from any hasty conclusion upon this question.

Mr Sawers

- Did this question come before the people at the federal elections ?

Mr Deakin

- In a general way.

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Mr FISHER

- So far as I am concerned, it did not come before me as a big question at the election. In Queensland we had one big question only, and that was whether that State was to be the heritage of the white or the coloured races. I had the advantage of being for some time a member of the Queensland State Parliament, where there has never been any doubt as to the position in regard to British New Guinea. Queensland has had a policy in this connexion. Queensland was determined to keep the possession, and backed up its opinions by the expenditure of its own money. I wish to add my testimony to the foresight and judgment displayed by the late Sir Thomas Mcllwraith when he endeavoured to secure the whole of New Guinea. If the Commonwealth takes possession of New Guinea we shall be strengthened in any negotiations we may enter into with the Dutch and German Governments regarding the portions of New Guinea held by them. Neither Germany or Holland are reaping from their operations in New Guinea benefits to the extent which Australia is receiving from the British possession, and we are much more likely to come to terms with them, which would enable us to obtain the whole island as a British possession, than we should be if we were to take any action other than that proposed by the Government. For that further reason I support the Government proposals. As to the danger of foreign fleets harbouring in New Guinea, and hurling forces into the Commonwealth, I have no fear. Are there Australians here who believe that any foreign power would land an army in Australia that was likely to do us any great damage? Recent events in warfare have taught us, I think, that foreign nations will be very chary of attacking Australia at any point. Far less are we likely to be injured in that way than to be injured by the want of a national spirit, which would be indicated in any child-like action taken by us upon this matter. As to the question of an Australian fleet, to which reference has been made, I think the sooner we recognise the fact that we are a nation, and require a fleet of our own, the better it will be for all

concerned. It is a matter for the early future I admit, but it is a question upon which I entertain no doubt. If we are going to protect ourselves, to look after our rights, and to maintain every inch of territory that we can claim to be our own, we must necessarily have this means of protection. The internal management of New Guinea is a matter of very great importance. Only a few years ago Australia had to take up a very firm attitude in regard to the internal administration of the possession, not from Australia, but from the Colonial-office. I think, however, that Mr. Chamberlain has been wrongly blamed to a large extent for his action on the occasion to which reference has been made. The proposals for the acquisition of land in New Guinea were so outrageous that he refused to grant them in the way presented to him and ultimately, as the result of action taken by Australian statesmen, they were set aside altogether. Further proposals have been made, as will be found upon reference to the Report of British New Guinea for the year 1st July, 1899, to 30th June, 1900. At page 24 of Mr. Le Hunte's report it is set forth that - Two applications for large areas of land for agricultural development - in one case for 100,000 acres, and in the other for 200,000 acres' - were received from well represented Australian syndicates. As the areas exceeded in both cases 50,000 acres, which under the arrangement made with the Premiers of the three contributing colonies, is the limit within which the Government of the possession can deal in lands without notice to them (see report of 1898-9, page 06). -

That condition was imposed after the attempt made by British speculators to obtain possession of a large portion of the island - these applications were at once notified to them ; and official intimation has since been received by this Government, to its great disappointment, of the intention of the Government of New South Wales to oppose both. As, however, the matter is not yet settled, further discussion of it is deferred. In view of the fact that attempts are being made to secure large tracts of land in British New Guinea - the land is admitted to be good in many instances - and that there is a large population under British control, it is of the greatest importance that the Commonwealth Government should secure possession of that country, and obtain possession of it in a way that will enable it to control its administration at the earliest possible moment. I know of no better way of obtaining control of the possession than that contained in the Government proposals, and whilst I regret, as I have said already, that we have not had more time to consider the great national aspect of this question, I shall support the Government proposals as the best that could be submitted in the circumstances.

Mr SKENE

- I am sure we are all agreed that there are several serious and far-reaching possibilities involved in the consideration of this question, and perhaps none is so important as that mentioned by the honorable member for New England and referred to by the Attorney-General, in speaking of the position we may ultimately land ourselves in if we take over the British possession of New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth. It seems to me that if we once enter upon a step of this kind we must eventually - not perhaps in our day or in the next generation - include the country annexed as a State of the Commonwealth. That will certainly involve very serious consideration. The American Government, in a Commonwealth like ours, which is administered upon very much the same lines, have recently taken over Hawaii, the Sandwich Islands. In including those islands as a territory of the United States, they have followed the course which one would have expected of them. They have adopted a perfectly fair and just attitude towards all the inhabitants of the islands. All the whites, including the Portuguese, all men of African descent, and all natives who were entitled to representation under the old rule of the islands, have been admitted as citizens of the United States. I refer to that as showing the difficulty which will arise hereafter in connexion with the annexation of New Guinea in the event of our taking over the British possession as a territory of the Commonwealth. We know that at the present time the aboriginal inhabitants of the possession are not people to whom the franchise could be extended, but so far as my reading goes, they are not people of a low mental calibre, and there is little doubt that in a very short time they will receive such a coating of civilization, as for instance the Maories of New Zealand have received. I understand it is generally conceded that the natives of New Guinea, and especially of the British possession, are of Polynesian descent, the same as the New Zealanders, the Tahitians, and the Samoans. The inland natives are, I believe, of a different character, but around the coast in the Dutch and German, as well as in the British portion of New Guinea, they are people who may, in the course of a quarter of a century, perhaps, claim to have representation in any State which may be annexed to the Commonwealth. We have in the Commonwealth of Australia the most favorable external and internal

conditions for an ideal Commonwealth. We have a truly scientific frontier in the broad ocean. We have no subject race that can by any possibility disturb the underlying principle of equality of representation ; and, though the difficulty to which I have referred may not arise in our day, I think it behoves us at this stage to look to the future in the light of that aspect of the question. We have at present no disabilities except those which we may bring upon ourselves, and once we annex this territory I hold that it will be utterly inconsistent to go back upon that step, or to try to get rid of difficulties in that way. The question arises, what are we to do under the circumstances placed before us by the Imperial Government? What form of Government should we advise them to adopt ? I do not think for a moment that the Imperial Government will in this matter treat us otherwise than they have always done, and that they will not give due consideration to fair and reasonable argument. Looking at the history of the Empire it seems to me that all outlying portions of it have first passed through the nursery stage of Crown colonies, and I do not see why, if the British Government is properly approached, they should wish to depart from that policy in connexion with the development of New Guinea. It has been found to be a most satisfactory evolutionary process.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Most unsatisfactory.

Mr SKENE

- Practically the nursery stage of all our colonies and of every colonial possession of the British Empire has been that of a Crown colony.

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Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- And it has kept them back in progress for a long time.

Mr Barton

- The proposition for a Crown colony came, I think, from the Lieutenant-Governor of Queensland as a counter proposition to that of taking over the possession as a part of the Commonwealth, and it has been definitely refused by the Imperial Government.

Mr SKENE

- I particularly refer to the matter of a Crown colony for this reason. In South Africa, in 1871, Basutoland was annexed by Cape Colony, and in 1884 it was taken over by the Crown, and it has since been administered as a Crown colony, though the Government of Cape Colony now contributes £18,000 a year towards the revenue of the territory. Almost the same proposal was put forward to-day by the honorable member for New England for the administration of New Guinea, as Basutoland is administered by the Imperial authorities, whilst Cape Colony contributes this considerable sum to the revenue. There is, I think, a very much stronger reason why British New Guinea should be administered by the Imperial authorities, and that was referred to by the honorable members for Wentworth and New England. It is that the Imperial authorities have control of both the military and naval forces of the country. I quite agree with the honorable member for New England in advocating the voting of this money, and I see no reason why it should not be done, but I think we shall be acting hurriedly in the matter if we take over the possession as a territory of the Commonwealth. A territory does not seem to me to logically attach itself to a Commonwealth in that way, except for a limited time, and a territory to which we could not concede equal representation appears to my mind to be inconsistent with one of the essential attributes of a Commonwealth. I rose principally, in following up the line of argument adopted by the honorable member for New England, to call attention to the policy adopted in South Africa, where, whilst the revenue of Basutoland is being contributed to by the Government of Cape Colony to the extent of £18,000 a year, the administration is being carried on by the Imperial authorities. I think that would be an excellent arrangement to adopt here. With regard to the land question which has been raised, I admit it is a most important one. I believe there is a proposal now to sell agricultural land in New Guinea at 2s. 6d. per acre, and inferior land at 1s. per acre. In the case of the Basutoland territory, and evidently for a special purpose, the most modern attitude of the British Government appears to have been adopted in this respect. No European is allowed to settle in the country. He can only be there as a trader or as one helping to administer the Government. The land question of New Guinea is one which I do not pretend to know much of, but from my knowledge of the troubles to which it has given rise elsewhere, I quite admit its importance. We have been blessed in this Commonwealth of ours in that we have never had a native

war. In almost every British colonial possession land troubles have led to wars of the kind, and it is one of the matters which requires to be most carefully considered in dealing with this question. We know that a war arose in New Zealand through land troubles arising with the natives there, and although it has been stated that the natives of New Guinea are still in the stone age, the age of iron, lead, and gunpowder is knocking at their doors, and as there are 350,000 people there they may become a very formidable enemy in the future. Notwithstanding the eloquent reply we have had from the Attorney-General, I should like to see the Government adopt some such suggestion as that made by the honorable member for New England. I would be content to pay the money, seeing the position we have got into, I should not like to think that there would be the slightest degree of repudiation. I should be inclined to vote whatever expenditure might be necessary to put the matter straight. If the Home Government knew that we were content to do that, and were asked by our Government to give the matter further consideration, we might arrive at some way of administering these islands short of taking them over at the present time as a territory. I am afraid of the far reaching consequences of taking them over as a territory. If the Government can see their way to take that course, so far as any financial difficulty is concerned, they shall have my support, but I would prefer the other matter to be held over if it can be done.

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Mr PIESSE

- This question comes before us in two aspects, viz., what should be done immediately, and what may be done in the future. It is certain that we must meet the financial difficulties of the position, and, speaking for a State which has not borne any part of the financial responsibility, I am quite prepared to recognise that it is a matter of Australian concern, and that a sum of £20,000 a year for five years should be voted without any delay. But then comes the question of administration. I interjected when the Attorney-General was speaking that the Colonial-office is more ready for this work than the Commonwealth is, and that embodies to me the whole difficulty of our position. Before we could be thoroughly ready to undertake this work it would seem to me that we should have to pass not only one law, but perhaps several sets of laws for the proper administration of the territory. From the way in which the motion is submitted I am not quite certain whether we are not going further than has been made apparent in any speech by either the Prime Minister or the Attorney-General. We are proceeding, I understand, under section 122 of the Constitution, which reads -

The Parliament may make laws for the Government of any territory surrendered by any State to and accepted by the Commonwealth, or of any territory placed by the Queen under the authority of and accepted by the Commonwealth.

Are we, in this motion, accepting this territory?

Mr L E GROOM

- No.

Mr PIESSE

- It reads very much as though we are. It says -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept New Guinea as a territory.

What is the effect of those words? We understand that the British Government will have to take some step. What will that step be? Will it be to offer to our Government the territory of New Guinea, and shall we by passing this motion give to the Government the power of accepting that piece of country as a territory? If that be the effect of the motion, it would appear that we should then bring within the Commonwealth territory over which its laws would operate under the fifth of the covering sections of the Constitution.

Mr Barton

- The laws which will be operative over the territory will be special laws passed for the purpose of operating there.

Mr PIESSE

- That is just one of those moot points-

Mr Barton

- There is no moot point about that, it is as clear as possible in the Constitution.

Mr PIESSE

- The fifth covering section says -

This Act and all laws made by the Parliament of the Commonwealth under the Constitution shall be binding on the courts, Judges, and people of every State, and of every part of the Commonwealth.

Mr Barton

- That includes the laws passed for the government of territories.

Mr PIESSE

- Of course it does, but it also includes all laws, so I take it, which are passed, unless they are excluded from operation within a territory. I cannot see any other construction to be put upon it, I am aware that under that section the Constitution and "all laws passed by the Parliament are to be operative over the States, but it goes on to say " and over every part of the Commonwealth," meaning that they shall be operative over lands which are not States.

Mr Barton

- The honorable member would not say that our Acts are binding under any circumstances in the States ? What this means is that they must recognise our Acts, but not necessarily where they conflict with the jurisdiction.

Mr Deakin

- We can only legislate within the jurisdiction.

Mr PIESSE

- If the Parliament is legislating for the Commonwealth, what does " the Commonwealth " mean ? The words are here intended to cover not only States as they exist, but all parts of the Commonwealth wherever they may be.

Mr Barton

- Does the honorable member contend that all laws passed by this Parliament must operate equally in territories as well as States ? Because, if so, he is contradicting the Constitution in fifty places.

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Mr PIESSE

- That appears to me to be open to argument. Where the Constitution does not expressly exclude the presumption, it might be concluded that a Commonwealth law, save where it provides to the contrary, run all through the Commonwealth. There seems to be much room for the consideration of the question, whether we should, before we are ready, accept the responsibility of a territory. I am afraid that the motion passed in the words in which it is framed will settle the question, that the Government will accept New Guinea as a territory, and that we shall be forced at once to administer it without being properly prepared to carry it out.

Mr Deakin

- Acceptance means acceptance by an Act in that case.

Mr PIESSE

- The words of the motion I submit with all deference should be altered to read in this way -

That this House is prepared to accept British New Guinea.

Then we should be posing a motion which would be in consonance with what ultimately will have to be done.

Mr Barton

- My honorable friend means that he would substitute the words "is willing" for the words "authorizes the Government."

Mr PIESSE

- I have suggested the words "is willing."

Mr Barton

- If my honorable friend thinks that there is any special and advantageous difference by having that amendment I shall not stand in the way.

Mr PIESSE

- It would seem to me to be more in consonance with what we are asked to do.

Mr Barton

- If my honorable friend is right it is not for this House to accept. It is only for the Parliament to accept, and this House's acceptance does not carry the matter any further.

Mr PIESSE

- I am quite open to that correction, but I think the principle for which I am arguing is accepted in the amendment which the Prime Minister has suggested. We ought not to pass a motion which will raise by implication the point that we have accepted New Guinea as a territory until we have passed a law under which it can be administered, which will be done by the Bill accepting it. Although I feel that we are face to face with a very great and difficult problem, the proper administration of territories, the proper control of alien races, such as those in New Guinea, and many other questions to which I might allude if this were the proper time for their discussion, I am prepared to accept those responsibilities as long as we put ourselves in a position readily to undertake them. It seems that before we can take over this territory there will have to be passed laws under which it can be administered. Therefore, to prevent any misconception arising, we ought to state in the motion the course which we mean to be carried out. We shall leave ourselves open to criticism if we say that we authorize the Government to accept this territory. We are not going to do that in effect, because we are saying that before they can accept it as a territory, and bind the Commonwealth to that acceptance, a law will have to be passed by the Parliament.

Mr L E GROOM

- Is there such a legal body as the Government? 1 Legally, can the Government accept it?

Mr PIESSE

- I do not wish to criticise the words further; I am only suggesting words which would embody in the motion what we desire. The Prime Minister, I think, has caught my idea; and if he would suggest words which would meet the views here set forth, I think it would make the matter clearer for us in the future.

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Mr MAHON

- I sympathize a good deal with the Government in this matter. I have taken the pains to read the despatches which passed between the Imperial Government and the Lieutenant-Governor of Queensland, and I really do not see what other position our Government could take up. It must be remembered that the agreement under which the several States found the money to pay for the administration of New Guinea expired some years ago, and had it not been for the generosity of the Government of Queensland, the cheques issued by the Administrator of New Guinea might have been dishonored when they arrived at the bank. That is certainly a very undignified and intolerable position for the administrator of a Government to be placed in, and that is why I say that the Federal Government are entitled to our sympathy, because it is impossible that they should allow such a condition of things to remain. It seems to me that the home authorities have acted in a rather precipitate manner. We have Mr. Chamberlain asserting that he is unable to find £7,000 per annum for the upkeep of the steamer Merrie England and it is difficult to conceive that this is the same man who spends £2,000,000 per week for the purpose of carrying on an iniquitous war. He refuses to pay £7,000, or to contribute anything whatever for the purpose of retaining a territory which may be of the utmost importance to the Commonwealth some day or other. I think it was very ungrateful on the part of Mr. Chamberlain, and I hope the Prime Minister will commission the Minister for Trade and Customs to write the next despatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, expressing his opinion of such conduct. The policy of the Imperial Government has been very niggardly, especially since Australia has expended some £400,000 in sending away soldiers to fight for the Empire in South Africa. Immediately the Home Government is asked to pay a small amount towards holding this great dependency Mr. Chamberlain answers that one-sixtieth of the excise and Customs revenue of New South Wales will meet the required expenditure. It is unfortunate that this matter should be forced upon the Government, because as honorable members have pointed out - not that there is anything very original in their discovery - our action may involve very far reaching results, and we should have been given time for exhaustive inquiry and mature deliberation. We shall have very different problems to deal with in New Guinea. There is the matter referred to by the honorable member for Wentworth, the maintenance of a fleet to keep order throughout the several islands. That involves an outlay which we should have had time to calmly consider before taking the steps indicated in these resolutions. But I cannot agree with some honorable members who say that we should vote this money and allow the administration of the territory to be carried out by other people. As a matter of fact I believe a stone can be thrown from one portion of the coast of New Guinea on to some of the islands which belong to Queensland, so that virtually the Commonwealth territory abuts upon New Guinea. Consequently we cannot afford to allow New Guinea to pass into other hands. We cannot afford

to allow the territory to be abandoned ; nor, as I have said, do I subscribe to the principle that we should vote money, and allow other people to spend it.

Mr Barton

- It is the funniest thing I ever heard of.

Mr Sawers

- We have done it in the past.

Mr MAHON

- If we have done wrong in the past, we should not continue to do wrong. The proposal of the honorable member for New England is that we should vote this money, and allow Queensland or the Imperial Government to spend it.

Mr Sawers

- Or the Commonwealth Government.

Mr MAHON

- If we are prepared to vote the money we should also be willing to accept the responsibility of directly administering the affairs of New Guinea. We know that we shall have to do this some day, because we are not prepared to allow the territory to pass into the possession of any foreign power, and we might as well take time by the forelock.

Mr Barton

-We can gain nothing by delay.

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Mr MAHON

-Exactly. The sooner this Government faces the problem of legislating for the waste spaces of Australia the better. We have not merely New Guinea, but the Northern Territory of South Australia, and a large area in the northwestern part of Western Australia. In my opinion the bulk of the north-west portion of Western Australia should be incorporated with the Northern Territory, and the whole of that country governed not from Melbourne or Perth, but from a local centre, by authorities who would understand the needs of the community settled in that portion of the continent-subject of course, to the general control of the Federal Government. For this reason I think we may as well deal with the New Guinea question at once. We must take over the Northern Territory, and we shall have to deal with country in the north of Australia almost in the same category as New Guinea. I am not one to make little of the difficulties which our action in this matter will involve. The first great difficulty will not arise out of the administration so far as the lands or mines are concerned, but in dealing with the native races. I should like to bring under the notice of the Prime Minister the fact that in New Guinea there are not only His Majesty's courts, but courts in which some of the native chiefs sit in judgment, and have power to award punishment for offences which we do not regard as crimes. For instance, I find from the report of the Governor of New Guinea for 1900 that in the No. 2 central division four persons were convicted of spreading lying reports, one person was convicted of extortion, eleven of adultery, and seven of sorcery. In No. 3 eastern division 23 persons were convicted of adultery, three of extortion, five of sorcery, and two of spreading lying reports. In another division three were convicted of sorcery, and no less than 26 of adultery, twenty others being discharged. I do not know whether it is advisable that we should have these two kinds of courts. We have had no proper explanation with regard to these matters, and we shall have to make an early inquiry into the question whether these two tribunals should run together, and whether we should punish the natives of New Guinea for offences which, under our own system of Government, we do not regard as criminal. Hence, I am in accord with the proposals of the Government, more especially as our acquisition of New Guinea will compel the Commonwealth to take into consideration the desirability of dealing with the native races inhabiting the waste parts of Australia. In this connexion I must say that the present Administrator of New Guinea, Mr. Le Hunte, is entitled to considerable credit for the manner in which he has treated the natives of that Island. In one portion of the document which I hold in my hand there is a report from Captain- Armit, who visited the Yodda Valley gold-field, and who, en route, was attacked by the natives. In informing the Administrator of the result of the encounters, the captain stated that many of the natives were " hurt." Mr. Le Hunte, who evidently was aware that the word " hurt " carried with it a very different signification from that which was conveyed to the average reader, wrote a minute to Captain Armit, in which he said -

I appreciate fully your great difficulties, and the critical positions in which you found it necessary to protect your party when attacked by the hostile natives, who were so because they were ignorant of your object, and I can only hope that the loss of life which has taken place under those circumstances may be sufficient to deter them from attacking other parties ; but I cannot read without regret the loose expressions which convey the official information of their deaths. I am aware that the wholesale destruction of men, women, and children, has, in other places, been conveyed by the term "dispersed," and killing by "hurt," and the occurrence of these expressions in your report gives me great uneasiness. I wish to be accurately informed as to the number actually killed in these collisions, at each place where they occurred, and to know in each case whether they occurred when you were with the party, or when the police were sent away by themselves. The taking of life is a matter of the greatest gravity, and officers who have to resort to it for the sake of their own or other persons' protection, cannot be too particular in ascertaining the fullest particulars of the results of any collision in which it has been necessary to use firearms. I cannot for a moment accept as satisfactory or sufficient such statements as "he was immediately shot" (by whom?), or "I am afraid some of them were hurt" (this occurs several times). I am not throwing any doubt on the necessity for the action, but it is, in my opinion, necessary to require the fullest details of the number of lives (for which officers must remember they and I are gravely responsible) which may unfortunately have been lost ; and I cannot allow myself or them to be satisfied with any casual or loose allusion to it.

It subsequently appeared from a despatch by Captain Armit that there were, thirteen men "hurt" on 16th February. In other words they were killed. On 19th February, seventeen were killed - that is, they were "hurt," according to the first despatch. On 22nd February, one was killed; on 24th February, six were killed ; on 26th February, four were killed; on 16th March, thirteen were killed. Captain Armit reminds the Administrator that -

The natives on the road to the Yodda River were not strangers to Europeans, but being numerically stronger than the prospector's party, whom they bullied and way-laid at every turn, they had become excessively bold and aggressive. Immunity from punishment encouraged them to block my path, and to order me to begone, and this not having the desired effect they did not hesitate to adopt offensive measures.

Sufficient evidence is available therefore to-, prove that the natives of New Guinea are not the docile and harmless creatures who exist in some portions of Australia, and notably in Western Australia. But the records of what Sir William McGregor and other officials have done there show that these natives are amenable to kind treatment, and may indeed become very useful. Many of them, for instance, are being employed as native policemen. In that way, by kind, firm, and considerate treatment, I hope the natives of New Guinea will be won over to the side of civilization and to the assistance of the settlers there.. I do not think it is necessary to labour this subject by speaking at any great length. I merely rose because I could not see what course other than that proposed was open to the Government under the circumstances. On the one hand, the agreement between the three eastern States to jointly bear the expense of administering the affairs of New Guinea had terminated. It was unfair to attempt to throw the whole of that expense upon the people of Queensland ; and then, on the other hand, we are confronted by the fact that the Imperial Government have absolutely refused to pay another shilling towards the maintenance of that territory. Therefore, although there may be some slight quibble about the wording of the resolutions submitted by the Prime Minister upon the main issue of what we are to do with this great heritage - which, possibly, in the not distant future, may become a great possession - there can be no difference of opinion. In this connexion, I wish to correct some of the statements made by the honorable member for Bourke. I do not doubt that a good deal more than the amount which is now asked will shortly be required for the administration of New Guinea. But I do say that the revenue of that territory has increased at a much greater ratio than has the expenditure. If we take the revenue from 1890 to 1900, it will be seen that while in the former year the revenue was only £3,016, as against an expenditure of £21,975, in 1900 it had increased to £13,834, as against an advance in the expenditure to £28,301. So that while the revenue has increased by nearly £11,000, the expenditure has increased by only £4,340. That is a very important matter. Even if we have to pay a little money for the administration of this territory, I think that the prospective advantage and value of it to Australia is too great to allow it to be lightly sacrificed in the way in which some honorable members propose.

Mr WATSON

- I echo the objections put forward a little time ago by the honorable member for Wentworth against being required in a hurried manner to enter upon the consideration of such an important subject. Every honorable member has been deluged with correspondence in respect of the Tariff, and it is only fair to the people concerned to give some consideration to the various details which are contained in that correspondence. It is almost impossible to give full consideration to all the very wide interests which are involved in the proposal now before the House.

Mr Deakin

- I pointed out that we were driven into taking this step.

Mr WATSON

- But the fact that we are driven, and have not time to regard the question from its various aspects, should warn us to do nothing that is more than of a tentative character at present.

Mr Deakin

- A Bill is to be introduced

Mr WATSON

- But I am afraid, with the honorable member for New England, that if we pass the first motion as proposed by the Government, we shall commit ourselves to a course of action which we should have great difficulty in retracing. 21 p 2

Mr Barton

- How can we bring in a Bill if the committee reject the first motion '! We should then have no warrant to bring in a Bill.

Mr WATSON

- That is a technical aspect of the question I quite appreciate.

Mr Barton

- It is not a technical, but a broad aspect.

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Mr WATSON

- I am prepared to vote for a motion which will place at the disposal of the Government a sufficiency of money to make good, for even a couple of years, the finances of New Guinea, rather than to, commit myself to a motion which would make that country a territory of the Commonwealth. The latter would be to take a step which may land us in a position appreciated, perhaps, by very few of us today. If the only concern were the amount of money that this protectorate or assumption of administration would involve, I should undertake the business with a light heart. But I contend, and I think it has already been pointed out sufficiently clearly, that the motion involves a great deal more. It involves the whole question of whether we are to set up, at this early stage in our career, a Monroe doctrine for Australia. I can quite understand the desire to have this doctrine, and to declare that in no territory within the influence of Australia shall we allow a foreign nation to interfere - that we shall take possession ourselves of every available inch of territory, and, by that means, prevent complications which might do damage in the future. I could understand the wisdom of such a doctrine if we were sufficiently strong to stand the financial burden of carrying it through. The mere expense of administration in time of peace is nothing, and possibly would be compensated for in the amount of trade, which would "follow the flag." But the wider range of possible expense cannot be estimated by those of us here to-day. It is idle in this connexion to quote the United States, because years ago, when the Monroe doctrine was announced there, that country even then was a power so far as population, wealth, and resources are concerned. We here in Australia are not such a power as America then was. We are a mere handful of people, with an immense territory within the confines of the continent to administer and develop ; and it will call forth every resource we can lay our hands on to bring the settlement and occupation of these lands to a successful issue. If, in addition to the difficulties which confront us within the borders of Australia, properly speaking, we, with our necessarily expensive government caused by our large area and small population, are going to undertake the defence of all outlying territories - those islands away from the coast of Australia - then I want the taxpayers to consider where the policy is going to land them.' I ask the Government whether they themselves have considered what provision will be required for the necessary defences of these outlying positions. If we take over the territory of New Guinea, we cannot allow any foreign power which cares to

come along in time of trouble to take peaceable possession.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- How could "we stop that?

Mr WATSON

- I should think it would be our first duty, after having encouraged our citizens to invest their money and risk their lives on the extremity of our territory, to take every means possible to protect them. That is one result which, it seems to me, is inevitably associated with the Government proposal. We cannot dismiss the subject by merely saying that the expense is only £8,000, or £9,000, or £20,000 per annum. -There is also involved, the creation of a naval force sufficient to give adequate protection to the people engaged in trade and industries in those outlying possessions ; and I fail to see at the present time that we are prepared to undertake this work. Of course, it may be said that we can come to an arrangement with the British Government to undertake the defences of these outlying places. But seeing the temper of the British Government, so far as the administration is concerned, even the procedure I have indicated, would seem to involve a much larger guarantee on the part of Australia than is involved in the present understanding with Great Britain. This is one of those questions which ought to have the fullest and calmest consideration. It involves a recognition of all possibilities, including the extension of the suggestion to other or contiguous islands in the Pacific Whatever evil is likely to arise from the settlement of New Guinea by a foreign nation has, it seems to me, already arisen. The great danger that is always pointed out is in reference to foreign powers getting military or naval bases near to Australia ; and New Caledonia and the Kew Hebrides have been alluded to in that connexion. But in the case of New Guinea, as we know, both Holland and Germany have between them a fair portion of the territory, so that, so far as one object of our taking possession is concerned, it is beside the question. These two powers are already established in New Guinea, and any advantage which that possession may be to them from a tactical stand-point is available now. As to whether, from a purely commercial stand-point, German or Dutch New Guinea is worth the sums those nations are expending, is perhaps doubtful. I do not pretend to that close knowledge of the conditions which is required to pronounce an opinion on that point ; but as to the possibilities of trade between New Guinea and Australia, I am sorry to say we have comparatively little data upon which to arrive at a conclusion. Whatever power may hold New Guinea, Australia must participate to a very large extent in an improvement in trade conditions, if there be any development commercially. The mere fact of our being close to- New Guinea must, in the future, tend to a great traffic if the territory * is developed. I regret to say that I cannot see my way clear to support the proposal embodied in the first part of the motion which the Government have submitted. The matter is too important to be decided in an off-hand way. If the Government are prepared to really take in hand the financing of New Guinea tentatively, without declaring that country a territory of the Commonwealth, I am prepared to assist them.

Mr Barton

- Who is to administer the territory 1

Mr Mahon

- That means that we vote the money and other people spend it.

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Mr WATSON

- We must recollect that that proceeding would not involve us in the responsibility which follows on the spending of money. If the honorable member for Coolgardie is alive to the responsibility that we undertake in passing the motion and the bill, which it is announced will follow, and he is prepared to take all chances, and to find the sum of money to provide defences which the proposal involves, I have no word of dissent to his holding that view, except that I cannot subscribe to it myself. If we undertake the administration of New Guinea for a time, it follows that we shall have a voice in the spending of the money we contribute. For whatever we undertake in that way, the Government will see that we get value so far as control is concerned. But it does seem to me that it would be an unwise step on the part of this Parliament, without the fullest consideration, to take upon itself responsibilities which may involve matters of such wide interest, and possibly disaster, to the people of Australia in the future, without our having a full and free opportunity of discussing the question, and that I contend, cannot be done at the present time, while the Tariff is under consideration.

Mr CROUCH

- I understand that the Prime Minister has made a sort of promise to the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse, that he would try to meet his objection in regard to the wording of the first paragraph of the motion, so as to define precisely what the Government mean by it. I should also like the right honorable gentleman to take into consideration what is intended by the words " His Majesty's Government" in the first paragraph. As I understand, " His Majesty's Government" does not altogether mean His Majesty's British Government, as the motion might lead us to believe. What is meant is that the committee authorizes " the Government " - that is, the Australian Government -

To accept British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth if His Majesty's Government -

That is, His Majesty's British Government -

Are willing to place it under Federal control.

I take it that the Government in Australia is as much His Majesty's Government as the Government in England. Therefore, what is really intended by the term " His Majesty's Government" in the motion is "His Majesty's British Government." I submit, therefore, that the motion should be altered to bring it into conformity with the words of the Constitution, which says that if "any territory is placed by the Queen under the authority of "the Commonwealth, the Government of the Commonwealth can take it over.

Instead of saying that the resolution says -

If His Majesty's Government are willing to place it under Federal control.

Mr Barton

- Precisely the same,

Mr CROUCH

- That possibly means either His Majesty's Government in Great Britain or in Australia.

Mr BARTON

- Does the honorable and learned member mean to say that he misunderstands the plain English of the expression 1

Mr CROUCH

- I do not misunderstand, it. I know that what it means is His Majesty's British Government. But this is a point I have protested against before, and. I shall protest against it as long as I am in this House. I do not think that any part ' of the Empire has an especial claim to be said to be governed by. "His Majesty's! Government"; because any Government - under the King is equally His Majesty's Government.

Mr MAUGER

- Does the honorable and I learned member mean that the Government of the Commonwealth is as important as the British Government 1

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Mr CROUCH

- I do not go into therein the importance of the various Governments, but I say that we should use terms to imply precisely what we mean. We have a King common to the whole Empire, and when the words of the section speak of -

Any territory placed by the Queen under the-, authority of, and accepted by the Commonwealth,, we should, as far as possible, use those words. I am ' rather disappointed at the - position of the honorable member for - Bland. I do not think that he has in any sense struck the note of Empire. We are taking upon ourselves a national responsibility in connexion with the control of some - of the islands close to our shores. I trust that the honorable member will reconsider-' the question in a different light, and will see that if, as he himself has admitted, this, is the establishment of a Monroe doctrine of Australia, and that it is of great importance for us that we should not postpone for a year or two the settlement of the question. The very circumstances that the Administrator can no longer carry on without further supplies of money,, and that the islands attached to the British New Guinea Government also require to be immediately administered, would make it a. great pity if Australia did not now take the opportunity held out by the British Government, and accept the proposal which Mr. Chamberlain has made - that the Commonwealth shall take over British New Guinea and administer it. The difficulty that appears to me is, with regard to the future administration of the country. If we admit British New Guinea as part of the Commonwealth, we have to extend to that territory equality of trade and commerce. We have recently passed a Kanaka Bill by which we have endeavoured to secure as far as possible that our sugar shall be grown by white

labour. If we extend the Commonwealth so as to include British New Guinea, we shall find ourselves in the position that our sugar planters can go to New Guinea and employ labour there ; and it would be quite impossible for us to say that the natives of that country are not to be employed in the industries of the territory itself.

Mr McDonald

- They would have to pay £6 a ton duty on sugar.

Mr CROUCH

- They would not have to pay that duty, because duties of customs being absolutely free between one part of the Commonwealth and another, sugar grown by kanakas in British New Guinea would have a right to be imported into any other part of the Commonwealth.

Mr Barton

- Has the honorable member looked at section 92 of the Constitution, which says that trade, commerce and intercourse among " the States " shall be free ?

Mr CROUCH

- Am I to understand, then, that the Prime Minister does not intend that there shall be freedom of trade between a territory and the States ?

Mr Barton

- That is a matter for the Parliament of the Commonwealth to determine for itself.

Mr CROUCH

- The United States has lately conquered and taken over Porto Rica. It has been decided in that case that the trade between the United States and the newly conquered country shall be free. That is to say, Porto Rica has been taken into its territory and become part of the United States. In Canada, also, every part that has been taken as a territory of the Dominion has become an actual part of the Dominion, and has the right to freedom of trade and intercourse. I am aware, however, that section 122 says that we can make our own terms for the admission of territories. The section also provides that the Parliament may - Allow the representation of such territory in either House of the Parliament to the extent and on the terms which it thinks fit.

Honorable members will have to consider | that section carefully before British New j

Guinea is taken over as part of the Commonwealth, because under the terms of that section, in fairness, we shall have to allow some representation to New Guinea.

Mr Barton

- Where does the honorable and learned member get that legal construction out of the words of the section ?

Mr CROUCH

- I think that the word "may" in this case -means "must" allow representation.

Mr Barton

- The British Interpretation Act says distinctly that where the word " may " is used, unless the context otherwise indicates, it must be read as " may," and not as " shall."

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Mr CROUCH

- I think that the phrase - "And may allow," gives to the word " may " the force of " shall " in the context. At all events, that is a matter for consideration. We are really taking a new plunge in regard to our Commonwealth life, and this is a question that should not be decided without grave consideration. I have no doubt that it has received that consideration at the hands of the Government. We are taking . upon ourselves responsibilities, the extent of which we cannot realize. If one of the tribes of natives in British New Guinea made an incursion into German or Dutch territory, we should immediately be placed in the position of having to explain to those foreign nations the reason why the incursion had taken place. We should have to take upon ourselves the responsibility of preventing such outrages in the future. By this act we are really entering into European politics, and it is just as well that honorable members should look into this matter thoroughly. I have thought it out, and have read carefully the papers put before us. Certainly it is a responsible step to take, but although there is some trembling, on the part of people who have not been accustomed to empire, in taking this action, I feel that this is the time to act. Recently the United States, as a democracy, has faced tremendous world questions in the Philippines, Cuba, Porto

Rica, and in other islands of the West Indies, and we should not shrink from some of the responsibilities which nature herself and our geographical position have placed upon us. We should be ready, if only in the tentative way proposed by the Government, to face this question in British New Guinea, and to say for all time that the possession shall be part of the great Australian Commonwealth.

Mr BROWN

- I recognise, with those honorable members who have preceded me in the debate upon this question, that this is a very important proposition. We are invited to consider whether, as a Commonwealth Legislature, we should confine our attention to matters within the bounds of the Commonwealth, or whether we should take into consideration the interests of the Commonwealth which lie beyond our shores.

Mr PAGE

- They do not in this case. One could swim across to New Guinea.

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Mr BROWN

- They lie outside the immediate boundaries of the Commonwealth. While the position demands at our hands the most careful consideration, I believe that the people of the Commonwealth have spoken already upon it. So far as they have spoken, their voice has gone in the direction of saying that we should consider the interests of the Commonwealth in respect to its relationship with the islands of the South Pacific. The States of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria have spoken upon this question of British supremacy in New Guinea, and they have contributed from their respective revenues towards the expenses of carrying on the government and maintaining control of the possession. The general regret, is not that that step has been taken, but that it was not taken earlier and more effectively than was possible when action was decided upon, and that the whole of New Guinea is not under British control. I believe that the people of Australia feel strongly that that policy is good, not only with respect to New Guinea, but with regard to many of the islands of the South Pacific, and, notably, the New Hebrides. We have to look at the question from this stand-point, and say whether we shall undertake the duties and obligations forced upon us in this matter - whether we shall commit the Commonwealth to an enlarged sphere of action in the South Pacific, or whether we shall decline at this stage the obligation, forced upon us, practically, so far as New Guinea is concerned. The position that presents itself to me is that we have either to undertake this obligation, with all the difficulties that those who oppose the Government proposal have put forward, or in a short time incur other obligations still more serious.

If we refuse to secure and maintain the control of British New Guinea, other Continental powers will come in and take possession. If the British Government withdrew from British New Guinea, no doubt Germany would extend her powers over it. It is simply because of the opposition that was raised within Australia prior to federation that the Continental powers have been restrained in their desire to acquire territory in the South Pacific, and particularly in the near vicinity of Australia. In making a choice between these two positions, I for one prefer to accept the obligation attaching to the duty of bringing the islands embraced by the motion within the control of the Commonwealth Government, rather than that we should have to face the other obligation of dealing with foreign powers in possession of those islands. For that reason I think that the Government are to be commended for the action they have taken, and I am prepared to support their proposal. I think it will meet with general commendation, although I do not say that it will meet with the entire approval of the whole Commonwealth, for there are evidences that it does not commend itself to the good judgment of some honorable members who believe that the Monroe doctrine of Australia should be limited to the continent of Australia. On the other hand, I believe that the majority of the people of the Commonwealth believe that the Monroe doctrine should be extended to the islands within the sphere of Australian influence. If this proposition is carried out, and the sphere of influence is extended, it will be proved in years to come that it was the wisest course to take in the interests of the people of the Commonwealth. I recognise that the future of British New Guinea will depend to a certain extent upon the form of government and administration which is introduced there. With that full and intimate knowledge of the requirements of that large island territory, which this Parliament possesses, we should be better fitted to meet the difficulties of progressive settlement there - and to provide for those difficulties on lines that will lead to ultimate success - than the Home authorities. I should like to emphasize the point that the trouble which the States have had with Downing-street in regard to the

administration Of the possession has been in preventing the snapping-up of land there by large syndicates'. That is one of the difficulties which beset every settlement in its initial stages. Those who wish to speculate largely acquire large tracts of land, and thus create a monopoly which prevents the best results of settlement being obtained from those who come afterwards. Speculators in the old world, recognising that British New Guinea, by reason of its contiguity to Australia and all its latent powers, will develop into a great territory,, wish to acquire land monopolies there, and it is only by the strong opposition offered by the States themselves that this has been prevented. Now these States look rightly to the Commonwealth to take up the burdens which they have been bearing so long in the maintenance of this territory, and to speak and legislate, not in the name of one or two States, but in the name of the whole of the people of Australia, for the general advantage of New Guinea and the Commonwealth, so far as their interests relate to that possession. I think that can be best accomplished by this Parliament. If the Government are successful in carrying this resolution into effect, I strongly suggest to them the passing of legislation which will prevent the alienation of land in New Guinea. The land there should be leased, and I commend to the Government the principle that is embodied in the New South Wales Land Act of 1895. If that course is adopted, so far as the interests of the Commonwealth, or of the new State that may be created, are concerned, there will, hereafter, be a national asset provided for, which will do away with a lot of the difficulties that present themselves to honorable members in dealing with this question at the present time. I am heartily in accord with the policy of the Government as disclosed in this proposal, and I am prepared to support them in the resolution they have submitted to the committee.

Mr PAGE

- In connexion with the proposed taking over of New Guinea I cannot understand some of the members from the larger States acting in such a selfish and provincial manner as their speeches would suggest. They want to throw the whole onus of administration on to Queensland. That State is quite prepared to take it, I can assure them, but she does not desire to pay the piper that the rest of the Commonwealth may have the benefit. That is the position in a nutshell. As has been mentioned in this debate, Queensland took the initiative in this matter, and annexed the whole island of New Guinea, and if her action had been ratified by the then Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Derby, this question would not have arisen to-day. Only a year or two ago some wealthy syndicates in England wanted to take up a great portion of the arable land on the Fly River. It was practically cut and dried that they should be allowed to take it up, and who were the means of stopping it?

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- I was one.

Mr PAGE

- I should have thought the honorable member would have been in the syndicate.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- I was not. I did my best to stop it.

Mr PAGE

- I remember that Sir William Lyne entered a very emphatic protest at that time.

Mr McDonald

- The credit of stopping it belongs to Victoria.

Mr PAGE

- I first noticed that Sir William Lyne moved in the matter, and there then came a very emphatic protest from Victoria.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Action was taken a long time before that.

Mr PAGE

- Yes, there was action taken to acquire the country, and there will be that kind of action taken again. Some honorable members have been talking about Australia as a nation, and I know that when the federal campaign was going on they were asking why we should not become one nation and one brotherhood. Now the first chance we get of showing ourselves as a nation they are afraid of possible foreign complications. Are these the kind of men who have built up the British Empire to be what it is to-day? If they had been afraid, as some honorable members are, of taking responsibilities upon their shoulders, should we have been in the position in which we stand to-day? My spirit rebels against these

sentiments. If we are to be a nation at all, let us be a nation in deed as well as in name, and let us not be afraid of foreign complications.

Mr Poynton

- Take the case of South Africa.

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Mr PAGE

- All I can say. about South Africa is that if they had not done what they have done, we should be in a very queer state, and should now be playing second fiddle to some one else, instead of being in the front rank. That is the position so far as I understand it.

Mr McDonald

- If they had known as much at that time as they do now, they would never have entered into it.

Mr PAGE

- That is all right, and if we were born 100 years ago we might not be here to-day. These things have to be found out, and there is no use in talking of what might have been. The question for us to consider is whether it is politic for the Commonwealth to allow a foreigner to be within a stone's throw of Australia.

Mr McDonald

- We cannot prevent it; he is there now.

Mr PAGE

- Then let him stop there, and we shall have this as a buffer State between him and ourselves. The interjection only shows that the honorable member knows very little about military tactics. He may be a good politician, but he is a bad soldier. The further we keep the foreigners away the better it will be ; and we should ask ourselves whether we are going to allow them to come alongside or are going to create a buffer State between them and ourselves. However, I look at the matter in a different light altogether. I look upon New Guinea as part and parcel of Australia, and I desire to see no one but Australians governing this continent. So far as I am concerned the Government will have my wholehearted support in this resolution. It is not to the advantage of Queensland to take over New Guinea. We do not. want the foreigners at our door. They may be in New Guinea already, and may stop there for a time, but I am sure that after spending a good many thousand pounds trying to colonize the country they will be satisfied that the game is not all it is cracked up to be. I hope the Government will be firm in this matter. It is the first opportunity we have to assert ourselves as a nation, and I say we should not go back but should go forward, and, asserting our authority, take over New Guinea.

Mr THOMSON

- In some respects, and very largely, I agree with the patriotic sentiments expressed by the honorable member for Maranoa, I do say that, placed as we are as outposts of the British race in these southern seas, we must recognise our responsibilities and our destinies. We must know that- the domination of, at any rate, the islands within a moderate distance of our coast line is necessary for the good of Australia. We must recognise that other nations are not settling them as colonies in the proper sense of the word. The climate and conditions of the islands are not such as to provide suitable areas for colonization. We practically have all the colonizable land in this part of the world, and we know that other nations are settling in the islands of the Pacific, not merely for some 'advantage of gain which they may obtain by trade or cultivation, but - and this is the real force behind their action in most cases - to occupy naval bases from which to make an attack upon the British colonies in the event of war with Great Britain.

Mr Brown

- In any case they are a menace to the Commonwealth.

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Mr THOMSON

- Whatever may have been the first reason inducing some of the other powers to annex these islands, we know that what they' are now looking to is to acquire strong naval bases in case of any trouble with Great Britain in the future. We have seen that in connexion with New Caledonia and the New Hebrides. Those latter islands were included in the commission of the first Governor of New Zealand. But owing to a want of full consideration of their importance they were not taken possession of by that Governor until the French obtained possession of New Caledonia. 1 The French now desire to get possession of the New Hebrides as well. Why? Because they will form a much better naval base than New Caledonia. The New

Hebrides possess one of the finest harbours in the Pacific for provisioning, coaling, and in the event of war as a base for an attack. They, consequently, look upon the New Hebrides as of very great importance from a naval stand-point. I quite admit that, from that aspect in New Guinea, the case has been practically given away, because the portion of New Guinea, which the Germans have possession of contains at least one good harbour. As they may form a naval base there at any time, it is not of so much importance as a question of defence that we should have the southern portion, but it is of importance in this connexion, that in the event of any adjustment taking place "in the future between the Great Powers - and these adjustments, frequently take place - the Dutch portion might be obtained by purchase, and it will be much easier to arrange an exchange for the German portion when we possess a footing there already. I think it will be the duty of the rulers of the Commonwealth to watch the Pacific question from now onwards. We do not wish to take, by force of arms or any unjust method, territories that belong to other powers : but the British people and Government are apt to forget in these, various adjustments which we have seen take place the importance of these Pacific matters unless the Commonwealth Government is there to submit them at such times when there is an opportunity, by exchange or other settlement, of getting possession of, «,t any rate, those islands which are within dangerous distance of our coast. Whilst I hold this view very strongly - because the policy of shutting our eyes will not change the circumstances, and we shall have to open them some day to the facts when the position is worse than it is to-day - at the same time I think that those who have objected to our attaching a territory practically in an afternoon, mid creating a Pacific policy, have some good grounds for their objection. Why do the Government require power, not only to accept the control of New Guinea immediately, and pay the contribution which is necessary - but to make it a territory 1 They cannot act any more fully under .that authority than they could act if we gave them power to get control. They can deal with ull the questions under that control, which . they could deal with if we passed the motion as it is : they can deal with the leasing of land, the punishment of crime, the general administration under control, if it is granted by the British Government.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- The Commonwealth Government could not do that under the second part of the motion.

Mr THOMSON

- I contend that it should go further than that. I am not proposing an amendment, but suggesting what I think would give the Government all they want without committing us to something upon which we are not yet in a position to express an opinion.. I suggest an amendment of the motion to this effect -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept control of British New Guinea, if His Majesty's Government are willing to place it under Federal control. »

Under those words, we should give the Government authority to accept control for the British Government without going so far 4is to empower them to accept the islands as a territory. I shall briefly give some reasons for that. One reason has been mentioned - that we are to take the islands as a territory. We wish to know how the British Government is going to regard the territories of the _ Commonwealth. Is there behind the Commonwealth in dealing with these territories the British Government? For instance, if the Germans choose to take an area of land on Our border in New Guinea, are we in the dispute with Germany, to have the support of the British navy 1

Mr Knox

- Should we not have that support if the Germans landed on any other part of the Commonwealth 1

Mr THOMSON

- As regards these outside territories, which are a different matter, the British Government might say - " We cannot go to war over this dispute ; you yourself will have to settle it with Germany." I do not say that they would say so, but that the Government ought to know the position. Then, are we to obtain this control with our present contribution, or with a larger contribution to the British Government? There is another aspect to consider. We can, I think - I would not question the many legal authorities who say it is so - decide whether we shall treat a territory as absolutely part of the Commonwealth as to the admission of goods and its inhabitants, or, as whilst portion of the 'Commonwealth, really beyond our bounds. Are we going to make distinctions between territories) to deal with one territory in one way and another territory differently 1

Sir William McMillan

- We must do so, because of the different conditions. That is what the Constitution allows us to do.

Mr THOMSON

- If we take over the Northern Territory, for instance, as a territory, shall we' have one treatment for it, and another treatment for another case ?

Sir William McMillan

- The Constitution provides for it.

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Mr THOMSON

- Shall we admit goods into the Commonwealth free from one territory, and tax goods coming from another territory ? There are a number of questions of that sort which I do not think have been decided, and it might have been better for the Government to let us have their policy before us. I am perfectly in favour of the proposal of the Government, so long as the Act by which they endeavour to carry it out meets with my approval.

This is the first step in that direction, and we ought to know more than we do before we commit ourselves to taking over this portion of New Guinea as a territory. There is no necessity that it should be a part of the Commonwealth, or that it should be made a territory. The Government can deal with it in different ways. I am quite with what seems to have moved the Government in this direction. I am quite with the necessity of contributing to the expenditure and of obtaining the control. I shall also be with them in making a territory when we know what that means. My anticipation would be that it would be better to deal with it as a territory, but let us see the Bill which is to make it a territory, and know what it implies.

Mr Higgins

- And also the cost.

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Mr THOMSON

- I want to know what the whole thing implies. For that reason, it would be much wiser to take the control, to have the administration for a period, and to guarantee the contribution ; and from that experience we should then know how best to continue the domination of the territory. What I would suggest is that we have the control for a period, and when we find out what the cost is to be, what complications are likely to arise, and how we can best avoid them, then we shall be in a better position to deal with it as a territory. It is only in that aspect that we are jumping the matter too quickly I think, when we interrupt a debate not merely to get rid of a difficulty which has been created - that is necessary at once - but to commit ourselves absolutely to a particular policy when there might be a better policy. I would suggest that the Government should obtain authority to take control of New Guinea, and delay the actual creation of a Commonwealth territory for the present. I hardly think that the remarks which have been made as to the meanness of the British Government in this matter are fair. The British Government were wrong - as they are always apt to be wrong in connexion with these distant territories - in not taking possession of the whole of New Guinea except the Dutch portion. They subsequently undertook to annex a certain portion of New Guinea under certain guarantees from the colonies. They have always looked upon New Guinea as territory acquired for purely colonial convenience ; and therefore when we formed ourselves into the Commonwealth it was quite justifiable on their part to say, " We have undertaken so much responsibility hitherto, and it is now your turn to contribute the money that we have hitherto provided." That was justifiable, and I very much regret that we did not recognise that in the first instance. I do not like begging appeals to the British Government, such as was made in connexion with the contribution of £7,000. The British Government had good reason for saying to us " Manage this yourself Their desire has been to obtain a sufficient amount of revenue from New Guinea to cover the expenditure, but the colonies stepped in and prevented them from doing so. I do not say that it was wrong for us to interfere, because in one or two instances our interposition was quite proper. Therefore the British Government were quite right in saying, " We cannot manage New Guinea at this distance. You want to approve of everything we do, and as we do not know the circumstances under which you will object, or the conditions that will find favour with you, take the territory and govern it yourselves, as we cannot effectively govern it." That was a proper position for the British Government to assume, and we should never have necessitated their writing to us and stating that while £7,000 was of great importance to us, it was of much more importance to them, owing to the enormous sum they were spending for the support of the colonies in other directions. I do not think it was mean of the British Government to tell us to govern New Guinea

ourselves. The Government may now well obtain authority for the control of New Guinea, and for the expenditure of the money necessary to administer the Government, and they can afterwards bring down any measure they may think fit, in the light of such further information as they may acquire after a little experience.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN (Wentworth). - I still hold to the opinion I expressed in the early part of this debate that, although we may ultimately decide to take over New Guinea as a Commonwealth territory, a matter of this great importance ought not to be rushed at this particular time, when Parliament is engaged in very important work of another character. I think that it would be well for this matter to be delayed until the Tariff has been disposed of in this Chamber. The financial position can very well be met by resolutions agreeing to the payment of the money necessary to 'meet all requirements up to the 30th June next, and we can also embody in the resolutions an expression of our intention to take over the control of New Guinea from the Queensland Government. I am not at all certain that it will not be better to take over New Guinea and administer it as it is now being administered by Queensland. Afterwards, when we have had an opportunity of giving careful consideration to all the surroundings, and after the settlement of some of the difficult questions which may arise as to our future position in the case of trouble in the Pacific seas, we shall be better able to decide upon the proper course to follow. It is not right or proper for this Parliament in one afternoon to decide upon a policy with such far-reaching results, and I would suggest that the resolutions should take something like the following form : -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept the responsibility of taking over from the State of Queensland the control of New Guinea.

Mr Barton

- We cannot take over the control from the State of Queensland, but only from the British Government. The Queensland Government has no right of transfer - it has only a delegated power, which can be surrendered to the British Government, who can then grant the power of control to us.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I have been advised that this resolution is, perhaps, not quite in the form in which it should stand ; but we cannot vote this money without taking over the control of New Guinea. We cannot expect the three eastern States to continue their payments towards the administration of New Guinea after the Commonwealth has been founded, and, therefore, by whatever means it can be accomplished, we should take over - whether from the British or the Queensland Government I cannot say - the control of New Guinea as it is carried on by Queensland.

Mr Barton

- I might remind the honorable member that we can only control New Guinea in that way until we pass a statute, and it rests with this Parliament to say whether we shall do that or not.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I further suggest that the motion should contain these words -

Pending further legislation this House authorizes the payment of a sum not exceeding £20,000, for the twelve months ending 30th June, 1902.

This simply means that we shall commit ourselves, at any rate for twelve months, to the payment of the deficiency in the New Guinea Budget, and this will get over the ' financial difficulty. Then we ask for the control of New Guinea pending legislation. As an alternative, I am willing to propose that we should commit ourselves to the expenditure on an understanding with the Government that after the Tariff has been dealt with this matter shall be fully considered - that we should commit ourselves to this extent for the current twelve months, and that then resolutions or a Bill should be brought in after the Tariff has been settled in this Chamber.

Mr Barton

- It is the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill after the Tariff has been dealt with, as I have already explained.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- My right honorable friend knows well enough that, whilst we shall not commit ourselves to the details of a Bill dealing with the relations of New Guinea to the people on the main-land, we shall, by passing the resolutions now before us, commit ourselves to the incorporation of New Guinea as Commonwealth territory.

Mr Barton

- Perhaps the honorable member will point out to me some way in which we can take governmental control of any place except as a territory of the Commonwealth.

Sir William McMillan

- is not

New Guinea a part of the territory of Queensland ?

Mr Barton

- -No ; it never was.

Sir William McMillan

- is not

Queensland, as far as financial matters are concerned, a Treasury bag for the States 1

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Mr Barton

- My honorable friend seems to forget that the powers given to every State are powers for the peace, order, and good . government of the State in all things whatsoever. These were the powers existent when Queensland accepted certain responsibilities with regard to New Guinea, subject to contributions being made by the other States. On the other hand, the powers given to the Commonwealth are powers that operate only in specified .eases..

If we transgress the lines of that statutory specification we shall go outside the powers which the Imperial Government gave us. There is no power given under the Commonwealth Constitution to deal with any country - I purposely avoid the use of the word "territory" - outside the existing limits of the Commonwealth, unless such country becomes the territory of the Common wealth. If my honorable friend can give me some indication that any transfer short of the transference of territory, which is sanctioned under the Constitution of the Commonwealth, or show that the Constitution gives us powers of control other than over a territory of the Commonwealth, he will solve a question which has caused me a very great deal of difficulty. The Attorney-General, the Vice-President of the Executive Council, and myself are all under the impression that the only way in which we can constitutionally manage any country outside of our present bounds is to take it over as a territory.

Mr Higgins

- Is it legal to appropriate money for the purpose ?

Mr Barton

- We can appropriate money only for those matters which are within the legal and constitutional powers of the Commonwealth. If, then, we have not a legal and constitutional power to assume the government of any place except as a territory of the Commonwealth, it follows as a necessary consequence that any money appropriated for that purpose would be illegally and unconstitutionally appropriated, and would expose us to injunctions and all sorts of reprisals in the High Court. I have no desire to put the matter dictatorially, but, as far as we can see, that is the legal position.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I grasp to some extent the position laid down by the Prime Minister. It is new to me that we cannot take over from three eastern States their financial responsibility in regard to New Guinea, and vote the amount which it represents as a vote of the Commonwealth. Does the Minister' mean to say that the Commonwealth is absolutely precluded from passing a vote for a certain purpose as a subsidy to any part outside of Commonwealth territory?

Mr Barton

-For the government of any place outside of it.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- We are doing it now by resolution, before there is any legislation at all.

Mr Barton

- This is only an abstract resolution expressing the willingness of the House to undertake the administration of New Guinea, in order that matters may be dealt with between this Government and the Imperial Government.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- The territory known as British New Guinea is what is called a British possession. There is an

Administrator there, who is appointed by the Imperial Government. The whole reason for the present haste is that this possession is drifting into insolvency, and the British Government has said to the Commonwealth - "We will have nothing more to do with it. You may take it or you may leave it." Surely, if the difficulty is merely a financial one, this House can declare that it will make itself responsible for the next twelve months, and we can defer the consideration of legislation by which this possession shall be incorporated in the Commonwealth of Australia. I am in favour of undertaking the administration of this territory, and believe that ultimately we must undertake it. But there are some matters connected with it which I do not see quite clearly just now. I do not think that the case has been opened out, except in a purely historical sense, by the Prime Minister. Therefore, as a matter of caution and reserve, this first great act of Commonwealth expansion ought not to be hurried through, when the minds of honorable members are diverted by a host of other considerations arising out of the Tariff. I will not move any amendment to the resolution just now. I shall watch how the debate proceeds. The necessity to intrude this debate in the middle of the discussion on the Tariff has arisen out of the financial needs of New Guinea. When we can so easily meet that financial necessity, we ought not to be rushed into the consideration of a matter which has such far-reaching results. The Government themselves must accept some blame in regard to this subject. The practical insolvency of New Guinea has been patent to the Ministry for months past, and it is a matter which might very well have been dealt with in one of our Supply Bills.

Mr Barton

- Not unless we were prepared to accept the principle of expenditure without control, which I think would be ruinous.

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Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- After all, the intention of the Government is to control New Guinea within a very short period, and to ask this House to accept legislation by which the British portion of it will be incorporated in the Commonwealth. Under existing circumstances, and in deference to the wishes of many honorable members, I advise the Prime Minister to amend his resolution so as to overcome the financial difficulty for the present year only, and to agree that legislation shall be introduced dealing with this matter immediately after the Tariff has been disposed of. We know that the British Government does not want the territory, and that Queensland does not want it. We know also that we must inevitably take it over. But there are matters connected with the assumption of this responsibility which ought to be made very clear. We ought to understand exactly where we are drifting. I should prefer to see a resolution submitted to the House, after the Tariff has been disposed of, accepting the financial responsibility of administering this possession for the current twelve months. The Prime Minister raised the question as to whether we could legally vote money for carrying on a Government which was not exercised in a territory belonging to the Commonwealth .

Mr Barton

- I expressed a doubt whether, under the Constitution, we could undertake the government of any place which was not either a State or a territory of the Commonwealth, and whether, therefore, if we voted the money it would be constitutionally voted.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I can see that that is a very strong argument, but, at the same time, it is an extreme point to take.

Mr Barton

- That is why we use the word " territory "in the motion.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- The contention makes us slaves, to a certain extent, of our own resolution. Sec. 51 of the Constitution, which carries with it all the powers of Parliament, says that we have power to make laws with regard to " the relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific." The present Government shows a strong tendency to enlarge the powers under the Constitution in every possible direction, and I think that under that section we should be perfectly justified in giving a vote for certain purposes. After all, the States which have voted the subsidy up to the present time for New Guinea, have done so because they believe that it is not safe to allow this territory to be without some kind of government, and, therefore, regarding that country as a sort of outpost, it seems to me it would be quite constitutional for us to vote

the money. I do not propose at the present time to move a formal amendment. I think it quite sufficient at present to meet the financial exigencies, and that the whole question with regard to the motion and the Bill which will embody it, can be considered at a further period of this session, when we are free from the peculiar position in which we are placed in having to deal with the new Tariff for the Commonwealth. Our difficulty at present arises out of the fact that, although this motion is really framed to meet the financial position of New Guinea, it practically fixes us to the acceptance of the principle that New Guinea shall become a territory or part and parcel of the territory of Australia.

Mr Watson

- And similar territories as well.

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Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- I do not know that exactly, because I think we must take New Guinea by itself. We are not dealing with the Solomon Islands or any other territory, and as I said in a previous part of my address, New Guinea belongs geographically to Australia. That is the crux of the whole question. I do not think that we could say that some of the islands at a distance belong geographically to Australia, although, of course, an arbitrary line might be drawn as showing the sphere of influence of the Commonwealth. I think there is a little weak point in the legal armour of the Prime Minister. The right honorable gentleman says that we cannot vote this money unless British New Guinea becomes Commonwealth territory ; but he proposes, I take it, to vote the money if necessary even before the act of incorporation is placed in a Commonwealth Bill, and passed by both Houses of Parliament. If we cannot legally vote money for the government of a territory or a possession outside the Commonwealth, we cannot vote it before every legal act has been carried out, which makes the territory part of the Commonwealth. As the Prime Minister does not propose, until the end of the Tariff discussion, to introduce the Bill which will practically incorporate New Guinea with the Australian Continent, he is absolutely precluded from giving the desired financial assistance at the present time. Of course, this House might pass a motion promising to vote the money when necessary, but if the Prime Minister's contention be correct, we cannot pass a vote at the present time. It is very clear that the committee is willing to take over the control of British New Guinea, and willing to vote the money which has been previously voted by the three Eastern States. The satisfaction of that knowledge ought to be quite sufficient, without committing us to the whole principle of the Bill that is to be introduced. I contend that a very simple resolution, embodying the willingness of this House to vote the money when we can legally do so, will be sufficient for all purposes, leaving us absolutely untrammelled with regard to our action when that particular proposal is incorporated in the Bill.

Mr. BARTON(Hunter- Minister for External Affairs). - I do not want to detain the committee long, but the remarks made by the honorable member for Wentworth and other honorable members warrant my making a short speech at this stage, in order to endeavour to clear up some of the doubts by which the proposals of the Government seem to have become confused. The suggested amendment, as roughly drafted by the honorable member for Wentworth, affirms -

That this House authorizes the Government to accept the responsibility of taking over from the State of Queensland, the control of British New Guinea, -

I understand the honorable member not to make it a point that the control of New Guinea should be taken over from Queensland, because there might be a legal difficulty in the way. The control would, of course,, have to be taken over from the Imperial Government. The suggested amendment proceeds - - and pending further legislation, this House authorizes the payment of a sum not exceeding £20,000 for the twelve months ending the 30th June, 1902.

There are two points - that the control should be taken over without there being anything specified as to the nature of the control, and that any financial responsibility which the Commonwealth undertakes should expire at the end of the financial year of 1-902. The amendment has not been moved, and I shall have to ask the honorable member for Wentworth not to move it, or, if he does so, I shall have to ask the committee not to accept it, because of definite reasons applying to a matter on which I see, at once, the honorable member and myself are not in hostility. It will be necessary for us to undertake the control of British New Guinea as a territory. I do not believe, apart from matters of mere law, that we are justified in spending the money of the Commonwealth to the tune of £20,000 a year - the amount may be more or less at the end of five years ; I hope and believe that it will be less - unless we are prepared also to

undertake the responsibility and duty attaching to the control. It is very well to say that the government of New Guinea may go on under the Imperial Government, or under the Queensland Government, but, so far as the Imperial Government are concerned, they are willing to divest themselves of the control ; indeed, I do not think I should be going too far if I said that the Imperial Government are anxious to divest themselves of the control. And there at once arises an answer to some of the doubts and difficulties of honorable members. The honorable member for Bland admits that if he thought we were strong enough to bear the expense of carrying through what he calls a policy of annexation, he would have no objection to a motion such as that now before the committee. But he has his doubts whether, in the absence of a navy of our own, as one efficient factor in the matter, we ought to undertake that responsibility. The responsibility of the Empire does not vary, whatever takes place. Whatever the devolution of control may be, the same responsibility rests upon the Empire as an Empire. There is no difference as to the Imperial protection, whether New Guinea is a territory of the Commonwealth, or a Crown colony, or a second Australia; whether its form of Government becomes in later years that of an important self-governing possession, or whether it becomes, as it may become, a State of the Commonwealth or otherwise. My honorable friend will admit with me that the Imperial Government acknowledges its responsibility for the defence of the whole Empire, no matter by what internal arrangements the parts of the Empire are controlled. The relation of parts of the Empire with the rest of the world is the same, and the duty of Imperial protection is the same, whatever may be the arrangement between parts of the Empire and the Imperial Government in regard to contributions towards the Imperial navy. There is no thought on the part of the Imperial Government in putting before us the proposal that we, who are nearer to New Guinea, can govern it perhaps more efficiently and better than it can be governed from England, of shirking the responsibility of protecting every part of the Empire. That is the duty of the whole Empire, and it does not alter, as far as the Imperial army and navy are concerned, whatever internal arrangements may be made between us. I want, in the first place, to make it quite clear to honorable members that there can be no thought, on the part of the Imperial Government, in asking us, who are nearest, to take the control of this possession, of divesting themselves of the responsibility for its defence, nor is there any thought of throwing upon us in any undue degree the responsibility for the defence of New Guinea. Whatever arrangements we may make for naval or land defence in the future rests with ourselves. We may make them more extensive than they are at present, or we may not. We may, for instance, enter into another naval arrangement with the Imperial Government by which we may contribute more and obtain still more effective protection. Or we may break away from that arrangement altogether and make arrangements of our own - only limited by constitutional bounds - which in such case might perhaps become irksome - for a more extended defence, which would apply also to New Guinea. But the point I wish to enforce is, that whatever we do in that way, the responsibility of the Imperial Government for the security of the Empire cannot be forgotten, and that its admission that the whole Empire, in every foot of its soil, is as sacred to it as is the soil of the United Kingdom will never be recanted. Whatever we may do ourselves - whether we break away from the Imperial union or not - whatever remains of the British Empire will be entitled to defence at the hands of the whole of the British Empire.

Sir William McMillan

- We admit that, but there might be interference in the interior in times of difficulty.

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Mr BARTON

- Whatever alterations may be made in the bounds of the Empire whether parts of it break away or not - the Empire, as it remains, will still be the absolute responsibility of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, subject to any arrangements that may be made within the Empire. I want that point to be clear, because there can be no alteration in Imperial responsibility if this change of Government is made. If it is not made, an invader will not be able to obtain possession of British New Guinea until the resources of the Empire are exhausted. If this arrangement is made the same condition will obtain. It is a matter between us and the Government of the United Kingdom how far we will go in our contributions or in our mutual assistance, but the paramount duty of the United Kingdom is to maintain the whole Empire intact ; and that duty will not be in the slightest degree altered whether the result of the vote upon this matter is one way or the other. That point seems to me to dispose of some of the objections to the motion. Our responsibilities may become greater in another sense. We may have more to do with the government of

New Guinea than we have had hitherto. But that responsibility will not j affect the duties of the Empire in the slightest degree. If the Imperial Government thought that we were more likely to embroil the Empire by taking charge of New Guinea than they were by continuing the existing arrangement, I do not think they would be as ready as they are to hand over the control of that territory to us. I want, further, to point out that the monetary responsibility we are asked to undertake is not a severe one. Up to the year 1898 the three States Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria - taking them in the order of their nearness to New Guinea - were contributing £15,000 a year, and, in addition, they were consenting, to a grant of £7,000 a year towards the guarantee out of the accumulated funds of New Guinea which, according to Mr. Le Hunte, made the total responsibility amount to something like £22,000. The only difference that will arise out of this motion, from the monetary aspect, is that that sum of, say, £20,000, will be found by the six States, according to population, instead of by three States in equal parts. It is simply in that aspect of the question that this House and the other House - when they come to deal with it - are asked to say whether it is not a just and right thing that a territory which is so much larger in size than this State of Victoria, and which has been described by nearly every member who has spoken as being geographically part of Australia, should be governed from some part of Australia, by an expenditure which would fall, as it did in the past, on three States, or whether the whole continent to which New Guinea is geographically assigned should not contribute equally to the expenditure, according to population. It makes very little difference in the monetary incidence, for this reason : - Towards the sum of £20,000, Tasmania and Western Australia would, according to population, contribute about £1,000 each ; South Australia would contribute about £2,000 ; and the remaining four States would amongst them make up the sum of £16,000. That is to say, the remaining States would make up £1,000 beyond the original guarantee of £15,000, but the whole expenditure would be no greater than has been borne by three States in the past. I now dismiss the question of expenditure, which I felt it my duty to mention in order to enforce the point that so far as the monetary incidence of the matter upon the public of Australia is concerned there is very little difference between this proposal and the continuance of the system which existed up to 1898.

Mr Watson

- Once we accept the responsibility we must take the risk of the expenditure being increased.

Mr BARTON

- I admit that. Now I come to the first part of the motion upon which the interjection made by my honorable friend is quite relevant. It provides that the Commonwealth should be ready to take over British New Guinea as a territory. The honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse, has taken some exception to the use of the words "authorizes the Government to accept," because he thinks they may lead to an acceptance on the part of the Commonwealth Government, which might be binding constitutionally, without the passing of an Act of Parliament. It is clear, however, that there must be something anterior - some acceptance at the outset - or something which signifies willingness on the part of the Commonwealth to accept the territory, otherwise the responsibility for administration could never begin. We cannot begin the administration without some arrangement between the Commonwealth and the Imperial Government. We might try to do so, but there

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could be no administration on our part unless the Imperial Government were ready to pass either a statute or an Order in Council to enable us to undertake the management of the affairs of British New Guinea. I said an Order in Council. I believe this can be done by means of an Order in Council, so far as the Imperial Government are concerned. I believe that the investiture in the Commonwealth, provided the Commonwealth is ready to accept, can be done by an order of the King in Council. I think that is what is meant by the phrase in section 122 of the Constitution -

Placed by the Queen under the authority of and accepted by the Commonwealth.

The acceptance by the Commonwealth, however, may be a different thing. It may be necessary for us - I will not bind myself to it - to pass an Act of Parliament before we can even accept British New Guinea. It may be that the Commonwealth would have to take a somewhat unconstitutional course in the meantime. If the possession were placed under its control by the Imperial Government it might have to face the unconstitutionality of governing that which is neither a State or a territory. I am strongly inclined to think - and the legal opinion of the Cabinet is with me - that to undertake the management of that which is neither a State or a territory may be to a certain extent unconstitutional. The Government must make that

admission at once in dealing with a question of this sort. On the other hand, the House finds itself in the position that there must be some preliminary step. It cannot legislate for a territory unless the place is a territory. It cannot constitutionally deal with a place until it becomes a territory. Admitting that there must necessarily be an interregnum between the placing of the possession under the control of the Commonwealth and the passage by the Commonwealth of an Act of Parliament, that time must be bridged over.

Mr Piesse

- It might have a territorial law ready for the occasion.

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Mr BARTON

- I will come to that point. I should like to meet the honorable member for Wentworth by saying that the Government may have to do something which is unconstitutional, at the will of the two Houses of Parliament - something unconstitutional for the time being, which will be ratified the moment an Act of Parliament is passed. I

I cannot conceive of the taking over of this possession, whether as a territory or otherwise, and the inception of administration in it, without something unconstitutional being done. I do not see how it would be possible otherwise. If the objection as to unconstitutionality were to prevail, then the day would never begin when this Commonwealth would take over even the Northern Territory of South Australia or any other place which might become a territory. The simple reason for this is that while we might obtain a parliamentary authorization - as we colloquially understand the term - nevertheless until the Act was passed which ratified the action taken in relation to the matter from the date of the inception of control there would be a degree of unconstitutionality.

Mr Piesse

- Unless we had passed, meanwhile, an Enabling Act.

Mr BARTON

- We might pass a general Enabling Act, but that would not get over the constitutional difficulty, because we could not convert a place to be taken over into anything but a territory or something else. My view is - and I scarcely think it is open to doubt, if I may say so, with all due deference - that if the place is not a territory, the Constitution provides no means by which we could take it over. If it is a territory, until we have legislated for it, we might have to continue the administration of it for the time being, which would be in itself to a certain degree unconstitutional.

Sir William McMillan

- Then the right honorable gentleman admits' that it is necessary to take an intermediate step 1

Mr BARTON

- There I think we are on common ground. It is possible, if I can make the matter clearer, that we shall have to vote money before this possession becomes absolutely constitutionally under the control of the Commonwealth. If that is so, it is a difficulty which must arise in the history of the Commonwealth with regard to every place taken over. We could not take over any part of the islands of the South Pacific - if the occasion for doing so should arise - without this same difficulty occurring. Therefore it simply seems to me to be a matter of this kind : An objection is raised which I meet by saying - " That is an unconstitutional position." My honorable friend meets me by saying " Yes, but to vote the money before we have taken it over is an unconstitutional position." We may say to each other, "That is granted, but the difficulties will arise in any case, and we must combine to meet them." The way to meet them is, when we- legislate on the subject, to ratify whatever has been done in the past which may appear to be unconstitutional.

Sir William McMillan

- Could not the Government frame the motion so that, while agreeing generally to the control of British New Guinea, we do not commit ourselves until a Bill is brought before us absolutely incorporating the possession in the Commonwealth ?

Mr BARTON

- I have a suggested amendment in my hand which I was about to say I was willing to accept in deference to what has been advanced by the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse. The amendment is to omit the words "authorizes the Government to accept " - lest any difficulty might occur in the minds of any honorable members about them, although I do not think there is serious difficulty, because the

constitutional difficulty, either as to territory or money, is one which the two Houses can cure - and to substitute the words -

Is willing to join in measures for the acceptance of -

That would get rid of the whole difficulty suggested by the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse.
Mr Hughes

- Join in measures with whom - the Imperial Government ?

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Mr BARTON

- It seems to me that the part of the Imperial Government is to pass an Order in Council or a statute evidencing their readiness to place this possession under our control. The acceptance is our own business, and can emanate only from the Commonwealth. The reason why I am prepared to use the words " willing to join in measures for the acceptance of " is that it shall be made reasonably clear that the ordinary and constitutional method of acceptance will be observed ; that is to say, that the two Houses and the Crown shall join in the passage of a statute ; or, in other words, that the acceptance shall be by an Act of Parliament passed by the Commonwealth. Whatever Act may be passed subsequently, or even at the same time, for the government of this possession, the acceptance by the Commonwealth should be by statute, and I mean by these words to make it reasonably clear that the acceptance must be so provided for. Of course once I suggest an amendment of this kind,

I recognise my responsibility, which is not to accept the government of the territory of British New Guinea without first passing through both Houses - if they will pass it - a statute accepting that responsibility. In my own mind I have always been clear that something of this kind should be done, and if I had thought that this point would have been raised, or if it had been raised when I was making my opening speech, I should have said then what I say now. That is one reason why I welcomed the opportunity of rising to make the matter clear. I think an amendment of that kind would remove a great many of the doubts which honorable members have entertained as to that part of the motion. Paragraph (1) of the motion would then read: -

That this House is willing to join in measures for the acceptance of British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth.

I come now to deal with the words, " as a territory of the Commonwealth," and there I think the Government must hold fast. I do not see how the federation is to be entitled to govern any outside lands except as a territory. That is recognised on the face of the matter with regard to the Northern Territory of South Australia. I am aware that there is not the same use of the word "territory " there, as in our Constitution. But I do not see how, for instance, the Commonwealth could accept that vast tract of country in the northern portion of South Australia, except as a territory or State. If it is handed over to the Commonwealth, it must be as a "State" or "territory." If it is unripe to be governed as a State, it can only be governed as a territory, and that applies more or less to New Guinea. I notice that in this correspondence from the Lieutenant-Governor of Queensland, who is also Chief Justice of the State, there is something about a change of administration being carried out " by arrangement." But for myself I cannot see how we can continue constitutionally to administer New Guinea unless it becomes a part of the Commonwealth. I grant that that also implies that if it becomes a part of the Commonwealth, it becomes a part of an indissoluble Commonwealth ; but as we cannot eat our cake and have it, if we are prepared to accept this responsibility we must accept it for good and all.

21 Q 2

Sir William McMillan

- Would not the same principle have applied to the State of Queensland before?

Mr BARTON

- I was careful to explain, in the short statement which my honorable friend gave me the opportunity of making, that as regards the States themselves they have a much larger and wider Constitution, so far as the things committed them are concerned than we have. They have the power to legislate for the peace, order, and good government of the State, in all cases whatsoever, and that power even now remains to them so far as no part of it is divested from them by our Constitution. Conversely this Constitution gives us only the power to legislate and deal with certain things which are absolutely specified I admit at once that that puts us in a difficulty, and it would put any Government in a difficulty which proposed to take over

anything from outside.

Mr Hughes

- Is not that implied in the Constitution ?

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Mr BARTON

- No, I do not think it is implied. Under our Constitution we have certain powers of legislation confided to us. It may be that in certain cases where we have the power to legislate we have a power of administration pending legislation. That may be, but it is not to be presumed in a hurry or violently. We have powers of legislation, and in these powers we have not merely what is expressed; but everything they necessarily carry by implication. I freely admit, as I have done before, that in entering upon the preliminary steps for taking over any territory, this Parliament commits itself to an unconstitutionality. But, then, I want the committee to face the position. If we are not going to commit ourselves to an unconstitutionality to that extent, it will be utterly impossible for us to take over anything, because the same difficulty must arise whatever the case is. I want the committee, therefore, to see that it is the duty of the Parliament and of the Government to minimize the unconstitutionality of taking over the thing our responsibility bids us takeover, by as soon as possible thereafter, exercising the power of legislation confided to us by the Constitution, and at the moment of its exercise the whole process will become constitutional. A measure of that kind can be made so to date back as to ratify anything done in the meantime. This is a somewhat lengthy constitutional explanation, but a many points have been raised throughout the debate that the committee will probably forgive me for going into these matters. Perhaps I may claim that I have made the matter reasonably clear. I have pointed out to honorable members that, whatever they do, they must either hold their hands off everything, or must commit a preliminary unconstitutionality, but it is entirely in their power to rectify that for the future, and ratify it for the past, because it is for this Parliament to see that the necessary legislation is brought forward and dealt with. We have been asked to postpone the dealing with this matter. I must say I think we ought not to consent to any postponement. The difficulties that have been suggested will arise whenever we begin to deal with it. The preliminary unconstitutionality will exist, whether it is dealt with now, or 20 or 30 years hence. The same difficulty must arise, but it becomes nothing of a difficulty if Parliament afterwards recognises its responsibility by passing the necessary laws, and giving them such retrospective operation as will indemnify the action of Parliament in its first steps. Nothing else can be done, nothing else ever will be done, and I know of no other way -out of the difficulty. Then we are told that we shall be to blame if we deal with this question in the debate of a night. That all depends upon the reason of the matter. If it is a right thing to do, it is better that it should be done in a night than in a year. I am the last to advocate indecent hurry in legislation or in administration. I do not believe in rushing things in the face of a deliberative assembly, but I believe that every speaker who has spoken to-night has admitted that we must ultimately take over this possession, and I therefore want to know what reason there is for delay, and what case has been submitted to prove that we can avoid the necessary dangers and difficulties of this control by postponing the taking over of the administration. Is it the fear of a savage tribe making an incursion into the territory of Germany or of Holland ? In New Guinea, have not these difficulties and dangers always been present to the minds of those who have controlled the possession ? Have they not been dangers and difficulties to the Empire ? Now, let any one who has looked into the matter tell me how far these dangers and difficulties have complicated the relations of the Empire either with Holland or with Germany. They have not to the extent of a solitary farthing. Is it to be said that they will increase ? If so, in that case the reason is not on the side of those who advocate the ultimate control, because they should rather advocate holding off altogether. If we once admit that we should exercise the control, and that the difficulties are likely to increase, it is better for us to assume control at the time when we can minimise those difficulties, and cut down the dangers to the lowest possible point. And those know best how to do that who live nearest to New Guinea. They can cut down the dangers and the difficulties better than those who are 12,000 miles away, and that is the very point which is recognised by the British Government, and it is the reason why they would feel themselves safer with us controlling New Guinea than they would feel in controlling it themselves. It is not that their system does not admit of an adequate and effectual control, but that the control of the nearest is generally the control of those who have the best information to enable them to deal with matters of the kind.

Mr Bamford

- If the taking over of New Guinea had been postponed, goodness knows what would have been the effect today.

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Mr BARTON

- As the honorable member has just suggested to me, if the assumption of responsibility had had to be delayed because of danger, then not only would the Imperial Government have nullified the annexation by Mr. Chester in 1883, but they would not have established the protectorate in 1885 or 1886, and they would not have annexed the possession in 1888. The "craven fear of being great" did not beset them, and it is not for any "craven fear of being great" that they want us to take over this possession, as I freely admit I believe they do want us to do, but because they know that we have our destiny to fulfil in these seas, and they believe that we are fit to carry out that destiny in terms worthy of our Empire. I can attach no value, therefore, to this argument of haste. Will any honorable member say to me that he has any anticipation that if we wait for a week, a fortnight, twelve months or ten years, he will have any better arguments to advance than he has advanced to-night? If he has not, what is the reason for delay; why should we wait? The evils of waiting are enormous. It is suggested that we should spend money which belongs to Australia to carry on an administration by another authority. If that administration were to be carried on by Queensland entirely with Australian money, that would be a repetition, and on a larger scale, of the evil which has occurred during the last thirteen years, which is that the entire control and administration have been in the hands of one State while three have been paying the way.

Sir John Forrest

- Four.

Mr BARTON

- Four States, for I believe Western Australia has paid her share, too. That in the very early stages might not have been a very great evil, but New Guinea is growing in importance and in production. Those who want to know of what use New Guinea will be to the Commonwealth must have forgotten the list I read out of its indigenous and possible productions. It is a rich land with very great possibilities. A country that can produce rubber and get £230 a ton for it - unless we are told that the fineness of the quality of that rubber is an indication that there is not much of it, which would be a strange proposition - a country of that kind has great possibilities. But the list I read out of the productions of New Guinea is enough to take away fear from the most timorous mind.

Mr PAGE

- The same arguments were used about Australia.

Mr BARTON

- Boyish as I still am, I remember well when the statesmen of New South Wales wanted to sell as fast as ever they could the whole of its lands at 2s. 6d. an acre, on the ground that they would never to eternity be fitted for anything but a sheep walk. We have the same thing at the beginning of the government of every country. We are not to be deterred by fears of that kind, and I hope we shall not be in the present instance. What do those hold out to us who ask us to spend our money on the administration of this country, but not to administer it ourselves? I have pointed out that it was a strange arrangement, although it may have been the only one possible at the time, that Queensland should have acted as a delegate of the other States in administering that £15,000 or £22,000 as it came to, which was found by three contributing States and partly by Western Australia. I have pointed out that that was an anomalous state of things, but the anomaly may be tolerated in early stages. That has gone on now for thirteen years. What has been the reason for the continuance of that anomaly in New Guinea, since the time it has been reduced into a state of more or less settled government? It has at its head a capable administrator, because his worst enemy will not say that Mr. Le Hunte has not administered it with great success, in succession to a man whose administration was marked by genius - Sir William Macgregor. British institutions as far as it has been possible to apply them to the conditions of the people there have been successful. The people are being taught, and whatever religious opinions one may hold, I have the strongest testimony to the success of the missionary work as an adjunct and a help to the work of Government. Well, all this has been going on. The state of mere babyhood of New Guinea I think has been passed. At any rate the state of babyhood of the Commonwealth is passed, and it is for the

Commonwealth to say that it is determined to be a bit of a grown-up man.

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- I do not think so. On the Pacific Island Labourers Bill it is in its babyhood still.

Mr BARTON

- That is a remark which, , comes from my honorable friend with peculiar force, and we can put up with it very well, because there is not a younger member of the House than himself, and I am quite sure that it is his continued juvenility which produces remarks of that kind. Whether Australia is grown up or not, she begins to feel her strength, and I think she means to exercise that strength to every extent that is compatible with the continuance of the best relations, not only of peace, but of kinship to the mother country. It is open to us to maintain those relations, and at the same time to take a great stride forward by passing this motion. It does not commit us to anything too absolute. It commits us to this extent, that if we approve of the necessary measures we shall approve of New Guinea being made a territory of the Commonwealth, and if the matter is brought, and properly brought before us, we shall consent to spend a sum not of £20,000- but not exceeding £20,000 a year.

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Mr McDONALD

-paterson. - Where is your white Australia then?

Mr BARTON

- I might as well ask my honorable friend where his hat is now ?

Mr Macdonald-Paterson

- The right honorable and learned gentleman cannot tell where his own is.

Mr BARTON

- It is not taken off unduly to anybody. We propose to make the mainland and Tasmania purely white to our race. It is the determination of this House, and I hope the determination of all Australia - and I am certain it is the determination of nine-tenths of the people of Australia - that this Continent shall be preserved free from unnecessary intrusion of races with which we can neither mingle nor work. That does not affect the question of New Guinea, because it has been absolutely admitted in all parts of the House that where ever a man is born he has the right to earn his living, no matter whether his skin is black or white. I shall have the concurrence of the whole House in saying that in the government of New Guinea, whatever we may say as to the mainland of Australia, there will be no step taken by Parliament or by this country, which could in the least degree affect the freedom of the people of New Guinea to carry out work wherever it may be offered to them as the right of the resident, and the native of the country. I shall not accept any other terms. If the House told me that as a condition of taking over New Guinea it would be a necessity that its people should not be allowed to work for their living, then I should say I would not touch the job at all, and I am quite sure the House would be with me in saying so. But then we see that the question of a white Australia is not mixed up in this. The question of absolute control of parts of these seas, which may become a danger to the Commonwealth, is inextricably mixed up with this proposal. I do not bring it forward as indicating that we are bound to take over all unoccupied or inaccessible parts of the South Seas. I have no proposition to make, which may complicate the future relations either of the Commonwealth or of the Empire to which we belong. That is not involved in this proposal. There ought not to be any fear about it. But here I am reminded of a little story. A young gentleman who was very much attached to a lady proposed to marry her. He proposed more than once, and although he had good reason to suppose that she cared for him she would not have him.

What happened? He sought a serious conversation with her - even more serious than one of those formal conversations - and he said " Why, Mary, is it that you will not accept me? I am sure you care for me ; " and after some little ado she admitted she did. He said " Why, then, will you not marry me - what is the trouble V She said " Well, Arthur, if we do marry we shall probably go and live in that nice little house of yours on the banks of the river, and you know what a pretty slope there is to the river. If we marry " - she said, blushing, "we shall probably have children, and they will play on that slope and roll over into the water and be drowned." He at length overcame her scruples and they were married, but none of their children rolled down that slope into the river, and none of them were drowned, for the simple reason that there were no children. This proposition does not commit us to having any more children, or to going any further than we have the right to go. We shall simply be assuming our proper position in these southern

seas if we take over this country as a territory, and I do not believe we can take it over in any other way. The cost will be no greater than has really been incurred before, and it will be distributed over the whole of the people of the Commonwealth. Further designs and further annexations - as one honorable member has expressed it - are not forced upon us ; but we are only asked to do this one thing, which seems to me and to the Ministry, and I hope also to the House, to be demanded of us by duty and honour, and to point, not to an aggressive and indefinite policy of annexation, but to a readiness on the part of this Commonwealth to take up its proper position in the sphere which the ability and enterprise and intelligence of its people have won for it.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am sure the committee is indebted to the right honorable gentleman for a very able speech, and I cannot but regret that we did not hear from him a deliverance of the same explanatory and analytical character at the beginning of this debate. Such an utterance would have helped us materially in the consideration of this very important question. While listening to the right honorable gentleman, I could not help feeling that he was indulging in a little special pleading, particularly in his criticism of the amendment foreshadowed by the honorable member for Wentworth. His main objection to that proposal was that we could not think of spending money without taking the responsibility of the control of New Guinea. We are proposing to take the responsibility of the control of the island, and the only difference between us is that we do not care to commit ourselves at this stage to its incorporation as a part of the Commonwealth of Australia. We propose to continue footing the bill, and to take the responsibility that Queensland has assumed with regard to New Guinea, but we suggest that the territorial problem should be allowed to shape itself in the future as circumstances may determine. The question is - What is the nature of the control we are going to assume ? We have had no plan elaborated by the Government up to the present. They simply say " Let us get hold of the island first, and then we will talk about the plans for its government, and about the relation of our control of New Guinea to the other islands of the Pacific." I venture to say that some very serious aspects of this question require to be considered before we commit ourselves to the territorial control of New Guinea. In the first place what power have we to police New Guinea if we do assume the responsibility of a more active administration than is at present provided for ? I take it that one of our objects in assuming control is that we may put New Guinea to better use than at present. Otherwise we might very well be content to allow the British Government to maintain its present direct relationship to the island, and to continue to discharge its responsibilities for the preservation of its integrity as a part of the Empire. The Prime Minister says that no matter what we may do, and no matter how direct or indirect our control may be, the responsibility of the Imperial Government for the preservation of the integrity of the Empire as a whole will remain unimpaired. He went further, and said that he believed that every inch of the soil of New Guinea would be held- as sacred as the soil of the British Isles. I wish I could believe that statement, but the history of the relationship of the Home Government to New Guinea shows a very different state of affairs. Recent history shows that the Home Government do not regard the islands in the Pacific in the same way that they look upon the British Isles. Great Britain has shown unmistakably that if pressure should be brought to bear upon her from abroad she would be prepared to cede these islands, or to make bargains for their disposal. Does the Minister suggest that, in any conceivable circumstances, the British Government would cede any portion of the British Isles to a foreign power? There is nothing in the Constitution to prevent us from assuming a temporary loose control over New Guinea until a more perfect plan can be elaborated. The right honorable gentleman admits that whatever is done will be done at the outset unconstitutionally, by reason of the very circumstances in which we are placed. Clearly the course which the honorable member for Wentworth proposes, is only a slight extension of that unconstitutional proceeding, and he suggests this as likely to lead to a more effective means of control in the future than could be arrived at by acting in the hasty way now proposed. Supposing anything were to happen in the future to make instantaneous action desirable; supposing that an embroglio occurred in New Guinea such as happened in Samoa, what would be our relation to the island ? Could we secure the immediate action of the fleet in the same way as the British Government could? What is to be our relation to the other islands of the Pacific after we have assumed the control of New Guinea ? I take it that we must have some definite and comprehensive proposal regarding the islands of the Pacific. The Prime Minister told us to-night that we have to deal only

with one aspect of the question for the time being j that we are to shut our eyes to our future relationship to these islands as a whole, and consider only our relationship to New Guinea. I decline to take such a piecemeal view of our obligations to the Pacific Islands as that. Before we assume this active control of New Guinea, we should have a very definite idea as to what our future relations are to be with the rest of the islands of the Pacific. Mr. Chamberlain in his despatch makes it perfectly clear that at a future stage he will press upon this Commonwealth the obligation of looking after the British Solomon Islands as well as New Guinea. He makes it clear, too, that the British Government do not want to have anything more to do with the islands in the Pacific than they are compelled by Australia to have. He tells us distinctly that the Imperial authorities assumed control of New Guinea only because of the earnest request which came from Australia. He says in so many -words - "We do not want New Guinea. It is of no use to us, and we would rather be without it. It was only because the people of Australia thought it was of concern to them, and at their earnest solicitation, that we agreed to take the responsibility of annexation." . What was the reason given at the time for this tardy proceeding on the part of the British Government - a proceeding, it seems to me, which did not reflect the highest credit upon our Colonial-office as we knew it in days gone by? What was the reason given ? They said - " We have one naval base in the Pacific already - namely, Australia." Here is revealed in one sentence the view which the Imperial Government have entertained concerning the islands of the Pacific. They have regarded them from the stand-point of naval bases only, not as integral parts of the Empire, and as containing the potentialities of future strength to it. To prevent the possibility of any foreign invasion of Australian soil, and to preclude any enemy from finding a lodgment in the Pacific, they were prepared to make these islands naval bases for future operations. It is to be feared that this is the view which is still entertained by the Home Government of the numerous islands in the Pacific. We have a somewhat different idea concerning those islands. We know them to be possessed of all those elements which in future will help to build up "an empire within an empire," as has been said, within the southern seas. As evidencing the need for great wariness and care in regard to the assumption of the control of these islands let me instance the case of New Caledonia. We are told that the French secured possession of that island when they had not the slightest interest in it, and when they ought not to have been permitted to obtain control of it in the way they did. What has France there? Some people seem to think that she has merely a convict settlement, but I should like to point to another aspect of the case. In New Caledonia there are the best deposits of iron-stone to be found anywhere in the wide world. There are mountains of it rising sheer out of the water, and carrying, according to our geologists, 95 per cent, of the best metallic iron. Can we over - rate the importance of these islands in the industrial future of Australia? Water carriage is very cheap, and iron ore can be brought here at a very low rate indeed. Here is an abundant source of one of the raw materials which is going to build up the industrial future of Australia. Yet, if ever we want ironstone from New Caledonia, we shall have to accept it upon such terms as the French Government choose to prescribe. France has got hold of almost untold wealth in that island.

Mr Kingston

- We do not need to go outside of Australia for ironstone.

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Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I am by no means under rating our own iron deposits. I had too much to do with the finding and developing of them. But it is only fair to say that, according to our geologists, the richest deposits of ironstone in the world are to be found upon the shores of New Caledonia, where the deposits carry on an average 95 per cent, of the best metallic iron. I merely cite this as one instance of the untold wealth of the Pacific Islands - wealth which has to be developed in future, and which makes our responsibility the keener when we come to assume that responsibility in relation to the islands out here. The point at issue is - "What relation are we to assume to these islands ?" At present we are told that New Guinea contains a population of about 300,000 savages. It is in its babyhood so far as its civilization and development are concerned, because it can never be said to have risen out of its babyhood whilst there are more than a quarter of a million savages upon it. The problem is a very serious one, and I venture to. think that we ought to know exactly what our future relationship to the island is going to be, and what is the nature of the control which we are to exercise. There should be no difficulty in regard to the constitutionality of the action suggested by the honorable member for Wentworth, because in the very instructions which were

given to the Queensland Government it was expressly laid down that that State must consult the Governments of the contributing States in regard to all matters other than those of ordinary expenditure. Those who support the view of the honorable member for Wentworth desire to do precisely what the Prime Minister suggested in his minute to the Governor-General. The right honorable gentlemen took a very proper view of the situation in that minute, and it is a pity that he does not adhere to its terms, because they seem to me to express so admirably what our relationship to New Guinea ought to be until a plan has been matured for the better government of the island. The minute in question states- Mr. Barton repeats that he declines to assume any responsibility or incur any expenditure until Ministers are informed that the control of New Guinea has been transferred to the Commonwealth, on what basis that transfer is made, and further until the terms of such control are made reasonably clear. That is precisely our position. Before we take over this island, we desire to know what the terms of our control are to be. We want to know what is to be the basis of the transfer, and what our powers for policing the island are to be. There will be serious problems to face. The moment we make these islands a territory of the Commonwealth we shall have to revise its whole criminal procedure so far as it is now carried on. At any rate we shall have to stop the practice of hauling men before a court of justice simply because they may have been saying something which, in the opinion of another person, is not quite correct. We shall have to stop treating these trivial offences as crimes, as they are treated upon the island at the present time. Its whole criminal system, indeed, will have to be revised the moment we commit ourselves to its control. All these facts should give us pause, so that we may, in conjunction with the Home Government, have our future powers and relationship to these islands accurately defined. I deny altogether the statement of the Prime Minister that we have only to do with British New Guinea. We should have a definite understanding as to what is to be our relations with the whole of the Powers in the Pacific. If we take over British New Guinea and assume all responsibility for its Government and for preserving it for all time as an integral portion of the British Empire, we should have some say in regard to Fiji, the Solomon Group, and other islands, all of which may be used as bases by enemies in future just as readily as New Guinea. It is for that reason, and with no idea of shirking our obligations, but with a view of having those obligations accurately defined, that I say we ought to know exactly the powers and responsibilities we are proposing to assume. We must consider the question of these Pacific islands as it arises from time to time. One of the main objects of the establishment of the Commonwealth was that we might have enlarged powers to deal with those islands, and might, if possible, develop the Pacific, and make it one of the commercial centres of the world. In times gone by, Sir George Grey wanted to establish a Customs Union throughout the whole of the Pacific, only he proposed to make New Zealand the centre of that Union. We now have a very different basis from which to elaborate the plan, and I believe that in the future we shall have some such Customs Union. But we ought to have some plan on which we are to proceed, and the Prime Minister gives us no plan whatever. All he says is that we ought to get control of British New Guinea, and then we shall see what we are going to do. It may be that our position will assume a different relation the moment we take this territory within the Commonwealth. For instance, if anything were to occur in the islands or there was a possibility of anything occurring, and we asked Mr. Chamberlain to give us police powers with the fleet in regard to New Guinea, the Secretary of State for the Colonies might say - "You can have power over the fleet if you will pay for it," and that would be a very natural suggestion coming from him. It may be that as a first step we should find ourselves asked to contribute a much larger sum than we do at present to the maintenance of the naval defences. Mr. Chamberlain might say, "It is your affair - it is your trade and practically your country ; our fleet is there to be used, but we think it is a fair thing that as you have domination over the island, you should pay a fair contribution for the maintenance of the fleet, without which your domination would be a mere name." All these considerations will come up immediately control is taken over ; and before we assume a responsibility so great and at the present time so vague, we ought to know exactly where we stand in relation to the Home Government, so that we may proceed on a well-defined plan, which, perhaps, in its unfolding will bring all the advantages we ask, and avoid all the disadvantages we now fear. Our responsibility in the Pacific seas must be accepted frankly, fully, and fearlessly, and we must exercise our ingenuity, and try to elaborate some plan which in its working out in the future will proceed on well-defined principles. At present everything is haphazard and vague. We are asked to trust to the future ; but as our relations are so precarious in regard to the islands, we ought not to take the grave step proposed until the

way is made clear for us under our feet.

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Mr HUGHES

- This is a very important matter, and I am inclined to hold with honorable members who consider it a matter that cannot be well ventilated and discussed in all its important aspects in one evening. Certainly some of the questions which the honorable member for Parramatta has brought forward require answering. From what I understood the Prime Minister to say, it appears that it would be unconstitutional for this Commonwealth to take over British New Guinea except under certain conditions ; but what these conditions are I do not quite gather. We shall have to know how far this control of ours is to extend. I quite understand, of course, that there is no sort of likelihood - and I do not think there is any such desire on the part of honorable members - of the Constitution " following the flag," or following each annexation. It is proposed, I presume, to make for New Guinea special laws and regulations ; but at the same time it is very necessary for us to know how far the Imperial Government intend us to have control. Are we to have a limited control, or is the control to be as absolute as that we exercise over the States ? If it is to be a limited control, we should understand how far it is to be limited. No mention has been made of any limitation, yet it is very clear that any limitation of power - police or otherwise - exercised by virtue of an Order in Council, may be very different from that exercised by virtue of the Commonwealth Constitution. Section 122 of the Constitution, which the Prime Minister quoted, and in which he, doubtless with good cause, seems to find a number of difficulties, sets forth -

Parliament may make laws for the government of any territory surrendered by any State to and accepted by the Commonwealth, or of any territory placed by the Queen under the authority of and accepted by the Commonwealth, or otherwise acquired.....

What does that mean? It is difficult to say what it means ; but what it appears to me to mean is that it is competent to make such laws as the Commonwealth thinks fit for any territory acquired either by conquest or cession or in any other way. Of course, I venture in fear and trembling to say anything at all about the apparent meaning of it, because the Prime Minister, who was exceptionally luminous, and to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude for endeavouring to explain it, did not, I am afraid, succeed in conveying what it means. If in addition to what I have stated we may have territory placed under our control for which we have no power to make such laws as we think fit, obviously there must be three different kinds of legislation - one, the laws existing in the Commonwealth ; another, the regulations existing in territory that is specified in section 122; and the third in territory handed over by an Order in Council or something of that sort. However, I leave that phase of the question, and confine myself to saying that it appears to me that there is no good and sufficient reason why we should do more than make such provisions as are absolutely essential for carrying on the government or control heretofore carried on by three States of Australia ; and we should have a very clear understanding, as the honorable member for Parramatta has said, of what it is proposed we should do in reference to territory in the Pacific. Because we may, by virtue of possessing or controlling territory in New Guinea, be called upon to enter into difficulties from which we should otherwise escape. It does appear to me that it is essential that we should assume control of this territory as soon as we can. How any man can conceive it possible that British New Guinea, lying adjacent to our shores - within a stone's throw, so to speak - being to all intents and purposes part of Australia, can be permitted, as it were, to lie, a pearl in the Pacific Ocean, waiting for some marauder to pick up, I cannot understand. We must take it. If I thought there was any danger in the mere assumption of administration without control, I would, no matter what expense it might involve, cheerfully cast my vote for the system of control now proposed. But there does not seem to be any great danger in merely continuing the present regime, subject to such a clear understanding with the Imperial Government as is necessary. One of the reasons why we should take over New Guinea is that year by year, under the control of the Queensland Government, the lands of the territory have been steadily sold. One of the items of revenue shown upon the paper which has been circulated is a sum of £1,660 for land sold. It appears that wherever our great and glorious Empire gets a hold, it always begins - if honorable members like to put it that way - by sending a missionary, and it invariably finishes by taking the land of the unfortunate aborigines, absolutely excluding them from the possession of their hereditary estate, and eventually reducing them to the level of serfs or slaves. There has been some talk of a coloured labour problem in New Guinea. I know of no such problem that can arise. Is it conceivable that any one

could have the intolerable audacity to stand up here and declare the conditions under which the natives of New Guinea should work? We may indeed prescribe wholesome restrictions on those who may seek to exploit their labour, but as to saying under what conditions the New Guinea natives should work in New Guinea - well, I myself have not arrived at so recognising that apotheosis of land-grabbing as to be able to even contemplate such a thing. What it is very necessary that we should do is to prevent the operations of certain ingenious companies or schemes that are outlined in these reports, where we are told that unless so-and-so gets a concession it is highly improbable that anybody else will invest any capital in the island. What this usually means is that it is proposed to make gigantic concessions of the best land in New Guinea to a number of highly enthusiastic empire-getters, who probably have hardly a pound to their name, but who propose upon the London and other confiding markets to make money out of the concessions. For that and other reasons it is necessary that we should assume control as far as we possibly can, and enact such laws and regulations as will enable the aborigines to have an easier and better time of it than they have had hitherto, and to have a better opinion of that religion which we all profess to believe in, than their unfortunate compatriots in the other islands have gathered from the operations of its professors. The Prime Minister said, on the best authority, that he had heard that the missionaries had been doing great things in New Guinea. , I am pleased to learn that the missionaries have done great things, but, as I have already said, the missionaries are usually accompanied, or speedily followed, by a band of men who may have Christianity written on the brims of their hats, but in their hearts have no god and no religion, nor anything else that is good. These ungodly marauders - pirates - have been engaged in picking the eyes out of the best land that the blood of the English race has won ; not for the good of the British Empire, but for the good of a handful of exploiters, who, taking no risks, have simply " scooped the pool." I do not propose to allow, as far as I have any voice, New Guinea to fall into these people's hands as a ripe plum. We should prevent every alienation of land, and should secure such healthy social, moral, and industrial conditions in the island as will insure to every man in it - that is to say, every native in it - that he shall at least not have a worse time under the dominion of the British Empire than he has hitherto had.

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Mr KIRWAN

- I quite agree with those honorable members who say that this motion has been brought up at an inopportune time. It seems a very strange thing, indeed, that in the middle of a very important Tariff debate we should be asked to consider this question, which involves such very large issues. The Government are hardly blameless for bringing the matter forward at this time. Any one who has read the correspondence which has been placed before us relating to New Guinea will see that the question has been the subject of negotiation for a long time between the Commonwealth Government and the Colonial-office, and I think that at the instance of the Commonwealth Government those negotiations have been unnecessarily prolonged. In this document there is published a despatch dated the 13th August last. It is a despatch from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth to the Governor-General, or virtually to the Secretary of State for the Colonies. In this despatch the Prime Minister says -
In view of the difficulties imposed on early finances of the Commonwealth for the next five, and, perhaps, ten years, by sections 87, 89, and 93 of the Constitution, my Ministers suggest that during five years Imperial Government should find £7,000 per annum of proposed amount, being the sum formerly contributed by Imperial Government under lapsed agreement, and covering maintenance of steamer Merrie England

I am not going to comment upon the making of a request to the Imperial Government for the paltry sum of £7,000 a year. A very definite and emphatic reply to that request came from Mr. Chamberlain, who was as explicit as he could possibly be. He pointed out that the Home authorities at present were somewhat embarrassed by reason of their heavy war expenditure, and having referred to other pressing calls upon the Imperial Exchequer for the development of territory he went on to say -

I am unable to recommend that any further Imperial grants should be made towards New Guinea-, towards which Her Majesty's Government have already contributed for seven years longer than they engaged to do.

Instead of accepting that very clear and definite statement from Mr. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister sent a despatch to the Home authorities, making a further request for the contribution of £7,000 a year. The

result was that the whole matter was delayed until the final despatch came to hand - a despatch in which the Secretary of State for the Colonies gave a somewhat severe snub to the Prime Minister. He very curtly dismissed the renewed request for the £7,000 a year, and said -

Having regard to the powers of taxation possessed by the Commonwealth Government and the resources at its disposal, they cannot believe that the addition to the expenditure of £7,000 a year will cause any serious embarrassment.

The Commonwealth Government would have taken up a far more dignified attitude if they had not made the request for such a paltry sum as £7,000 a year, and when they did make the request they took up a still more undignified position, and wasted time, by applying to the Imperial authorities to reconsider their decision.

Mr Mahon

- Was it not mean for the Home authorities to refuse the request for so small a sum 1

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Mr KIRWAN

- That is another matter. The Imperial Government are somewhat different from the average government of a colony. When they make up their minds on a point they first consider all the circumstances very fully, and they are not likely to alter their determination without any very good reason. The Prime Minister did not submit any fresh reason or show any true cause why the Imperial Government should change from their decision in this matter. Therefore, I say that if the Prime Minister had accepted Mr. Chamberlain's decision in the first instance, as he should have done, this proposal would have been brought before us as far back as August last, when we had comparatively little to do, instead of being tabled in the middle of the Tariff debate. I quite agree with those honorable members who say that the Commonwealth Government must sooner or later take over British New Guinea. It is part and parcel of the Australian Commonwealth, and there are great possibilities in front of it. I have met several men who have been prospecting on the island. Not many of them obtained very much gold, but they agree that gold is to be found there, and that some day a big gold-field will be discovered on the island. If a gold-field were discovered in New Guinea the whole face of the country would be changed in a few months. We should have an immense white population there, and if anything like that should happen it would be better to have the affairs of the territory administered by the Commonwealth rather than from Downing Street. There are other possibilities in front of New Guinea to which I should like to refer. I do not think that anyone has yet mentioned a report on New Guinea, prepared in 1898 by the Honorable Sir H. M. Nelson. It seems to me to be very interesting, because the writer views New Guinea through Australian spectacles. In the course of this report Sir Hugh Nelson writes rather highly of the character of the land. He says -

With regard to the lands that we were able to inspect, my impression is that along the banks of the rivers they are most fertile and suitable for agriculture, but pioneers must make up their minds to have a very rough time of it for some years after starting operations. Towards the mouths of the rivers the banks are very low, and seemingly subject to inundation, but this, I am led to believe, would not be any detriment to the growing of rubber. But these lands would certainly not be suitable for the growth of sugarcane or light tropical products. As you ascend, the river, however, the banks become higher, and tropical cultivation of every kind could be carried on there.

Reference is made in the report to the very high mountains in the interior of New Guinea. There are a number of these mountains which are so elevated that the climate there is very good, the land is suitable to be tilled, and white men could perform the work. There is another portion of this report which is of special importance in connection with the question of the employment of the natives of New Guinea. Sir Hugh Nelson views the matter from a stand-point rather different from that in which it is regarded by the majority of honorable members of this House. When he went there he evidently seemed to hope that there was a possibility of securing some of the New Guinea natives to work upon the Queensland sugar plantations, just as kanakas are doing. In that connexion he writes -

So far as the employment of Papuans in regular work is concerned, nature has been so bountiful to them that they have never been accustomed to anything like systematic or continuous labour. I do not think that the present generation, at any rate, could be induced to undertake steady daily toil.

He goes on to say -

As to the idea that has been mooted, of getting some of the natives over to Queensland to work for six months during the busy season on the sugar plantations, I cannot see any reason to give encouragement to the project. The family and home affections of the people are so strong that any lengthy absence from their villages would be most distressing to them, and form an obstacle that it will be very hard to overcome. If the experiment were made - to which, of course, the consent of the Imperial Government would be necessary - it would require to be carried out in the most careful manner.

Finally he says that -

Taking all the circumstances into consideration I think our planters might as well at once abandon the idea of looking to New Guinea as a field from which to secure extra labour.

Therefore, from the opinions expressed by Sir Hugh Nelson, there is no reason to fear the possibility of the natives of New Guinea being employed on the sugar plantations in the same way as kanakas have hitherto been engaged. He considers that it is utterly impossible for them to be put to such work. There is another question regarding the natives that I consider is of some importance. A couple of years ago a book entitled *Through New Guinea and other Cannibal Countries* was written by a Captain Webster, who had travelled extensively through the island. In the concluding portion of that book he discusses the question as to whether or not the New Guinea natives could survive contact with white or other races that might settle upon their island. He concludes by saying -

I am, perhaps, sorry to say that, in my opinion, these Polynesians inhabiting the far-away islands of the South Seas will die out as the Malay and Chinese races extend, and if the flow of civilization should move towards New Guinea, there can be no doubt but that the Papuan race inhabiting that vast country will, like the aboriginals of Tasmania and Australia, fade away.

There can, therefore, be no fear of the New Guinea race increasing to any serious extent, and it is not likely to become a menace to the Commonwealth in the same way that the negroes of America are becoming a menace to the United States. For all these reasons I am in favour of the Commonwealth assuming control of New Guinea. I feel, as Captain Webster suggests, that there is a danger of this island being invaded by Malays, Chinese, or some Asiatic race, and if it were ever to be overrun by Asiatics it would indeed be a serious menace to the "white Australia" we are all so anxious to maintain. I believe that if the Commonwealth of Australia does not take control of this island, it will be acquired by some other nation, and possibly then its affairs would not be administered so much to the advantage of the Commonwealth as they would be if it were under the control of the Commonwealth.

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Mr SALMON

- I desire to congratulate the Prime Minister upon the redemption of the promise that he made at Maitland that the Government would take steps to preserve, so far as in their power lay, Australian control over the islands of the Pacific. I feel that no more important matter than this could engage the attention of the Commonwealth Parliament at the present juncture. I have been somewhat surprised at the attitude adopted by some honorable members with respect to it. The position taken up by the acting leader of the Opposition has filled me if, not with dismay, at any rate with a certain amount of disturbance. I feel sure that we have the support of nine-tenths of the people of Australia in saying that it is our duty by every means that lies in our power to prevent troubles which may, even in the distant future, arise in connexion with the control of these islands. The honorable member for Kalgoorlie put the case very well when he drew attention to the position we might occupy at no distant date when a large number of people, mainly drawn from the Commonwealth, might occupy this island. They might go there in search of the minerals which we know are to be found in the British portion of the possession. The experience of the past shows Australians how ineffective, nay more, how dangerous, control from Downing-street is when we have large populations suddenly gathered together for the purpose I have already described. In this matter the Home

Government does not so much desire to have money from us as to be relieved from responsibility. The responsibility of administration is very great and is accentuated by distance and the Home Government, I feel sure, is perfectly seized of what might happen in the near future with regard to British New Guinea. I feel that they would hail it with delight, and would look upon it as a substantial contribution by the Commonwealth, and in part as a recognition of the magnificent gift they bestowed upon us at the beginning of the century if we were to relieve them of the responsibility of the administration of this

particular part of the Empire. Some honorable members seem stricken with fear at the prospect of taking on any fresh responsibility. I am somewhat surprised to find that it is from the Conservative portion of this House that we find these fears emanating. In the old country the Conservative is looked upon as the most fearless exponent of a vigorous foreign policy.' Here we find the narrowest prejudices operating amongst those, whom from their position, we are compelled to look upon as the representatives of that particular class of thought in this Chamber.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- Who made the honorable member a judge ?

Mr SALMON

- I am not abrogating to myself the position of a judge ; but I ask honorable members to look into their actions and say whether they are not sufficient to place them in the category which I have already stated that I think they should occupy. To my mind, the position exemplifies the difference between true statesmanship and what is known in the States as " pea-nut politics." We have on the one hand the leader of the Government prepared to accept this responsibility and to take upon himself all the troubles that will inevitably follow administration of this kind - to aggrandize the Commonwealth? Not at all. In the first place - and I am expressing my own personal opinion - to relieve the Home Government, and in the second place to secure to the people of the Commonwealth that freedom which they can only enjoy, if in the future New Guinea is administered from the Commonwealth itself. By agreeing to the motion we shall prove that our Imperialistic beliefs and utterances are not mere lip service, that we are prepared to accept responsibility, and to take up the onerous work of administration. Some of those, who have shown such timidity and such a woeful lack of appreciation of their duty to the Empire, of which they profess to be so proud, to which they so frequently claim such strong: allegiance, and for which they are willing to sacrifice a great deal, are in the position of Mark Twain or Artemus Ward who was prepared to sacrifice his mother-in-law or other of his wife's relations. They are prepared to give us a great deal, but when it comes to accepting responsibility, they shrink with fear and timidity, and we find them counselling delay or some modification of the vigorous action suggested to them.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- " Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

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Mr SALMON

- The honorable member was good enough just now to ask me who made me a judge. Surely I may reply to the honorable member by asking him who made him an angel ? At any rate, it was no divine hand ; it must have been simply his own self -consciousness. I congratulate the Prime Minister upon having the courage and the fidelity to carry out the promise which he made. I congratulate him upon the statesmanlike attitude which he has adopted, and upon having the ability to place the question before the committee in the fashion which he has done. I submit to honorable members that we have a double duty to perform. We have the responsibility which our position places upon us of looking forward, of not being content to do only what is required to-day, but of taking steps to secure the future. We must recognise, even those who are of a reactionary temperament must see, how possible it is, if not more than, highly probable, that at no distant date a large number of our population will be settled in this portion of the Empire, seeking gold, minerals, precious stones, which are there on the best authority in abundance, or, at any rate, in no small quantity. On the other hand, we have our duty to the Empire. There is an opportunity now for us to show our appreciation of the great gift which was so freely bestowed upon us by relieving the Home Government, not of a pecuniary obligation, but of a responsibility which they might find it difficult to discharge, and which, I feel sure, none will acknowledge more readily than the Secretary of State for the Colonies, can better be discharged by the members of a Parliament such as this, and by a Government such as we have8 near at hand, and acquainted with all the local conditions, and thereby equipped in every possible way for the proper discharge of those high and onerous duties which would follow such a settlement as I have described.

Mr MACDONALD-PATERSON

- There is in Melbourne a gentleman who will give a cheque for all the expenditure which has ever been undertaken by the joint colonies in respect of New Guinea, and all that will take place up to the end of next year, and take the whole responsibility over on behalf of the Imperial Government if the

Commonwealth Parliament reject the proposals that are before the committee to-night. I saw the gentleman this afternoon, and he is quite prepared after 24 hours' notice, if the committee reject the proposals to-night, to step in and take up the whole of the financial responsibility.

Mr KENNEDY

- It is refreshing to know that the Prime Minister, even at this late hour, has carried out his obligations to the people of Australia. I was a little surprised at the tone of what I think I may fairly term the little Australians, who profess to voice the opinions of the people of Australia here, when they practically say that they are prepared to accept all the advantages accruing from federation, and from their connexion with the Empire, but will not accept all the obligations pertaining to that unity which we have achieved. At whose request, may I ask, did Great Britain annex New Guinea ? Was it not done at the request of the separate States, speaking with a united voice for that purpose? Shall we allow this anomalous condition to continue for any length of time, of having one State in the Commonwealth administering the affairs of New Guinea, and having to go cap in hand to the others as sovereign entities for their contribution towards its proper administration? I am rather surprised to find that the Prime Minister has almost made it a test question with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, has almost insisted that if Great Britain should not contribute its moiety towards the administration of the territory jointly with the Commonwealth, he would, perhaps, have to seriously consider the question of asking this Parliament not to take over its government. I think that before that step was taken on behalf of the people of Australia, this Parliament might well be consulted. I do not think that the cost of the administration would be challenged for one moment by the Parliament. And as to those who raise objections to the Commonwealth taking over the administration of New Guinea at this juncture, what will be the right time to do so ?

Mr Conroy

- When we have considered it and have a measure before us.

Mr KENNEDY

- Is it possible to get a measure before us before we know that the British Government will hand it over to us? Will not this be a preliminary step at any time? I think it is generally agreed by legal members that this is a preliminary step which must necessarily anticipate any legislation, to prescribe on what lines we shall administer a territory. I think that the House has now arrived at that juncture when it is in a position to determine irrevocably as to whether it will accept the responsibility of administering this territory. Is there anything to be gained by delay? Should we get any further information on the subject if we delayed the decision ? The possibilities are very great, and if any disturbance should arise in New Guinea, who would suffer? We have it in evidence, and I do not think it will be questioned for a moment that the proper administration of New Guinea is of more material concern to the people of Australia than it is in a degree to the Empire, not losing sight for a moment of the fact that anything which materially concerns Australia including New Guinea, must materially concern the Empire. We, as representing Australia, are most materially concerned in everything which affects New Guinea, and, therefore, we should not hesitate for a moment. Criticism has been levelled against the Government for the delay which has occurred in introducing these proposals. I am not going to exonerate them from any blame in that direction. I think they should have come down with their proposals at an earlier stage than they have done, but now that they are submitted I am not one of those who will support any movement for further delay.

Mr Barton

- We brought them forward as soon as the communications could be made complete.

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Mr KENNEDY

- I am prepared to accept that statement. The time has come when we should determine once for all whether we, representing the people of Australia in Parliament, shall accept the responsibility of administering New Guinea as a territory and as part and parcel of the Commonwealth. The question of the form of its Government may be fairly left for settlement when the measure is brought down to determine on what lines it shall be administered.

Mr CONROY

- One cannot be surprised at the correspondence which has taken place between the Executive of the Federal Parliament and the Home Government. I protest now, as I protested this afternoon, against the very humiliating position in which the Federal Government has been placed. If New Guinea is of such

importance to Australia as the Ministry now assume it to be, it was almost dishonorable on their part to ask the Imperial Government for a contribution of £7,000. That is a paltry sum, which should not have been asked for ; but, having recorded my protest, it is not necessary for me to dwell further on the point. Perhaps, the most remarkable thing in the whole of the correspondence is the disposition shown by Great Britain to hand over such a large slice of territory to the new Commonwealth of Australia. That is a departure from Great Britain's previous policy, and shows how entirely she recognises that the interests of New Guinea are bound up with those of Australia.

Mr Kennedy

- New Guinea was annexed in the first instance at the special request of the Australian colonies.

Mr CONROY

- It is true that, under those circumstances, twelve or thirteen years ago, New Guinea was annexed by Queensland, and if the advice of that State had been followed by the British Government then, we should possibly not have the difficulties which may arise in the future. Great Britain agreed to make a contribution for a certain time, and did so. Australia is now federated, and the question before us is not what shall be done eventually, but what shall be done with the motion of the Government. The proposal now before us is that the House shall authorize the Government to accept British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth, if the Home Government are willing to place it . under federal control.

Mr Deakin

- There is a verbal alteration to be made by inserting the words, " willing to join in measures."

Mr CONROY

- We have already, I take it, had a definite expression of opinion from the British Government, which is composed of statesmen who are not likely to depart from any undertaking into which they have entered. The House is now asked to assent to a motion making New Guinea part of the federal territory without having seen a single line of the Bill it is proposed to introduce ; and here lies the difference between myself and the honorable member for Moira. The question is not whether we shall ultimately assume control over New Guinea, but whether we shall practically bind ourselves to any Bill the Government may bring forward.

Mr Deakin

- No.

Mr CONROY

- If I assent to this motion, I shall be bound to support the Bill which the Government may bring in. That is the ground on which I base my opposition to the present proposal.

Mr Deakin

- Honorable members will have an absolutely free hand in regard to the Bill.

Mr CONROY

- I do not think that honorable members who vote for this motion ought to have a free hand in regard to the Bill, nor do I think that Ministers ought to abrogate their Ministerial control.

Mr Deakin

- We do not.

Mr CONROY

- I hope the day will come when Ministers will adhere to their decisions, even if that adherence means a change of seats. There are honorable members who may consider that to vote for this motion does not bind them any further ; but this is the time to take exception to the Ministerial proposal. If honorable members intend to trust the Ministry as to the Bill they should vote for the motion, but they must not afterwards say that they have been misled. If honorable members vote for the motion, and then refuse to support the Bill, the Government will be justified in saying that the proper time for asking for information was when these proposals were before the House, and that they are entitled to the support of those honorable members. I am quite in accord with the second part of the motion which proposes that £20,000 per annum should be placed in the hands of the Federal Executive in order to defray the expenses of the administration of British New Guinea; but I cannot agree to the first part of the motion.

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Mr Kennedy

- The honorable and learned member agrees to expenditure without control.

Mr CONROY

- I agree to an interim expenditure until we know what are the provisions of the Bill the Government intend to introduce. The statesmen of the United States, where there is a population of nearly 80,000,000, are very doubtful as to the wisdom of going outside their own boundaries, and as to what to do with two or three new territories they have acquired. The United States Constitution, which was framed before there was any idea of entering on a path of expansion, imposes a dozen and one hindrances, and the same will be the case under the Australian Constitution with regard to the territory of British New Guinea.

Mr Piesse

- We have special powers under the Constitution.

Mr CONROY

- Granted; and does it not more clearly follow that we should know exactly what the Government propose to do before we consent to this motion? My arguments have no force, of course, with honorable members who believe that in voting for this motion, they are not committed to vote for the Government Bill.

Mr Kennedy

- The motion does not bind us to the lines on which the territory shall be administered.

Mr CONROY

- The motion binds us to accept New Guinea as a territory, and to support the Bill, if the Government say that the provisions embody the lines on which they are determined the administration of New Guinea shall be conducted.

Mr PAGE

- What about the Opposition ?

Mr CONROY

- I am anxious as a member of the Opposition not to bind myself to support the Government. I have seen so few samples of sound work in the Bills introduced by the Government, that I am distrustful. The Government have not fully considered any measure they have introduced, and are always willing, at the instance of a sufficient number of members, to change their opinions at once.

Mr L E GROOM

- Does the honorable and learned member favour the taking over of New Guinea at all ?

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Mr CONROY

- I shall, I think, be in favour of it when that question arises. But I object to supporting this motion, because such an act will bind me to support any Bill which the Government may subsequently bring forward. For example, if the Government introduced a Bill, and said, " This is our measure, and we will resign our offices if it is not accepted," how could any honorable member who had voted in favour of this motion consistently oppose them 1 Our Constitution has not yet been properly interpreted. When it is interpreted, it will be by lawyers of strong common sense, who will look to the spirit, and not merely to the letter, of the law. They will put the widest interpretation upon it, and no mere change in the use of a word will avail. It is quite conceivable, therefore, that, under that interpretation, 70,000 or 80,000 savages - taking the men only - at present upon the island of New Guinea will be entitled to representation in the Federal Parliament. It is also conceivable that, if we make New Guinea an integral part of the Commonwealth, we shall not be able to differentiate between its inhabitants and those of the mainland merely because of their colour. These are matters which are at least deserving of serious consideration, and all I ask is that honorable members will not too readily assent to this motion, which practically commits us to support any Bill that the Government may introduce. For the reasons which I have given I am perfectly in accord with the course of action suggested by the honorable member for Wentworth. Mr. HIGGINS(Northern Melbourne).I think that those honorable members who have pleaded for consideration before action need no apology. If this were merely a matter of spending £20,000 annually for five years, and of passing laws for New Guinea - " if it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well 't were done quickly." But it means more - it means a very big and increasing responsibility. It means the taking over of one-third of this great island, where different conditions operate altogether from those which obtain in Australia. At present Australia is in the happy position of having a simple sea frontier. That is one of the greatest preservatives of the peace, and one of the greatest means of freeing us from invasion. Now we are asked to substitute a land frontier which is contiguous to possessions of the great

German State, as well as of the State of Holland. That is not a thing to be lightly ridiculed. Not only so, but if we take over this fraction of New Guinea - it is not as if we were offered the whole of the island - it will mean that we shall be expected, as is indicated by the despatches from the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to assume responsibility over the Solomon Islands and other adjacent islands. I want to know where the thing is to end. The reason that we are wrong in condemning those who ask for delay is that we are not legislating for a few years, but are taking a step which is irrevocable and cannot be recalled. If we once assume control of this piece of land we can never recede from that position. But even if we decline to take it over I have no fear whatever that Great Britain will abandon it. Britain never abandons anything. To do so would be inconsistent with the action of a growing and developing nation.

Mr McDonald

- What about Samoa?

Mr HIGGINS

- That was a very doubtful case, in which there were as strong claims upon the German as upon the British side. Moreover, Britain received something in exchange. We must also remember that at the time England was under very severe pressure because her resources were being taxed elsewhere. The assumption of the control of New Guinea by the Commonwealth will mean either that we shall require some naval force, or that we shall contribute towards one, and we do not know how much such a contribution would represent. We shall also have to deal with a number of tribes in the interior, and for the purpose of keeping peace between them we shall require to keep soldiers there.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- They are there now.

Mr HIGGINS

- But we are under no obligation to pay for them. If those territories belonging to Holland and Germany prove to be of any use, it is quite possible we shall experience very great difficulties on the frontier line should a Klondyke happen to be found in the neighbourhood. I should not like to see Australia forced into having to adopt a military system for the purpose of defending outlying possessions. One great drawback to Canada is that she has a great land frontier, and has been compelled to organize an expensive militia for the purpose of defending it. It is to the great advantage of Australia that we have nothing of that sort. We are making a new departure, and the reason that I understand to be at the root of the plea for delay is that we, having a responsibility not only for ourselves in the present generation but for future generations, should consider fully what policy we mean to adopt with regard to the islands of the Pacific. It might be right for us with our strong democratic proclivities to expand and spread; and to become rulers over subject nations, but we are dealing with a very big question. We are placed in a very peculiar position by virtue of the acts of others who have gone before us, and we ought not to render the position of those who come after us more difficult than we can help. There is no doubt that New Guinea was taken over at our request, and it does seem ungracious for us, when we are told that this territory was not acquired for England, but for Australia, at our request, to say that we are not willing to meet all the expense, and take all the responsibility of governing the possession. We cannot ignore the promises and the requests made by those who, in the eighties, first dealt with the acquirement of New Guinea. The British flag was planted on the island by the Queensland Government, and was taken down by Great Britain, and again planted there at the request of the Australian Governments, and we cannot ignore our responsibility. Still, there is the question of what will happen if we do not accept the proposal of the Government. I do not think there is the least fear of Great Britain ever giving up New Guinea, but there is a fear that Great Britain may hand over this unprofitable dependency to be exploited by land syndicates. She has already almost finally concluded bargains with land syndicates to exploit this country.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Not at present.

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Mr HIGGINS

- I am referring to what happened a few years ago in connexion with the Sommers-Vine syndicate, and now there is the Halls Sound Company. In a despatch from the Administrator of the possession to the Lieutenant-Governor of Queensland, dated the 21st June, 1901, I find the following statement : -
A good deal will of course depend on whether the Government of New South Wales will withdraw its

opposition to the application of the Hall Sound Company for the 100,000 acres of land for agricultural purposes.

That is a living danger, and I wholly object to that system of so-called colonization, which means putting under the flag a large extent of country occupied by aboriginal natives, granting it to syndicates behind the backs of the natives, and then shooting the natives when they claim their old working or hunting grounds. I confess that I dislike the idea of the Australian colonies allowing New Guinea to be exploited in that way by people who simply get hold of lands and wait until they become valuable, and then get money out of them without working them. I know how Tasmania has been injured for 70 or 80 years by the operations of the Van Diemens Land Company over a great portion of that island. I know also of the injury done by the A.A. Company in New South Wales.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- That company did a good deal to develop New South Wales.

Mr HIGGINS

- The State would have been developed without their help.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- Perhaps 50 years afterwards.

Mr HIGGINS

- However, I do not want to raise any antagonism against private enterprise, because I think we have a sufficiently difficult problem to face without doing that. Under no circumstances must we allow - even if we take big risks - large native questions to be raised at our very gates by permitting land syndicates to get hold of land, and quarrel with the natives. These natives never understand land grants, and it is our business to make sure, as far as we can, that this island shall not be made a centre of difficult questions between native tribes and white exploiters. I feel almost certain that the House, as a whole, regards the action of the Government in bringing forward these resolutions as praiseworthy. They had to undertake the responsibility of doing something, and I do not see very well how they could have hoped to do anything less than what they proposed in the first instance. The only thing I have asked myself is whether we could not take some step of the nature suggested by the honorable member for Wentworth - some step which would ease the present position, but which would not commit us irrevocably to the taking over of New Guinea as a territory until we can see what the measure providing for the transfer is to be like, or before we decide upon our policy with regard to the islands of the Pacific. I do not think this House has ever yet fully considered the ultimate policy we are going to adopt with regard to the islands of the Pacific. I think, therefore, that we might alter this motion by stating that the House is willing to consider a measure for accepting New Guinea as a territory. I know the motion as it stands would commit the Parliament to an expression of willingness to "join in" certain measures.

Sir William McMillan

- I have somewhat altered my proposed amendment, and I have made it read in this form -

That in the opinion of this House it is expedient that the Government should introduce a Bill providing for the control and administration of British New Guinea by the Commonwealth.

That does not commit us to taking over New Guinea as a territory.

Mr Deakin

- It is either territory or nothing, though.

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Mr HIGGINS

- I think we might add to that motion words to the effect that we are willing in the meantime to find £20,000, perhaps, till the end of June, 1902, and to accept an interim control of the possession. Of course we should have to act upon existing lines, and should have control without the power to make laws. The Attorney-General will probably ask if we have power under the Constitution to do this.. I have looked into the matter, and I think we have. Under the Constitution we have the power to make laws with regard to any islands in the Pacific. It may be said, perhaps, that New Guinea is not in the Pacific, and I will assume that it is not in the Pacific. Still we have power to make any laws regarding "external affairs" which tend to the peace, order, and good government of Australia. The States have appropriated money for the purpose of the war in South Africa. If that can be done under a State Constitution, I think it is perfectly clear that we can appropriate money to keep an adjacent country in peace and quiet, and prevent it from

disturbing us in Australia.. We cannot ignore a state of disturbance in New Guinea. We may not be as dependent upon the condition of New Guinea as the United States were upon Cuba, but the United States could not ignore the consideration of war going on for years in Cuba, and I do not think that our Constitution is likely to be construed in such a narrow spirit that it will be said we are not allowed to spend money for the purpose of administering an adjacent country. I read with great interest the speech of the Prime Minister in moving this motion. He gave the committee a good many details and statistics, but I did not find in the speech any particular indication as to the policy of the Commonwealth upon this' matter. The right honorable gentleman went into the subject very much better this evening, after he had been criticised. I venture' to suggest the alteration of the motion in the two respects I have mentioned. One is that we should simply state that we are willing to consider a measure for the purpose ; and, secondly, we should intimate that we are willing to find £20,000 a year for. one, two, or three years, and in the meantime to accept the responsibility of administering New Guinea under the existing law. Perhaps the Imperial Government will give us some other powers, but a provisional administration, until we look round and ascertain what our policy will be, will be sufficient. I agree with the honorable member for Moira that we are not likely to gain much more experience by delay j but, at the same time, we are likely to settle and consolidate our ideas on the matter by a little delay. I do not think that a day's discussion upon such a subject is too much. Indeed, this is a far more important topic than the Tariff. I would rather accept the Tariff in globo or reject it in globo than have this business wrongly done. I do not move any amendment, unless there are others sufficiently in favour of my view to support one, but I have now indicated the direction in which I think we should proceed.

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Mr WILKS

- The last speaker is an honorable member whom we usually have to thank for a thoughtful contribution to the debate. He has placed his finger upon a dangerous spot in connexion with this subject. He has pointed out the difficulty of control in an island that consists of Dutch New Guinea, German ' New Guinea, and British New Guinea ; and has pointed out the alarming dangers in the way of Australia unless she is prepared to defend her land frontiers. The Minister for Trade and Customs said some time ago, I will not say in the spirit of braggadocio, but with something approaching it, that Australia is .a self-contained country. But now we have the Prime Minister asking the Commonwealth Parliament to go in for a policy of expansion. The honorable member for North Melbourne realizes the danger of divided control, because Australia by the acquisition of New Guinea will have a land frontier to defend. But later on the honorable and learned member said that this is only a matter of policy, and if the Government could only tell him what was to be the policy with regard to the island of the Pacific he would be satisfied. That seems to me to be a strange position. Personally; I think that what the Government should dp is to endeavour to induce the Imperial Government, by the medium of exchange or purchase, to obtain the full control of New Guinea, so that Australia could administer the island without any danger of collision with any foreign power. If only part of the island were under the control of Australia, the unfortunate act of some official might involve this country in serious difficulties. There is also the danger of Great Britain ceding the island to another power. Great Britain has already ceded many of her former possessions in the Southern seas. She has ceded the New Hebrides and Samoa, and we know that there is a considerable danger from New Caledonia being in the hands of the French. If it is not the duty of the Imperial authorities to retain control of the Pacific, it certainly is the bounden duty of Australia to be concerned about the possession of those islands. Therefore, I am prepared, although a member of the Opposition, to support the Government in the action they are taking on this occasion. The only difference between the Government and the honorable member for Wentworth is, that while both are in favour of annexation, the Government favour annexation to-day, while the honorable member for Wentworth favours annexation after twelve months' or more delay. Experience has shown us that Great Britain does not feel much interest in New Guinea. It has been a source of trouble and expense to the Imperial Government, and was only acquired upon thi representation of the Australian Colonies in the interests of their own defence. If it was in the interests of defence then is it not in the interests of defence to-day 1 It is not because the States said ten, fifteen or twenty years ago that we should take over New Guinea that we should adhere to that determination now, if experience has shown that instead of the possession being of any assistance to Australia it would be a danger. If it could be shown clearly that it would be a danger to us either because

of racial difficulties, or as suggested by the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne, because of the divided control, it would be an easy matter for us to say that the decision of fifteen years ago was wrong, and that we did not require the possession. Every speech delivered during the course of the debate has shown absolutely that there is a necessity for us to exercise control over the fringe of the Commonwealth as well as the continent itself. New Guinea is the fringe of the Commonwealth, and, on the north of Australia is equally as important to the Commonwealth as Tasmania is to the South. I recognise that the possibility of Tasmania being used as a base for foreign naval operations against the Commonwealth, is just as great as it is in regard to New Guinea on the north. I have not had time to read the official correspondence on the matter, and while I admit that the question is a most difficult one, I am influenced in determining the way in which I shall vote, by the fact that I think that British New Guinea would stand as a buffer between Australia and the eastern nations. The taking of it over would avoid our possible invasion by easy stages from eastern countries. The only thing I can suggest is that the motion should be accompanied by a very strong request to Great Britain to purchase the rest of New Guinea. The Imperial Government have shown a willingness to purchase other territory or to make exchanges with other nations, and I see no reason why they should not acquire the remaining portions of New Guinea from Germany and Holland. This is only part of the policy which has been given to Australia. If federation is to be an advantage to us, it will be by reason of the power of expansion which it gives. The question of Imperialism has nothing to do with the matter. What we have to consider, in my opinion, is whether the taking over of the control of this possession will have any effect upon the welfare of Australia. I do not think it would be possible to estimate the value of this island, and, indeed, of the whole of the islands of the south Pacific, to Australia in the future. Already there is divided control in the New Hebrides and Samoa, and dual-administration in regard to New Caledonia. Are we going to allow New Guinea to drift away from us, or are we going to take up our responsibility in this matter? (New Guinea is a means of protection to us. I see no reason why we should wait for the Bill to which reference has been made. The honorable member who last addressed the committee said that if he only knew the policy to be adopted he should not hesitate to vote. I would point out, however, that when introduced the Bill will be the property of the House. Whether it is brought in by the present or any other Government, it cannot defeat the intentions of the people in regard to the administration of New Guinea or any other island, simply because it is not set out now how the possession is to be controlled by the Government. I am satisfied that the expression of opinion by this committee will be of such a character that we shall have nothing to fear; that honorable members will register their votes according to their political beliefs, and that we shall have an administration founded upon liberal lines. There is no danger in passing this motion, and it is our duty, not from any question of Imperialism, but in our own interests, to accept the full responsibilities of the possession. The honorable member for Parramatta said there was a danger of "policing" the island.

Mr JOSEPH COOK

- I did not say that.

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Mr WILKS

- At all events it has been strongly urged that if Australia assumed full control of British New Guinea, Great Britain would not afford us the assistance of her fleet in carrying out the administration. Instead of weakening our position, however, I consider the taking over of the possession would really strengthen it. If New Guinea became portion of the Commonwealth, Great Britain could no more afford to lose it than she could afford to lose Tasmania or South Australia. It would be an integral portion of the Empire, and Great Britain would be compelled to defend it, just as she would be compelled to defend any other portion of the Empire. I think that the immediate annexation of New Guinea, so far as its administration is concerned, would have a strengthening effect. If it is agreed that the policy of Australia is to dominate, control, and direct, as far as possible, the islands of the Pacific and of the South Seas generally, the best course for us to adopt is to take this first step in regard to New Guinea, and show that our policy is one of expansion. The idea that we would not be able to defend New Guinea is absurd. I see no danger. Great Britain has shown her indifference, and has allowed the matter to drift. Although there may be a danger of tribal wars and of difficulties in regard to divided control, no honorable member would advance the idea that Australia is prepared to part with the possession. If that is so, the sooner we take this step the better. The most recent Ministerial intimation is that as soon as the Commonwealth decides to take over the

administration of the possession, and to bear the expenditure of it, the Imperial Government will give us control. That is all that is required. Doubts have been expressed in regard to what will be the policy adopted in the administration of the island, but that consideration will not cause me to hesitate in casting my vote. The Ministry will be compelled to bring in a policy in unison with the opinions held by honorable members. I see nothing to be gained by supporting the amendment which has been foreshadowed, and I shall support the motion.

Mr O'MALLEY

- Early in the session I gave notice of the following motion, and I am very pleased that after the lapse of live or six months, honorable members are now where I was then -

That, in the opinion of this House, it is both desirable and essential in the interest of fairness and the friendly relations existing between the Australian Commonwealth and foreign relations -

That the Commonwealth should declare that any attempt of any foreign power to spread its anti-British system to any part of this portion of the Southern Hemisphere will be regarded as dangerous to the peace, happiness, and safety of the Commonwealth.

That with the existing dependencies of foreign powers the Commonwealth should not interfere, but unquestionably by natural geographical conditions the controlling destiny of the islands of the Southern Seas is sacredly vested in the Australian people.

That the further annexation of territory or acquisition of islands in the Southern Seas by foreign powers will be considered as an act of hostility towards the Commonwealth, and that none of these Islands should ever be utilized for any foreign stations or convict settlements.

This may seem very strange, but 100 years ago honorable members stood up in the United States Congress and opposed the purchase of Cuba, when they could have had it for a mere black bird's song. They opposed the purchase of Louisiana, of Missouri, and all those great western States that have made America an Empire, just as tenaciously, just as conscientiously, just as honestly as our friends opposite are now opposing the acquisition of New Guinea.

Mr CONROY

- No. one has opposed it so far ; we only want to know what the Bill is.

Mr O'MALLEY

- When is the accepted time ? To-day is the day of salvation, and to-morrow the soul may go up to heaven lost for ever. Our friends of the Opposition never lose a chance to kick the Government, and my honorable friend the member for Wentworth, honest, conscientious, and Christian, is yet, so far as this goes, a double-jointed kicker of the Government. The time is come for the people of the Australian Commonwealth not to hesitate about these islands. What has it cost the United States to take Cuba? And yet she cannot keep it, because half the people of America are opposed to annexation, and half are in favour of it. Next May, Cuba will go back, after costing the American people, along with the Philippine Islands, some £18,000,000, and America could have had it 100 years ago for a trifle. Are we to profit by their mistakes, or are we for ever to live in a jackass's paradise? Honorable members stand up here and oppose everything, and 20 or 30 years from now, if they are still living, they will look back and regret the lost opportunity. Thirteen years ago the Germans seized the Samoan Islands, while we lay here supinely and watched. Had it not been for the United States stepping in, Germany would have had the whole of them. We remember that Mr. Blaine was Prime Minister in Harrison's Cabinet at the time, and it was Mr. Blaine who called a halt. I say these islands are here for us specially. Now, as to these syndicates which the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne speaks of, they are an absolute midnight curse when they come into a country. I want to say that Tasmania to-day is absolutely cursed by the Van Diemen's Land Company, and it is the same with any country in which a syndicate gets control.

Sir Malcolm McEacharn

- How about the earth being for sale ?

Mr O'MALLEY

- The earth is for sale, and the honorable member has a fair slice of it. I want to say that these syndicates mean slavery, because they are not satisfied when they get possession of a country. They want black labour and cheap labour - they do not care where it comes from - to create wealth.

Mr McDonald

- Are the shareholders, slave-owners ?

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Mr O'MALLEY

- They are slave-masters. What I want to say is that we want to nip that in the bud.. I heard the honorable and learned member for Northern Melbourne speak of a good Tory. The only good Tory is a graveyard Tory. There we find them equally laid out at even distances, and there they never grow. They remain there until they decompose. We shall never find hope in a good Tory; he is beyond redemption. Now, about the missionaries, who take whisky into New Guinea and are killing off the natives.

Mr L E GROOM

- They do not.

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Mr O'MALLEY

- I am glad to hear my honorable and learned friend say so. It is the commercial missionary who follows them who takes it. I assure honorable members that there is serious danger ; there is no doubt that we shall have to fight Germany and drive her out. Do not worry about it, we can do it. The United States was very small when she did some heavy fighting. What are we bringing out a Commandant for? I say we can send the Minister for Defence up to New Guinea as the first Governor, and the right honorable gentleman can establish an autocracy there, just as he did in Western Australia. Honorable members may smile, but does not that show that the right honorable gentleman is a strong man ? There will be a lot of room for him there, and we can govern the country from Australia. I agree also that we have to contribute to the navy, but are we not able to do it ? And why should we not do it ? We must, however, control the navy, which must be bossed right from this House, and not from England. We are going to have an army, and why not put the army up there to govern these savages ? We do not want the army in Australia, where there is nothing for it to do. I am going to support this motion, and to support the acquisition of every island from here to San Francisco. I do not want one island lying in the track of civilization to go to these foreign countries in the future, because we must fight them. There is no doubt about that. They have tried it in America, and if it were not for the fact that Great Britain is a friend, and of the same family, as the United States, there would have been trouble. I am sure that if Canada belonged to France, to Germany, or to any other nation but Great Britain, the United States would never allow that canal to be cut into the lakes to allow gunboats to go up there. Honorable members can take that from me. I heard it when I was there. I have seen the reports of debates in Congress lately, and they always say - " It does not matter ; it is Great Britain, and she is our friend." I assure honorable members that there is danger, and we ought not to allow any European nation to own one foot of territory in these southern seas.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN (Wentworth). - We have heard a great many interesting speeches to-night, but we have heard also, I am sorry to say, a great deal of very cheap vituperation, and a most gross misrepresentation of the opinion of honorable members on this side. After all the debate, we stand exactly where we were at the beginning of this sitting. The Opposition took up this position - that it was not fair to the business of this Chamber to intrude this debate at the present time; . and in the next place that the wording of this motion ought to have been different, and should have left honorable members free to deal with every part and principle of the Bill that is to be introduced. I said, and I reiterate it now, that personally I am in favour of the taking over of this territory; but at the same time I feel that the consideration of this subject opens out a far reaching policy for Australia. We may very reasonably, and I think we should, give the Government power to take the initial steps, to go on with the negotiations, because we are not in the position of asking the British Government to allow us to do this, but we are in the position of responding to the British Government, who are anxious that we should do it, which is a very different thing. I have, therefore, tried to alter the terms of my amendment so as to give -us a perfectly free hand. I allow that the amendment suggested by the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse, goes a long way towards accomplishing what I desire. No doubt if I were to divide the committee, and ask honorable members who agree with me to vote in the same direction, it might place some of them in a false position. There is scarcely an honorable member who does not agree generally with the policy of the Government. There is no use then in talking about honorable members shirking their responsibilities. I do not think that we on this side of the House have a smaller idea of Australia and its responsibilities than have any other honorable members. I shall vote for the amendment suggested by the honorable member for Tasmania, and I ask the Government in all fairness to allow us to consider that

with regard .to every principle involved in the Bill, with regard to the principle of the possession being taken over as a territory, we shall be perfectly free when it is before the Chamber. I think that is a reasonable request. I understood from the Attorney-General that it would be perfectly open to us to review the Bill, not in mere details of administration, but in broad lines of principle.

Mr Deakin

- Excepting that some Bill must be passed taking it over as a terri"»tory.

Sir WILLIAM McMILLAN

- That may be but the administration of the territory will come before the House, and the Bill will be entirely open to discussion. The position is very deplorable at the present moment. It has been precipitated on account of the unfortunate financial chaos into which the administration, of New Guinea has been allowed to drift. We are asked, not for the sake of affirming a principle, but for the sake of finding this paltry £20,000, which we all agree to do, to pass a motion in the midst of the most important business of the session, when honorable members cannot give to it that attention which is necessary for such a large and far-reaching subject. I am content to make -this protest, not against the policy of the Government generally, but against the form in which the motion has been brought up, and the time at which it has been proposed. I trust that it will be considered that we -shall have a perfectly free hand in discussing the Bill when it is submitted.

Mr. BARTON(Hunter- Minister for External Affairs). - I do not wish to be misunderstood. I think matters can be so dealt with that the honorable member for Wentworth will not misunderstand me or the position of the Government. I have outlined an amendment, which I have shown to the honorable member for Tasmania, Mr. Piesse, who considers that it meets his views. I move -

That the words "authorizes the Government to accept," lines 1 and 2, be omitted with a view to insert in lieu thereof the words - " is prepared to join in measures for the acceptance of."

It is quite obvious that no control can be exercised over New Guinea, after that initial control which would follow the acceptance of it, except upon terms to be laid down by Parliament in a Bill which I hope will be introduced and become an Act. But I do not subscribe to the position that it is to be left open as to whether New Guinea shall be a territory. I have several times endeavoured to make myself clear to the committee to-night in saying that I do not see the means by which we can control possessions like New Guinea unless we make them territories of the Commonwealth. I have admitted from beginning to end, that to make places territories of the Commonwealth, which is, on the face of it, indissoluble, is to make them for all time " territories " until they merge into the position of States, which, of course, we all hope they will in due time. But I cannot accept the position- which my honorable friend puts before me, if he wishes me to say that the question of whether New Guinea shall be a territory is to be left open. I ask for a declaration from the committee that New Guinea is to be a territory of the Commonwealth. That is the question upon which I have endeavoured so persistently to urge the committee to assume a responsibility, of which I am sure it will not regret the assumption, and as to which in all the circumstances, I think the assumption is a matter of duty. Therefore, I cannot answer my honorable friend's question favourably in all respects. It is not only my intention, if this motion is carried, to legislate so that New Guinea may be a territory of the Commonwealth, but it is my intention, in the meantime, to take steps as far as I can to see that it is made a territory of the Commonwealth. As to details, as to the principles of administration, as to the way in which that territory shall be conducted, the whole matter is entirely in the hands of Parliament. The Government can do nothing. It can establish an interim administration which I think, if it is wise, will boon the lines of the existing administration until legislation can be carried out.

Mr Fisher

- A very economical one now.

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Mr BARTON

- It is a very economical administration as it stands. I think it will be a wise thing to administer on the present lines until the. time arrives at which we can pass a Bill. It will be a Bill for the administration of New Guinea as a territory, but it will be full in its provisions. It will give every opening to honorable members to express their ideas as to the principles of administration, and there will be nothing to bind them in the present interim condition that we ask them to commit themselves to, except that they find the

money, and carry on matters as they are being carried on, subject to the legislation which the Government will introduce, and which they hope to have dealt with in no party spirit, but by the co-operation of all sections of both Houses. That is the position which I wish to make clear, and if my honorable friend is satisfied with that, we may as well pass this motion speedily, with the amendment I move.

Mr CAMERON

- One or two honorable members on the other side of the House have twitted honorable members on this side with always opposing the Government. Whenever the Government propose a measure in which I believe, I shall invariably be found, in the future as in the past, supporting it. It was a little unfair to twit honorable members on this side in that way. However, it does not affect me. I cordially support the motion for incorporating British New Guinea. There can be no doubt that in the future the aim of Australia will be to acquire not only New Guinea, but other islands of the Pacific. While I individually hold that opinion, I must confess I am extremely surprised at the attitude of a number of members, more particularly the labour members, in advocating that New Guinea shall be incorporated in the territory of the Commonwealth. What becomes of a "white Australia" ?

Mr Page

- With your assistance we will look after that.

Mr CAMERON

- According to the Prime Minister there are 350,000 natives at present in New Guinea, and if they become part of the Commonwealth, how can we have a "white Australia"? This shows what absurd nonsense it is to talk of a white Australia, and in the same breath propose to incorporate another 350,000 coloured aliens. The Prime Minister indicated that we might have certain legislation for that portion of New Guinea which it is proposed to incorporate. But unless we give the white men over there certain rights as regards voting we shall be acting exactly as Kruger acted in the Transvaal towards the Uitlanders.

Mr Page

- That is no news ; the same is done in Queensland.

Mr CAMERON

-Then all I can say is that that is a great shame. I did not know that such was a fact, and I trust that a remedy will be found before long. We are practically unanimous on the question now before the House, but I suggest that certain honorable members should consider their attitude a few weeks ago on the Alien Restriction Bill and the Kanaka Bill in relation to the attitude they take this evening on the question of the incorporation of British New Guinea.

Mr McDONALD

- We ought to have more time in which to consider this important question. By the motion it is proposed to add 87,700 square miles to our territory, and, as the Prime Minister said, a population of 350,000 natives, though I should say the number more nearly approaches half-a-million. The Government should have indicated some determined policy on which they intend to carry out their proposals, but they have not done so. It is all very well to say that, in view of our having entered nationhood, we should not be afraid to take action, but the very fact that we have entered nationhood is a reason why we should be cautious and careful. It is just as well that we should look at possible consequences. It cost the New Zealand Government £15,000,000 or £16,000,000 to quell the various insurrections amongst the Maories, to say nothing of the valuable lives which were lost, and the money which was spent in the same cause by the British Government. It is to be hoped that such circumstances will not arise in New Guinea ; but it would have been wise for the Government to adopt a temporary policy. They could grant £20,000 per annum for two or three years, and in the meantime the Federal Government and the Parliament would have an opportunity of obtaining valuable information. But the Government have been forced into action owing to the peculiar position of affairs, though they have not been forced into annexing the territory straight away.

Mr Mahon

- Mr. Chamberlain is to blame.

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Mr McDONALD

- I do not know who is to blame, but something ought to be done. It is not fair to ask Queensland to take the responsibility of the large expenditure which is necessary to administer this portion of the Empire. I

had hoped the Government would have seen their way to follow out a policy on the lines I have suggested, but they have taken a course to which honorable members generally seemed favorable, and I shall enter no further protest. When the Bill is introduced for the administration of New Guinea, I hope it will receive the consideration which so important a measure deserves. I cannot forget that while we have two Bills before Parliament dealing with the evils of black labour in our midst, we are proposing to take over nearly half-a-million of coloured people, who sooner or later will come into conflict with us in commercial life. It is suggested that we should not allow those natives to come on to the mainland, but they have been employed on gold . mines in various centres on the islands which are within the sphere of the Government of the Commonwealth at the present time. If these rich tropical agricultural lands become cultivated to any large extent, and the commerce achieves dimensions which will make it valuable, a strong agitation by interested parties will immediately be raised in favour of that commerce being admitted free into Australia. Thus greater difficulties will arise in administering the affairs of that territory than is anticipated at the present time. I hope that in the Bill, which I shall await with interest, the matter will be dealt with more fully than it has been in this bald resolution.

Mr. SAWERS(New . England). - I understand that owing to the feeling of the committee, it is hopeless to attempt to force a division with any prospect of success. I shall therefore content myself with making a final protest. At the same time I hope that the result of the policy which has been entered upon will be all that the Prime Minister desires, and of benefit to the Commonwealth.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr BARTON

- To meet the objection raised by the honorable and learned member for Corio, I move -
That the words "Governmentare willing" in paragraph . 1 be omitted with a view to insert in lieu thereof the words " is pleased."

Amendment agreed to.

Resolved -

That this House is prepared to join in measures for the acceptance of British New Guinea as a territory of the Commonwealth, if His Majesty is pleased to place it under Federal control.

That towards the expenses of the administration of the possession this House is willing, when called upon, to vote a sum not exceeding £20,000 per annum as from the 1st July, 1901 , subject to revision at the end of five years.

Resolution reported and adopted.

POST AND TELEGRAPH BILL

Royal assent to this Bill reported.

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22:55:00

House adjourned at 10.55 p.m.