

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 19 JUNE 1866

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2. That such committee consist of Mr. Macalister, Mr. Stephens, Mr. Watts, Mr. Forbes, Mr. Dalrymple, Mr. Raff, and the mover."

So long a time, he said, had elapsed, since he first gave notice of this motion, that probably some honorable members might have forgotten some of the circumstances attending thereupon. He, therefore, felt it to be his duty to refer briefly to some of the circumstances, in order that the matter might be fairly understood, and discussed, not only on its own merits, but also on the merits of another motion, almost identical, which appeared on the notice paper. As honorable members were aware, a committee was already sitting on the subject of the railways of the colony—a committee appointed by the other branch of the Parliament, and consisting of honorable members of the Legislative Council. He had no doubt, himself, that the result of the inquiries of that committee would be creditable to the honorable gentlemen who had been appointed members of it, and probably be of benefit to the Government, who would be enlightened by the information which the committee would supply to them. The information that would thus be furnished, might be of vast benefit, also to the country. Feeling, however, that the representatives of the people should never stand aloof, when a subject of vast expenditure was being discussed, or inquired into, he could not consider that he, as an humble member of the Parliament of the country, would be doing his duty to the country, if he consented to the investigation being entrusted to an irresponsible House. There was, in his mind, a way of meeting that difficulty, and he believed, that to some extent, that way was attempted. He believed he should not be infringing the standing orders of either House of Parliament, in saying, that there were rumors that propositions were made to honorable members of that House, and to members of the Government, that the committee should be a joint one. Probably, such a committee would have been satisfactory to the country; though, he believed, such an investigation, which had to deal with an enormous expenditure of money, should be confided to a committee appointed by the guardians of the public purse. But the committee, he was told, did oppose—or those instrumental in the formation of the committee—did oppose, its being a joint committee, and that, besides, the proposition was not acceded to by the representative of the Government in the Legislative Council. Now, it was not likely, after that, that any such proposition, made by an honorable member of the Legislative Assembly, would receive the consent of the Government; and so it would have been idle on his part, or on the part of any honorable member on the same side of the House, to have proposed that there should be a joint committee. But when an honorable member of the House got up and proposed that

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 19 June, 1866.

Railways of the Colony.

RAILWAYS OF THE COLONY.

Mr. WALSHE moved—

1. That a select committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, and sit during any adjournment of this House, to inquire into and report upon all matters connected with the railway operations of the colony.

there should be a committee of that House, and that a committee to investigate a matter so deeply affecting the welfare and character of the country, and affecting the pockets of the inhabitants of the country—then, he apprehended, there would be no difficulty in inducing a majority of honorable members of the House to insist that there should be such a committee. Those were the grounds which induced him to take such earnest and active steps towards the formation of a committee of that House. He felt that honorable members of the House would not be doing their duty to their constituents, nor doing their duty to themselves, were they to allow it to appear that they consented to leave in other hands such an important duty. The necessity for such a committee as the one he now asked for must, he thought, be apparent, from the report that had been laid on the table of the House by the Government, from their Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Fitzgibbon. That report probably came near the mark, and gave a better insight as to the difficulties and expense connected with the gigantic work that had been undertaken, than any other information honorable members as yet possessed. That report told them, what all the world seemed to know before, but which the House, in its wisdom, never arrived at before. There were statements made in the Assembly, and elsewhere, that the anticipated easiness—if he might so express it—that the facilities for making railways by the Government were over-rated, and the cost of construction under-rated. But the Government, backed up by their engineers, or by honorable members of the House, were always able to set at rest those suggestions. Notwithstanding that, however, honorable members now found it admitted by the Government, through their engineers, that their notions of the expenditure, their notions of the cost, their notions of the facilities for making railways, and their want of notions, he might say, of the difficulties, had been a tissue of mistakes; and that those persons who were supposed to know nothing of the subject, and who had expressed their opinions—sometimes singly, sometimes in twos and threes—had been invariably in that House the true exponents of the difficulties, and of the cost to the country, of the construction of railways. Under such circumstances, he did not think the committee could sit too often on such a subject. The question of railways involved an expenditure of something between two and five millions of money. It was now believed they would cost, when completed, nearly three millions; but, after the experience they had had, would honorable members not be justified in supposing they would cost nearly five millions? He had no data to go on, or no information from engineers, to lead him to suppose that the expenditure would be so excessive; but, judging from experience, he might say it was not improbable that the expenditure, which it

was said would not exceed a million and a half, having already so far exceeded that sum, might ultimately come up to five millions. The sum was so enormous, that he thought a committee on the subject could not sit too often; and so long as the Government had in their hands the laying out of such a prodigious sum, so long should there be a committee watching the movements of the Government. No harm could accrue from it; and were there a permanent committee on the subject, it would tend, to some extent, to restore confidence in the people, and would probably help the Government to discover mistakes they were hardly at all times answerable for, and also otherwise assist them. But the object of this committee was not to inquire into imaginary evils, but rather to find out where the causes of evil lay. The House having agreed to such expenditure, and the carrying on of such works, it behooved them to discover what were the causes of the great blunders that had occurred; and not only that, but to see if, by the most diligent application, by the examination of witnesses, and getting all the information that could be commanded, it might not be possible to avert the perpetration of blunders in time to come. It must not be overlooked, either, that at the present time there were some very unpleasant rumors extant in connection with those railways. It was well known that there were conflicts going on between the Government and the contractors. There were even rumors extant that the Government were not all at one with their Chief Engineer, and that they did not take his advice, except when it served their political purposes. Those were rumors that honorable members could not shut their ears to. They might be untrue, and he hoped they were; but they were rumors which the Government, he was satisfied, would only be too glad to assist the House in dispelling. There were rumors, also, other than as to differences with the contractors;—rumors as to the resumption of lands for railway purposes; that, in fact, much wisdom had not been shewn in the expenditure of those large sums of money, and that the Government had not been so well and faithfully served as they should have been. It would also be one of the duties of the committee to see if there were truth in the statements that were current, as to undue payments for lands resumed for railway purposes, and if the rumors extant as to the enormous profits made out of the railways were true; and then, if they were established, it would be the duty of the representatives of the people to see if such occurrences might not have been prevented. It was not his intention to make a party question of this motion—far from it. The question was of too serious a nature for that; and, in the selection of names for the committee, he trusted he had shewn that a desire to make

this a party question could not be laid to his charge. His sole object was to see the Assembly do its duty in the matter, as well as the other branch of the Parliament seemed to have done; and to see if, by this committee, they could not to some extent retrieve their character from the blundering which, he believed, few would acquit them of; and if they could not make some atonement to the country for the egregious mistakes they had too often drifted into, and, as he feared, for political purposes. As he had already observed, there was on the notice paper another motion of a somewhat similar import to the one he now moved, which stood in the name of the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works. He would not attempt to say what might have been the object of the honorable the Premier of the colony in giving notice of that motion within five minutes after he had given notice of his; but this he would say, that he thought the honorable the Premier shewed a great deal of feeling on the occasion; and, so far as he (Mr. Walsh) was concerned, a great deal of unnecessary feeling. Supposing the policy of that honorable gentleman,—who might be regarded as the father of railways in this colony,—supposing the policy and proceedings of that honorable gentleman to have been as pure as they were patriotic—and he did not mean to contend they were otherwise—then he should have thought the Premier, if he had any enemies on the subject, would have been in a position to have defied them; and that he would have said, in effect, that if the motion implied a want of confidence in him, either as a Minister or as a man, then gladly he should see his enemies approach him, and investigate the subject. But the conduct of the honorable the Premier, he regretted to say, bore to his mind a different construction; and he should feel only too glad if the honorable gentleman should be able, on the present occasion, to convince him that he was in error. But he thought that, when the honorable gentleman got up in the hurried manner he did, after he (Mr. Walsh) had given notice of his motion, and gave notice of a motion almost identical, he betrayed an anxiety in the matter which there was no necessity for. From what he knew of the honorable gentleman, he felt sure that he would gladly meet any investigation as to the formation of the railways, and as to his policy on the subject. The only thing with which he would tax the honorable gentleman at present was, his having gone into his railway policy—not from political motives, at the outset—but with having drifted from what was a rational railway policy into one of expediency, which course he had allowed to be carried so far, that he was unable to check it. That was the only accusation he had to make in the matter against the honorable gentleman; and it struck him, at the moment, that the honorable gentleman must have felt that,

when he met his (Mr. Walsh's) giving notice of motion in such a way as he did. He prepared his motion, and named the members of the committee, without consulting any one; and he named those gentlemen who he thought would assist the Government and the mover in the inquiry, and who would act solely for the good of the country, and who, he felt, would bring the inquiry to a satisfactory issue. In proof of the assertion that he did not mean that to be regarded as a party question, he needed only to point to the fact, that a majority of the members of the committee were decidedly partisans of the Government. There was, however, one or two who might to be looked on as occupying the unfortunate position of inveterate oppositionists. Well, he must admit that, from his previous knowledge of the honorable the Premier, he felt bound to say, that he did not suppose the honorable gentleman would consent to the committee he had nominated, in its entirety. Knowing, as he did, the fearless course the honorable gentleman generally pursued, he anticipated he would have said to him that he would not submit to the committee, so far as his own name was concerned—that he would not occupy a seat on a committee whose object was to inquire into his proceedings as a Minister, and that he would not accept of a position that would make him one of the judges of his own conduct. Feeling the honorable member would do that, he also felt that, out of courtesy to the Government, and to the honorable gentleman, his name ought at least to appear in the list of members of the committee. The honorable gentleman, as he had said, had given notice of a motion similar to the one now before the House, and in it he was himself named as a member of the committee. If that motion were carried, the honorable gentleman would, as a matter of course, be the chairman of the committee. He would be chairman of a committee consisting of his own accusers—the chairman of a committee appointed to investigate into the blunders or errors of the Government. Now, notwithstanding that, he would do the honorable gentleman the justice to suppose that the placing of his own name in the list of the committee was an act of impulsiveness, and that he would yet inform the House that he would not only never consent to be the chairman of a tribunal that was to try his own policy and his own acts, but that he would not even be a member of such a committee. For his own part, except on account of the position and consistency the honorable the Premier should maintain, he would rather see his name retained on the committee, because he felt satisfied that, in regard to the subjects generally to be inquired into, his information, and the value of his services, would be for the benefit of the committee. But there might be questions put to the witnesses who would have to appear before the committee which it would be almost unpleasant for the Premier of the colony to

sit by and hear put; and questions that the honorable gentleman could himself answer better than the witnesses who would be called, and the answers to which it would be preferable to receive from a member of the Government. For those reasons, among others, he thought it would be better that the honorable gentleman should not be a member of the committee. Having been considerably opposed in the action he had taken in this matter, by the action taken by the honorable the Premier himself, he had felt it necessary to detain the House so long. He had no intention, when he gave notice of the motion, to detain the House for more than five minutes, in moving that it be agreed to, by describing its nature and the necessity that existed for such a committee of inquiry. That the action he had taken was important, the honorable the Premier would himself admit, and, indeed, did admit by his having taken similar action himself; and on that account the question had been embarrassed to a considerable extent. He asked now that the House would agree to the appointment of a committee for the purpose of examining into matters connected with the railway operations of the colony; and he would ask honorable members who were named on the committee, if they consented to act,—he asked them, should the motion be carried, to go into the inquiry with the full determination of carrying it on with fairness to all parties—with a determination to extract from the evidence sufficient to enable them to bring up to the House a report that would command its reception by a large majority, and that would restore to the country the confidence that had to a considerable extent deserted it on the subject of the construction of the railways. He asked them to go into the matter with a determination to assist the honorable the Colonial Treasurer, if possible, in his present arduous duties,—with the determination of preventing any increase of the enormous expenditure that was now going on, and of preventing to a certainty any necessity for the Government having to come down to the House and admit that the estimates for the construction of the railway were so far wrong that nearly half a million more would be required to complete it. If the committee should discover only that the Government were carrying on the works with the idea that they would be finished for the sum asked, or that the engineer assured the Government they would be completed for, and if the committee should discover that the works could not be completed for that sum, and should point out the fact to the Government in sufficient time, the result of the inquiry would be, so far as he was concerned, highly satisfactory. But he would say more, he would say that if the committee should discover that the action of the Government had been sound and prudent, that its specifications were such as might be relied on, then, he would say, the services of

the committee would be invaluable to the country and to the Government. He had no other object except such as he had stated in moving for the committee. If it had been his object to embarrass the Government he could have adopted a much simpler way. A simple motion expressing a want of confidence in the management of the railways would have been sufficient, if he had been so inclined. But at the present stage he had no such object in view. His wish was, before the present session closed, to discover what was the real work in the matter of railways they were pursuing, and what was likely to be the real cost; and in regard to the question of cost, he would like to see swept away those ugly rumors that had too long prevailed in connection with the railway expenditure. He hoped this matter would not be made a party question; and he should be sorry if any honorable member on the Opposition side of the House attempted to find fault with the policy of the Government on any subject while the present motion was under discussion. The North had its grievances as to the railway question, and he hoped the committee would be able to do something for the satisfaction of the North, likewise; but he hoped the present discussion would not be encumbered with that question. He had intended to go through the report of Mr. Fitzgibbon pretty fully, but having stated so much already, and having referred honorable members to the fact that there was nearly half a million of money required for the line of railway in excess of that which the honorable the Premier was induced to ask the House for originally, he would not do so. He had been informed that the accuracy of the report generally was doubted. He did not presume to say there were any grounds for that, because he was not conversant with the subject; but it was only stating that which was true to tell the Government that at any rate in some cases the general purport, and the general details, of the report were very much criticised; and the labors of the committee he now moved for would probably assist the Government on the subject. The Government could not be held answerable for all the reports that were sent in by their officers; nor should it be taken for granted that the officers were not liable to error; and in dealing with this and other parts of the question, the committee, he apprehended, would be of more service to the country than he had been able to suggest. Whether the motion were carried or not, he felt satisfied that much good would result from the discussion that would take place upon it, provided that the discussion were carried on in a temperate manner, and with a desire for the welfare of the country.

Mr. R. CRIBB suggested that the honorable member for Maryborough should withdraw his motion, and allow the other of a similar nature, standing on the notice paper in the name of the honorable the Premier, to be

carried. It was not his intention to have spoken on the motion before the Hopse, but he felt called upon to say a few words on account of the castigation the honorable member had attempted to administer to the honorable the Premier, in respect to his giving notice of his motion on the same subject. He said the castigation the honorable member attempted to give, for, like all his castigations, it amounted to mere wind. He was astonished to hear some of the remarks made by the honorable member, when he remembered what took place when the honorable member gave notice of his motion. On that occasion, previous to the sitting of the House, the honorable member for Maryborough and he were sitting at the table, but opposite to each other; and he saw the honorable member consult the honorable member for the Western Downs, Mr. Watts, about the motion, though he had just now stated that he did not consult any one about it, and between the two of them the motion was prepared. The honorable the Colonial Secretary came in previous to the assembling of the House, and the honorable member for Maryborough shewed him the motion, and asked him what he thought of it. The honorable the Colonial Secretary said the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works had drawn up a motion to the same effect, of which he intended that day to give notice. The House met just afterwards. He watched the honorable member for Maryborough then, and looked closely at him, and observed the earnestness with which he took advantage of the first opportunity to jump up and give notice of his motion. Now, in the face of that, and considering what the honorable member had just stated, it was unnecessary, he thought, for him to say any more.

DR. CHALLINOR said, that as he had been looking for something in the *Gazette*, he had not heard all that had been said by the honorable member for Maryborough, but he gathered from what he heard, that he was anxious to bring the question before the House, that the Government might have an opportunity of clearing themselves from imputations respecting the way matters regarding the railways had been carried out; and that he considered it was a duty honorable members owed to the Government, to themselves, and to the country, that those matters should be investigated. Well, he did not see any objection to a committee for such a purpose. So far from that being the case, he was prepared to support the appointment of such a committee. But he was not prepared to hear the statement that had been made by the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. Cribb, to the effect that the honorable member for Maryborough, when he gave notice of the motion, was aware that the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works was prepared to give notice of a similar motion; especially, after the state-

ment just made by the honorable member for Maryborough, that the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works had immediately after him, on the spur of the moment, as it were, given notice of his motion on the subject, with a view to supplant, as he made it to appear, the motion of the honorable member for Maryborough. Now, an honorable member to stand forward and make such a statement as that made by the honorable member for Maryborough, would be calculated to induce the House, but for the statement made by the honorable member for East Moreton, to oppose the appointment of the committee to be moved for by the honorable the Secretary for Lands and Works, and to grant the one he himself moved for. But, admitting that it was right the House should grant a committee to make such an inquiry as the one proposed, and it was right to have this inquiry made, the proposition for the committee should, he thought, come from a different quarter than the one from which it had come. Such a motion should not be made, on the grounds stated, by an honorable member who was himself the subject of unfavorable rumors, and who, it was reported, had abused his influence as a senator for the accomplishment of his own purposes. Now, in justice to the House, the honorable member for Maryborough ought, under all the circumstances, to withdraw his motion, at least until he himself was exculpated from charges embodied in public reports,—for it was on the ground of reports, as the honorable member himself said, that he asked for this committee. Let the honorable member shew that he himself had clean hands in the matter with which he was charged, before he asked the House to grant such a committee as the one he now asked for. He had given some consideration to this matter, and he was prepared to say that one honorable member of the House, and that none other than the honorable member for Maryborough, had contracted with the Government to supply them with a thousand tons of coal at twenty shillings per ton,—and that was a proceeding which was contrary to the constitution of the House. He could also say that, according to the honorable member himself, the Government were prepared to take all their coals, or a great part of them, from the Burrum coal mines, if it could be shewn that there were six or eight feet of water up to the wharf.

MR. WATTS rose to order. He thought the honorable member was dealing with a matter that was not before the House.

THE SPEAKER said he was just rising to call the attention of the honorable member to the fact, that he was travelling from the question before the House, which was the appointment of a select committee to inquire into all matters connected with the railway operations of the colony.

Mr. WALSH took the opportunity of stating that he never entered into a contract with the Government for the supply of coals; and he pledged his word that he never made any contract with the Government as to the supply of coals.

Dr. CHALLINOR said he considered he was not out of order, inasmuch as the honorable member for Maryborough asked for the appointment of this committee on the ground of the existence of public rumors as to the maladministration of the railway affairs of the colony; and he (Dr. Challinor) was proceeding to say that an honorable member who asked for such a committee should not be himself the subject of public report. He did not know what might be the strict definition of the term contract. There were written contracts, he knew, and verbal contracts, and he had seen, in the handwriting of the honorable member for Maryborough, himself, a statement to this effect:—"The Government has ordered of me 1,000 tons of coals, at twenty shillings a ton." Now, that, he believed, was what was called a verbal contract, and was a proceeding that was in violation of the principles of the constitution. But that was not all, for he should be prepared, in due time, to shew that the honorable member had not only had dealings with the Government, as to supplying coals, but in other matters, which affected the civil servants of the colony in such a way that, by the rules of the House, he was not entitled, from those considerations, to come before the House and ask for the appointment of a committee, such as he now moved for.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is again out of order. The character of the honorable member for Maryborough is not the question before the House. The question is as to the appointment of a committee.

Dr. CHALLINOR: The question, he understood, was, as to whether the House should grant a committee, of which the honorable member for Maryborough would be the chairman, and the honorable member asked the committee simply on the ground of public report as to the mal-administration of the moneys voted by the House for railway purposes. He maintained, therefore, that, till the reports affecting himself were set aside, the honorable member should not ask the House, on the grounds of public report, to grant a committee as to matters affecting the Government, of which he would be the chairman. After the ruling of the honorable the Speaker, as to his not being in order in making certain references, he should not be able to go into a statement of particulars, which he had from the handwriting of the honorable member for Maryborough, himself, to shew that he would not be the right man in the right place, as chairman of such a committee as he now asked for. He should certainly oppose the granting of the committee.

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS AND WORKS said: Perhaps it is just as well that I should

now rise, for the purpose of making a few observations with reference to this motion. I do not say I rise for the purpose of opposing it, though, probably, what I shall state will have some bearing in that direction; but I do not rise for the purpose of attempting, for a moment, to throw any obstacle in the way of a committee being appointed to investigate into the whole of the railway operations of the colony. I do not rise for the purpose of putting off an investigation into any report or hearsay story the honorable member may have heard; but I object, at the very outset, to the way in which the honorable member for Maryborough has coupled my name with the motion that stands in my name on the notice paper of this House. I think the honorable member would have acted with more consistency if he had left my motion to be dealt with—if it could be dealt with—when the time came for it to be submitted to the House. But the honorable member not only introduced that motion to the House, but accused me, in as plain terms as could be made use of, of concocting and giving notice of a motion of my own, five minutes after he had given notice of his motion. I state, and I state it distinctly as a charge against the honorable member, that he must have intended to mislead the House, if he kept back a piece of information which he should have communicated to the House, and which I candidly confess was not in my knowledge till to-night. Now, whether the honorable member knew, on the night he gave notice of this motion, that I intended to give notice of the motion in my name, I was entirely ignorant, till I heard it from the honorable member for West Moreton, a few minutes ago, when he announced that the honorable member for Maryborough and the honorable member for the Western Downs both knew that I intended to give notice of the motion;—so that, for the purpose of endeavoring to prejudice the House against the motion standing in my name, the honorable member makes a statement that, but for the contradiction by the honorable member for West Moreton, would have misled the House. It appears that the honorable member was aware I intended to give notice of the motion, of which I afterwards gave notice, and that he, at that moment, had nothing of the kind prepared, and that his motion was not prepared till he was well aware that I intended to take action in the matter. Honorable members are aware that, on one or two occasions, I have suggested to the House that, when honorable members desired to move for a committee like this, if they informed the Government of their intention, the Government would not offer any objection; but we hoped that any such motions that might be brought forward would be for the public interest, and not for the gratification of either party or personal feeling, and that by such committee we

should have been able to put such evidence as it is the duty of the colony to put into the hands of those who are lending their money on the securities of the public works. Now, how has the honorable member treated the motion? He has told us that there are various rumors about—that some of the rumors are that the Government are not at one with their Chief Engineer. Which of the Chief Engineers the honorable member referred to I do not know. I am not aware of any difference between the Government and the Chief Engineers. The Chief Engineers are subordinate officers to the Government, and, therefore, the Government cannot enter into any dispute with them. If the Government choose to take one view, and the Chief Engineers another, it is the duty of the latter to carry out the instructions of their employers. I take it, that it is to something of that kind the honorable member refers. If he means to say that, because one of the Chief Engineers has recommended an extension of the northern railway, that the Government are not at one with him on the subject, I say that that is not a matter for the committee to inquire into. That is a question which has been discussed in the House over and over again. It forms, and has been made to form, a charge against the Executive Government, and, therefore, it is not a question that should go before a committee of this House. But the honorable member has also stated, as a rumor, that there were undue payments made for the land required to be resumed for railway purposes. Now, I admit, if the honorable member can establish that the Government has made payments for lands which were not authorised by the Railway Act, he has sufficient grounds for asking for a committee to condemn the Government. But this question, I believe, is at present under the investigation of another committee; and I presume the honorable members on the other side, who are backing up the honorable member for Maryborough, are aware that that committee is formed of gentlemen who are not favorable to the Government; and yet, my conviction is, from what I have heard of those gentlemen, that they will deal fairly with the question presented before them. And, after all, I defy the honorable member to substantiate, on a fair and equitable basis, any charge against the Government, in connection with those railways. But, it seems to me extraordinary that the honorable member should have introduced the motion for the purpose of going into the question, before he heard the result of the investigation that was going on before a committee of the Legislative Council. As I have already stated, in the early part of the session, I invited honorable members to go into this question; but shortly after another committee has been appointed by the other branch of the

Legislature—and I may say that the vague rumors that are going about amount to nothing—the honorable member for Maryborough takes up the question, and, without waiting till the report of the other committee is brought up, he rushes to have a select committee of the Assembly also on the subject. The honorable member has stated that it might have been better to have had a joint committee of both Houses. Probably it might, and if I could have discovered in the appointments made by the other House that there existed a desire to have the Government represented in a committee appointed to inquire into a matter of so much importance, I should have been delighted to have aided in obtaining a joint committee. But, as I have regarded the committee, which was moved for by certain parties, it is to a great extent a political committee; and as I found the committee was composed of gentlemen, every one of whom was an opponent of the Government, I did not feel myself in a position to agree to any proposition for a joint committee. But, as I have stated, I am not only desirous, but will give reasons—and reasons have not been given by the honorable member for Maryborough—why I think such a committee should be appointed. The honorable member, who, it appears, urges as an objection to my motion that I should be the chairman of the committee, does not seem to think that the same objection would apply, and with greater force, in his own case; because, beyond a question, he appears here as the accuser of the Government. Has he not in the first instance attempted to keep back information that he should have given to the House? Was there any doubt that his object was to hark back and find fault with everything that has been done by the Government? Is there any one committee on which the honorable member had ever sat, in which the Government was concerned, that has given the honorable member satisfaction. I think not. Now, sir, if in place of fault-finding, as the honorable member has done—instead of finding fault with the select committee of the Legislative Council, who, I believe, are at this moment taking full evidence on the subject, the honorable member had expanded his views a little, had looked a little before him, and considered those persons who are lending their money to the colony, and been really anxious to uphold the credit of the colony, he would have found that there were many things requiring the attention of a committee more than a parcel of groundless rumors. It is not my intention to go through all the objections urged against the Government in reference to our railway policy. I believe everything that could now be brought forward, from either side of the House, was brought forward when the Warwick line was under discussion. But I certainly do propose to occupy the time of the House, for a few minutes at any rate, to

invite the consideration of honorable members to some of the objections urged against the Government and their officers. I know nothing about the various rumors which, on all occasions, appear to have reached the ears of the honorable member; but there is no doubt that we have reports in this House of what takes place in another quarter; and I think, as the honorable member himself admits, that this matter has been left over until too late a period of the session. It is not, however, I think, too late for me to refer to what has occurred in another place. One of the charges brought against the Government is a very conspicuous one—and one to which, if this committee be appointed, I shall invite their attention—is, that the Government are paying Sir Charles Fox, as their agent in London, a commission of five per cent. Now, it turns out that this charge was brought forward by a gentleman who happens to be a defeated candidate for the Government agency in London. Not only was this charge untrue, but it was so unfounded, that I cannot acquit that gentleman from making it, knowing it to be untrue. It is just possible that he may have heard something of the original arrangement with Sir Charles Fox; but he ought, before making such a sweeping charge, to have obtained more reliable information from some person in the office of the Commissioner for Railways. I must remind honorable members that, when the question of railway communication was before this House, some years ago, the Government were not, at the moment, in a position to inform this House as to the amount of commission paid by any of the Australian colonies; and not only did the difficulty then exist of ascertaining what that commission was, but it exists at this present moment. For, although I can ascertain what is the commission positively paid for certain acts, still, there are certain other acts in regard to which we have found it impossible to obtain any information. Now, when the Government first communicated with Sir Charles Fox, and instructed him to procure certain railway plant for this colony, he was told that he would be allowed a commission of five per cent.; but that was altered by an Executive minute, passed so far back as the 8th April, 1864. But, before I go into this alteration, I may be permitted to refer to what seems to be the practice in the other colonies. I find that, in New South Wales, they pay a commission of two and a-half per cent. on the rolling stock and machinery, and, as all honorable members are aware, that comprises four-fifths of the whole plant connected with railway making. That is a commission simply paid for inspection of the machinery and rolling stock; we have no information contained in the report as to what is paid for their mercantile agency in London, or the shippers and brokers in connection with the transportation of the material from London

to New South Wales. Again, when the Victorian Government were applied to to give information to this Government as to the rate of commission paid in that colony, I find the communication we received was to the effect that on rails a commission of two per cent. was paid; on locomotives, three per cent.; and on rolling stock and machinery, three and a half per cent.: but it is very remarkable that the letter gives no information in reference to the commission they give their mercantile agent in London, although they have sent a person from Melbourne to perform that duty. Neither does it state what amount of commission is paid to the very respectable shipping brokers connected with the transportation of their material from England to Australia. This being all the information the Government could obtain, on the 8th April, 1864, a minute was passed to the effect that, for discharging all the duties paid separately in the other colonies, and for seeing to the transportation of the whole of the plant, Sir Charles Fox was to receive three and a half per cent. commission. Another charge brought against the Government in another quarter was rather an extraordinary one, and no doubt it had about as much foundation as the other. But there is this difference between the two charges—one was advanced by a gentleman for whom I have some respect; the other, by an individual who, on a previous occasion, made a violent attack upon me in reference to a subject which, if it had not been withdrawn from the business paper, I should have brought very conspicuously before the notice of honorable members. Any allegation from that quarter, I say, therefore, must be regarded with very considerable suspicion. But I think it is my duty to meet these charges. The next statement is that Sir Morton Peto had offered to take our debentures and make the whole of our railways for us. My answer to that was that I had never heard of it before; no such offer was made; but the probability is that if it had been, it would have been rejected,—because I do not believe that, however eminent the firm might be who would undertake to construct our railways upon such terms, the works would have been worth half the money. It is a notorious fact, that works placed in the hands of debenture-holding contractors are done just as they like to do them, and if one word of disparagement is uttered, the debentures are thrust back upon the Government. That is the position we should have been placed in with Sir Morton Peto, if we had consented to allow him to make our railways and to take our debentures. Another charge, in connection with Sir Morton Peto, was this—that if we did not take care, he had it in his power to ruin the sale of all our debentures. When I heard that charge, I must confess it gave me some little anxiety, as this colony would have been placed in a position in which I am sure every honorable member would have

regretted to see it. It was said that, if we did not allow Sir Morton Peto to make our railways, how and when he chose, he could ruin us whenever he liked to do so. Now I deny that he could do any thing of the kind. I have always regarded, and I think the public have also regarded, that gentleman as an honorable man and a man of business; but, according to this statement, he must be thoroughly degraded in mind and lost to every moral feeling. Such an assertion could only have proceeded from a mind of a peculiar character. I say, again, I deny that he has it in his power to ruin this colony, or that he would do so if he had. It is on account of these accusations having been continually repeated for a number of months past—it is because they have at last found vent in another place, that I was desirous of bringing these matters before the House, not only to meet every charge against the Government on the subject of railways, but to go further. My object was not only to prove the unfounded character of the charges, but I felt the time had arrived when I should do something more, and prove, not only the permanence and efficiency, but also the reproductive character, of our railways. These were my motives for putting on the paper the motion which stands in my name, and that is the course which I intended to pursue if that motion were granted. My object was not to take the chair, as the honorable member has stated it to be, because I deny that there is anything in our regulations which would render it necessary. I assert that I should not have taken it; my only object was to see that the evidence was properly marshalled and placed before the committee, and with that I have no hesitation in stating that I could defy any report which they might bring up. But if there are grounds of objection to my taking the chair, I should like to know why the honorable member for Maryborough should be chairman of a similar committee, or what right he has to take any action in the matter? And if the committee which he has asked for be granted, I should like my name to be struck out of it. I have no desire to prevent the appointment of that committee, but I do not think it will do justice to the great and important subject of the railways of this colony. Another object I had was, that in the event of its being found impossible to take all the evidence during the session, a royal commission should have been appointed to sit and conduct the inquiry after the prorogation, and to bring up a report after or during the recess. These were my views, and I have now to state that I shall not divide the House upon the motion of the honorable member, but I shall certainly not act upon the committee, and I shall afford him all the information he desires, and leave the matter in the hands of the committee. But I must ask him, and I would put it to his sense of honor, after what he has stated this evening,

whether he feels himself justified in pressing his motion and acting as chairman of the committee?

Mr. WATTS said it was not his intention to have spoken on the subject at all, but as his name had been brought into question, he considered it necessary to say a few words. He deeply regretted that any personal feeling should have been shewn in the course of the debate, or personal accusations made by one member against another, when a subject of such importance was under consideration. He deplored the course taken by the honorable member for East Moreton and the honorable member for Ipswich, Dr. Challinor, in making charges which might prove to be totally unfounded. It must be known to almost every honorable member, that upon the question before the House he (Mr. Watts) had taken neither one side nor the other, and that if he had leaned one way more than another, it had been towards the present Ministry. He was astonished to hear the honorable member for East Moreton say that he had made a clandestine arrangement with the honorable member for Maryborough. He knew nothing of the motion before it was placed on the paper. The honorable member for Maryborough had merely asked him if he would sit on the committee, and he had said that he had no objection to do so. He was not aware that the Secretary for Lands and Works was about to place a similar motion upon the paper. It was not likely that he (Mr. Watts), who had taken an opposite view of questions, and might be termed, in a political sense, the enemy of the Premier, would have been taken into the confidence of that honorable gentleman. He denied that he knew the Government were going to make that motion, any further than it was stated the Opposition were going to put such a motion on the paper, and the Ministry would put on another. He must again express his regret that any personal feeling had been introduced into the debate, especially when a question was being discussed which involved the expenditure of over three millions of money. It behoved honorable members to try and find out how such a large sum of money had been expended, and how much more the railways were likely to cost the country. He had also been astonished to hear the honorable the Premier say he would not sit upon the committee. He admitted that it was not necessary that the honorable gentleman should do so, for the evidence which he would be able to give, if examined, would be quite as valuable, whether he were a member of the committee or not. He was not one of those who objected to the expenditure of a little more money to secure the proper completion of the railway works. But that was not the time to make any accusations against this officer or that officer. Any charges of that nature would be most appropriately dealt with by the committee. Nor was it a time to con-

sider any statement that the Government was at variance with their engineer. He believed it had already been agreed, on both sides of the House, that no more money should be spent than had already been contracted for. He could only say, as far as he was concerned, he would rather not be on the committee. If the honorable Secretary for Lands and Works refused to sit, he would recommend the honorable member for Maryborough to substitute the Colonial Secretary's name for that of the Premier. He felt sure there would be no desire on the part of any member to deal unjustly with the committee. He did not expect to find many of these reports substantiated; no doubt, many of them were fallacies. But while those reports were in existence, he thought it would be satisfactory to the Minister for Lands and Works, and to the country, to clear up all such accusations—which he thought the honorable gentleman would be able to do—and it would be equally so to those persons who were about to lend their money to carry on the works. He should cordially support the committee, and if the Premier declined to sit, he thought it would be well that the Colonial Secretary, as a member of the Government, should be appointed.

Mr. PRING said he thought it would have been well had the debate been confined to the real question before the House. He had not the slightest doubt, that the honorable member for Maryborough would be able fully to exonerate himself from the charge which had been brought against him, and no doubt that honorable member, in his reply, would express his surprise that the honorable Secretary for Lands and Works should have moved for a committee immediately after he had made a similar motion. But he (Mr. Pring) was not at all surprised at it, and he had good intimation that an attack would be made that evening upon the honorable member for Maryborough; but he was rather surprised to find that attack commenced by the honorable member for East Moreton, Mr. R. Cribb, and followed up by the honorable member for Ipswich, Dr. Challinor. But, to return to the question before the House, whether it was desirable to appoint a committee to inquire into, and report upon, all matters connected with the railway operations in this colony; he thought no one would say such an inquiry was not called for. He had not moved for such a committee himself, for certain reasons, which he had stated to the House. The honorable Secretary for Lands and Works had stated, some time ago, that he was not averse to the appointment of a committee, and, no doubt, his reason for not moving in the matter before was, the fact that he was at the head of the department concerned. No doubt the honorable gentleman wished to leave it to an independent member, and he (Mr. Pring) could therefore see no reason why the honorable member for Maryborough was not a

proper person to take charge of such an inquiry, or should not consider it his duty to investigate the matter. He had only understood that honorable member to refer to certain reports in circulation—whether true, or not, he was not prepared to say—which rendered it desirable to appoint a committee to investigate all matters connected with railway operations in this colony, and to see, among other things, whether those reports were true or not. Whether that was a sufficient reason or not for granting a committee, he could not say; but he could see no grounds for taxing the honorable member for Maryborough with improper motives in making such a motion, because, if the rumors in question were mere surmises, they ought to be refuted as fully as possible, especially when the Government were about to borrow money on the alleged reproductiveness of these very works. He repeated, that he could see no grounds for charging the honorable member for Maryborough with dereliction of duty. But he did not think that was a sufficient reason to support the appointment of the committee. In his opinion, there were other, and very strong reasons. He thought the Government, in the first place, should have furnished the House with more information as to the working of the railways, with some further details as to the way in which the money had been spent; and that, before the Loan Bill was passed. While the people of this country were so anxious about a Land Bill, which was not so much required, they seemed perfectly prepared to allow the Government to spend as much money as they chose—if they could borrow it—without asking for an inquiry as to what money was owing, whether it could be paid, or whether there would be sufficient to complete the works in progress. That was what, as far as he could see, the House had actually been guilty of, and the public had been content to pass by, without any question. The railways had absorbed the greatest portion of the loan that had been raised. With the exception of a vote for immigration, nearly all the loan had been laid out on railway works. In point of fact, the whole of the railway lines had been constructed with borrowed money, and the House had authorised the Government to raise money, without even knowing how the loan previously raised had been expended. Before any Loan Bill was passed, the House ought to have compelled the Government to give full information on the subject. Whether the committee would be enabled to learn all the financial bearings of the railway question,—and to bring up a report after the money was spent, would be like shutting the stable door after the horse was stolen—it would, under any circumstances, satisfy the public mind, would materially strengthen the Government, if the statements of the Minister for Lands and Works were borne out, and would do much to increase the stability and

add to the credit of the colony. Although the credit of the colony was not bad, it might be much better. He was not prepared to say that there had been any mismanagement of railway matters; but there might have been errors of judgment in entering into contracts or carrying on works. Being ignorant of the mode in which the lines had been constructed, it would be presumptuous in him to offer an opinion on the subject; he could only say, that the information which might have been afforded had not been furnished by the Government. He thought, therefore, that the committee was all the more required, in order to shew what was the real state of the railway operations in this colony at the present moment; how the money authorised for their construction had been expended; and whether the Government, in what they had done, had acted for the best. If errors had been committed, the House would be able to determine, after seeing the evidence, whether they arose from unforeseen circumstances or were such as justified severe condemnation being passed on the Government. He did not consider it material whether the Minister for Lands and Works was a member of the committee or not. He was perfectly prepared to take the honorable gentleman's word, that when he put his motion on the paper for the appointment of a select committee, he had no intention of taking the chair, and he (Mr. Pring) did not think there would be anything extraordinary in his not doing so, and he would be able to afford quite as much information if he were not a member of the committee, and would be able at any rate to free himself from the imputation that he had been actuated by any unfair spirit. Doubtless, in whatever position he might be placed, the honorable gentleman would be ready to give all the information in his power. He thought the committee ought to give no credence to out-door reports, unless those who originated or circulated them were prepared to prove their correctness. A great deal of injury was done by false reports. The public mind became imbued with a certain amount of distrust of any public officer whose character was impeached by rumor, and the effect was very damaging to the colony. In his opinion, unless specific charges were made, the labors of a committee ought not to extend to an investigation of rumors. He would rather see the committee examine the method in which the railway operations had been carried on, in a financial point of view, and see whether the department under which they came had acted in a manner for the good of the country. No doubt the Minister for Lands and Works would afford every information, and assure the committee that everything had been done, so far as he was concerned, that could have been done. He thought many things had been said, which would be found to be without much founda-

tion. For instance, in reference to the commission for the purchase of railway plant, he believed, from his own recollection, the honorable Secretary for Lands and Works had been perfectly right in what he had stated. In many other instances, no doubt, with as little foundation, the public had been led into the idea that certain things had been done which ought not to have been done. He hoped, and he believed, the honorable gentleman would be able to shew that the railway affairs of this colony were in a healthy condition, because he could not conceal from himself the fact that the colony would be benefited in a great degree, if the report of the committee could shew that the assurances of the Secretary for Lands and Works were well founded, and the position of the Ministry would be very much strengthened. He hoped the committee would enable the Government to shew that the railways were in a proper condition. Until he saw a report condemning the action of the Government, he should be content to believe that things had been done rightly, and that, if the engineer had been wrong in his estimates, he could give reasons such as to satisfy them that the miscalculation was unforeseen. The House certainly had sufficient faith in the Engineer-in-Chief, and the representations of the Government, to vote the additional loan that was required; and no doubt the House would be glad to find that they had been justified in trusting them to that extent. The report of the committee would not affect the raising of the new loan, because long before it would be laid on the table of the House the arrangements for the loan would be completed. He hoped the members of the committee would enter on their labors with a desire to discharge their duty, which was of no slight character, and would require a great deal of care and attention. A reference had been made to the fact of the Legislative Council having appointed a committee, but he could not see why another should not be appointed, or why, if the Council thought proper to have a select committee to investigate the railway operations for their satisfaction, the Assembly were not at liberty to appoint a committee for a similar reason. The Assembly had a great deal to do with the purse strings; and as railways could not be made without money, they had really the most interest in the question. In his opinion, the inquiry would have been better in the hands of a joint committee of both Houses, as that would have saved a great deal of trouble, and a great deal of expense in printing the same evidence over again. But the Government seemed to have prevented that through their representative in the other chamber. He saw no objection to the motion, or to the names mentioned in it. He felt sure the committee would act fairly, and he hoped they would be able to

bring up such a report during the present session of Parliament as would satisfy the public that the railway affairs of the colony were in a sound and healthy condition.

Mr. RAFF said he did not wish to enter into the question of the necessity for an inquiry, because honorable members on both sides fully admitted it. He would not enter into any details, for he thought the proper time to do so was when the report of the committee was brought up. The only question, it appeared to him, was whether the motion of the honorable member for Maryborough, or that of the Minister for Lands and Works, was to be carried. He had risen chiefly for the purpose of asking the honorable member to withdraw his name, and substitute that of some other honorable member; perhaps the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Herbert, whose name appeared first in the motion of the Government, would not object to be appointed. He (Mr. Raff) had never refused to act on any select committee before, and believed that he had been as zealous in attending as any other member; but this session, as he had stated on a previous occasion, he should not be able to give full attention to this duty.

Mr. HERBERT said that he was not so directly interested in the results of the railway policy as he should have been if he had continued a member of the Ministry, but at the same time he was chargeable with a large amount of responsibility, having been originally connected with it. In some respects that policy had not turned out according to the anticipations of many of the community, who desired a full and fair inquiry into railway management and operations. He did not oppose the appointment of a committee, having been connected with the adoption of the railway system, but seeing the nature of the proceedings in another place, he was inclined to think that a searching inquiry into the matter was being made there. If another committee were appointed, it would do nothing more or less than go over the same ground as the committee of the Legislative Council. If any honorable member of the Assembly was troubled with any rumor, or possessed of a fact, he could either be examined as a witness, or desire that evidence on the subject should be called. Honorable members could take care that the inquiry was complete. Holding these views, he thought a great deal of time and money would be wasted if they appointed a committee. He proposed to move the previous question, and hoped some other honorable member would do the same thing when the Minister for Lands and Works' motion came on. He would not take part in getting rid of that motion to allow the other to come on, because he thought there was no necessity for either of them. He said so, *bonâ fide*, only from a firm belief that a thorough inquiry would be made elsewhere. If he were not satisfied that that inquiry

would be full and complete, he should not propose the amendment. Although he adhered to every tittle of the railway policy he took part in commencing, he believed his views might be altered in reference to details of money expenditure in the mode of constructing the railways. He believed, for instance, that before the lines to Dalby and Warwick were finished, a more cheap method of construction would be adopted. That point could be elucidated by inquiry. He did not intend, by moving the previous question, to shirk inquiry, because he believed the investigation commenced in another place would be worthy of Parliament. It was to the other chamber that they were indebted, on a former occasion, for much valuable information, which cleared up the whole question at a time when there was a deadlock in the Legislative Assembly. To test the feeling of the House, he moved the previous question.

Mr. R. CRIBB seconded the amendment.

Mr. FITZSIMMONS said that both sides had argued that a committee should be appointed. For a long time the Government had been allowed to go on as they pleased, and it was not unreasonable in the House to inquire how the money had been expended. He was willing to admit that the Government had no occasion for concealing anything; and it was immaterial which of the two motions was carried. A committee would give general satisfaction to the public. He had not heard any reports derogatory to the Government, but if there were any in circulation, the party originating them ought to be defeated in his object to injure the colony. One thing he regretted—that some honorable members had taken the opportunity of abusing wholesale the honorable member for Maryborough. A petition, that day presented to the House, had brought that honorable member's name prominently forward, and he thought it was ungenerous and unfair to attack him in the violent manner in which he had been assailed. The only thing to be inquired into was this: a large sum of money had been borrowed on the credit of the public, and the House would like to let the public know how that money had been expended. The Government could have no objection to that, and he thought that an inquiry ought to be granted.

Mr. PUGH said he had, more than once, as honorable members were aware, expressed his opinion that there should be an inquiry of some kind into the railway operations of the colony, such as was proposed by the honorable member for Maryborough. But he thought the observations of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Herbert, deserved the attention of the House, because, as that honorable member had justly observed, if a committee were appointed they would travel over the same ground as the committee in the Legislative Council—would examine the same witnesses at a

great cost to the country, and the evidence they would obtain would only be a duplicate of that which would be furnished by the other chamber. The honorable member for West Moreton was also quite right, in saying, that if any member of the Legislative Assembly were desirous of eliciting any particular fact, it was quite in his power to do so, by asking some honorable gentleman in the Upper House to put certain questions to the witnesses, and to call for such and such evidence. On the other hand, he had no special objection to the committee now asked for; he thought it would be an excellent committee; but, as the Secretary for Lands and Works was supposed to be, of all persons, the most *au fait* in the matters connected with the inquiry, he thought the honorable member for Maryborough—who was, he felt convinced, actuated by the purest motives—might give way, and allow the name of some other honorable member to be substituted for his, and then there could be no objection to the committee, and the Secretary for Lands and Works would probably withdraw his motion. He (Mr. Pugh) was, however, more inclined to vote for the previous question, because he thought the proposed inquiry would be an unnecessary waste of time and expense to the country, and it did not appear to him that any great object would be gained. If, however, it could be shewn that any concealment would be practised, or any facts not brought out which ought to be made public, he should support the motion of the honorable member for Maryborough; because he considered that, in the present crisis of affairs, the very fullest and freest inquiry into railway affairs, both here and at home, as to the survey and construction of the lines, and everything connected with them, should be instituted; and no stone left unturned to arrive at the truth, whether blame were attached to one person or the other, either for wilful extravagance or anything else. He thought, therefore, the honorable member for Maryborough might either accept the amendment of the honorable member for West Moreton, or be magnanimous enough to retire, and allow the name of some other honorable member to be substituted in place of his own.

Mr. RAFF said he did not intend to vote for the previous question, because he thought that if the House saw the necessity for an inquiry, it would not be satisfied to leave the subject to be dealt with in the other chamber. In his opinion, it would have been better to have appointed a joint committee to conduct the inquiry; but as the matter had been considered in the other chamber, he could see no reason why a committee of the Legislative Assembly should not be appointed. That committee might wait until the committee now sitting in the Legislative Council had brought up

their report, and that report and the evidence attached to it could be laid before them, and would very much abbreviate their labors, as well as assist them in arriving at a correct decision. In his opinion, therefore, the appointment of a committee was desirable; whether it were a committee moved for by the honorable member for Maryborough or the honorable Secretary for Lands and Works did not appear to him of much consequence.

Mr. WALSH said he was sorry he could not assent to the amendment of the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Herbert, for the reasons advanced by the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pugh. He had also another reason for dissenting from it. It was almost the first time, in his experience, that he had ever had the pleasure of hearing accorded to the other House an opportunity of suggesting any experience of their own for the benefit of the Legislative Assembly. Hitherto it had been, if not the policy, at any rate, the fashion, in the Assembly to derogate from any remarks uttered in that House, or any deductions which might have been arrived at there; and he almost feared that, were the suggestions received, and that honorable House were to bring up a report—ever so valuable a report—which was not favorable to a majority in the Legislative Assembly, it would not be received, even with respect. Even were the report from the committee of that House to acquit the Government of all blame, to praise them for the economy they had practised, and the diligence they had shewn, in carrying out the railway works, it would still be jeered at in the Assembly. And he believed, from what he had been able to learn, that the evidence already extracted from the witnesses in the Upper House had been altogether satisfactory to the Government in reference to their railway policy. In explanation of what had been stated by the honorable member for East Moreton, he begged to say he was not aware that the Government intended to propose a motion on this subject until he determined to bring forward one of his own. He believed that he had informed the Government of his intention the day before he gave notice of his motion, and his memory failed him very much if he had not done so an hour or two before. At any rate, he was sure, from the manner of the Colonial Secretary, that the honorable gentleman was well aware of what he (Mr. Walsh) was going to do, for he had put that question to him, or to use the honorable member's own words, he had said, "What mischief are you up to now?" and he (Mr. Walsh) had replied, "I am writing out my resolution for the appointment of a railway committee." The honorable gentleman did not stop for a moment; but, as he went towards the door of the Ministerial room, he said, "You need not do that, for I believe Macalister is going to

move for a committee." That was really the case; and whatever explanation the Colonial Secretary might afford, he felt sure it would be, if an alteration—an alteration of words, and not of facts. The honorable gentleman distinctly understood that he (Mr. Walsh) was about to move for a select committee to inquire into the railways of the colony. He confessed that he had been very sorry to hear the explanation given by the honorable the Premier, in reference to the feelings that actuated him. He had endeavored to persuade the honorable gentleman that he (Mr. Walsh) had no party motives to serve in bringing forward the motion before the House. He had been influenced solely by a sense of public duty;—he had considered it right that the Assembly should take upon themselves the duty which was being performed by the other House, because he did not think it was right to entrust to that branch of the Legislature a duty which devolved properly upon them. He could afford to treat with contempt the accusations which had been brought against him: but could the House afford to treat such proceedings with contempt; or, if a member were maligned and accused publicly of any act as a private individual, admit that, as far as his ability as a member of that House, he was to be degraded? It would take him a very short time to refute the charges which had been brought against him, though it might take years to redeem his character from the unjust aspersions which had been cast upon it. He should not at present offer any further remarks upon that point. He could not accede to the proposal made by the honorable member for North Brisbane, Mr. Pugh, and be magnanimous enough to allow his name to be withdrawn; for he felt satisfied that he had never done anything in his life to render him incompetent to sit upon a committee. He did not think the names mentioned in the motion before the House were those of members who were at all likely to be induced to turn from the right path, or to commit any impropriety, by one member. It was doing the committee an injustice to suppose that they could be influenced to forsake their proper course by any honorable member, and on that score alone he would be no party to insult the committee by allowing his name to be withdrawn. If the House choose to call for a ballot, he should offer no objection, and even if his name were struck out, he should make no complaint. He should feel that he had done his duty to the country, and to all those persons who were connected with the railways of the colony, if he brought about the inquiry which he considered to be necessary at the present time.

Mr. MILES said he felt compelled to vote for the motion of the honorable member for Maryborough. It had been declared on both sides of the House that such an inquiry

as was proposed was necessary. Looking down the notice paper, he found a similar motion to that moved by the honorable member for Maryborough standing in the name of the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works; therefore, its necessity was admitted by the Government. A good deal had been said about rumors being in circulation, and he (Mr. Miles) had, himself, heard very unpleasant reports abroad; although he was not inclined to believe anything like the statements put forth, it was his impression that an inquiry would set matters at rest. It had been urged by the honorable member for West Moreton, Mr. Herbert, that the committee was objectionable, on the score of economy; but that was no ground for coming to a conclusion on this subject. It would have been much better for the colony had that honorable member always been so economical. He was under the impression that the honorable member had done something towards placing the colony in the position it was in. He deplored very much the course that had been adopted by one or two honorable members, in making a violent attack on the honorable member for Maryborough;—he believed that that honorable member had his faults, but he did not believe that dishonesty was one of them. The honorable member was entirely free from that. It was not becoming of honorable members to get up and make attacks on any honorable member's private character; and he was utterly astonished that it had been done by the honorable member for Ipswich, Dr. Challinor. It had been remarked that a similar inquiry was going on in the Legislative Council; but that had nothing to do with the question. As guardians of the public purse, the Assembly were bound to grant the committee asked for. He had not the slightest hesitation in saying that he thought the Government would come out all right. He had met a gentleman in the street that day, and his first remark was that certain charges had been made against the Government, of making free use of the public money. Now, if on that ground alone—that there were such rumors in circulation—the House ought to grant the committee. He trusted that the House would agree to the motion. If the motion of the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works had come first, he should have supported it; but, as he thought the honorable the mover of the present motion was the only member of the committee objected to, he should certainly vote for the motion as it stood, with every confidence that the honorable member for Maryborough would bring up a fair and just report, and one that neither the honorable the Minister for Lands and Works, nor any other honorable member, would object to.

Previous question put—"Shall this question now be put?"

The House divided.

Ayes, 13.	Noes, 15.
Mr. Walsh	Mr. E. Cribb
" Pring	" Herbert
" Sandeman	" Pugh
" Miles	" Mackenzie
" Fitzsimmons	" B. Cribb
" Palmer	" Macalister
" Haly	" Brookes
" Watts	" Wienholt
" Davis	" Stephens
" Royds	" Edmondstone
" Raff	Dr. Challinor
" Harden	Mr. McLean
" Dalrymple	" Coxen
	" Lilley
	" Bell