

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**TUESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 1866**

---

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

## ERRATA.

---

Page 800, column 1, lines 12 and 13, for "included the working expenses of," *read* "diminished the cost  
"of constructing."

Page 898, column 1, line 30, for "Gubingen" *read* "Tubingen."

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Tuesday, 9 October, 1866.*

Decease of Member.—The Railways of the Colony.—  
Message from the Legislative Assembly (Discontinu-  
ance of Public Works).—Question of Practice  
(Messages).

## DECEASE OF MEMBER.

The PRESIDENT: It is with much regret I have now to announce to the Council that the name of the Honorable William Henry Yaldwyn has been struck off the list of its members since the last day of meeting. This melancholy intelligence has not been conveyed to me through any private source; but the intimation through the public press is, unfortunately, too certain to admit of any doubt as to its correctness. The death of one who took his seat with the very earliest meetings of the Council, in 1860, cannot, I am sure, be learnt by this House without feelings of mournful regret. Mr. Yaldwyn died in Sydney, on the 28th September last.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am quite certain that every honorable member of this House will share the regret I now feel, on account of the melancholy announcement made by the honorable the President. Mr. Yaldwyn had long been a member of this House, and had always maintained a character which commanded respect and

esteem. \*I cannot say that I was particularly intimate with him, but I had known him long as a fellow-colonist; and I cheerfully bear my testimony to his worth, as a private gentleman and as a member of this House.

The Hon. W. WOOD: I cannot allow this occasion to pass without expressing my feeling that this House ought to regret very much the loss of our late member. He was appointed one of its first members. He was an old colonist, and while in life did all he could for the benefit of the colony in every possible way. For the first four or five years after Separation he endeavored to attend regularly; but during the last year his failing health prevented his attendance as often as he wished. But I agree with what has fallen from the honorable the Postmaster-General, that we have lost a good member, and the country at large a good colonist.

#### THE RAILWAYS OF THE COLONY.

The Hon. W. WOOD, on rising to move the adoption of the report of the Select Committee on the Railways of the Colony, said: It will be hardly necessary for me to take up the time of the House for any length, as, in bringing forward the next order of the day, I may have to refer to many things which I should otherwise have to refer to in this case. I believe that the committee have tried, to the utmost of their power, to examine every person who they thought could give material evidence bearing on the subject, and that they have exercised a sound discretion in getting the best evidence they could. I can hardly conceive it possible that any honorable gentleman in this House will object to adopt this report, because the evidence speaks for itself. There can be no doubt that the colony, when it was first committed to these railway undertakings, pledged itself to what it considered to be a cheap system. The Parliament which met at that time considered that they were going to get a cheap railway, and that the colony could afford it; but, instead of adopting the wise plan of making a small portion of the line first, they rushed into extensive undertakings; and it is now found to be, instead of a cheap, a very expensive system. I think the House will find that the contracting system of engineering is an expensive one, and that the Minister for Lands and Works himself felt this. He was at the mercy of one man, who did not seem to be in a position to give to the Government disinterested advice upon the various matters of importance which must necessarily arise during the construction of such works; and the Government had no one else to advise them. The consequence is, the colony is plunged into an enormous debt. If all the lines projected are to be carried out, as originally proposed, the debt will be something terrible

to contemplate, when they are all completed. There can be no doubt, and I think the House will come to the conclusion, that every railway that can be stopped ought to be stopped at once; and that some scheme should be devised by which the Minister of the day should obtain the assistance of some disinterested and competent professional adviser. It is impossible for any one who is not a professional man to deal with professional men in a proper way. It will be seen, by reference to the evidence accompanying the report, that the Southern and Western Railway, which was to cost £5,000 per mile, has got up to £8,000, and in some instances to £10,000, and more, per mile. It is doubtful whether the railway, which was to have been so cheaply constructed, will not cost quite as much as the single broad gauge line in other colonies. The committee in this report call the attention of the House to the large amount of expenditure which has been incurred, some of which was not authorised by Parliament. We are at a loss to find out whether the bridge over the Bremer at Ipswich was authorised by Parliament. With respect to the deviation of nine miles, I find it impossible to ascertain whether it was authorised or not. Honorable members will recollect the enormous load of calico that was sent down to this House—I cannot say whether this deviation was marked on that plan or not. The stations that have been erected at Ipswich and elsewhere are another source of enormous expense, which might have been avoided. The committee therefore felt it necessary to put another clause in the report recommending that the stations to be erected hereafter should not be so expensive, and that they should be made of colonial materials, and made in the colony. There is one circumstance alluded to in the report to which the committee find it necessary to call the attention of the House, and that is to the fact that £60,000 might have been saved, if the contract of Messrs. Peto, Brassey, and Betts, had not been accepted. When Mr. Fitzgibbon was asked whether he had advised the Government on that point, he said it was not his duty to do so, and he did not do so; but when the Minister for Lands and Works was examined, he said that the Board of Works, of which Mr. Fitzgibbon was a member, recommended the Government to accept the offer of Messrs. Peto, Brassey, and Betts. A report was made on the subject. This report cannot be found in any department of the public service. I have striven for the last two months to find it, but cannot discover it anywhere. It is certainly a very remarkable circumstance that a document of the Board of Works, affecting the expenditure of half a million, cannot be found in any department of the public service. We are told by the Minister for Lands and Works that on that occasion the board consisted of Mr. Fitzgibbon and the Engineer for Roads. Yet that same

gentleman, who thought it his duty not to advise the Government on the subject of railway contracts, was a member of the very board which recommended the Government to accept an offer so largely in excess of his own estimate and the lowest tender. He was considered the best man to know all about it, and the other member of the board signed the report, as a matter of course. The northern railway is so short that it is perfectly useless. The north never asked for it. It was only a sop thrown out to them; and it is certainly an anomalous state of things that the expenses in the north are as great as in the south. I think they are both excessive, and the sooner they are stopped the better. The committee do not wish to dictate to the Government what portion of the railway works should be stopped, and what portion proceeded with; but they trust that the greatest discretion will be exercised by the Government, in stopping the work at different places, so that it may be done without loss, and that the compensation to be paid to the contractors shall be such as will not impoverish the colony. I will not touch upon the Warwick line, although that is one of the lines the committee had in view at the time that paragraph was penned. They wish to stop all lines that can be stopped without additional expenditure to the colony. It is useless, now, for the committee to express their regret at the confidence that was placed in the Engineer-in-Chief, because the mischief is done, and it is all over; but there is one recommendation towards the end of the report, which I think the House will consider very desirable—that the lines should be worked as economically as possible, and that the tariff should be revised. At present the carriers are competing advantageously with the railway, and if something be not done, they will continue to do so throughout the whole of the wool season. There is one matter not referred to in the report, to which I wish to call the attention of the House. According to the Railway Act, the Commissioner for Railways is bound to carry out its provisions. I think it is a very bad principle to have an under secretary appointed to the office of Commissioner for Railways, because, as under secretary, he is subordinate to his superior, and cannot be as independent of the Minister of the day as it is desirable he should be. He ought to be employed in the same manner as the Commissioner for Crown Lands was, to carry out the Land Act. The only other matter to which I think it necessary to call the attention of the House is that which relates to the purchase of the land required for railway purposes. There was a great outcry raised on this subject, and it was thought that there was a great deal of land-jobbing carried on. I think the committee have come to the right conclusion, that there was nothing of that sort—that it was a mistake on the part of the public—but they have also come to the

conclusion that, if there had been a little greater expedition on the part of the Government in resuming the lands, and in purchasing them from the people at once, a great deal of money might have been saved. Nearly all the land had been sold years before, and there was little of it left belonging to the Crown. If the line be surveyed, and the land be not taken up immediately, the people sell the land over and over again, and the colony has eventually to pay a greatly enhanced price for it. I do not think there is any necessity for me to say anything more with regard to this report. I have only to apologize to the House for the delay which has taken place in regard to it; but the long adjournment made it difficult to get members together. I have to report to the House, that the evidence of one of the witnesses was taken without a quorum; a greater number could not be got together, and as the gentleman was going away from the colony, it was necessary to take his evidence at once, or lose it altogether. I now move that the report of the Committee on the Railways of the Colony be adopted.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am not going to oppose the adoption of this report, which, I think, upon the whole, does great credit to the members of the committee, who certainly have evinced a great deal of assiduity in the discharge of their very onerous duty; and the conclusions they have drawn, though I don't agree with the whole of them, are such as persons may arrive at without being liable to the accusation of being influenced by party spirit. My honorable friend, in moving the adoption of the report, went into a great many topics. His first assertion was, that Mr. Fitzgibbon had estimated the cost of the railway at only £5,000 a mile; but, if the honorable member will refer to Mr. Fitzgibbon's first report, he will find that the cheapest line, that to Dalby, was estimated at £5,500 per mile; and the next in price, the Warwick line, was £5,900. The line from Toowoomba to Ipswich was estimated within a very few pounds of £9,000 a mile. Of course, I am perfectly aware that my honorable friend has made the statement inadvertently; but I think it right to correct it. The next point he refers to, is the fact that the carriers are competing with the railway. I am sorry to say that it is the case; but I will explain to the House that it is impossible to prevent their competing with the railway in the present unfinished state of the line. There are thirteen miles still unfinished between Ipswich and Toowoomba, and for this distance the carriers charge more than the railway charges for the whole of the remaining distance. The price of carriage to Helidon is something like three pounds ten shillings per ton; and if you add to that two pounds per ton for the railway charge, which was the charge until the tariff was reduced within the last few days, it will give five pounds ten shillings per ton for the carriage

for sixty-five miles. It may be expedient for the railway to carry at a loss, for a time, in order to drive the carriers off the road, and some such policy is, I believe, intended; but the carriers still have the power to charge what they like for the thirteen miles, so long as the line remains unfinished. I estimate the cost of the line between Toowomba and Ipswich at very nearly nine thousand pounds per mile.

The Hon. W. Wood: The estimate was seven thousand pounds.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is the average for the whole of the lines. With regard to the Commissioner for Railways, there is a good deal in what my honorable friend has said; but Parliament is unwilling to vote large salaries, and it was with a view to economy that the commissionership of railways was attached to the office of Under Secretary for Lands and Works; but when money becomes plentiful, I have no doubt the House will be ready to vote a salary for that office as a separate office. Although there is a great deal of truth in what my honorable friend has alleged, as to the loss of time in purchasing the land after the surveys have been made, yet that of itself is not the sole cause of the evil of which he complains. The evil is attributable in part to the system that has been adopted for ascertaining the value of land. I think it is extremely injudicious that the land should be valued by persons in the neighborhood, amongst whom there would exist a sort of fellow-feeling for the keeping up of the price of land. An instance of this is referred to in the evidence of the late Secretary for Lands and Works, in which a certain portion of land was purchased from a widow near Ipswich for £500, but as the interests of minors were concerned, it was found necessary to make use of the machinery of the Railway Bill in order to facilitate the purchase of the land, and £600 was given for it. I now come to the objections which I have to urge to the railway report. To the first four clauses of that report, there is no objection. The next clause is to the effect:—

“Your committee, while admitting that there is reason to believe in the success of the narrow guage system, deeply regret that fuller information was not sought for by the Government of the day from first-class engineers, previous to committing the colony to an expense which has eventuated in such disastrous financial consequences; and they also feel that the wisest course would have been to have tried the experiment on a small scale instead of commencing so many large works simultaneously.”

The great feature of the narrow guage system is the saving of expense, and although we may not have got it carried out quite as cheaply as we might have at first supposed, yet the evidence of a most experienced person distinctly shews, that if we had recourse to the broad guage the expense would have been three times as great. The difficulties of

construction would have been increased, and the expense would have been increased in the same ratio. I would refer the House to the evidence of Mr. Doyne, given in page 66 of the evidence accompanying the report, questions 48 and 49:—

“I wish to know whether you think we have had as much for our money as we ought to have had. You commended the line at that dinner, in consideration of its economy. If you had known it would have cost £13,000 a mile instead of £8,000, would you still have recommended it? I am speaking solely of comparative expenditure. I am not in a position to say whether every pound has been well spent. But, whatever the line has cost, it would have cost two or three times as much with a broader guage.

“Then, if the narrow guage has cost this large sum, a broader guage would have cost two or three times as much? Yes.”

I may also refer to the evidence of Mr. Higinbotham, page 63, questions 64 and 65:—

“Can you give the committee any idea, Mr. Higinbotham, of what would be the cost of constructing a line of four and a half feet guage over the same country—can you give an approximate guess? I could not attempt to give an opinion without a very careful survey. The country which has to be dealt with in crossing the Little Liverpool Range and the Main Range is undoubtedly a most difficult one. The object in adopting the narrow guage—of course, I need not mention to the committee—was to make use of sharper curves than would otherwise be possible.

“The primary object was economy? Yes; that would result from the use of the narrow guage, as by having sharper curves, heavy embankments and cuttings would be avoided, and the cost of construction lessened.”

Now, I think that is a triumphant answer to the inference which is attempted to be drawn by paragraph five of the report, and it is from a most unexceptionable witness. Mr. Higinbotham, in all his evidence, expresses himself most favorably of the narrow guage.

The Hon. W. Wood: Look at question 58 of Mr. Higinbotham's evidence.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes; it is as follows:—

“But do you think the additional expense of £100,000 is compensated by that advantage? To answer that question would require a much more careful consideration than I have been able to give to the subject. I may, perhaps, say that, if the question of railways had to be considered *de novo*, I should advise the Government to make the most careful and thorough survey of the whole of the Little Liverpool and the Main Ranges, with the view of determining whether it might not be desirable to adopt much steeper gradients than have been adopted, and, with them, to have less sharp curves and a wider guage. I think it is unfortunate that that course was not adopted in the first instance. As an engineer, I should have preferred steeper gradients and a wider guage than you have at present on the line. I am not prepared to say that they should have been adopted, but I think it is a pity the question was not looked into more carefully at first.”

I do not think that has anything to do with the question of economy. I shall come to the question of working expenses by-and-by, but Mr. Higinbotham admits that, under these circumstances, the narrow guage is a saving of expense. So, also, does Mr. Doyne. In his letter, which will be found in page 69 of the evidence, he says :—

“It is not correct to say that I, with other engineers, consider that the three feet six inches guage is sufficient for Queensland. There the special circumstances of the case left no choice between what has been adopted, or no railway system at all; but there are few, if any, engineers who contend that that guage should be adopted, when circumstances are favorable to the construction of broader guages.”

But he says that the circumstances are not favorable here to the construction of broader guages, and that the narrow guage is a saving of expense. This paragraph of the report contains a sort of censure upon the Government for not having sought fuller information on the subject; but I consider that, as the success of the narrow guage is admitted in the report, the Government have acted rightly in adopting that system, no matter by what process they arrived at that result. The next paragraph refers to the mistake which it is alleged was committed in allowing the surveying and engineering superintendence to be contracted for, instead of being conducted by a department. The first section of the sixth paragraph refers to a point on which my honorable friend dwelt at considerable length in his speech—the manner in which Mr. Fitzgibbon was paid. Perhaps my honorable friend may object to my quoting the evidence of Mr. Fitzgibbon, but I think he is an eligible witness, his evidence having been taken in this case. I beg to refer the House to page 16, question 64 :—

“That is, the contract that has been entered into now? No; that sum includes everything, rolling stock, engineering, superintendence, and all cost. You will find that agreement, with the amount, in the Loan Bill passed the other night; whereas you will find that the £10,000 per mile, in New South Wales, is only for making the lines up to formation level; it does not include laying the permanent way. This is the point to which I would call the attention of the House. In New South Wales the permanent way costs about £3,000, and the engineering superintendence about £1,350 per mile, while in Victoria the engineering superintendence costs £1,500 per mile, according to the printed report of the Commissioner for Railways for 1864. All these items have to be added to the contracts you speak of, besides the price of the land and the rolling stock.”

Now, I submit that, as this evidence was given on the 8th June, if there was any reason to doubt the trustworthiness of Mr. Fitzgibbon's statement, it was open for the committee to have procured the documents and to have printed them in the appendix.

The Hon. W. Wood: We did procure them, and ordered them to be printed in the appendix, but the Colonial Secretary would not allow them to be printed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Mr. Fitzgibbon's contract for engineering, superintendence, surveys, and all, is about £400 per mile; but in Victoria these expenses amount to £1,500 per mile; here, then, is a saving of something like £1,100 per mile for superintendence alone. I admit there is an apparent inconsistency in paying an engineer for his services by the mile, instead of by the day. If the Government have acted injudiciously in this matter, they have done so in the pursuit of economy; for it is clear, that by this arrangement they have put about £1,000 per mile to the credit of the colony. The third section of the paragraph gives a reason which has more weight with me than any other part of the paragraph. It says—

“Because, should it at any time during the progress of the works be considered desirable to discontinue them, either partially or wholly, Mr. Fitzgibbon will be able to claim compensation as damages for breach of contract.”

I am not aware that any objection can be made to the soundness of that, and, therefore, I shall not make any comment upon it. I will now call the attention of honorable members to the eighth section of the report :—

“As items in the large expenditure may be specially pointed out,—the heavy cost of the surveys and engineering superintendence ;—” I do not see that that is at all borne out by the evidence, while we do see that there is a clear saving, in comparison with other colonies, of £1,000, per mile.

“the unnecessary bridge over the Bremer, which was not authorised by Parliament ;—”

This statement is not borne out by the fact, for I remember that in the very first session of the Parliament of Queensland, the Legislative Assembly, of which I was then a member, passed a vote of £3,500 for a bridge over the Bremer. That vote was not given or pretended to be given as sufficient for the completion of such a work. It was stated, at the time, that the vote would require to be supplemented on a future occasion. The matter was not mooted again for a session or two; but when the Government asked for a Bill for the railway, I heard it most distinctly stated that two bridges were required. That is the bridge for which the £3,500 had been voted by the Assembly, to be erected at some future time, and the bridge which was necessary for the railway. These two have been made into one. Any Government is liable to have a certain amount of jobbery forced upon them. I have no hesitation in saying that the carrying of the railway over the Bremer, at such a considerable expense, was wholly unnecessary; but the constituencies of Ipswich and neighborhood



are more immediately answerable for this. I think that no Government could have held their place if they had not condescended to meet the requirements of those constituencies. The next portion of this paragraph to which I shall advert is the following:—

"and the large additional sum required for the extra nine miles on the Main Range, a deviation from the original plan, officially never sanctioned by Parliament,—the advantages of which, as to gradients, do not counterbalance the disadvantages of increased expense, whilst even the adoption of a plan like that proposed for Mon Cenis might have combined a steeper gradient with a shorter distance of line to construct."

The Hon. W. WOOD: The word "officially" is a misprint, it should be "apparently."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is a mistake which can be rectified. There never was an original plan, except that plan which was sketched on the gigantic roll of calico which the honorable member has adverted to, and which was brought before this House. That it was in that plan, I am certain. It was marked out in the plan from which Messrs. Peto, Brassey, and Co. undertook their contract.

The Hon W. WOOD: May I ask you to look at the letter:—

"APPENDIX F.

"With reference to that portion of your letter relating to the extension to Toowoomba, I am reluctantly compelled to state that I was misinformed as to the nature of the work. In the first place, the total length from Bigge's Camp to Toowoomba is now eight miles twelve chains longer than was originally represented. In the second, the heavy works over the Range were not to exceed eighteen miles; now the distance cannot be considered less than thirty-two and a half miles, in addition to which the works are greatly increased throughout the entire length."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am not in a position to state whether there have been any more alterations, but Mr. Wilcox contracted for the construction of so many miles of railway, and there has been no alteration in the plan from that which Mr. Fitzgibbon made when he rode over the country for the first time, and surveyed it with his eye; and when he said he could make a railway there for a certain sum per mile. I think that this deviation of nine miles has been sanctioned by the vote of the House.

The Hon. W. WOOD: Never; but Mr. Wilcox was allowed to alter his offer.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That offer was made upon Mr. Fitzgibbon's report. I dare say it was made, and that the proposed plan was withdrawn, and another substituted for it, in which Mr. Wilcox offered to construct the line at so much per mile. The nine miles deviation received impliedly the consent of Parliament when the plans and books of reference which were laid upon the table of the House were approved. Those were the plans which Messrs. Peto, Brassey, and Co. worked upon when they made their amended

offer. The first was a casual offer, that they could take the work at so much per mile. I will trouble the House to turn to page 65 in the report, and refer to questions 31 and 32:—

"Mr. Fitzgibbon, in his original report, states that a gradient of one in fifty would be sufficient to accomplish everything that was required; and then, afterwards, he said he could get a gradient of one in seventy, and that his professional ability as an engineer, would be depreciated if he did not make the alteration. Do you think he was justified in the course he pursued? I have endeavored to explain that a gradient of one in fifty has been used wherever the curves were large. I know that Mr. Fitzgibbon's intention, at first, was to use an average gradient of one in fifty; but, I think he was right in making the alteration. He consulted me, and I strongly advised him to make it. I may say, that I have committed myself, professionally, in advising him to do so.

"Do you think we could have done with a gradient of one in fifty, and without the additional nine miles? I must answer that generally. It is a matter of close estimation. The first consideration in the calculation is that there is an additional interest of £6,000 per annum involved by the change. The question then is, will this £6,000 per annum, or more than that sum, be saved in the working of the line by these alterations? It is a mere question of calculation, which I am not in a position to answer without going more closely into it. That is the basis of the calculation."

But, Mr. Doyle says that he strongly advised Mr. Fitzgibbon to do so. I would also trouble the House to look through questions 12 to 15, in Mr. Doyle's evidence:—

"Do you imagine that the alteration, in lessening the gradient, and increasing the length of the line nine miles, has compensated for the additional expenses? I think it has; it was, to a certain extent, under my advice, that Mr. Fitzgibbon adopted it—at least, I may say that I strongly advised him to do so. Perhaps I had better explain that it is in the working expenses the saving will be so great. An easier gradient makes a great saving in the working expenses, and consequently reduces the annual expenditure required for carrying on the traffic, and that saving in the annual expenditure may, of course, be set off as a saving against the interest on capital.

"Do you think, if even a steeper gradient had been used, and a broader gauge up the Main Range, a greater success would have been arrived at? I consider that, on the whole, a broader gauge with steeper gradients would not have been applicable to the country; inasmuch as a broad gauge necessarily involves large curves, which, of course, increase the cost of the works. With a sharper ruling gradient, the length of the line would have been shortened; but the cost per mile would not have been decreased.

"Then, if he had a less number of miles, the cost of the line would have been proportionately less? Yes; but the working expenses would have been increased proportionately.

"Do you think any method could have been adopted to let down the trains by means of a rope, from section to section? Doubtless, it



could be managed; but such a system is opposed to every engineering principle of the present day. It has been found a complete failure."

That last question does not refer exactly to the point I am touching upon, but I have heard the question frequently referred to by the late Colonial Secretary, Mr. Herbert, that it would have been much cheaper to have run the trains on level ground, and to have brought them up the gradients by means of stationery engines and chains. That system would have included the working expenses of the line, but Mr. Doyne entirely condemns it. He was further asked, question 16:—

"But would it not be cheaper? It might be made cheaper, but it would be attended with many dangers and risks. That system has been entirely abandoned."

The objections, which I have hitherto made bear upon Mr. Fitzgibbon's moral culpability in recommending those changes to the Government, and the moral culpability of the Government in accepting those changes, which, it has been said, would entail an extra cost of £100,000; but, if we read Mr. Doyne's evidence, we shall see that it will effect a considerable saving as the traffic goes on, by reducing the ruling gradient. By having the ruling gradient 1 in 75, instead of 1 in 50, a great saving is effected, not only in the wear and tear of the engines and rolling stock, but in the working expenses of the line. It is a great advantage to keep the gradients as low as possible. By making the gradient 1 in 75 you can work that portion of the line twenty-five per cent. cheaper than if the gradient were 1 in 50. I, therefore, think that these clauses of the report are based upon fallacies; and, although I do not mean to vote against the report, I still think it right to record my dissent from those fallacies. As to the ninth paragraph of the report, it says:—

"With regard to the northern railway, the original estimates do not at present appear to have been exceeded, but the cost of the department, which appears excessive, is about the same per mile as the cost per contract in the south; while the line itself, from its shortness, is, in the opinion of the committee, perfectly useless, and a great waste of money."

Now, I am not aware that there is a single tittle of evidence adduced which tends to prove that the expense of this department is excessive. Honorable gentlemen may say that they think it is excessive, and that an engineer ought to work at five shillings a day, but I think, if they go into the engineering market, they will find no one disposed to accept those terms. I will trouble the House to turn to page 34 of the report, and to questions 16 to 18 of the evidence given by Mr. Plews:—

"Your department, Mr. Plews, I believe, is conducted in this way—you are paid a salary, and all the expenses of your department are paid by the Government? Yes.

"Can you give the House any idea as to the cost per mile which the expense of your depart-

ment amounts to, for survey and engineering superintendence? The cost of my department, including survey, averages something like £395 per mile.

"Including everything? Including everything; it will average that on the opening of the line, in May, 1867. Of course, every month that the construction of the line is extended, will increase that amount."

I do not think that bears out the assertion made in the report, that the expenditure on the northern line appears to be excessive, because it is clearly shewn that the expenses per mile are less than they are in Victoria. With respect to the general strictures on the northern railway, I must say that I am very much inclined to coincide with them; but I can only give the same reason for that expenditure having been incurred as I have given in the case of the Bremer bridge and the Ipswich station. There is, no doubt, a great deal in what my honorable friend has said, that this railway was given as a sop to the north; but so long as we have parliamentary government, there must be a certain amount of jobbery tolerated. I must now request honorable gentlemen to turn to page 55 of the report; but I would first remark, in reference to the tenth paragraph of the committee's report, that I think it would be invidious to single out any gentleman who had only adopted the course which had been adopted by other persons. I allude to Mr. Bernays. I think it is invidious that he should be singled out, and that he alone should be mentioned by name. Now, there is nothing in his evidence to bear it out.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: Not in his evidence; but look at Mr. Roche's evidence.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Mr. Roche is a party interested in the matter. I do not mean to reflect upon his evidence; but, perhaps, he thought he would like it to have been his land. In page 55, question 6, it is stated:—

"Then, you did not purchase the land before the plans were laid before Parliament? No, not for three months afterwards. The plans, if I recollect rightly, were laid before Parliament on the 10th of April—I cannot be positive as to the exact date—and my purchase was not made until the 12th July following; at any rate, at least two months elapsed before I made the purchase."

And, in question 10,—

"Have you any objection to state what you gave per acre for that land? Well, I have no objection, because I have nothing whatever to conceal; but I do so, simply for that reason; otherwise I submit that it is hardly a fair question to put. However, I have no possible objection to state that I gave an average price of £35 an acre."

I by no means say that his valuation was not too high, I repeat, what I before asserted, that the system adopted for the valuation of lands led to all sorts of irregularities; but it is too much to expect that a man, when the Government valuator tells him that a certain

portion of his land is worth £200 an acre, will give it to the Government at half that price; particularly if he be a man that has his way to make in the world. I can understand that a man of large means, who has a railway coming through his property, might dispose of such portion of his land as might be required, at a great deal below its value; but this cannot be expected of a civil servant of the Government.

The Hon. W. WOOD: But this was only resuming the land.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I think there is no reason for singling out Mr. Bernays, and making him

"To point a moral and adorn a tale;"

and, I think, a man cannot give a better proof of his sincerity, than when he is willing to waive all his right—to allow the severance of his property, and to take in return acre for acre of Government land in a similar situation. If a man bought four or five acres of land, and sold the whole of it at a very high increase, it would be a different thing; but, in this case, Mr. Bernays purchased a portion of land, for which he paid a price considerably in advance of the price paid to the Government; and that shews he must have had some faith in the value of the land in that locality. The twelfth paragraph of the report says:—

"Your committee trust that the greatest discretion will be exercised by the Government of the day, with regard to all railway works in process of construction, and that wherever it can be shewn that the cost of compensation to the contractor, and that caused by the loss of the interest on money already spent, and the damage likely to occur to works left in an unfinished state, does not exceed the interest which would accrue on the loans raised to finish the works, those works will at once be stopped."

I do not think it proper, just now, to make any remarks upon this paragraph; which, upon the whole, contains a considerable amount of common-sense, because I shall have an opportunity of speaking at considerable length upon the subject when the question next on the paper comes before the House. The next paragraph, No. 13, is as follows:—

"The committee are of opinion that the colony has been much misled by Mr. Fitzgibbon, in his estimate of the cost of stations, and trust that, for the future, much greater care will be exercised in framing such estimates, and also in acting upon them. Your committee also recommend that, in future, all railway stations shall be constructed in the colony, and, as far as practicable, of colonial materials."

I would now wish the House to turn to the evidence of Mr. Higinbotham, pages 61 and 62, and questions 46 and 47:—

"With regard to the stations in Victoria, of what material are they generally made? Since I have had charge of the lines, they have been constructed entirely of stone or brick. Previous to that, several of the stations were made of corrugated iron and some of wood. I had a strong

opinion that both those materials were very objectionable, and we abandoned the use of them. I should mention that my predecessor had received instructions to exercise the greatest economy in constructing the stations. I have always held the opinion, that stations should be constructed in the most serviceable manner, in the first instance; and I ventured to disregard the instructions given to him, but not to me.

"You think that stations, built substantially in the first place, are cheaper in the long run? Yes; several of the stations, supposed to be economically constructed, are not fit to live in. I think it should be a principle with the Government to house their officers well, and give them complete accommodation."

Upon this point Mr. Higinbotham may be wrong; but I only call the attention of the House to his evidence to shew that this is the opinion which he entertains, and upon which something may be said on the other side. At the same time, it is impossible for me to say whether the expense of stations is greater or less than is necessary or absolutely unavoidable. It is not easy for an outsider like myself to state the exact point at which economy and durability may be combined with the greatest advantage. Mr. Fitzgibbon, in his evidence, distinctly states that he called for tenders for the erection of a brick station at Ipswich, and, as far as I recollect, he states that the estimate sent in by the architect was considerably in excess of the expense which had been incurred in the erection of the iron station in that town, which is the one chiefly pointed out by my honorable friend opposite. Of course, it is extremely desirable, as the committee recommend, that the greatest economy should be exercised in the department of the Commissioner for Railways. With respect to the revision of the tariff of railway charges, a reduction has taken place to the lowest point at which it can be done; but I contend, from long experience in the colony, that two pounds a ton cannot be considered an extravagant rate. This is far cheaper than wool has ever been carried before in any part of the colony that I am acquainted with. I am an employer of the railway myself, and it is to my interest to keep the charge as low as possible; and, looking at the question from that point of view, I am not disposed to quarrel with the recommendation of the report. I have noticed those points in which it appeared to me the report of the committee was not borne out by the evidence. Making allowance for differences of opinion, I think that the report is eminently a fair one; and great credit is due to the gentlemen who have had the onerous task of compiling it.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: I will not take up the time of the House at any length in endeavoring to answer some of the objections which have been advanced by the honorable the Postmaster-General to the different clauses of the report. As a member of the committee, I may say that we were very careful before we put any clause into

the report to see that it was borne out by the evidence. And the more I look at the evidence, the more I am satisfied that we did not go beyond what it justified; in fact, on some points we might have gone further. The honorable the Postmaster-General seems to think that Mr. Bernays has been unduly reflected upon; but I think that, in reading the tenth clause of the report, the honorable gentleman has put a wrong construction upon it. The reflection there is not upon Mr. Bernays, but upon the Government; because, if they had exercised proper precaution, they would have been able to resume the lands at less cost than they have done. The committee wish to state that there was no accusation of unfair dealing. It is quite clear, from Mr. Bernays' own evidence, that if the Government had exercised the same promptitude which Mr. Bernays did, instead of paying Mr. Bernays £200 an acre, they could have got the land at what it cost him, which was £35 an acre. The honorable gentleman seems to imagine that it was improper to refer pointedly to the case of Mr. Bernays; but I cannot agree with him. Does he mean to say that the question should have been put by the committee, as referring to Mr. So-and-so, in order that the name of Mr. Bernays might not be mentioned? Whether Mr. Bernays or Mr. Bernays' friends were annoyed at it or not, is not a matter for consideration. It was the duty of the committee to investigate the matter, and to report upon it. They found that Mr. Bernays obtained from the Government £200 an acre for land which cost him only £35 an acre.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That was for the whole of it.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: Mr. Bernays gave £400 for the whole of it; and the Government gave £1,000 for five acres of it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I think, if my honorable friend will allow me to interrupt him, I may explain—that for one lot, Mr. Bernays may have given £400; but there was another lot, and that a considerable one, for which he gave £50 an acre.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: Mr. Bernays states in his evidence:—

“I gave an average price of £35 an acre.

“For the two portions of land together? Yes, that was about the average.”

Then, as to the mode of payment to Mr. Fitzgibbon, I certainly am surprised to hear the honorable gentleman in any way defend that. He certainly exercised only due caution in saying that he only gave expression to his own opinion. I doubt whether he has consulted his colleagues on that particular point. I do not think he has. I do not think he will find any member of the existing Government willing to continue the present mode of payment to Mr. Fitzgibbon.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I did not say anything about continuing.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: There is another objectionable feature in this mode of payment. Does the honorable gentleman think that the system is likely to induce the engineer to make the line as short as possible? I do not give Mr. Fitzgibbon, who is not a permanent resident of this colony, credit for so much patriotism. I think we ought to delay the acceptance of this report until the question, of which Mr. Wood has given notice for to-morrow, is answered—as to what amount has been paid to Mr. Fitzgibbon. I think, when that question is answered, the honorable the Postmaster-General will not be so ready to defend that mode of payment. I think it is extremely objectionable. Then, with regard to the alteration in the gradients—I am not finding fault that the gradient has been altered from 1 in 50 to 1 in 75. I think that is beneficial to the colony; but I ask, why was it not found out at first?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: It was found out at first.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: I beg to contradict the honorable gentleman, flatly. Mr. Fitzgibbon said, in his first report, that a gradient of 1 in 50 would be sufficient; but he afterwards altered the gradient to 1 in 75, thereby lengthening the line. The honorable gentleman, in defending the expenditure on the bridge over the Bremer, omitted to mention that, while the original vote for the bridge was £3,500, the sum expended had exceeded £30,000. It was not a pleasant reflection for a Minister to have to make, that such wholesale jobbery was necessary; and that this Government, the head of whom was then Minister for Lands and Works, rather than run any chance of losing his seat, consented to such gross jobbery as this—to such a large outlay of public money without any authority from Parliament. The honorable gentleman says, that we must not expect to get on without jobbery in a Government of this sort; but it is clearly our duty to do all we can to check such wholesale jobbery as this. With regard to the thirteenth clause of the report, I think that is fully borne out by the evidence of Mr. Higinbotham. He advised that the stations should be built of brick or stone, as the stations were in Victoria. And even if they do cost more than the iron stations, the whole of the materials and the labor are colonial, and the colony gets the benefit of the whole of the expense. There is also the saving of the commission of Messrs. Fox, Henderson, and Co., and that little commission upon commission, the meaning of which we have not been able to arrive at.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: I shall not detain the House very long, as we have had a surfeit of railway debates, but there are one or two remarks of the Postmaster-General which I cannot allow to pass without making some comment upon. If we are to be guided in our estimate of the success of the railway by the estimate of the Postmaster-General,

it would appear that the colony had not been misled by Mr. Fitzgibbon, and that the money voted by Parliament for the construction of the railways had been well and judiciously spent, and that the railways have been very inexpensively made. I utterly disagree with him. I think we have been grossly deceived by Mr. Fitzgibbon, and the report of the committee supports that view. Indeed, I thought the report was not sufficiently strong to bear out the evidence we had gone to the expense of obtaining on this subject. The Postmaster-General wishes to make it appear that, so far as the engineering supervision was concerned, the arrangement made by the Government with Mr. Fitzgibbon was a very judicious one, and one that had led to economy. I think, however, if we refer to the evidence taken by the committee, the case will be found to be quite the reverse. In order to ascertain what the actual cost of the engineering supervision was, we must first ascertain what it cost Mr. Fitzgibbon, and what staff he employed for the purpose. Now, we find by the evidence of Mr. Edwards, that the only extra staff Mr. Fitzgibbon had consisted of two or three clerks in his office. I will quote a part of the evidence of Mr. Edwards, to shew the extra expense to which Mr. Fitzgibbon was put for the engineering supervision of the line between Toowoomba and Dalby, commencing with question 4:—

"Can you inform the committee what engineering supervision there is at present, and has been since the works were commenced, and the names of the persons employed attached to Mr. Fitzgibbon's staff? Mr. Day was engaged at one time for a period of three months, and then he was superseded by Mr. Tillet, the present resident engineer.

"What other staff has Mr. Fitzgibbon employed on that line? One inspector, Mr. Thompson.

"Can you give the committee any idea of the salaries paid to these persons? That I cannot say.

"But, as you are an engineer, you can give some idea. What are such officers usually paid? I should say the resident engineer would get about £500 a year, and the inspector about £150 or £200.

"And, of course, they provide themselves with rations? They provide themselves.

"You have two years to complete the line? Yes; or two years and a half, I think.

"Then, according to that, the engineering superintendence of the line from Toowoomba to Dalby would cost about £1,300? Yes."

Mr. Fitzgibbon gets from the Government for that service £15,160; and, therefore, I certainly cannot agree with the Postmaster-General that that is a very judicious arrangement. I think, also, that Mr. Willcox's evidence will shew that the Postmaster-General has formed a very erroneous estimate as to the cost of the work. Mr. Willcox's

evidence, commencing with question 7, is as follows:—

"Did you erect the bridge over the Bremer? Yes.

"I believe that was the commencement of the line, as far as your contract went? Our first contract commenced at a point some twenty chains from the present station.

"Mr. Fitzgibbon was the engineer representing the Government, was he not? Yes.

"Did he give his personal supervision to the works? Yes.

"What other engineers had he on that line during its construction? Mr. Hart was the resident engineer.

"What others were there? There were two or three inspectors.

"Were there any other assistant engineers. I think not.

"Are you certain as to the number of inspectors? There were three, I believe.

"Of course you are in a position, from your long experience, and the number of railways you have constructed in the colonies, to give the committee some idea of what remuneration persons of Mr. Hart's ability and engineering knowledge, professional men of his standing, receive? A person acting as resident engineer, as Mr. Hart did, would receive, I should think, from £400 to £500 a year.

"And what do the inspectors receive? About twelve or thirteen shillings a day."

I maintain that, so far from the money being judiciously spent, there has been, according to the lowest computation, a clear loss to the colony of about £100,000, which have been wasted on our railways. If you refer to the report of Mr. Fitzgibbon, you will find that he estimated the cost of the line to go to North Ipswich only. It appears that the formation of the bridge, the crossing of the Bremer, and the carrying of the line into South Ipswich, was an afterthought, and that those works were done without Parliamentary or Executive authority. The bridge across the Bremer and the carrying of the railway over it, cost upwards of £50,000. With regard to the iron stations, Mr. Macalister in his evidence states that no more iron stations are to be ordered, and that all the indents sent home had been countermanded; but at the time that statement was made, the indents had been sent home twelve months, and we find that there is a station coming out for Toowoomba, the indent of which will cost £12,000. I differ from the Postmaster-General as to the judicious expenditure of the public money in the construction of the railways of the colony.

The Hon. W. WOOD: I am not going to take up the time of the House, in replying to the observations of the honorable the Postmaster-General. I can only say that I was as guarded as it was possible to be in bringing up the report, because people might think, as I had always been opposed to the railways, I might be prejudiced; but I really think the report is not half so strong as it might have been, considering the character

of the evidence which was given before the committee. It is quite clear that an immense amount of jobbery might have been exposed; but the committee were merciful. The motion was then agreed to.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY (DISCONTINUANCE OF PUBLIC WORKS).

The Hon. W. Wood said: The resolutions which have come down from the Legislative Assembly are three-fold. The first, all honorable members will agree with. It is merely a formal expression of opinion that the financial position of the colony requires a reconsideration of the expenditure of public money. The second resolution goes still further, and takes one particular item of expenditure, the Warwick railway; and that is one which may not have the support of the honorable gentleman who represents the Government, though I hope it will have the support of the House. The third resolution has reference to the advisability of stopping any further expenditure in the works for improving the navigation of the river between Brisbane and Ipswich—the little ditch, as some have called it. It can hardly be necessary for me to say much with regard to the first of these resolutions; and I suppose it will be desirable to put them *seriatim*. It must be obvious to all honorable members, that the colony is in a very bad position, and that we must, therefore, economise as much as possible. I will now proceed to consider the second resolution; and the reason why I wished to have the railway report adopted previous to taking this resolution into consideration was, that I was aware that the railway committee recommended in their report that all works, which could possibly be stopped with any degree of economy to the colony, should be suspended. I regret that another portion of the resolutions, as originally proposed, but which was struck out in the Assembly, did not also come down. It recommended that the construction of a railway from Brisbane to Ipswich should be the basis for negotiating with the contractor for the Warwick line. I think it would have paid so very well, that it might have helped to defray extravagances such as we have gone into already; but that proposition is not in the resolutions, and therefore the Council have only to see whether certain terms can be effected. The contractor seemed to think that there was no contract with him at all, and, even now, it seems doubtful whether any contract is in existence for the construction of the line further than Allora. £30,000 has been spent upon it. The money spent or sent home for rails or rolling-stock will not be lost, as the plant will be useful elsewhere. The rails are said to be wearing out already in a part of the line that is finished. The question resolves itself into this, whether the amount we should have to pay to the contractor for the completion of

the line would be more than it would be worth our while to pay. When the question was put to Mr. Williams whether he was willing to come down and to undertake the construction of the line from Ipswich to Brisbane, he said he was willing to stand all the damage which might occur to the line between Warwick and Toowoomba for the next two or three years. The only question is, what the amount of compensation should be. It must, I believe, be settled by arbitration; and the question for consideration is, whether such an arrangement cannot be entered into with the contractor as will make the suspension of the work of greater advantage to the colony at the present time than its being proceeded with. If we attempt to go on with all the lines now, we shall be obliged to stop for want of money. With regard to the third resolution—for stopping further expenditure on the works for improving the navigation of the river between Brisbane and Ipswich—I believe that every honorable member will be in favor of it; and that, even in the interest of Ipswich, it cannot be opposed. The removal of the rocks has not had the effect of deepening the water, but, as was predicted by professional men, the water is now lower than ever it was before. If we are to incur any further expense, we had better employ the money in putting the rocks back to give the people of Ipswich their deep water again. It is absurd to say that a railroad should not be formed alongside a navigable river, because we know of many cases in which a railroad, a canal, and a river, run alongside each other. But this is not a navigable river, and the only effect of the attempt to improve the navigation will be that the “Emu,” the “Ipswich,” and the “Brisbane,” will be superseded by the “Amy” and the “Bee.” The people of Ipswich are ambitious of making the town a seaport—a very laudable ambition on their part, and I have no doubt they expect to see the “Great Victoria” up there; but that is no reason why we should spend the public money in trying to gratify their foolish ideas. They have already managed to saddle the colony and the people of Brisbane with a heavy expense in the alteration of the bridge, so as to allow sea-going vessels to go up to Ipswich; and the late Minister for Lands and Works supported them in that idea. I think we ought to remove the dredge from the Upper Brisbane, and stop the works altogether. The Harbors and Rivers Department has been done away with; and we may, therefore, presume that the Government are not inimical to this resolution. They did not object to a private member doing away with the department; but I suppose he had the consent of the Government to do so. I, therefore, confidently expect the vote of the Postmaster-General in favor of the third resolution. I do not expect to have his vote for the second; but I trust that the majority



of the House will enable me to carry it, also.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the resolutions be put *seriatim*, which was agreed to.

The first resolution was then put, as follows :—

“That the present condition of the financial and mercantile affairs of the colony requires from the Government and Parliament a reconsideration of those acts and votes which authorised and provided for the carrying out of extensive unfinished public works.”

The Hon. H. B. FITZ said he had great pleasure in supporting the resolutions, though he did not anticipate that any good would result from them; but if they did no good, they would do no harm. Resolutions of that House would not override an Act of Parliament, and he thought the right course would have been to amend the Loan Act. He had a doubt in his mind, whether the Government would be bound by those resolutions. A vote had been passed for a certain amount for the construction of a line from Toowoomba to Warwick; and he thought that it would be better to pay £200,000 for a line that would yield a return, than to spend £350,000 for a line that would yield nothing, and which, by the time it was completed, would probably cost half a million.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I rise to a point of order. This matter is not before the House.

The Hon. H. B. FITZ: He was not aware that he was out of order. His remarks were in accordance with the first resolution. He was only saying that, in their present financial difficulties, it would be better if they could enter into a contract which would cost only £200,000, and which would bring a return, instead of making a line through the honorable the Postmaster-General's paddock, into Warwick, which would cost £350,000, and which for six months in the year would not yield enough to pay for the wood consumed for fuel.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I am not going to oppose this resolution. I think the honorable gentleman was correct in saying that a resolution of this House cannot set aside the Loan Act. I believe the resolutions will be *vox et preterea nihil*, as they cannot override an Act of Parliament. At the same time, the Government may take them into consideration. I cannot help complimenting the honorable gentleman on the consistency with which he has opposed the Warwick railway to the last. He is looking sharply after his own interests in doing so. He is now in the position of a large fish, with the hook fixed in his jaws, making a final struggle before he is consigned to the landing net. When the Warwick railway was resolved upon, it proved, in a metaphorical sense, the honorable gentleman's death warrant.

The resolution was then agreed to.

The Hon. W. WOOD moved the second resolution :—

“That to relieve the country from some of the authorised expenditure, which it is now proved it can ill afford to incur, so much as is practicable of the railway line under construction between Toowoomba and Warwick, and can be agreed upon with the contractor, ought to be discontinued.”

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: When these resolutions were first debated in another place, there was another resolution associated with them which, to my mind, entirely destroyed their utility; but in the form they now come before the House, they are a much more statesmanlike production. The other resolution suggested that, instead of the line between Toowoomba and Warwick, another line between Brisbane and Ipswich should be constructed at a smaller outlay. The difference in expense between the two was comparatively small, and the Government would still be pledged to carry on the Warwick line when the other was finished. That resolution was rejected by the Assembly. If it were possible to annul all that has been done on the Warwick railway, I would cheerfully give my support to the resolution before the House. But in getting rid of the Warwick railway, now that so much money has been expended on it, we should be paying rather too dear for our whistle; for it would cost us more to abandon the railway than to carry it on. I should be very glad, in the present state of the colony, if we could do away with the thing altogether. At present there is no intention of carrying the railway any further than Allora; but, with respect to what has been already done, we are committed with the contractor. He will not give up his contract without exacting the full amount of compensation to which he is entitled by law. I will now shew the House what expenses have been incurred, what we are likely to incur, and what we shall gain by breaking off the contract. There has been expended for the plant on the line the sum of £66,381. My honorable friend opposite says that this money will not be thrown away, as the rolling stock and rails will do for some other line; but it must be borne in mind that the expense of storage will be considerable, and the money invested in the plant will afford no immediate return. If we could substitute it for the Dalby line it would not matter, but I believe that the plant for that line has been ordered already; and, notwithstanding the bold assertion of my honorable friend that the rails are wearing out—I do not believe he has ever been on the line—I can confidently affirm that, with the exception of a small per centage of indifferent rails, they are not worn; and I do not think the colony will be put to the slightest extra expense for new rails for the next ten years. At the stations, where the most wear and tear occurs, from the application of the

breaks, I have not seen the slightest symptom of wearing on the rails. The cost of surveys and superintendence to Allora, and no one contemplates going further than Allora at present, was £9,768; and the surveys to Warwick, £1,880. The contractors had received £31,053. So that, in all, we have put out of our power for the present the sum of £109,082. The amount to be paid to the contractor for the completion of the line is £163,946, and for superintendence £7,711, making the whole amount to be paid for the completion of the line £171,657. I now come to the question, what shall we profit if we break off the contract at present? In the first place, there is ten per cent. unpaid on £31,053, amounting to £3,100, which will have to be paid up whenever the line is discontinued. Then there is the penalty of ten per cent. on £163,946, say £16,400; and then there is the conveyance of the plant to New South Wales, which may be estimated at £5,000, making a total, in the shape of penalties, of £24,500. So that there is sunk, as I have said before, £109,082, from which we can receive no immediate return whatever, and which, unless the line be completed, will never profit the colony nor any one in it. The penalties for breaking off the contract amount to £24,500—making, altogether, £133,582, which we shall have to sink in order to avoid paying a further sum of £171,657 for the completion of the line. All we shall save by such an arrangement\* is £38,075. The interest on the money we have sunk already will be about £8,000 a year. I have reason to believe that a demand will be made by the contractor for damages, if the contract is not carried out in its integrity, and there is too much reason to fear that the law would allow the damages to be assessed at the amount of profit which the contractor might have made, if allowed to complete the work; and, assuming that to be twenty-five per cent., we would then be called upon to pay him twenty-five per cent. upon the whole of the line. The contractor could recover from the Government, in addition to the ten per cent. penalty for breaking off the contract, whatever the damages might be estimated at for the portion of the line taken from him. Under these circumstances, it is a very serious matter for honorable members of this House and the Government to consider, whether it is not better to accept the first loss and go on with the contract; but, at the same time, I confess, that if we could undo what has been done, it would be desirable to put off the construction of the Warwick line until we are in a better position to undertake it; and, without altering my opinion as to the value of the line, I should be inclined, under present circumstances, to vote in favor of the resolution. I shall not vote for the resolution; but I do not know that I shall divide the House upon it. It cannot override an Act of Parliament; and the Government are

as desirous as honorable gentlemen can be of exercising economy.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE: After hearing the figures, which the honorable member has brought before the House, and which came from the office of the Minister for Public Works, I am inclined to vote against the resolution. I have more confidence in the statement, as being made by the new Minister for Public Works, than I should have had in it if it had emanated from his predecessor. The words of the resolution are, that "so much as is practicable of the railway line under construction" should be discontinued. That does not bind the Government to do what is not beneficial to the colony; but if the course proposed in the resolution can be carried out with advantage it will be desirable to do so.

On the question that the third resolution be agreed to,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he would not oppose the resolution, though it certainly was a little illogical and inconsequential, as it had been proposed originally as a corollary to the construction of a railway along the bank of the river. The Legislative Assembly had struck off the vote for the Harbors and Rivers Department, but the cutting of the Redbank Flats would probably be completed by the expiration of the year, when that department would cease to exist. What his honorable friend had said the other day of the Seventeen-mile Rocks was very true,—it was owing to the system of tinkering on a tidal river, to please the people of Ipswich, who wished those rocks removed. The calculations upon which the works were commenced had been said to be the best; but now it was proved that they were fallacious. It was shewn now that the removal of the rocks was a great injury to the river. The works there were suspended, and dredging operations were in progress at Redbank Flats, and he was informed that by the close of the year the channel through the Flats would be completed. This was very much wanted; but then it would have to take its chance.

The Hon. W. WOOD, in reply, observed that the people of Ipswich had been warned and advised, upon the best authority in the colony, that injury would accrue to the river from the removal of the Seventeen-mile Rocks; but they would not listen, and now the injury had eventuated. He begged to call the attention of the honorable the Postmaster-General to the fact that £1,500 had been voted for water supply to the different towns of the colony. It was very little to spend, and he trusted there would be no attempt on the part of the Government to retain the present staff of the Harbors and Rivers Department, on the strength of that vote. It must be borne in mind, that the Engineer of Harbors and Rivers had been placed in the anomalous position of Engineer of Waterworks. He put this to the Post-



master-General now, in order that if he heard of anything of the kind he could not say that he had not been forewarned.

The PRESIDENT said he thought the Honorable W. Wood was travelling a little beyond the limits of the question before the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had no idea whatever that there was the slightest intention on the part of the Government to keep the Harbors and Rivers Department in force beyond the year. With respect to the £1,500 for water supply, that would not keep the staff up any time.

The Hon. W. Wood: It would pay the salaries.

The question was put and passed, and the resolutions were ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly with the usual message.

#### QUESTION OF PRACTICE (MESSAGES).

The Hon. W. Wood called the attention of the House to a point of order in reference to the manner in which messages were sent from the other branch of the Legislature. He referred to the practice of the Imperial Parliament, as laid down in "May's Parliamentary Practice." He thought that when a Bill had been agreed to by that House, it did not leave the House, but a message containing the amendments was sent to the Legislative Assembly.

The PRESIDENT: The Standing Order says:—

"When either House of the Legislature shall not agree to any amendment made by the other House in any Bill, vote, or other resolution, with which its concurrence shall have been desired, or when either House shall insist upon any amendment previously proposed by such House, and any communication shall be desired, then the communication shall be by message, and the House transmitting such message shall at the same time transmit written reasons for not agreeing to the amendment proposed by the other House, or for insisting upon any amendment previously proposed by the House, in such message."

It is in accordance with that Standing Order that a message is sent with the amendments to the other House; if the Assembly disagree with the amendments, or any of them, it is for them to send their reasons for so doing. The Bill was sent down from the Assembly with their reason for disagreeing with a certain amendment made by this House. In my opinion the message from the Assembly is perfectly formal.

The Hon. W. Wood: Then, am I to understand that we cannot move an amendment on that?

The PRESIDENT: Certainly, you cannot.

The Hon. W. Wood: Then I shall give notice that, on a future occasion, I will move that that Standing Order be suspended.

The PRESIDENT: If we make an amendment on a Bill sent from the other House, the Bill will be re-committed in the Assembly;

and the House may agree with our amendments, or they may agree with some and disagree with others, or they may disagree with them altogether. In this case they disagree with our amendment, and send their reasons for so doing; and we say we accept their reasons for disagreement and do not insist on our amendment.

The matter then dropped.