

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 12 MAY 1875

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 12 May, 1875.

Absence of the Minister for Lands.—Return to Order.—
Payment of Members Bill.—Matrimonial Causes
Bill.—Continental Railway Bill.

ABSENCE OF THE MINISTER FOR
LANDS.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought it right to the House to state that his honorable colleague the Secretary for Public Lands was not in his place, owing to his being confined to his own house by serious illness. He believed that, to-morrow, the honorable member would forward to him his resignation, both of his seat in the Government and his seat in the Assembly, on which occasion he (the Colonial Secretary) would probably take the opportunity of making one or two observations.

RETURN TO ORDER.

In answer to Mr. PALMER,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that the return moved for by the honorable gentleman, of the correspondence with the Agent-General in England, was a very long one. Although the clerks were now employed in making it up, he could not say when it would be ready; but he thought he should be able to produce it next week.

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS BILL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved the second reading of a Bill to provide for the compensation of members of the Legislative Assembly for their services in attending Parliament, and for the payment of their travelling expenses. He said he did not know that it was necessary to make any observations whatever on the Bill; but that he had a desire to point out to honorable members the reasons why an alteration was made in it which caused it to differ from the measure which was before Parliament last session. The great object he had in view was, if possible, to get this Bill through another place. He understood that one of the objections against the Bill last session in another place, was, that it provided a travelling allowance to members of the Legislative Council. The objection that members who received payment would not be independent in their position, he thought was a mistaken one. In the hope that the change he had made would have the practical effect of getting the Bill through the Council, he had omitted the clause which provided for a travelling allowance to members of that House; but if it were the wish of the House to put the clause in, he should not stand in the way of its being inserted in committee. The most important alteration was that the Bill was not to take effect until the commencement of the next Parliament, whenever that might be. He remembered that the Speaker himself and several other honorable members objected to the Bill only because its operation was to have commenced from the date of its passing

It was perfectly in the power of the House to have the Bill as it stood originally, and if passed, it would be in accord with constitutional authority. The object of the alterations made was to get the Bill through another place; and to have it passed as soon as possible. He did not think the House should hesitate to assent to the second reading.

Mr. DE SARGE explained that having supported the Bill before, he should do so again, with the proviso that, in committee, the daily rate should be reduced from three guineas to one guinea. He believed that three guineas a day with a seat in the House would be an inducement, to a certain extent, to persons making politics a profession; while the payment of a smaller rate, bare expenses, would not do so. He hoped that the Bill would be altered, and it would be passed almost unanimously; in that hope, he should vote for the second reading.

Mr. McILWRAITH said he did not approve of the way in which the Government put the Bill before them—"to provide for the compensation of members" of the House. It was rather too low a view to take of the services of honorable members, to pay them so much a day for a certain number of days. It was like a threat that, if they did not get through their work in a certain time, they would not be paid any longer. So far from that restriction having the effect of shortening the session, he thought that it would have the effect of prolonging it. The offer of payment for the first sixty-four days of session was an inducement to delay business somewhat, in order to get the payment; and, in most years, the Government would have to bring forward a considerable amount of work to make the session last sixty-four days. Instead of preventing honorable members spending too long a session, it would have the contrary effect. The real reason why a member of Parliament should be paid was that, as a representative, if his services were worth anything, he did every day a certain amount of work for his constituents, and not during the session only; he was at work all the year round for them in some way or other. It was so in his own case, and he knew it was so in a much greater degree in the case of other honorable members. Looked at in this way, two hundred a year was not enough. He thought that a man should have sufficient to enable him to attend to politics and to keep himself respectable. The House should look at the subject fairly, and put down the payment at so much a year. That was the only objection he had to the principle of the Bill. He thought the House should make the measure what it ought to be and pass it.

Mr. HODGKINSON said the Bill if passed in its present shape would disfranchise the northern districts. He could state from his own knowledge that it was exceedingly difficult to find any man of position to represent a distant electorate. If the Bill should pass, it would defer the settlement of

the difficulty; as it would be inoperative until the meeting of the next Parliament. It was not a profitable speculation to embark as a politician; it was, to say the least, hazardous: a man must leave his business, and incur expense to his own loss. If the Bill passed, there would be an influx of professional politicians as distinct from true representatives. Though it undoubtedly bore the impress of personal interest in connection with this subject, he said that his place in the House was by no means permanent. He spoke for his successor and for other gentlemen in a similar position to himself, as the representative of a distant constituency. The sacrifice of personal interests entailed by attendance in Parliament, almost debarred northern constituencies from securing the services of local representatives. The House should not seek to postpone or to evade, by deference to the feelings of the other Chamber, the settlement of the question of payment of members; as it was the only solution of the difficulty to which he referred. No doubt, immediate payment would meet with a great deal of opposition in the other House; but the voice of the country must be answered, and the voice of the country had pronounced in favor of payment. The Council were not the only exponents of public feeling; they must modify their decision to the particular course of action indicated by the Assembly. No doubt, they were a wholesome check upon rash action on the part of the representative House; but they must not place themselves in opposition to the country, for a conflict must only end in their discomfiture. He should object to the Bill on the grounds set forth by the honorable member for Maranoa, and he should oppose the clause which put off the payment until the commencement of the next Parliament; but he should reserve his opposition until after he saw if the amendments which he thought necessary were carried in committee.

Mr. GRAHAM said he voted on several occasions in favor of payment of members; but he always objected, and should still object, to the title of the Bill. The House should not call the payment to be made, compensation for the services of members of Parliament; it was payment for the expenses incurred by members which such a Bill provided for. If the services of honorable members, if their time, were to be compensated for by the amount proposed to be paid by the Bill, if the value of their duties was to be gauged by the payment of £200 a-year, then they were very small indeed. The difficulty was to get members in all the distant electorates. It was known that, only a few years ago, it was the regular thing to get a professional man in Brisbane to represent an outside district; and such a man could attend the House without any sacrifice whatever. Few local men could attend without some sacrifice. The actual expenses of a representative from a distance were in themselves very great. Then

there were other losses: the great inconvenience of leaving his ordinary occupation and the business of his life was a serious consideration, apart from the loss of his own personal supervision. For those reasons, and for others which he need not offer now, he (Mr. Graham) thought that the title of the Bill should be altered, "to provide for the payment of the expenses" of members; and that the object in view would be met more efficiently if the proportion between the annual payment and the travelling expenses were altered by increasing the latter and reducing the former. As the Bill stood, there would be a difference of only about £30 a year paid to a country member over a member resident in Brisbane. He should be prepared to support the amendment of the scale, with a view to increasing the amount for travelling expenses. In other respects, his views were much the same as he before expressed them in the House.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, that as one of the few in the House who were opposed to the Bill, he did not intend to offer any factious opposition to it. But he warned the honorable member for Brisbane, who took such a gloomy look at the future when before his constituents, that he could not reconcile it to his conscience to vote for such a Bill when there was such a great necessity for reducing the burdens of the people. If the Bill must pass, he was not inclined to coincide with the views of the honorable member for Clermont; he would not make fish of one and flesh of another. He rather agreed with the honorable member for Maranoa, that, if there was to be anything paid, it should be a fixed sum. There was, of course, an objection to the word salary to members for their duties; but there must be no restriction made about the amount: the same amount that was given to one must be given to the other. He should do all he could to make the coming tax upon the people, which appeared to be imminent, as little as possible.

Question put and passed.

MATRIMONIAL CAUSES BILL.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved—

That this Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. PALMER said he objected, when the formal motions were being called, to this Bill being taken as a formal motion, and he did so because he was desirous of getting some slight information from the honorable the Attorney-General. His attention had been called, since the Bill was before the House last night, to a report in the *Courier* of the 25th of November, which was to the effect that the honorable the Attorney-General had appeared in court with a brief for one of the parties in a divorce case. His appearance there was objected to, as he (Mr. Palmer) was informed, by the Chief Justice, and he had to retire. Now, he thought they had not had a sufficiently clear explanation from the honorable the Attorney-General

with reference to that case, and he would like a little further explanation as to whether this report was correct; whether he, the Attorney-General, being the person appointed by law to make special inquiries into the circumstances connected with divorce cases—being in fact appointed grand juror for that purpose, almost more than grand juror, because he was compelled by law to inquire into these cases—was justified in holding a brief for either party. He did not mean to object to the third reading of the Bill, although he must confess he would like to have a little more time for its consideration, and also a little more information from the legal members of the House. He must confess that he did not feel very well satisfied with their exertions last night in respect to this Bill; and he thought the honorable the Attorney-General ought to give some information as to the circumstances he had alluded to.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not see what the observations of the honorable member who had just spoken had to do with the question before the House. He (the Colonial Secretary) rose simply for the purpose of stating that he thought some injustice had been done to his honorable and learned colleague by the observations made last night in regard to this Bill. With respect to the case the honorable member opposite had referred to, in which the honorable the Attorney-General had appeared, he could not see what it had to do with the question. If it had any bearing upon it, it was to establish the necessity for the Bill. On the occasion referred to, if he remembered rightly, the court held that, because it might be necessary for the Attorney-General to intervene, he could not appear as an advocate for either party. Now, in all cases in which the Attorney-General intervened, the costs would be charged to the Government, the Government paid the costs; and the very object of the Bill, so far as the Attorney-General was concerned, was simply that, where he was compelled to appear, the costs should be paid by the losing party. He thought that was perfectly fair and reasonable, and that the honorable member had really nothing to complain of.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have been called upon by the honorable member for Port Curtis—

The SPEAKER: The honorable member has spoken, and can only speak now with the consent of the House.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL submitted that, having merely moved the third reading of the Bill, he was entitled to speak.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member must speak in moving the motion.

Mr. PALMER: The honorable member may speak in explanation.

The SPEAKER: He can only do so by consent.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said it was often the practice for speeches to be reserved until

the third reading, and knowing that the honorable member for Port Curtis wished for some explanation, he did not say anything in moving the motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: As a point of order, I take it that, when an honorable member moves an order of the day, he is entitled to speak.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is wrong. The mover of a motion speaks necessarily, but the seconder of a motion does not speak necessarily.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have great respect for your opinion, sir, but you will allow me to differ from you. However, no doubt the House will consent to the honorable member making the explanation.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said, with the permission of the House he would reply to the inquiry of the honorable member for Port Curtis. The report mentioned had been previously referred to by himself, and he said it had been decided by the court that he should not appear, while holding the office of Attorney-General, as an advocate in the Divorce Court. Beyond that, he did not know exactly what the honorable member for Port Curtis wanted him to answer. It was quite clear that he could not appear, and he did not want to appear. He thought it hard at the time; and he informed the court that, before accepting a brief, he had caused inquiries to be made by the police as to whether there was any information which would necessitate his intervention, and there being nothing of the kind, he thought he had performed his duty, and was at liberty to appear, but the Court thought differently. However, if this Bill were passed, there could be no doubt whatever about it; because, so far as it affected the Attorney-General, he was absolutely excluded from practising at all in the Divorce Court, except on behalf of the Crown, whenever it might be necessary to interfere.

Mr. PALMER: With the permission of the House he would say that he had brought no charge against the Attorney-General, as insinuated by the honorable the Colonial Secretary. His object was merely to give the Attorney-General an opportunity of explaining, because reports had been circulated that his object in getting this Bill passed was to secure costs to himself. That was his only reason for bringing the matter forward. He made no charge whatever.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said, if he had known before that such was the intention of the honorable member, he should have expressed his thanks for the opportunity he had given him of explaining, and he would now tender him his thanks.

The question was then put and passed.

CONTINENTAL RAILWAY BILL.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS moved the second reading of a Bill to authorise the making of a railway from Dalby by way of Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria, and to pro-

vide funds for the construction of the same by the sale of Crown lands. He said that in the course of the observations he should have to make on this measure, it would be necessary for him to allude to certain proposals made by the firm of Collier and Company for the construction of a railway through the districts which it was now proposed to traverse, and, in alluding to those proposals, to explain the reasons why the Government were unable to come to an agreement with that firm to carry out the contract which they were the first to propose. The first proposal of which he had any knowledge, was communicated by Messrs. Collier and Co. to the Premier, on the 18th September, 1874. In their letter, it was proposed by Collier and Co. to construct a railway from Dalby to Normanton, or some other port on the Gulf of Carpentaria, and to take in payment certain blocks of land on either side of the line. That proposal was generally approved of by the Government, and after several telegrams had passed backward and forward between Collier and Co. and the Premier, an arrangement was made that one of the firm should come to Brisbane to discuss details and final arrangements. He must here state, as was said by the honorable member for Maranoa, a few evenings ago, that the Cabinet were perfectly aware that, in paying for the construction of railways in land, they would be paying a higher price than if they were prepared to pay for the work in cash; because the contractors would have to undertake the risk of carrying out a large work, the risk of the fluctuations in the money market, and the risk of disposing of a large quantity of land which they were to receive in payment for the work they did; but it was thought that if the country could have such a railway as was contemplated carried out, without any extra burden to the taxpayers, it would be advisable to secure it, even if the Government should have to give 10,000 acres of land per mile for the first part of the railway and 20,000 acres for last part, in addition to allowing the line to remain the property of the contractors. But when the gentlemen representing Collier and Co. arrived in Brisbane, it was shown, at the first meeting they had with the Cabinet, that they were not prepared to take up the section from Dalby to Roma, taking payment in land along the line. They asserted that although, in their original proposal, that section was mentioned as to be paid for in land, yet that they had stated certain objections to the honorable member for Maranoa, who was then Minister for Works, and they proposed to take some land in certain parts of the district of Darling Downs to compensate them for the inferior land between Dalby and Roma. It was stated by the Government that the country would not be likely to approve of any proposal to give the contractors land on Darling Downs. That matter was, therefore, disposed of at

once, and Collier and Co. withdrew from the discussion, intimating that they would have to consult together further;—Messrs. Collier, Cain, and Hale required to consult amongst themselves with reference to the terms of a fresh proposal. The Premier considered that, as the matter lay more in the Department of Works than any other department of the Government, it would be advisable that the Secretary for Public Works should communicate with Collier and Co. further, and that he should learn from them the heads of any fresh proposal they would be willing to submit to the Cabinet, and ascertain definitely how far they would be prepared to go—what concessions they would make—and get from them their ultimatum. He (the Secretary for Works) then intimated to them, in accordance with the wish of the Premier, what was desired, and informed them that all correspondence with the Government must thenceforth pass through him. Accordingly, he received certain letters from them which were published in the correspondence which had been presented to the House. He had, also, personal interviews with them, the particulars of which would not otherwise appear in the correspondence; and, as certain matters were important, in his letter of the 17th February to Collier and Co., he recapitulated the progress of affairs as he had reported it to the Cabinet. That his statement was correct was shown, for they admitted that what he had laid before the Cabinet was an accurate *résumé* of the correspondence and the conversations that had taken place between Collier and Co. and himself. The proposal had narrowed itself down to this:—That they were prepared to undertake a contract for the construction of a railway from Dalby to Roma on the usual conditions, to be paid for in cash, or half cash and half in debentures at the current market price, which was the same thing; beyond Roma they proposed to construct the railway to the meridian of Tambo, on the conditions of the original proposal—10,000 acres of land for each mile of the line; from Tambo to the head of the Thomson, for 15,000 acres per mile; and from the Thomson to the Gulf of Carpentaria for 20,000 acres per mile. The answer which he was deputed by the Government to give to them was to the effect that the Cabinet did not consider it would be advisable to engage to bind the country to dispose of valuable land beyond Roma until the line had reached that point; because, in the event of an agreement being made for the construction of the line to Roma, the value of the land would be very largely increased by such extension of the railway; and if that line could not be undertaken by Collier and Co., under an arrangement by which the expense of construction should be defrayed by land grant, the negotiations for the railway beyond Roma were premature. As Collier and Co. were not prepared to undertake the construction of the line from Dalby to Roma on other terms than payment

in cash, the negotiations fell to the ground. He had had several letters printed with the correspondence between Collier and Co. which had been received from other gentlemen in the colonies, offering to undertake the construction of the railway on different terms. None of those proposals appeared to be such as the Government could make much of; but, taken in conjunction with Collier and Co.'s proposal, they showed that—and he wished to draw attention to the fact—in the unsold lands in the western districts, Queensland was possessed of a fund which might be turned to account for the construction of railways. However absurd some of the proposals were, it was evident that the contractors considered that the lands had certain market value. Since the Government could not make an agreement with the contractors for the construction of the railway, payment being made in land, the question arose—could not the Government manage to sell the land themselves and pay the contractors who constructed the line with the proceeds of the sales? The Bill was introduced upon that principle. It appeared plain to the Government that Messrs. Collier and Co. did not go into the project without knowing what they were undertaking, or without feeling confident of being able to dispose of a certain quantity of land. It was evident that they were very well informed and possessed of accurate information. If they could do that, it was presumed that the Government would have no difficulty in selling land: they would sell the land, place the proceeds to the credit of a separate account for the construction of railways, and pay for the railways out of that fund. Those were the objects of the Bill, the second reading of which he now asked the House to consent to. The thirteenth clause gave the Government all the powers embodied in the existing Railway Acts for the resumption of land for the construction of railways, that was to say, for the purchase of freehold land, and it embodied those Acts; therefore, upon that point, there was nothing to be said. But there were three or four important points upon which he expected the debate would turn. The first was in the preamble, which, at the outset, enacted that—

“Whereas the making of a railway from Dalby by way of Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria would be of great public advantage.”

Secondly, the preamble asserted that

“it is expedient that such railway should be forthwith constructed.”

Thirdly, it asserted that

“funds for the construction of the same should be provided by the sale of Crown lands.”

Now, he proposed to prove the preamble—to back it with arguments to show that the assertions it contained were correct. With regard to the statement that the construction of the line would be of great public advantage, he should point out that for every

100 miles the railway extended out west, the area of the colony would be enlarged that could be profitably occupied. There was a great extent of country in the district of Gregory, and elsewhere, which was unoccupied, or was not at any rate profitably occupied. He might say that many of the occupants of that country held it only in hope of profit in the future; but, in the future, profit would increase. There was an enormous extent of country which was nominally in Queensland and which was occupied by Queensland settlers, but which, at the present time, was of very little benefit to this colony beyond the small rents received from the outside squatters. A great many of those settlers were in the habit of drawing their supplies from Fort Bourke. By extending the railway out west that country could be more profitably occupied than now, and the trade would be drawn down to Queensland ports and to Queensland merchants, instead of going, as it now did, down the Darling River to South Australia, or to other colonies. Another point was, that the extension of the railway would be profitable, and it would result in the more economical working of the existing lines, and enable them to pay a larger profit over and above the working expenses. His reason for saying this was, that, as honorable members all knew, a great part of the traffic that passed over the railway to Dalby went on to Roma and westward. If the railway was extended to Roma, all the traffic would be secured by it; the traffic would be all profit, less the working expenses, and the cost of maintaining the existing main trunk line would be diminished; and the extension of the railway to Roma would not require any addition to the rolling stock. The Chief Engineer stated that the rolling stock in possession of the Government would be enough for the extension to Roma; no new workshops would be required there, as they were established at other places already; no additional terminus would be required, because the terminus would only be shifted. The experience of the other colonies proved conclusively that by extending the line the working expenses per mile would be diminished. He had returns for 1874, showing such results in Victoria. On the Williamston line, the length of which was six miles, the cost was 6s. 10d. per train mile; on the Echuca main line, 156 miles long, the cost of running was 4s. 3d. per train mile; on the Ballarat line, 95 miles, the cost was 5s. 1d.—showing that, in proportion as a line was increased in length, so was the cost diminished, and that the shorter the railway the heavier the working expenses. On the North-Eastern Railway, 160 miles, the cost was 3s. 9d. per train mile. In point of fact, a great deal of money which this colony now spent on the maintenance and working of the present line would be available for working a very much longer line; the additional 180 miles of the proposed extension to Roma would be worked for very little more than the

present working expenses of the railway to Dalby. Therefore, it might be fairly stated that there was good reason to believe that the extension to Roma would be of great public advantage in the different ways which he had pointed out; and that it was expedient that such railway should be constructed forthwith. It would make the present railways pay; it would open out a large extent of country for settlement which was not now profitably occupied; it would tend to draw away from Fort Bourke and the Darling a very great amount of trade that was now of no advantage to the colony. The expediency of carrying out the work could not be doubted. Now, he should endeavor to prove the assertion of the preamble, as to the desirableness of providing funds for the construction of the railway by the sale of Crown lands. One great advantage in paying for public works in this manner was that it did away altogether with the necessity of imposing taxation upon the population of the colony. If carried into effect, the public had the benefit, whatever it might be, of the construction of the works and of the expenditure during their progress; it had the benefit of the opening up of the country; and the people were not called upon to bear any increased burden in the shape of taxation, while the revenue was increased by the additional population employed and by the increased trade created. There was, under such a system, no demand upon the general revenue for the payment of interest on loans. There was a considerable difficulty in connection with large public works in this colony, one that every Government had felt, and it was, that for large public works constructed in one district upon borrowed money, all the colony had to pay;—in other words, one district had the advantage of the improvement, while all districts participated in the burden of paying for it. True though it might be that all the inhabitants of the country participated in the general prosperity of the colony, there was unfairness in taxing all for public works which really benefited only a portion of them. Those who were not in a district favored with railway communication did not participate in the advantages that were derived from the construction and extension of railways; and they ought not to be called upon, or it did not seem right to call upon them, to share the expense of such works. By taking land and selling it, such difficulties and apparent injustice were avoided. The land which it was proposed to sell for the construction of the line to Roma would be taken from within a certain distance of it; the limit proposed in this case being fifty miles on each side of the railway. One of the strongest arguments used in objecting to the disposal of public lands in large areas was that the Government were parting with the public estate. He admitted its force, if the land was sold for the purposes of revenue. But, under the system proposed, when the land would be

sold and the proceeds used exclusively for the construction of railways, there was merely a change of investment. The public estate, in the shape of its land, was parted with; but, in exchange, it got a railway, a reproductive public work, which was as substantial a possession as the land itself. It was merely using the land for investment in railways. There was no squandering of the capital of the State, but only a change of investment. The question to be answered was, whether it was better to keep the capital of the State locked up in land, or to invest it in railways? Now, he asked this House to take some figures into consideration, in dealing with this question:—The railway from Ipswich to the Downs—to Toowoomba and Warwick—cost, including the charges on the sale of debentures, £2,211,000. That was to say, if land was sold at ten shillings an acre for the construction of that railway—that was the upset price proposed in the Bill—the amount of land taken would be 4,422,000 acres. During 1874 the profit on the working of the railway was £37,000, after paying all expenses of the year. From a railway which could have been constructed by the sale of 4,422,000 acres of land, that was a good return. He found from the “Statistical Register,” that, in 1873, the runs under lease in the colony occupied an area of 132,400,000 acres of land, and that the rent from them was £87,000. Thus, the net profit, last year, of the Southern and Western Railway, which cost the country, say four and a-half millions of acres of land, was equal to the annual rental of sixty millions of acres of land let on lease! Now, if the land capital of the country was turned into railways on such terms, the State would make a very judicious investment. But talking of the profit of the Southern and Western Railway, the net cash received was not, by any means, the only profit the country derived from it. If that railway had not been constructed, there would have been a very large sum on the Estimates of 1874 for the maintenance of roads from Ipswich to the Downs—to Toowoomba, up the Main Range; to Warwick, through Cunningham’s Gap; to Dalby, across the black soil;—also, for the conveyance of mails, for the conveyance of prisoners brought to trial or to undergo their sentences, and for constables. Honorable members might consider that public money had been saved. The cost of the conveyance of mails, alone, but for the railway, would have figured at £20,000, last year. That would raise the revenue derived from the railway to £57,000. If the amount of expense in the Lands Department—he did not know what it was—and for police in connection with the pastoral occupation of the country, was deducted from the amount of rent received, as he insisted it might fairly be, the revenue from the land would be found to contrast very unfavorably indeed with the revenue from the railway. And, besides, he had shown that the railway per-

formed various public services. He thought he had proved that the method of investment he proposed for the State possessed great advantages. As to the advantages to be derived from the occupation or sale of the land on better terms than, from its improved value, consequent on facilities of access and for traffic, could be secured now, he should not touch upon them; because there were several honorable members on both sides of the House who were better acquainted with the outside districts than he was. He should leave it to them to point out, also, the hundred advantages which the colony would derive from the increased population that would follow the carrying out of the measure he now brought before the House. He need only observe, in connection with the profits of the Southern and Western Railway, last year, that there was every reason to believe that, if the intentions of the Legislature at the time that railway was first initiated had been fairly carried out, there would be a much larger population on Darling Downs than there was, at present. However, he would hope that, in time, he should see a large population there on the lands which had been reserved for so long from profitable cultivation, and which must soon be handed over to the people; when the railway would pay even more than now. He might say that the traffic on the railway showed a tendency to increase still further, and that there was every reason to believe that, during the ensuing year, a large revenue would be derived from that source. He thought he had now disposed of the second item of the preamble. At all events, he had satisfied himself, as a unit of the population of Queensland, that the line should be constructed, and that it should be constructed from the proceeds of the land in the districts through which it would run, rather than by a loan to be repaid by the whole population of the colony. The next point of the Bill to which he should call attention was to be found in clauses 3, 4, and 5, which dealt with the resumption of land from the pastoral lessees and the creation of a continental railway reserve to be disposed of under the Bill. If the House agreed with him that the line should be constructed out of the proceeds of land sales, he did not see how the land could be sold with greater regard for the interests of the present lessees than was shown in those provisions. The rights of the lessees were guarded most carefully. The Government did not intend to take anything from them except the land, as required for the construction of the railway. It was provided by the 5th clause that, after the passing of the Bill, the first thing to be done would be for the Minister for Lands to give notice to the lessees whose runs were within the railway reserve of the resumption of the runs. The resumption would not take effect until sixty days after the next meeting of Parliament, so that if no resolution to the contrary should be passed, it would become valid. After it was effective,

the lessees would have the right to occupy the land, paying the same rent as at present, until it was absolutely appropriated in the manner set out in the Bill. They would retain the same pre-emptive right at the end of their leases as was conferred upon them by the existing law. In fact, they had all their rights reserved to them, except that the land should be sold as required for the railway; and they were entitled to a reduction of rent for the amount of land taken out of their runs. Nothing could be more equitable than the Bill. With regard to the disposal of the land, he thought that the terms offered by the 9th clause were so liberal that they ought to tempt honorable members into the passing of the Bill. It provided the means by which those gentlemen who believed in stock-farming on a large scale would be enabled to obtain areas of land for themselves without having to resort to such difficult and dangerous expedients as had been practised in the colony under different Land Acts. Gentlemen outside the House and squatters generally who required large tracts of land would find it more judicious to go to auction and purchase large areas of land, up to 10,000 acres, without conditions, than to resort to the questionable modes by which large areas had been attempted to be gained on Darling Downs under the Act of 1868, by dummying and the evasion of conditions. For their own satisfaction, he considered they would rather acquire land in a straightforward manner, even at a higher price, on the fall of the hammer, and be sure of it. There was, of course, power reserved for the reservation of townships, because it was hoped that, when the railway was carried through the country, a much larger population would be settled in the interior than could be settled without the railway. For the same reason, it was thought proper to have the power to create homestead areas where land was required. Some honorable members thought the country out so far was unfit for agriculture; but others said that the land about Roma was equal to that on Darling Downs, and that cultivation was carried on there satisfactorily. If it should be found that there was a demand for homestead areas, Government would reserve them. But there was no doubt that the Bill must be looked to mainly as the means of providing money for the construction of the railway. Honorable members on the Opposition side of the House were satisfied that a large amount of land in the western district could only be profitably occupied for many years to come for the purposes of keeping stock, and not for agriculture; and there need, therefore, be no fear whatever on their part that the whole of the railway reserve, or even the best part of it, would be wanted for homestead areas. The Government would have to provide means, at the rate, probably, of £300,000 or £400,000 per annum, for the construction of the railway; and that could not be done,

unless they brought forward a very large amount of land for sale. If honorable members on the other side were prepared to accept the principle that now the time was come for a railway to be run into the interior, they would accept the Bill as the most favorable for them that could be given effect to. He should now call attention to the 15th clause, by which it was declared that—

"It shall be lawful for the Colonial Treasurer under the warrant of the Governor to pay and advance from time to time out of the moneys standing to the credit of the Public Account any sum or sums of money not exceeding in the aggregate at any one time the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds to be placed to the credit of 'The Continental Railway Account' and to be paid in the manner hereinafter provided."

That was, it was to be repaid out of the proceeds of land sold, with interest at 5 per cent. added. The advance was necessary. Under any circumstances, if resumptions were made to-morrow, which they could not be, there must be services performed that would render it necessary that some money should be expended, and that must necessitate the drawing upon the Treasury. Certain sums should be advanced to start the work as soon as the measure should come into operation. The resumptions could not take place for twelve months. In the meantime, the Government had the first fifty miles of the survey from Dalby towards Roma completed; and they had the engineer's report and estimate. Complete Parliamentary plans and sections for that first fifty miles could be laid on the table of the House any day. In the Railway Office, at the present time, there was the complete survey up to 96 miles from Dalby; the plans were not quite complete, but long before the House would rise for the recess, the Parliamentary plans and sections for the first 96 miles of the railway would be laid on the table. It appeared to the engineer that a line from Dalby to Roma might be divided conveniently into three large sections: the first, from Dalby to Charley's Creek, of which the survey was complete in all particulars; the second, from Charley's Creek to Dulacca Creek; and the third, from Dulacca Creek to the town of Roma. The report and survey of the line to within three miles of Dulacca Creek were in the office; and in a very few weeks he should have the complete survey to that point. In fact, if the House passed the Bill, and allowed the Government to start with the advance of £250,000, they should be able to let contracts for the construction of the first two sections, somewhere about 100 miles, without any delay—before the House rose. Every one would, he thought, agree that it would be best to carry out the work rapidly; that, once determined upon, it was best to proceed as fast as possible, in order that the country should make haste to derive the advantages that would accrue from the construction of the railway. The manner in which the funds derived

from the sale of lands would be disposed of as was provided for in the 16th clause. Some writers in the press were in great fear and distress that the Government would sell land to the extent of thirty-two millions of acres, and that after constructing the line from Dalby to Roma, they would have the balance available for the purposes of corruption and other base designs. There was no danger of the Government selling that quantity of land. Taking a tract of 100 miles broad, honorable members knew that there would be in it a great deal that would not be saleable in our time, nor until the country was occupied. The most that the Government could expect at first, would be to sell the best land, or that which was most advantageously situated. If they were enabled to sell sufficient to carry on the railway quickly, they should, he considered, do very well indeed. He had no expectation that they would realise a very large surplus over and above what they required for the time being as the work went on. But the Bill provided that, if they should get money, it must be paid to the credit of the Continental Railway Account; whence it could not be taken, except for the purposes of the railway. He supposed that, when Parliament met, the fund would figure amongst the special funds which the Treasurer would have to make out, and it would be shown in the quarterly returns, as well as in the Treasurer's statement. The other night the honorable member for Maranoa objected that the Government, in selling land for funds to make railways, would be using capital which ought to be more beneficially employed; and urged that it would be better to bring capital into the colony by borrowing, and to leave the capital now in the colony for local enterprises. Well, in the first place, borrowing money entailed burdens on the colony, and paying interest on loans was a greater burden than the advantage was of spending the borrowed money. It was a fact that a great deal of capital had gone out of Queensland that was in the colony, simply because there was no land to be got for investment. He (the Secretary for Lands) had heard that repeatedly from honorable members on both sides of the House, and he had seen the same thing stated in the press—in the respective newspapers which supported both sides—that capital was taken out of the colony because people could not get land to purchase.

Mr. DE SARGE: They could not get their deeds when they did.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The argument cut both ways. If the want of land drove capital out of the colony, it might be taken for granted that throwing open large areas and selling the land to get funds for the railway, would retain the capital in the colony and draw a great deal from other colonies, and enable the Government to raise quite as much as they would require to raise

by a loan. What he proposed to do, if the Bill passed, was to give notice immediately in the southern newspapers that, on some day to be fixed, a grand land sale would be held of 500,000 or 600,000 acres about Dalby and Roma; and he ventured to say that purchasers and a large amount of capital would be forthcoming from Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia, for the purpose of investing in that land.

Mr. McILWRAITH: He had not the slightest doubt about it.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The honorable member was anxious to have money brought into the colony. If he was afraid that the people who would come to invest would outbid him and the settlers in the colony, it would be for the benefit of the Queensland people: and, surely, the owners of the land had a right to get the highest price for it!—they should not be asked to keep out purchasers in order that some person in the colony might get a good bargain! If there should be a large demand for land, the Government could easily supply it. He was not afraid that there would be no demand: as he happened to know that there was now a very considerable demand. He did not think that the Government would produce a financial crisis by taking the money in the colony for the land they hoped to sell. The next thing which he wished to call attention to was the schedule, which was, in point of fact, one of the most important parts of the Bill, because it defined the railway reserve, from a certain distance from the town of Dalby to the Ward River. The way in which the railway reserve was defined had particular advantages to commend it to the House. In the first place, if the Government surveyed the line from one end to the other, it might be diverted, as was done before now, merely to hurt a political opponent or to serve a friend. The first point to which the railway would be taken was from Dalby to Roma: a straight line would be drawn between those towns which would be the base line of the reserve, which reserve would extend fifty miles back on each side of the base line. The railway might not run along the base line; in point of fact, it would not; it would have to be kept north of the base line, but not a very great distance. The advantage of fixing the railway reserve in that manner was, that there could be no possible motive for diverting the course of the railway, for taking it from easy into difficult country—as in the Brisbane extension, instead of bringing it down to South Brisbane, taking it across the river and bringing it down to North Brisbane. There was no possible reason for that, or for one Government doing what was not pleasing to the other. The railway reserve was fixed.

Mr. McILWRAITH: There were 100 miles wide to take the line through.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: But the limits of the reserve would not be altered. The runs inside would be affected, the runs

outside would not be affected, by it. The reason why the reserve should be extended beyond Roma at the present time—the base line being from Roma to Lansdowne Station, on the Ward River—at the present time was, that it was absolutely necessary; as there was great reason to doubt whether the Government could get enough good land between Dalby and Roma to construct the line between those towns. Collier and Co. were well acquainted with the nature of the country; they had the best advice, no doubt; and they were of opinion that there was no good land between Dalby and Roma. Ministers did not want the House to fall into any trap. They represented that the railway was to be paid for by land; and they must ask the House to give them land to sell that would bring enough money to pay for the line. It was not at all probable that there would be enough good land to be got between Dalby and Roma to pay for the railway. There were 200,000 acres about Jimbour and Warra Warra; beyond that, only two solitary patches of fair land, until Roma was reached. The land beyond Roma was of that quality that the Government could easily sell enough along the second base line to pay for the railway. Why, it was asked, was the railway taken to the Ward River; and where northward, would it go? The Government did not know. At the present time, they did not know what port on the Gulf of Carpentaria it would be taken, or where it was most desirable to take it. This they did know, that whatever port on the Gulf it should go to, it ought to go through the mining district of Cloncurry, which was about 300 miles this side of Carpentaria. If it was to be constructed from the proceeds of land, the railway should be taken where there was the best chance of obtaining land, and where the line would afford the best chance of paying traffic. That was a point to be taken into consideration, when starting from Roma. If honorable members looked at the map they would see that, taking the railway from Roma to the great Australian mine on the Cloncurry, it would pass very near the head of the Ward River in a straight line. If it was taken to Tambo, and thence down Barcoo, it would traverse two sides of a triangle instead of the hypothenuse, and the eastern half of the reserve would include a great extent of triodia and sandy country. It would never do to say that land on the eastern side of the base line was useless, and the land on the western was good. On the eastern side, near Tambo, it was nearly all bad sandy country, perfectly useless land that was not occupied for pastoral or any other purposes; but by going to Lansdowne Station, at the head of the Ward River, good country was passed through, on both sides; it was the best land, almost illimitable, which would not only pay for the railway from Roma to Lansdowne, but from Dalby to Roma. He hoped, therefore, that the schedule would be accepted. He

was perfectly aware himself that it would never do to undertake the construction of the railway with the land between Dalby and Roma; and, therefore, he asked for land beyond Roma that would sell well and provide the money that was required. To show that the persons who would be affected by the reserve had no cause to be aggrieved, he might mention that on Mount Abundance Run, the richest run about Roma, the lessees had taken up 40,000 acres on pre-emption. If the Government made a railway to Roma, the value of that land was doubled. They thus made a present to the lessees of £40,000.

MR. MOREHEAD: He must be allowed to correct the honorable member, who was very much in the wrong.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He was obliged to the honorable member for the Mitchell for correcting him; he was under the impression that it was about 33,000 acres.

MR. MOREHEAD: It is not 30,000; it is between 20,000 and 30,000.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Well, there was a large amount—over 20,000 acres, according to the admission of the honorable member for the Mitchell, held by the lessees of that run. They would therefore benefit to the extent of £20,000 by the construction of this line, and it might very fairly be considered that what would be taken away would be more than counterbalanced by that amount. By the construction of this line every acre would become more and more valuable to them; and, in addition to that, they would have the power of going to auction and buying as much more of these lands as they could buy at auction.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: They won't object.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He had no doubt they would not object; and if they did not object he did not see who had any right to object. They were all aware of how much the large pastoral tenants on the Darling Downs had benefited by the construction of the Southern and Western Railway; and he ventured to say that they would not have heard anything about dummie had it not been for the making of that line, simply because it very largely increased the value of the lands. The construction of that line had made the fortunes of these men, and placed them in such a position that men who were desirous of settling actually objected to the land being sold by auction, because they would buy it over their heads. This had arisen entirely from the great advantages afforded by railway communication; and he contended that the pastoral tenants of the Crown, who occupied runs in the districts of Maranoa and Warrego, who would be affected by the Bill, would derive an immense advantage from this line, even though they could not keep their runs intact. They would be able to make larger profits from smaller areas than they now held, and he had no doubt whatever that if the Bill were passed they would be found

fully alive to the benefits to be derived from it. They would have the advantage of taking up their pre-emptive selections at 10s. per acre; these selections would be greatly improved in value by the construction of the line, and he would ask, was not that a very substantial benefit offered in return for the resumption of the land which would be taken from them? He had explained that if the Bill became law, and the Government were authorised to commence the construction of the line from Dalby to Roma, and pay for it by the sale of land, they should have an amount of land placed in their hands which would be sufficient for that purpose. He hoped sincerely that this clause would be passed, because it would be of the greatest importance not only to the inhabitants of the district, but also to the colony at large. If the measure were adopted, and the success attended it which he hoped and believed would attend it, it would be the initiation of a very important scheme of policy, as he believed the principle might be applied to other parts of the colony besides the western districts. He had spoken to one honorable member, from the central district, about the extension of the northern line of railway on the same principle, but that honorable member did not seem to think it was necessary at the present time. Perhaps he feared the land on Peak Downs could not be sold, or perhaps it was thought that if such a scheme were adopted it would split up the northern bunch. He could not understand what argument had led that honorable member to close his eyes to the advantages of the proposal, but he did not seem to think this system would be applicable to the Northern Railway; but he (the Secretary for Public Works) believed that once it was established it would be largely adopted throughout Queensland. He would point out to the House that if the Bill passed as it stood; if the Government were enabled, as he said before, twelve or fifteen months hence to make large sales of valuable Crown lands in the neighborhood of Dalby and Roma, the probability would be that they would be at once able to repay the £250,000, with five per cent interest, into the Treasury, and then that sum would be available for the same purpose—to construct another railway on the same principle elsewhere. He had now fully explained, so far as he thought they required explanation, the details of the Bill, and he might now be permitted to say a few words upon the general policy of the Government in connection with railways, as indicated in this measure. A great deal of this matter was not to be considered solely by itself, but it might be taken as an indication, and must be taken as an indication of the general policy of the Government. Now, the party who at present occupied the Ministerial benches, had for many years been identified with the policy of railway institutions in this colony; and they had been subject to much misrepresentation

on that score. He recollected that it was urged against them that their sole view of a railway policy was the construction of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway, for the sake of spending public money in East and West Moreton, and thereby gaining the support of those constituencies. Now, he thought that since the time of that assertion they had had another railway policy before them, and it was only right that he should take that opportunity, when the first Railway Bill of the present Government was introduced, to point out distinctly how that policy was distinguished from the policy of honorable members on the other side of the House. He would call attention first to the fact that the railway policy of the Liberal party had been always associated with their land policy. In 1863, when the honorable the Premier was a member of the Government who introduced the first railway into Queensland, there was passed during the same session—in fact the two Bills were passed within a few days of each other—a Bill establishing agricultural reserves on the Darling Downs of over 200,000 acres, for the purpose of settling a population along the railway line then proposed to be made. They knew how that policy of the honorable the Premier had been defeated. The agricultural reserves did not pass into the hands of the persons who were expected to have found traffic for that railway.

Mr. PECHAY: Hear, hear.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: The intention of the Government who introduced the Railway Bill and the Agricultural Reserves Bill was defeated. He would not advert to the means employed to defeat it, because the courts of law had already given a decision on the subject; but he would venture to express a hope that that land might yet be recovered and returned to the use to which it was originally dedicated, and that the railway lines in the southern portion of the colony might have the benefit which must arise from an industrial population being settled upon them. He would distinctly point out to the House and the country that the first railway policy established in Queensland, initiated by the honorable gentleman now at the head of the Government, was one connected with the setting apart of land for occupation—for other than pastoral purposes. During the year 1871, soon after he joined that House, it was attempted by some writers in the *Maryborough Chronicle* to excite his constituents against him on account of the part he took in advocating the claims of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway. At that time he wrote a series of letters, which he was not going to inflict up the House; but he might state that they pointed out that the policy of the Liberal party was not to go in for spasmodic expenditure of large sums of money, raised by loan, but by steady expenditure to open up the lands of the colony by means of railways,

and to supply funds for their public works and immigration by the sale of public lands. These letters had the approbation of the leader at that time on the other side of the House, who was then the honorable member for Fortitude Valley, now Mr. Justice Lilley, and they must therefore be taken as also stating the policy of the Liberal party in connection with the railway extensions. He denied most emphatically that they had ever gone in for a policy of profligate expenditure in connection with railways. The advantages which they hoped to obtain from railway extension were not of that unhealthy character which, by borrowing large sums of money, unduly stimulated a trade in one or two years, to result in a disastrous crisis. They wished to take advantage of the natural wealth and the natural resources of the colony in order to provide means for the development of those resources.

MR. PECHAY: Just so.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: And they now asked that House to give them the land in order that they might construct railways with the proceeds, and they had shown that the benefits to be derived from the construction of railways, to open up the country, were much greater than they could be expected to obtain from the sale of lands under the present system. If there was a want which the colony had felt more than another, it was the want of a definite policy in regard to public works; and the party who went in for the construction of cheap railways—who provided for opening up the country by means of the construction of railways—who endeavored to carry out that construction without burdening the colony with interest on loans—and who attempted to carry out the construction of railways from the natural resources of the colony—he considered had claims for the very careful consideration of that House in the measures they proposed. He was not afraid to place the railway policy of the present Government, as indicated by their measures, in comparison with the railway policy of the late Government. They brought forward a policy, not of constructing railways by means of large loans, but by means of land sales, and they showed, by figures beyond dispute, that the result of investing the money now lying dormant in the lands, in railways, would be much more profitable to the country—taking direct returns apart from indirect returns—than any system yet brought forward. They had always endeavored to grapple with the question of cheap railways, which he contended was one of the most important questions Queensland had to deal with, because it was not merely the railway from Dalby to Roma, and further westward that they had to consider. There was also the line from Gympie to Bundaberg, that must be considered, and it must be admitted that, as population increased, the demand for improvement in the means of internal communication was also increasing very rapidly.

They were now spending very large sums upon roads in all parts of the colony, and he believed it could be shown that cheap railways could be constructed at less cost than they could construct a good road. He believed it was perfectly possible to construct a railway, having a speed of ten miles an hour, for less money than a good hard road; and, if that could be done, he said it ought to be done, and that, in making the experiment which they intended to make, if the House supported them, they were doing merely what Queensland had a right to expect from them. He would now direct the attention of the House to the estimates which had been furnished by the Engineer-in-Chief as to the cost of the construction of the first fifty miles of this proposed railway. They had seen, when another party was in power, estimates brought into the House, and votes taken for the construction of railways, which were afterwards more than doubled.

MR. IVORY: We saw that long ago.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He referred to recently—quite recently enough to freshen the memories of the taxpayers of the colony, if not the memory of the honorable member opposite. He would direct the attention of the House to the fact that not only was the railway policy of the Government materially different from the policy of honorable members opposite when in power, but their estimates were materially different also. He would not go into the question now as to whether these sums, which were originally asked for the Brisbane and Ipswich, and Northern railways, were asked for on account—he did not understand that they were on account—but he would point out that there could be no dispute about the estimates for this proposed line, because they were under the hand of the Engineer and would be laid upon the table of the House before Parliament was asked to sanction the work at all.

MR. MCILWRAITH: Are they correct?

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Were they correct? He was not prepared to guarantee the estimates of the Engineer. Why should he be asked to undertake to do so? The honorable member for Maranoa himself knew better than to guarantee the correctness of any estimate he brought in. There was every reason to believe, so far as could be judged, that this estimate was an honest one, and that the Engineer did not contemplate exceeding it. At all events, if he did, his professional character was at stake; he could not deny, as other engineers had denied, that it was his estimate; for they had the fact under his own hand, and the Government could not do more than that. Besides, the Engineer-in-Chief was, he believed, appointed to that post by the honorable member for Maranoa himself; and he did not see, under these circumstances, how that honorable member could call into question the accuracy of his estimates.

Mr. McILWRAITH: He was appointed by the present Ministry.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He believed he was appointed by the honorable member for Maranoa when Minister for Works, and he did not think that honorable member could seriously intend to impeach the accuracy of a gentleman who was so long in his department.

Mr. PALMER: We don't know what he might do under instructions.

Mr. PECHAY: Just so!

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: Well, at any rate the Government did not come forward with estimates which could be disowned—estimates unsigned by the engineer—as had been done. They placed these estimates on the table of the House, signed by the Engineer-in-Chief, and if they were inaccurate, the most that could be said was that the Government had been deceived as much as any one else. He thought it was adding insult to injury when honorable members opposite, who obtained from that House the support of two lines which they would never have obtained if they had made the House acquainted with what the actual cost would be—it was adding insult to injury that, after letting the colony in for an enormous expenditure in that way, they should now come forward and say that because their estimates were fallacious those of the present Government should be distrusted.

An HONORABLE MEMBER: Who said so?

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: It had been insinuated; but because the estimates of the previous Government were found to be fallacious, that was no reason why it should be supposed that those now referred to would be exceeded. He hoped honorable members would not compare the line now proposed with the Brisbane and Ipswich and the northern lines, because the principle was altogether different.

Mr. McILWRAITH rose to a point of order. The honorable member looked directly at him when he said it had been insinuated. Was the insinuation made by him? What was the insinuation? The only insinuation he had heard was that the honorable member's estimate for the Maryborough bridge had been exceeded.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: I had no intention of looking at the honorable member for Maranoa.

The SPEAKER: What is the point of order?

Mr. McILWRAITH: The honorable member was proceeding to deny an insinuation coming from this side of the House, and I wished him to state what it was clearly, so that we might understand it.

The SPEAKER: That is not a point of order.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS: He had no intention of alluding to the honorable member for Maranoa. With regard to the Maryborough bridge, he denied most emphatically that the estimates for that work

had been exceeded, because there had never been any estimates for it. He thought the remarks he had made in the latter part of his speech had been called for by the fact that honorable members on that side of the House had been subjected to much misrepresentation in regard to their railway policy. Now they had brought in a Railway Bill, and declared their policy—the policy they had always advocated. They went in for the construction of cheap railways, and also for paying for those railways by sales of land. He placed the railway policy of the present Government, which had been declared in the present session, before the House and the country, and he challenged comparison between that policy and the policy of the last Ministry. He moved—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. C. J. GRAHAM said he had listened with a great deal of interest to the address of the honorable the Minister for Works in announcing the railway policy of the Government, and he must confess he had been somewhat disappointed in finding that their railway policy was such a meagre affair after all. It appeared to him that although the Bill now before the House might be said in a certain sense to be the exposition of a railway policy, it was, to a great extent, as much a land question as a railway question. It had been said that the Ministry went into office as a railway Ministry, but he said they took office emphatically as a land Ministry. They came into power and still retained that power on the understanding that they were to introduce a comprehensive measure to settle the much-vexed land question of this colony; and yet almost the only thing they had failed to do was to introduce a land policy of that kind. Honorable members had seen one or two Bills brought before the House, which, after various kinds of treatment in their passage through the House, drifted away into nothing. They had had no Bill passed in which a land policy was enunciated; and they had now a Railway Bill brought forward which embraced a land policy totally different from any land policy ever advocated by that side of the House before. The honorable the Minister for Works had attempted to point out that the policy now inaugurated had been the policy of the Liberal party for many years; but, so far as he had been able to understand the policy of honorable members on the other side of the House when in Opposition, it was opposed to the sale of land by auction, or anything which would enable men of capital—men who would expend capital—to acquire it. Their policy, so far as they had one at all, had been to keep land out of the hands of a certain class, and to place it, so far as they were able, in the hands of another class. In that they had signally failed, and had now come round to a much sounder system, he was happy to say, and he

congratulated them upon it. But until the Government gave some intimation of the whole of their land policy, he felt great difficulty in dealing with the question now before the House; and he thought that, under the circumstances [pointed out by the honorable the Premier, about two hours ago—circumstances which he deeply regretted, and which he felt sure every member of the House deeply regretted—that the honorable the Minister for Lands was not likely to appear in his place again that session—and as they were likely to have a new appointment to the office of Minister for Lands, it would be much better that the Bill should be put off until the new Minister had an opportunity of laying before the House what the policy of the Government really was. Looking at the Bill as a railway policy, it did not seem to him to be a very satisfactory one. Even taking the Bill, for the sake of argument, and adopting the views of the honorable the Minister for Works, that the proper way to construct railways was by the proceeds of the sale of land, he did not see how that policy could be carried out. It was possible that the first section, from Dalby to Roma, might be carried out by the sale of lands in the neighborhood of Roma; but he did not see how they could carry out the line from Maryborough to Gympie, or the line promised from Bundaberg to Mount Perry, or other short lines, on the same principle. For instance, there was the line from Warwick to Stanthorpe, which they had been informed outside the House, had been promised, and the line from Maryborough to Gympie, which was also said to have been promised; and yet there was nothing in the Bill providing for the sale of Crown lands for the construction of these lines. Therefore, they had a mere patchwork policy. It was not a policy; it was simply a proposition to adopt a certain system for the purpose of constructing one particular line; and when they came to construct the line from Maryborough to Gympie, he expected they would have a totally different policy. They would probably propose to construct that line by means of money raised by loan, the very course which they strongly condemned the previous Government for adopting. The honorable gentleman commenced his address by dealing with the preamble of the Bill, and to his (Mr. Graham's) mind the preamble of the Bill was one of the most important parts of it. But the honorable member did not confine himself to the Bill, but went into several matters not contained in it. In arguing in favor of the preamble, he merely referred to the portion which said:—"Whereas the making of a railway from Dalby to Roma," but never mentioned "by way of Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria." He left out that portion, and said it would be a great advantage to make a railway from Dalby to Roma, and one of the arguments he used in support of that was, that when the line got to Roma it would open

up a large extent of country lying far away to the western boundary of the colony, which could not now be opened up and occupied, and also that it would attract a great deal of traffic from the south-western portion of the colony which now went down by the Darling River to Victoria or South Australia. But if that was the view of the honorable member, where did he propose to go when he got to Roma? Why, he turned up at right angles, and instead of going west he went north. If the western and south-western traffic was to be attracted, why did he not carry the railway due west from Roma instead of going north? That he (Mr. Graham) objected to most strongly. If it were proposed to construct the line from Dalby to Roma with a view of carrying out a further extension from Roma at some future day, it would be another matter; but the House were asked to commit themselves to a line from Dalby to the Gulf of Carpentaria by way of Roma. He did not suppose the honorable gentleman had any personal acquaintance with the Gulf of Carpentaria or the surrounding country, nor did he think he could have made any inquiries from Government officials or others who knew the locality, and could have given him some information respecting it. So far as personal acquaintance with the district was concerned, he (Mr. Graham) was quite as ignorant as that honorable gentleman, but he had had frequent opportunities of obtaining information on these matters from eye-witnesses, and he had been informed that a vast tract of country there was completely submerged in the wet season, which came regularly every year. He believed there was a portion of the country, extending from within a few miles of the coast about 200 miles southward, which, in the wet season, became one vast inland sea. They had frequently seen telegrams of mailmen being stuck up on isolated patches of dry land for weeks and weeks—of persons being drowned and stock carried away—and he had been informed by those who had been in the district that this was the character of the country through which this railway would have to pass for a distance of about 200 miles. Therefore he thought, putting aside the question whether the line ought to go from Roma westward, the House ought not to commit itself to the extension from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria, which they would do if they passed the second reading of the Bill. Then again, there was another point in the preamble which the honorable gentleman forgot to refer to at all. He went on to say:—"And whereas it is further expedient that such railway should be constructed," leaving out the word "forthwith," which appeared before "constructed." The railway was to be forthwith constructed if the Bill were allowed to pass. He had no doubt it would be found very desirable to construct a line from Dalby to Roma at some time, but he thought that, until the railway works at pre-

sent being carried on were completed, they would not be justified in entering into that undertaking. He was not prepared to say that there were not other new lines from their seaports inland which were more desirable, and would confer even greater benefits on the country than this line from Dalby to Roma. It must be considered that if they read the Bill a second time, they would commit themselves to the immediate construction of that line, and also to the construction, with all possible speed, of the extension from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The argument in favor of the construction of railways by the sale of Crown lands, was an exceedingly pleasant one to contemplate. At the first blush it struck every one as being a splendid thing. Instead of burdening the colony with further charges in the way of interest on borrowed money, it would appear that they would be simply giving the land for the construction of great public works, which would yield a large revenue; but, on looking a little below the surface, it would be found to be more imaginary than real. All the time they had been constructing public works they had also been deriving a large income from the sale of Crown lands, which had all gone into the consolidated revenue, a thing which was now condemned; but while it had been condemned it had not been shown how the annual expenditure would have been met if this money had been devoted solely to public works. If they had appropriated the proceeds of land sales to the construction of railways and other public works they would have had to borrow money to the same extent that they had done to meet ordinary expenditure. In fact they had had to do so at one time, and if the system of appropriating land revenue to public works had been carried out, they would have had to go just as deeply into debt as they had done, to make provision for current expenditure in each year. It was all very well to say—"Let us construct railways by means of the proceeds from lands!" They had no surplus revenue, and if they were going to throw open large tracts of land and drive the capital of the country into purchases of land at not less than ten shillings an acre, a great deal of that capital which would be otherwise expended in ordinary land purchases in other parts of the country would be absorbed, and it would then be extremely likely that they would have to fall back on the land and additional taxation for the purpose of reimbursing the revenue whatever amount might be deficient. He held—and he must confess that he had considerable difficulty in discussing the question, which was as much a land question as anything else—that instead of selling land at the merely nominal price of ten shillings an acre—which was a nominal price, little more than the expense of surveying and bringing it into the market—it would be far better if they could adopt such land laws that, after having raised the capital out of the country to con-

struct railways, they should make the land pay the interest on the money expended in their construction. He was sure, if that could be done, and if they secured to the pastoral tenant a tenure such as any private individual would give, they would raise a revenue from the Crown lands which would amply repay any expenditure they might think it desirable to make in the construction of railways. The construction of railways would increase the value of the lands, and make them much more profitable, and thus enable the pastoral lessees to pay much larger rents than they did now. If, with the construction of railways, they gave these lessees something like security of tenure, they would be able to get double or fourfold the rents they now received: in fact, he thought it was not too great a stretch of fancy to suppose that they might increase the rents of pastoral tenants in the more favored districts of the colony six or even tenfold. He believed it would be a much sounder and much more substantial principle to look upon the lands as the means of paying the interest on loans, than to look for the construction of railways from the sale of lands; because it was well known to every honorable member who had any experience in the colony, that those who invested money in industries in these colonies looked for a considerable profit on the capital invested. If a man invested money in Government securities or mortgage on land, he might be content with five or six or ten per cent., but when he invested it in any enterprise he looked for a very much larger return. On the principle he had indicated they would import money into the colony at four per cent., and the capital in the country would go on producing, as it was now, twenty and thirty per cent.; and the difference between four per cent. and the profit arising from the industry would be the profit to the colony. That would be the advantage gained. Besides, those who held stations now, and had expended large sums upon them, would be compelled to buy largely to save themselves, thus sinking capital in the purchase of land that would be more profitably invested in improving the country and making it more productive. If that money were expended in further artificial supplies of water, fencing, and other numerous improvements, to which he need not refer, there could be no doubt that the capacity of the runs would be largely increased, and corresponding benefits would follow. He looked upon the Bill as an experiment which would not be found sound in practice. He thought it was merely giving an attractive name to something that was really very common-place. The honorable the Minister for Works had pointed out very clearly, and, so far, he quite agreed with him, that the further this line was extended inland, the less, in proportion, would be the working expenses, and the greater, in proportion,

would be the profits. But, if he applied that argument to this proposed line, it would apply with equal force to the Northern line. There they had experience of the evil of too short lines. They had a line about thirty miles in extent, which was not paying the working expenses—the expense of greasing the wheels, as had been said; and he would ask honorable members, of what use the line from Ipswich would be if it went only forty or fifty miles and stopped there? The line to Dalby carried all the western traffic as far as it went, but in the Northern line they had, and would have for some time to come, a line of railway with drays travelling down side by side; and if the honorable member was really sincere in saying that it was necessary, in order to make railways productive, that they should be of a certain length, why not try the experiment—for the Government admitted it was an experiment—on the Northern line, and push it on another hundred miles, with greater rapidity than was being done at the present time? Again, if it was the policy of the Government, as stated, to pay for public works by sales of land, so as not to make them a charge on districts not benefited, why did they not begin by selling land on the Darling Downs, and paying off the debt incurred in the construction of the southern railway and other works? It was said the southern line paid a profit on the working of it, and, although there was a considerable profit, that profit was far less than the annual interest on the cost of construction, which was partially paid for by the inhabitants of the Wide Bay and Burnett, the central, and the northern districts.

AN HONORABLE MEMBER: What about the Northern line—who pays for that?

MR. GRAHAM: He said the charges for these works fell more or less upon the Wide Bay and Burnett, and the Central and Northern districts, and it fell more especially on the districts which had not received any benefits from the money expended. If the Government were sincere in their policy, why begin by taking the extension from Dalby to Roma, and proposing the visionary scheme of one to the Gulf of Carpentaria? Why not set to work by selling the Crown lands on the Darling Downs and elsewhere, where they could get splendid prices, and pay off the debt that had been incurred? That would be carrying out the principle in a much more sound way than the way in which they proposed to carry it out. No political considerations could interfere. What might happen in the country about Roma and to the westward of that place, and in the North, was a matter of no consequence to the party now in power. They knew that, once they got into the unsettled districts, what became of the land and the people on the land, was a matter of very small moment to the honorable gentlemen on the Ministerial benches, who directed their attention to districts nearer the capital from which they drew the great bulk of their

support. There the same principle must not be carried out; they must not have the same principle there: and instead of paying off a portion of the debt, they said, "No, we must keep the land for the industrious settler—the people who send our supporters to Parliament." The honorable the Minister for Works made one good point in his speech, for which he (Mr. Graham) gave him a great deal of credit. He said the greatest injustice would be done to the colony at large if any land were sold to one man at a price less than another was prepared to give, and he supported the honorable gentleman entirely in that, and was glad to see that he had come round to that view. Although he and his party seemed to have been in darkness for a long time, they were at last coming into the clear light of day; and if that policy were carried out in its entirety, he (Mr. Graham) would be one of his warmest supporters, so far as that portion of his speech was concerned. With regard to the Bill itself, it appeared to him that there were a good many clauses which were quite unnecessary. It seemed to provide for very little that was not already provided for under the present Acts. It did not propose to do anything at all until the lands in the railway reserve had been resumed under the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869, but that was the case now; until the land was resumed, nothing could be done. It went on to say:—

"Such resumption shall have the effect of withdrawing the lands so resumed to the extent next hereinafter provided but no further or otherwise and the lessee shall have and be subject to the following rights and liabilities that is to say the land resumed shall be subject to reservation for township reserves"—

And so it might be now, without further legislation.

and public purposes"—

It could be applied now to public purposes. "and shall also be subject to selection and alienation under the provisions of this Act."

If it was a reserve it would be equally subject to selection and alienation under the Acts now in force. It might be thrown open to selection at a minimum price of ten shillings per acre under the Act of 1868, which provided that land in the unsettled districts should not be thrown open at less than ten shillings per acre, and the same thing was provided in this Bill. Then, the lessee was to have a grazing right until the land was selected, and was to have a reduction in his rent in proportion to the area alienated, both of which were provided for in the existing law. In fact, he could see nothing in the fifth clause which was not provided for in the Acts now in force, and he could not understand the object of re-enacting them. If the Government proposed bringing other Acts to repeal the existing Acts, then he thought the House would like to know what were their intentions in that respect. They were

led to suppose that a comprehensive Land Bill would be brought in, and yet they were asked to re-enact these things, without having a single word as to the reason for it, or the changes that might be made. Clause 8 simply provided that the 16th section of the Act of 1868 should not apply to the lands within the reserve, but that was also provided for in the Act of 1868—that the lands should be open to selection at a minimum of ten shillings, or fifteen shillings per acre, he did not know which—and he supposed the object of inserting the clause here was that, when the lands were resumed, they would not be open to selection, so that they might be sold by auction. His impression was that the land in the railway reserves would not be open to selection until proclaimed. If he were right, the course was unnecessary; but if he were wrong, it would be necessary. In clause 9 they found it provided that lands in the reserve might be taken up under the Mineral Lands Act, and he would point out that, whether they were resumed or not, they could be taken up under that Act; and it was the same with reference to the Gold Fields Act, although it was again provided for in this section. Then it said:—

“Under the provisions of the laws in force for the time being relating to the sale of Crown lands by auction.”

Any lands resumed in the unsettled districts could be put up to auction, and the same thing appeared to run through the whole of the clause; he need not detail the various portions of it. They were all provided for in the present laws. Then he came to the conditions, which certainly made some slight differences. The first was:—

“The upset price of country lands offered for sale by auction shall not be less than ten shillings per acre.”

That was provided for in clause 40 of the Act of 1868, which was to the effect that the price of any land in the unsettled district should not be less than ten shillings an acre, whether selected or sold by auction.

“The areas of country lots so offered may be increased to not more than ten thousand acres.”

That was the great point in this Bill. It proposed, instead of limiting the area, as the Act of 1868 did, to 640 acres, it might be sold in blocks of 10,000 acres. That was a very important feature in the Bill. It was so entirely opposed to what had always been the policy of the honorable gentlemen who now occupied the Treasury benches, and the Land Bill of last session, that he was perfectly astounded; and as he had only seen the Bill to-day, having been prevented from reaching town earlier, he was not prepared to discuss that portion of it at the present time. There was another rather suspicious feature about the scheme, which was the provision for homesteads. He should have liked the honorable gentleman to have been a little more explicit on that point; and he thought it would have

been better if the Bill had been framed so as to specify what would be the extent of these homestead areas and the price, and what area a man would be allowed to select as a homestead. All these matters were left untouched, and it was therefore impossible to discuss them. The honorable gentleman was rather more amusing than edifying when he took credit for and claimed that the principles held by the Opposition side of the House were those that were usually propounded by the honorable gentleman at the head of the Government; but he could not carry the House with him. He referred particularly to the year 1863, when the first Railway Act was passed, and alleged that the present Premier had allied his railway policy with his land policy, and that the lands in the railway reserves had provided for the railways. The first agricultural reserves were proclaimed under the Act of 1860.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: No, no; in 1863.

MR. GRAHAM: No; that was an amending Act, honorable members would see. At the time the first Land Act was passed in this colony, the honorable gentleman was a member of the then Opposition, and that Act provided that agricultural reserves should be proclaimed in East and West Moreton, Darling Downs, and on all rivers, for the settlement of population. Nothing was more notorious than the complete way in which that law was defeated. Mountain ranges were reserved for agriculture; and that was when the honorable gentleman held the portfolio of Minister for Lands. There were Relief Acts passed, when the honorable gentleman found that the party with whom he acted was in favor of them. His (Mr. Graham's) main objection to the Bill was that it did not disclose a railway policy, but an isolated proposal to make a certain railway. It was brought before the House under false colors. There was no intention on the part of the Government to extend the line beyond Roma for many years, yet they brought forward a Bill for the construction of a railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. There was not a single honorable member on the Ministerial side of the House who believed in it. He must be carried away completely by the grandeur of the idea, he must be perfectly ignorant of the country proposed to be dealt with. As to the schedule, nearly all the arguments adduced in favor of it went for nothing. He did not see why the country beyond the terminus should not be included. Why not bring the whole of the unsettled districts of the colony into the schedule, so that any land that the two Houses of Parliament chose to include in the schedule might be sold for the making of railways? If that was the policy of the Government, why bring forward a schedule including a few runs only? He begged honorable members to consider the subject very carefully, and to judge whether there was any necessity for the proposed extension at the

present time. He confessed that he could not perceive such a necessity. They all knew that, by opening the line from Dalby to Roma, the railway would advance into a purely pastoral country, from which nothing but pastoral produce would come. If the Government would carry out the policy enunciated during the recess, and complete the northern line out westward before going on with other new lines, they would be more deserving of support, and would receive far greater support than they could secure for their present proposal.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he had listened with much satisfaction to the speech of the Minister for Works in moving the second reading of his Railway Bill, and he must say that he agreed with a good deal that the honorable gentleman had said, though, at the same time, he was bound to disagree with the principle which was laid down in the preamble. He agreed with the honorable gentleman so far as the policy of the Government was indicated to be the sale of land for the construction of railways instead of applying for loans for railway purposes; because the system of loans always bore unequally upon different portions of the colony. If the district which he had the honor to represent was taken into consideration, he thought it could be easily seen that that part of Queensland had as little interest in the construction of railways in the southern part of this colony as in Victoria. If the railway which the Ministry now wished to carry out, from Dalby to Roma, and thence to the Gulf of Carpentaria, was carried out in its integrity, it would be to the disadvantage of certain portions of the North; and it would lead to a system of centralisation that would take away the traffic of all the northern ports.

Mr. PECHBY: He did not see it.

Mr. MACROSSAN: Perhaps not; but he could assure the honorable member for Aubigny that the inhabitants of the North saw it, and they saw it in its proper light. The people of Cooktown, Townsville, or even Rockhampton, had no interest whatever in the construction of a railway from Dalby to Roma and the Gulf of Carpentaria. Besides, he thought that even supposing that railway was constructed—that the population of the country was doubled, and that the production of the country was increased in proportion—it would not do more than what the railway from Rockhampton did for years, pay for the grease for the carriage wheels. He should be glad to assist the Government, if they could prove the necessity for constructing the railway from Dalby to Roma for the purpose of increasing the traffic on the Southern and Western Railway, and so lessening the liability which rested upon the North for the payment of the interest on the railway loan. He should expect the Government to follow the policy that they proposed in the extension of all future lines: it should be applied to the Maryborough and Gympie

Railway, to the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway, and to the Warwick and Stanthorpe Railway. Pledging themselves to the policy of constructing railways by the proceeds of sales of public land, if they proved the preamble of the Bill, that the line from Dalby to Roma would be of great public advantage, they should have his hearty support; otherwise, he could not agree to the Bill as it stood. It was a visionary scheme, to undertake to construct a railway to a place where there was no port. A port had yet to be found in the Gulf of Carpentaria. It was in the mind of the Ministry that in a few years the railway would pay, as the great railway across America paid now; but those honorable gentlemen must remember that the American railway was constructed from one State which had a population four or five times larger than that of Queensland, to connect it with the whole eastern side of the continent, including all the old settled and most populous States of the Union. There, the promoters of the undertaking could look to a reliable income for the expense incurred. Besides that, the line went through lands which could not otherwise be made available for immigration and agriculture. It was beginning to be understood as almost a settled fact, that there was very little use in trying to bolster up or force the settlement of the people on the land, for the purpose of agriculture. He was in Victoria a few months ago, and he saw that many farmers were throwing up their selections, being completely starved out of the country; and the land for which they had paid only a small sum to the State was being sold to capitalists at rates four, five, and even ten times the amount originally paid for it by the selectors; and, of course, the State was robbed to the extent of the difference between what the Government received and the selectors realised. If the Ministry would look at the question in a proper light, they would find that this country was not as well suited for agriculture as Victoria, where, in spite of all the land laws, in spite of the impetus attempted to be given to agricultural settlement, any person who visited that colony must see that the endeavor to force and extend agricultural settlement was a mistake. It was visionary to look for agricultural occupation in the far west of Queensland within the next hundred years. If the line was in operation to Carpentaria, it must depend solely upon the custom and traffic of the pastoral occupants of the land, which never could pay more than a small portion of the working expenses. Taken as one colony, Queensland was in a different position from Victoria or New South Wales. The people in the South were in the habit of looking at things as for the interest of the South, for the interest of the whole country. That was not the case here. For all practical purposes, the colony of Queensland was divided into three or four great

districts, some of them having as little interest in common with Brisbane as with Victoria. For instance, if the railway should be carried out, the trade of Rockhampton and other ports, which was now almost independent of the southern districts, would be destroyed; and the whole commerce of the western country would be centralised in the city of Brisbane.

MR. PECHEY: What about separation?

MR. MACROSSAN: Without entering into any comparison of the railway policy of the present with that of past Governments, which he thought was unsatisfactory to either old or new members, it was sufficient for the present to discuss the question in hand rather than for honorable members on one side of the House to be taunting those on the other side. Honorable members should take the advice lately given to the House about the land question, and "let bye-gones be bye-gones."

MR. FRASER moved the adjournment of the debate.

MR. W. SCOTT said he considered the Government perfectly justified in bringing forward the Bill, as any Government would be; but there was really such inconsistency about it, that he could not say that he approved of it at all. By clause 3, the whole of the lands of the colony were made liable to support one railway line.

HONORABLE MEMBERS: No, no.

MR. W. SCOTT: All Crown lands described in the schedule, or "such further or other area" as might be proclaimed, were to be sacrificed for the railway to the Gulf. Why not carry out the Bundaberg and Mount Perry and the Maryborough and Gympie lines on the same footing, and not confine the policy to one? He should support the Bill, if it took in all railways, but he should oppose it and do all he could to throw it out, if it took all the lands of the colony for one line of railway.

Question put and passed, and debate adjourned until Wednesday next.