

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 1876

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 1 November, 1876.

Question of Order.—Returns.—Adjournment.—The Victoria Bridge Bill.—Railway Reserves Bill.

QUESTION OF ORDER.

Mr. PECHEY said he rose for the purpose of calling attention to a matter that had come under his notice. Certain amendments on the third reading of the Railway Reserves Bill had been placed in their hands—

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is out of order in referring to an Order of the Day, which will come on at a later period of the evening.

RETURNS.

The CLERK having read the list of returns ordered but not yet furnished,

Mr. J. SCOTT asked the honorable the Minister for Works, without notice, when it was probable the return he asked for about six weeks ago would be furnished?

The PREMIER said the return referred to would take about six months to prepare. It was a return of:—

"1. The number and area of resumptions for road purposes, including deviations, in 1874, 1875, and first six months of 1876, in each division of the colony.

"2. The approximate time expended by the officers of the Roads Department in re-surveys and adjustment of selections consequent on such resumptions.

"3. The money cost of such resumptions, specifying the amounts paid for fencing, for survey, and for land resumed respectively, in each division of the colony."

He did not think it could be furnished this session. It would be very voluminous, and take considerable time in preparation.

Mr. J. SCOTT was understood to say, that he believed all the information necessary for the purpose of making out the return was in the office, and it could be prepared in a week at the very outside.

Mr. WALSH asked why the return ordered on the motion of the honorable member for Toowoomba respecting work done in the Ipswich workshops had been kept back? They certainly would not be able to go on with the Estimates of that department until they got that return, and he warned the Government that those estimates would not be passed until it was furnished. Any boy in the department could copy the whole of the correspondence in two or three hours.

The PREMIER said, with regard to the remarks of the honorable member for Spring-
sure, that it would take a month or six weeks to communicate with some portions of the colony, and get an answer back. In reply to the honorable member for Warrego, he could say, the return was being prepared as quickly as possible; and he might also state that the honorable member for Toowoomba altered his motion at his (the Premier's) request, in order that the country might know who ordered

most of the private work executed at the Works Office, Ipswich; and it would be found that more work of that kind had been done while the honorable member for Warrego was Minister for Works than by all the other Ministers for Works since Separation.

Mr. THOMPSON asked when was it probable the return respecting coal contracts would be printed? There seemed to be some extraordinary delay in the printing of it.

The PREMIER said he could not get the Surveyor's reports ready under three weeks. They had been sent to the lithographic office, and he was informed they could not possibly be got ready in less than three weeks.

Mr. PALMER said it was a matter of serious importance that these returns were not furnished. If the Government Printing Office could not do the work, there were other offices in town, and the work should be sent out. He believed the Government Printing Office was quite able to do the work, and they should have the returns.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no delay in the Printing Office, and he believed it was in the Lithographic Office. He thought, considering the amount of work to be done in the printing office, it was very well kept up.

Mr. PECHEY, referring to the matter he had previously mentioned, said he thought, when the business of the House was interfered with by a matter that required correction, and that could be corrected in a few minutes, it was in the power of any honorable member to endeavor to set it right. This paper (amendments to be moved on third reading of Railway Reserves Bill) had not been placed in the hands of honorable members in the usual form. It did not state by whom the amendments were to be moved.

The SPEAKER: The honorable member is out of order. The paper which he alludes to is not before the House; it is in the hands of honorable members, but it is not before the House.

Mr. WALSH said, speaking to the point of order, he thought the honorable member for Aubigny intended to conclude with a motion; but before the House understood the subject on which he wished to speak, he was shut up. He (Mr. Walsh) thought it was the duty of members of the House to endeavor to protect each other.

ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. WALSH said the reason why he was desirous that the honorable member for Aubigny should move the adjournment of the House was, that he might have an opportunity of calling attention to a statement, which he did not remember having heard at the time, made by that honorable member against a class of gentlemen in the colony, who certainly should never be assailed in that Chamber, except on the most necessitous grounds. The honorable member had

made one of the grossest attacks he (Mr. Walsh) had ever heard of, upon one of the most respectable and useful classes in the colony—namely, the unpaid magistrates. He was completely shocked when he saw the statement, and he had no idea that such language would have been allowed to pass unchallenged in that House. He could not allow it to go unchallenged for one moment beyond the time necessary to call attention to it. He should, no doubt, be told, that it did not matter what the honorable member for Aubigny said about anybody; but he maintained that as a member of that House, he (Mr. Pechey) held a position equal to any other member in it. At any rate, he was able to make his opinions known, and if his statements on a question of this kind were allowed to go unchallenged, it was a disgrace to the House. He did not hesitate to say the honorable member had libelled the class to which he had referred; and the Government either were aware that such things existed, or they had not manliness enough to get up and defend the unpaid magistrates of this colony, and why? Simply because the honorable member who made those libellous charges was one of their supporters. Here was the statement respecting the magistrates of the colony that he found perpetuated in their own records,—in the report of the proceedings of the 24th of October, in "Hansard"—

"There were many men in his own district who were a disgrace to their position as magistrates, and who rarely sat upon the bench unless they were requested to do so, and whether the bribe came in the way of cash or in the shape of some influence which they supposed they gathered from the position, he had not the slightest doubt there was some *quid pro quo* of that kind offered, and the sooner it was done away with the better."

He said such a charge ought never to have been uttered against a body of gentlemen in this colony who were doing honorary duty, and who were doing it, he believed, in the most honorable way. Never before was such a charge made in that chamber without the Government or the Attorney-General calling upon the honorable member to substantiate his statement, or getting up and repudiating it. He considered it his duty to call the attention of the House to this most damaging statement, which he believed could not be substantiated, and which he thought the Government ought to have refuted the moment it was made; and he said it was a standing disgrace that such a statement should be recorded in "Hansard." He moved—

That this House do now adjourn.

Mr. MORGAN said it was not his intention to say anything whatever reflecting upon the unpaid magistrates of the colony. He believed, as a rule, they did their duty fairly and well, and he had not a word to say against the appointments to the Commission of the Peace that had been made by the present or

any previous Government; but he knew, and he did not care by whom the appointments were made, that there were magistrates in his own district who made it a rule—with scarcely an exception—never to appear on the bench except for the purpose of revising the electoral rolls. He knew that for a fact; he had pointed it out to them, and they were equally candid in admitting it. They did their duty quite in their own way, and he knew others who were almost as careless in the performance of their magisterial duties unless they were hunted up to pack a bench. He knew for a fact that they were hunted up, and that, even in Brisbane, country magistrates were hunted up to go on the bench to outvote the local magistrates. He did not endorse the statement of the honorable member for Aubigny, but he knew there were some cases in which magistrates did not do their duty in a broad general way, but they went on the bench whenever they liked.

Mr. GROOM thought if there was one thing more than another to which the attention of House ought to be directed, it was the necessity or securing the administration of justice without the slightest taint of suspicion; because, if once the report went abroad that benches of magistrates acted in the way described, it was impossible to say what might be the injury the general public would sustain. He was pretty well acquainted with the gentlemen who occupied the position of magistrates in Toowoomba, from the Police Magistrate downwards, and in the course of his professional work he was very frequently in the court-house, and he had no hesitation in saying that the statement referred to was a libel on the magistrates of the Darling Downs. He did not believe there was any gentlemen who had been appointed to the Commission of the Peace on the Darling Downs, and certainly not in Toowoomba, who would be mean enough, or base enough, to take a sum of money to go on the bench to adjudicate cases, for that was the charge alleged against them; and if the honorable member for Aubigny knew of any such case, it was his duty to report it to the Government, because he (Mr. Groom) should like to know what confidence could be placed in the bench if that were the case? So far from the magistrates being in attendance on the bench in Toowoomba, the fact was they did not attend at all, and in nine cases out of ten the Police Magistrate was alone on the bench to perform his work; and the only cases in which the bench was packed—if it were packed—was on the occasion of granting publicans' licenses and appointing persons to collect the electoral rolls. There was a magistrate on the Darling Downs who committed the indiscretion, on the day before the licensing meeting, to send a circular to his brother magistrates, asking them to attend on the bench, and he picked out certain innkeepers whose licenses he wished to get

refused. Beyond that, he had not heard any complaints whatever against the unpaid magistrates of Toowoomba. He thought the honorable member for Aubigny had a little overstepped the mark, and that it was his duty either to satisfy the Government that his charges were true; and if they were not true, in justice to the magistrates, he ought to withdraw the expressions he made use of on last Tuesday. His (Mr. Groom's) attention was called to the report in "Hansard" that morning, and he was asked whether it was really true that the magistrates of Toowoomba would be guilty of taking money to adjudicate in certain cases. He knew the names of the magistrates, and he did not believe any one of them would lend himself to any such proceeding. It was a very serious accusation to make, and as he said before, from his own knowledge of the bench of Toowoomba, both personally and otherwise, he was certainly of opinion that it was a libel on their character, and the honorable member was bound either to prove the charge or to withdraw it.

Mr. PECHAY said, since the honorable member for Warrego had referred to this matter, he had taken the trouble to read through the report in "Hansard" of the speech he made on the occasion the honorable member had mentioned, and he found that his opinions were very well reported there. There was not one word that he could see from glancing through the report, that he would attempt for one moment to retract. He would rather try and enforce it. He would like it to ring out like a bell in the hearing of every man who had the interests of the colony at heart. It was one of those matters that should receive more consideration than any other; and he was surprised to find the honorable member for Toowoomba getting up in that House, and charging him with trying to libel the magistrates of the colony; for he knew that if the records of the House were hunted up—which he had not had time to do since this matter had been brought up—it would be found that there was no member of the House who had more strongly enforced the idea that he had tried to enforce—whether in better terms or in worse terms than that honorable member he did not know—but there was no member of the House who had dwelt more upon the subject of a revision of the Commission of the Peace than the honorable member for Toowoomba himself. That being the case, he would ask, was it at all to the good of the district that honorable member represented, or of the district which he (Mr. Pechay) had the honor to represent, or was it to the good of the colony at large, that that honorable member should always consider it to be his duty to try to subtract from any advice he (Mr. Pechay) might offer to the House or the Government, with perfect honesty of intention, in the manner he had done now? He said it was impossible for a district to be well served,

when an honorable member was prepared to make accusations in the manner the honorable member for Toowoomba had done. As he said before, he believed the report in "Hansard" to be a thoroughly accurate report of the words he had used, and he was not inclined to retract one iota of the statement. He would rather try to emphasize it; and he was quite sure that he could produce many instances, were it necessary, where his words would be borne out. Probably he had now said sufficient on the subject; he might have an opportunity on some future occasion of ventilating his views respecting it perhaps more strongly than he had done heretofore. Now, if the statements in that report were so important as to have interested the honorable members for Warrego and Toowoomba to the degree that their remarks would lead the House to suppose, why, he would ask, was that report not published at any length in the columns of the papers of the country, which were supposed to inform the people who sent members to that House, what their representatives said from time to time? Why, it was simply because he found it to be his duty to call attention to the dereliction of duty on the part of the people who occupied that position. Now, he had another dereliction of duty to call attention to, which he had tried twice before to bring under the notice of the House. Certain amendments had been placed in their hands purporting to be amendments which would come before the House some day; but they were not told on the face of the amendments who was the mover of them. Was it possible that members who were editors of newspapers knew so much about the management of the Printing Office that they could go there and get their amendments put before the House in a different form from what any other honorable member could? If that was the case, he said the sooner every one of them had the means of doing so by having a newspaper, or by attempting to start a "rag," the better. He would not sit for one instant under the obloquy that had been attempted to be poured on his head by different members in the manner in which it had been done, without replying. He was there to answer every accusation that might be made against him, and to represent his constituents to the best of his ability; but he might fail, sometimes. They were all liable to failures—to great weaknesses and failures, and they should be a little charitable sometimes, but possibly no such idea entered into the heads of honorable members who made these sort of accusations. He did not ask for charity; he only expected abuse. It was what he had always received from honorable members opposite, and what he supposed he would receive until the end of time; and that being the case, he supposed he must be prepared to sit under it.

Mr. PALMER said he certainly thought, on a subject of this kind the honorable the

Colonial Secretary or some member of the Government would have risen to say whether they believed the statement of the honorable member for Aubigny was correct or not. He considered it was peculiarly the duty of the Colonial Secretary to defend the unpaid magistracy in that House when they were attacked. The honorable member for Aubigny had made a very sweeping charge, and he (Mr. Palmer) confessed that although he heard the honorable member's speech he did not pay any attention to what he said. The charges he brought forward were:—

"There were many men in his own district who were a disgrace to their positions as magistrates, and who rarely sat upon the bench unless they were requested to do so, and whether the bribe came in the way of cash or in the shape of some influence which they supposed they gathered from the position, he had not the slightest doubt there was some *quid pro quo* of that kind offered, and the sooner it was done away with the better."

Well, if that were true, the duty of the honorable member was very clear. He should bring the names of those gentlemen under the notice of the Government, and not take the advantage of his position in that House to libel the whole of the magistrates of that district in the manner he had done, knowing very well that he was not responsible for his statement. He very much doubted whether the honorable member was prepared to make that statement out of the House; he thought he would hardly attempt it. He (Mr. Palmer) hardly knew who were the members of the Toowoomba bench; he did not even know their names, but he was certain from his experience of the magistracy of the colony, that this was a gross libel on those gentlemen as a body. That there were bad members of the magistracy he supposed nobody would deny; and that no Government could be responsible for bad appointments of that kind was equally true. If the Colonial Secretary took all possible care that the magistrates were recommended by men whom he believed to be good judges as to their fitness to be appointed on the Commission of the Peace, he thought he had done his duty; but he could not avoid making some bad appointments. He (Mr. Palmer) confessed to having made some such appointments, but, of course, he did not know it at the time, or he should not have made them. He said when a libel of that sort was uttered in the House by a member, who was not responsible, it was no disgrace to the magistracy, but it was a disgrace to the member who made the charge, unless he was prepared to substantiate it. That, the honorable member had not done; and even now, when he was perfectly safe, and when it could not be brought against him outside the House, he had not mentioned the names of those magistrates, or brought forward a single instance in support of his statement. He had merely repeated his assertion, which would go as the asser-

tion of the honorable member for Aubigny and nothing more. He said it was disgraceful that a member should take advantage of his position in that House to libel a body of gentlemen in the manner the honorable member for Aubigny had done; and he was very much astonished that the honorable the Colonial Secretary, or the honorable Attorney-General, who ought to know something as to how magistrates conducted themselves on the bench, had not made some remarks as to whether he believed those statements or not. It must have come under his knowledge, or under the notice of the honorable the Colonial Secretary, how affairs in connection with the bench at Toowoomba were conducted, and yet when the honorable member for Aubigny got up and repeated this libel, no member of the Government rose to contradict it. The impression that would go abroad from the statement of the honorable member for Aubigny was, that they had a corrupt bench at Toowoomba, and the Government were afraid to deal with it. That was the impression that must go abroad when they found no member of the Government rising to reply to that statement.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he heard part of the honorable member for Aubigny's speech when this supposed attack on the magistrates of the district in question was made, but he did not notice the words uttered. However, the honorable member had repeated them now; and so far as he (the Colonial Secretary) was concerned, he had heard no complaint about the bench at Toowoomba, or about the unpaid magistrates in any part of that district; and unless the honorable member had some definite proof to bring forward, his statement must go for very little. The Government were not prepared to defend general charges like that, without something more definite being brought before them. They had no knowledge of the matter, and he confessed that he did not know who the justices of the peace were in that district; nor did he think the matter came particularly under the Colonial Secretary's department, as the honorable member for Port Curtis had mentioned. The paid magistrates came under the Colonial Secretary's department, but the Colonial Secretary had nothing to do with the unpaid magistrates.

Mr. PECHEY said he might be allowed to explain, with regard to the remarks of the honorable member for Port Curtis, that it was sometimes his (Mr. Pechey's) duty to be prudent.

Mr. WALSH, in reply, said he had never heard such a defence as that made by the honorable the Colonial Secretary against one of the most honorable classes in this colony—a class which he felt ought to be especially under the protection of the Colonial Secretary, and when a black sheep was found amongst them, he should be turned out by the Colonial Secretary. Every

member of that House, in making a statement, was supposed to do so on his honor, and on his knowledge of the fact which he stated—that he knew it to be true; and yet when this charge was reiterated, in even a more forcible way this evening than it had been previously, the honorable the Colonial Secretary made light of it. It was not a light matter to have amongst the magistracy, especially of an important district like the Darling Downs, men who would receive pay for their services—who could be bought and sold. A more disgraceful explanation in extenuation than that made by the honorable the Colonial Secretary he had never heard in his life. The charge was not only made and re-made by a member of the House, but it also came from a brother-magistrate, and he sincerely trusted that there was honor enough amongst the magistrates of that district, if there was not enough in the Minister or the Government, to say whether these charges were true or untrue—to call the honorable member for Aubigny to account. He challenged that honorable member to say outside the House what he had said inside of it. He challenged him to go on the Bench and make the same statement. The honorable member vented his spleen against his brother-magistrates by making statements of that kind in the House; but that was nothing compared with the conduct of the Government, who had been twice told that such things existed—that such crimes were practised in the colony, and they could not see that it was their duty to interfere. In the early days of the colony, if the slightest breath of suspicion was cast on magistrates, immediately the Attorney-General used every effort to ascertain whether there was any truth in it, and if there was, they were at once removed from the Commission of the Peace. But here was a wholesale charge made against the magistracy of the Darling Downs. The honorable member said the report in "Hansard" was strictly accurate, and he would not withdraw it; and they found the honorable the Colonial Secretary, simply because that honorable member voted with the Government, getting up and trying to turn the matter into one of little or no importance. Could there be any more important subject in this colony—amongst free men—than that the benches of magistrates, the administrators of the law, should be pure and above reproach? Was there anything more solemn and more necessary for them to look to and to guard than that? And yet, although these charges had been repeated, and he thought the honorable member said he could give the names, but he had not dared to do so—notwithstanding all the information that had reached the honorable the Colonial Secretary's ears, he could see nothing to cause the Government to interfere. He should be ashamed, if he were Colonial Secretary, to make such a statement. Here the magistrates of the colony were charged

with selling their magisterial services for money, and the Government took no action in the matter. The Government were steeped in degradation to allow such a statement to be made, owing to their not having an Attorney-General who was jealous of the public honor. A comfortable seat on one of those benches was of far more consequence to him (the Attorney-General) than that of raising up the colony in its moral position, and seeing that gentlemen who were sworn to do certain duties did not receive fees for doing them. He deeply regretted that the Government had made so light of a very serious matter.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the honorable member for Warrego had used his right of reply to attack him, and he began by saying that every member of the House was supposed to speak upon his honor, and to say nothing but what he knew to be true, and he should recommend that maxim to the honorable member himself, for he thought, if he had borne that in mind, he (Mr. Walsh) would not have made the accusation he did against him. He (the Attorney-General) never heard anything about this matter until he heard the honorable member for Port Curtis reading from "Hansard," and the honorable member, he supposed, following the rule that an honorable member should never say anything unless he knew it to be true, tried to found on that a reason for attacking him—that the reason why improper persons sat on the bench was some misconduct of his. He thought it was unnecessary to say anything more on the subject; the honorable member for Warrego had not followed the rule he had laid down himself.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had a few remarks to make in reply to the honorable the Attorney-General. He could not, perhaps, bring forward proof in such a strong way as suggested by the honorable member for Warrego, but the statement he was about to make was, he believed, substantially correct; but, of course, he was subject to correction. It was this: A short time ago the honorable the Attorney-General had brought under his notice the conduct of a merchant in this city with reference to his connection with a certain insolvency case. The Attorney-General, after carefully perusing the documents, said he did not think it was a case in which he, on behalf of the Crown, should institute a criminal prosecution; but when the parties went a little further, and took the necessary steps to commence a prosecution against the merchant, what did they find? That the Attorney-General, with all the knowledge he had gained from the evidence, which was supposed to be sufficient to convict, accepted a brief for this merchant's defence in one of the courts of this colony. Those were facts; they spoke for themselves, and required no comment from him.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the statements of the honorable gentleman were not facts. It was a fact that some time ago a statement made by a convicted prisoner in gaol was laid before him. Upon that it was suggested that he should file an *ex officio* information against a merchant in this city; but considering that the statement made by the prisoner in gaol had been contradicted by his own sworn evidence, he (the Attorney-General) said he could not, consistently with his duty, upon such material as that, exercise the right of filing a criminal prosecution—a right which had never yet been exercised in this colony. Those were the facts, and he thought it extremely unfair, although names were not mentioned, that the matter should be referred to in this way, and that accusations should be made by the honorable member for Mitchell against an individual in this city, which he thought the honorable member would not like to make outside, and which could not be answered without disclosing the name. He thought he was bound not to refer to the other part of the matter for that reason.

Question—That this House do now adjourn—put and negatived.

THE VICTORIA BRIDGE BILL.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for the resumption of the debate on the motion of the Colonial Treasurer—

That this Bill be now read a second time,—

Mr. BUZACOTT said that he had not expected that he would have been called upon at that early period of the evening to discuss the measure before them, especially in the absence of the honorable member for South Brisbane, who, from having moved the adjournment of the debate on the last occasion, might have been expected to commence it that evening, and more especially as the first business on the paper was the third reading of the Railway Reserves Bill. He wished to point out that the taking over by the Government of the Victoria Bridge, involved a much more important question and a much larger sum of money than was indicated by the Bill before the House. That Bill stated that a sum of £120,945 should be paid by the Treasurer, and that on the Government undertaking to pay the debentures to that amount with interest thereon, possession should be given to them of certain lands which had been estimated a long time ago at the value of £52,000, or thereabouts; but there would be a demand made on the Government for something like £250,000 if they took over the Victoria Bridge. He should like to point out that if the Government took over that bridge and made it free of toll, they would inaugurate a system of free bridges, which must be extended from one end of the colony to the other, and as a member representing a distant constituency, he maintained that no exception must be made in the case of the metropolis.

He maintained that if the Victoria Bridge was a highway to Brisbane, the Maryborough bridge was a highway to Maryborough, and the Mackay bridge was a highway to Mackay. He had been informed the other day that they were still charging tolls at the Maryborough bridge, which he had been very much surprised to hear. If all bridges were made free, he did not see how tolls of any sort could be charged on ferries, or, in fact, on any kind of communication. He did not say that if the House were to affirm the principle that all highways should be free, they would be affirming a principle which could not be sustained; for he was well aware that in England and elsewhere tolls were now being looked upon as obsolete, and, by many men who studied such matters, as obstacles to commerce and communication, which were not compensated for by the revenue derived from them. It was, however, a question for that House to consider whether the colony, with so many large and important works already in hand, with others shortly to be undertaken, and owing public creditors a very large sum of money, was in a position to relinquish tolls on public works which involved an annual payment of £12,500 for interest, and which represented capital amounting to £250,000. He need not enter into the history of the bridges at present constructed in the colony or of those about to be constructed, but he would point out that they were only beginning to make bridges; if the Victoria Bridge was made a free bridge, applications for free bridges would be coming in from all parts of the colony. If tolls were to be charged, that would of itself repress the ardor of constituencies; but when it was known that any structure of the kind would be free of toll, then there would be indiscriminate applications for free bridges all over the country, or, perhaps, for half-a-dozen bridges over the same river. Therefore, he did not wish the House to be misled when they were asked to consent to the Victoria Bridge being taken over by the Government. It was not merely the question of £120,000, or the interest on that sum, but, as he had endeavored to point out, it was a far wider question. There was one important matter to be considered in connection with the bridge. The railway between Brisbane and Ipswich had been constructed at the public cost; but he was informed that persons living at South Brisbane, through having to pay bridge tolls, were put to more expense than if they chose to live a little way up the railway line, and pay their fares. That seemed ridiculous, and he thought that they must either abolish the bridge tolls or raise the railway fares; it was not fair to the people of South Brisbane that they should be put to greater expense in simply crossing the river than the residents of Toowoong were, who took advantage of the railway. The railway had been constructed at

public expense, and the bridge at the expense of the municipality of Brisbane, and he thought that if there was to be a charge on either, the higher charge should be on the railway. It had been laid down by some advocates of railways, that the fares for travelling on them must be made reasonable, so as to induce people to go and reside along them; but that when a population was settled, the fares could be raised. That, he considered, was a miserable huckstering system which the legislature should discontinue in every way. The fares should be such as to be remunerative to the department, and certainly should not be lowered to a price below which the service could be performed, in order to attract people to live along the line. He could easily understand the circumstance that the people of South Brisbane were anxious to have the bridge made free, and he thought they were quite justified in being so. He thought it might be a good thing if the Government were to take over the bridge and continue the tolls; although he was aware that the Corporation did not wish the bridge to be transferred, except on the understanding that it was to be made free. He understood that at the present time the whole of the municipal rates were mortgaged to debenture-holders as security, and that consequently the Council were not in a position to offer any security to the Government, or the money lenders, for such sums as were absolutely necessary to pay the cost of improving the city, making the streets at all respectable, and to carrying on sanitary reforms. He thought the state of the city, so far as its sanitary arrangements were concerned, was discreditable to the metropolis of Queensland; and it was really a question to be considered, whether by taking over the bridge, and thus relieving the municipality from the heavy interest it had to pay, and the conditions under which the whole of its revenue was mortgaged, they would not be doing a public service. It was a matter requiring consideration, whether the Government should take over the bridge at all; but their making it a free bridge was a different question, and he considered, on the whole, that they would be hardly justified in doing away with the tolls. He felt that if they took over the bridge, and still charged a toll, they would probably be in a position to undertake the structure of works of a similar character in other parts of the colony, which under a free system would have to be deferred, and also, that in making the bridge entirely free, they might be doing what they were not called upon to do. If it was decided to take the bridge over at all, then the question arose what would be a fair price for the Government to pay for it? He found that the original contract was taken for £52,000, but that afterwards alterations were made in the design, and other things occurred which brought the cost up to £143,000, and what

the Council now asked the Government to pay for it was, £121,000, that being the amount actually due to the debenture-holders. He had no doubt that that £121,000 was a great deal more than the bridge was worth, and that a similar structure could be erected for something like £70,000 or £75,000; if so, what were the arguments in favor of giving £40,000 or £50,000 more for it? He had no doubt that the Municipal Council had made all sorts of mistakes, and that they had rushed into the construction of a work of which they knew very little at the time, and he had no doubt that if honorable members looked into all the correspondence which had taken place since 1864, they would find that such had been the case. He might also remark that he considered, before that House was asked to deal with a matter of this sort, all the correspondence bearing upon it should have been placed before them. He believed also from various things which had come to his knowledge, that the Council had been very improperly interfered with, and that if it had not been for the action of the central authorities, the bridge would have been completed for £60,000 or £70,000. That being the case, he thought it might fairly be considered whether under all the circumstances the Council had not an equitable claim, and the amount of £121,000 should not be paid. There was no doubt that the Municipal Council of Brisbane was at the present time practically insolvent, and he thought it was not desirable that the metropolis of the colony should be in the hands of a Council which was, in fact, insolvent. He thought, therefore, that if the House could extend a helping hand without demoralizing the Council itself—if it could give an encouraging hand to assist the Council in adopting a better principle in the management of its affairs in future, it should do so. They had heard a great deal, during the short debate which had taken place on the Bill, of the enormous mistakes made by the Corporation of Brisbane; but it must be remembered that when the bridge was commenced, the Council had been in existence for only a very short time, and that the aldermen had had very little experience of the working of municipal institutions; it was, therefore, only natural to expect that mistakes should have occurred. Supposing £40,000 or £50,000 had been fooled away on the bridge, had not larger sums of money been fooled away by the central authorities? How far, he would ask, need they go from Brisbane to see how a far larger sum had been foolishly expended in public works? They had only to look at the railway between Brisbane and Ipswich; so that if the Corporation had made mistakes, the central Government had made greater ones—in fact, if they had made such great mistakes as the central authorities, they would have ceased to exist long ago. As those mistakes on the part of the Corporation occurred so long back, and

as he had noticed that the Council had lately been endeavoring to carry on its affairs in a better way, he thought that House should give them another opportunity of proving to the people of Brisbane that it need not be a disgrace to the colony, but that it was perfectly able to manage its own affairs. Seeing that the bridge was worth from £60,000 to £70,000, and seeing that the cost additional to that was incurred through the conduct of the central authorities, he did not think that the House should hesitate over a few thousand pounds. He did not attach much value to the land which it was proposed to hand over to the Government, for he thought that instead of their being worth £50,000 they would not realise more than one-half that. He knew that it had been said, that the Corporation could not erect the bridge they had intended to do, in consequence of the interference of the Government of the day, and he was willing to admit, at the same time, that they made any number of mistakes ten years ago. Taking everything into consideration, he did not think that the Council should be refused another chance. If he gave his vote in favor of the Bill, he should do so with the object of giving temporary aid to the Corporation, and with the hope that it would enable them to retrieve their character and become the pattern municipality it should be as the metropolis of Queensland, towards which all other municipalities should be able to turn for instruction. That was what it should be; but the whole secret of the degradation of the Council for the last ten years was that it had been in a practical state of insolvency. No man who valued his reputation would join an insolvent firm, and so with the Municipal Council of Brisbane. No man valuing his character cared to be a member of it; it was, in fact, so involved that no amount of attention on the part of the members of it, no effort, no economy, could retrieve it from its unfortunate position. But if they could once more place the municipality of Brisbane in its normal condition, he had no doubt that they would see citizens coming forward who would take care to conduct its affairs in a proper business manner in future. There had been one cause of the misfortunes which had fallen upon the municipality of Brisbane, more particularly in the early days of the colony, namely, that when the citizens got into any kind of trouble, they went to the Government for assistance—if they wanted funds they went to the Treasurer, and if their aldermen did not treat them well, they went to the Attorney-General. Instead of attempting to rectify matters themselves, they were constantly going to the central authorities for help, and he believed that a great deal of the evil which had fallen on them had resulted from that practice. If there had been a proper system, the members of the Municipal Council would have scorned

the idea of going to the Government of the day as they had done. But it was not only the Municipal Council who had been in fault, for he was afraid that the whole course of legislation had been in a wrong direction. The policy had been to interfere with the affairs of the municipality and to weaken and degrade the civic authorities. The great secret of the success of the Rockhampton municipality had been that it had hitherto shown itself capable of conducting its own affairs, and had not allowed any interference on the part of the Government; it had entirely by its own efforts become one of the most flourishing and respectable municipalities in the colony. That House had interposed when the bridge was being built by the Brisbane Corporation, and had thereby caused a great deal of mischief; then, again, they had interfered when the Corporation constructed their water-works; they said that the Council were not fit to take the management of them, but that they must be given into the hands of an irresponsible Board. Then the Government established a local Board of Health, who could authorise the expenditure of money, and send those people whom they employed to the Municipal Council for payment. That Health Board might be, and no doubt was, a very excellent institution, but it, too, was totally irresponsible, and to that was greatly owing the bad system of sanitary government in Brisbane. Some time ago, the municipality of Rockhampton were asked if they would have a local Board of Health established there, and they immediately appointed a committee to consider the matter, who, after giving the matter great attention, decided at once that if the sanitary condition of the town required improvement they would do it themselves. The mere fact of such an application having been made to the municipality of Rockhampton spurred them on to do a work before they might otherwise have done it; and he believed the Council of Brisbane would have done the same thing if they had been consulted in time. During the last year, when the drainage of the city was under consideration, it was decided that the Municipal Council could not be allowed to take the matter into their own hands, but that it must be carried out by the central authorities; and then again, with regard to the fire brigades, they had to go to that House for assistance, and asked to have the management of them entrusted to boards. He did not say those things could be helped under the circumstances, as the Municipal Council of Brisbane was in a state of insolvency, and hence their present unfortunate position. But he considered that when the Government took the work of drainage into their hands, which properly belonged to the Council, and threw upon that House the liability of that work, and when they now asked to relieve the Corporation by taking over the Victoria Bridge, they flew in the face of constitutional autho-

rities. All were agreed that local government was a thing to be cherished and strengthened, and not emasculated, and that instead of trying to humble the Council, they should have endeavored to encourage it and elevate it, so that to be a member of it should be sought by persons as an honor. He did not often trouble the House by reading extracts from books, but to show honorable members that the views he put forward were supported by well-known authorities on such matters, he would read a few quotations which he had selected as bearing upon the subject. Mr. John Stuart Mill said:—

"Now, it is quite hopeless to induce persons of a high class, either socially or intellectually, to take a share of local administration in a corner by piecemeal as members of a Paving Board or a Drainage Commission. The entire local business of their town is not more than a sufficient object to induce men whose taste incline them, and whose knowledge qualifies them, for national affairs to become members of a mere local body, and devote to it the time and study which are necessary to render their presence anything more than a screen for the jobbing of inferior persons under the shelter of their responsibility."

Then, again, speaking of the position of a mayor, Mr. Mill said:—

"He occupies in the locality a position analogous to that of the Prime Minister in the State; and under a well-organised system, the appointment and watching of the local officers would be the most important part of his duty; he himself being appointed by the Council from its own number, subject either to annual re-election or to removal by a vote from the body."

Again, on the same subject of representative bodies, Mr. Mill went on to say:—

"The practical conclusion from these premises is not difficult to draw. The authority which is most conversant with principles should be supreme over principles, while that which is most competent in details should have the details left to it. The principal business of the central authority should be to give instruction, of the local authority to apply it. Power may be localised, but knowledge, to be most useful, must be centralised; there must be somewhere a focus at which all its scattered rays are collected, that the broken and colored lights which exist elsewhere may find there what is necessary to complete and purify them."

He thought the Bill which had been introduced that session afforded to the Government an excellent opportunity of making all municipalities strictly carry out the provisions of the Act under which they were incorporated. If they could not prove that they had kept their accounts in strict accordance with the terms of that Act, the Government should withhold the payment of the endowment to which they might be entitled. He found that not only Mr. Mill, but also other authorities said that that principle was a perfectly correct one, that the central authorities should have no power to interfere with the actual work of the municipalities.

De Toqueville, when writing on the American system of townships and municipal bodies, said :—

“Municipal freedom eludes the exertions of men. . . Nevertheless local assemblies of citizens constitute the strength of free nations. Municipal institutions are to liberty what primary schools are to science ; they bring it within the people's reach ; they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. A nation may establish a system of free government, but without the spirit of municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty.”

He would not detain honorable members with reading more quotations, and he was afraid he had already trespassed too long on their time ; but he would just add that there should be an understanding that, if the House agreed to take over the bridge, they should also compel the Council to take its water-works into its own hands, and pay as quickly as possible the interest upon them. At present all the money raised from them was applied to extensions ; and he believed he was only stating an actual fact when he said that not one farthing of interest had been paid. At Rockhampton the case was very different—there they had expended £15,000, and at the end of the first twelve months had paid not only working expenses, but interest—and he did not see why the Brisbane Municipal Council should not do the same. He thought, therefore, that the House should insist upon the Council taking charge of all local affairs, and should see that they managed them properly. He thought he had said sufficient to show that although he should vote for taking over the bridge, it was not with the object of log-rolling, or in order that he should make an attack on the Government for anything for Rockhampton. He had no hesitation in saying that last year he had had an offer made which, if he had accepted it, would probably have resulted in the Fitzroy bridge being constructed before now ; but he had refused that offer ; and he thought that if honorable members would all take the same stand that he did, and allow applications made by them to rest on their merits alone, there would be fewer attacks on the revenue, and they would find that the Treasurer was more able to meet the demands of the colony.

Mr. MORGAN said it was not his intention to occupy the time of the House very long with the few remarks he had to make, but on a question of such public importance as that now before them, he did not think it would be his duty to give a silent vote. With a great many of the remarks of the honorable member for Rockhampton he entirely concurred, particularly that portion of them which asserted that the highways of the colony should be kept clear of any obstacles to commerce and communication. It was too late at that time to go back to the origin of the construction of the Victoria Bridge—whether it was entered upon from feelings of

youthful ambition on the part of the Municipal Council, or what were the inducements for its construction. That was not to the purpose, but it was for that House to consider whether it would be desirable for the general interests to take over that bridge from an insolvent corporation. He submitted that it was desirable to do so, and, so far as he could make out from facts which had come before him from time to time, he did not think that the public interest would be sacrificed by such action on the part of the House. Considering the great necessity there was of keeping communication of all sorts open to the public, he should very cordially support the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. EDMONDSTONE said no doubt the great difficulty which had been suffered by the citizens of Brisbane had arisen in a great measure from the manner in which various Governments had overlooked their claims. As one of those citizens, he thanked the honorable member for Rockhampton for the liberal tone in which he had treated the question. He intended to say very little on the present occasion, but could not refrain from stating that the first matter that had gone against the city finances was the taking from Brisbane of all the endowments which every other municipality was allowed to retain. The citizens of Brisbane had, in fact, been mulcted in every possible way. He trusted, as a measure of justice, the Bill would be read a second time.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was much pleased at the conclusions arrived at by the honorable member for Rockhampton, although he was rather surprised at some of his statements with reference to the Corporation of Brisbane. The honorable member was in the habit of paying very great attention to any subject in which he took an interest, and, no doubt, he had paid much attention to this subject, but not so much as the whole question deserved, and not sufficient to do justice to the Corporation of Brisbane, whom he condemned wholesale from beginning to end, up to the present time. Had the honorable member been acquainted with the whole circumstances of the case, he would not have made the statements he did respecting the Brisbane aldermen. The honorable member said that, instead of the aldermen of the City of Brisbane maintaining their dignity and carrying on their business without making applications to the Central Government, they were always in the habit of going to the Central Government for everything they required. He denied the statement *in toto*, and could prove that it was incorrect. Let the honorable member show what the aldermen of Brisbane had received from 1867 to 1874, and whether the Central Government had contributed one farthing towards the Corporation. He would not take up the time of the House in relating how this unfortunate bridge came not to be completed by the time specified in the contract. The honorable mem-

ber for Toowoomba, before the adjournment of the debate, made reference to some matter that had taken place when the contract was entered into, and he took the liberty then of drawing his attention to the fact that it was a mistake. The matter alluded to by the honorable member took place three years before the contract was entered into. This could be shown by reference to "Hansard" and the annals of the House. He wished, however, to point out to the honorable member for Rockhampton that after the stoppage of the bridge, in consequence of certain action which it was not now necessary to enter into, the bridge was left in an unprotected state. What had the Corporation of the city to do? They had to use the whole of their rates for the protection of the bridge, and, consequently, for the whole ten years they never received one halfpenny of endowment from the Central Government. Could the honorable member say that of the Corporation of Rockhampton, who had the whole of the water frontage of the Fitzroy River, and received the revenues from the wharves?

Mr. BUZACOTT: It is not endowment.

Mr. BEATTIE said that when the Government alienated the wharves, the Corporation had not a farthing from the Government, while the people of Rockhampton received the frontage of the Fitzroy River, and their endowment. It was unnecessary to go into the details, because it would take a great deal of time, and would be an infliction upon the members; but with reference to the two bridges, he would draw the attention of the House to the fact that through the Oxley bridge the Government were competing with the Corporation, as far at least as the Oxley Bridge was concerned. He believed, from inquiries he had made, that owing to the advantages offered by the railway, a person could live at Oxley and come into town cheaper than he could by living at South Brisbane, and it was very unfair to the city of Brisbane that these advantages should be given, and that the Government should be entering into competition with the Corporation. With respect to the cost, he was certain that any member who had examined into the affairs of the two bridges, and knew the amount of money spent upon them would at once see that the amount placed upon the Victoria Bridge was in itself different from what had been represented. He believed the actual cost of the Oxley Bridge had been something like £70,000, perhaps a little more, perhaps a little less. The first contract price of the Victoria Bridge was £52,500, and with the alteration entered into, he believed the increased cost of that bridge was something like £30,000 or £40,000, bringing the first cost of the works, if completed at that time, up to something like £90,000. Then there had been the interest, £30,000 spent out of the rates, and the endowment not received from the Government, so that on the whole it must be seen that the Corporation had some just claim upon the

Government, and had a right to declare this main artery—this important outlet to the southern portion of the colony—free. He believed all highways of this description should be declared free, and that the time had arrived when tolls should no longer be imposed, and if any honorable member would introduce an Act saying that all bridges and main thoroughfares should be free of toll, he would be most happy to support him.

Mr. MACROSSAN said he must admit that honorable members manifested a good deal of inconsistency in their actions; the appearance of the House at present was not what it should be when a question of this description was under discussion. Here was a question that involved an addition to the national debt of £122,000, and yet the House contained only seven or eight members; amongst whom were three Ministers. Upon some occasions when the paltry sum of £100 or £200 was under debate, the House was full, and an acrimonious debate would be sure to be carried on for hours. When £122,000 was under discussion, members were elsewhere. He could not understand the inconsistency. It was not of much use going into this question of the Victoria Bridge, which had been so fully debated and studied by members on both sides of the House, owing to the committee which, last session, sat upon the question and brought up a very luminous report. There was also a committee in 1869 and 1870. He was a member of the committee last year, and from all the evidence produced before it, the conclusion he came to was that the Corporation of Brisbane had not been so well treated as other corporations in the colony. At the same time, he thought they had no right to claim the position of coming before the House and asking them to free the bridge at an expenditure of £122,000. A certain recommendation was made by that committee, of which, if he remembered rightly, the Colonial Treasurer and Colonial Secretary were both members. That recommendation was made after due deliberation, and that was all the Corporation could justly claim. If anything else was given to them, it was not as a matter of right, but as a free gift, simply because Brisbane was the capital of the colony, and because, to a certain extent, it was a just principle that all bridges should be free. But if bridges were to be free, they ought to be built where they were required. This was, to him, a very serious question, and honorable members who took up a position against the bridge which he asked for the northern portion of the colony, and which would be a main highway, placed themselves, if he chose to enter into a course of obstruction with certain honorable members, which he could easily do if he chose, in the very false position of putting off the Victoria Bridge question for one more year simply by lending themselves to an injustice. The bridge, he admitted, ought to be free, but, at

the same time, he could not see the great hardship that had been complained of. The people of Brisbane had a fine bridge, which was, no doubt, an ornament to the country, and over which they could go once, if not twice, for the payment of one penny, while a man on horseback or in a buggy could cross it twice for a shilling. He was quite willing to take the bridge over the Burdekin and pay a toll of one shilling for every foot passenger, and two shillings or two shillings and sixpence for every horseman passing, but he was refused it; and now these gentlemen came forward to ask for a free bridge. Not content with having a good bridge for the payment of a small sum of money, they asked for a free bridge, after denying his constituents and the constituents of the honorable member for Ravenswood and other northern members a bridge over a river which was impassable for six months within the year. Members who represented metropolitan constituencies were thus both inconsistent and unjust. If he made up his mind to obstruct the passing of this Bill in committee, as he and other honorable members perhaps ought to do, he would be only doing justice to his constituents. But he did not intend to do it. He should call for a division upon the question, in order that he might protest, simply as a matter of duty, that the Corporation had no right to come before the House and claim that the bridge should be free. It had been said by the honorable the Colonial Secretary that the Corporation did not come there to sue *in forma pauperis*. He (Mr. Macrossan) insisted that they did come to sue in that manner, and if the bridge were made free it would be in consequence of their so suing. If they succeeded in getting this £120,000 placed on the national debt for the purpose of getting the Victoria Bridge free, every corporation in the colony that had placed itself in difficulties through want of management, or any other cause, had a right to come to the House and claim to be freed from their difficulties; and if this Bill passed through committee, and any other corporation claimed a similar right, he should be ready to support them.

Mr. FRASER said that, without intending to occupy the House upon the general question, he rose to put himself right once more with the honorable member for Kennedy. When the honorable member brought forward an important question respecting the bridge over the Burdekin, he told him that if he would bring it in a definite form before the House, and that if the sum he asked for would be in any way approaching what would be necessary to complete it, he should certainly give him his support, and he was prepared to do so at any time that it came before the House in that way. He must confess there did not seem to be a vast amount of interest betrayed in the question now before the House, and he certainly agreed with the honorable member for

Kennedy, that when a question of this importance, involving the colony in something like £122,000 and the interest that might accrue from it, was under discussion, honorable members were guilty of a dereliction of duty in allowing it to pass without that consideration to which it was justly entitled; this he said irrespective of his opinions upon the particular question before the House. There was one observation he would like to make. The question had been treated as if it were purely a corporation question; it was nothing of the kind. It was purely because of benefit to the public that honorable members on both sides were urging that the bridge should be made free. The Corporation of Brisbane had been guilty of blundering, perhaps, and not incompetency; that he did not intend to deny, but they were at all events reaping now the fruits of what the honorable member for Rockhampton had described as the incompetency or mistakes which young institutions and corporations were always liable to fall into, and he might have added, young colonies also. The honorable member for Port Curtis, he was aware, had expressed a disparaging opinion of the lands on the south side of the river. He (Mr. Fraser) however, knew every inch of the land, and could affirm that if the bridge were made free, and if the Government would give him the chance of accepting the whole of those lands at from £20,000 to £35,000, he should be prepared to find a capitalist who would take them up, and get a handsome bargain for his money. There seemed to be scarcely any diversity of opinion as to the importance of making these thoroughfares free throughout the colony. They had been free elsewhere, and the principle was the same whether applied to a bridge that cost £120,000 or one that cost £1,000, so far as the interests of the community were concerned. As there seemed to be no desire to discuss the question at any length, he did not feel justified in trespassing further upon the attention of the House. Had there been a formidable opposition, he might have been prepared to go further into it; but he would say no more, except that the justice of freeing the bridge was a matter upon which the whole colony agreed.

Mr. J. SCOTT said when the Maryborough bridge was proposed some years ago, he stated his views upon this subject. The cost of the Brisbane bridge was £120,000, Maryborough bridge £30,000, Rockhampton bridge, £50,000, and the Mackay bridge about £20,000; amounting altogether to a total of, as near as possible, a quarter of a million of money. He did not see how they could deal with one portion of the colony without treating all parts alike, nor why the honorable member for Kennedy should have been opposed when he brought forward the motion for a bridge over the Burdekin. That was no doubt a costly bridge, but it was very much required, and he could not see

with what consistency the Government could support the Brisbane bridge when they opposed that over the Burdekin. At the same time he did not know that it would be such a very costly thing to the Government to take over the Brisbane bridge. The actual expenditure had been, £160,000, or £100,000 more than was estimated, but if the land on the south side of the river was so valuable as it was said to be, the expense to the public could not be so very great. If the land was worth £50,000 the cost was reduced to £70,000, but there was no evidence at present that the land was worth so much. Taking that estimate, however, the bridge would only cost £90,000, and that was not, perhaps, a great deal for the country to pay for such a fine bridge. If the Government would deal in the same spirit with all portions of the colony, and not pick out particular bridges, and leave the rest without any help, it would be much more conducive to public satisfaction.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY RESERVES BILL.

The PREMIER moved that this Bill be read a third time.

Mr. BUZACOTT said when the Bill was in committee, honorable members might have observed that he did not take part in any obstruction, but with other members on that side of the House endeavored to prevent what he might term the senseless obstruction which he regretted to say accompanied the Bill in its passage through committee. But on the second reading of the Bill he brought forward an amendment with a view to record in distinct and emphatic terms his protest against the Bill from beginning to end. He regretted very much to see a measure of this sort introduced into the House at all, because it was in direct opposition to what he believed was the fundamental principle upon which railway extension should be carried out. When the House was in committee, he again protested against the Bill, and he now considered it his duty on the third reading to protest a third time, and to protest, if possible, even more distinctly and strongly than before; because, although in some respects the amendments made in committee were an improvement, in other respects they had departed so far from the original design and scope of the Bill as first introduced, that it ought not to be allowed to become law. Honorable members had received a copy of the amendment which he now moved, and they would observe that it began by saying that the amendment in clause 8 of the Bill as printed had made its provisions inconsistent with those of the Western Railway Act of 1875, and had eliminated one of its own distinctive features. The Western Railway Act provided for the sale of lands by auction, and for the construction of railways out of the proceeds; but this Bill, by the alterations made in committee, provided that the ordinary modes of

alienation applied to the settled districts should be applied also to the railway reserves. He would ask the House, whether the people of Queensland would tolerate that large areas of the reserves should be sold by auction? The honorable member for Toowoomba, like himself, believed that the demand would sooner or later arise that every suitable acre of land all over the colony should be open for either conditional or homestead selection, and that only such areas as were not suitable for selection should be sold by auction. This alteration in clause 8 had, therefore, entirely altered the scope of the measure, and he held that there was not the smallest hope that the amount necessary for the construction of railways should be obtained by the sale of Crown lands in the reserves. There were also other distinctive features introduced. At first, the main features of the Bill, except in regard to the maximum area of lots, were very much the same as the Railway Act of 1875, but there had been a further alteration made in enlarging the area for auction from 2,560 to 5,120 acres. There, again, the scope of the Bill had been entirely altered, so far as the alienation of Crown lands within the reserves was concerned. Hence he had introduced as the third clause of his amendment, the statement that in so altering the schedule as to include the whole area of the self-contained district of Wide Bay and Burnett in a railway reserve, the House practically affirmed the principle that the entire area of Crown lands in each district of the colony ought to be appropriated for railway purposes, and also that no provision should be made out of the proceeds of Crown lands for public works other than railways or for immigration. Honorable members who knew the country would no doubt agree with him that the Wide Bay and Burnett district was a little principality within itself almost, having scarcely any connection with other districts either North or South. Nearly all its commercial business was transacted with Sydney, and the people of Wide Bay had not the slightest sympathy with the people of Brisbane or Rockhampton. He, therefore, maintained that in appropriating the whole of the Crown lands within the Wide Bay and Burnett district for railway reserves, the Government had practically affirmed the principle he had described. This being the case, why should he not come down to the House and say that he wanted the whole of the Central district reserved also? There was a very important railway there that would have to be carried four or five hundred miles into the interior, and it would be the most profitable railway in the colony when completed. But the Government wanted the money to carry out that railway; and if, henceforth, the House decided that railways were only to be constructed by the proceeds of the sale of Crown lands, and that the whole of the Wide Bay and Burnett district should be formed into a

railway reserve, he held that the whole of the Central district ought to be formed into a railway reserve for the extension of the Northern Railway to its ultimate destination. He should like to know from where the people of Wide Bay were to get their other public works, if the whole area were to be appropriated to railway construction? So far as he could see, there could be no other means of providing public works in the Wide Bay and Burnett district, when the railway reserve was created, than falling back upon the general revenue of the colony. Another consideration was, that the Bill did not divide the whole colony into railway reserves, and in parts where there did not happen to be reserves, there were to be no railways; the Crown lands in other parts of the colony would be appropriated for other public works, for paying the interest on the public debt, and for other purposes, and it was absurd to suppose that railways could be constructed in them when there would be such large demands of another nature. At present the whole revenue derived from Crown lands in the colony was very little more than the amount paid for interest on the public debt. In 1876-7 there would be paid for interest the sum of £346,000, and the whole revenue from Crown lands, sales by auction, conditional selection, and pastoral leases, amounted to £379,000—only £33,000 more than was required for interest. At the rate of public expenditure now going on, they were increasing their interest so that in the year 1877-8, unless there were increased proceeds from Crown lands, the interest would absorb the whole proceeds of the Crown lands. If that were so, where, under existing circumstances, was the money to come from to construct public works in the districts where there were no reserves? There was no way, except plunging the colony headlong into debt far beyond what any honorable member would allow, and by a process that would necessitate further taxation upon the people. The Minister for Lands, he believed, made a great mistake last night, in assenting to the amendment then brought forward, to the Wide Bay and Burnett Reserve, especially after refusing assent to the amendment with regard to the Southern Railway Reserve. He (Mr. Buzacott) maintained that devoting the whole of the Crown lands of the colony to railway purposes was a breach of faith with the public creditor, and calculated, by depreciating the securities of the colony, to render fresh taxation upon the people imperative. The fifth clause of his amendment did not start any new theory which he had suddenly struck upon. The principle there enunciated he had held for a long time, and through the whole of his public career, short as it had been, he had looked forward to the time when the legislature would affirm the principles he now laid down, viz., that any measure for specifically appropriating the public lands should be founded upon broad and equitable

principles, and embody among others the following conditions, viz.:—That the entire revenue derived from waste lands should be appropriated to payment of interest on the public debt; to the construction and maintenance of railways, roads, and bridges, and other necessary public works; and to the introduction of European immigrants. If they once decided to appropriate the revenue of the colony to these three purposes, they would do a thing that would redound to the credit of the colony, would improve its position in the English money market, and make the credit of the colony the very first in Australia. What he proposed was, a plain principle that anyone could understand; and, he maintained, whatever sacrifice they might be called upon to make to secure its adoption, it should be made at once. But he believed there was no sacrifice necessary; for, as he had shown by a comparison of the interest on the public debt and the proceeds derivable from Crown lands, it would not in any sense disturb the financial operations of the colony, while they would be able to carry out public works that would be of immense advantage, not only in the present but the future. They would be adopting a principle that, to his mind, would lay the foundation of solid prosperity in times to come. For these reasons he appealed to honorable gentlemen opposite not to defeat the amendment, which he had brought forward for no other reason than that he felt it to be his duty to do so, and believed that the measure as it stood would be to the detriment of the colony—to the present generation not less than to their successors, who would inevitably have reason to deplore its effects. He warned honorable members, therefore, that they would incur a serious responsibility if they authorised the passing of the Bill. The honorable member for Toowoomba, after the Crown Lands Alienation Act had passed through its various stages, said that the Minister who introduced it would in twelve months' time be the most unpopular man in the colony. The honorable member said this, however, after assisting the Government to pass the measure. He was astonished to hear the honorable member, last night, make the same statement with respect to the Railway Reserves Bill, and it did appear to him that the position occupied by the honorable member was most extraordinary, for he supported the Government in passing measures of which he did not approve, and which he affirmed would make Ministers very unpopular. The honorable member's duty was perfectly clear; it was his duty forthwith to walk across to the Opposition side of the House. It ought not to be said that any honorable member sacrificed his duty and distinct convictions upon any subject, much less upon the most important measure that could come before the House, because he wanted to support a particular Ministry. Such a system would disorganise the system of representation altogether. He might say

that, with one exception, he did not want to see the present Ministry out of office, but there was one member of it to whom he objected most strongly, and if he were replaced by some other member it would be more acceptable to the House, and the Ministry might go on very well. Once more he would protest strongly against this measure, and would therefore move his amendment.

He begged to move that the question be amended by the omission of all the words after the word "That," with a view to the insertion, in their place, of the following words, viz. :—

"The amendment in Clause 8 of this Bill, as printed, has made its provisions inconsistent with those of '*The Western Railway Act of 1875*,' and has eliminated one of its own distinctive features."

"2. That the application to the several railway reserves of the laws in force for the time being for the alienation of Crown lands in settled districts, practically negatives the affirmation of the preamble 'that funds for the future construction of railways should be provided by the sale of Crown lands within the districts to be benefited by such railways.'

"3. That, in so altering the Schedule as to include the whole area of the self-contained district of Wide Bay and Burnett in a railway reserve, this House practically affirms the principle that the entire areas of Crown lands in each district of the colony ought to be appropriated for railway purposes; and, also, that no provision should be made out of the proceeds of Crown lands for public works other than railways or for immigration.

"4. That the application of said principle is a breach of faith with the public creditor; and calculated, by depreciating the securities of the colony, to render fresh taxation on the people imperative.

"5. That, in the opinion of this House, any measure for specifically appropriating the public lands, should be founded upon broad and equitable principles, and embody, among others, the following conditions, viz. :—

"That the entire revenue derived from waste lands should be appropriated—

"(a.) To payment of interest on the public debt.

"(b.) To the construction and maintenance of railways, roads, and bridges, and other necessary public works.

"(c.) To the introduction of European immigrants.

"6. That, for the foregoing reasons, it is desirable that the Bill should be further considered."

He did not mean that the Bill should be reconsidered in committee. The ground he took was, that that House ought not to attempt to make such an important and fundamental alteration in the system of constructing railways, without first having consulted the constituencies. That House was returned in consequence of the Redistribution Act of 1872; and at that time, he was quite sure that none of the constituencies had the slightest conception that any such

alteration as this in the law and in the practice of railway construction would be proposed or brought into force by the House which was then returned. He thought that the House having already dealt with some very important questions, such as the State Education Bill, the Crown Lands Alienation Bill, and the Settled Districts Pastoral Leases Bill, they might be well content to leave over such an extremely important alteration in the law with regard to railways, until a future session. In moving the amendment, he had no wish to divide the House on the subject, but if any honorable members chose to call for a division, he should be happy to support them by his vote, but he did not wish to raise any obstruction in connection with the Bill. He must apologise to the House for having taken up so much time. He knew it was not usual for members to introduce amendments on the third reading of a measure; but seeing the extraordinary alterations that had been made in committee, the altered shape of the Bill as it came out of committee, and the unworkable character of it from beginning to end, he thought in moving this amendment he had not trespassed beyond the fair limits of debate on an important Bill of this sort.

MR. DE SATGÉ said the few remarks he had to make on this occasion would apply mainly to the third reading of the Bill, although the amendments of the honorable member for Rockhampton were excellent in themselves. He did not think that honorable member need have apologised at all for taking up the time of the House on such a very important measure; or that he meant it to go forth that the whole of the debate in committee was senseless obstruction to the Bill. He (Mr. De Satgé) thought there were many speakers in committee who devoted themselves to the practical issues of the Bill, and the honorable member surely could not allude to them as senselessly obstructing the business of the House; he could not have meant those who applied themselves to making practical observations on the schedules.

MR. BUZACOTT explained that his remarks did not apply to the whole of the debate in committee. What he said was, and he now repeated, that there was, during the debate in committee, senseless obstruction, and he thought every honorable member except those who obstructed must think so too.

MR. DE SATGÉ said he had misunderstood the honorable member, and he accepted his explanation. He thought now that they had come to the concluding stage of this Bill, it was well that the passive majority who had backed up the Government in going thus far with this most important measure—the most important that had been presented to that House perhaps for several sessions—should know the issues they had come to, and the state they had left the Bill in. He regretted the absence of the honorable members for Toowoomba and Darling Downs, because those

honorable gentlemen, representing, as they did, not only large and populous constituencies, but constituencies which were very highly interested in this Bill, should be there to express their views before the Bill finally passed out of the hands of that House. The honorable member for Toowoomba, being almost more than any other member the champion of the rights of settlement on the Darling Downs, was perhaps more interested than any other member in the final passing of this measure, and in using all the powers they knew he possessed, and in lending the weight of his arguments against it. The Bill, as it was about to leave that House, presented, as pointed out by the honorable member for Rockhampton, the most singular extraordinary anomalies ever presented in any Bill that had ever passed out of that House, and especially a Bill of such a sweeping character and of such vast interest. With regard to the Southern Reserve, the Government had gone against the vested rights of a very large and important portion of the colonists of Queensland. They had at once attacked the vested rights of the people of the Darling Downs, and of those who looked forward to opportunities for settling in that district. They had departed from the homestead area principle that was promised in another Act.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS: NO.

MR. DE SATGE said they had done so most decidedly, and most distinctly in giving up a large portion—the fairest portion of the Downs—to auction. They had departed from the principle which he was sure the honorable members for Toowoomba and Darling Downs would wish to advocate as the special privilege of those who wished to settle. With regard to the observations of the honorable Minister for Lands, with reference to the country being subject to inundation, and therefore unfit for settlement, he would remind him that no country in the world was so well fitted for agricultural production as that which was liable to inundation. The Hawkesbury and other portions of New South Wales that were subject to floods yielded splendid crops; and the honorable gentleman, in speaking of the inundation of the Yandilla land, and of the large area now put in this railway reserve, as being unfit for agricultural purposes, knew he was talking against his own convictions. He (Mr. De Satgé) finally objected to the Bill as far as the Southern Reserve was concerned, because they had gone against the principles conceived and expressed of developing the resources of the country, and because they had departed from the principle of the Bill previously introduced. When they advanced to the Wide Bay and Burnett Reserve, they still further departed from those principles, as pointed out by the honorable member for Rockhampton; nor were they likely to get from the honorable the Minister for Lands any explanation whatever as to how he was going to

include the whole of the Wide Bay and Burnett district in the schedule, thereby apportioning the whole of its land revenue to the one purpose of railway construction, especially when it had yet to be determined by facts whether there was any need, for some years to come, to commence the railways in question. He had no wish to say anything against any particular district. The Wide Bay district was represented in part by the honorable the Minister for Lands himself and the honorable member for Gympie, whose opinion the honorable the Minister for Lands appeared to have thought so highly of that, intent on securing his vote, or the good opinion of the constituency of Gympie through its member, he thought fit to depart from the principles of the Bill. He must have thought very highly of that honorable member's opinion, when in a rash, hasty moment, he changed the whole policy of a measure of this kind. He (Mr. De Satgé) contended that never from the beginning had any figures been brought in, or had any deductions been brought before the House to warrant them in commencing the Maryborough and Gympie or the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railways. He had noticed the debates on the question of those railways from first to last, and never had they had any sound or practical deductions, similar even to those brought forward by the honorable member for Carnarvon with respect to the railway in his district, laid before them to show that those railways would be required; and yet they were going to set apart the whole of the land in this district for the purposes of railway construction, leaving them nothing whatever for other public works, as stated by the honorable member for Rockhampton. And although the honorable the Minister for Lands might work in conjunction with the honorable member for Gympie, and overpower the opinion of the honorable member for the Burnett—who was the third representative of that district—although they might do so by force, he contended that they could not do so by argument; and that honorable member, as a representative of that district, had also to be consulted on the subject of taking the whole of the lands there for one special purpose. The honorable the Minister for Lands had not only departed entirely from the principles of the Bill, but he had also gone against the representatives in that House of a large and influential portion of that district—the honorable members for Burnett and Mulgrave. In fact it was two representatives of that district against two others, only one was a Minister who was backed up by a majority. That was the principle, so far as he could see, adopted on the second railway reserve. With regard to the Central Railway Reserve, there had been a principle introduced which was more insidious and dangerous still. The Government and their supporters had set one class of leaseholders against another, by picking out

special isolated pieces of country for this particular purpose. He considered that the present Government had initiated a principle—or a want of principle rather—the most dangerous they had ever yet introduced in this colony, and that was to pit one class of squatters against another. That was the last thing any Government with any sense of justice should think of doing, but they had done so; and how had they done it? He was in the House some six or seven years ago when the Pastoral Leases Act of 1869 was passed. They then, under considerable pressure—for the pastoral interest was depressed, though not much more so than at present—passed an Act giving resumable leases for twenty-one years, which were accepted in perfect good faith, on the distinct understanding that they should only be taken away when the land was actually required; but now, before seven years of that period had elapsed, they had assailed the rights of those leaseholders, and this Government could take credit to itself for having committed a breach of faith with those settlers who had got capital together and had invested a large portion of it in improvements. The honorable the Minister for Lands looked with contempt on any argument used by any member of that House with regard to the pastoral lessees. That honorable gentleman seemed to think they had no right to stand up for the rights of those lessees who had accepted leases under the Act of 1869 for twenty-one years; but he would ask honorable gentlemen opposite, if they could give any reason why they should now step in, when only one-third of that period had expired, and deprive them of their lands? The honorable the Minister for Lands had been connected with squatting long enough to know that when security of that kind was once assailed, the matter was done for, and the capacity for spending money upon the country and improving it was gone at once. That was the position in which he placed those leaseholders, and the Government could congratulate themselves on having done so. The worst feature in the Bill was pitting one class of leaseholders against another; and still the Government were rejoicing in the downfall of the pastoral interest of the colony. He said rejoicing in it, because they were backed up by those who were the opponents of the pastoral interest, and they had given no earthly reason to the House why they should take this large tract of country, when, at the same time, they told certain leaseholders in the south that their runs would not be taken, and that they would be twenty-five or fifty per cent. better off than their neighbors whose runs would be taken from them. They were told that a house divided against itself would never stand, and the pastoral interest had been so far assailed in that way, that the Government had striven to set one portion of it against the other. He blamed the Government during the pas-

sage of the Bill before them, more for what they had endeavored to do in that respect than for their spoliation—it was the worst feature in their conduct. As he had said to the honorable members for Toowoomba and Warwick, who were interested in the settlement of the lands, if they did not fight for their own districts, and kept the Yandilla land within the scope of homestead areas, instead of allowing it to be sold by auction for railway purposes, they failed in their duties as the representatives of those constituencies. The Wide Bay and Burnett members were divided two against two, only of course, the two supporting the Government had the most power—the two honorable members on his side of the House who had objected to the partition and reserves in their district having met with no response whatever from the Government. With regard to the settled districts, the arguments adduced by his side of the House had been allowed to go for nothing. All the Government had tried to do, was to pit one class of leaseholders against another class; and he trusted that although the Bill was passed by that House, it would be rejected in another place, and never become law.

Mr. MORGAN said that the speech they had just heard from the honorable member for Normanby was in his usual style, for he had tried to raise feelings which sensible men would rather know to be sleeping. There was no feeling of antagonism to the pastoral lessees on the part of honorable members on his side of the House. Those lessees knew that they were merely under an agreement with the State that after a certain time their leases should expire, and what then was there to complain of? He must join the honorable member in his expression of regret at the absence of the honorable member for Toowoomba, whom he had justly described as the champion of settlement on the Darling Downs. Now, much as he respected the honorable member for Toowoomba, he must deny totally that he was the only champion of homestead settlement, because he firmly believed that there were others on both sides of the House who were equally anxious to secure homestead settlement; in fact he could point out as many honorable members on the opposite benches as on the Government side of the House who were equally anxious for that desirable consummation. He had listened very attentively to the speech made by the honorable member for Rockhampton in moving his amendment, and he must do that honorable member the credit to say that his sentiments were characterised by the good sense and moderation which were generally shown by him. After, however, the Bill had passed its second reading, after, he might say, a considerable amount of opposition to that second reading, and after it had been well discussed during its passage through the committee, he thought it was rather late in the day for the honor-

able member to come forward with such important amendments. He gave the honorable member every credit for his moderation; he believed that the honorable member, having brought forward his resolutions, would be prepared to take the sense of the House upon them, and had no desire to offer any factious opposition to the passing of the Bill. As he had already said, he was pleased with the moderation shown by the honorable member, and he almost regretted that he was compelled by a feeling of duty to vote against the amendments. In doing so, he would inform the honorable member, and other honorable members opposite, that he had not consulted one member of the Government on the subject, or had said how he should vote.

Mr. BAILEY must say that he had been rather surprised that day when the amendments of the honorable member for Rockhampton were put into his hands, which seemed to him to be throwing down another bone of contention. That honorable member must have known that night after night they had been twitted on his (Mr. Bailey's) side of the House with the grievances which would be caused by certain railways not crossing certain reserves; and it was in deference to the opinion which had been expressed by honorable members opposite that the amendment of the honorable member for Gympie had been brought forward. He was glad to find that, in the estimation of the honorable member for Normanby, the Wide Bay and Burnett reserves were not the most objectionable, but that there were others further north. Until that night he had always patiently submitted to the unfortunate position that the Wide Bay and Burnett districts occupied of being placed, as it were, between two stools; and, until the present session, he must say that they had received very scant justice indeed. If some honorable members had their will, the injustice of years past would still be continued, although, with the exception of Moreton Bay, they were the oldest settled districts. He would ask honorable members, how those districts had been treated, or whether they had ever received any justice till lately? Not an offer of justice had been made to them; but now, after they had for years asked for some equitable portion of justice, there was some chance of their being recognised, and their proper position in the country was beginning to be felt. It seemed to be an extreme hardship to the people in the North that such should be the case, for the honorable member for Normanby stated that he had never heard any reason given for the two railways—that from Maryborough to Gympie, and from Bundaberg to Mount Perry—being made. Had not that honorable member heard, that at one time, the discovery of the Gympie gold fields, and the gold that came from them saved the colony from insolvency? Did not that honorable member know that, at the present time, notwithstanding the

years which had elapsed since their discovery, the Gympie gold fields still were the most prosperous in the colony? Was not the honorable member also aware that a few years ago thousands of men rushed to the Wide Bay and Burnett district, attracted by the rich mineral discoveries which had been made at the Mount Perry copper mine, and that, after remaining there for some time, they were compelled to leave, because the Government refused to give them the means of conveying their copper to the nearest port from which it could be shipped? Those mines had not been developed from that cause, but if the railway now proposed was made, those thousands who had left them would return, and the district would rise to be the most prosperous in the whole colony of Queensland.

Mr. GROOM said he rose not so much for the purpose of speaking on the amendment of the honorable member for Rockhampton as with some other object. He had intended to move for the recommitment of the Bill, but as it now appeared, he was prevented from doing so by the amendment of the honorable member. He had intended to do so, because he had received a letter from the Mayor of Dalby, representing the feelings of the Council of that town, asking him to move the recommitment of the Bill for the purpose of introducing a clause of the following nature:—

“Notwithstanding anything in the Western Railway Bill of 1875 to the contrary, Crown lands in the Western Railway reserves, held under ten years' leases, may be alienated under the conditions of the laws in force for the time being relating to the alienation of lands by conditional selection.”

In order, however, that the House might know the feelings of the people of Dalby in the matter, he would read the letter:—

“Town Hall, Dalby,
“30th October, 1876.

“DEAR SIR,

“On behalf of the Council of this Municipality and the inhabitants of the town, I beg to tender you my thanks for your endeavor, on Wednesday evening last, to introduce a clause in the Western Railway Reserves Bill, relating to the alienation of land by conditional selection.

“The Hon. J. P. Bell, M.L.A., our representative, being at present on a visit to Jimbour, and it being beyond my knowledge whether or not he may be in the House on Tuesday evening next, I have decided, in the interests of this town and neighborhood, to ask you to try to obtain a recommitment of the Railway Reserves Bill, for the purpose of endeavoring to introduce a clause to the following effect:—

“Notwithstanding anything in the Western Railway Bill of 1875 to the contrary, Crown lands in the Western Railway Reserves, held under ten years' leases, may be alienated under the conditions of the laws in force for the time being relating to the alienation of lands by conditional selection.”

“I need scarcely point out to you the importance to this town of such a clause as the above.

"We have hitherto looked upon the Crown lands in this vicinity as a future source of permanent and increasing prosperity to the town through the settlement of a population around us, but the submission of these lands to public auction will cause them to be thrown into the hands of a few capitalists, thereby completely extinguishing all chance for the selector.

"The result to the town of Dalby will be simply ruinous; and coupled with the fact of the railway superseding the present carrying traffic to and from Roma, the working of the Railway Reserves Bill in its present form will reduce this town, in regard to population and business status, to an infinitely worse position than it occupied some ten or twelve years ago.

"I have written to the Secretary for Lands this morning on the subject, and also enclosed him a copy of the clause contained herein.

"I remain,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours very faithfully,

"P. LANDY, Mayor.

"W. H. Groom, Esq., M.L.A."

It would be seen from that, that the letter was sent to him in the belief that the honorable member for Dalby would not be in his place that evening; but he (Mr. Groom) had intended to give expression to the opinions of the people of Dalby as they were expressed at a public meeting some months ago. He had no doubt that the honorable Minister for Lands would say that under the Reserves Bill the Government would have power to proclaim certain lands open for homestead selection; but asking men in that district to take up such small areas as were allowed in homestead selections, would be equivalent to asking them to starve. He might say that the people of Dalby felt, that after expecting from a Liberal Government that areas would be thrown open of sufficient extent to allow of men becoming small graziers, all their hopes had been blasted by the proposition contained in the Bill, to reserve all their lands for the purposes of railway construction. He had stated, at the second reading of the Bill, that if the schedules were not amended in the way in which he had then indicated, he should vote against the third reading of the Bill—and he might now say that it was his intention to do so. He considered that the Darling Downs had been literally robbed of from four to five hundred thousand acres of its best lands, which had been promised to the people there for settlement—and for what? Why, for making a railway from Warwick to the Border of the colony. In giving expression to that opinion, he was confident he was only representing the opinions of a majority of his constituents; because he was certain, from what they had told him, that they felt themselves greatly aggrieved by that sacrificing of land for the construction of a railway, which, of all others, should have been constructed with borrowed money. It was well known to the Government that there was only a small portion of land left on

the Darling Downs, and, therefore, they should have been specially careful that it should not be sacrificed, as it would be if offered for sale by auction, as then the capitalists would go in and purchase the whole, the small man being too heavily handicapped. He should vote against the third reading of the Bill; and although he knew that in doing so he might lay himself open to unfavorable comment, he believed he should be only keeping good faith with his constituents. If the Bill became law, the onus would rest upon the Government; and he did not withdraw one iota of what he had said on a previous evening, that after it had been in operation for twelve months it would be the most unpopular measure ever passed in the colony.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he thought it was desirable before they went to a division that he should say a few words in reference to the remarks which had been made by the honorable member for Toowoomba, and also the amendment of the honorable member for Rockhampton. In the first place, he must say that the somewhat unusual course which had been adopted by the honorable member for Rockhampton, was scarcely called for. Whatever were the defects of the Bill, they had been amply and fully discussed, several days and evenings having been devoted to it; and, therefore, he should have supposed that the Opposition and those honorable members who had expressed themselves as so anxious to bring the session to a termination would have been satisfied with the discussion which had already taken place, and with simply recording their votes on the third reading, without going into fresh arguments such as were embodied in the amendment. He would do the honorable member for Rockhampton the justice to say that he had amply stated his objections, and had had an opportunity of recording his opinions. According to the forms of the House, the honorable member had every right to move his amendment at the present stage of the proceedings, and he would also say that the honorable member's action whilst the Bill was in committee had not been characterised by that factious opposition which, he regretted to say, had been shown by some honorable members opposite. It was not his intention to discuss the various questions now raised by the honorable member, as he considered they had been already fully discussed, nor could he say more than that the Government adhered to the opinions they had expressed in the matter. He was very far from asserting that the Bill was all that he could desire; but, as honorable members were well aware, a Government must always be guided by surrounding circumstances, and by previous legislation. It was impossible to lay down a theoretical course of legislation unless it completely squared with what their ideas of perfect legislation might be. He thought that under the circumstances of the case, and viewing previous

legislation and the somewhat complicated position of the land question, the Bill was calculated to promote two things which were of the utmost importance to the colony, namely, the construction of railways and the settlement of population on the lands. Without affirming that it was in any way a perfect measure, or that it would not lead to further adaptations, he gladly accepted it on the part of the Government as a step towards the settlement of the country by affording permanent means of access to it. Those were the views which had been taken by the Government. In regard to the statement made by the honorable member for Toowoomba, he was aware that that honorable member was the exponent of the views of a certain class who believed in the kind of settlement he had described—namely, that of conditional selection in larger areas than homestead areas; and he was also aware that it was supposed that the Government in the Bill were, to some extent, invading the privileges of those people. He doubted, however, whether they were. He thought that the opinion of his honorable colleague the Attorney-General would hold good, that if the Bill became law, the conditions laid down in the Crown Lands Alienation Act must be carried out. With regard to the sale of land in the vicinity of Dalby, no doubt the Mayor of that town had represented the feelings of a large number of persons who viewed with alarm the sale of land in large blocks by auction; but he (the Minister for Lands) failed to see why they should not sell some of that land by auction, as it had been laid down by the wisdom of the legislature, that it should be so sold, and he, as Minister for Lands, was bound to give effect to such legislation. It had been brought under his notice that if they were prepared to apply that process to similar country which was around Roma they might apply it equally to the land round Dalby, and without doing so they could not carry out what was really a great national work, authorised by Parliament. He had merely to carry out that which was authorised by Parliament; and if the measure was not in all respects in accordance with the views of the inhabitants of Dalby, it must be granted that it was in accordance with parliamentary authority. He questioned very much whether by the proposed mode of selling land in the vicinity of Dalby, the inhabitants of that district would suffer to the extent they appeared to anticipate. He questioned whether by the sale of lands in large quantities they would be depriving a large number of persons of employment. He was not prepared to say that all the lands should be sold by auction, for he thought they might secure a portion of it for conditional selection; at the same time he had his doubts as to whether much benefit had been derived by the inhabitants of Dalby from what he might term the equivocal purchases which had been made in that form.

They all knew that what was characterised as dummying had been carried out in the district of Dalby.

MR. GROOM: Not by the inhabitants of Dalby.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS said he thought not; but it had been carried on by persons who had evaded the law to defeat the objects of the people of Dalby. There was no doubt that no good ends could be attained without some persons suffering from what they deemed an injustice, and it might be that some injustice would be done to some of the inhabitants of Dalby. At the same time, he must say that he was very far from sharing the same gloomy opinion that appeared to be entertained by the Mayor of Dalby, and he did not believe that the industry of that town would be diminished by some portion of the lands being sold by auction. He hoped the House would allow the question to go to a division at once.

MR. FRYAR said that, like other honorable members who had addressed the House at that stage of the business, it was not his intention to occupy much time, having already expressed his sentiments in regard to the Bill at some length. The amendment of the honorable member for Rockhampton was not one with which he could agree, as the second clause of it was opposed to the sentiments he had always expressed. He did not believe that throwing open the lands in the various railway reserves, in accordance with the laws in force for the alienation of Crown lands, would be the means of depriving the Government of funds for the construction of railways; at the same time he was strongly opposed to the Bill, and should vote against the third reading of it. He believed that the Government were rushing into an expenditure which would be attended with the most serious results. He need hardly remind honorable members that in the year 1836 the colony was involved in a very heavy debt—that bad times came on—that men willing to do a fair day's labor for a fair day's wage, were reduced to almost starvation, and that the Government had to spend £50,000 or more for the support of relief camps until better days arrived. Not only that, but the Government were unable to meet their engagements, and had to issue bills bearing ten per cent. interest, and Treasury notes, in order to fictitiously keep up the credit of the colony until better times came. Those times came, and the Government were enabled to meet the legitimate demands made upon them. After three or four years their position improved, and they commenced borrowing again, until they had a debt of seven millions, and were about to add to that another three millions, or, if the proposed railways were made, to bring up their debt to twelve millions. He would advise honorable members to pause before they proceeded with such expensive works. He would remind them that the fall in the price of wool had induced the Trea-

surers of all the Australian colonies, except Queensland, to regulate their finances accordingly and they now had rumors of a war in Europe, in which the mother country was likely to be involved, so that there was an additional reason why they should be very cautious in incurring liabilities of such a nature. He believed that the additional three millions of debt for railways would be simply an expenditure for the purpose of purchasing a lot of white elephants, which would not add to the working power of the colony or bring an increase of revenue, but would only entail an additional burden which the already sufficiently-taxed people of the country would have to put up with. He thought, therefore, that if honorable members on the Treasury benches would take that matter into their consideration, and agree to rest on their oars for a time, it would be a great deal better for the colony. He hoped that the Bill would be defeated, either in that House or elsewhere.

Mr. PALMER said it was not necessary for him to explain his opinions upon the Bill; as he had done so as plainly as possible, and at some length, on a former occasion. He believed it was a bad measure in every clause of it; there was nothing good in it. The amendment moved by the honorable member for Rockhampton, and very clearly explained by him, was a good one; but he feared at this stage of the proceedings not much benefit would be gained by a division on the amendment; he would much rather vote against the third reading of the Bill, and he hoped there was common sense enough left in the House to defeat the third reading of such an injurious Bill. He believed there was a great deal of truth in what had been said by the honorable member for East Moreton, and if Ministers had not been able to see the state of things before, they should be roused by the late news from Europe, to which the honorable member had called attention. The peculiar character of the times no doubt demanded great caution, instead of rushing headlong into a Bill which would sooner or later subvert nearly the whole of the interests of the colony. As the honorable member for Rockhampton had pointed out, this Bill was a breach of faith with the public creditor, and he believed on the intimation of the Bill being passed the Ministry would find great difficulty in raising a loan. He repeated it was a clear breach of faith with the public creditor to devote the lands proposed by the Bill to the construction of railways—such an enormous quantity of land, too, as had been decided upon. By nothing he could say now could he express a stronger opinion against the Bill than he had expressed; and that opinion was, that its every principle was bad. The original principle was bad, and it had been made worse by every alteration. It was so bad now that the author of it ought to be very glad to get rid of it. It contained no principles whatever now but injurious ones,

and it was conglomerated in such an extraordinary manner that if the Bill was thrown out forthwith, he believed the Minister for Lands would be glad in his heart at that result.

Mr. MURPHY said that whatever Government was in power, he hoped they would not adopt the standstill policy of the honorable member for East Moreton. The honorable member's principles, if carried out, could not fail to prevent the progress of the colony in a way that was not at all to be desired. Whether the principles enunciated by the Bill were correct or not, these were times of progress when they should not stand still or lag behind. Viewing the matter in that light, he hoped the Bill would pass its third reading, whatever fate might be reserved for it in the other chamber. The honorable member for Normanby alluded to the misfortunes that would overtake the pastoral lessees if the Bill became law; he (Mr. Murphy) must, for one, say that he did not, and would not, join anyone in oppressing them. When he said he would vote for the second reading of this Bill, it was on the condition that a clause should be introduced taking away one-half of the runs to which the Bill applied; for it seemed to him that these lessees were entitled to some consideration, that if one-half of their runs were taken, it would be quite sufficient for the purposes of the railway reserves, giving to them the use of the other half. He supported that principle, but honorable gentlemen on the other side, and the pastoral lessees, to a man, voted against it, and voted that the whole of the runs should be resumed. If, therefore, any injustice had been perpetrated on the pastoral lessees by the reservation of these vast tracts of country, they themselves were partly responsible for it. He did not say the principle was an incorrect one. Honorable gentlemen opposite, and the pastoral lessees of the colony, were the best judges of that, but he thought half the quantity was sufficient, and he gave effect to that opinion by voting for it, thinking that the gentlemen who had spent large sums of money, and contributed so much to the prosperity of the country, should be considered. He merely mentioned this that the honorable member for Normanby might acquit him of any desire to oppress the pastoral lessees in any vote he might give upon this Bill. He was very sure that no honorable gentleman on that side of the House wished to oppress the pastoral lessees, or in any way detract from the pastoral interest, which every one who had any interest in the community must wish to see go ahead. If that great interest were depressed, other interests would be depressed also; for, with the advancement of pastoral pursuits, the general interests of the colony would equally prosper. It was impossible to forget that, at one memorable time when that interest was depressed, depression fell upon the whole community. Therefore, he for one would never be found to interfere in any degree

with the rights of the pastoral lessees, but would rather uphold what he considered to be their just rights, and give them every fair facility for pursuing their avocations, which tended so much to the general welfare of the colony. With regard to the Bill itself, he should be glad to see it read a third time, because, take it all in all, it was a step in the right direction. It might be improved upon in committee, and in time they might see reason to remodel and modify its clauses in some way, but on the whole he regarded it as one of those Bills that would give effect to useful legislation, and tend by its promotion of railways to send the colony ahead. He could not join the honorable member for Toowoomba in condemning the Bill because the rights of conditional and homestead selectors were interfered with. Their rights were sufficiently recognised, as they should be, without shutting out the general rights of the whole colony. The Bill provided for the ultimate payment of the moneys that would be expended in the construction of the railways; but if these lands were given away for little or nothing, of course the principle enunciated by the Bill would be to some extent lost. Keeping, however, in view the interests of these conditional selectors, and others who might be disposed to invest their capital in the colony, the principles of the Bill, taken as a whole, were fair. It would tend to benefit the community as a whole, because its principles were progressive; and, believing this, he would be prepared to vote for the third reading. He was surprised to hear the member for Normanby intimate that the member for Mulgrave would vote against the Bill, because it had always seemed that that honorable member was as much in favor of it as the honorable member for Gympie. Viewing, then, the Bill as good on the whole, he was of opinion that it ought to pass the third reading.

MR. PETTIGREW said, before he made up his mind how to vote upon this question, he should like to ask the Minister for Lands one question. He noticed that there was £100,000 put upon the Loan Estimates for various railways. Take the Stanthorpe Railway to begin with, as an illustration. When this £100,000 was expended, if there were no lands sold, what next? Was the railway to be carried on by borrowing money? If not, how was it to be done? This he took to be a plain commercial question that required answering; for they ought to look ahead, and see what were to be the ways and means for prosecuting the works to a complete issue. They were to begin by spending this £100,000; the lands, let them presume, would not sell; how was the railway, in that case, to be carried on? Was the £100,000 to lie idle? or were the Ministry of the present or future to come down to the House, and bring in a Loan Bill to finish the line? They were now proceeding on the principle of selling lands for making railways; but before selling the

lands they borrowed the money, and committed themselves to a certain amount of expenditure, which would be perfectly useless unless they completed the work. It was something like a man speculating by little and little until he was bound to protect the money that had gone, and go further and further into debt. That seemed to him to be the position they would be in with regard to the Bill; but no doubt the honorable the Minister for Lands would be able to give a thorough explanation of it, and to some such explanation the House was certainly entitled before the question was further proceeded with. It was no use saying it would be discussed when the Loan Estimates were before the House. This, in his estimation, was the time to know if the £100,000 was to be spent in starting the Stanthorpe Railway, what was to be done if the land did not sell? He had no hesitation in saying that the land would not sell. He quite agreed with the honorable member for East Moreton that the colony was approaching times such as they had not seen since 1866, if the telegrams from Europe were any indication of what was going on, and he believed there were some telegrams not published pointing to the direction of war; and if war took place, colonial produce would fall most seriously in the home market. Those who had to export that produce, whether woolgrowers or what not, would find that it would not pay to send it to England. In 1871 they learned to their cost how much wool and stations were reduced. He hoped the Minister for Lands would consent to leave the Bill open till next session, because they were too late to go into the money market, when there was every probability that various parts of Europe would require money for war purposes, and as they were upon the spot, they would be first in the field. Besides, it was well known that when war broke out, people in the old country would not lend money. He would like a distinct and straightforward answer from the Minister upon this important point, which he did not bring forward for the mere purpose of troubling the Government, but to elicit necessary information. If the Bill were carried against them at the forthcoming division he was prepared to move a vote of confidence to keep them in power. He believed they were the best Ministry there had been since he had been in the House, and they carried on the business of the country quite as well as honorable gentlemen opposite, who, he was given to believe, had no desire to come into power. Without entering into the question of payment for these railways, he must say he was much amazed at the arguments of one honorable member, who asked if one-half of the land was required for railway purposes, why take the other half? That honorable member seemed to think they had simply to make a railway and run it. It had, however, to be paid for, and it had been shown that Queensland railways were not

yet paying, and that the tax-payer was paying for them. He did not think that was the state of things under which they should go into heavy expenditure. He did not hesitate to say that they had to thank the honorable the Speaker for this fanciful railway business. The Maryborough and Gympie Railway was certainly a fanciful railway, and was never anything else. He did not wish to be personal to the honorable gentleman who occupied the chair, but there could be no doubt that was a railway to which he took a fancy, and did his level best to carry it out. The people of Gympie could have had a railway at a price. He himself (Mr. Pettigrew) would be happy to accept £1,200 a mile to make a railway in the Ipswich Reserve, and he would be satisfied with a speed of eight or nine miles an hour, because these branch lines were not to be expected in the present state of the colony, and with its small population, to run at the same pace as the Southern and Western trains. The member for Cook said he would vote for this Bill. No doubt he would; he would vote for any Bill that the present Government would bring in, and back his vote as he had just done with arguments that were valueless as commercial considerations and were mere lawyers' arguments. He held that the Government had no business to start railways simply to find work, so that when that work was done men who were well off in a particular district were to spend large sums of money to get themselves into difficulties and lose their property. He wanted to have something that would pay, and at the same time advance the prosperity of the colony. To applaud a member of Parliament at the hustings would not make a colony contented and happy. The great object of railways at the present time was simply to expend money in a particular district, which thought fortunes would be made if it could only get an expenditure of public money, and he was sorry to say the Liberal party since they came into power had pandered to that state of affairs without any good results; and that in many instances thousands of pounds had been expended: at Maryborough, for instance. He was sorry to say the Government had been compelled to use the immigration barracks at Maryborough for a school. The idea of erecting a large brick building, with a ship coming into the port twice a-year, was a monstrous absurdity. A cheap affair would have done quite well enough, for there was plenty of timber to make a building there suitable for the time being; and when the country was more wealthy they could go into further expenses. To come back again to the point from which he started, he wished to have an explanation as to whether, when this money was expended, and the land was not sold, the works were to be stopped, or were they to go in for a fresh loan?

Mr. MACROSSAN said that as the question seemed to be re-opened again somewhat, and

honorable members were ventilating their opinions, he must say, in a somewhat extraordinary way on the third reading of a Bill, he felt inclined to say a little himself, although he should not keep the House long. When the Bill was under discussion on the second reading, he did his duty conscientiously against the Bill, believing, as he did, it contained principles which were bad. He opposed it as much as he possibly could, and would have thrown the Bill out if he could. He did not think, after having tried to amend the Bill in Committee, and done his best, as other honorable members had done, to amend it, it would be consistent in him, or them, to come forward now, and try to defeat the Bill on a third reading. Had the suggestion of the honorable member for Port Curtis been taken, and the Government been allowed to carry the Bill through committee without debate or amendments, they would have been perfectly justified in trying to defeat the Bill in its present stage; but, as he had said, having done their best to amend it, and actually amended it to a great extent, they were not justified in throwing it out now or in hoping and anticipating that if it was not thrown out now it would be in another place.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Hear, hear.

Mr. MACROSSAN said the Minister for Lands claimed for the Bill, as amended, that it would lead to two things, the construction of railways, and the settlement of the population on the land. If it would in any degree tend to the settlement of population, it would not be owing to that honorable gentleman or the Government that the Bill contained that principle—it was owing to honorable members on the Opposition side of the House, and the few on the other side who tried to amend it; and, after having amended it in such a way as that large areas of land would be resumed under it, and thrown open to conditional selection, they would not be justified in attempting to throw it out at this stage. He did not believe the Bill contained, in itself, the elements of railway construction. The preamble contained a falsehood, inasmuch as it provided that funds for the construction of railways should be provided by the sale of Crown lands within the districts to be benefited by such railways. He contended that the railways to be made were not to be made by the sale of public lands. That might have been the intention of the honorable gentleman who introduced the Bill, but it had been departed from, and it was departed from at a very early stage of its passage through the House; because, in the second speech which the honorable gentleman delivered on the second reading of the Bill, he distinctly declared that he would borrow the money for initiating the work—he would borrow money for carrying it on—he would borrow money for finishing it. This was a complete answer to the ques-

tion asked by the honorable member for Stanley. That was how the railways were to be made. The Bill itself, as far as making the railways was concerned, was a mere sham. That, however, would not justify him in attempting to throw out the Bill, because so far as it would tend to settle population in the land, it was not a sham, although it was not such a reality as he could wish it to be. There were many millions of acres resumed under this Bill, and the population would have a chance of settling upon the land; for this reason he should not vote against the third reading. He could not, however, for a moment agree with the arguments of the honorable member for East Moreton. He had never yet heard that gentleman open his mouth upon the question of public works, that he did not use selfish arguments; the most ultra-Brisbane member never used arguments more selfish than his. He said in effect, "We have incurred a certain amount of debt for public works in the South; there you must stop; we will not contract any more debt because we cannot pay the interest." The honorable member had got railways and public works for his supporters; therefore he objected to railways and public works in any other portion of the colony. But the honorable gentleman should have been consistent; having voted against the second reading of the Bill, in committee he voted upon every occasion with the Government, and never attempted to amend the Bill, but on the contrary voted against those who were trying to amend it. The speech of the honorable the Minister for Lands was quite in the usual Tory style of the speeches he was in the habit of delivering whenever he spoke upon the land question. The whole of the honorable gentleman's speech was to the effect that it was a great benefit for the lands to be concentrated in the hands of a few individuals. That was the effect of his answer to the honorable member for Toowoomba in regard to lands around Dalby; it was a good thing for the lands of the colony to be concentrated in the hands of a few. He (Mr. Macrossan) maintained that it was not a good thing; and if the amendment, which would to certain extent deprive capitalists of the advantage they had under the Bill as introduced by the honorable the Minister for Lands, had not been introduced, he would have voted against the third reading. But, as he said before, as he conceived that the Bill would to a certain degree tend to the settlement of population upon the lands, he should not vote against it, but not because he believed it would tend to the construction of railways; for, in spite of the Bill, there was no doubt that the railways would be made from borrowed money, and he was only sorry that the new clause he tried to introduce yesterday had not been adopted, because then the cost would have been defrayed by those who would benefit by the expenditure.

MR. WALSH said seeing that an important amendment had been introduced, and introduced with so much telling argument, he thought the one honorable member who had charge of the destiny of this colony—the Premier—should express an opinion on the subject. He was surprised that the honorable the Minister for Lands should allow a matter of so much importance to be considered without the Premier of the colony expressing his opinion upon it. What were they to think of the Government of the colony, when an amendment of such pressing importance was not even attempted to be spoken on by the Premier? It appeared to him that they had ceased to have a parliamentary Government; that they had ceased to have the Government they thought Queensland possessed. That the honorable the Premier was unable to address himself to the subject was natural from his want of attainments and knowledge of the subject, and he left the chamber. Was that decorous? Was it decent? Was this matter of such trivial importance that the Premier of the colony should absent himself during the discussion of it? He warned the honorable member for the Kennedy to beware of the cheers he received from the honorable the Attorney-General during his speech. If he (Mr. Walsh) were speaking, and were cheered by that honorable gentleman, he would have thrown back and repudiated any such endorsement of his opinions, and he should have felt that he was falling into a trap prepared by the Government. He regretted indeed to see his honorable friend the member for Kennedy beguiled by the serpent in accepting those dangerous cheers. The Government supporters, so far, had been mute; they were not allowed to explain their opinions at all, except the few who had dared to express them in a way adverse to the Government. The honorable member for Cook always seemed to be holding a brief for the Government on every matter they brought forward. He was very sorry to have to say it; he knew it was not the case, but it certainly appeared so from the manner the honorable gentleman had adopted. By some mistaken course of action, whenever the honorable member addressed the House on a grave question of this kind, of which he appeared to know nothing, he appeared to hold a brief for the Government. It was a mistake he had fallen into, and he (Mr. Walsh) thought a great deal of it was attributable to the advice which the honorable the Attorney-General gave to honorable members. He did not know whether his honorable friend who moved the amendment intended to press it to a division, but if he did, he (Mr. Walsh) should certainly vote for it, and if he did not, he should regret it. Still, he thought the arguments of the honorable member for Kennedy were not sufficient to justify him in supporting a measure which he despised, and which he believed would be injurious to

the colony. That he was bound to support it because it had been amended in Committee, was not a sound argument, and ought not to induce the honorable member to follow that course.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put, and carried.

Question—that the Bill be now read a third time—put.

The House divided.

AYES, 20.

Messrs. G. Thorn, Dickson, Douglas, Stewart, Griffith, Bailey, Beattie, Low, J. Thorn, Murphy, Lord, W. Scott, Fraser, Edmondstone, McLean, Kingsford, Pechey, Morgan, Tyrel, and Foote.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Palmer, Thompson, Amhurst, Ivory, Graham, J. Scott, Fryar, De Stag , Groom, O'Sullivan, Pettigrew, Walsh, Buzacott, and Stevenson.

Whereupon Bill read a third time, and passed.