

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 30 AUGUST 1877

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ERRATA.

- Page 134, second column, resolution for appointment of committee—*read* “A. H. Brown,” *for* “W. D. Box.”
- Page 135, second column, first line—*read* “A. H. Brown,” *for* “W. D. Box.”
- Page 187, first column, twenty-second line from bottom—*read* “incapable,” *for* “capable.”
- Page 211, second column, last line of the Honourable W. Thornton's speech—*omit* the word “not.”
- Page 261, second column, twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth lines from top—*read* “Mr. Fryar was the Minister for Lands.”
- Page 263, first column, first line—*after* “thought,” *read* “if it was necessary”; commencement of third line—*for* “and,” *read* “they should be”; sixth line—*read* “public-houses” *for* “stations”; and, at the end of the paragraph, *read* “for the consideration of Government.”

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 30 August, 1877.

Absence of Member—Resumption of Land.—Appropriation Bill, No. 2.—Appointment of the Usher.—Detention of Letters.—Construction of Railways.

ABSENCE OF MEMBER.

The PRESIDENT informed the House that he had received a letter from the Honourable K. I. O'Doherty intimating, under the Standing Orders, that the honourable member would not be able to attend the House for one week.

RESUMPTION OF LAND.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved, without previous notice—

“That the resolution of the Legislative Assembly embodied in the message received from that House on the 7th instant be referred to a Select Committee, consisting of the following members:—The Honourables J. C. Heusler, G. Edmondstone, E. I. C. Browne, F. T. Gregory, A. H. Brown, and C. S. Mein, in pursuance of the Standing Order of 1st September, 1875.”

He said that the resolution was one respecting the resumption of 15 square miles from one run, and 79½ square miles from another run, in the Settled District of Port Curtis; and of 44 square miles from a run in the Settled District of Kennedy. By the Standing Order, any proposition for the resumption of land by the Lower House must lie on the table of the Council for one week and then be referred to a Select Committee, to sit *de die in diem*, and to collect such evidence as might be obtainable and to report to the House upon the policy and justice of the resumption. It had been the practice hitherto to move the appointment of the committee without notice; because the Standing Order implied that the thing should be done at once. The committee, with the exception of one name, were the same as the committees that formerly sat.

Question put and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL, No. 2.

A message was received from the Legislative Assembly, presenting for the concurrence of the Council, “A Bill to authorize the appropriation out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland of the sum of

£100,000 towards the service of the year ending on the last day of June, 1878.”

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a first time and ordered to be printed.

There being an absolute majority of the whole Council present,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said, as the passing of the Appropriation Bill was a matter of importance, the second month of the financial year being just at an end and the salaries of the Civil Servants being payable within a few days, and the object of the Bill being to provide funds for the payment of current expenditure, under the circumstances, he apprehended no objection to advancing the Bill through its remaining stages, to-day; and, therefore, he moved, without notice, and, as an unopposed motion:—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of the Appropriation Bill being passed through all its stages in one day.

There being no objection, the question was put and passed.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the Bill was read a second time.

The House then resolved into Committee of the Whole for the consideration of the Bill in detail.

When the Chairman (the Honourable D. F. ROBERTS) took his seat,

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he gladly took the opportunity of congratulating the Chairman on his being restored to the Council in quite renewed health.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The CHAIRMAN desired to acknowledge the compliment of the honourable gentleman representing the Government, and to thank the House generally for their consideration, and especially to express his obligations to the Honourable E. I. C. Browne, who had so kindly undertaken the duties of Chairman in his absence.

The Bill went without amendment and was so reported to the House, and was then passed through its remaining stages, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly with the usual message.

APPOINTMENT OF THE USHER.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON not being in his place to move the following motion, when called on, motion lapsed:—

“That in the opinion of this Council, it is derogatory to its position that the office of the Usher of the Black Rod should be held under an inferior tenure to that of the corresponding office in the Legislative Assembly, viz.:—that of the Sergeant-at-Arms.”

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL remarked that he did not think the honourable gentleman intended to go on with the motion. He knew, as a matter of fact, that the President had made an application that the

Usher of the Black Rod should be appointed under seal, and the matter was being attended to.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

DETENTION OF LETTERS.

The Hon. W. D. Box asked:—

“Are the Government taking any action which will alter the present mode of detaining letters insufficiently stamped that are posted in the United Kingdom for Queensland, and *vice versa*?”

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL answered: They are not.

The Hon. W. D. Box moved the adjournment of the House, for the purpose of pointing out to honourable members the practice that seemed to have obtained, and that he thought was one to be remedied. If a letter was posted in London, insufficiently stamped, for the Torres Straits mail, it was detained, and an advice was sent out to the colony, to the person to whom it was addressed, stating that the letter was lying in St. Martin's Le Grand, and that upon his paying so much in British coin, or authorizing any other person to pay the money in British coin, or to affix the necessary stamp, the letter would be forwarded as addressed. The consequence was, that a letter might be detained four months, though it might be of the most serious importance;—indeed, it was impossible to get it under that time. Whereas, by the Melbourne route, letters insufficiently stamped in London came on to their destination, and the deficient postage, with the addition of 6d. fine on each letter, was charged upon delivery. The most careful person might make a mistake occasionally, in stamping letters; and honourable members must agree with him (Mr. Box) that the penalty of detention was too severe, and that it would be much better in every way to make the deficiency payable, with a fine, on delivery. Certainly, he thought that letters by the Torres Straits mail route should be placed in the same position as letters by the Melbourne route. Those were the reasons why he had called the attention of the Postmaster-General to the subject; and, because he thought it right honourable members should know the practice prevailing, he had trespassed on the attention of the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was not himself aware that there was any difference in the practice of sending the mails from the United Kingdom *via* Melbourne and *via* Torres Straits. However, the matter was very simple. A certain scale of charges was laid down for the carriage of letters from the United Kingdom to this colony; due notice had been given of that; and inattention to it entailed certain consequences. The question had been agitated

at home, whether, in the event of letters being insufficiently stamped, the authorities in London ought not to do something—to despatch the letters. Hitherto the postal authorities of Great Britain had thought it inexpedient to do anything of the sort. It seemed to him (the Postmaster-General) that the action taken was quite proper. The public had sufficient intimation as to the charges made; there would be a considerable amount of uncertainty in the collection of the deficiency of postage at this side of the world; and to undertake it would be to offer a premium to persons at home to post letters insufficiently stamped and to throw the burden of the payment of the deficiency on those who would receive them in the colony. Such was the practice in the colonies before the Imperial Government insisted upon the pre-payment of all letters despatched. If the Government gave way to the wish of the honourable member, they would be going back to the inconvenient practice which was in force some time ago. He might state in regard to the question that, practically, letters insufficiently stamped here were not detained, but were forwarded, when the sender's name appeared on the outside of the envelope and he was a person of substance and known respectability; the officers of the department taking it upon themselves occasionally to pay the deficiency of postage out of their own pockets, relying upon the sender to make it good upon being informed of his mistake;—but that was a matter *ex gratia* entirely. It would, he thought, be most inconvenient to adopt the practice as pointed out by the Honourable Mr. Box, and it would be altogether inexpedient. Without further explanation on the point, he should feel considerable difficulty in taking action in the way indicated.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR: From his experience, what the honourable gentleman representing the Government had stated was correct. The system in England was pre-payment. On a former occasion the same matter as was now raised by the Honourable Mr. Box was taken up; the office in London was communicated with, and the Imperial authorities distinctly refused. His (Mr. Murray-Prior's) reason for rising, now, was to say that he thought the Postmaster-General could easily have given the explanation at the outset which he had given afterwards; and, really, it would have been the more courteous way of dealing with the Honourable Mr. Box, to have answered him at first. He had thought the honourable gentleman had not understood the question, and that it was a pity—the explanation might have been given so easily.

The PRESIDENT: He was afraid that none of the honourable gentlemen who had addressed the House on the question had quite mastered it. They were not,

apparently, aware that the same question arose in the House of Commons not long ago. The Postmaster-General was asked in the House of Commons—Whether it was the practice to open letters insufficiently stamped addressed to the Australian colonies, to read them, and to return them to the persons by whom they had been posted?—and the right honourable gentleman acknowledged that such was the case;—he said the letters were not read as a rule, but that they were always opened and returned to the writers. He (the President), of his own knowledge, was aware that such was not the case always, because he had received letters insufficiently stamped with a demand to pay the amount of deficiency; and he supposed other honourable gentlemen had the same experience. He almost forgot to add that the Postmaster-General at home said that an effort had been made to bring the Australian postal authorities to consent to the transmission of those letters insufficiently stamped and the collection of the deficiency upon their arrival in the colonies, but that the colonial authorities declined to afford any assistance. It seemed to him (the President) desirable, certainly, that such an arrangement should be made. Two honourable gentlemen having experience of the office of Postmaster-General had addressed the House, both better up in the duties of that office than anybody else; and they had stated what the practice was. As had been remarked by the Honourable Mr. Box, the most careful person might accidentally post a letter insufficiently stamped; and it seemed very hard that it should be detained six weeks therefor. He (the President) thought that some agreement might be arrived at by the post office authorities in England and the Australian colonies to avoid the inconvenience complained of, and the more so, inasmuch as England was willing to enter into it, whilst the colonies were not.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN observed that what struck him, was, that the honourable Mr. Box said he had received, since he put the motion on the paper, two letters with deficient stamps *via* Melbourne; and that, if an arrangement for forwarding such letters existed under one postal contract, it should be carried out under another. He could not see why the same facilities offered by Great Britain to Victoria should not be availed of by this colony. A fine could be inflicted on those who failed to put the proper stamps on letters. But he did not see why this colony should be placed in the difficulty pointed out by the Honourable Mr. Box, when the deficiency could be collected here. He had not the slightest doubt that Great Britain would listen to a proposal from Queensland and make reciprocal arrangements; and that, if letters sent hence were insufficiently stamped, the required deficiency

could be collected at home. He trusted that the Postmaster-General would see the policy of relieving merchants and other correspondents from the difficulty described. It could not be a matter of very serious consequence to do so, as regarded the departmental arrangements. Some notice should be taken of the matter.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he would inquire into the practice that prevailed between Victoria and Great Britain, and ascertain whether there was a different policy adopted in regard to that colony. At the same time, he must add that the chief difficulty which suggested itself to his mind was, that, instead of being a convenience, the laying down the rule desired by the honourable member who raised the question would be penalising the colonists: if a letter or document was insufficiently stamped in England and forwarded out here, the person who received it had to pay not only the deficient postage, but he was fined also. The result would be that documents on which the postage was 5s. would be deposited in the post office bearing a penny stamp, and they would have to be forwarded, and the people of this colony would have to pay the deficiency. Large parcels, samples, and other such commodities for the benefit of the mercantile community, came out to the colony by every mail. It would be offering a premium to persons at home, who were legion, to send them out in order that persons in the colony might have the pleasure of getting their samples and paying postage and penalty on them.

At the request of the Hon. W. D. Box, The motion for adjournment was, by leave, withdrawn.

CONSTRUCTION OF RAILWAYS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved, in pursuance of notice, the following:—

(1.) That this House approve of the following plans, sections, and books of reference sent up by the Legislative Assembly for the approval of the Council, namely:—

1. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the extension of the railway from Warwick to Stanthorpe.
2. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the railway from Maryborough to Gympie.
3. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the railway from Bundaberg towards Mount Perry.
4. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the extension of the railway from Comet to Emerald Downs.
5. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the extension of the railway from Dulacca to Roma.
6. The plans, sections, and book of reference of the railway from Townsville towards Charters Towers.

(2.) That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly, by message in the usual form.

These resolutions, he said, might be regarded almost as old friends of the Chamber. They were almost identical in terms with resolutions which excited a great deal of discussion during last session and which narrowly escaped being carried through the Council. The subject of railway extension had been again brought before the representatives of the people and had again met with their almost unanimous approval; and now it presented itself to the Council for the second time. He felt pretty sanguine that honourable gentlemen having had the benefit of one year's consideration of the subject, and having in view the growing feeling of the public out of doors, as well as the strong feeling amongst the representatives of the people, would be more inclined to favour the proposition laid before them this session than they were inclined to favour it last session. He presented the proposition dealing with six railways in one resolution, the first—because the resolution had come up from the Legislative Assembly in that shape; not from a desire to force all the railways upon the acceptance of honourable members; though, at the same time, he was extremely anxious that they should all meet with their approval. He announced when the House were discussing the Railway Reserves Bill what the policy of the Government was with regard to railway construction. When the Western Railway Act was passed in 1874, he took it that honourable gentlemen by their votes committed themselves to the construction of the railway from Dalby towards Roma, at all events; and he took it, also, similarly, that when they passed the Railway Reserves Act of this session they committed themselves to the construction of the railways which the Government then intimated it was their intention to undertake, and which were set forth in the resolutions now before the House. He went fully into the railway question on the second reading of the measure last named, and he pointed out that this colony was behind the other colonies in pushing forward such important public works; and that the requirements of modern civilization insisted upon the adoption of the most important and certain means of communication, which railways afforded, between producing and consuming countries. In advocating railways he was sure that he expressed the feeling of all persons of liberal and progressive tendencies, that this young colony, in order to encourage population to come here to develop its resources, and to make it attractive to others, must offer facilities for bringing the producer as speedily as possible into communication with the consumer. If Queensland was to keep pace in progress with the other colo-

nies possessing similar attractions, public works must be pushed forward here as rapidly as they were in the south. Honourable members by their votes appeared decidedly to favour his contention, and they appropriated lands in certain districts for the purpose of railway construction. The only point that required elucidation was the mode in which the Government intended to construct the railways then foreshadowed. The House were of course entitled to information showing that the Government were not going to be reckless in their proposed expenditure. With regard to the railways, he might state that upon none of those works had the Government entered without taking great care to have the best information as to cost, to secure as far as possible economy of construction. When the question of construction was under discussion in the Cabinet, the Government thought it desirable to take into their confidence to assist them in their deliberations, the three engineers connected with the railways of the colony; and on the unanimous testimony of those officers with regard to the practicability of carrying out the railways effectively and economically, the Government decided upon the scheme which was now submitted for the approval of the House. The first of the railways proposed was from Warwick to Stanthorpe. He did not know that he need dilate upon the desirability of that work, as the Council, last year, affirmed its construction, not only to Stanthorpe, but intimated that the line should go further and approach the southern border of the colony. The Government did not propose to go beyond Stanthorpe, now; their chief reason being that the line would be ultimately pushed forward to meet the extension of the railway of New South Wales northwards to the border. Several schemes of extension in this direction had been devised by the New South Wales authorities, but none decided on. However, judging by the recommendations of the engineers of the Government, they all tended towards some point near Tenterfield. As Stanthorpe was but a short distance from that place, it would be prudent to wait a little, for the final opinion of the Government of New South Wales as to the direction of their extension, so that the decision of the junction might be arrived at before Queensland completed its southern extension. The distance from Warwick to Stanthorpe was forty and a-half miles. The Government had the permanent surveys completed, as now submitted to the House. Several trial surveys had been undertaken and completed, and the permanent survey had been arrived at after very mature deliberation. The line started from the present terminal station on the north side of the Condamine, skirted along the bank of the river a short distance, then along

by the back of the pound, and crossed the Condamine near the hospital, running thence parallel with Lyon street to a small station near the Post Office; thence going on towards Stanthorpe. An alternative line had been surveyed going more through the centre of the town. It had been found that that line, though a little shorter than the one adopted, would involve an increased expenditure of money, and would not possess the same convenience. By the parliamentary plan submitted to the House, improved means for effectively crossing the Condamine and avoiding risks from floods were secured at a decreased cost; the curves were less and the gradients were more favourable, and fewer streets in Warwick had to be crossed and less town property to be passed through; and it was estimated that a saving of £3,300 would be effected. There were other details; but he need only state that, in addition to the two terminal stations, there would be five intermediate stations, one being the small station near the Post Office, in Warwick itself, to which he had referred, and the others, Rosenthal Creek, for watering chiefly; Maryland, Rosenthal paddocks, and Cherry Gully. They were all provided for in the estimates. The total cost of the line, including ten per cent. for contingencies, was £349,411 14s. 6d.; or, at the rate of £8,553 per mile. The work was, as, of course, honourable gentlemen were aware, the extension of one of the main trunk lines of railway of Queensland. The average cost per mile was in excess of what the Government were now getting the Western Railway towards Roma constructed for; but the increase arose because a considerable portion of the country traversed was difficult. The bridge over the Condamine would alone cost £12,280; and, with other bridges, culverts, and drains, would involve altogether £61,980. Although the cost was comparatively large, yet the gain to the country would be equally large. By the construction of the railway, the mineral resources of Stanthorpe would be developed; and they already contributed materially to the prosperity of the colony;—besides it would attract for the purpose of transport the tin which was produced in large quantities in the northern part of the neighbouring colony, as well as the agricultural produce of a considerable portion of New England. He thought he had heard honourable members not as sanguine as he, say that the production of tin had deteriorated. By scientific authorities he learned only a few days since that the tin mines of this colony and the neighbouring district of New South Wales were deemed so prolific that they had shut up the tin mines of Cornwall. At the comparatively small cost of £350,000, the value of the resources of the district would be immensely enhanced, and the productions and means of

the colony greatly increased. Proceeding northward, he came to the two lines of railway in the Wide Bay and Burnett district. The first was that from Maryborough to Gympie. With regard to that work, it appeared to him that there could not possibly be a doubt as to its necessity. The claims of the district had been hitherto entirely ignored by the Legislature. The population of the district was 24,000. No public work of importance except the Maryborough Bridge, which was absolutely necessary, and which was constructed at a very cheap rate, had been carried out in the Wide Bay district.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN: Hear hear.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Contrasted with what had been done in the Central district, which was not more than it was entitled to, as it contained a fair population, 23,000 souls—there had been expended in that district, on railways alone, upwards of a million of money, and the expenditure was to be further increased, properly so, if justice was done to the rest of the colony—nothing had been done for Wide Bay. The railway from Maryborough to Gympie would connect two populous and very important towns. Any person who had travelled over the road between them, as he had, must feel satisfied that it was absolutely impossible to construct a fair traversable road and to maintain it at a less cost than was necessary for the construction and maintenance of a railway of the character the Government proposed. By the construction of the railway not only would the large agricultural resources of the country now being opened up for several miles outside of Maryborough and along the banks of the river be more fully developed than was possible otherwise; but the mineral resources,—gold, copper, and others,—of Gympie would be made available to the world. He could hardly think that honourable gentlemen would seriously disregard the claims of the district. The colony was deeply indebted to that district for its present prosperity. He remembered the time, some ten years ago, when Queensland was in exceedingly low water indeed; and he remembered most distinctly what was the effect on trade, and and on every interest of the colony, of the discovery of the gold field of Gympie. Notwithstanding what that district had done for the colony, its claims had been ignored. He trusted that on the present occasion honourable gentlemen were, as a body, inclined to do what he considered was but justice to the district. The distance between Maryborough and Gympie was 62 miles 39 chains; and, according to the estimate, which provided very fully to meet every contingency, the railway could be constructed for £320,478 7s. 6d., or at the rate of £5,127 per mile. For the construction of a railway between

the two towns, numerous surveys had been carried out in the district, and the fullest inquiries had been made by the Government, through their officers. The route finally determined on and proposed now for the approval of the House, started from a place in Maryborough called the Ninety-acre Reserve, and followed the northern bank of the Mary river through the agricultural district to which he had referred, *viâ* Yengarie and Ramsey's saw-mills to Antigua; then, crossing the river a short distance above the sugar-mill, the line passed on the western side of Tiaro; thence by Gootchie and Curra stations, and, following up the watershed of the right-hand branch of the Curra Creek, it traversed eight to nine miles of broken country to the north of Gympie, and terminated in what might be termed the principal business part of the town—the centre of Gympie, on the ridge by the back of the court-house. One of the last surveys made was of a more direct line than the one adopted by the Government; it crossed the Mary in what he might say was the centre of the town, below Prince's Ferry, and thence to Owanilla, saving five miles in length, but involving a bridge that would cost £55,000, and not opening up agricultural land;—in fact, the country was bad, so bad that the Government would not make a railway by that route. There was, also, a third route surveyed, by Bailey's Falls; it was longer than the line *viâ* Yengarie and Antigua; and it was out of the question as compared with the line now proposed. The Mary would be crossed by one bridge which would involve an expenditure of something like £12,000; at any rate, considerably less than would be required if the direct route was chosen. In addition to the terminal stations at Maryborough and Gympie, there were five stations provided for:—Yengarie, 9 miles, from Maryborough; Antigua, 15½ miles; Tiaro, 21½ miles; Gootchie, 32 miles; Curra, 53 miles. The third line of railway proposed by the resolution was that from Bundaberg towards Mount Perry. A great many of the observations he had made respecting the desirability of the second line would apply to the third with equal justice. The mineral resources of the Mount Perry district were undoubted; and similarly the agricultural lands along the banks of the Burnett to within a few miles of Bundaberg were also undoubted. However, it was anticipated that the traffic along this railway, for some time to come, would not be very large, and the Government had determined, upon the advice of one of their engineers who had made the survey, to apply here a cheap method of construction. The distance, according to the plans now submitted, from Bundaberg to New Moonta, short of Mount Perry, was 49 miles 42 chains. It was proposed to save expense in the construction

of the line by doing without fencing except where the line ran through purchased land, and by making the earthworks and permanent way less heavy than usual, and by using lighter rails and lighter rolling-stock; and it was calculated that the cost per mile would be £3,050 per mile, or a saving of something like £2,000 per mile on the former estimate. Besides the temporary terminal station at Bundaberg, the following stations were provided for:—Bingera, 12 miles 40 chains; Kolan road, 21 miles 30 chains; Gin Gin Creek, 29 miles 10 chains; Moonboolaman Creek, 41 miles 7 chains; the fifth, where the line diverged from the route which would be ultimately followed to Mount Perry, distant nearly 46 miles from Mount Perry; and the sixth, the proposed temporary terminus, about 20 chains from the works of the New Moonta Company, at 49 miles 42 chains 63 links from Bundaberg. There was, it appeared, abundance of material for sleepers and other requirements of the works throughout the whole of the route, and the opportunity would be there afforded of practically testing the question whether it was possible to construct cheap lines of railway capable of doing the work that this country required of them. The fourth line of railway proposed was the extension from Comet to Emerald Downs. He did not know whether honourable members would expect him to say much about it. It was the extension of a main trunk line of 30 miles. The works towards the Comet were very nearly completed; and, as soon as the House had agreed to the further extension, or by the time the money should have been voted for the new work, the labourers now engaged on the line would be ready to go on towards Emerald Downs. The distance was 30 miles, and the estimated cost was £150,000, or £5,000 per mile. That was more than might probably have been expected, owing to the comparative evenness of the country; but a great expense was necessary from the fact that three bridges would have to be constructed, which, however, were the only important works. He might state that the Government, in order to keep the workmen employed, in anticipation of Parliament approving of the line, had sanctioned the engineer's taking steps towards the construction of those bridges. The fifth railway was the line from Dulacca to Roma. It also was an extension of one of the main trunk lines, and one which the House decidedly agreed to when they assented to the Western Railway Act of 1874. Parliamentary authority had been given already for the construction of the line to Dulacca at £4,300 per mile; and he had satisfaction in saying that it was confidently anticipated that the line would be constructed for less than that figure. The distance from

Dulacca to Roma was 61 miles 66·90 chains. The cost was estimated to be a little over that of the works now in progress, but that was owing to the fact that the line traversed more difficult country from an engineering point of view; but the greater cost was only about £300 per mile. The total estimate was £286,619, or £4,636 per mile. It was said, now, and it was confidently believed, too, that the railway would reach Dulacca by the 1st of January, 1879; and that if authority was given for the construction of the line now proposed, the line to Roma would be open for traffic, right through, by the 1st of November of the same year. The whole distance of 166 miles, from Dalby to Roma, would thus be traversed by railway within three and a-half years from the commencement of the works; or, the construction would be at the rate of 47 miles per annum, which would contrast very favourably, he was informed by the engineers, with the progress of similar works in the southern colonies. Fortunately it would not be necessary to go to any considerable expense for land for a terminal station, as Mr. Fitzgibbon, a considerable time ago, made a large reserve of land, and thus provided for a terminal station at Roma. The last railway was that from Townsville to Charters Towers. The survey was not completed up to Charters Towers, but it was complete to a point 50 miles 56 chains distant from Townsville. The estimated cost of the line was £256,119, or an average of £5,051 13s. 4d. per mile. Though not a main trunk line, yet it was anticipated that ultimately the railway from Townsville to Charters Towers must be further extended; and it would, therefore, be constructed in a solid and substantial manner, capable of doing its work thoroughly and properly. It would not only bring down to the seaboard the mineral productions of the Charters Towers district, but it would, also, at a comparatively early date bring down the produce of the Barcoo and the rich pastoral district of Diamantina. He did not know that he need further insist upon the construction of the line. Townsville was a very important place, as honourable members knew; its imports and exports were second only to those of Brisbane. Charters Towers and Ravenswood were apparently inexhaustible goldfields. He had gone over the six railways embodied in the resolutions, and he hoped that honourable gentlemen would feel inclined to vote for them as they stood. It was quite competent, however, he admitted—and as he found out to his cost, last year—for any honourable member to take exception to any particular line. But he hoped the House would, on this occasion, give way to what was apparently the wish of the representatives of the people, manifested twice over, that the works proposed should be constructed. With regard to cost, he

had referred somewhat fully to it, and it was satisfactory to know that, although in the early days of railway construction in this colony, we paid rather dearly for railways, yet now they were constructed within the estimates of the Government engineers, and the cost per mile was considerably less than what our neighbours were getting their railways constructed for. In Victoria the average cost per mile was £19,530, and in New South Wales, £16,971; whilst the most expensive of the lines now proposed for Queensland was estimated at £8,553 per mile; and one was to be constructed at the rate of £3,050; and another at the rate of £4,636, per mile. Those figures showed, at all events to his own mind, that the engineers of Queensland were alive to the necessity of constructing railways economically, consistently with the works being done substantially. That being so, he trusted honourable gentlemen would by their votes show that the Government were justified in making their proposals, and that in making them they were doing only what was absolutely necessary for the prosperity of the country.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said, as on former occasions, when the Postmaster-General made a long statement in regard to any proposition of magnitude, he had to congratulate the honourable gentleman on the clearness and perspicuity with which he presented the subject to the House. There were, however, one or two points on which he thought the honourable gentleman had totally omitted to enlighten the House. When the question was before the Council, last session, the honourable gentleman was twitted with his utter failure to produce any statistics tending to support the construction of the railways proposed; it was frequently thrown in his teeth that he had not produced such information as was required; and he was quite unable to show the amount of traffic, passengers, or goods, or the population of the districts through which the railways passed—except from Maryborough to Gympie—adequate to justify the large expenditure involved in the works. He (Mr. Gregory) was not now speaking with regard to the whole group of railways, but the two or three lines which were most strenuously opposed, and which were the cause of the whole being withdrawn last session. There were many honourable gentlemen who generally voted on his side who were quite willing to accept two or three of the lines; and it was only in consequence of the persistence of the Government in refusing to make any change in the group that the whole were lost. He should not say that on the present occasion he was prepared to join with other members in throwing out or objecting to any of the railways; because he was convinced that the onus of constructing or

deferring them lay with the Government of the day, according to the financial condition of the colony. Still if the House passed the resolutions, that would be tantamount to their acquiescence in the construction of the whole of the lines. He should confine his remarks to one or two points; and, first, with regard to the lines which he thought could be constructed with advantage to the colony, under existing circumstances, as distinct from those lines which could not be undertaken without considerable prejudice to the best interests of the colony by embarrassing its finances and very materially disturbing the distribution of labour. With regard to the Stanthorpe railway, there was no doubt that while the yield of tin continued as it was last year, the line would pay a small percentage; that was, it would pay sufficient to make the work worth undertaking. It was certainly a very expensive line to construct; but, as it was a continuation of an existing main trunk railway, it could be worked without a large additional plant and rolling-stock, such as must be involved by any entirely new line. There was a vast difference in starting a line where a separate staff of engineers and officials, besides new rolling-stock, were necessary to work it. For the Warwick and Stanthorpe extension everything in that way was already organized and existing; and all that would be necessary for its working, when constructed, would be the appointment of a few additional minor servants and the providing of some additional trucks. The engineers had made a very fair estimate of the cost, one which would not be so much exceeded as was generally the case. Still, fair as it was, he (Mr. Gregory) thought the line would not be carried out without an additional expenditure of 25 per cent. upon the total amount. It was very doubtful whether Stanthorpe was the right point to which to construct the Southern Main Trunk Railway approaching the border of this colony and New South Wales. From additional information afforded to the public, it became still more doubtful whether Queensland was adopting a wise course in this undertaking; and whether the Government should not first settle with the neighbouring colony at which point on the boundary the inter-colonial railways should join. If the House could feel confident that the present Government would not rush at once into expense—that, having obtained the sense of Parliament in favour of the southern extension they would not go on with the works until they had arranged with New South Wales to meet the northern extension of that colony—there would be little to object to in the proposition under consideration; for the settlement of that point would seriously affect the work undertaken, and

the benefit to be derived from it. The Maryborough and Gympie railway certainly seemed to be one which, as regarded population, might fairly be undertaken; that was if population alone was a sufficient basis on which to commence the construction of a railway in any new district. But against that there was the very serious drawback that nothing was shown by the engineers, or from any other source of information available to the public, as to the present amount or the future prospects of traffic on the line being in any way commensurate to the enormous cost entailed. The railway would not open up any new district for agriculture, and that interest was not large. No doubt, minerals of considerable value were raised; but, being chiefly gold, the whole amount for the year could be conveyed to the seaboard by the ordinary means at a very small cost. It seemed absurd that an expensive railway should be constructed to carry gold, no matter what its value might be. Gold could be carried for a price so absurdly low as to tonnage, that the cost could not enter into the question at all of the construction of railways. A small amount of minerals had, no doubt, come down from the Gympie district; but there was no evidence that the quantity would increase. As to the sugar industry, the produce came down by the Mary River; so that a railway was not wanted for it. Consequently, he could not discover what interest, or what class of produce, or what passenger traffic, called for the construction of the railway. The same arguments as were advanced against the line last year applied now. No alteration had taken place in the circumstances of the country under which honourable members voted against the line last year. The railway from Bundaberg to Mount Perry appeared to have been introduced really as a sop to the district. The closure of the mines that it was supposed to give access to showed that the only excuse for making the railway—he thought he was not using an improper term—no longer existed; the only excuse was, that the railway would carry minerals from Moonta to the seaboard, and now no minerals were raised in the district that would pay for half-a-dozen miles of railway. There was nothing to carry now, so that a railway was not wanted. However, he should leave the subject to honourable members who knew a little more about the district than he did. Passing to the fourth railway, from Comet to Emerald Downs, it was one with which he concurred wholly. It was the extension of an existing line in operation; and it would not entail the expense to which he before alluded in connection with a totally new line; while it would enhance the profits of the existing line, and confer great benefits on the whole territory which

would be brought into connection with the railway. He looked upon it as second only, if second, to the railway to Roma. Both lines tapped most valuable districts of Queensland, and they would promote the profitable occupation of the far interior and the general prosperity of the colony. His remarks were equally applicable to the fifth railway of the group. The line to Roma would carry traffic through the most inhospitable part of the colony lying between the settled and valuable district of Darling Downs and the important and rich pastures which commenced in the vicinity of Roma and extended thence for hundreds of miles. The arguments advanced in support of that line by the Postmaster-General were not only just, but a great deal more might be said in support of the extension to Roma. He (Mr. Gregory) should not, however, detain the House in making further comments upon it, but only say that he fully endorsed what the honourable gentleman had said, and that his advocacy would be fully endorsed by everyone who understood the subject. There was no need for further discussion. Coming to the sixth railway, from Townsville to Charters Towers, there was no doubt that at no distant period that line would be one which the country would be fully justified in constructing; but it was a matter of very serious doubt whether the Government should attempt more than the three lines to which he had favourably referred, for fear of the embarrassment of the labour question. So many large public works going on simultaneously would involve the importation directly, either by the Government or the contractors, of a large quantity of labour; and, in the latter case, the contractors would be compelled to tender at rates so much above what they ought to be, as to enhance the cost of the railways beyond what the colony would be justified in incurring at present. The line from Townsville to Charters Towers was one that the Government might keep in reserve for the employment of labour when it should be in excess, or after the requirements of the other lines had been met. Indeed, the principle to be adopted by this young country in regard to public works, was to keep them going at an even rate, and not to do anything which would disturb the labour market either by attracting labour from other interests, or by a sudden stoppage, throwing a large number of persons out of employment; for this might occur from a financial crisis, like that of 1866, or other difficulty over which the Government could exercise no control, such as an European war. He counselled that the colony should not be embarrassed by any attempt of the governing body to run before it could walk. Dealing generally with the question of railways, he should give some statistics from the report of Mr. Higinbotham, the Engi-

neer-in-Chief of Railways in Victoria, who had been authorised by the Government of that colony to make a tour, which extended over two years, to gather information connected with railways in Europe, America, and Asia. He regretted that the report was not in the hands of every honourable member; it was a very valuable document. It was written in no party spirit, but purely with professional knowledge of the railways described, of their construction, of their requirements, of their efficiency and economy, and showing what was best in them. Mr. Higinbotham had gone very far into the subject, and into other matters which it was not necessary at the present moment to discuss. The report was most exhaustive, and the information given was very valuable. In the first place, with regard to the United States of America, Mr. Higinbotham gave the following particulars as to the cost of railways:—In six New England States, the cost per mile exclusive of rolling-stock was £8,000. He (Mr. Gregory) might here pause to say, that in bringing forward those statistics he did it for the purpose of showing how highly improbable it was that this colony should construct its railways for the prices that had been estimated by the Government engineers. In the six Middle States, taking New York and others, which were very populous, and in which the cost of railways was enhanced by the value of land purchased for the works, the railways cost an average of £12,870 per mile. In the thirteen Western States the cost was £8,940 per mile; and in the twelve Southern States, it was £7,320 per mile; while in California the average cost per mile of the railways was £18,000. He had grouped the States in that way to show the expenditure in the populous districts, which was immense as compared with others but thinly settled. The figures must seem rather strange in the face of the number of articles that had been thrust down the throats of the public during the last two or three years in respect to the low-cost railways of America.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Hear, hear.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: Those positive and solid facts that he gave were very much better than mere expressions of opinion which some persons put forward: they were the result of the observation of a man of solid knowledge and understanding, the Engineer-in-Chief of Railways in Victoria, a man of standing in his profession. He (Mr. Gregory) now came to the population basis, which he had been anxious that the Postmaster-General should have given to the House as a justification for the works proposed by him. In the United States the population varied: in some, it was as low as 115 inhabitants to the mile of railway; in others, it ran as high as 1,420 inhabitants to the mile of railway. In Queens-

land, he thought the population would be very much nearer the lower proportion than the higher one of America. The average of America was 580 inhabitants to the mile of railway. Taking the proportion of working expenses to the receipts of railways, they varied from 41 to 78 per cent., the average being about $63\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; showing that though the American engineers had, for years, endeavoured to carry out the construction of railways upon the most economical principles, yet they had failed to make them by any means a financial success. The railways were involved in very heavy debts; and if it was not that, in some instances, preferential stock was issued, by which some of the States were burdened with a very heavy annual payment to make up the deficiency of the 5 per cent. guarantee to the companies that constructed the railways, the lines could not be maintained in operation. He should now read a few passages from Mr. Higinbotham's report, bearing upon the statistics which he had just furnished. In page 27, referring to the alleged low cost of railways in America, those remarks occurred:—

"The following information is taken from Poor's Manual of the Railroads of the United States, 1874-5, which is the recognized authority on the subject. It may be interesting to those who have not an opportunity of referring to the Manual itself, and will serve to show how incorrect the statements are which have been made with great confidence, both here and elsewhere, as to the small cost at which railroads in the United States have been constructed.

"The total length of railroads in the United States at the end of 1873 was 70,651 miles, distributed as follows:—

New England States ...	5,314 miles.
Middle States	14,019 "
Western States	33,772 "
Southern States	15,353 "
Pacific States	2,193 "

Total miles 70,651

"The length of the railroads which were in operation throughout the year 1873, and of which statistical information is given in the Manual for 1874-5, was 66,237 miles; and the aggregate cost of these roads was 3,784,543,034 dollars, giving an average cost per mile of 57,134 dollars. In 1872, the average cost was 55,116 dollars, and in 1871, 59,726 dollars. Taking 4.86 dollars to be equal to £1 sterling, the average cost of the railroads which were in operation in the United States throughout the year 1873 was £11,756 sterling per mile. Of the whole 66,237 miles, not much more than one-fourth are to be found in the New England and Middle States, where the lines are well constructed. The railroads which make up the rest of the mileage are all single lines: they are, for the most part, without fences, ballast, and signals; the stations are few and far between; and the price paid for land, when it has been necessary to buy any, has been inconsiderable. The physical features of the States

are decidedly favourable to economy in construction. The railroads are almost everywhere on the surface, the only great works being bridges over the large rivers, and on three-fourths of the whole mileage these are of wood."

The writer then went on to give the cost of the different lines. It was not necessary to quote it, as he (Mr. Gregory) had brought it out in the figures he had given to the House already. Mr. Higinbotham then drew a comparison with Victoria; and it was here that he (Mr. Gregory) hoped the information given would come immediately home to Queensland:—

"In this country there are now in operation 618 miles of railway, or one mile of railway for every 1,335 inhabitants'—

That was rather an important point that the House should bear in mind. Any honourable member who should take the trouble to find what was the population of any district of Queensland where railways were proposed would be struck to see how far behind this colony was in that fair proportion:—

"And there are 338 miles in course of construction, which will make the ratio of mileage to population 1 to 863. Again, about 900 miles have been surveyed, and the Government is urged to construct the whole of this additional mileage; if this were done within the next five years, the ratio would become 1 mile to every 502 inhabitants, allowing for the increase of population during the same period. Comparing these figures with those which I have extracted from Poor's Manual, I think they will suggest the conclusion that the demands for such a large additional mileage in this small and compact province, with a slowly increasing population, are excessive, and would probably lead to serious embarrassments."

In some respects that might not be applicable to this colony; but, still, it held good in many that were obvious.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Hear, hear.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: In page 39 of the Report, Mr. Higinbotham drew attention to another important feature of the construction of railways:—

"It is now universally acknowledged that a light permanent way for railways in a hilly country, where steep gradients must be used in order to keep down the cost of construction, is a mistake, from an economical point of view. It was plausibly argued at one time that the interest of the money saved by constructing light instead of substantial works would be sufficient to renew them when they required it, and this may possibly be true of certain works, as, for instance, bridges, which, under certain circumstances, it may be economical to build of wood instead of stone or iron; but with the permanent way the case is different, for, if this be of light construction, light engines must necessarily be employed, and on steep gradients they can only draw light loads; consequently a greater number of trains must be run, and hence a great increase in the cost of working and maintenance."

He (Mr. Gregory) drew attention to this passage more particularly on account of what had been advanced by one of the engineers who had reported on the construction of railways which were now before the House, and strongly urged the reduction of the gauge with light rails; because they were utterly condemned as false economy.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Hear hear.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: The last extract which he proposed to read was a very short one, but it was one which should certainly not be forgotten in dealing with the question before the House; it bore on the question whether the lines to be undertaken should be branch or feeding lines or extensions of the main trunk lines through the colony. At page 71 of his report, Mr. Higinbotham made a quotation from the *Times* of the 3rd of April, 1876, on Indian Finance, as followed:—

“The construction of branch lines which do not pay is a mistake; but what is to be said of the construction of branches which not only do not pay, but are also made of a different gauge from the main lines, so that there is a necessary transhipment at the connections? The effect in one striking case has been that almost as soon as the extension was opened, a new line on the broader gauge was commenced by the side of it and is now in active progress, the intention being to abandon the existing narrow line as soon as the other is completed. We believe that this is but a sample of the experience which lies before us with respect to the rest. They are in process of construction, at a great expense, to be superseded when the inconvenience of working them comes to be felt. It is to meet the cost of such projects that the Finance Minister of India is called on to provide so many millions annually, which he raises by loans, the burden of which is thrown on posterity.”

He (Mr. Gregory) hoped sincerely that this colony would not run into that mistake. Of course, with regard to the construction of narrow-gauge lines as feeders at first, they appeared to be economical; but their failure had been proved elsewhere, and Queensland must avoid being caught in a similar snare. A remark fell from the Postmaster-General as to the construction of light lines, as recommended by the Government engineers. Well, he (Mr. Gregory) should like to draw the honourable gentleman's attention to one passage in the report of Mr. Ballard, which was hardly consistent with the statement put forward—at any rate, there was an inconsistency somewhere. In the reports from Mr. Ballard on Branch Railways, he stated:—

“Now, I have no hesitation in declaring, as an engineer of considerable Australian experience (and in this declaration I feel certain that I shall be supported by the great majority of my profession), that although it may be quite possible under certain advantages to construct

in favoured localities isolated railways on the three feet six inch gauge at a cost of from £3,000 to £4,000 per mile, still, at the same time, that it is quite certain that over an average country, taking rough and smooth, three or four thousand miles of good substantial railway on the three feet six inch gauge could not be constructed and furnished with rolling-stock at a cost of less than £6,000 per mile. I shall support these figures by conclusive proof, based upon the cost of the railway now under construction here, in which you will see that while I myself am able to construct certain sections of my work at a cost of less than £4,000 per mile, there are other sections not a mile in length which cannot be surmounted, except at nearly ten times the cost.”

Thus, on the report of the Government engineer, £6,000 was not excessive as the average cost of railways throughout the colony. Again, a very significant remark was made with regard to the Townsville and Maryborough lines:—

“The railway from Townsville and the Gympie and Maryborough line are railways upon which it would be folly to expend the money necessary to construct a 3 feet 6 inches gauge, until the traffic requirements imperatively demanded such additional expenditure.”

That was from one of the most practical engineers of the colony, who had been given liberty to construct a railway as a contractor under the Government without the Government having to pay the large profit which contractors reaped. In favour of such condemnatory observations, he (Mr. Gregory) was puzzled to know how honourable gentlemen fancied that the Government engineers were in favour of all the lines. But he should not detain the House any further beyond expressing his hope that what he should put into the form of a substantive motion before the House, would be carried—that the railways be now dealt with *seriatim*. If the attempt was made to pass them *in globo*, he and other honourable members who sympathized with the important and useful lines proposed might have doubts in their minds whether they could consistently support so vast a mass of public works as was proposed by the Government. Therefore, he moved, by way of amendment:—

That the resolutions on the plans, sections, and book of reference of each railway be considered separately.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: There were only two resolutions. One of them contained the statement of the plans and sections of the different railways to be adopted, and the other referred to the notification of the approval of them to the other House. The honourable member's views would be met by his moving, as an amendment, that subdivision 1, or 2, or 3 of the first resolution be omitted. If the House

wished to excise any particular railway, it could easily do so upon such a motion.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: His motion was to consider separately each railway embodied in the motion.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said he did not think the Postmaster-General could make any objection to the amendment. He could hardly wish to force the House upon the consideration of the whole of the railways at the same time. At all events, he (Mr. Murray-Prior) trusted that the House would see the necessity of taking them *seriatim*, and discussing each in order.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The Honourable Mr. Gregory had discussed the whole of the lines in his speech. His object would be gained by following the most regular form of procedure; that was, by moving an amendment on the paragraph referring to any particular line to which he had an objection. Thus he would get practically what he wanted, and the House would avoid giving unnecessary votes on those lines to which all honourable members agreed.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY, in explanation, pointed out that if the course he proposed was taken, some of the railways would be passed at once without discussion, and that only those to which honourable members had objection would be debated. The House would get on much easier.

The Hon. J. GIBBON: In a matter of such immense importance, involving the expenditure of an enormous sum of money, the House should proceed very carefully. Although some of the railways might be very desirable, yet there were others which it would be very unwise to authorize the Government to proceed with. On the whole, they would be more fully discussed, if they were put separately, than by being put *in globo*. He did not object to any particular railway, but he wished to see them discussed as their importance deserved; therefore, he hoped the Postmaster-General would not object to see the subsections of his resolutions dealt with on their merits.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He did not want to burk the discussion of any particular railway, he repeated, for the third time; but he did wish to see the business of the House conducted in an orderly manner. He did not want a repetition of the speech of the Honourable Mr. Gregory on every subdivision of the first resolution. That honourable gentleman had made his speech on the whole of the resolutions—he had dealt with the question generally. He now wanted the railways to be put *seriatim*. That would involve a separate speech on each of the six railways from the honourable member, opening up the whole subject that he had already dilated upon for three-quarters of an hour. Did the House want that? The whole object in view would be

met by moving an amendment for the omission of any particular railway from the resolution; endless discussion would be avoided, and the same practical result would be ensured.

The Hon. E. I. C. BROWNE considered that the Honourable Mr. Gregory would be entitled to speak again, if the course of the Postmaster-General was taken rather than that suggested by the amendment. Instead of being sorry for the detention of the House by the Honourable Mr. Gregory, the House should be very much obliged to him for the knowledge that the honourable member had brought to bear on the question.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER: As he understood the question, he did not see any material difference in the courses proposed to be taken; but, no doubt, a good deal of time would be saved by proceeding as the Postmaster-General suggested.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN could not conceive what difference it would make which course was taken, and it was of little importance.

The PRESIDENT said it had been pointed out to him as an objection to the course suggested by the Postmaster-General, and he thought it was a tenable one, that it would not be competent to any member but one who had not spoken in the debate to move the rejection of any particular railway named in the first resolution. That seemed to be the only practical difficulty in the way of deciding the question as the Postmaster-General suggested.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Honourable gentlemen had been speaking to the amendment. If another amendment was proposed, they could speak to it; but the honourable gentleman who had moved the first could not move another amendment, though he could speak to it when proposed.

After some further discussion, the dinner hour being near,

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR rose to move the adjournment of the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL objected: the honourable member had spoken, and could not make the motion.

The question was then put on the amendment; and the House divided:—

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The Honourables T. L. Murray-Prior, A. H. Brown, W. D. Box, J. Gibbon, F. T. Gregory, W. F. Lambert, and E. I. C. Browne.

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The Honourables W. Thornton, W. Pettigrew, J. Mullen, J. C. Foote, G. Edmondstone, W. Hobbs, J. C. Heussler, D. F. Roberts, and C. S. Mein.

The original question, being the resolutions, therefore stood.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said the Postmaster-General would have done well to have listened to the wishes expressed by

honourable members, and he ought to have taken a lesson from what had occurred in the House on former occasions when similar questions to the present were under consideration. He had come to the House thinking the railways would pass with very little discussion; but the Postmaster-General had provoked a good deal, and, now, the common-sense of many honourable members would show them that some of the lines were simply the outcome of political log-rolling, which very likely the Government had no present intention of carrying into effect. The good lines were mixed up with the bad, so that they might all be carried through the House. But he was not quite so certain now as when he came into the House that the Postmaster-General would be able to pass his resolutions. The Postmaster-General evidently wished to shut the mouths of honourable members and keep them to one question. Fortunately, however, only one honourable member had spoken on the general question, and the discussion of each line could proceed separately. Therefore, to bring that about, he moved:—

That the words, "The plans, sections, and book of reference of the railway from Warwick to Stanthorpe," be omitted.

If, as had been said, the line *via* Stanthorpe would ultimately connect this colony at the border with the New South Wales railway, he should be the last to propose such an amendment; but there was no certainty at all about it. In fact the northern line of New South Wales would probably go in a different direction; and he, for one, did not think that, under the circumstances, this colony should be committed to an expenditure for the purpose of bolstering up a nearly worked-out place. A considerable amount of good would be done to Stanthorpe by the construction of the railway, and the line would attract considerable additional traffic from New South Wales; but he could not think that only for those purposes the House were justified in making the line.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN said he could speak with more confidence on the present occasion than he did last year when the railway resolutions were before the House. He then spoke and voted against the Stanthorpe line, not because he did not approve of the southern extension of the railway, which was the one above all others that he should support if selected judiciously, but because it was the most ill-chosen line. He had examined the plans and sections very critically, and the conclusion he had come to was that the line would cost very much more than was contemplated by the Chief Engineer. It might be a line of tolerable selection as far as Stanthorpe; but he considered it would be wiser to have kept in view the great object of this colony in connecting its railways with

those of New South Wales and the southern colonies, and to have made the railway to Stanthorpe a branch line and not the main trunk line. The Postmaster-General, in favour of the line, pointed out that it was necessary on account of the mineral wealth of the district. So far as he (Mr. Brown) could make out, the tin-mining interest was unimportant, comparatively speaking; and it would be far more important to make a railway into an agricultural district, where settlement could be formed along the line, being one of the most important considerations to be kept in view in connection with public works. The railway to Stanthorpe passed through what was, comparatively speaking, barren country, decomposed granite, which could not be cultivated, and which for pastoral purposes was very inferior. Anyone looking at the sections would be astonished at the heavy cuttings and fillings of the earthworks compared with those on the other lines proposed. He wished there was some alternative between accepting and rejecting the line, and that the Government had power to deviate; as he was sure that if it was passed they would in time find that they had hastily adopted the present proposal, and he should like them to have some loop-hole of escape provided.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON said he was sorry he was not able to be in the House at an earlier part of the day, or he should, perhaps, be a little more *au fait* as to what had been done. While he could not agree with the proposal of the Government as a whole, and while he should have voted for the amendment of the Honourable Mr. Gregory, if present at the division; he could not oppose the railway to Stanthorpe. He disagreed entirely with the honourable gentleman who just sat down. He had been very much oftener up the line to Stanthorpe than the honourable gentleman; and he was perfectly convinced that if a railway was made between that town and Warwick it would take the whole of the traffic of the northern part of New England and divert it to Brisbane, to the exclusion of the present difficult route over the mountains to the Clarence River. Queensland would benefit greatly by the trade of the neighbouring colony. As to the connection of the main lines of railway at the boundary between New South Wales and Queensland, he felt perfectly certain that the point of communication would be somewhere about Goondiwindi. He did not look upon the Stanthorpe line as the main intercolonial line at all; but it would open up a considerable extent of pretty good country, and would attract the traffic of New England, as he had mentioned.

The Hon. W. D. BOX said that since he discussed the railway to Stanthorpe, last

year, he had the opportunity of passing over the country. Beyond fourteen miles from Warwick there was no land at all fit for agriculture. The Postmaster-General had not attempted to argue that the traffic of passengers or the carriage of tin would pay for the railway; and it never could. The traffic from agriculture would be attracted to the Warwick station. At Tenterfield, he saw some very good country; but the farmers settled there told him that they had to pay £2 a ton to get their produce to Stanthorpe, and that there was no country in New England that could grow produce to pay at that rate. The Government of New South Wales would have a railway to that country, and would carry the produce down to the southward, and send supplies thence. The railway to Stanthorpe, he held, would never pay expenses; it would be a tax on the community; and it was unadvisable to proceed with it at present. If the railway scheme was carried, and no doubt it would be, it would be obligatory on the Government to proceed with all the works at once. Honourable members in another place whose railways were voted would compel the Government to proceed with them. Would the honourable member for Bundaberg be content to sit still and see the Government do nothing? Would the representative of Townsville be satisfied to see all the other railways progressing and his own standing still? If the labour of the colony should be absorbed by Government works, the industrial interests of Queensland would be upset in a way that would not be desirable. He should support the amendment and vote against the Stanthorpe railway.

The Hon. W. THORNTON said he saw in the present proceedings a repetition of what occurred in the House last session, when the project to make the railways was before the House. It appeared that certain honourable gentlemen were opposed to making railways at all.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no.

The Hon. W. THORNTON: They knew very well that if one line was thrown out, the same fate awaited all the railways that befel them last session. Were they content to go on with the old roads that needed repair always, as against railways? The line to Stanthorpe was one that would pay, he was sure. The Honourable Mr. Box was a mercantile man, and ought to know that the Stanthorpe railway would stimulate business more than any other line proposed. It was most surprising that he should object to that railway. If the railway was agreed to, there must be a bonded-store established at Stanthorpe, as the whole of the business people would have their goods conveyed thither in bond and warehoused there. All the supplies for northern New South Wales would be carried by the railway from Brisbane to Stanthorpe. The pro-

duce of the New England district—not less than a thousand bales of wool a season could be had now—would be sent *via* Stanthorpe to the port of Brisbane. If that was the case, now, it was easy to calculate how much the trade would increase in a few years with increased settlement and the best means of conveyance established. A large part of the country that the railway would pass through might be barren, but there were portions near which were very valuable. But, above all, the Stanthorpe railway was the line which took the right direction; it was the connecting link with the New South Wales railway system. Yet it did not matter whether it joined that system; it would lead to the employment of additional ships, and additional people, and it would open an extended market for the consumption of dutiable goods and increase the revenue of this colony. The Honourable A. H. Brown said that the railway would cost more than the estimate. Well, the House had been informed by the Postmaster-General and the professional officers of the Government, that the railways were now being constructed for less than their estimated cost.

The Hon. W. F. LAMBERT: One.

The Hon. W. THORNTON: If that was the case, it was wise to go on with the works. If the Stanthorpe line should cost considerably more than was paid for other railways, it would be wise to make it; and most certainly he should not support it.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He should say a few words in answer to the objection raised by the Honourable Mr. Brown. The honourable gentleman did not object to a line being constructed to New South Wales; but he objected to the Stanthorpe line, because he thought the route was an inexpedient one, which would not be connected ultimately with the New South Wales railway extending to the border. When opening the discussion, he (the Postmaster-General) stated that the report of the Chief Engineer of Railways of New South Wales, for last year, indicated that a large proportion of the proposed extensions to the border of New South Wales and Queensland tended towards Tenterfield, and that the railway to Stanthorpe was in the direction of the termination of those lines. Since that time he had come across the report, and he now laid it on the table for the information of honourable members. They would observe that four railways were proposed northwards to the border; that three of them came up to Tenterfield; and that the fourth one went down to Burke, with a branch towards Moree, which might ultimately come on to Goondiwindi. No grounds existed for the Honourable Mr. Brown's objection.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said, the subject having been ventilated, and his

side having no chance of carrying the amendment, he asked leave to withdraw it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON moved by way of amendment—

That the words, "The plans, sections, and book of reference of the railway from Maryborough to Gympie," be omitted.

It would be, no doubt, in the memory of honourable members that there was a considerable discussion over the same subject last session. He confessed that he had not changed his opinion. Although the Maryborough and Gympie line might be a very good and useful railway, yet he did not think it was one that the Government were called upon to make, when there were so many other more important railways urgently required throughout the country. His impression always was, that the line was nothing more nor less than the first section of a railway between Maryborough and Brisbane; and that honourable members would soon find out if its construction was authorised. Although that would be a good thing for Brisbane, yet he did not think it would be fair to the colony at large to make it; and he thought the expenditure might be better directed to other works.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW objected to the amendment. Compared with other railways proposed, the Maryborough and Gympie line stood as good a chance as any of being passed if tested on its merits. The Honourable Mr. Gregory mentioned that there was no traffic on the line except what was required by the carriage of gold from Gympie to Maryborough. Gold, no doubt, made the district support a much larger population than it would ever have contained for the sole production of wool. It was in the remembrance of most honourable members that, ten years ago, the colony was in a state of collapse, from the Government making too many railways and having to stop too suddenly, which threw a large portion of the population out of employment; when, fortunately, gold was discovered at Gympie. Since that time, gold was discovered in various parts of the colony, until gold-mining was the leading interest of Queensland for the value of its production. Through the gold discovery at Gympie, the colony recovered, and Gympie was one of the places that maintained its standing and importance as a centre of population, and industry, and wealth. There were more people engaged in gold-mining, and they produced more wealth, than in any other interest in Queensland. Judged by bulk, the export of gold was a small affair. In that the Honourable Mr. Gregory was right, no doubt. But the honourable gentleman should have remembered that in other ways the requirements of those who raised and spent the gold led to a large traffic. The

diggers must live. All their supplies were received from Maryborough; flour, tea, sugar, and all other necessities and luxuries of life, were no small affair. The traffic in those commodities was worth taking into consideration in connection with the proposed railway. But, independently of that, there were about Gympie a large number of furnaces which required great quantities of fuel, which at present was almost wholly timber. Coal was found in the district. If the railway was made, the traffic in coal would be something great. The neighbouring and surrounding country was largely and heavily timbered, much more than any other part of Queensland that he knew. Some time ago, it was proposed that the whole country from the Glass House Mountains to Gympie should be reserved for sake of the splendid timber which it contained. But the Government had done nothing. They would recognise the advantage of doing something to preserve the native forests some day. In timber there would be a large traffic on the railway; a large amount would go down to the seaboard, and it would form a considerable item in the profits to be derived from the line. For years and years, the supply of the finest timber in that district would be unlimited; and if the forests were properly managed, it would be growing as fast as it was consumed. Those were some of the items of traffic from the railway. While coal would go upwards to the Gympie mines, it would go downwards also to the steamers at Maryborough wharves; and the steam traffic even now was something considerable. The steamers did not go to Maryborough for nothing! They took cargo there, and landed large quantities. Where did it go? Some of it, no doubt, went to Gympie and the neighbourhood. There were other mines besides gold to the westward of Gympie, and others to the eastward; and their produce would add to the earnings of the railway. The antimony mines, and other mining industries, would be developed by the railway. The honourable Mr. Gregory had quoted from one of Mr. Ballard's reports; and it would have been well if he had quoted a little more, so that the House might have that professional gentleman's exact opinion. In a report dated the 25th of January, 1876, Mr. Ballard advocated the making of railways at half the cost at which they were now made; and he (Mr. Pettigrew) entirely agreed with him, as he had advocated similar ideas for many years past. He presumed that most honourable members had read Mr. Ballard's reports for themselves, and he should not detain them by reading from them, but that he thought quotations ought to be given fairly to the House:—

"Now, I have no hesitation in declaring, as an engineer of considerable Australian experi-

ence (and in this declaration I feel certain that I shall be supported by the great majority of my profession), that although it may be quite possible under certain advantages to construct in favoured localities isolated railways on the three feet six inch gauge at a cost of from £3,000 to £4,000 per mile, still, at the same time, that it is quite certain that over an average country, taking rough and smooth, three or four thousand miles of good and substantial railway on the three feet six inch gauge could not be constructed and furnished with rolling-stock at a cost of less than £6,000 per mile. I shall support these figures by conclusive proof, based upon the cost of the railway now under construction here, in which you will see that while I myself am able to construct certain sections of my work at a cost of less than £4,000 per mile, that there are other sections not a mile in length which cannot be surmounted, except at nearly ten times the cost. I shall prove that a railway upon the 2 feet gauge, upon average country, can be constructed and fitted with rolling-stock at half the cost of a 3'6 gauge, and the same would of course hold good under the most favourable circumstances, where such a line need not exceed £2,000 a-mile."

* * * * *

"A saving of £3,000 per mile in the construction of 3,600 miles of railway represents a matter of nearly eleven millions of money, and if each railway that you should construct upon the 2 feet gauge would answer your purpose for the first thirteen or fourteen years of its existence, you will observe that it will have paid for itself entirely by the interest of money saved, taking such interest at five per cent. only, and all the works existing upon it made, and available to be improved into a broader gauge for heavier traffic at the expiration of that time, would be so much clear profit.

"What I have to recommend, therefore, is that you should, without delay, satisfy yourselves, by actual experiment, of the perfect utility of the 2 feet gauge, and having done so, that you should at once apply it to the immediate development of your colony."

Now, that was a nice little railway, as he (Mr. Pettigrew) had good reason to know. He did not say that a line from Maryborough to Brisbane would ever be made. Indeed, he did not think it would be anything else than downright folly to make such a line; as there was no traffic but that to the Pine River, and for that and for such a short distance, he did not think it was necessary to make a railway. He should quote a little more from Mr. Ballard's report:—

"It is a great mistake to think that gauge rules capacity for traffic; it is not so. Gradients rule it, curves rule it, many things rule it more than gauge. Thus a level line ten miles long on the 2 feet gauge would have a carrying capacity infinitely superior to a 3 feet 6 inch gauge on a gradient of 1 in 100, and there are other reasons why, with equal curves and grades, a narrow line may be equal, if not superior to a broad one. Fairlie, in his paper read before the British Association at Liver-

pool in 1870, deliberately asserts and shows in regard to the London and North-Western Railway, that if its gauge were 3 feet instead of 4 feet 8½ inch, its goods traffic could be hauled at half the present cost, with half the present motive power, and in such a way as to reduce the present tonnage over the road by one-half, and to remove the necessity for the heavy expenses that are now being incurred in the construction of a third line of rails. He goes on to say, 'The same or a greater speed could be maintained, say up to 35 or 40 miles an hour.' He arrives at his at first sight paradoxical result by reducing the dead or non-paying weights—lighter rolling-stock.

"I will make one more quotation from Mr. Fairlie's paper:—'It ought to be engraved on the minds of every engineer, that every inch added to the width of a gauge beyond what is absolutely necessary for the traffic adds to the cost of construction, increases the proportion of dead-weight, increases the cost of working, and in consequence increases the tariff to the public, and by so much reduces the useful effect of the railway.'

"Another quotation from this great authority, and one that I think should be written in letters of gold:—'Railways can be made cheaply, and at the same time be thoroughly efficient; and those who aver to the contrary are, in fact, enemies to progress and civilization. There is no country too poor to have railways sufficient for its requirements, and railways furnish the cheapest possible mode of transport when they are not borne down by the results of that incompetence and extravagance which we so often see associated together.'"

He went on, further:—

"A 2 ft. line, with light loads and rolling-stock, could easily be worked at a pace of twenty miles per hour. It is a rule in the art of moving goods on railways, that light loads run quickly are equal, and sometimes more convenient, than heavy loads run slowly. In most cases, the speed need not exceed ten miles per hour for goods, and from fifteen to twenty for passengers; and under these conditions, with frequent sidings and a well-organised system of working, such a line would be quite up to the traffic requirements for many years to come."

Now, that report was by a very efficient engineer, and it spoke volumes in favour of what he (Mr. Pettigrew) called cheap railways. He should go on, but he should be told, as he had often been told, over and over again, that he went for what was cheap and nasty.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW: Well, the principle by which he would test them was, would they pay? If a line could be made that would answer his purpose for £200 or £300 a-mile, he did not see why he should pay £3,000 a-mile for it. He had made a line at Tin Can, and it had been working for three years; and he durst say adequate traffic passed over it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW: The average speed of the trains over his railway was about four miles an hour. That was not fast; but still it was a great deal faster than bullock teams travelled, which took the traffic of the interior of the colony. Horse teams were on the road between Maryborough and Gympie; but they could not travel more than four miles an hour. He had gone over his own railway at more than ten miles an hour. Well, the cost of that line did not amount to £1,000 a-mile. The steepest gradient was 1 in 18. He had surveyed about half-a-mile with a rise of 1 in 16½, but that proposed line was abandoned. He contended that the gradients of cheap railways for this colony might be made favourably 1 in 22, instead of 1 in 50. To the west of the Nepean River, in New South Wales, there was one gradient, 1 in 33.

The Hon. H. G. SIMPSON: He had seen one, 1 in 30.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW: He said a train could go up 1 in 20. He had done it for three years; and what had been done for three years on his line could be done on any other line. If the inclines were made steep, no doubt the line would be cheaper; and he thought it could be made cheaper and better. He did not, however, intend to move any amendment on the Maryborough and Gympie line.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN said he was very glad that the honourable member did not intend to make an amendment. The railway suggested by him was a very cheap and nasty one, and he did not wish to have anything of the kind in Wide Bay. It might answer the purpose of the honourable member, but he thought it was entirely unsuited for public traffic. He was sorry the Honourable Captain Simpson had offered no better reason for his amendment than that advanced in his speech. The House had a right to expect something dignified and statesmanlike from him for taking such action. Large reserves of land had been made for railways, and the railways should be made. There was not in the colony another district with mineral resources equal to those of the Wide Bay district; nor with agricultural resources equal to those of the valley of the Mary and its tributaries. Those resources were very great and could not be at present realised. The means of water traffic afforded by the river were availed of as far as practicable, at present; but greater facilities for traffic were required. As the Honourable Mr. Pettigrew had said, the timber of the district, including cedar, was unlimited, and its value must be something enormous. There were five or six timber mills in Maryborough, and when he (Mr. Brown) was there a short time since they were all

stopped absolutely for want of material, which could not be brought from the forests to market with sufficient expedition. Of course, that stoppage interfered greatly with the trade of the port. A railway up into the scrubs would make the timber trade much more important than it was now. The reason for making a railway to Stanthorpe was the existence of the tin-mines; but he considered that tin deposits were as nothing to the mineral wealth of every variety which slumbered in the earth at the heads of the Mary. As the Honourable Mr. Gregory had said, the transit of gold was inconsiderable; but the labour of getting the gold was considerable, and the expenditure on account of it was considerable. An invention lately introduced to notice which was to be adopted in this colony, the diamond rock-drill, would create an extraordinary revolution in mining, and the speed was astonishing with which it put down holes to enable miners to ascertain what was below the surface of the earth. It would be of immense value to those who embarked in mining enterprises. It was not only Gympie that was wealthy, but there were other townships in the district, such as Kilkivan, rich not only in gold but in copper and other minerals. Honourable members might know them from having joined in choice speculations: some might remember them with regret. The railway would promote the development of the great wealth of the district. For himself, he should be sorry to see any railway made that was not likely to be permanent. He quite admired the Honourable Mr. Pettigrew's pluck in having got over the old bullock-track, and made a railway to do his work; but his line was not of the character that was required for the public use. He had seen Mr. Ballard's report, and there was not anything in it. The report of Mr. Higinbotham, as quoted by the Honourable Mr. Gregory, contained something different; and that honourable gentleman had discussed the question with great ability and with benefit to the House. If the Government could construct a permanent line for the amount estimated, he thought it would be unwise to make a railway of a cheaper description. The Honourable Mr. Gregory was discussing the population basis for railways. He (Mr. Brown) did not think that it would answer. If the railway was extended into the fine country of the far west, population would follow; but if population was waited for before access was given to the country, it might be looked for in vain. The same argument would apply to the line from Maryborough to Gympie. That country must be opened up. The railway would give mining industry a great stimulus and develop the resources of the country, and the Government were acting wisely in constructing it.

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR could not at all agree with the arguments of his honourable friend, Mr. Brown, though they generally acted together. It appeared the railway would go from Maryborough to Gympie but no farther. Gympie might be a rich place; but he did not see why the country should be charged with the cost of constructing a railway to it. The Honourable Mr. Pettigrew, although jeered at for what he had done, had for many years past shown what a cheap railway was. He (Mr. Murray-Prior) did not sufficiently understand the subject to speak decisively, but if railways could be constructed for such a small sum as had been stated, that would remove a great deal of the objection that he had to the undertaking now under consideration. He urged on the Honourable Mr. Pettigrew that by voting against the propositions of the Government and waiting a little longer, he might have some chance of seeing his own scheme carried into effect. The cost of the honourable gentleman's railway was very little more than would be required for making an ordinary road; but, really he (Mr. Murray-Prior) did not see how he could vote for it as a main trunk line without a little more time for consideration; and, besides, he thought the proposal ought to be before the country. The Government had, of course, taken the opportunity to put gentlemen into the House who would very likely carry out their ideas; nevertheless, he should vote against them and in favour of the amendment, trusting that the Honourable Mr. Pettigrew would join him.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER: The honourable Mr. Brown had made out a good case for a railway in his district which, it had been admitted, was the most neglected in the colony. The railway would be a very judicious work, accommodating at once 25,000 people. With regard to the narrow-gauge railways advocated by the Honourable Mr. Pettigrew, they would answer as feeders, but would hardly be a fit substitute for any of the lines proposed by the Government, and certainly would not answer for the traffic on the line between Maryborough and Gympie. During a late tour he (Mr. Heussler) had made in the district, he formed the acquaintance of a resident of many years who corroborated all that the Honourables Mr. Brown and Mr. Pettigrew had said about the resources of the district, especially its magnificent timber, which alone justified the making of the railway. He heartily supported the original motion.

The Hon. G. EDMONDSTONE said he should certainly not support the amendment, but should vote for the original motion for the reasons given by the Postmaster-General, that the district had not received its just share of the expenditure out of revenue. Further, he was certain that no portion of Queensland was

thriving at a quicker rate than the Wide Bay district, especially that part lying between Maryborough and Gympie. He coincided in the remarks of the Honourable A. H. Brown as to the richness of the country in minerals, and with the observations of the Honourable W. Pettigrew as to its abundant wealth of timber for mercantile purposes. There was excellent agricultural land in the district, and the outlet for its produce to the world was the port of Maryborough. As to the different opinions of engineers, Mr. Higginbotham did not recommend cheap railways while Mr. Ballard did. As doctors differed so did other professional men. Who was to decide between them? As the Government had had the best advice they could obtain, they might be left to do the best they could for the country; and the lines they recommended might safely be adopted by the House. The line to Gympie would be in a short time one of the best paying railways in the country. He was a believer in the dictum—"Make a railway and the railway will make traffic." The present railways had realised its truth and force. It had been said that if a railway was made to Toowoomba it would not pay in a century. Well, it now not only paid its working expenses, but something towards interest on the outlay for its construction.

The amendment was put and negatived.

The Hon. W. D. BOX moved the omission of the sub-section referring to the railway from Bundaberg towards Mount Perry. It seemed to him, he said, that the Government, as representatives of the people, were parting with a great deal of their power by the course they were now taking. A Bill for dealing with an old member of the Civil Service, the Auditor-General, was read a first, second, and third time respectively, and proceeded with from stage to stage with deliberation and after due discussion. But the railway scheme was pushed forward, involving an enormous expenditure, without any such deliberation; indeed, with great haste. There would be engineers, a staff of officials, workshops, terminal stations, &c., to be provided for at Bundaberg; but everything was hurried on. Mr. Ballard said that probably 1,400 or 1,500 people would settle down along the two railway lines in Wide Bay. The stoppage of one contract would throw hundreds of people out of employment. As he (Mr. Box) wanted further information to justify the construction of the work, he thought some delay was desirable.

The question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—was put, and the House divided:—

CONTENTS, 9.

The Honourables J. C. Foote, W. Pettigrew, J. C. Heussler, D. F. Roberts, G. Edmondstone, J. Mullen, W. Thornton, A. H. Brown, and C. S. Mein (Teller).

NOT-CONTENTS, 5.

The Honourables T. L. Murray-Prior, F. T. Gregory, W. D. Box, H. G. Simpson, and W. F. Lambert (Teller).

The amendment was, therefore, negatived.

The Hon. W. D. Box rose to address the House; but,

The PRESIDENT ruled the honourable member out of order, as he had already spoken on the general question.

The Hon. W. F. LAMBERT said there could be very little objection to the three lines now before the House. They ought to have headed the list. The extensions of the Great Northern Railway and the Great Western Railway were the great works of the colony; while the line from Townsville to Charters Towers was one that he thought would most likely pay. The House had passed some lines of doubtful utility, which he would hope would pay their expenses. The last one passed was such a one. Bundaberg was going back, and it did not even pay the enterprising A.S.N. Co. to send their steamers there. Maryborough and Gympie, he believed, were entitled to a railway. Last year he opposed the Stanthorpe line, but it was carried then as now against him. Very little had ever been done for the Maryborough and Gympie district, though it contained a very large population for years.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN asked the Postmaster-General if it was intended to commence the railways simultaneously, or, if only two would be proceeded with at once? If the latter course was intended by the Government, then he could only express his astonishment at the proposals put before the House. He had voted for the preceding railways in deference to the wishes of the people, whose representatives had passed them twice. But, as he had heard, the proposals now before the House were not all the railways which the Government intended to undertake. There were some half-dozen other short local lines or branches spoken of; but he did not anticipate that the Government would enter upon their construction simultaneously, to the disturbance of the labour market.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that the Postmaster-General, having spoken, could not answer questions. The Honourable Mr. Brown must give notice for next day, according to the rules of the House.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN said he had not finished his address, and he should move the omission of the last subdivision, to give the honourable member an opportunity of answering.

The PRESIDENT: There was the motion about the Highfields railway coming on.

The question was put, and the resolutions were agreed to, as moved.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approve of the plan, section, and books of reference of the branch railway line from Highfields station to Highfields Summit, sent up by the Legislative Assembly for the approval of the Council.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly, by Message in the usual form.

He might state that the money for the construction of this railway was voted last session; but the plans not being complete he had not had the opportunity of asking the House to approve the line. The line was seventy-one chains long, and commenced at a point near to the present Highfields station; it then rose a short distance on a gradient of 1 in 30 for eight chains; after that it rose forty-eight chains, on gradients varying from 1 in $5\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 in $6\frac{1}{2}$. At the summit there were twelve chains of comparatively level ground. The object was—as Highfields was the centre of an agricultural district which was a considerable distance from Toowoomba, and as the only way of getting down below the Main Range was by way of Toowoomba, a distance of fourteen miles—to enable the farmers, by a steep railway of three-quarters of a mile, to get access to the main line of railway. The new line would be constructed on a principle in use on only three railways in the world—Mount Washington, in the United States; Rigi, in Switzerland; and Kahlenberg, near Vienna. The gauge was something over 4 feet, and a centre toothed-rail, on which a cog-wheel ran, prevented the train from going back when the ascent was being made, and from going too fast when descending. The cost would be about £6,000.

The Hon. W. F. LAMBERT: The House had just voted railways that would involve a very large expenditure, and now they were asked to do something further. It would be only reasonable and fair of the Postmaster-General to tell the House how the Government intended to carry out the railways; or, if they intended to commence the whole six at once or only three, or two. He hoped the honourable gentleman would answer, so that some idea might be gained of how the labour market of the country was to be guided. If the Government should commence the six railways simultaneously, then the labour market would be upset.

The PRESIDENT: The question now before the House would lead honourable members to consider matters which had evidently been on their minds during the evening. As he judged from their expressions, they all felt that though voting for the railways put before the House they knew nothing about them, as far as the wisdom of constructing the particular lines was concerned. To his mind the great difficulty was in the mode

in which the consent of Parliament was asked towards the different lines and the very large expenditure they involved. Taking the whole of the railways as they had been proposed, he had concurred in them, believing the question before the House was, whether they should consent or not to the policy of the Government for the time being. The question before the House, this night, was, as to the main lines which had been approved of, first by the representatives of the people, and then by the Council. But when the Government asked the approval of the House to a branch line, an additional expense to the present line that had been made at a great outlay, he thought it was necessary that they should have the fullest information as to the reason for the change and the cost. If he should go on to another session, he should certainly propose to the House that all branch lines be referred to a select committee, before the House consented to them. It was quite right, in the present state of things, that the Government should propose new lines, as policy, and that the responsibility of the conduct of the construction of the lines should rest upon the department charged with them. That he did not object to; but if the House were asked to supplement lines already constructed by making branch lines, such as the one at Highfields, which was for local advantage, before the House agreed to it they should have the fullest information upon it. From what the Postmaster-General had said, the present was a case in which for a very small expenditure people would be saved travelling a distance of twenty-eight miles; and he had no doubt it was quite right that it should be constructed. But he (the President) rose to protect himself, by saying that in future he should require branch lines to be referred to a select committee for inquiry and report, before the House were asked to sanction their construction.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL was understood to say that the Government had laid on the table the fullest reports from their officers upon the works which the House had been asked to sanction. Honourable members were supposed to know the geography of the colony and the requirements of the districts through which the railways were proposed to run; if they did not, they ought to know that much; and they ought to have learned from the reports of the engineers in charge of the works the nature of the works. With regard to the question of the Honourable Mr. Lambert as to the intentions of the Government, he (the Postmaster-General) might say that it was not the intention of the Government to rush the labour market in any way. They had the permanent surveys of the line to Stantlorpe ready, and also of thirty-six miles of the Maryborough and Gympie line. The construction of those works would be proceeded

with as rapidly as possible consistent with the amount of labour at command. The extension of those railways would go on with due regard to the labour requirements of the colony. The other works would be entered upon as opportunity enabled the Government to proceed.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: The question was now drawing to a close. The Government had the power numerically to carry their resolutions. He must sympathize with the Postmaster-General and his colleagues in the position they had placed themselves in; they were on the horns of a dilemma.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, rising to order, reminded the honourable gentleman that the question was the approval of the Highfields railway.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY: The question at issue in connection with the Highfields line was of so trivial a nature after the voting of the six railways in the preceding resolutions, involving an expenditure of three or four millions sterling, that it was not worth while to make much of a work that would cost only £6,000. He could only express how deeply he sympathised with the unfortunate dilemma in which the Government were placed between their constituents and the country, with the authority given to them for the expenditure of money which the country could by no means afford.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN said he might be permitted to repeat his question, whether it was the intention of the Government to carry on the whole of the railways at once? Something more than rumour was current to the effect that the Bundaberg railway was to be gone on with immediately. A resident of Bundaberg had been in the city, and had had an interview with the Minister for Works, who told his interviewer that the work was to be commenced next month. He (Mr. Brown) would read a telegram which had been sent to Bundaberg and made public:—

“Brisbane, August 2.

“Sixty Snider rifles for”——.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL rose to order. He interrupted a short lecture from the Honourable Mr. Gregory, because he did not sit in the House to be lectured by that honourable member. Now, the Honourable Mr. Brown was going into the question of Snider rifles. What had that to do with the question before the House?

The PRESIDENT ruled that the Hon. Mr. Brown was out of order.

The Hon. A. H. BROWN admitted that he was wrong in referring to the Snider rifles, but he thought the Postmaster-General had unnecessarily interrupted his honourable friend. The telegram went on:—

“The Hon. George Thorn hopes that tenders for a short section of Bundaberg railway will be called for in four months' time.”

Now, he (Mr. Thorn) hardly knew upon which statement to place reliance: he did not know how much reliance could be placed on the statement of the Minister for Works. That was why he put the question to the Postmaster-General, who was the only authority in the Council. The honourable gentleman had implied that no such work would be carried on. Therefore he (Mr. Brown) was placed in a difficulty. Would the Minister for Works enable the Bundaberg railway to be commenced in four months; or was it to be postponed indefinitely? With reference to the suggestion of the President, that branch lines should be referred to a select committee, he imagined that could be proposed at any time when the matter came before the House, as an ordinary proceeding.

Question put and passed.

Messages were transmitted to the Legislative Assembly to the effect that the railway resolutions had been concurred in by the Council.
