Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 30 JULY 1878

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 30 *July*, 1878.

Question without Notice.—Selectors Relief Bill—third reading.—Motion for Adjournment.—Supply—Contingent Motion—resumption of debate.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past three o'clock.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. MACDONALD asked the honourable the Secretary for Public Works—

1. How far has the permanent survey of the proposed extension of the Northern Railway been completed westerly from Emerald Downs ?

2. When will the plans and sections be laid upon the table of this House and the sanction of Parliament be asked for said extension ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Miles) said, in reference to the question of the honourable member for Blackall, he could only speak from memory. He thought, however, he would be correct in saying that the Parliamentary survey had been completed to twenty-seven miles beyond Emerald Downs. The plans and specifications would be laid on the table of the House at an early date, and Parliamentary authority asked for the extension of the line to that extent.

Mr. WALSH objected to the course that had been taken. The honourable member for Blackall asked a question, without previous notice, and immediately the Minister for Works got up and——

The SPEAKER said the honourable member could not raise a debate on the answer to a question.

Mr. WALSH said he would then have to move the adjournment of the House in order to call attention to the conduct of the Ministry with regard to the honourable member for Blackall. That honourable member, who had been summoned to assist the Government in a dilemma, came to the House with a question, and the Minister came prepared with an answer. It took weeks for the members on that (the Opposition) side of the House to obtain information from the Government, whereas the honourable member for Blackall was able to get from the Minister for Works, apparently without any premeditation whatever, a most extraordinary answer to the most extraordinary question that had been propounded in this House. It showed an immense amount of corrupt practice on the part of the present Government to secure certain votes; and he must confess that there had been too much of that. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

Mr. MACDONALD was not in the least surprised by the remarks of the honourable member for Warrego, as that honourable member always seemed to judge others by his own standard. The question

was so simple that he did not consider it necessary to give notice; it was one such as the head of any department would be quite prepared to answer. The first part of the question related to the permanent survey, and the second asked when it was proposed to lay plans on the table of the House for the sanction of Parliament. If he understood the answer to the second, it was that the plans would be laid upon the table shortly, and very little time was required to consider such an answer as that. If the honourable the Secretary for Works had named a particular day, he (Mr. MacDonald) should have been more satisfied; but when the honourable gentleman said "shortly," it did not appear as though he had considered the question. The distance was only twenty-seven miles, and, surely, if the honourable member for Warrego himself had occupied the position of Minister for Works, he would not have expected two or three days' notice to answer such a question. He did not see what object was to be gained by giving notice. His reason for bringing forward the question was, that he had heard that the timber-getters had actually reached the end of the line at Emerald Downs, and 150 of them had been paid off. It was, therefore, quite time that such a question was put, and a satisfactory answer elicited. He hoped the short time referred to would mean within a few days. It was understood up the country that plans had been prepared, and he (Mr. MacDonald) was anxious to know what the distance was.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS did not see that he had been guilty of any serious offence in answering the question referred to, without previous notice being given, particularly as it had been the intention of the Government to lay those plans and specifications on the table, and ask sanction to the further extension. Speaking from memory, he believed he was correct in saying that the Parliamentary survey was completed for twenty-seven miles beyond Emerald Downs; and if it was any satisfaction to the honourable member, he had no hesitation in saying that the plans and specifications would be laid on the table to-morrow.

Mr. WALSH said he did not know how many times the honourable the Minister for Works was going to address the House; and he did not wish to give him any further opportunity. He (Mr. Walsh) considered he was justified in drawing a comparison between the readiness of Ministers to give answers to questions put by their supporters, and their dilatoriness in furnishing even necessary information to other members of the House. It was now weeks since necessary information for the session's work was asked for, and that information could not be got; but the moment an honourable member, who had been telegraphed for, came down at the bidding of the Government, and put a question to the Minister for Works, although not in accordance with the practice of the House, the Minister for Works immediately got up and cheerfully gave a most voluminous and substantial answer. The Minister for Works knew very well that he had made play with the honourable member for Blackall, and he thought he could fool honourable members of the Opposition.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Rockhampton) said the information required by the honourable member for Blackall had been already given by the Colonial Treasurer in the course of a recent debate. Had the honourable member been present on that occasion, it was probable he would not have asked his question. The Colonial Treasurer then stated that it was the intention of the Government to ask the authority of Parliament for a further extension westward.

Mr. BELL would call attention to the action of the Minister for Works in giving two answers in replying to the question of the honourable member for Blackall. First of all, he gave an answer which was not satisfactory to the honourable member, and then he gave one that was satisfactory. No honourable member on that (the Opposition) side of the House ever got such a satisfactory reply.

Mr. IVORY said, as the honourable the Minister for Works had been so condescending in replying as he had done, perhaps he would be equally condescending in gratifying him in a similar way. He would ask, without notice——

The SPEAKER reminded the honourable member that a motion for adjournment was before the House, and he could not, therefore, ask a question.

Mr. IVORY said that, in the course of his remarks, he would ask a question in reference to the debate now before the House. A question had been raised, and it had been followed by a motion for the adjournment of the House. While the Minister for Works was in such a gracious humour, he might inform the House, and the country at the same time, when the plans and specifications of the Bundaberg and Mount Perry railway would be laid on the table of the House? He hoped the honourable gentleman would be able to reply to that question as decidedly and distinctly as he had replied to that of the honourable member for Blackall.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, with the permission of the House, he would state that tenders would be called for next Saturday.

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

SELECTORS RELIEF BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of Mr. MACFARLANE (Rockhampton), this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council with the usual message.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. WALSH said he did not like to intrude upon the House, but he had just received information that there had been forwarded to him from Toowoomba early this morning, a telegram which he had not yet received. He might not himself be a very important personage, but the same circumstance was likely to occur to other persons, and he considered the delay in the telegraphic department was a grievance. He would therefore call the attention of the Premier, or the official in the House who was responsible for the department, to the fact that he (Mr. Walsh) had the fullest information that a telegram which he had not yet received had been sent to him very early this morning from Toowoomba. He did not suppose there was any value in that particular telegram; but he knew it had been sent, as the sender was at the present moment in the House; and he (Mr. Walsh) wished to call attention to the subject in order to prevent the recurrence of delays which might be fatal to persons who perhaps had less influence than himself. He cared nothing on his own account, but a great deal on account of the public. He begged to move the adjournment of the House.

The PREMIER (Mr. Douglas) said he would make the necessary inquiries into the matter. It was not a matter of usual occurrence, and he presumed the telegram had been sent from Toowoomba, but was probably directed to the honourable member's private residence. He hoped such would turn out to be the case. In the meantime he would make inquiries, and have the matter investigated.

Mr. BAILEY said it would be found that the constant practice, not only between Toowoomba and Brisbane, but in other parts, was to delay telegrams. He knew a case in which a party, coming down from Toowoomba to Brisbane, wired a message down, but reached Brisbane several hours before the telegram was delivered. He also knew of several other instances of similar delays. When the honourable the Premier made inquiries, the investigation should be a thorough one, as the conduct of the department was very unsatisfactory indeed.

Mr. PERKINS said that delays at Toowoomba were of very frequent occurrence, and when he had made a complaint he had been as good as told that he was telling falsehoods. On the occasion he referred to, he was talking to the office-keeper about a telegram which was sent to Melbourne, the delay in sending which had entailed on him a loss of about £150. He would not have mentioned the circumstance, but that he happened to be in the office at the time when the telegram to which the honourable member for Warrego had referred was sent. Such delays were of frequent occurrence.

Mr. MCLEAN mentioned a case where a telegram from Maryborough had been four weeks in arriving at its destination. He was not surprised, therefore, at a delay of a few hours, and attributed it to the envelopes not being properly addressed.

Mr. BELL attributed the delay to the want of sufficient wiring capacity. When he last mentioned this subject here, Government promised to put on at least one additional wire. That had not yet been done—probably there had not been time for it—but he believed that on inquiry it would be found that an additional wire was the only thing wanted.

Mr. MOREHEAD thought it was hardly worth while discussing the matter now; it would be better to take it when the telegraph estimates came on. Complaints on this score had been made session after session, and, as yet, no redress had been given. He recently formed one of a deputation to the Postmaster-General on this very subject, and the only reply they got—not from the Postmaster-General, who was always courteous, but from Mr. Cracknell—was that the telegraph department of Queensland was superior to that of any of the other colonies. He might mention that the other day he received a telegram from Blackall, asking whether the honourable member for Maranoa had received a certain telegram which had been despatched to him four days previously. On being applied to by him, the honourable member for Maranoa said he had never heard of any such telegram, and he (Mr. Morehead) believed he had not received it from that day to this. A full debate on this question, he hoped, would be taken when the telegraph vote came under consideration.

Mr. BEOR said he wished to take advantage of the motion to refer to the very inconvenient arrangement of trains in the new time-table, to come into operation on the first of next month. For some time past there had been a train running which arrived in Brisbane a little before ten o'clock in the morning. This was a most convenient train, and was made use of by a great many persons whose business in town began about ten o'clock. In the new time-table that train was done away with, and two trains were substituted, each of which arrived in Brisbane about nine o'clock—one about ten minutes before the other. This would be a very inconvenient arrangement, and he trusted the depart-

ment would make an endeavour to meet the convenience of the public.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that in arranging the new time-table, every endeavour had been made to meet the convenience of the public. It was impossible to construct a time-table which would meet the wishes of every individual in the colony, and the department had done its best to meet the convenience of the general travelling public. An endeavour had been made to meet the complaint that persons residing west of Toowoomba could not get to Toowoomba, transact their business, and return the same day, owing to the hour at which the train left Brisbane; in fact, the department had done its best to suit the convenience of the public generally.

Mr. WALSH complimented the Minister for Works on the altered time-table, because, as far as he could gather, the public were altogether pleased with the proposed alterations. He felt sure, however, that if the Government would inquire into the way in which telegraphic messages were sent out, they would greatly relieve the dissatisfaction that was so generally felt in respect thereto. He might mention that in the old New South Wales Parliament both telegrams and letters were delivered to members while sitting in the House.

Question for adjournment put and negatived.

SUPPLY—CONTINGENT MOTION—RESUMPTION OF DEBATE.

Mr. GROOM, in resuming the debate upon the Colonial Treasurer's motion—"That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty"; upon which Mr. McIlwraith had moved, by way of amendment, that all the words following "That" be omitted with the view of inserting in their place the words "in the opinion of this House a Bill should be introduced this session to authorise the raising by loan a sum of three millions sterling for the completion of public works already authorised and the further extension of reproductive works"—said he was fully impressed with the great importance to the country of this debate. In view of a general election, and when the constituencies must necessarily be appealed to under a Redistribution Bill, this question was one of very great significance; and the time at which it had been brought before the House was of equal significance and importance. He had no hesitation in at once stating that the Government had invited this motion of the honourable member for Maranoa. He had listened attentively to the Colonial Treasurer's Financial Statement, and had very carefully perused it afterwards, and he was struck with the entire absence therefrom of any allusion whatever to a loan. He had also watched the progress of the sale of railway reserves in the colony, and from the time of the test sale of the Roma lands, he had consistently opposed the continuation of sales of this sort. He was particularly struck by the fact that the Colonial Treasurer expected to realise, before the 30th June, 1879, no less a sum than £180,000 from the sale of land in the railway reserves. It was not until after the debate on the Financial Statement—not until after the honourable member for Maranoa had clearly shown the necessity for a loan—that the Colonial Treasurer, in his reply on that debate, announced that the Government intended to come down and ask for a small loan. It was impossible for any public man who had directed his attention to the course of public events during the last eighteen months not to be convinced that on no account must there be a stoppage of our public works; and it was equally impossible that they could all be kept going from the proceeds of the sale of the public lands. The proposal of the honourable member for Maranoa was to borrow £3,000,000 for the construction of the works which he at the time enumerated. The policy of the Government, on the other hand, was to get a small loan and to obtain the balance required from the sale of public lands. A distinct issue was thus raised, on which the House and the constituencies would have to be appealed to. Whether they were prepared, in the face of the sales they had already witnessed, and which had resulted in such a lamentable failure, still to sacrifice the public lands of the colony for this purpose, he knew not; but he held it was high time they asked themselves whither they were going in this direction. He used the word failure advisedly, and he hoped to be able to prove it. When the Premier, who was at the time Minister for Works, placed the Roma lands in the market for sale, an advertisement was drawn up and published in terms similar to those which the Colonial Treasurer would use in announcing the sale of lots at the new seaside watering-place of Scarborough. Those lands were described in this fashion:—

"From the first exploration of the Maranoa country by Sir Thomas Mitchell, in 1846, to the present time, the plain country of the Balonne, and the open Downs country round Mount Abundance, have been celebrated for their great fertility. The natural pasture has not suffered from the effects of stocking. The fattening grasses are as abundant as they ever were, and the herbage as rich. The portions now submitted for sale are offered in the confident belief that nothing superior to them, for either pastoral or agricultural purposes, can be found in Australia.

THE WESTERN RAILWAY

is now under construction, and it is expected that it will be completed before the end of 1878.

A PERMANENT AND CERTAIN MEANS OF ACCESS

will thus be secured to the country now offered, and in a few years' time it is certain that a value considerably in advance of what is likely to be realised at the present time must attach to properties such as these.

No more valuable addition for pastoral purposes could be made to the working of a squatting property on the Barcoo, the Thompson, or the Upper Warrego, than the possession of a few thousand acres of freehold property on the Fitzroy Downs."

Then the public were treated to an extract from Sir Thomas Mitchell's journal, in which that explorer said :—

"Riding to the N.N.E., in about two hours we came upon the identical river we had so long followed up. It was accompanied as usual by the Acacia *pendula*, had its rounded bergs, reedy waterholes, and an open strip along the left bank. Crossing it, I rode over towards an elevated part of the open downs, in hopes to obtain sight of what the country was beyond; but I found that to be impossible, as it seemed boundless. So, turning, I ascended an elevated north-easterly extremity of Mount Abundance,

AND FROM IT BEHELD THE FINEST COUNTRY I HAD EVER SEEN IN A PRIMEVAL STATE—

a champaign region, spotted with wood, stretching as far as human vision, or even the telescope could reach."

Could any language more vividly depict the admirable excellencies of this land than that set forth in this advertisement? The terms of that advertisement struck him forcibly, and he made it his business to attend the first sale in Brisbane. But there were only four buyers, and the question would naturally arise, who were they? They were not, as might be expected, persons desirous of settling on the land; they were simply the holders of the stations where these lands were situated, and who naturally went into the market, not to convert them into any higher use, but to protect themselves from others. Of the Mount Abundance country, 90,000 or 100,000 acres went to the Scottish Australian Investment Company; the late Jonathan McLean purchased 40,000 acres, and two other buyers purchased the remainder. Beyond these gentlemen there was not a solitary purchaser, and these lands, so admirably described in the advertisement, were sacrificed at an average of 17s. per acre. If these lands had been kept until the railway had reached Roma, they would have realised at least five or six times the price. On that point there could not be the slightest doubt. The present Premier had been a member of a great many Governments. He had been on the Conservative side to-day, on the Coalition side to-morrow, and on the Liberal side the day afterwards; and everyone of the Governments to which the honourable gentleman had belonged, had had dealings with the Darling Downs lands, which until the last few years had been disposed of at an average rate of 5s. per acre. He might mention that at the present moment a portion of these lands, being the private estate of a person lately deceased, was being offered by the executors at from £3 to £5 per acre on terms. But for the railway those lands would never have been so highly valuable. It was an undisputed fact that the best of the lands on Darling Downs had been literally given away for political expediency. No excuse could be urged now for a repetition of that procedure, for no such expediency had now arisen. In the face of the result of the Roma sale, the Government attempted an experiment with the lands on Jimbour, and although they were not advertised in such magnificent terms as the Roma lands, yet they had been described in equally glowing language. And what did they again find? There was not a solitary selector at the sale, and Mr. Bell, Mr. Tyson, and Mr. Taylor bought whatever they required, at the upset price. He could not, as the Attorney-General did the other night, regard these sales as a triumphant success. In what did the success consist? Where was the settlement that had taken place in consequence of those sales? Success should consist in the settlement of people on the land, and not in the disposal of it in large blocks. The evil of large estates had been abundantly shown in Victoria, and if they wished to profit by the example set by that colony it was the duty of the Government not to aggregate estates, but to settle people on the land. Believing this, he (Mr. Groom), when the Premier introduced his Railway Reserves Bill, gave it his strongest opposition, stating that if he could get two or three members to assist him, he would endeavour to defeat it altogether. For some reason or other, he did not get any support—probably honourable members were disposed to let the Premier have the full length of his tether. However, matters had now come to such a pass that it had become necessary to adopt the very policy which the Premier formerly said he would not adopt. As far as land sales were concerned, he (Mr. Groom) had always been opposed to the sale of large areas, and the published returns bearing on this subject, and which substantiated his reasons, were very interesting. In the three years preceding the commercial crisis of 1866, the amount of money invested in town allotments was £119,178 1s. 9d., and, in country and suburban

lands, £396,508 17s. 10d.; making a total of £515,686 19s. 7d. There was then a gradual falling off after the crisis and until 1875. In the years 1875, 1876, and 1877, the same spirit of gambling in land again showed itself, and we were again on the verge of, if not already within the vortex of a commercial crisis in 1878. During those three years, town lands were sold amounting to £58,377, and country and suburban lands amounting to £756,841; or a total of £815,219. But that was not all. These were only cash sales realised at auction. During the nine years from 1868 to 1877, inclusive, there were conditionally selected 3,061,014 acres, and selected in homestead areas 393,184 acres, making a total of 3,454,198 acres. The surest test to show whether these transactions were *bonâ fide*—whether the purchasers of this land were devoting it to better purposes than heretofore—was its productiveness. What did they find? Out of these 3,061,014 acres of conditionally selected land, there were only 25,480 acres under cultivation; and out of the 393,184 acres taken up as homestead selections, only 18,057 acres were under cultivation; or a total out of the 3,454,198 acres selected, including 2,958 acres under orchard or garden cultivation, of not more than 46,492 acres. Why, the fact, from these figures, was clear to the mind of anyone that they had been carrying on a system of gambling in land, for which every facility had been afforded; and what was the result? That people were unable at that moment to even fence in their land, much less devote it to good and beneficial purposes; and they found the colony in a commercial crisis. It was perfectly true the drought was responsible for that to some extent, but it was not wholly responsible for it. Look at the large amount of money that was sent out of the colony yearly for articles of consumption that the lands here were quite capable of producing; but those lands, instead of being devoted to cultivation, were taken up for grazing purposes, and grazing purposes only. With these facts before him, he had come to the conclusion that in the present circumstances of the colony it was neither wise nor judicious to allow any more sales of land by auction; and if it were possible for him to table a motion to stop such sales altogether, he should certainly do so; but he could not take that course, and between the two—between stopping auction sales altogether and the policy of borrowing money for the construction of our public works—he preferred the latter; and on that ground, which was quite consistent with the whole of his action in connection with the matter, he should this evening vote for the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa. The honourable the Premier, in addressing the House the other evening, said it was not the intention of the Government to extend lines of railway into the interior of the country, except on the principle that those who were benefited by those lines should pay for them, either by forced sales of land or by an adjustment of territorial taxation. Those were, he believed, the honourable gentleman's words. The honourable gentleman was also pleased to say that he had copied this system from the honourable the Speaker, and that it was when travelling in America he was convinced of the great good which resulted from the apportionment of land for the construction of railways. Now, he (Mr. Groom) would quote, for the information of the honourable gentleman, an article from the *New York Tribune*, which was a recognised authority amongst a large section of the American people. This journal, published in January last, said:—

"The system of giving grants of land to railroad companies and other speculating corporations, is recognised as a monstrous device of corruption and dishonesty. The grants already reached a total of 215,000,000 acres, but an attempt is being made to recover a large portion of this area. Nearly all the companies have failed in the conditions upon which the gifts were made. The grants to only five roads have been fully adjusted; the grants to only four of the remainder have been declared forfeit; and of the 215,000,000 acres conditionally appropriated to the subsidy roads, only one-fifth part has been certified and patented to them, and that fifth was more than they earned. The Commissioner of the Land Office has published a list of twenty companies whose grants and extensions of grants have now expired; some of them ran out eleven or twelve years ago; more than half of them have never built a mile of road, although in some instances they have actually received patents for large amounts of the land to which they had no just title. It appears to have been popularly supposed that when these grants ran out the title to the land reverted to the Government without further process. A decision of the Supreme Court, however, establishes the important rule that the grants, notwithstanding the limitations contained in them, remain valid until the declaration of forfeiture is enforced by proper legislative or judicial proceedings. There are consequently defunct, or bankrupt, or unsuccessful, or fraudulent railway companies which still hold the title of millions of acres of subsidy lands that they have not earned and have no prospect or intention or earning. Mr. Joyce, of Vermont, has introduced in the House a joint resolution for the recovery of these forfeited lands (with due protection to *bona fide* purchasers), and their appropriation to the use of actual settlers, or to purposes of education."

It therefore appeared that the system of land grants for railway purposes had not been at all a success in America, as some persons had tried to lead them to believe. In the case referred to, it was a free grant of land under certain conditions on the construction of the works; but in the present case

the honourable gentleman proposed to sell land and devote the proceeds to the construction of railways. He (Mr. Groom) entirely dissented from that doctrine of that honourable gentleman, and he would ask him to point out any other British colony or number of colonies where such a policy had been adopted or endorsed, and he would ask him if he had read, and read attentively, the speech delivered by Sir Hercules Robinson at Bathurst about two years ago, in reference to railway construction. His Excellency then drew attention to the snail's progress that had been made by all the colonies with railways, and pointed out the great necessity, especially in colonies like these, where there were few large navigable rivers, that existed for railways, in order to develop as far as possible the resources of the interior. There was not a word said by him or by the statesmen who followed him—Sir John Robertson or Sir Henry Parkes—about adopting the policy he (Mr. Douglas) now foreshadowed. If that principle was a good and sound one, as the honourable gentleman represented it to be, why did he not carry it out in every instance? Why was it not embodied in the railways already formulated and carried through the House? And why was it not proposed in connection with these branch railways, and why not declare that the districts benefited by those railways should be taxed for their construction?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They are taxed; the land is sold.

Mr. GROOM said the land might be sold; but by whom had it been sold, and what had been done with the proceeds?

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Toowoomba line.

Mr. GROOM said the Toowoomba line was constructed by loan, and not by sales of land. The interest had been derived partly from the proceeds of sales of lands throughout the colony, not from any particular districts. As was pointed out by his honourable colleague the other evening, from a return laid on the table of the House, of £117,000 derived from sales of land last year, £87,000 was contributed by the Darling Downs. How much came from East and West Moreton, and especially the former? They might just as well say the Darling Downs paid for the building they were sitting in, which cost £90,000, or for the new Supreme Court, or the Post and Telegraph Offices. The argument would not hold water any way. If railways were to be constructed at all, his impression was that they should be carried out as they had always been hitherto in this colony—by borrowed capital. If honourable members turned to New South Wales and Victoria, they would see clearly that the more railways were extended into the interior the more remunerative they became. By this means the railways in Victoria now not only paid working expenses and interest on the original cost, but contributed a considerable sum to the general revenue—nearly a million sterling per annum. And in South Australia, to which the honourable gentleman sometimes referred as a model colony—and he (Mr. Groom) believed it had a model Premier—the policy adopted was to construct some twenty-two lines of railway; but was it said that the people of the district through which these lines passed should be taxed especially to pay the interest on the cost of construction? No, the principle held there was that all classes of the community must necessarily benefit by the construction of railways, and it was a sound principle. Would any member representing the city of Brisbane say that if our railways were carried into the remote and vast interior which Sir Thomas Mitchell spoke of—that boundless and almost illimitable district so admirably adapted for pastoral purposes, and which, if they were to believe the gentleman recently speaking at a banquet at Aramac, was also admirably adapted for agricultural settlement—he asked, would any honourable member dare to say that the city of Brisbane would not derive considerable benefit from the construction of that line? He believed, in every way they could look at it—on commercial grounds and all grounds of public policy—it was far better to extend our lines into the vast interior by means of borrowed capital than to sacrifice the public lands in the way they were doing just now to carry on public works. How could these works be carried on? On looking over the returns furnished from the Lands Office, bearing the impress of the Under Secretary for Lands, he found that the total amount of money received from the Western railway reserves last year was £289,545. The greater part of that was derived from the Darling Downs. In the Southern railway reserve, the railway which was to cost half-a-million, the amount received was £1,065 18s. In that reserve there were 11,000 or 12,000 acres which ought to have been offered to the people for settlement; but the honourable gentleman refused to place it in the market for that purpose, but sold it in large blocks, which were bought by two persons—Mr. Gore, of Yandilla, a particular friend of the honourable gentleman's——

The PREMIER: I don't know him.

Mr. GROOM said he was sorry to hear the honourable gentleman say so, because he had heard him say he was one of the few men untainted by dummying. The other purchaser was a Mr. Pierce, who had a selection adjoining, and he was compelled to do what many others had had to do. In order to extend his area and save himself

from ruin, he had to go to his bankers and make arrangements with them to enable him to do so. In the Wide Bay and Burnett railway reserve, where there were two railways to be constructed, the amount received was £10,564; in the Central reserve, £209,541; and in the Kennedy reserve, £224. That was the amount received last year from these reserves for the works to be constructed in them. Now, the honourable the Treasurer told the House in his Financial Statement that the Government intended to ask the House for £150,000 for the line from Warwick to Stanthorpe, £150,000 for the extension from Dalby to Roma; £100,000 from Maryborough to Gympie; £100,000 from Comet to Emerald Downs; £100,000 for the extension from Emerald Downs; and £100,000 for the line from Townsville to Charters Towers; making a total of £800,000. It was clear, on the very face of it, from these figures, that it would be utterly impossible to make all these railways on the principle laid down by the Premier himself. He contended that it would be much better to repeal the railway reserves at once, and go on the broad basis that these works should be constructed by means of borrowed capital. He should not weary the House by going into details of the question, as it affected the general interests of the colony, because that had been carefully and well ventilated by the public Press, not only in this colony, but also in the adjoining colonies. It had been shown as conclusively as it was possible for facts and figures to prove it, that as far as New South Wales was concerned, from which colony the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government borrowed his policy of selling land by auction—that that policy had been attended with something approaching ruin. Mortgages on pastoral properties were never higher than they were now; discounts in the banks were higher than ever they were, and commercial depression existed equal almost to that of the crisis of 1866. To such an extent did this depression extend there at this moment that it was impossible for the Treasurer to attempt to withdraw money, although the Government had three millions to their credit in the banks, and they had therefore to propose to borrow a million and a-half to carry on works already authorised. With this staring them in the face, to carry on a policy of selling the public lands of the colony in the way they had been sold, would be suicidal; and if the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa was a protest against the policy of the Premier for selling land as he had already done, he (Mr. Groom) should support it. If it were on account of his action regarding the lands at Mount Abundance alone, he should support it, because, as soon as the railway reached Roma, the value of those lands would be greatly enhanced—they would be worth about £3 an acre—so that the honourable gentleman had practically made the company that purchased them a present of a quarter of a million of money, which ought to have gone into the Treasury. The honourable gentleman, when addressing the House the other evening on this question, referred to it in a spirit of party, and charged the honourable member for Maranoa with being greedy of office. Now, the honourable gentleman at the head of the Government had been particularly apt in applying expressions of that kind to honourable members this session. The other evening he charged the honourable member for Aubigny with want of temper, because he had expressed himself in rather strong terms on a subject that he felt warmly upon. He was also pleased to designate him (Mr. Groom) as an enemy of progress, because he chose to vote in support of a motion which had a tendency to stop the growing ascendancy of the metropolis; and in the course of this discussion he had charged the honourable member for Maranoa with greed of office. Now, he did not think there was a single member of the House who was less liable to a charge of that kind than that honourable gentleman. What were the real facts of the case in regard to that honourable gentleman? When the Palmer Ministry retired in 1874, and Mr. Macalister was commissioned to form a Ministry, that honourable member was asked before any other member to accept office as Minister for Works. Then, when there was a disagreement in the Cabinet, and he retired, a discussion took place on the matter in the House, and Mr. Macalister was only too anxious to get him back, and sent an emissary to ask him to take his portfolio again. Then when the disruption took place on the motion of the honourable member for Kennedy, and Mr. Macalister left office without tendering any advice to His Excellency, it was a matter of notoriety that Mr. Hemmant advised the Governor to send for the honourable member for Maranoa.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not so.

Mr. GROOM said he was stating facts. On the authority of the late Premier, the Honourable George Thorn, who informed him (Mr. Groom) not only that Mr. Hemmant had so advised the Governor, but that His Excellency had shown him (Mr. Thorn) a letter addressed to Mr. McIlwraith to be sent to him if Mr. Thorn failed to form a Ministry with himself as Premier. Then, when Mr. George Thorn undertook to form a Ministry, it was well known the first thing he did was to ask the honourable member for Maranoa to become one of his colleagues. And he should like to ask the

Premier himself whether he had not been coquetting with the honourable member for Maranoa himself to get him to join the Ministry?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. GROOM said he believed efforts had been made to seduce the honourable member to go over to the Government ranks. The Premier was the last person who should raise a charge of greed of office against any honourable member. That honourable gentleman had been a member of various Governments; he had known him to be a member of a Conservative Government one day, of a Coalition Government another, and of a Liberal Government another. What did he find on reference to the records of the House? In 1867, the honourable gentleman sat in the old Chamber in Queen street as Treasurer of a Ministry composed partly of Darling Downs squatters.

The PREMIER: Name them.

Mr. GROOM said Mr. Bell was one, Mr. Watts was another. The honourable gentleman would not deny that they were Darling Downs squatters, although Mr. Bell had the reputation of being the most liberal of them all. The present Premier was then Treasurer, and appeared in the House as such one day, but on the next day he appeared as something the House could not understand at all. A question being asked, he replied on behalf of the Treasurer. The honourable member for North Brisbane (Mr. Pring) was startled at the position occupied by the honourable member; the Speaker was appealed to, and, at length, the Colonial Secretary rose and made this explanation:—

"I believe it has been the practice, and I believe it is according to Parliamentary rule, that 'questions' are not regarded as business of the House. For this reason I never have given—and I do not believe it has been done by any predecessor of mine—an explanation, until questions have been asked. However, I have no objection to meet what I believe to be the wish of the House, and to offer an explanation on the present state of the Government arrangements. I may mention to the House that a difference of opinion has arisen between my honourable colleague, Mr. Douglas, and other members of the Government regarding a question that will shortly be before this House for discussion. My honourable colleague held to the opinion that the resuscitation of the land-order system is opposed to the financial position of the Government, and that the policy of recognising the land-order system is inconsistent with his views as Finance Minister. Under such circumstances, and after considerable deliberation, the members of the Government, with the consent of the honourable gentleman himself, advised His Excellency the Governor to transfer the honourable gentleman from the department of the Treasury to the department of Public Works, and as Minister of that department he has now his seat in this House."

Now, he did not say that that was an indication of greed of office; but if it was not that, he would ask what was it? The honourable gentleman had quoted precedents the other night, but he could find a good precedent in the action of Lord Derby recently, who, not agreeing with the policy of Lord Beaconsfield when calling out the army reserves, retired from office. But there was no retirement in the case of the honourable gentleman. It was merely a hop, skip, and a jump from the office of Treasurer to that of Minister for Works. The House resented that course of action, and by a majority of nineteen to five decided that the honourable gentleman must go before his constituents for re-election. What followed? A dissolution of Parliament, a general election, the defeat of the Liberal party, and the placing of the honourable member for Port Curtis at the head of the Government. That was the result of the action of the honourable gentleman, who now came forward and charged honourable members who had the good of the country quite as much at heart as he had, with being actuated by motives of greed. He thought the honourable member for Maranoa was the last man in the House who could be charged with that. While on this subject, he would read an extract from a speech delivered by Sir Henry Parkes, at Molong, on the 19th of this month, which was particularly applicable to the state of affairs here at the present time. He said:—

"Now we have arrived at a time in the history of our Parliament when we are likely either to go onward or go backward. It is utterly impossible for any person of a candid disposition and of acute observation, and who is not asleep, not to have noticed the changes that have grown up in working out our free institutions—changes by which the decisions of Parliament are affected by underhand influences, by extraneous interests, by all kinds of devices other than the force of argument and the progress of opinion. Free government under our political system means that the affairs of the country should be managed by men who by their services, by their intelligence, by the proofs that they have given of integrity, command the confidence of the people. It does not mean that the affairs of the country should be in the hands of persons who by promises, by an improper dispensation of patronage, or by what there is no other word for than jobbing, can for the moment get a majority of votes. Government, by Parliamentary majority, fairly won—won in the open daylight by the merits of the persons who win it—is one of the best forms of government in the world. Government under our form of constitution, by men who receive the support of a majority got together by unseen processes, by backdoor influence, by means which the public know nothing about, is the worst, or if not the worst, nearly the worst form of government."

Now, was not this a fair battle in the House? Was not this a fair contention raised by the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa? The policy of the

Government was to sacrifice the public lands to raise money, while the policy of the honourable member for Maranoa was to borrow money to construct public works already authorised, and such further works as the House might think necessary. There had been a great deal of clap-trap circulated to the effect that this motion was closely connected with the *Queenslander* exploring expedition; but he did not believe a word of it. If he thought for one moment that there was any connection either directly or indirectly between the two he would have nothing whatever to do with it. He believed it was only an idle tale circulated by people down here, and that it was not believed by any intelligent persons. He had too much confidence in the honourable member for Maranoa to believe anything of the sort. At any rate there was this great safeguard: That no railways could be constructed without the authority of that House; and if it were proved when the plans and books of reference of any railway came before the House for approval that they were directly or indirectly connected with the motion of the honourable member, he (Mr. Groom) would be one of the first to vote against them. He was not one of those who could be led astray by such cries. He believed there were honourable members opposite who were just as anxious to see the colony advance and prosper as any honourable gentleman on that side. He would be the last to cry down the public men of the colony, a course which neither looked nor sounded well. There were some gentlemen in the Ministry whose words he would be always ready to take; but there were others whose vacillating conduct was a source of danger to any Government they were connected with, and to the country also. He could say, that as far as he was concerned, he had no personal interest whatever in this question. His sole object was the good of the country and the good of the people amongst whom he lived. He believed that if he served them conscientiously he would be serving the country faithfully, and he was convinced that he was doing that in the course he now adopted. He had now given at some length the reasons for the vote he should record to-night. He should record it firmly and conscientiously, believing that the proposal of the honourable member for Maranoa was the best and wisest to be followed in the present position of the country. He knew he should be charged with deserting the Liberal party, and with having voted with gentlemen who had been charged with hostility to progress. The principles and opinions he had expressed that afternoon were the same that he entertained when he entered that House, sixteen years ago. He was then a determined opponent of the grasping, selfish policy of the Darling Downs squatters—a policy that some of the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House condemned as strongly as he did. Things had very much changed since then. In the early part of 1867, the Darling Downs squatters were able to form a Ministry almost by themselves—indeed at one time, there were three, if not four of those gentlemen in a Ministry. The honourable member for Dalby was the only remaining relic left in the House of the black-soil squatters—as they were then designated—and he was always regarded as the most liberal-minded of the whole of them. But there was now a Liberal Ministry in power—Liberal in name, but certainly not in principles. Their land policy was the very reverse of Liberal, at least, so far as it affected the Darling Downs. The honourable member for Port Curtis (Mr. Palmer) once declared—he thought it was in 1867—that to limit a man to 320 acres on the Darling Downs was to make a cattle-stealer of him. Well, if 320 acres would make a selector a cattle-stealer in 1867, what would eighty acres of stony, barren, waterless ridges make him in 1878? Land on unwatered stony country, which was not worth 5s. an acre, and yet £2 was asked for it; yet the latter limited area, and in such country, was the creation of a Liberal Ministry who were placed in office by the acclaim of the people in 1874, expressly on the faith of passing a liberal land law. The people asked for bread and in return received a stone—They asked for a liberal land policy, and they received in return the very illiberal Land Act of 1876. They had seen the fairest of the land pass away from them in large areas at auction sales, while they themselves—the bone and sinew of the country—had been "cabined, cribbed, and confined" to the smallest possible area. The Liberal party, and its Government of 1874, had all but disappeared, and in its place there was arising a new creation—a party not ruled or governed by political principles, but by schemes, by devices, and misrepresentations in their Press organs of the honestly-expressed opinions of members of this House. During the passage of the Electoral Districts Bill, they saw the efforts made to strengthen and consolidate this new creation—this new governing body—whose chief political creed consisted in the belief that Queen street was Queensland, and that all the rest of the colony, and even of the city itself, was merely subsidiary country to be considered only when the expediency of the moment might demand it.

Mr. KINGSFORD: Sublime.

Mr. GROOM said there was one step from the sublime to the ridiculous, and the honourable member's interruption was an instance of it. In voting for the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa, he was confident he was acting in consonance with the wishes and sentiments of the large

majority of the people of the colony. They did not wish any further sacrifice of the public estate. They desired that the country should avail itself of its borrowing powers to a moderate extent, and by the vigorous prosecution of the public works, ward off, as far as they could, the more serious consequences of the present commercial depression. If the drought broke up at an early date (and he was sure we all hoped it might do so), and trade improved and their prospects became brighter, the rapid extension of railways and other reproductive works would be found of the utmost value to all classes of the community. The loan of three millions would help in this direction, and would assist not only in affording employment to the industrial classes, but in opening up the vast interior, besides extending the blessings of rapid communication to the more settled districts. He did not mean to say that there was a disposition in the country that the Ministry should be turned out of office, but there was a strong feeling that the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa should be carried. He was going to vote for the motion, as he believed it was the best course that could be taken in the present commercial crisis. He had been all along opposed to the construction of railways by the sale of lands, and he was strongly of opinion that the Premier's policy was against the wishes of the people, and the interest of the country. He should vote for the motion, believing that he should be best serving the interests of his constituents, and of the country, by taking that course.

Mr. BEOR said that the position in which they were placed just now, reminded him of some lines of Milton that he remembered:—

> "This said, he sat, and expectation held
> The Assembly mute, awaiting who appeared
> To answer or oppose."

Was there, he would ask, nobody on the Government side of the House who would venture to reply to what had been advanced by the honourable member for Toowoomba, or were they to take that honourable member's arguments as unanswerable? It appeared to be the last proposition which the House was content to assume. There seemed to be a large number of honourable members who were contented to vote against the side on which the honourable member had spoken, but who were unable to assign their reasons for doing so. From the outset of the present debate great efforts had been made by the honourable Premier in the first place, and, he thought, by the honourable Attorney-General afterwards, to show that there was really no difference between the proposition brought forward by the honourable member for Maranoa and the scheme which had been already planned by the Government, except in matters of detail; but the honourable member for Toowoomba had pointed out at least one difference, and that was the main difference, which had been tried to be avoided by the two members of the Government to whom he alluded. The difference which was sought to be avoided or skimmed over was this—that in the one case the House had a scheme placed before them by which railways were to be made out of the proceeds of lands, whilst in the other, namely, that of the honourable member for Maranoa, they were to be made out of borrowed money. It was very curious to watch the course that the proposals of the Government side had taken since he had had the honour of a seat in that House and a little before that. It was well known to all honourable members and persons both inside and outside of the House, that the railways were to be made in the first instance out of money to be raised by the sale of lands—there was no mention made of borrowing at all. That proposition was before the country for a long time, and there was a kind of enthusiasm expressed at the promise made—that the country was to have railways without paying anything for them, without paying a farthing of taxation, or without being asked to go into the money-market to make them. But what was the next thing they heard? Why at the end of last session, when the last Railway Bill was brought in, and when he was sitting on the Government cross-benches, the honourable Premier used words to this effect, "We do not intend to pay for railways directly out of land, but we will hold out these reserved lands before the people who are going to lend us the money and say, There is your security." Those were almost identically the words used by the honourable gentleman last session, and he listened to them most attentively, and recollected a great portion of them, for he was not sure at the time, nor could he discover, what was the policy of the Government on which they were going to make the railways. He had really understood the honourable gentleman to say that he was prepared to reserve the lands only for the purpose of paying interest; but he might have misunderstood him, as it came out quite fairly in the speech afterwards, and the statement was reiterated by the honourable Attorney-General, that the railways were to be made and paid for out of lands. First of all the policy was that the railways were to be made out of the proceeds from lands; from that they had this step—that the land was only to be held out as a security for the money borrowed; and now they had advanced another step, namely, that the branch railways were to be made out of borrowed money, without any reference to the lands at all. That was what they had come to by steps; at last they were

coming by steps to the very policy which he had always understood to be the policy of the Opposition. He thought it was a good thing that they were doing so, but was it, he would ask, an attitude which a Government should assume?—was it a dignified position for any Government? The Government had shown that they had arrived at their present policy partly by conviction, partly by having their eyes open, and partly by the force the Opposition had had upon them in directing their movements. There was another distinction which existed between the policy of the Government and that proposed by the honourable member for Maranoa. The Government were satisfied with coming before the country and saying, "We are going to make you any number of railways; we are going to make a railway right away from Rockhampton to the West; we are going to extend a line from Charters Towers, also one from Clermont; we will make a line from Ipswich to Fassifern, also one to the Logan, and one from Oxley to South Brisbane," and he did not know how many more they were willing to make; but if they were to conduct the extension of those railways in the way in which they had begun to construct them, and in the manner in which they had conducted those already constructed, how far, he should like to know, would the railways get under the Liberal Government? The country was at present in this position, that there were started a few railways which were in such a condition that they could not, without being pushed much further, be of any advantage to the country. Most honourable members would readily believe that if the Government pushed forward the present lines they would become more remunerative. That had been stated by honourable members before, and it only stood to reason that if a short railway did not pay, a long extension of it might do so. For instance, if a man lived 130 miles from Townsville, and had to cart his goods for 100 miles, it was not likely he would tranship them into a railway truck for the purpose of having them carried the remaining thirty miles. But supposing he lived 150 miles from Townsville and a railway was within fifty miles of him, it would pay him to have his goods brought the part of the distance traversed by the railway and the rest by the ordinary road. Those were extreme cases perhaps, but he had taken them as an illustration of his argument. As soon as there was a railway 200 miles long, people would come a distance of not only thirty miles, but any distance to it; but when there were only thirty miles of railway, it was not worth anyone's while to travel a long distance to avail themselves of that thirty miles. That was, therefore, a strong reason why the railways should be pushed on, and he believed for his part that it would be much better to finish one railway before they commenced another. Some had been commenced, and the country was bound to proceed with them. Again, he contended, from the mode in which the present railways had been commenced, if the Government were really looking forward to a bold and vigorous policy of making railways in future, it was something entirely new to them. He thought it was a most extraordinary thing that such a policy should have struck them at the very moment the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa was brought forward. But there was another thing—not only that that policy was a new one, but there were other grounds to show that the Government had no intention of pursuing the bold and vigorous policy they had just announced they were willing to adopt, and that was brought to his mind by a statement made by a Minister of the Crown, the other night, and which was alluded to by the honourable member for Toowoomba: a statement by the honourable Attorney-General, that the populous districts were not likely to consent to be taxed for railways into the interior. If they were not, all he (Mr. Beor) could say was, that the populous districts would be very foolish indeed. That was what he understood the honourable gentleman to say.

The Attorney-General said he must correct the honourable member. What he said was, that the opinion of the new constituencies would have to be taken, and it was just possible that the people might object.

Mr. Beor said he had been told that his version of what the honourable gentleman said was a correct one, but as he had been handed a copy of *Hansard*, he would read what the honourable gentleman said—

> "I would here mention that it is just possible that new constituencies may be of a different opinion with regard to trunk lines: I hope such will not be the case, but the fact remains, that the popular constituencies under the new Act may be in a much increased proportion, and it is just possible that the people may object to being taxed simply for the purpose of making railways, which must be for the present unremunerative, for the purpose of opening up the interior."

If that did not express what he had said, he did not know what the words could mean. He had said that the contention of the Attorney-General was, that the populous constituencies were very likely to object to being taxed for making these railways, and he could not see any difference between that statement and the passage he had read. If the populous constituencies were going to object, they were intending to do a very foolish thing. He supposed that the honourable gentleman meant by the term populous districts, the districts in the

neighbourhood of the coast towns. If there was one thing more remarkable than another about the effects of railway extension into the interior, it was, that it increased the prosperity of the coast towns. If the honourable gentleman would go to the neighbourhood of Bathurst, Goulburn, and Wangaratta, in the other colony, he would find that the station-holders, who, before the railways were made, were accustomed to get their supplies from these towns, were now drawing them either from Sydney or Melbourne, thus proving that the trade of the interior upon the making of the railways directly added to the prosperity of the coast towns at the expense of the inland towns. If there were any people who ought to object, it was the people in the small towns in the interior, who had been accustomed to supply the stations with stores, because, when the railways were made, this custom was likely to cease. Further, if the populous constituencies were going to object to be taxed for railways into the interior, what would the people of the interior say to being taxed for branch lines. Would they not be much more likely to protest against a scheme which was going to take the public money to make railways in small particular localities, and refused to use the same public money for the purpose of making railways in the large districts likely to prove beneficial for the whole colony? If there was to be an objection to the making of railways out of public moneys, it should be to the branch lines and not the main trunk lines. He would make a few observations with respect to the policy of selling the land first and making the railways afterwards, if only to record his protest against it. It was, in fact, a policy having for its object the selling of the land first, and the improving of that land afterwards to an enormous extent, for the benefit of the people who had purchased. Since he had entered the House he had been trying to find out what was the liberal policy of the gentlemen who sat on the Treasury benches, and had come to the conclusion that their liberal policy was to improve others people's property at the public expense. Last Wednesday, when a motion was brought forward by the honourable member for Clermont, it appeared that the Government not having possession of certain land which was wanted, first improved it, and then made overtures to the owner to buy it, putting themselves in the position of being compelled to pay for their own improvements. That was the rendering he gave of the liberal policy as adopted by honourable gentlemen opposite—to improve other people's property at the expense of the colony. In the case of the railway lands, they were going to do it by selling the lands first and afterwards improving them for the benefit of the purchasers. There was another marked distinction between the proposals of the honourable member for Maranoa and the scheme of the Government. The Premier, as he understood him, proposed to go in for a most extensive scheme of immigration, as against the honourable member for Maranoa, whose scheme was not nearly so large. For what purpose were the Government going to bring the immigrants here? Was it that the immigrants might find, on landing, that there was no employment, and to share in the destitution which could be seen everywhere? He could adduce numbers of instances of men desirous of getting work, but not able to obtain it. People had been tempted into this country by the extensive railway scheme which had been laid before the whole of the English-speaking world as being contemplated by this colony. If the works embraced in this scheme had been prosecuted and extended, they would have seen neither these instances of destitute men seeking for employment, nor the commercial destitution which also existed. If the Government had pushed forward these works, the people who had been tempted here would have found employment. The colony would have had work for the unemployed, and those they could bring into it. The proper policy was to show that they were in earnest in their public works policy, and to bring men into it when they found they had employment for them. More than that, if they brought them here and found them work they should leave the lands open in the vicinity of the railways in order that the men might find, when they had earned sufficient, suitable land upon which to settle, and to become in the future good and permanent colonists.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) said the honourable member for Bowen had expressed surprise that no one on the Government side of the House had risen to reply to the honourable member for Toowoomba. That honourable member did give the House one argument against the present Ministry, and in favour of the amendment of the honourable member for Maranoa; but the honourable member for Bowen had supplied no argument in favour of the position he had taken up. The one argument of the honourable member for Toowoomba was, that he had always consistently opposed the making of railways by the sale of land. The House knew that he had been consistent in that respect, and the honourable member was to be admired for his consistency. Whether he was right in opposing the Government was another question, however. He intended to vote against the amendment, firstly because it was premature. If the honourable member had waited until the Government had brought forward their Loan Bill, he (Mr. Macfarlane) could perhaps have seen some reason for it, and the

honourable member might have got more supporters than he would do now. He looked upon the amendment simply as an attempt to forestall the Government in their loan policy; and, viewing it in that light, could not support it. He could not support it for the further reason that he did not think the colony was prepared for such a large loan as three millions. The inhabitants were a mere handful. Reference had been made by the honourable member for Toowoomba to a remark made by Sir Henry Parkes, that the time had come when New South Wales must go forward or backward; but the population of New South Wales was very different to that of Queensland, and to burden this colony with another loan of three millions in addition to the heavy burden the people had already to bear, would be a step in the wrong direction. To his mind the burden of this debt would fall upon the producers, and if they deducted from the adult males of the colony who might be taken to represent the producers, the persons who produced no wealth to the colony, such as Civil Servants, police, inmates of lunatic asylums and gaols, the actual number of producers would not exceed 70,000; and taking that as a fair number, this loan of three millions would add a burden to the producers of something like £40 per head. This was something serious, and he did not think the colony was in a position to incur such a large debt. The honourable member for Bowen spoke of the policy of the Government as if they had no railway policy. He said, "If they would go ahead." He would like the honourable member to point out any period in the colony's history when railways were going ahead more than at present. They had a great number actually under construction, and others were passed, and if the Government were sure that with a small loan they would be able to carry on these railways, going in for another small loan in a year or two, it would answer the colony better than to go in at once for this large loan and simply to expend one portion on the works and put another in the banks to find a difficulty perhaps of getting it out again. He believed that if the House sanctioned the loan of three millions, they would be doing something which would prove ruinous and suicidal to the colony.

Mr. Fox said the policy advocated by the last speaker might do very well if they were about to initiate railways, but they had started railways, and to make them pay, to make anything out of them, they must carry them into the country. Some honourable member had said that the effect of going in for this loan would be similar to that experienced by New South Wales, with regard to the large sums of money derived by that colony from land sales. He had given some consideration to that question, and found that in New South Wales no money, nothing substantial, had passed for the land. Nothing but cheques passed. The persons wishing to become purchasers of the land arranged with the banks to honour their cheques; these cheques were handed to the Government, and by them back to the banks as Government deposits, so that there was nothing but the passing of mere pieces of paper. When the Government wished to operate on their supposed deposit of four millions to carry on public works, the banks applied to the parties for the money. These parties had not recouped themselves by profits out of the land, and, consequently, were unable to pay. And the Government found, on representations from the merchants and bankers, that if they persisted in requiring their deposits, a financial crisis would be caused. The result was, that they proposed to go into the market and borrow three and a-half millions. If this colony went into the Home market and floated a loan, the money would be brought actually into the colony. Therein lay the difference between their position and that of New South Wales, in applying for the money supposed to have been received from land sales. Whether this colony borrowed one or three millions, there was nothing to prevent the money intended to be devoted to immigration and railway plant being left in England. The balance for prosecuting the works could be brought out and distributed amongst the different banks at interest, the money to be drawn at certain periods. This money would return to the banks by the ordinary means of circulation, which would be provided by the prosecution of the works and the payment of the persons employed on them. It was erroneous to compare the position of New South Wales with Queensland, as no crisis could occur here provided they were prepared to pay the interest. As regards the policy of making railways from the sale of land, he found that as far back as 1875, when the present Government, or the larger number, came into office, the only railway policy they had was the construction of the Stanthorpe line, and that by the pressure which was brought to bear on them, they increased their scheme, proposing to carry it out by the very seductive plan of constructing the works from the proceeds of land sales. At first blush that plan seemed very seductive, but would not stand investigation. The Government carried their scheme, and created railway reserves after the principle introduced by the Speaker with regard to the Western Railway. He, himself, should have given the principle a trial, so far as the Western Railway was concerned, because he thought it worthy of one; but he did not agree that the Government were justified in bringing in fresh reserves, such as carried last year in the

Central and Northern districts, until the Western Railway Reserve had a fair trial. The contention of honourable members on his side of the House was, that the plan would be a failure, that it would be impossible to make railways from land sales as proposed by the Government, and that the proper plan was to borrow money to make the railways, and afterwards sell the land. The fact that the Government had now adopted this plan of borrowing money to make the railways was a proof to him, that they, themselves, considered their former plan of making the lines from the reserves a failure. There was no doubt that it was a failure and a very serious failure, and he could not believe that it was right at all to interfere with the general interests until it was proved that doing so would be a success; for no interest, whatever it might be, should be disturbed unless it was almost positive that it would conduce to the greater general interest of the country. The honourable the Premier had spoken of the main trunk lines as being an overtax, and of the branch lines as being met out of the public funds. In that he thought the Premier was altogether wrong. If they took the policy of the Government in regard to the Local Government Bill, they would find that they advocated a very different course from that. The Attorney-General also spoke on the matter in much the same manner, and introduced a clause into the Local Government Bill providing that all roads on which coaches ran were to be considered main roads, to remain at the expense of the Government. If the same rule were to apply to the railway which those honourable gentlemen advocated then, the main trunk lines should be at the public expense, and the branch lines at the local expense. The honourable gentleman at the head of the Opposition had foreshadowed something of this kind. He alluded to the Local Government Bill, and said that a sum of money should be provided for certain municipalities, which they should, if they thought proper, spend in making branch railroads. It would be a good thing if a Bill could be introduced whereby municipalities could be induced to adopt this plan, that was, if railroads could be made at little beyond the expense of making main roads; and that was a subject which he hoped the head of the Opposition would educate the people up to by adopting a system of cheap railways. With regard to the present Government, this was a mere term. In all their speeches in advocacy of these branch lines, it was asserted that they were to be made at a low cost. But what did they find? That from the plans and specifications of the extension of the Gympie and Maryborough line, it would cost £9,000 a mile. That could not be termed a cheap railway. They also found from an inquiry made of the Minister for Works, that the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line would cost equally as much. Indeed, the experience derived from the experiment of making those lines would deter honourable gentleman from making any more branch lines, unless they were made out of local taxation. He would now refer to a paragraph in which the Premier brought forward a quotation from the speech of Lord Stanley. The Premier had said that the honourable member for Maranoa should not have brought forward a motion of this kind at this time, in an expiring Parliament; but the arguments used in that case had nothing whatever to do with the matter before this House, as the honourable member for Kennedy clearly pointed out when he said that members of the present House represented the people of the colony as fully under universal suffrage as the new House would with fifty-five members. The Attorney-General had complained of the honourable member for Maranoa for bringing in his motion at this time, and not giving the Government notice that he intended to come down with some scheme or policy. But it appeared to him that as Government had not made provision for the carrying on of public works, the honourable member would have been too late if he had allowed the matter to remain any longer without receiving some definite answer from the Government as to what was to be done. As for Ministers pleading that they had no notice of this, that was not so. The honourable member had been spoken to before as to the necessity of bringing in a loan, and he himself had spoken to some of the Ministers on the subject. In watching the policy of the Government, he found that what had been said on that (the Opposition) side of the House was quite true —that when any Bill was brought into the House the Government deferred to the opinion of the Opposition, and invited them to make what proposals they thought proper. The divisions in the House had been in favour of the Opposition. He had taken the trouble of ascertaining what the divisions had been up to the beginning of last week, and found that in committee there were fifteen divisions for the Government, and eleven for the Opposition; and that in divisions in the House, eight were for the Government, and six for the Opposition. If the honourable member at the head of the Opposition had not brought in this resolution, and the Government had allowed things to go on as they were doing, the consequence would have been that more than one of the railways now in progress would have to be stopped. He had before him the vote for immigration, and was of opinion that if they were to keep up immigration on the present large

scale, they should keep up the provision for public works. And there could be no more important public works than the completion of the main trunk lines, The extension from the southward to Cooper's Creek was most important, seeing that other colonies were pushing their railways to the borders of this colony. Nothing showed more the absolute necessity of carrying out the main trunk lines, and they had an example of it in what was going on in New South Wales. The production of wool there was largely in excess of that in Victoria; but the exports from Victoria were something like twice as much in value as that of New South Wales. Within the last few days a telegram had appeared in the local papers, stating that special rates had been made in Victoria on the North-Eastern Railway to bring down the New South Wales wool. If there was this competition between New South Wales and Victoria, what was to prevent Queensland, if the South Australian and New South Wales Governments pushed their railways on to our border, taking advantage of the circumstances? If, by any action of the House, the progress of these main trunk lines was delayed the effect would be a very bad one. He found the importance of this question was brought forward as far back as 1876 by the honourable the Premier, who then said:—

"It is admitted, I think, on all hands, that without railway enterprise, this country cannot be developed; that there are no great rivers; and that if we are to continue bringing population into the country on such a scale as we have hitherto done, in order to afford them employment, public works must be established."

In his speech the other evening, the honourable the Premier said there was to be a deviation of the line from Roma to Landsdowne, as proposed by the Trans-continental Expedition. This showed what was working in the honourable gentleman's mind as to the magnitude of the work to be done; and yet he could now come forward and say that populous constituencies object to the development of these lines. Notwithstanding the progress of the Southern and Western Railway and the progress of the Central Railway, it was a remarkable fact that an increase in carriage had gone to the extent of 100 per cent. He mentioned this to show that by the progress of railways in the interior the amount of work and production of the country was increased; and he could have no better proof than this increased rate of carriage, and the constant demand for conveyance. The goods conveyed in these cases must come from the populous constituencies, must come from and to the port of Brisbane. The same principle held good with regard to the Central Railway. Honourable members might form their own conclusions when he mentioned as a positive fact that, notwithstanding the fact that the railway had advanced 214 miles into the interior of the Central district, the rate of cartage from Rockhampton to Clermont was more than it originally was when the teams had to come down to Rockhampton. He believed the honourable member for Port Curtis would bear him out when he said that he paid more carriage to his station, although the railway ran directly towards him, than he paid originally from Rockhampton. These facts spoke for themselves. In his own neighbourhood, in 1869, twenty-five teams were travelling where now there were 260 teams; and the rates of carriage had gone up 100 per cent. What better proof could be wanted that railway communication was required? He had no objection to these branch lines if they could be made at something like the cost of common roads, or, say, never more than £3,000 a-mile; but the Government had failed to show that they could do it at anything like the price. The contract for the Maryborough and Gympie railway was £4,000, without rolling-stock, rails, or plant, and he had no doubt in the world, it would cost quite £8,000 per mile.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. MCILWRAITH: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I say no.

Mr. FOX said if it was to cost as much as seemed to be inevitable, there could be no honourable member, even though he sat behind the Government, who would not be compelled to object to the system. But if it could be proved that these lines could be made for a little more than the cost of roads, he would withdraw his objection; not that he did not object to them, but that he thought it was a members' duty to accept a compromise when it nearly met his own view, for no one could expect to carry everything exactly as he would have it. Therefore it was the duty of every honourable member, if it could be shown that the work could be prosecuted in an economical manner, not to oppose the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa. In this course he should certainly support that honourable member. He did not think as did many honourable members who stated that the motion was inopportune; on the contrary, the honourable member who introduced it acted with a great deal of patience, and it was not until he was persuaded by honourable members on his own side to do something of the kind that he adopted the course he had pursued; and doubtless, if he had adopted the course of calling upon the Government to state their policy, he would have led them into a trap, for it was not to be thought for a moment that they had any policy. The astonished expression visible on the face of the honourable the Premier

when the notice of motion was given, clearly showed that, if he had a policy, that was the time to have got up and said, "We are prepared to meet honourable gentlemen now; here is our policy." But why was this astonishment shown; and why did the honourable the Premier get up and ask the honourable member for Maranoa what he meant by his motion; and why did he ask that the motion might be deferred for consideration? He (Mr. Fox) was sure the Government had no policy, and the borrowing of £180,000, as mentioned by the Colonial Treasurer in his Financial Statement, was the outcrop of the motion made by the honourable member for Fortitude Valley, as to the draining of that portion of the city. The House would remember that honourable members expressed disapproval of the proposal of a grant; that a better and more extensive system of drainage should be adopted. Shortly afterwards the Colonial Treasurer proposed this £180,000, saying that it was for the drainage of Fortitude Valley, for works in Brisbane, and on the Fitzroy River. Under these circumstances, he (Mr. Fox) would support the leader of the Opposition, if he should bring his motion to a division.

Mr. GRIMES said the introduction of a motion such as that now before the House, in the way in which it had been introduced, showed him that there was something of great importance behind it. It was always said, that when a motion was introduced as an amendment upon a motion for going into Supply, it was intended as a direct assault on the Treasury benches, and there was nothing in the present circumstance to lead the House to suppose that anything else was intended by the leader of the Opposition when he placed this motion upon the paper, than to make a last desperate attempt to wrest from the present Ministry the reins of office previous to a dissolution, and the election of a new Parliament. That was the actual state of affairs, and the course adopted was, perhaps, one which had suggested itself as most likely to be productive of that result; but it was one which he believed would in the long run tell very unfavourably against the honourable member who introduced it. He could understand, and could honour, honourable members on the Opposition benches when they were true to the traditions which had been theirs in time past, to restrain as much as possible the overweaning extravagant expenditure of any popular Ministry, and he admired the Opposition for the way in which they had in times past done their utmost to check enormous and extravagant expenditure; but when they forsook those traditions, and all that which had given them claim to public confidence and support, and sought by the proposition they had adopted on the present occasion, to take the wind out of the sails of the Ministry by proposing a still grander policy of public expenditure than any Ministry had dared to propose, they would lose the confidence the public had reposed in them, and would certainly find their position worse than it otherwise would have been had they remained faithful to those traditions. He was very much struck with a remark made by the honourable member for Kennedy, to the effect that the whole policy of the Opposition had been changed by the voting on a simple resolution moved by himself. He (Mr. Grimes) had been long enough in the House to know that the passing of a resolution was very little in itself, except that it might present a chance of annoying the Ministry, and he had noticed that when such a motion was proposed, the Opposition threw in all their influence and voted in a body. He himself had very little faith in the change which had been spoken of, and if the honourable member who made the remark thought he had persuaded the House that there was really a change on his side of the House, he was greatly mistaken. The change was on the honourable gentleman's part alone. By such a resolution as had been proposed by the leading members of the Opposition, the party which was generally supposed to have acted as a break upon extravagant public expenditure, seemed to have forsaken their old traditions and to be launching into a policy far more extravagant than any intimated by their opponents. But on looking further into the question, something still more extraordinary appeared. The honourable the leader of the Opposition could not, with his knowledge of Parliamentary practice, have expected that the resolution, if passed, would have furthered the object he had in view, if that object were the obtaining of a loan of £3,000,000. It was well known that, by the rules of Parliament, if the question of Supply were superseded by a motion of this character, it could not be reintroduced during this session. The fact of this resolution being passed would, therefore, simply prevent the House from going again into Committee of Supply, and no supplies could be granted to Her Majesty for this year. Had the present Ministry resigned, it would have been necessary that there should be a new session of Parliament, because whatever would operate against the present Ministry getting supplies would operate also against any other Ministry getting supplies during the same session. As it was, a certain time must elapse; the tenure of office of members elected to this Parliament would have to expire, and the Ministry could no longer have transacted the business which was necessary to be done. The honourable member's object, therefore, could not have been furthered had the resolution been passed. But there

would have been other matters for consideration had the present Ministry resigned office and the leader of the Opposition been called in. The effect of such a state of things would have been to have given to the Opposition party the reins of power until the new Parliament could have been called together, which, from the showing of the honourable the leader of the Opposition would have been about March next year. That would be giving to a new Ministry of whom the House knew nothing in any way, and to a party who had not given the House any outlines of a policy, the administration of affairs for from six to nine months without any responsibility to Parliament. Such a state of things would be very objectionable. He was constrained on the present occasion to appear as the apologist of the present Government. He had expressed, and should express this evening, his dissent from their policy, and also from the policy proclaimed by the Opposition. There was room enough for a policy distinct from either, and such should be the policy of the country at the present time when the condition of affairs was such as to demand the serious attention of every member of the House. He would deal first with a few of the matters that had been alleged against the present Ministry, some of which had been referred to by the honourable member for Toowoomba. Of all attacks that could possibly be made, an attack from the rear was the worst, and had the honourable member for Toowoomba been on the Opposition benches, the attack made by him would, perhaps, have been more easily repelled. He (Mr. Grimes) had been in the House for two and a-half sessions, and he must say that he had heard that honourable member express dissent from each and every land policy that had been pursued in the House, so that he had been unable to gather what policy the honourable member would have advocated. He grumbled at every policy proposed, but if his own ideas, supposing he had any clear ones, had been put into a concrete form, it was a question whether any other honourable members would agree with his policy. He complained on the one hand with the present Government for selling land at so high a price, and he also complained that they would not sell the land. He (Mr. Grimes) had heard the honourable member complain of the Government selling for 17s. an acre land which he said ought to have been retained until railways had been built, and then sold for £3 an acre; and he had heard him, only three or four days ago, complain that the Government were selling land to selectors and putting the high price of 30s. an acre on it. It was difficult to gather what policy he would like to see adopted. An honest and business-like man could easily form some idea of what the land policy of Queensland should be. The land of Queensland was the endowment of the State and of the people, and, if alienated in any form, it should be alienated in such a form that it should produce some tangible result to the people, and be, in the long run, conducive to the welfare of the colony. If any person wished to avail himself of what was public estate—to take to the individual what was the property of the whole—he should be expected to pay what was considered a fair value of that property. The farming portion of the community neither required nor desired to obtain land at a cheaper rate than their neighbours. They only wanted power to obtain possession, and to put them to the best advantage. He did not believe in the clap-trap cry that selectors wanted land for a merely nominal sum. It was that cry, and the policy founded upon it which had placed the best lands in the colony in the hands of a very few individuals; and the advocacy of gentleman like the honourable member for Toowoomba had materially facilitated these transactions. Those men were thus enabled to lease their lands for an equivalent to the first purchase money, or to resell them at an enormous advance on the first price. Extraordinary ideas seemed to be entertained with respect to this proposed loan of three millions. Any proposition of that kind, from its very boldness and extravagance could be sure to gain some supporters, and in a time of considerable commercial depression like the present, it was especially likely to gain supporters, on the ground that it would afford temporary relief. But the practical result, he thought, would be different. If they applied the principle this year, they would have to apply it to a much greater extent next year; and, as he hoped to prove, this policy of obtaining money on loan ought rather to be restricted than allowed to proceed at random. The remarks of some honourable members reminded him of the story of the gentleman who directed his servant to dig a hole and bury therein a quantity of rubbish. The hole was dug and the rubbish put in, and the rubbish taken out to make the hole lay alongside it. The master, seeing this, told his servant to dig a hole big enough to hold both the rubbish taken out of the hole and the rubbish to be put into it. Some honourable members seemed to think that the policy of the honourable member for Maranoa was to be to borrow money, not only to pay off the whole loan, but the loans that had preceded it as well—to go on borrowing until the whole debt was extinguished. The interest on the public debt of the colony already amounted to about £450,000 a-year, or nearly one-third of the revenue of the colony. If the resolution were passed, the debt would be immediately increased to over twelve millions, the interest on which would amount to nearly £600,000,

or one-half of the revenue. The way in which it was proposed to use this three millions, was not one which would practically benefit the colony. A great deal had been said about reproductive works. But which of our public works had been really reproductive in the common-sense of the term? They might be reproductive in the sense that the money spent on them had not been blown away in powder and shot. But they were not reproductive in the sense of paying interest on their cost of construction, and many years would pass before that would be the case. A portion of the loan was proposed to be allocated to the extension of railways. Probably in no way could money be invested, if the colony had money to spare, more likely to conduce to the welfare of the colony at large. But did the already existing railways return the interest on capital expended on them, and pay their working expenses as well? The Commissioner for Railways, who was not likely to err on the wrong side, said in his report that they scarcely paid $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., leaving the other $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. a charge on the whole colony, to be obtained from the ordinary sources of revenue. Railways had a tendency to be beneficial to those who had money investments in the colony, and not to the colony at large—not to the revenue-producing portion of the population. In the debate on the Financial Statement, he (Mr. Grimes) pointed out that the persons benefited by a large loan expenditure were almost solely the pastoral tenants of the Crown. He showed that the use of the railway line, as far as production was concerned, was almost confined to that class of the population, and that mainly the holders of property in the interior had been benefited by railway lines, as far as they had yet been extended. Taking the line from Dalby to Roma, he was informed, on good authority, that previous to the building of that line, the cost of bringing wool down from Dalby to Brisbane was about 10s. per cwt., or a little over 1d. per lb., and that during the three months occupied by the journey, the wool was at the risk of the owner, and was sometimes greatly damaged in transit. At present, wool was taken charge of by the railway officials at Dalby, forwarded to Brisbane within two days at the risk of the department, and the whole at a cost of less than $\frac{3}{4}$d. per pound. The saving of interest alone was equivalent to 1d. per pound, taking the wool to be worth 2s. 1d. per pound, and the interest payable on advance 10 per cent. It was fair, therefore, to say that the carriage of wool from Dalby to Brisbane had been made a present of to all the squatters living beyond the Dalby terminus of the line, and that they had been advantaged to the extent of $\frac{1}{4}$d. per pound into the bargain. Their stations were worth just as much more as 1d. per pound advance on their wool, while facility of communication had advantaged holders of station property to a far greater extent. Property alongside railway lines had increased in value from 50 per cent. to 200 per cent. by the mere fact of the railway facilities afforded. He knew portions of the colony—notably the portion which he had the honour to represent—which, though near Brisbane, had no interests in connection with it. It had no railway, nor even good roads, and for any good roads to be made in the future under the provisions of the Local Government Bill, they would have to be paid for by the people who used them. And yet that portion of the colony had to contribute by taxation to the maintenance of the lines of railway, which were a direct charge upon the revenue; for the loss to the revenue by the maintenance of those lines was paid by the producers of the colony. He agreed with the Premier, therefore, in the principle that the people of the district through which trunk lines ran, should pay for them, and although it was not a principle that could fairly be applied to branch lines. It had been said, that the lands held by the pastoral tenants would become much more valuable to the colony by railway lines passing through them. But he had always found it an extremely difficult thing to deal with the land of the pastoral tenants. They were very seldom willing to part with it—and he did not blame them for it, so long as they could keep legally—except to their own advantage, and they had managed to obtain a greater portion of the best lands in the colony than any other portion of the community. The taxation which would be necessitated by this large loan expenditure, even if it was all laid out on railways, would not be fairly distributed. Setting aside the fact, that certain lines were to be paid for out of the proceeds of sales of land—which was using the property of the whole colony for building lines for the benefit of the few—apart from that source of revenue it must be made up by the general taxation of the community. Now, there were certain districts of the colony where all the public lands had been sold by the Government, the proceeds of which had gone into the general revenue, and had been expended in paying portion of the interest on the railways already constructed. Had this money not gone there it would probably have been spent on works in the neighbourhood where the land sold was situated. They must look at the fact that if railways were made, the interest on the money must be paid somehow, either by sales of land, which was the property of the whole of the community, or by direct taxation, which the people had to bear. He would point out that at present there was a class of persons

who held large properties in the colony and enjoyed all the benefits of public expenditure, by which their properties became more and more valuable, but who were not reached by our present system of taxation. He referred to absentee owners of stations, who contributed nothing whatever to the revenue. The loss to the colony from this he estimated at about £250,000 per annum. He contended that the taxation was not raised evenly and fairly from the people, because, on looking at the articles in our tariff, he found those which were generally consumed by the working man were most heavily taxed. He found that a working man with a family, earning about 25s. per week, which was about the average throughout the colony, would contribute something over five per cent. of the whole of his earnings to the revenue for the maintenance of the general Government, and the payment of the interest of the debt of the colony. A man with a family would not be able to do with less than half a pound of tea; that would contribute 3d. to the revenue. If he were a smoker, he would have to pay 2d. or 3d. more; if he indulged in a glass or two or three glasses of liquor, he would have to contribute 2d. more; and with *ad valorem* and other duties, the whole would amount to about 1s. 6d. of his earnings. In the face of this, he would ask, did those who owned large properties in the colony contribute to the revenue fairly and in proportion to their incomes? He maintained they did not. And he would ask further,—Would the labouring classes of the community benefit more, or as much, by increased loan expenditure as the capitalist? They knew very well they would not, because whenever public money was expended, giving increased facilities for communication, there must necessarily be increased productiveness of the property in which capitalists invested, and they ought to contribute a fair share to the expenditure which public loans entailed. Had the honourable member for Maranoa suggested any plan by which the interest on this £3,000,000 was to be paid? Had he come down with a magnanimous scheme and said the pastoral tenants of the Crown, who would be principally benefited by the expenditure of this money, would contribute even a fair share towards it? He (Mr. Grimes) wondered what honourable gentlemen who usually sat at his back would say if he were to suggest such a means of providing the interest this loan would entail. He questioned very much whether they would be found supporting him in the way they had done on the question. It had been said that the present Ministry had no confidence in the resources or the future of the country. He (Mr. Grimes) did not know whether they had or not, but he had every confidence in the resources of the colony, and he contended that they had no right to attempt to stifle the development of those resources by withdrawing labour which would otherwise be devoted to productive industries. He made this statement boldly, knowing it to be true:—During the first few years after the crisis of 1866, the foundations of true prosperity were laid in this colony, and that prosperity had continued ever since. It had been said that this prosperity was due to railway extension, but on the contrary he believed that railways had been more an incubus than anything else. The real cause of it was the settlement of the people on the land, and the establishment of industries, which were carried on with energy and perseverance, and the progress of mining enterprise. He would ask, had the pastoral districts gone on increasing to the same extent as other parts of the colony? He found that in order to continue the present rate of prosperity it was necessary to spend about £1,200,000 of public money next year. The population of the country was only 200,000. There was territory enough for fifty times that number, and were they to expect that the spending of public money alone would go on increasing settlement? It seemed absurd for honourable members opposite to argue that they had confidence in the resources of the colony when in order to give employment to immigrants they considered it necessary to establish some grand scheme of public works. If they had confidence in the resources of the colony, the fact that immigrants were brought here to develop its resources and make it productive and remunerative and of benefit to the whole colony, and all the colonies, ought to be quite sufficient. He took it that the argument of honourable members opposite, that in order to maintain prosperity it was necessary to continue our present extravagant expenditure of public money, was a sign of non-belief in the future of the colony and its great resources. He was ashamed to hear it stated that such a course was necessary. If they had taken the proper course, and refrained from borrowing to the extent they had, but had left the people themselves to develop the resources of the colony, they would have seen the community much more prosperous than it was at the present time. He was satisfied that the expenditure of borrowed money simply for the purpose of giving employment would not really advance the prosperity of the colony, but that it would prove an incubus on every industry in it. He thought it was time to consider whether it was not better that they should endeavour to check this expenditure—that, instead of spending during the next two years at the rate of £1,200,000 or £1,500,000 per annum, they should gradually hold their hands. They had been too extravagant—going too fast—and it was

time they began gradually to apply a check. To do so suddenly would bring commercial disaster, which no one would desire; but it was necessary that something should be done. If £1,200,000 was required next year for a population of 200,000, when the population grew to be 250,000, the expenditure woul require to be £1,500,000 or £1,600,000 to maintain the same rate of prosperity. In 1866 the extent of our expenditure from loan was £23,000, and it had gradually increased to £1,200,000 in 1877-8; and now honourable members opposite, who were supposed to be the conservatives of the colony, and to look after its interests, upbraided the Government because they were not going into a more vigorous public works policy. When honourable members opposite appeared in their true colours, he felt sympathy for them; but if they were going to throw off their old policy and go in for a very vigorous policy of public works, he should not only distrust them, but he should reprobate them in every possible way. When the question of municipalities borrowing money came before them the other evening, it seemed to be the universal opinion that it would be unwise to give a municipality power to borrow more than five years' revenue; and if they tried the colony by that principle, they would find that they had borrowed to the extent of half as much again as that, and that the honourable the leader of the Opposition wished to increase the debt to nearly ten year's revenue. When the question of the policy of the Government, and that of the leader of the Opposition, came to be considered by the people, he was quite satisfied as to which side they would support. Another question was the proposed allocation of this £3,000000 of borrowed money. The honourable member referred to various items on which he proposed to expend the loan, upon which, in fact, he must expend it if he wished to get any support; and among other items, he put down £350,000 for branch railways. He did not know whether there was an understanding between the honourable member and those whom he wished to support him as to the allocation of that £350,000; but he must say that between two Ministries and the two sides of the House, if it was asked to which he would give the power of spending that money, he should say the present Government, as they had given some idea of the branch railway lines to be made out of the money they wished to borrow, whilst the honourable gentlemen opposite had, to use such a term, tried to dangle a bait before honourable members, so as to secure the proper amount of support when necessary. He might say at once that no promise of a railway under any circumstances, no promise of a line, even in which his constituents might be interested, would make him swerve from the statement he had already made that the colony had gone quite far enough in borrowing money. It was quite time that it should stop. Those who were growing up in their midst would have to bear the brunt of all the indebtedness in future, and although he did not wish to say that those who succeeded them should be far better off than they were, still he thought that an incubus should not be left upon them. He might mention that the present loans had to a great extent been expended upon what were strictly speaking reproductive works, yet for all that they had brought the State to such a condition that it was practically insolvent, and from what he had seen in various prints, there were several States in America, where practically that was the the case also, and where a State was insolvent, if repudiation was not indulged in, some steps must be taken to relieve it from the incubus and burden of debt that it would not be able to pay. He contended that the less taxation this country had to pay the cheaper would she produce, that the less expenditure there was, the better would it be for those who had to follow, as increased taxation must increase the cost of production of every commodity. Thus, then, in the interest of futurity —in the interest of those who were growing up to be the future Queensland people—he protested against an increased taxation, and he hoped that there would be sufficient interest taken in the matter by the colony generally to show that Queensland did not wish to engage in the expensive policy in which it had engaged in the past. He did not wish to be understood to say that railways were not a great advantage to the country, as he firmly believed they were; but the principle on which they should be undertaken should be this, that they should not only pay the cost of working, but also nearly the whole of the interest on the cost of construction. He would go further and say, that where there was a prospect of a line paying three out of the five per cent. interest on the amount required to construct a line, it would be in the interest of the State to make such a line, for it would not be more than a year or two before it would pay the other two per cent., and after that there would be a profit to go towards the reduction of taxation. He should vote against the resolution of the honourable member for Maranoa, and he hoped that the people of the colony would see the motion in its true light, and would treat it as he believed they would. He hoped they would regard it as an extraordinary bait thrown out to catch popularity at the present time, and would also bear in mind that it came from a party in that House which all along had been supposed to be inimical to a large expenditure of money, but which had all

of a sudden become converted when there was a prospect of a general election.

Mr. FRASER said that honourable members on his side of the House were twitted not long ago with the charge of leaving all the speaking on the present question to honourable members opposite; it appeared, however, that a change had come, and that the speakers that evening were on the Government side of the House. Had it not been for the reticence of honourable members opposite, he did not think that he should have ventured to address the House. He might observe that the question now before them, in all its bearings and surroundings, was one of the most important, if not the most important, which had occupied the attention of the present Parliament. It had excited more real attention and expectation outside of the House than any question that he ever remembered to have been before the public. That might be owing in a great measure to the well-known character and high reputation of the honourable member who moved the resolution, and also to the expectation on the part of the public, that that honourable member would give a statesmanlike exposition of his views when moving the resolution. He was, however, sorry to say that public expectation on that point had certainly been doomed to disappointment, as the honourable member contented himself with giving the House simply a *resumé* of his observations and criticisms on the Colonial Treasurer's Financial Statement. He was also bold to assert that the honourable member had not done himself that justice of which he was capable, and had thus sadly disappointed the expectations formed of him. There might be reasons for the honourable member's reticence, and one, he presumed, was, that the honourable member had felt himself considerably hampered, because, whilst he professed to be simply influenced by a desire to discuss the railway policy of the present Government in dealing with the question before the House, he had most unquestionably another object in view, and while he was himself reticent, studiously so, on that point, his principal supporter did not exercise the same precaution. The honourable member for Port Curtis at once avowed the object of the motion, and avowed his own determination to use every possible means within his reach to eject the present Ministry. It was perfectly legitimate for the leader of an Opposition to do that, and also quite legitimate for a leader of an Opposition to try to be the head of a Government; and he was sure there was no honourable member who was not fully aware that in many ways the honourable leader of the Opposition was fit for such a position. He might also say that public expectation had for a long time been directed to that honourable gentleman as the coming man; but he was bold to assert that in the movement the honourable member had made he had certainly not promoted that object—at least, in the mind of the public. The honourable member had made a mistake, and had made it, he believed, and as stated that evening, through the pressure brought to bear upon him, more than by what was dictated by his usual judgment and prudence. Most honourable members who had spoken that evening, and on the previous evening, had raised issues which had no connection with the question as raised by the honourable leader of the Opposition. Each honourable member had raised an issue of his own, and he should not occupy the time of the House by going over them. The honourable leader of the Opposition had raised this issue—that the Government had failed in realising their position, and that they had not sufficient foresight to provide for the requirements of the colony in advance; that they had failed in making provision for carrying on the public works already authorised, as well as for the initiation of other new and important works. He must admit, in common with other honourable members on both sides of the House, that, in listening to His Excellency's Speech, he was considerably disappointed to find that works which were promised last session by the Government were almost entirely ignored in the Speech, but when the reasons assigned were considered, he held that the Government, instead of failing in their duty and manifesting a want of confidence and courage in the matter, that they showed, under the circumstances what would be regarded by nine-tenths of the community as commendable prudence. Did they not anticipate, at that time, that every fresh telegram would contain the news that England was involved in war with Russia, and that the consequence of such a war would perhaps have been a general European war such as the world had never seen? Supposing such had taken place, he would ask honourable members whether it would have been possible for this colony, or any of the other colonies, to obtain men or money to carry on public works? They would not, and it would have been a fatal mistake—a mistake which would have brought down upon the heads of the Ministry, the condemnation of the people, if they had committed themselves to anything of the kind. That he took to be the sole reason why the Government hesitated in the slightest degree to bring before the country, in His Excellency's Speech, a proposal for further expenditure, and a further loan. There was, also, as the Colonial Treasurer had said, another consideration. They had a loan in the market, but were not aware how it would take, and, therefore, it became the Government to exercise due prudence. On

seeing that the danger had actually passed away, that the loan had been successfully floated, and that it was the opinion of the House and the country that something further should be undertaken, the Colonial Treasurer at a very early day announced that it was the intention of the Government to bring before the House a Loan Bill upon a small or limited scale. Sneering comments had been made by the Opposition with reference to the expression "small." As had been mentioned that evening, it was certainly a new phase for the Opposition to condemn the Government for the smallness of its contemplated expenditure. Well, the honourable the Colonial Treasurer announced that it was the intention of the Government to bring down a Loan Bill for £1,080,000; but, notwithstanding that the honourable the leader of the Opposition knew that such was the intention of the Government, he gave notice of his motion for a loan of £3,000,000. He did not know that in itself there was a very serious objection to the borrowing of such an amount. If they went on constructing public works, it was only a question of time when such a sum would be expended; but a thing might be right in itself and yet the mode of doing it might be wrong. It was to the manner in which the loan was proposed and the mode of dealing with it that he objected. If the honourable member for Maranoa had waited—and he might fairly have done so—until the Loan Bill of the Government had been introduced, that would have been the proper time to show where the Government had failed, and to put something forward that was an improvement. The difference was this: The honourable the leader of the Opposition came forward with a proposal to borrow £3,000,000, whilst the Government proposed to borrow £1,080,000. It had not been attempted to be denied that the proposal of the Colonial Treasurer was ample for all the requirements of the colony up to the time that the House would have the opportunity of meeting, and, if necessary, going into the loan market again. It was objected that it was a bad thing to go frequently into the loan market, and that it would be better to raise a large sum at once; but an objection had been made to the latter proposal, which had not been fairly met. It had been said that it was one of the purposes of the loan to deposit the money with the banks to trade with, to which the objection had been urged that it would be difficult to obtain the money when required, and that it would create what they were so anxious to avoid—another commercial panic. The honourable member did not meet that objection with his accustomed fairness and boldness. He said there was no occasion for this—that the money might be borrowed by a million at a time; but he did not say such was his intention. Some of the subsequent speakers said he had committed himself to that course; but he did nothing of the kind. Looking at the manner in which the honourable member proposed to deal with the loan, he (Mr. Fraser) should simply allude to the question of railways. One would suppose from what had been said in this debate that the present Government were not alive to the importance of carrying on the railways under construction. Such a statement had been made, but not by the honourable member for Maranoa, whose remarks were the reverse, for he said:—

"I do not mean to impute to the Government any intention of stopping the public works of the colony; I think myself it has been simply miscalculations that has led them into this difficulty. They must as business men be perfectly well aware of the disasters that would follow a stoppage of our principal railway works now in progress."

The honourable member, it would be seen, imputed to the Government no intention of resisting the progress of the works now going on, but with neglecting or failing to make adequate provision for carrying them on. Admitting that the Government might have failed, they found that, on reconsideration, they were prepared to make provision for carrying them on. At the close of his speech the honourable member said—

"No doubt this House expires very shortly by effluxion of time, and I hold myself that all legislation upon important measures should be withheld until we have an appeal to the constituencies."

That was a sentiment with which they would all agree, and, seeing that the Government of the day had made ample provision for carrying on the public works until an appeal to the constituencies could be made, the honourable member was not acting consistently with his opinion, and ought to have deferred his resolution. There was no occasion for it. He went on to say—

"But I have fully considered the matter, and have come to the conclusion that it is far too pressing to be delayed. This House is bound to take action at the present time, because, if we allow the Parliament to expire by effluxion of time, it is in the power of the Government not to call us together till June next, when all the harm will have taken place."

How was it possible that this harm should take place between now and June if the Government went into the market and did what they proposed—borrowed £1,080,000? For once, he maintained the honourable the leader of the Opposition was inconsistent and illogical—a position in which they did not often find him. Now let them glance for a moment at the mode in which the three millions were to be

employed. In round figures, two millions were to be employed on trunk lines and £350,000 on branch lines. The honourable member did not tell them what these branches were to be, the reason given being that he wanted to avoid the charge of offering bribes to certain constituencies by naming them. Why, this £350,000 dangled before the public for branch lines in this way was a greater bait than could be offered by naming the particular lines. It was a bait to every part of the colony looking out for a branch line. The branch lines proposed by the Government were definitely stated. Let them for a moment assume that the honourable member would apply his sum to the branch lines named by the Government—the Logan, Fassifern, Caboolture, Highfields, and Oxley. He was not averse to the construction of trunk lines of railway in this or any other country. He knew they were indispensably necessary for progress; but there were two different modes of progress—they might progress in such a way as to be able to bear a burden or so as to overwhelm the colony with debt; they might progress in such a way as to promote the general interests of the colony; or in such a direction as to enhance and promote the interest of one class at the expense of another. This was what he objected to, and if they assumed that the population of the colony was, in round numbers, 200,000, they now proposed to borrow, according to the honourable member for Maranoa's proposal, £3,000,000, which would add a debt of £15 to every man, woman, and child in the colony. But suppose they came down to what was proposed to be done for railways. £2,000,000 were to be employed in the construction of trunk lines, to be pushed into the interior; and another £350,000 for the construction of branch lines. This would be at the rate per head of the population of £1 15s. for branch lines, and £10 for trunk lines; and it would bear upon the Logan, Fassifern, Highfields, Caboolture, and Oxley districts in the following way: The population of those districts was in round numbers 77,000, and they would have to bear an expenditure of £134,750 for branch lines and £770,000 for trunk lines. This was about one-third of the population of the colony, and were populous districts, and they would have to bear mainly the payment of interest upon this £770,000, from which they really and truly would derive little or no benefit; because the works would be mainly for the benefit of those who occupied remote districts. This was not fair or just. They were told that the pushing out of these lines to the interior with vigour and despatch would inaugurate a period of prosperity. He admitted that main trunk lines were found to pay better than branch lines, as a rule; but circumstances altered cases, and there were certain conditions to make either trunk or branch lines pay. If they pushed these trunk lines into the interior to-morrow, they would never make them pay, because the main element which contributed to making railways pay was entirely absent, and that was, population. The honourable member for Toowoomba had that evening said that the system of constructing railways in America had been a great mistake—a system, namely, of giving lands for construction of lines. The honourable member said that this system led to an unprecedented amount of gambling; but as far as that went, he (Mr. Fraser) would point out that it was the abuse and not the use of the system. He should like to know what system there was that had not been abused. Some of them were old enough to remember the gambling—for it was nothing less—that took place on the London and Liverpool Exchange in connection with railways in Great Britain, where there was no such arrangement as that which existed in America. But it was a fact that the American system did answer, and the construction of railways out of land did answer the purpose for which they were intended. The honourable member for Kennedy the other evening explained—and no one could do it better—the whole process of constructing railways in America by grants of land. He drew a very graphic and tempting picture of what would result if the inhabitants of Queensland were to push their railway into the interior—into that country of which they they had heard such glowing descriptions. It must be gratifying to all who had cast their lot in with the prosperity of Queensland to find that, notwithstanding they had practically lost the Darling Downs, they had beyond it a country infinitely superior. It remained for them to see that they should not repeat the mistake concerning this country that they made respecting the Darling Downs. The member for Kennedy, during that glowing picture of the prosperity that would follow the peopling of this country, mentioned that the rents of runs would be enhanced. He (Mr. Fraser) would like to see the honourable member attempt to increase the rents of runs by so much as one penny, supposing the line was to run into that district to-morrow. If the honourable member insisted upon it he would find that he never made a greater mistake in his life, and would soon be very glad to cut his connection with that side of the House, although, as someone had said, the leopard had changed his spots. The honourable member rested his conclusions upon what had taken place in America. It could not be denied that they had pushed railways into the wilderness with great speed, and they became payable after a time; but he would read, for the informa-

tion of the House, a passage from the evidence of Captain Williamson, a man of great experience in connection with American railways. That gentleman said, in answer to questions from himself (Mr. Fraser):—

"I suppose that, where there is a prospect of a railway paying eventually, you would not look to any profit at first—you would not mind for some time working it at a loss? That has been done in many cases; there is scarcely a line in America on which some portion of the traffic has not been carried at a loss at first.

"I apprehend that the principle that is applicable to private companies would apply with greater force where the lines are constructed and run by the Government? I should think more so.

"So you would approve of the principle that would make these lines pay by developing the industries of the country? Yes, if you will allow me, I will explain. In America we have no Government lines, but I will take the Illinois Central Railway, which runs from Chicago to the place described by the late Charles Dickens as Eden; the Government gave that company every alternate mile for thirty miles on either side of the railway, so that they had a strip of thirty miles wide; that they immediately put into the market at very low rates, and gave the settlers very good opportunities of paying for it—namely, first a deposit, next 6 per cent interest, and the next year a slight proportion of the principal, and so on, running the payment over six years; they also carried out all the fencing that the men required, it being downs country, with plenty of water and coal; and they also took the material for building houses, and even sheds, and put up stations convenient for shipping produce. For years they ran the line at a loss, but now it goes through a continuation of gardens, the land being all taken up by farmers, and the line pays well."

If honourable members were prepared to adopt this principle and push their railways into that fertile land, where was the population to come from? Where would be the means of improving the land until it became reproductive? He, for one, would pledge them that if he was a member of the House, or a member of the community, he would give them his warmest support if there was the slighest chance of the thing succeeding; but where was the population to come from? They had not them in Queensland, and they were not likely to get them at the rate of immigration they were pursuing. On this subject he would like to give the House an extract from "Sir Francis Head" that showed that the position Queensland occupied could not be compared to that of America. The picture was drawn in 1866.

"It has been roughly estimated that the population of the United States, like a great wave, is constantly rolling towards the westward on the land of the Indian, at the rate of over 20 miles per annum."

If Queensland had a population landing on its shores, as upon the shores of America, not by hundreds, but by thousands, which must necessarily push to the West, they would see that the construction of the trunk railways to the interior could not be pushed forward too vigorously or rapidly. But if they were to depend upon population landing on these shores—in mere driblets of not more than five or six thousands a year from Europe, and taking into consideration at the same time, the natural increase of population—he should like to know when they would be in a position to avail themselves of the rich prairies of the West, and make trunk lines constructed at such an expense remunerative. Another remark of the honourable member for Kennedy was to the effect that by a vigorous system of immigration, the debt of the colony per head of the population might be reduced by the year 1881 from the present rate of something like £54 or £58 per head to £2 less. He (Mr. Fraser) was of opinion that if the proposed three millions were apportioned at the rate of the present debt, it would require an addition of something like 60,000 persons to the population to bring the debt down to the same proportion per head as at present; that was to say, an addition of more than 25 per cent. of the population in something like two and a-half years. That was more than had been done in the palmiest days of immigration, and he was satisfied it was more than could be done if all agencies available were employed. At the present time this colony was competing with the southern colonies, which was not the case a few years ago. By the assistance of members on the Opposition side of the House, the Government had been enabled to put an end to the emigration lectures in Ireland and Scotland, an act which he (Mr. Fraser) had regretted more than anything else that had been done since he had been a member of the House. He was much amused at the remark of the honourable member for Kennedy that a change had taken place in the policy and views of the Opposition from the time he went across to them. That struck him (Mr. Fraser) as somewhat singular, because it appeared more likely that a change should take place in the views of a single honourable member than in the policy of the whole Opposition. The reason the honourable member gave was that the Opposition voted for him on a resolution of want of confidence in the Ministry. That reminded him (Mr. Fraser) of an old Tory elector he knew who was wont to say that if the Tories put up a broomstick he would vote for it. If any member, or even a broomstick, brought forward a motion of want of confidence, the whole of the Opposition would be found supporting the motion. He would remind the honourable member that two

years ago the then honourable member for Aubigny carried a vote for £6,000 for the construction of a railway to Highfields, by the aid and support of the Opposition. The present honourable member for Aubigny thought proper the other evening to move that the vote be cancelled actually after the survey had been completed, and material for the construction of the line ordered from England. That was also carried by the assistance of the Opposition. What was the obvious inference from the fact that the Opposition agreed with the then member on the former occasion and the present member on the latter? It was not that they had changed their opinion. The House were told the other evening that they only took that course in order to show their contempt for the Ministry of the day. Was that the conduct that was to be expected from honourable members who had been sent here entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the colony? Were they going to sit there for amusement, and for the annoyance of the Ministry of the day? Such a proceeding carried its own comment. One of the reasons he had for voting against the honourable member for Maranoa's resolution had been very fairly stated by the honourable member himself in his concluding remarks—namely, that a measure of this sort, involving the country in such liabilities ought to be thoroughly considered, and, as in the natural course of events, Parliament would expire shortly by effluxion of time, such a question ought to be submitted to the constituencies. The honourable member for Kennedy said that no change of opinion need be expected from the constituencies, and that although a Redistribution Bill had been passed, that Bill was really not so much a Redistribution Bill as an Additional Member's Bill. He would ask the honourable member whether it was not likely, that considering what had transpired during the last five years, and the present circumstances of the colony, a decided change of opinion might have taken place in many constituencies. He ventured to say such would be found to be the case, and that many constituencies that had returned members five years ago, would not return the same members again. It was, therefore, nothing but fair that before the country was saddled with an additional debt, raising the total to twelve millions sterling, that the constituencies should have a fair opportunity to express their opinions on the subject. They had been told that, although the Parliament was an expiring one, they had a right to legislate, and that they occupied a position something like that of a dying man making his will. He was surprised to hear the honourable member for Port Curtis using such an analogy. A testator made his will bequeathing what was his own to trustees, laying the trustees under obligations to carry out certain conditions or else resign their trusteeship. They were not, however, in that position, but rather in the position of the trustees sent here intrusted with the affairs of the colony, and about to render an account of their stewardship. They had, therefore, no right to impose upon their successors conditions, which might greatly hamper their actions in the interest of the colony. The honourable member for Bowen had presented to the House some wonderful theories on the construction of railways; but as that honourable member was not in his place, he would not follow his remarks. The honourable member for Toowoomba had alluded to Victoria and New South Wales. He (Mr. Fraser) thought it ought to be sufficient for the House to be reminded that New South Wales, with its large population, realised wealth and great development, was at this moment only indebted at the rate of £22 per head of population; and that Victoria, with all its wealth and railways, only £29 per head; whilst Queensland, though rich, with undeveloped resources and a small population of only about 200,000, had a debt of something like £54 to £58 per head, as it might be reckoned. The honourable member for Toowoomba had said that it was time to pause before plunging deeper headlong into difficulties. He (Mr. Fraser) regretted that the honourable member for Toowoomba was not in his place, as he did not like to say anything behind anyone's back; but he must mention that the honourable member had stated that this question was now narrowed down to a Queen-street question. If there was anything really wearisome in the House, it was when that honourable member got up and began to talk in that way. He began, continued, and ended, with Darling Downs. If there were any section in the colony that had controlled legislation and dictated, shaped, and sounded the depths of policy, it was the Darling Downs influence in this House. He (Mr. Fraser) was sorry to have to oppose the resolution of the honourable member for Maranoa; and he regretted sincerely, on that honourable gentleman's account, that he had brought it forward at that stage. He could assure the honourable member that it had produced very unfavourable impressions in what was called the popular constituencies. On a former evening the Government had been challenged to appeal to the popular constituencies. He (Mr. Fraser) was able to assert that if the question at issue were fairly laid before those constituencies, and the principle fully presented to them, with all the advantages and disadvantages, they would almost to a man oppose the present resolution. Such would be the case among those in the agricultural interest, for instance, an interest now

struggling for subsistence, but one which, in the long run, would prove the back-bone of the country and the permanent source of its success. If the main trunk line were extended to Roma, or any other part of the interior, the pastoral tenant would be able to get a bale of wool down to the shipping port at a less expense, and in a shorter time than a farmer could get a bag of maize, at certain times of the year, a distance of twenty miles to market. In a part of his (Mr. Fraser's) electorate, not ten miles out of Ipswich, there were times in the year when a farmer could not get a single bag of maize to the Ipswich market, unless he carried it on his back. Yet those farmers were begrudged a miserable pittance of a few hundred pounds, required to put their roads in repair. It was only the other day that a farmer complained of the condition of the roads, and a paltry sum of money of £150 was recommended to be placed on the Estimates, to make the roads passable for him, and hundreds of others similarly placed. The man was beginning to congratulate himself that by-and-bye he would be able to get to market comparatively easily; but he (Mr. Fraser), on referring to the Estimates, found that the sum had been knocked off, and the poor man would, therefore, be obliged to stick in the mud, as on former occasions. He (Mr. Fraser) had simply to say that he was not opposed to the construction of trunk railways, but he maintained that while the construction of trunk railways was carried on, they were bound to give every facility they could to the settlers in the way of branch railways and good roads; and he also honestly believed that it would be far cheaper for the country to construct branch lines than to go on constantly spending large sums of money on the making and repairing of roads. As to whether they would pay, that was not the object they had in view in constructing them. Roads did not pay, although thousands and thousands of pounds were spent on them every year—the return being the facilitation of communication with markets. His objection to the present resolution was that it contemplated plunging the country too rapidly into debt. If the amount was only to be borrowed at the rate of a million a-year, the Colonial Treasurer was making ample provision in that direction, and he saw no reason why they should choose the evil they did not know, for the evil of which they had, at any rate, some knowledge.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Rockhampton) said that many objections had been taken by honourable members on the Ministerial side as to the manner in which this motion had been introduced. The first he saw or heard of it was a telegram in the *Bulletin*, and he had, at that time, considerable doubt as to whether it was a politic move on the part of the honourable member for Maranoa. After, however, hearing the speeches from the other side, he had no difficulty whatever in supporting the amendment moved by that honourable member. There seemed to be a unanimous concurrence of opinion on both sides of the House that a loan must be raised before next session. The Colonial Treasurer told them on Wednesday that he was going to bring forward a loan for £1,080,000; and judging from the speeches of the Premier and the Attorney-General, this small loan would be only the beginning of many very much larger ones. According to the Attorney-General, the objects the honourable member for Maranoa had in view bore a great similarity to those to which the Government intended to devote their own proposed loan. The honourable member for Maranoa gave a short sketch of what he intended to do with his three millions. The first thing he attended to was immigration, saying that an increased sum for that purpose was absolutely necessary, to the extent of £200,000, besides the balance in hand, during the next three years; and the Attorney-General, in reply, said that half-a-million would be nearer the amount required. The Colonial Treasurer expressed his entire concurrence with the honourable member for Maranoa in the other objects to which this three-million loan was to be devoted. He (Mr. Macfarlane) hoped that the Local Government Bill would be proclaimed in many districts, and that a very large sum would be required in endowments for new municipalities. The money would be well spent, would save a great deal of bad feeling, and prevent infinite trouble to Colonial Treasurers, besides saving a very large amount in the votes for roads and bridges. The Colonial Treasurer also agreed that water-supply and drainage would absorb a large sum. That was, no doubt, a question that must be dealt with, and dealt with soon; a good water-supply and a well-considered system of drainage were necessary to the health and comfort of residents in towns, and in pursuit of these objects large sums of money would have to be spent, and he trusted that whatever party was in power, money would be liberally granted in this direction, under the usual restrictions as to repayment. Amongst the proposals of the honourable member for Maranoa was a sum of £350,000 for branch lines, and the proposal enunciated great expressions of surprise from the other side of the House; they seemed to think it extraordinary that such a proposal should come from this side—why he could not tell. Last year the Premier asked for £300,000 for branch lines, but not one word was said as to the sort of branch lines intended to be made. In the absence of such information how was it possible to vote so large a sum? If they were to spend

£5,000, £6,000, or £7,000 a-mile on branch lines they would very soon involve the country in ruin. Speaking for himself, he should be extremely glad to see a system of branch lines initiated. They were a crying want of the country, and the sooner their engineers adapted themselves to the wants of the country and went in for a cheap system of railways the better. The Premier had told them that he was in possession of such a scheme —that Mr. Ballard, the engineer of the northern line had already given a sketch of a system of cheap railways. From what he (Mr. Macfarlane) had heard of this system, he believed it amounted to this, that Mr. Ballard had said he was able to build a 2-feet gauge railway, as substantial as the 3 feet 6 inch gauge railway now in use, at an average cost of about £3,000 per mile. If this was known to the Premier last year, why did he not then make it known to the House? had he done so, probably some attention would have been given to the proposed vote. From what he had heard, the Maryborough and Gympie line was passed on the distinct understanding that it was to be a cheap line, and yet it was likely to cost at least £8,000 a mile. It was too late to do anything with that line now, but he hoped the Minister for Works, before accepting tenders for the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line, would see that it should be a cheap line. It would be flinging money away to spend £6,000 or £7,000 a mile on such a line as that. With regard to the proposed loan, the difference between the two sides of the House was one of degree, not of principle. The argument of the honourable member for Maranoa was that since you must go in for a loan, it would be better to name a sum that would carry them over the next three years. He did not propose to raise it in one large sum, and he (Mr. Macfarlane) agreed with him there, for he knew very well what the result would be of lodging three millions in the banks. It would make things very pleasant for a short time, but the period of increased stringency must necessarily come. By raising the money as it was required, no such disastrous results would ensue. There was some force in the Colonial Treasurer's objections to this plan; but it seemed to him to have the fewer evils of the two. The great object was trunk lines of railway. If they were to believe honourable members on the other side, nothing but disaster would follow if these were carried out. He was, however, astonished to hear such views expressed. The colony had a vast estate in the West, which had been taken up through its length and breadth by sheep and cattle stations, and the quality of the land was said by those who had seen it to be unsurpassed in the colony. This vast estate could not be utilised without roads, and the best, and, indeed, the only way to do so was, to run lines of railway into it. Over and over again they had been told by honourable members opposite, that disaster would follow pushing railway lines out into this country. But he could not see it. He knew a great deal more about squatting pursuits than honourable members opposite; and what was the character of this country? Like nearly all the good land in Australia, it was very badly watered. It was a vast expanse of magnificent rolling downs, very badly watered indeed. Before that could be utilised, what was to be done? Wells and dams had to be made, fences erected, and very heavy expenditure incurred. In fact, he knew one station on which within the last four years, £80,000 had been spent, and instead of carrying only 40,000 sheep, as it did five years ago, it had now 200,000, drinking from artificial water supply. That was only a type of nearly the whole country. Honourable members opposite conjured up the most fearful ideas of the results of pushing out our railways, but he contended that the best thing that could possibly happen to all classes of the community was to afford means for utilising this vast back country. By doing so, farmers would get a better market for their produce, the greatest benefit would arise to the coast towns, and the colony generally. They had not yet developed their wheat-growing facilities to such an extent as to be able to export wheat, but ships coming to our ports must have cargo; the best they could get was wool, and every additional bale of wool clipped in the country, did good to the inhabitants of the towns and every selector in it also. To show the disaster that had followed from pushing our railways into the country, he would point out some facts from a paper furnished by the honourable the Colonial Treasurer with his Financial Statement. On the southern railway line in 1872, there were 180 miles open for traffic, and the net earnings amounted to £30,904; and for the ten months of 1877-8, with 260 miles open, the net earnings were £59,533. That did not look like disaster. And, it must be remembered, that this line had to pass a lot of bad country, between Dalby and Roma, and had not yet reached the good country, so that not a fifth part of the benefits that will flow from that railway had yet been realised. The next table was still more convincing. It was in reference to the Northern, or, as it ought to be called, the Central railway. In 1872 there were thirty miles open, and a loss accrued of £1,411 17s. 11d. In 1874, with forty-four miles open, the loss had gone down to £141 19s. 4d. In 1875-6, with sixty-two miles open, the net earnings were over £3,000. In 1876-7 the net earnings were £11,000; and for the ten months

of 1877-8, with—the return said, 140 miles open, but that was wrong, because the line to the Comet was only open for traffic about two months ago—the net earnings were £14,113. That showed that every mile that had been opened increased the net earnings. A great deal had been said about the bad country to be gone through, and no doubt it was very unfortunate that there was some very barren country between the coast and the back country that had to be crossed. But from all he knew — and he was entitled to speak with some authority on this subject, because he was chairman of the sub-committee appointed by the Rockhampton Chamber of Commerce to inquire into the extension of the railway towards Barcaldine Downs, and was obliged to look very closely into the facts of the case—he was certain that by the time the railway was carried to Barcaldine Downs it would pay not only working expenses, but the whole of the interest, which simply meant working off about £2,000,000 from the debt of the colony. Look at Riverina! It was a purely pastoral country; but look at the effect it had had on the property of Melbourne. The people of Adelaide and of New South Wales were now straining every nerve to get a share of the traffic of that country; and yet Riverina was not half the country this colony had out west. It was of such extent that it would require two or three lines to tap it. He objected to the Ministerial programme in reference to these main trunk lines. They had been told by the Treasurer that the Government intended to give them an instalment of twenty miles; but the Minister for Works had made it a little better by saying they would give twenty-seven. But that was a miserable rate of progress. They had a very competent staff, that was able, without going to any further expense, to construct fifty miles of railway, and it was false economy to cramp them down to twenty-seven. He agreed with the Premier that the Northern and Central lines should go out west, but with regard to the direction the Southern line should take when it reached Roma, he was not going to say how it should go; but unless it was very conclusively shown from an exhaustive survey of the whole colony to the contrary, he thought the lines should not converge; that other things being equal they ought to have an equal distance between them. He believed they would do most good that way for the whole country. The great point in the consideration of the question was: How was the loan to be paid off? They were told by the Premier that it was to be paid by the railway reserve system, or by some scheme that he did not properly explain, by which the territory benefited would be responsible. He (Mr. Macfarlane) was in hopes this bad railway reserve system was to be done away with, and he was sorry to hear that it was to be revived, and that that battle would have to be fought over again. What did this system mean? It meant—taking the central line with which he was best acquainted—that they must jump over the bad country between Emerald Downs and Barcaldine Downs, proclaim vast reserves out West, put it up in large tracts, and sell it by auction. That was the same as saying to every lessee, "Give us your money and we will not take your land from you." They sold under compulsion, as it were, and all they got for the land sold near Roma was the magnificent sum of 17s. per acre, and they took that to make a railway out of it. It appeared to him that this was a perfectly monstrous system, and it was one which he hoped the House would never consent to. They compelled people to take up large estates. If they allowed them to become possessed of large landed estates in a natural way from the investment of capital, he was not afraid of it; but before they went into forcing people into large landed estates they should look at what the effect of a similar system had been in the other colonies. In Victoria, by a bad system of land laws, they had created large landed estates, and what was the consequence? A social war. New South Wales had compelled the Riverina settlers to buy enormously. They did not want to buy, and, as he had been told by one of them—"We have had to mortgage the very shirts off our backs to buy land." Were they going to perpetuate such a system as that? He hoped not. There was no necessity for it. Under the Pastoral Occupation Act of 1869 and the Crown Lands Alienation Act of 1876, there were ample powers to sell all the land that was needed. He for one did not wish—he knew it was not possible—to increase our debit balance, if the interest was to be raised by further taxation; but he maintained that it was quite possible to make the lands of the colony pay all the interest that was due. It could easily be done without any such large forced sales of land. He must say he had been very much amused by the assertions made in the course of the debate, that all the liberality was on the Government side of the House. He could not see that at all. It was wonderful how men decided, and what on earth entitled honourable members opposite to claim to be more liberal than honourable members on the Opposition he could not understand. It was certainly not in their legislation, as that had been, so far as the land was concerned, a very great failure. He thought, on the whole, the measure with the fewest faults in it was passed by his side of the House, namely, the Land Act of 1868—an Act which had been the

basis of all others. He should heartily support the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa, as he believed it would result in a liberal public works policy. What, he would ask, was the value of this great country unless they could run railways into the interior, and make branch lines wherever there appeared to be a possibility of their paying, and, also, by a vigorous carrying out of the deepening of the harbours and rivers to enable people when they got their produce to a town to speedily and safely get it out of it? He would not detain the House longer, but would very heartily support the resolution of the honourable member for Maranoa.

Mr. MURPHY said that ever since he had been in the House he had been one of those who were prepared to sanction any reasonable expenditure that was necessary for the extension of railways in the colony, and he should never be behind in giving his vote in favour of any reasonable loan for such works. It seemed to him from the speech of the honourable member who had just sat down, and from the speeches of other honourable members, that the issue between the two sides of the House was almost the same. One side suggested that a loan of three millions should be negotiated, one million of which would be sufficient for present purposes, and the other, the Government, side seemed to think that one million would be sufficient until next year, when the character of the public works policy they intended to introduce would necessitate a far larger loan than was proposed by the honourable member for Maranoa. He should have been glad to have seen that honourable member take a bold stand, propose that a loan of three millions should be made at once, and take the opinion of the House on the subject; but now the whole thing was narrowed to this, that both sides proposed a loan of one million for the present year, but the policy of the Government next year would render necessary a larger loan than was proposed by the honourable member. He was prepared to support the Government, as it appeared to him that their principles were progressive, more so than on the other side. He should certainly have expected from the fair play which the honourable member had always shown to his opponents, that he would have asked the Government what their intentions were with regard to introducing a loan; but that was not done, and the Government had not had an opportunity of stating what they intended to do. If the honourable member had done that, and the Government had shown the slightest hesitation in giving in reply a most vigorous policy, both now and in the future they should certainly not have had his support. The honourable member, however, had not done so; but if he remembered rightly, notice of the motion was given on the very day that telegraphic news arrived, that war was averted, which was the time when the Government could see a prospect of a loan being successfully floated at Home. No doubt the previous loan had been most successfully floated, and for that reason the honourable member should have asked the Government for their views on the question. The honourable member for Rockhampton suggested that there was a hesitation on the part of the Government in immediately carrying out great trunk lines throughout the colony. He had not heard himself any hesitation of that kind, nor had he heard that there would be any delay; on the contrary, he had been led to believe that there would be every despatch given to the carrying out of those great trunk lines into the interior. The honourable member had very properly shown the great advantage of opening up the vast interior of the colony by trunk lines, and he did not suppose that any honourable member would oppose such a proposition. Certainly the honourable member for Bulimba seemed rather timid of their being pushed on; but he did not think that anyone would echo the honourable member's fears. Something had been said about the Railway Reserves Act; it had been attacked by honourable members on both sides, and it had been said that the system had not been a success, and never would be; but he believed in the system of setting apart large reserves of land for paying for railways. He had never understood from the Government that the lands would be sold first, and the railways made afterwards, but that the reserves would be set aside as an ultimate security, so that capitalists might know that there were lands set apart which could not be sold except for the repayment of the loan; that would form a fund, in fact. That had always been his opinion, although it had been stated—notably so by the honourable member for Toowoomba, that by the large reserves, selectors had been shut out, and that the lands had been sold in large blocks instead of being sold in a manner which would bring the best price and promote settlement. Now, the selectors to whom the honourable member referred had certain conditions to perform, which they performed sometimes, and then sold their land to the large capitalist. In many cases facilities were given to the selector to comply with the conditions so that he might sell out at a large sum afterwards to the capitalist. He thought the best way of dealing with such lands so as to test the *bonâ fides* of settlement would be to give a lease for fifty or ninety-nine years, with no power of alienation; if that was done there would perhaps not be so many free-selectors found. At present, they were in many instances only land specula-

tors in a smaller degree, and yet they were the first to cry out about the large speculators. He should always be prepared to support and encourage *bonâ fide* settlement, and give every facility for the proper acquisition of the public lands of the country. When they looked at the Western Railway Reserve, they saw what been done there. The lands had been sold at a sum which must be considered an advance upon what could have been obtained by free selection, and a railway had been made from Dalby to Roma at a small expense to the State. He was not aware that much of that land would have been taken for purposes of *bonâ fide* settlement if there had been no reserve. He believed that a great deal would have been taken up for speculative purposes. It must be admitted that the result of the Western Railway Reserve Act had been the construction of a large extent of railway for a comparatively small sum of money from the public funds; and, to test the future by the past, they should pause before passing the wholesale condemnation upon the Railway Reserves Act embodied in the honourable member for Maranoa's resolution. From what had been said, by some honourable members, in relation to what had followed from the construction of railways, one would almost hesitate to extend them. The honourable member for Normanby had said, that although the Central Railway had been extended one hundred miles in the interior, the carriage from Clermont to the railway was nearly as much as it was formerly for the whole distance. If that was an argument it would hold good against going in for railways; it would be in favour of the stoppage of railways. The probabilities, however, were that the high rate of carriage was brought about by the drought, that the teamster's stock were unable to work, and it became necessary to stop carrying or charge a large sum to keep their horses on the way. It was either that, or that things were so prosperous in the district that the men could employ their teams more profitably in some other way. Nobody in the House would be found a greater advocate for the extension of railways than he. Attention had been drawn to a statement of the Premier that the construction of the main trunk lines must be by some form which would make the payment of the interest fall more especially upon those persons for whose benefit the lines were made. He presumed that what was meant by that statement was, some principle which would not press too heavily upon the people of the coast districts. That was certainly a matter deserving of the fullest consideration. The extension of these branch and trunk lines had his full sympathy and support, and he should at all times be prepared to do justice to the claims of all parts of the colony for railway construction. He hoped that before many years the extension of the three great trunk lines into the interior, would be accomplished. He believed in the ultimate extension of the Charters Towers line in the direction of the splendid Diamantina country, feeling assured that it would prove to be one of the best paying in the land. He further believed in the extension of the great Central line from Rockhampton, and of the Western Railway from Roma towards the magnificent country of Coopers' Creek. By means of these and the line from South Australia, to which reference had been made, they would yet be able, he hoped, to traverse the whole of the vast interior. It was because he could not see that the Government had been behind-hand in the matter of railway construction, or that the member for Maranoa had made out a good case for displacing them from office, that he could not give his support to the amendment. He believed that the Government would give effect to the railway extensions to which he had referred, and he would support them. If he should have the honour of holding a seat in the next Parliament, and should find that they did not, they would not have his support.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, in reference to a statement made by the honourable member for Cook, when speaking in favour of making railways from railway reserves, that the lenders of money to the State would have the inducement of knowing that their loans were secured by the lands within the reserves—that he took it that any public debtor was secured upon the land of the whole country, and, further, that he looked to the revenue and not to the unremunerative lands. The chief reason why he should support the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa, irrespective of his feeling as to the effeteness of the present Administration, was on this very railway reserves question. It would be generally admitted that the Government had abandoned that principle of constructing railways which they made such a main point of a few sessions ago. He remembered the present Minister for Works making one of the strongest speeches in the House against the adoption of the railway reserves policy, but where did they see him now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Look at your leader and the Western Railway reserve.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that he found from *Hansard* that at any rate there was one honourable member in the House "in whom there was no variableness and shadow of turning." This honourable member had said in the session of 1875, in reference to this question of railway reserves—

"What they wanted was to bring foreign capital into the colony and not to abstract it

from the banks and other moneyed institutions. He said that if he were a capitalist that there had been no finer squatter's Bill ever put on the table of the House than this. It was purely a squatting Bill—a Bill which would allow the squatters to pick the eyes out of the country if it became law, and he was perfectly astonished that a Liberal Government of which the honourable and recumbent Premier was the head should have brought in such a measure."

He (Mr Morehead) went on to point out that a Liberal Government, by the measure then before the House, instead of settling the people upon the land, would throw the land into the hands of the capitalists. This had been proved since by the action of the Government in seizing the occupants of the runs by the throats, as it were, and compelling them to buy portions of their holdings. He said advisedly that this had been done with respect to the then occupants, but present owners, of Mount Abundance run, who were a company formed to lend money and assist people to get on in this and the other colonies. They had been compelled to buy in self-defence, and £100,000, which would otherwise have been floating capital, had been locked up. The next run, of Rocky-bank, belonged to a poor man, but it was cut up and submitted to auction, and was destroyed as a run for the herds and flocks of the poor man. He (Mr. Morehead) was present at the sale, and said to the Under Secretary for Lands, in reply to an inquiry whether he (Mr. Morehead) was not going to buy, "You are not going to get many bids. We don't pretend to be monopolists. We don't wish to buy under the feet of our neighbours. We bought in self-defence." That was the position of the company now owning Mount Abundance run. They would rather have remained graziers until the land could have been settled upon by people with small means; but the result of the Railway Reserves principle was that they were forced to buy 100,000 acres, which was locked up for the present at any rate. They might cut it up and sell it hereafter at a profit; at present, he knew that great damage had been done to the country by the alienation of that run, and that it had not been sought by the present owners. An immense amount of the floating capital of the colony had been absorbed by the way in which the Government had forced the lands into the market. They forced them in at first at prices which prevented all competition, and compelled the owners of land to buy or go out. A point had been made with reference to the pre-emptive power the owners possessed, before the lands were put up to auction; but those pre-emptive rights, from the very circumstances of the case, were an absolute evil. Those wretched owners had these pre-emptives dotted over each block, and they were compelled to connect them at a price three times the amount of the original cost, or had to see the vacancy left open to conditional purchase. The Government had entirely abandoned their position in reference to railway construction, and ought to be impeached. The most important works in a colony, like this, were railway works, and, if they were to have mixed systems of payment, the sooner the Government were put out the better. The honourable member for Maranoa, had been consistent throughout, advocating from the first the construction of these lines by loan, leaving the great public estate to be dealt with hereafter. The auction system of the Government was run to an extreme, for friendly political purposes in some cases; for damaging political purposes in others, and that was a dangerous power to place in the hands of any Ministry. The Premier had not meeted out justice to all. His acts were incongruous. There was a discrepancy between the Western Railway Reserves Act, and the Railway Reserves Act, which had led to a large quantity of land being taken up at a less price than other land adjoining. When they found a Ministry with a lot of measures, passed by themselves, so incongruous that they were almost unworkable, what were they to do? When they found the Act of 1876 had done great injury to the settlement of the colony, it was fully time the Government were removed to make place for better men wherever they might be found. And whether they were found on that side of the House or on this, he did not care one straw. Of course he should prefer to see the honourable member for Maranoa at the head of the Government, because he believed that honourable gentleman was the most capable man in the House, and would command, if not universal support, at least a large majority, on his side of the House. But the present Government, day after day, submitted to defeat after defeat, and took no notice of them except it was to smile at them. The Minister for Works was always a pleasant party to attack, and what did he say of his quondam colleague about this very Railway Bill? According to *Hansard*, he said that he should want some better names than those of the present Ministry for his guarantees. This was said by the honourable gentleman, who was very strong in opposition but very weak in government. As to the policy of selling the lands in the way in which they had been sold, had the honourable the Premier considered the position in which New South Wales had landed itself, and what might be the result of following out the policy of making railways by sales of lands?—had he taken the trouble to consider

whether it was possible that any one of his proclaimed Railway Reserves would yield sufficient to make one quarter of the railway, with the exception perhaps of the Western Railway Reserves? Did the honourable gentleman think he would pay for the railway in either the Central, Northern, or Stanthorpe districts out of the sales of land? Any person who knew these localities would tell him that he would not make them in that manner. He (Mr. Morehead) was in favour of proceeding with the railway to Stanthorpe, the vote for which had been passed. But would the railway to Stanthorpe be made out of the sale of lands in that reserve? If not, why did not the honourable gentlemen come down and say he would abandon the railway reserve, and do it all by loan? Why mix up the two things together? That was not an act of either a Minister or a statesman. On this ground alone, he should certainly support the honourable member for Maranoa, and he certainly thought, by the way in which the present Ministry had temporised, and truckled and tinkered in their legislation, they were no longer fit to be in the position of Ministers of the Crown. They had had a good time, and they ought to leave. They had changed so much that one hardly knew which was the senior Minister, although he (Mr. Morehead) thought it was the Attorney-General. At any rate, he should cordially support the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa, and whatever came of it he hoped the Government would get such a shaking that they would not get over it in a hurry.

Mr. KIDGELL said he had been very much impressed with the amendment of the honourable member for Maranoa, but any sympathy he had for it would not be sufficient to allow him to vote in its favour. There were many grave reasons whether he should support it, and he could not but look with a certain amount of suspicion at the manner in which it had been introduced. They were asked to affirm a principle already affirmed in the House last session. Night after night the Opposition fought most persistently, and in what many persons considered to be an unwarrantable manner, opposing the railway policy of the present Government. Members on the Government side of the House came in for an unqualified share of abuse for supporting a railway policy which was persistently denounced as one which was to ruin the country. Members who supported the Government were charged with being abject supporters, and by none more than by the honourable member for the Warrego. That honourable member almost exhausted his copious vocabulary in abusing Government supporters, and now, after in this manner washing their hands with invisible soap in imperceptible water, they came down and were prepared to soil their political fingers with this railway policy that they once so much denounced. In fact, they would out-Herod Herod if possible. He must, therefore, look with a large amount of suspicion upon any such policy coming from that side of the House. He was glad to find the Opposition were at last going in for a good railway policy. One of the leading features in that policy was, whether their efforts should be devoted to grand trunk, or national lines, and another was whether there should be an almost ignoring of the lesser, or branch lines. He intended to refer to the speech made by the leader of the Opposition with regard to the distribution of the large amount he proposed to borrow. Nearly two-thirds of the loan were proposed to be set apart for the construction of these national lines, while an insignificant amount, in comparison, was to be set apart for the branch lines. A proposal of this kind would largely increase the construction of the trunk-line railways, and at that stage of the existence of Parliament, it was neither fair nor just to the people of the colony to deliberately commit the country to such a scheme, involving a large expenditure and a large loan. They were on the eve of a general election. It was, perhaps, doubtful, whether the members in the House adequately represented the wishes of the electors, and it might be safely affirmed, at any rate, that they could not be certain that they did represent those wishes. Was it wise, when they had recently passed a Bill to return an additional number of members, to commit the country to so large an expenditure, for which there was no pressing necessity? If the present Ministry had persistently refused to advocate an additional loan, there might be some reason for the adoption of the honourable member's amendment, but no such reason existed. They had been assured, over and over again, by the Colonial Treasurer, that it was his intention to come before the House to ask for an additional loan, so that there might be no hindrance to the prosecution of public works. He (Mr. Kidgell) was not opposed to the construction of main trunk lines, for he was a consistent supporter of the railway policy generally; but the time was most inopportune for the extension of this policy in such a manner as that proposed, and the people of the colony had a just claim to an expenditure on branch and loop lines—the lines upon which they had already spent a large sum of money, and which the people were heavily taxed to support. The country had a perfect right to demand that a good comprehensive system of branch lines should be introduced, instead of which a scheme had been brought forward involving the expenditure of a very large sum of money to construct lines hundred of miles into what was called the never-never country. It was, no doubt, very grand

country, and would be of great value when made available for settlement. The question was, what would produce the settlement? A great deal of fuss had been made by members on both sides of the House about the lines producing settlement; but he (Mr. Kidgell) could say that those grand trunk lines would not produce it. People would not leave the coast districts, which were still only sparsely populated, to go into the interior, at least for years to come. The lines would make the land very valuable, and increase the already large fortunes of some of the capitalists, many of whom deserved very little sympathy, as they extracted all they could from the millions of acres held by them at a nominal price, and were frequently absentees. Such men had no right to be considered before the farmers and small graziers, who worked hard from year to year, struggling to improve their own condition and that of the colony. Those men were to be quietly shunted on one side, and the present taxation was to be increased, in order that trunk lines might be constructed. He felt it to be his duty to oppose the motion of the honourable member for Maranoa, at all events at this stage, as he considered it was unwise, ill-advised, and inopportune to bring such a motion in at this time. The Maryborough and Gympie railway had been alluded to by some honourable members, and erroneous opinions seemed to exist as to its probable cost. He trusted the Minister for Works would be in his place to-night to set at rest entirely any doubts on that subject. That honourable gentleman had in his possession statistics to prove conclusively that the Maryborough and Gympie railway, so far as it had been proceeded with, was not one of the most expensive lines in the country, but would prove to be under the average cost, when the circumstances were taken into consideration that a deep river would have to be crossed by an expensive bridge. That fact would go a long way towards explaining why the first section would involve the expenditure of a large sum of money. He held that if the present railway policy was to be gone on with, those who had initiated, fought for, and successfully carried it through so far, had not yet forfeited their right to the confidence of the House. He did not in all respects agree with the conduct of the Government. On the contrary, he found fault with them for not carrying out their scheme with more vigour, as if they really believed in it; but he would give them the credit of being inclined to err on the side of moderation rather than of prodigality. In the condition of the country it was far better, if a mistake were made, that it should be on the side of moderation. Another question, wrapped up in the motion before the House, was the question of how much it was desirable to borrow? In that respect they found that the proposal of the Government and that of the Opposition party approached one another very nearly. The leader of the Opposition proposed to ask the sanction of the House to a loan of three millions; but he told them in almost the same breath that it would only be necessary to borrow a million at a time. If such were the case, he (Mr. Kidgell) held that it was unnecessary to get the sanction of a dying Parliament to borrow three times the amount. The people of the colony surely had a right to express their opinion; and why should they be deprived of that power, and the incoming Parliament committed to a course that might possibly be opposed to their ideas of what was good for the country? The constituencies should have an opportunity of expressing an adverse opinion if they wished to do so. Parliament should not be committed to carry out a policy which the country did not believe in; and that was one reason why the present motion ought not to be carried. The honourable member for Normanby had stated that the populous constituencies would not object to main trunk lines. He (Mr. Kidgell) did not suppose that any section of the people of the colony would object to them; but they would object to trunk lines being made everything and branch lines nothing. The policy of the Government was to consolidate their present railway policy, and make those lines which were beginning to pay, pay better still. The honourable member also said he was quite prepared to give his support to the construction of branch lines, supposing they did not cost more than ordinary roads. That was a mild way of giving support, because lines which would not cost more than ordinary roads would be simply toys, and perfectly useless. He (Mr. Kidgell) regretted he could not agree with the honourable member for Maranoa on his estimate of low-cost railways, and he could not help thinking the honourable gentleman was not quite so earnest in that portion of his programme as he was in that relating to trunk lines. He proposed to give a very cheap and not very useful line, on which the rate of speed would be from four to eight miles an hour. If they were to have branch lines at all they would be part and parcel of the present system, and common sense would suggest that they should be all of the same gauge. It would be going to the other extreme to build cheap railways which would very likely cost the country a large amount of money and be little better than roads. He should be sorry to see the motion carried because he thought it was inadvisable and unjust to the country. He trusted the present Ministry would continue to carry out their railway policy and would carry it

on with a little more vigour than they had done hitherto. He was not prepared to admit that they had failed in carrying out the trust the country had reposed in them; and therefore he did not see any reason for withdrawing his confidence from the Ministry, who had fought hard for two sessions to initiate the system of railways which the Opposition now declared was desirable to the country.

Mr. MCLEAN said, since the leader of the Opposition had delivered his speech on the motion now before the House, honourable members had learned something considerable of the policy which would regulate the Opposition should they happen to get into power at the present time. Various reasons had been assigned why such a motion should be tabled and why it should be carried. The honourable member for Port Curtis first assigned, as a reason, that he wished to see the present occupants of the Treasury benches turned out of office for the simple reason, as he stated, that the Government was the most corrupt one that had occupied those benches, and that he had no faith whatever in their administration. He (Mr. McLean) had had the honour of occupying a seat in the House for three sessions, and had been a consistent follower of the Government; but if he had considered that they were a corrupt Government, they would never have received his support, nor would he have occupied a seat on the same side of the House with them. There was a saying—

"Suspicion ever haunts the guilty mind."

which might very appropriately come to the front in connection with that assertion. It was a very easy thing to make assertions, but very difficult sometimes to prove them. The Estimates now before the House had been obstructed on several occasions for the purpose of trying to bring proof against the Government that they were corrupt in connection with the administration of public affairs. Up till the present moment all the returns and documents which had been laid on the table of the House and put into the possession of honourable members, had failed to bring home such a charge. He (Mr. McLean), for one, considered that those charges brought against the Government had failed, and he could not give his support to any motion that would have the slightest tendency to deprive the present Government of power, and place another set of gentlemen in their places. When it came to be a question of the transference of power from one party to another, he would require to have faith in the party likely to come into power before he gave them his vote. With reference to the present leader of the Opposition, there was no one who had a higher respect for his abilities than he (Mr. McLean) had. He believed that honourable member was as capable as any other honourable member in the House, if not more capable, of carrying on the affairs of the country. But he was only one honourable member. There were others whom he (Mr. McLean) would be quite as willing to entrust with the reins of power to-night if necessary; but there were others he could have no confidence in, and he could have no confidence in any Ministry that could be formed from that side of the House. Therefore, his vote would be given in the interest of the present occupants of the Treasury benches. A charge had been brought against the present Government that they had departed from their policy in connection with the Railway Reserves Bill. It had always been asserted by the members of the Opposition that the policy of the Government was to sell the lands of the colony, and to construct railways with the proceeds of those sales. That view had never been entertained by him or by any solitary member on that side of the House. The policy of the gentlemen in Opposition had been to go into the English market and borrow money for the purpose of constructing railways; but they did not say how the interest was to be paid. They had introduced a motion that three millions should be borrowed; but among all the honourable members who had spoken on the subject, not one—not even the leader of the Opposition himself—had explained to the House by what means it was proposed to meet the interest on that three millions. The assertion had been made that the present Government had departed from their policy in connection with the Railway Reserves Bill. In reply to that, he would quote what the Premier said when that Bill was before the House. After explaining the principles of the Western Railway Reserves Bill, and the amount of money proposed to be borrowed in connection with that Bill, the Premier went on to say—

"After that statement, I do not see why the honourable gentlemen opposite should express any surprise whatever that we now choose to justify this undertaking, and build our superstructure of railways upon this foundation of reserves. I do not see how they can justify any accusation such as that we have announced a new policy this session. I have done nothing of the kind. I intend to abide exactly, or nearly exactly, by the terms of the last Bill. There are only some immaterial alterations in the wording, and the Government propose to abide as nearly as possible by the policy of last session, which was, to ask the authority of the House for loans to commence these works, and carry them on in the meantime, taking care to provide that, by the creation of these reserves, they secure the means for the payment of the interest on those loans, and for the final repayment of the loan itself. All this was clearly stated last year, and I hope to make it clear now,

that the primary consideration, before we enter upon railway enterprise at all, is to take care that the indebtedness which we foresee in consequence—that the loan which we shall have to raise, and must raise—will be met in the form I have described. I hope, therefore, the member for Normanby and others will not be led away by the misrepresentation of their friends who wish to delude them into the belief that we are propounding a new policy. I do not say that in some unimportant particulars we shall not be prepared to accept amendments from this House. So long as the main principles of the Bill are secured—so long as we obtain sufficient reserves of land with a view to meet the interest, and be satisfied that we can supply those persons from whom we borrow money with a guarantee that, even with these special liabilities, we have a good security, we are justified in going on with this undertaking. I am not of a very dogmatic spirit, I trust; but, at the same time, I hope I shall not be so sceptical as the honourable member for Toowoomba has been on many occasions."

That proved pretty conclusively that the Government policy had been all along to construct railways from loan; but they provided a certain guarantee to the English creditors that their money should be repaid from land sales in the railway reserves. It was not the intention of the Government to sell the land first, and then construct railways, but to set apart these reserves as a guarantee that the interest would be paid, and finally the whole loan, by that process. He was very much struck with the line of policy laid down by the leader of the Opposition in his allocation of the three millions which he proposed to borrow. Something like two-thirds of the whole was to be appropriated for the purpose of constructing what were termed main trunk lines of railway. No member was more willing than himself to give his vote in favour of railways; but he could not forget that there was already a very large population settled on the lands of the colony who were not yet provided with any means of bringing their produce to market. And yet they were to borrow two millions to benefit imaginary settlers while they were to leave in the cold the large industrial and agricultural population who had already been settled on the lands, who were struggling against bad seasons and bad roads, and who were to be patted on the back with £350,000 for the construction of branch lines. Those real settlers were told that if they would behave themselves, and pay the interest on the two millions to be spent on main trunk lines into the interior, they should have little tinkering branch lines that would carry themselves and their produce to market at the rate of four or eight miles an hour. Instead of providing for an imaginary population, they ought to provide for those who were already settled on the land; and that was one reason why he should vote against the motion tabled by the leader of the Opposition. It had been repeatedly said, that the longer a line the better it paid; but there was one feature in the question that had evidently been forgotten—population. Without population no line would pay; and if a line had to be taken over 140 miles of sandy desert, it must of necessity work at a loss. They were told by one member of the Opposition that if it could be proved that branch lines would pay, they would have no objection to go on with the construction of them; while the same question was never asked with regard to the main trunk lines. Surely, what was sauce for the goose was sauce for the gander, and if it could not be proved that the trunk lines would pay, it ill-became their advocates to say that they would build branch lines if it could be proved that they would pay interest on construction. He was much struck with the remark of the honourable member for Normanby, that he would vote for the construction of trunk lines, if they could be made as cheaply as roads. And yet the same honourable member was quite willing to vote for the construction of trunk lines; no matter how costly they were, so long as wool could be brought down to the seaports cheaply. The bringing to market of farm produce was nothing in the eyes of the Opposition, yet they were magnanimous enough to say that they would build branch lines for the farmers, if they could be made as cheaply as roads. That was what they were to expect if ever the party now in Opposition were transferred to the Treasury benches. He had every confidence in the uprightness of the leader of the Opposition, and one or two of his followers; but the tenor of the speeches of the majority of the members of the Opposition was in a direct opposition to the sentiments of their own leader, and he felt bound to pause before giving his vote to put them in possession of power. He might here say that some honourable members rang the Darling Downs into their ears on every possible occasion. They seemed to think there was no other place in the world than the Darling Downs. Every question that arose, whether with regard to land legislation, railway policy, water-supply, or what not, those honourable members could not dissociate themselves from the Darling Downs. But there were other places in Queensland beside the Darling Downs, and whose welfare was of equal importance. He (Mr. McLean) was not here for the purpose of making an electioneering speech, although he had been amused to find that almost every speech made this session, no matter the question before the House, had been turned into an electioneering speech; and the members of the Opposition had made the most of the present grand opportunity for mak-

ing electioneering speeches. Well, he was glad of it, for the country would be able to consider them; and he had no doubt that at the next general election they would return to office not those men who were so condescending as to give the settled districts branch railways if they could be made as cheaply as ordinary roads, but those who would mete out a due measure of justice to the people and not waste millions on the imaginary settlers of the far interior.

Mr. PERKINS moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER, in agreeing to the motion, expressed a hope that the debate would finish as early as possible to-morrow, as there was a good deal of important public business that required attending to.

Question put and passed, and resumption of debate fixed to stand an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at half-past 10 o'clock.