

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 10 JULY 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 10 July, 1879.

Formal Motion.—Low-cost Railways.—Question.—Meat Curing Companies.—Bathurst Burr.—Rust in Wheat.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. H. W. PALMER—

That there be laid on the table of the House, all correspondence relating to the contract for the construction of the Burdekin low-level Bridge, especially relative to an alleged promise of time bonus on completion of the contract within the specified time.

LOW-COST RAILWAYS.

Mr. MACKAY said that, in moving the motion standing in his name, he would take it in the shape of the four clauses in which it was drafted, and read the clauses *seriatim*, though it was a matter for the House to decide whether they would treat them in that way. The first clause was as follows—

1. That settlement upon a farming basis is hindered, in this colony, in consequence of the loss of time, expense, and difficulty of transporting bulky produce long distances over bad roads.

He took it for granted that this would be accepted as an undeniable proposition, and

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that the fact would be conceded that in this colony, as in other countries, produce could only be transported over roads a given distance at a given cost; but directly they got beyond a certain limit it no longer paid to bring produce to market. That had been proved in other countries, but it was intensified in a country like this where the climate assisted wear and tear, and the principal produce was corn, grain, and other products of a perishable nature. Instances could be brought forward where within thirty miles of the best market in Queensland—Brisbane—industrious men had commenced farming with considerable capital, but had actually worked it out from having been unable to make farming pay, when they had all the advantages of good land and a market in their favour, and that after land carriage for over ten or twelve miles they could avail themselves of water carriage as good as any in the colonies. It could also be proved that corn, when realising, say, 2s. 6d. a bushel, could only pay where within a very short distance of the market; while butter and eggs, which with other things ought to be the means of fostering a good, hearty population, did not pay to bring in at all unless the market was very easily accessible. Taking the average of dealers in agricultural produce, they required one-half of the total value of the produce they might buy to enable them to bring it to market and market it. The consequence was that many settlers who ought to be now in possession of thriving homesteads, depending on farming for their support, had been crippled and finally lost to the country because they could not make their business pay on account of the difficulties of getting to market. The next clause of his resolution was—

2. That it is desirable to commence a system of low-cost railways, constructed and conducted upon principles adapted to the requirements of settlers in new country, where there is sufficient population settled and good land available to warrant a belief that railways would pay, if worked with a lower tariff than that on existing lines in the colony.

He did not wish to say anything against the existing lines of railroad; but if they looked along the lines and compared them with ten years ago, anyone would see that they had not to any appreciable extent been the means of fostering agricultural settlement. That was very largely owing to the difficulties in the way of farmers sending their produce by train, as the cost, even in their case, was too great; and that it was too great arose from the fact of the railway system not being adapted to the colony in the way in which it might be for the purposes of settlement in a new country. Because a man now had to incur, in sending a parcel of eggs or butter, for example, a great deal

of trouble and loss of time, first in taking it to the railway, and then in booking it, so that by the time it reached the customer in Brisbane—taking Brisbane for illustration, as it was the largest market—most or all of the profit was absorbed, and the article did not, therefore, pay. At the same time, the existing tariff could not be well lowered, because the cost of working and the first cost were so heavy. He repeated that the first cost was so heavy that he could not see how the tariff on the existing system of railroads could be reduced. He did not wish to blame the working of the lines, but from the manner of their construction and working they could not be so serviceable as the railroads of other new countries, which worked on a different system. It was a matter of interest for any person to look into this. Low-cost railways—using the word “low-cost” as against “cheap,” an expression he did not like—were low-cost in the same way that a man would not use tools unsuitable to his work. The railways he advocated were on a system adapted to the work they had to do. There was no heavy expense incurred for selling or collecting tickets, nor the expenses connected with working platforms, and the officials connected with them. All these things, and many others that were necessary, added to the working expenses. In the low-cost system the business was largely done by means of the conductor—a man who would be responsible for the train, and would take charge of it to all intents and purposes, and would be able to take part, if not most, of the work now performed in the railway offices in the issue of tickets, &c. In the case of parcels and articles of small value a system of stamp might be adopted. By affixing a shilling stamp a parcel might then be sent to its destination—the stamps being saleable at different parts of the colony, in such places as the post office or other public offices. He was not drawing any fancy sketch, and he could say that there was probably more business done in this system by means of stamps and low tariffs than under the other system under which we were working. Eggs, butter, and dairy produce generally might not be of any great value as parcels by themselves, but in the aggregate they came to a very considerable amount, and they might very well be stamped and sent to their destination in charge of the conductor, who would also see they were delivered. By one operation, therefore, the producer would be able to send his goods, and, in short, the system now in use in regard to telegrams and letters would be extended to railroading. By these means railways paid in new countries, and it was by some such means that railways in this country would take the position he wished to see them take.

Although he had, so far, only alluded to goods and parcel traffic, these lines would develop a large passenger traffic, for every facility should be given to people to settle along the lines, so that ultimately they would be able to travel by them. So much for the system. The 3rd clause read as follows—

3. That the southern districts of the colony, with South Brisbane as an outlet, appear to form a suitable locality to commence the system; the population and wealth of said districts ensuring an amount of suburban traffic equal to that of the railway running out from North Brisbane; and that a railway there would open up rich and extensive agricultural districts.

The southern district of the colony was very rich. There were extensive tracts of land—land as rich as any in the colony, and entirely suitable for settlement—for, as it was, men had settled on it to their satisfaction. The line he advocated should leave South Brisbane; and, in saying this, he wished it understood that he had taken that locality as an illustration, because the system must have a commencement somewhere. From the amount of population resident in the district a large passenger traffic would be insured, the population, next to North Brisbane, being the largest in the colony. With a sufficiently low tariff they would obtain a very large suburban traffic. The length of the line he proposed, and which he hoped the voice of the House would sanction, would be thirty-two miles and a few chains, starting in South Brisbane and going, in twenty-three miles, to Beenleigh, as one of the principal centres of population in the district. Three or four surveys had already been made in that direction, and this line could run into any one of them. The construction of the line would then enable them to run a branch of eight miles and a few chains, to be used as a horse railroad, and running in the direction of Tambourine Valley, opening up a very rich tract of country, where the farmers had not as yet been able to sell much of their produce, owing, largely, to the cost of carriage. Another line, also, to be worked by horse power—the main line running past Norman's Creek—might go in the direction of Bulimba to rich country; another branch might run to Mount Cotton, and tap the country towards the banks of the Logan—another stretch of good agricultural land. But, in the meantime, he would suggest that it was desirable to test the system he proposed in the line to Beenleigh and Tambourine, which could afterwards be extended towards the southern border, touching the various agricultural districts as it went on. The sugar company of Sydney had already expressed a desire to make a line from the

Tweed towards Nerang, but our surveys went only as far as Coomera at present. Returning to Tambourine, extensions could be made through the Valley into rich agricultural country in the Upper Logan and Albert, which was not yet settled as its merits deserved. There was a great probability of a line paying in that direction, and a horse railroad would quickly assist to open it up. Population was the best means of calculating whether a line would pay, and the population of this southern part of the colony was 18,000, and who were heavily engaged in agriculture, but who were not now prospering to the extent they might if proper facilities were available. On the coast there was a considerable sugar business as it was, and, in speaking to the owners of the coasting steamers, he had ascertained from them that they were not afraid that a railway would be likely to damage them, because the sugar plantations were mostly on the river bank, and those men found by experience that their business was not so great as it was six or seven years ago, and that something additional was necessary to foster settlement in the country and enable their business to pay as in other occupations. There was also another business in that direction which might be of importance—the supplying of fish, for there were some of the finest fishing grounds on the coast, and fish could easily be got to Logan and Albert Rivers and any other river the line would have to cross. The 4th clause of his motion was—

4. That if the monetary position of the colony as at present arranged does not warrant the construction of a railway or railways as stated, from the public funds, then that a system be adopted holding out inducements for the formation of companies upon a guarantee of, say, 4 per cent. upon the capital invested in forming railroads; the plans and estimates of the Queensland Government engineers being the basis of calculation for the said capital.

He would like to see this system introduced. Various inquiries had been made from England on the subject, and were suitable inducement offered capital could be found. Over twelve months ago inquiries were made here by firms in Scotland, and he had good reason for saying so, because at the present time there was a direct offer before the Brisbane Corporation to lay down a tramway, and on such favourable terms that the Corporation, he hoped, would accept them. One of the inducements to make the offer was that there would be a railway coming in on the south side, and that probably a line from Sandgate would come in to the Valley. The tramway would go through the city, and would be the means of connecting our railroads, which would be much assisted by street locomotion. This tramway system was dependent very largely on the railway running from South

Brisbane. Calculations had been made by competent gentlemen, and their estimate was that for a trifle over £100,000 thirty-two miles of railway could be made, with all the rolling-stock. There would be very few stations, and access to the carriages would be obtained from level platforms. This system would be far less costly than the existing one, and would afford greater facilities for passengers to get on and off the carriages. It would be possible to get on or near the public roads, and so avoid purchasing much private land. Should this matter be taken up by a company, lands that had to be resumed would be given or sold to the company at a far more reasonable rate than it had been the custom to sell them to the Government. Thickly settled districts stood in urgent need of railroads, and it was impossible that any Government could furnish all the railroads that were asked for. If some such system as this were adopted—if capital were guaranteed 4 per cent., companies would be formed who would not be in the least likely to make railroads unless there was a reasonable prospect of their paying, because they would have to pay their own working expenses, and the 4 per cent. would only be sufficient to give a fair premium on their capital. They would be more likely to get railroads in the country districts by this means than by any other. He would like to make a few remarks in connection with a matter which had occupied a good deal of attention recently—the raising of the fares on the suburban line from Brisbane. Various letters had appeared on the subject, and in one of them—signed by Mr. Thos. E. White—a comparison was made between the suburban passenger traffic on the lines running out of Melbourne and from Brisbane. From this it was found that the cost in Brisbane, before the recent addition was put on, was greater here than in Melbourne. One reason for this was said to be that Melbourne was a city of 300,000 inhabitants, while Brisbane had only 30,000. His own belief was that unless we managed to bring the expenses of our railroads lower than they were, and induced people to travel on them at less cost, it would be a very long time indeed before Brisbane had a population of 300,000. The Minister for Works, in reply to a deputation that waited on him about the Sandgate Railway, gave some very telling items of information which, he doubted not, were strictly correct. The hon. gentleman said that—

“Mr. Stanley had prepared estimates of cost of the first section of the line (from Brisbane to German Station) by the five different routes surveyed. They ranged from £29,000 to £40,000 for the six miles, and, if the cost of purchasing land had to be added, the various estimated amounts would have to be doubled;”

or, say, £10,000 a mile. Seriously, there was no part of Queensland where it would pay to make railroads at that cost. Where was the traffic that would warrant the construction of railroads with a sunk capital of £10,000 a mile? He would not say the tariff on our existing railways was too high, but the cost was altogether higher than would justify them in making other railroads, especially into agricultural districts. The line he had tried to sketch out would run four trains daily—one from each end in the morning, returning in the evening—making connection in each trip with the horse railway going towards Tambourine. Supposing it was decided to encourage a company to take up this matter, the total cost to the country in the first place would be £5,000 per annum. Supposing that company was formed with a right to work the railway for twenty-one years, the whole cost to the country would be £5,000 a year at the outside; and that sum would be pretty nearly saved on road construction, seeing that it would take off the heavy traffic now on the roads. The company would be at the entire expense of working the trains, and arrangements might be made binding them to run at certain regular periods. The whole business could be based on the surveys and estimates of the Government engineers. He had heard it said that a railroad of this kind had been worked, and not very satisfactorily, in Tasmania. He took remarks of that kind with a good deal of salt, because outside of this colony he had heard similar things said about the Queensland lines, and he should not be surprised if the parties who spoke against the Tasmanian line did not give it all the credit it was entitled to. If a company were formed on such a basis as he had explained, the terms of the agreement might be made so stringent that they would know perfectly well what they had a right to expect, and what the company would be compelled to do for the sum paid to them. There would be of necessity a fixed scale of tariff charges, and a railroad of this kind, running amidst a population numbering 18,000 at present, and increasing all the time, could manage to carry passengers at the very outside for 2d. per mile;—there would be only one class of passengers carried in the train. The tariff for parcels and freights could also be decided before the arrangements were completed. To manage this railroad his estimate was that eighteen men would be sufficient to do all the work connected with it. Such a line should not, in the first instance, be grafted on to any existing railroad, because it could not be supposed that a lower tariff could be permitted in the agricultural districts than on the main line. It was equally plain, however, that unless the charge was lower than they

had been in the habit of paying, and unless facilities were offered for traffic and the disposal of produce advantageously, our railroads would not develop on that solid basis which was desirable in a country of this sort. He would not enter into minute details on this occasion. The line would run as nearly as possible to the public roads, so that it would be easily accessible and would cost as little as possible. He had spoken with various parties near whose land the existing surveys ran, and in every case outside of towns they had stated they would be very glad to see the railroad, and would give the land, if it adjoined the public road, without making a heavy charge. Various parties on the Logan had told him that. Another advantage would be that it would familiarise people with a railway, and show them that it was not such a dangerous thing as some imagined. They had all seen how familiar people and horses had got with the road steamers in Brisbane, which were as fearful-looking as any railway train. Horses passed and re-passed them without taking any notice; yet, unless the machines had been well spoken of they would have been hunted out of the place at first. The endeavour would be to lay out the railway suitably for the work it had to do. It would be a substantial railway so far as construction went. The rails would be as heavy as those at present in use, but many other items would be less costly. As the journey would occupy two hours the speed would not be very high. The engine to be used was one with which he had had something to do in introducing into the colony, and which had earned the good will of all the engineers and others connected with it. He would prefer a tank-engine—an engine which was not expensive, and which did a great deal of work at comparatively little cost. He would now give a few instances of how these railways worked and succeeded in country districts in the United States and Canada, from papers received by the last mail. As an instance of the amount of traffic carried on lines running into a purely agricultural district which had sprung into existence during the lifetime of most hon. members, he would cite the following from a Chicago paper—

"Last week the trunk lines carried from Chicago East 2,151,201 bushels of grain, 75,838 barrels of flour, and 16,057,227 pounds of meat."

He had been at considerable trouble to find out the charge for the carriage of cattle, which formed a very heavy item in these returns, and he had found that cattle (of a comparatively poor description) were bought in Texas for 15 dollars, or an average of £3 per head; the railway fare to Chicago, a distance of 1,500 or 1,600 miles, together with feed, was about 20 dollars, or £4, so that

the cattle only cost £6 or £7 a head when they got to the fattening paddocks in Illinois. He would next refer to a Canadian line, the Bruce and Toronto, which might be taken as a type of what was required here, and on which he had had the pleasure of riding several times, and could answer for the convenience it afforded to farmers and settlers, and the amount of traffic it carried. Along this line produce was sold on condition that it should be laid down near the railway track, where it was picked up and carried to its destination in the large cities. The cattle cars on lines carried from sixteen to twenty head of cattle, and the cost per car for a journey extending over 1,500 miles was 175 dollars, or less than £2 a head. With advantages like that one could scarcely wonder how those people made cattle raising pay, and were able to ship them to the English market. Log timber was carried on those same lines for 2½d. to 7½d. per 100 feet over a journey of 1,500 miles. No wonder the people prospered who had such facilities of traffic available. Something of that kind was urgently wanted here, for it was plain to all that the Queensland settlers were not prospering as well as could be wished, and there was very little prospect of their flourishing until such facilities as he had spoken of were afforded them. Lines of this kind existed very largely in California, a country which had not all the great natural advantages of Queensland. He had been through a considerable portion of their farming and grazing country, and, so far as he could judge, Queensland could beat it in both kinds. Yet, with its small population, California had nearly 8,000 miles of railway, and the amount of business they managed to do could not, therefore, be wondered at. He had a report from Governor Stanford, formerly Governor of California, and president of the Central Pacific Railroad, in which a great deal of information was given in connection with the traffic on that line. The report states that although the arrangement of the company with the State of California was that they must not charge more than 15 cents a ton for carrying freight, they actually carried freight at 2 cents, and it mentioned coal as being carried at half a cent. per ton per mile. Those facilities gave great advantages to settlers who had access to such a line. In conclusion, he would say that, if the Government felt indisposed to take up some such system as this, he should be very glad to see a company come in and do the work. He spoke with some knowledge of facts when he said that if a guarantee were given for the construction of the thirty-two miles of line of which he had given an outline, a company could be found to build and work it upon a guarantee of 4 per cent. on their capital. His

present object was to test the opinion of the House on this subject. The only expense the country would be put to would be the completion of the surveys through the district he had referred to, in addition to the 4 per cent. guarantee. Upon those surveys and estimates the company could base their capital, and it was upon this only that he came forward and affirmed that the House would be justified in offering a guarantee of 4 per cent. on capital expended on the basis of the Government's own surveys and on their own plans and estimates. He would now move the motion standing in his name.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said the name of the hon. member for South Brisbane had been very much connected in this colony with the question of low-cost railways. This motion appeared to be brought forward under that guise, but was really intended to bring about the construction of a railway in the hon. member's own district. Not content with one railway, he appeared, also, to advocate the construction of about half-a-dozen branches besides. He thought the advocacy would have been more readily accepted by the House had the object been to construct a railway of the same kind in the district of some other hon. member, because it would look less like electioneering; and there were some districts of the colony in which, if it were considered desirable to introduce such a system, a line could be made under conditions as favourable as those of South Brisbane. A great deal of what he had said was incontrovertible. The first proposition was especially true, and the same thing might be said of other industries. Not only farming was hindered by those disadvantages, but also mining and squatting and other industries to an equal extent. If, as he said, farming would not pay the expenses of carriage at a distance of twelve miles from water carriage, there was very little chance of it being advanced by the construction of railways, for it was impossible in any colony in Australia to adopt a system by which railways would be brought within twelve miles of every man's door. The hon. member said the railway he wished to be constructed to Beenleigh would be thirty-four miles long by the way he would take the line. Now, the freight to Beenleigh by water carriage was 8s. 6d. per ton, and, if farming would not pay the expense of that 8s. 6d. per ton for water carriage, it certainly would not pay a railway journey of thirty-four miles. The Government were carrying at the present moment agricultural produce at a rate as cheap as anywhere in Australia—namely, 2½d. to 3d. per ton per mile, and it would be a very easy calculation to find how much it would cost to carry a ton of pro-

duce over the thirty-four miles of railway constructed at the proposed cost. The hon. member, in advocating low-cost railways, could not get beyond the saving in the mode of collecting tickets by combining the duties of collector and conductor. It was, no doubt, very important to decrease the number of hands employed in the working of railways; but he could inform the hon. member that there were not so many men employed on the trains, proportional, by the present system, as he considered would be required for the four trains to carry the traffic on those thirty-four miles of railway. He said the four trains would require eighteen men—that was an average of four and a-half men per train, whereas the Railway Department had not as many men employed in the movements of trains, proportionally, including porters and station-masters; so that, in that respect, his system of working a low-cost system would not cost one whit less than the present system. Next, the hon. member said the cost of making the thirty-four miles would be £100,000, or about £3,000 per mile. At present, the Government were making railways, without an elaborate advocacy of low-cost, at £3,000, or even less than that sum. A section of twenty-seven miles of the Central line had been let, a few weeks ago, at such a price that, when completed, the probable expense would be upon a very similar scale to that of the low-cost line advocated by the hon. member; and he went in for very inexpensive stations—in fact, only platforms. The contract for twenty-seven miles was let at £1,953 per mile. According to the last quotation from England, the rails would cost £316 per mile, which, with fish-plates and other appliances and freight from London, would amount to £466 per mile. One station required at the end of the twenty-seven miles, at a cost of £800, would make the total cost of the line about £2,449 per mile. If the hon. member was determined that the House should adopt the system of low-cost railways, he should certainly show that they could be constructed for a less sum than he had named. They had an example of a line being constructed for less, and the same thing could be carried out on other sections of that line and on other lines. He was bold enough to say that the whole of the Central line between the portion constructed and Barcaldine Downs, including the ascent of Drummond's Range, could be constructed at very little over a cost of £3,000 per mile. A portion over the range would cost £8,000 to £10,000 per mile, so that some other portions would have to be considerably less. That was a complete answer as far as low-cost was concerned, and the hon. member should be satisfied that they had at last reached a cost of con-

struction to satisfy him. The Government were not quite certain that the line which he advocated—from Beenleigh towards the Border—would cost only £3,000. He was afraid, when the engineer's estimates were produced, they would find it would cost a great deal more, because the country was much more difficult than that in which a line was being constructed for less than £3,000 per mile. There were a good many rivers to be crossed, creeks to be bridged, and rough country to go through; and before they got to the end of the thirty-four miles nearly another £100,000 might be required. Taking it through, the country was nearly as rough as that he had referred to in answering a deputation, and would cost nearly as much per mile. The hon. member had told them about companies having made inquiries; but he (the Minister for Works) was rather surprised to hear that, because companies or private individuals having such objects would probably make their inquiries of the Government, when they would be more likely to arrive at favourable results. There was only one gentleman at present representing a company of capitalists who had made inquiries from the Government; and if there were any other wishing to construct a line from South Brisbane towards the Border, he would probably make application to the Government. The hon. member had told them the rates of freight current in America; but it would have been far more to the purpose had he told them the rates current in Australia, as then a comparison might have been made more easily. They were all pretty well aware that a great many American railways had not paid one farthing since they had been constructed; and very likely the hon. member had been quoting from the figures of some of those lines. He quoted one line in Illinois, but it was scarcely fair to institute a comparison between that country and Queensland, seeing that it was one of the oldest States in the western part of the Union, and thickly settled by a population of about two millions chiefly engaged in agriculture. If he wished to make a comparison he should quote New South Wales or Victoria, and he would then find the rates here were lower than the rates there. He had told them about a company in California that carried coals at a farthing per ton per mile, but he (Minister for Works) had heard of steamship companies carrying passengers for nothing and feeding them besides; but that was a commercial enterprise that would not pay. In Queensland coals were carried at a less rate than in New South Wales, although that was a greater coal-producing country; and the rate here could not be reduced half a farthing per ton unless they were carried at the expense of the State. The rate here was three farthings per ton, and

in New South Wales the charge was a farthing more. He had nothing to say against the construction of a line in the district the hon. member represented; but it would have been better and fairer had he brought the matter boldly forward on its own merits, leaving aside the general advocacy of lines in farming districts elsewhere. When the question of branch lines was brought forward the merits of the South Brisbane line would be considered as well as others. One great drawback to the advocacy of a line in that direction was, that the great majority of the settlers in that district—upon the Albert, Logan, Coomera, and Nerang—had water-carriage to their very doors. Looking at the matter in that light, although they might consider the making of that railway on its own merits, there were other districts not having the same facilities which would probably be considered first.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said that hon. members had not got much light from the hon. gentleman who had just sat down as to the intentions of the Government with regard to railways; but they had got used to that sort of thing now. They had, however, derived a glimmer, as the hon. gentleman had told them what would be the cost of the railway to Barcaldine Downs, so they might take it for granted that the extension of the line to that point was a part of the programme of the Government. Then he had also said that he viewed with disfavour the construction of a line towards the Logan;—that they might take as another glimmer of light. But with regard to the general principle of low-cost railways and branch lines they had got very little information indeed. The hon. gentleman's speech was rather against them, and tended to the inference that the Government did not believe in branch lines. The hon. member for South Brisbane asked the House to affirm a proposition, and desired to have the resolutions considered *seriatim*. What did the hon. gentleman say as regards the first resolution, affirming that settlement on a farming basis was hindered? He could not deny that.

The PREMIER: We all agree on that.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, then the Government were, no doubt, prepared to affirm the resolution. That was one step in the right direction, and he was glad they were all agreed, for once. The next resolution affirmed that it was desirable to commence a system of low-cost railways. The speech of the hon. gentleman was against that, and he expressed a general disapproval of the system, in a mild sort of way. He (Mr. Griffith) would like to know whether the Government intended to agree to that resolution as well as the first; for his part, he had a very strong opinion that it was

desirable and practicable. The Government appeared now to signify that they were agreed in affirming the second resolution. They now seemed to think they must do something—that it was time for them to take some step forward towards regaining that position in the country that they fondly thought they held some months ago; and they were going to affirm the proposition approving of a system of low-cost railways. No one was more delighted than he to see the change. He had always said it could be done, and he had seen his way to do it during the short period during which he held office as Minister for Works. He saw that a cheaper railway than the Central could be constructed to answer all the purposes of a farming district, and he should be glad to hear that the Minister for Works was prepared to carry out such a system. If, as the hon. gentleman said, a first-class line could be constructed for less than £2,500 per mile in parts, and £3,000 for the whole average, he might have gone on to say that the Government were prepared to introduce a system of making railways at a less expense for farming districts. It was all nonsense to say that they could not make a good serviceable line at less expense than a first-class line. He was disappointed at the Minister for Works not giving some idea of the intention of the Government, but perhaps that would form part of the great disclosure with regard to the particulars of which the Government had apparently not made up their minds. Ministers had evidently made up their minds not to tell; and perhaps might say with the knife-grinder, "Story!—God bless you, I have none to tell, sir." He hoped they would try to make up their minds soon. The third resolution followed, and affirmed that South Brisbane would be a suitable locality in which to commence. He believed South Brisbane would be a very good place to try something of that kind. The Minister for Works said it was a rugged country to the Logan, but he (Mr. Griffith) did not call it so. He believed the gradients would not be steeper than on the Central line the hon. gentleman had spoken of, and a line might be found from Brisbane to Beenleigh almost level. There was rough country to be found there as everywhere, if you looked for it; but he was certain a line could be found to run a railway on which they could always get gradients of one in fifty, or less, without disturbing the surface of the soil. As to the fourth proposition, he hoped the hon. member would withdraw it, as he was not prepared at present to affirm the desirability of instituting a system of guarantee. If the Government could guarantee 4 per cent. they should be prepared to make the railways. He believed in instituting a system of making railways of a second class, not

so complete and perfect as were being made now in this colony. It had been talked about for years, and he wanted to see it begun. The late Government had been prepared to make a beginning, and to construct railways much cheaper than the Central Railway, and he was only sorry the present Government did not seem prepared to do so. He extremely regretted the Minister for Works did not say where the branch railways were to be. The Government thought the Darling Downs a suitable place a short time ago, and it would surely not be an improper disclosure of policy to say in what part of the country they were to be tried. If they were going to extend railways to a large extent they could not afford such expensive ones as they had been constructing; they could not stop railway construction; and therefore the only alternative was to face the difficulty in a manly way, and be content with a system of railways less expensive than those now under construction, though not less serviceable to the country on that account.

Mr. KINGSFORD was understood to say that, though he regretted to hear the Minister for Works state that the Government would not take into consideration branch railways from South Brisbane into the southern districts, he was yet glad that the intimation had been made, as the electors of South Brisbane and the adjacent districts would know to what extent they would be indebted to the Government. He was not now going to advocate a branch line from South Brisbane to a more southern part of the colony; for that matter had already been discussed, and very few people would have the temerity to dispute that such a line had a prior claim to all others. His colleague (Mr. Mackay) had stated, in his opening remarks, that he did not mention South Brisbane to the exclusion of all other districts in his proposed branch trial lines. He thought it a most suitable locality to try the experiment, and for that reason mentioned it, but not to the exclusion of all others; and therefore the Minister for Works' strictures in this respect were not called for. He was quite sure that his colleague would not be deterred, by any opposition that might arise, from proceeding with a matter that he had taken in hand, and that with his usual perseverance and persistency he would continue pushing forward the question of low-cost railways. He was happy to hear from the Minister for Works that the principle was already recognised; but, at the same time, his colleague (Mr. Mackay) would not rest satisfied until a more economical system of railway making was introduced into the country. Unless they constructed more railways the colony could not advance; and it was time the colony awoke to a sense of its importance,

and to the necessity of taking its place with other countries in the world. And he did not think they should be above taking a notion from their American cousins, or adopting principles advocated by others, when it was clearly to their advantage to do so. He should not go at length through the motion. The first paragraph was a truism, and might have been left out; but as regarded the last he believed it would be to the advantage of the colony, and would simplify matters, to enter into a sort of co-partnership with companies for the construction of railways. It would reduce responsibility, and would cause the introduction of outside capital. He did not agree with every detail of his colleague's scheme, but he cordially assented to the principle of the motion.

Mr. GROOM said that when the railway question was first raised before the Queensland Parliament it was upon the basis of what was called "low-cost railways." He was a member of the House at the time, and had a lively recollection of what took place in connection with the subject. A gentleman named Mr. Tooth came to the colony and stated that he would construct a tramway or a railway—whichever the Legislature chose to adopt—from Brisbane to the Darling Downs at a cost of £3,000 per mile. He was not sure whether his name was Robert Tooth or Edward Tooth; but this gentleman brought with him Mr. Fitzgibbon as an engineer who would bear out his proposals. He was perfectly justified in stating that the proposals which were submitted to the Legislature by Mr. Tooth and Mr. Fitzgibbon were accepted as being true, and that the then Premier, who held three offices at one time, recommended the Legislature to accept Mr. Tooth's proposal, based upon the recommendation of Mr. Fitzgibbon; and they were assured that the railway to the Darling Downs could be constructed for the sum named. He was one of the members who, in conjunction with the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan), disputed the correctness of the estimate, and for so doing they were designated the South Brisbane Select Committee. The late Mr. Forbes, Mr. O'Sullivan, and he went into the matter carefully at a house in South Brisbane; came to the conclusion that the estimate was not correct; and when the question came on for the second reading they voted against it, and they were then designated the South Brisbane Select Committee by the then Premier. An appeal was made to the country on that particular issue, and the result was that a majority were returned who were prepared to carry out the railway to the Darling Downs. He referred to this matter incidentally to show that, so far as estimates were concerned, they were not to be depended on, unless their accuracy could be

assured on the best and most guarded testimony. The line in question was eventually started from Ipswich; but instead of costing £3,000 per mile, as had been estimated, it cost £8,000 per mile to be carried to the bottom of the Main Range, and £10,000 per mile to be taken over the Range, and involved an expenditure which was never contemplated. Had it even been suggested that some competent gentleman should come from the other colonies to review Mr. Fitzgibbon's estimate, and to report whether the best and most reliable surveys had been taken, the expenditure would not have been incurred, he believed. From that time he had always had his doubts of estimates of the cost of railways, and he had not known a single instance in this colony of such an estimate proving correct: invariably, the colony had to provide for a larger expenditure. When the railway reached Dalby it was supposed it had gone far enough. Mr. Macalister, however, proposed its extension to Roma, and he was present at a meeting convened by that gentleman of his supporters at which it was distinctly stated that overtures had been received from a firm of English capitalists to build the line for £2,500 per mile; and they gave their consent to the work on hearing Mr. Macalister make it a condition that if the cost was to exceed £3,000 per mile he would cancel the contract, or would not ask the sanction of the House for it; but what had been the result? Had not the contracts shown that instead of the line costing £3,000 per mile, as they had been led by Mr. Macalister to believe would be the ultimate expenditure, it would be nearly £6,000 per mile. Engineers' estimates were by no means reliable, and the House and the country had been invariably led astray by them. He did not believe the Bundaberg-Mount Perry, and Maryborough-Gympie, lines would be an exception; the line from Brisbane to Ipswich had exceeded all estimates. After these convincing testimonies as to the uncertainty of engineers' estimates, how could they accept any proposal for what was called a system of low-cost railways? He was one of those who thought it was perfectly absurd for members of the House to go outside the colony for precedents in regard to railway construction or to settling the public lands, for each country had circumstances which made it differ from others. Reference had been made to America. It was a country favoured especially by navigable rivers, gold and silver mines of enormous extent, and resources entirely different, perhaps, from any part of this colony; and if there was any country which could bear costly railways better than any other it was, perhaps, America. It had a population of about forty-five millions of one of the most

vigorous and enterprising peoples in the world; whereas Queensland, with its enormous area, had only a population of 200,000, which was scarcely equal to a second-rate town in America. How, therefore, could any analogy be drawn between the two countries? Queensland had no navigable rivers of any extent; it had goldfields, certainly, but it had often been said that, so far as reefing was concerned, to get £4 worth of gold £3 in silver had to be spent. They could not say that Queensland had any large silver mines; and, in point of fact, it was not to be compared with America as regarded its geological features and geographical position, for, if it was, the balance was decidedly in favour of America. Referring to American railways, how had they been constructed? He should not like to see our railways built with Chinese labour, or the colony inundated with a population alien in blood, religion, and everything else; and if they gave the ordinary rate of wages how could they expect to get railways built on the basis of America? America was inundated by Mongolians, who had been used to the best advantage—namely, to construct railways; and had lived, perhaps, in localities where Europeans could not be expected to exist, and at a rate of wages which it would be an insult to offer to Europeans. He was prepared to give the hon. member (Mr. Mackay) every credit for desiring to introduce a system of low-cost railways, but by no possibility could Queensland be compared with America. Even supposing that low-cost railways had induced traffic in America, it would not do so here because they had not the population. Even the present rate fixed by the Government, and considered to be the lowest that could be adopted to make our lines return anything like a proportionate amount of the cost, was deemed to be a burden. The Minister for Works had thought fit to increase the rates between Brisbane and the suburban stations on the Ipswich line, and the result had been that a general outcry had been raised to intimidate him. As regarded agricultural produce, it would not bear the cost of the carriage. A firm had recently started in Brisbane to see whether some facilities could not be afforded outside producers to obtain a market. The colony had been labouring under a long drought, but of late Providence had favoured them with genial rains, and the result was that, just now, there was an accumulation of farm produce. Owing, however, to the general scarcity of money the farmers were unable to sell their produce. If they went to the wholesale dealer in the inland towns they were told that their produce would be bought conditionally on the value being taken out in kind—in stores and

drapery. If the farmer asked for cash, the storekeeper replied that he was not able to give it. This state of things now existed; it existed in his district; and they should direct their attention to relieving it. Ships were chartered in the other colonies to bring cargoes of produce to Brisbane, but they should encourage their own farmers to send their produce down; at present, however, low as the railway rates were, they were too high for the farmer to bring down his produce at a profit. In illustration of this he would mention that pumpkins, which were a vegetable easily grown, cost 10s. 10d. per ton to bring from Gatton to Brisbane;—he was told incidentally that a truck was engaged to bring a load down to Brisbane, but, after paying the railway freight, the carriage from the railway station, and the cost of selling, there was no profit left; if any profit was got it was by the Treasury, which received 10s. 10d. per ton. He did not say that their railways should carry farm produce free, but the example of the neighbouring colony should be copied. When he was in Sydney, twelve months ago, he used to see sixty trucks loaded with vegetables arriving from Windsor, and he was told that the freight charged was the minimum sum of five shillings per ton, and that the owners of the produce sat on the trucks and were brought down and taken back free. If some such system were adopted here, to give encouragement to their farmers, it would be better than engaging in this proposed railway scheme. They were inducing people to settle on the lands and to go into agriculture; and was it not better to afford them facilities to sell their produce, by enabling them to send it down at rates that would pay, than to have ships bringing the same produce from the other colonies? He spoke upon this matter not with a view to discourage the hon. member (Mr. Mackay); he knew that the hon. gentleman thought he was introducing something which would benefit the agricultural interest, and he had therefore a perfect right to bring his scheme forward. The hon. gentleman had spoken of a company which was prepared to undertake the railway to which his motion more particularly referred, if sufficient inducement were held out: if any private gentlemen were prepared to make overtures for the construction of railways here on the guarantee of a bonus, they could not expect to get support unless they went to the head fountain—unless they communicated with the Government. If this were done and the proposals were considered favourable, the Government would no doubt come down to the House with them, and there would be a good chance of their being carried; but if they came through the weaker side, the fact of their not being made known to the Government would

secure their defeat; therefore, it would have been better for the parties in question, however sincere they might be, and it would be better for the country, that they should seek the support of the Government for their proposals, as they would then have some guarantee that they would be carried. Looking at the question altogether apart from party aspects—because he thought questions of this kind should be considered without party feeling—he should be very glad indeed if the motion resulted in nothing more than inducing the Minister for Works to devote a little attention to the present tariff so far as agricultural produce was concerned, because he was satisfied that it would result in a great deal of good. At the present moment, if anyone read the returns supplied to the House by the Colonial Treasurer, they would see the enormous amount of produce that was being brought into the colony even now. Much as agriculture had advanced within the last few years, and while there had been a large increase in the area under cultivation, as shown by the returns of the Under Secretary for Lands, still an enormous amount of produce that they could grow themselves—and which, with such a season as the present, could be grown in abundance—was imported; and, therefore, he said the Government should afford every possible facility, so far as the railway was concerned, to bring produce to market. He saw by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which hon. members could see for themselves in the Library, that at Orange cattle averaging 1,100 lbs. and sheep 90 lbs. were slaughtered there and sent by rail to Sydney, rather than go to the expense of driving them down to be slaughtered at the abattoirs in Sydney. Now, if the rates on the Sydney railways were not such that it would suit both the producer and purchaser to pay, it was clear that they would not be sent by rail. But did they find anything of the kind here? On the contrary, they saw some of the finest sheep on the Darling Downs, instead of being slaughtered there and sent down every Saturday morning to the Brisbane market, sent down in dribs and drabs, and people were continually complaining that they could not get a truck here or there. He thought the railway tariff was a question deserving the serious consideration of the Minister for Works, who he was sure, with his great practical sagacity, would bestow attention upon it. He gave that gentleman credit for being anxious to facilitate agricultural settlement in the colony; and he thought that in considering the carriage of agricultural produce the question of profit to the railway should not form a part. He said that if agricultural produce only paid the actual cost of carriage on the railway that was all the colony could expect. It would benefit

them ten-fold in other ways; it would facilitate settlement on the public lands, and induce men to enter into agriculture who otherwise would not do so. It must not be presumed that people were ignorant about these matters, and were not influenced by them. People who were anxious to go into agriculture looked at the cost of carriage to the railway stations, the railway charges, commission agents' charges, cost of carriage from the railway station to where the produce was sold—all these things were taken into consideration; and everyone knew that at the present low prices of produce these various charges put together formed an exceedingly large item, and left little or no profit to the producer. He observed that in Sydney and other large towns in New South Wales—such as Bathurst and Goulburn—the people, in consequence of the carriers fixing a certain price for carrying goods, had formed a deputation to the Minister for Works with a view to having carriers licensed by the Government to carry produce from the railway terminus to the markets at a certain rate. This showed the importance with which the cost of carriage was viewed in Sydney, where there was a population of 200,000; and how was it here where consumption was limited—where, in place of a population of 200,000, there was only 30,000? The cost of carriage was everything to the farmer, and if the motion of the hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Mackay) had done no other good, it had done some by directing attention to this matter. As far as the question of low-cost railways was concerned, he should be as much inclined as any member to support the proposition if a company was prepared to construct a railway to the Logan on the terms stated; but, at the same time, until some comprehensive scheme was adopted by the House which would ease the Government of the construction of railways, he could not give his consent to the proposal, because it would be wrong to see railways constructed in one part of the colony by the Government and in another by private enterprise. At the present time there was a scheme afloat, in England, for the Government to purchase the different railways; but it found no favour. The purchase of the telegraph lines did find favour, and for very good reasons; and if they referred to Victoria, the only railway there which had been constructed by private enterprise—the Hobson's Bay Company's line—had lately passed into the possession of the Government. It was found extremely inconvenient that the Hobson's Bay Company should be competing with the Government, and the Government at last bought the line. Therefore, until some comprehensive scheme was proposed by the Government he should be disinclined to

consent to a motion of this kind. That the district mentioned was entitled to a branch line he did not think there could be any doubt; but, in considering a question of that sort, as the Minister for Works pointed out, the character and formation of the country had to be taken into account. The hon. member expressed his belief that the line could be made for £2,500 per mile, but he (Mr. Groom) was inclined to think that the cost would be a great deal more. Even in the matter of bridges on the Main Range he would point out that extra expense had to be incurred. There was a bridge there known as "Watts' Bridge," and when the vessel which contained the bridge to span that particular chasm was wrecked on the coast of Brazil, the engineer was ordered to construct a wooden bridge in its place;—and what had been the result? That, from the time it was constructed up to the present, it had been an incessant source of expense; and the Engineer, Mr. Cross, was now about proposing it up, and a deviation was to be made, to cost he did not know how much—probably £3,000 or £4,000. There was another wooden bridge known as "Fountain's," a short distance from Murphy's Creek, and a deviation was also proposed to be made there at a cost of £6,000 or £8,000. He believed that in the proposed line towards the Coomera it would be found that instead of the cost being £2,500 per mile, it would be something like £8,000 a mile; so that he thought before going into a matter of that kind they should have reliable estimates before them. They had made errors enough in the past in railway construction, and, before committing themselves to such a work as this, the House should be thoroughly satisfied, on the best and most reliable information, that the estimate would not be exceeded. He desired to see low-cost railways, but he would not like to see them constructed by a reduction in the wages of the working classes. He did not suppose the hon. member desired anything of the kind, but it struck him that low-cost railways generally meant low wages, and that he did not approve of. Referring, again, to the carriage of agricultural produce, he should like the Minister for Works to give the matter serious consideration. He (Mr. Groom) was one of those who thought that railways should be utilised to the greatest possible extent. There they were—they could not take them away; and if, by the exercise of a little discretion on the part of the Minister for Works, the cost of the carriage of produce could be reduced to such a price that it would facilitate the sale of produce, which was rapidly increasing, he was sure the House would justify him in any course of action he might take to secure that result. He would much rather see the trucks coming down loaded from the Downs and

West Moreton and Gatton, which was one of the best producing districts in the colony, than to see ships coming to this port loaded with the produce of the adjoining colonies.

Mr. WALSH said he always listened with pleasure to the hon. member who had just spoken, but he was afraid that gentleman had not discovered the real cause of the evil. The hon. member had referred to the depressed state of the farming community; and he (Mr. Walsh) thought it was the duty of that House to alleviate that distress as far as possible. But how was that result to be obtained? Must there be no charge on our railways, that had cost the country so much, for produce carried by them? He believed he could point out where they could find a remedy for the present depression. He looked upon this discussion as a sort of feeler as to where they should have branch railways. The Loan Estimates, he was sorry to say, were not yet upon the table; and hon. members were evidently feeling their way, and pointing out to the Government how and where they should build their railways; but it appeared to him that it was very little use to build railways to farming districts if the farmers had no market for their produce—and that was virtually the position of the farmers at the present time. They had no market, and could not exchange their produce for coin, but had to exchange with the storekeeper, and, instead of getting money, they had to barter away their produce, and probably to pay a higher price than those who were able to pay cash. There was only one way in which this evil could be remedied, and that was by settling population upon their goldfields—that was the only way. They all knew that the opening of the Gympie goldfields, some years ago, saved the country from ruin and commercial disaster; they also knew that, subsequently, the discovery of the Palmer goldfields saved the commercial crisis that would otherwise have taken place at that time; and he had no hesitation in saying, as a business man with some knowledge of these things, that the commercial depression at the present moment would have existed long since had not the Palmer goldfield been opened. What was the fact at the present time? That the farmers of the colony—the hon. gentleman's constituents—could not get more than 2s. a bushel for their maize; but during the palmy days of the Palmer, and until very lately, they could get 4s. and 5s. a bushel, so large was the demand for the produce of farmers during 1874 and 1875, which helped them in so great a measure on towards prosperity. It surprised him that hon. members representing farming constituencies never looked at these things; they never looked beyond their own doors; they all wanted railways to their own constitu-

encies—almost everyone to his own farm; but were he (Mr. Walsh), representing as he did the most northern constituency, and the largest and most important, and no doubt the richest in this colony, as he could prove—if he were to ask for a railway in his district, he believed hon. members would pooh-pooh the idea; and yet that would be the very thing to relieve the depression at the present time existing in the farming districts. A few evenings ago he showed the House that during the short period of its existence they exported from Cooktown gold to the value of three millions of money. That was alluvial and reef gold combined. They all knew that alluvial gold was not a lasting thing, especially on the northern goldfields, where there was no deep sinking; it was only temporary, and they must expect it soon to be worked out. He could now produce figures to show hon. members that, beyond doubt, rich deposits of quartz gold existed there, and that the Palmer and Hodgkinson goldfields were merely in their infancy. On the Palmer there had been crushed, since its commencement, 16,503 tons of quartz, showing a yield of 41,516 ounces, or nearly 2½ ounces to the ton; and they must consider that that gold was not second in value to any found in the Australian colonies; the average value of the whole being £4 an ounce. There was a mine of wealth! There was a place to settle population! And yet, what was the result? That there were only 700 or 800 miners on about 400 square miles of country, only a few miles of which were being worked. Only a patch had yet been tried, and the reefs, he was happy to say, were turning out well. Some of them were now down about 200 feet, and all that had been sunk to any depth proved better as they went down, so that the permanency of the goldfield was not a matter about which there could be any doubt whatever. This was the place to make a railway; and, instead of having a few hundred people there, he maintained that they ought to have as many thousands as there were hundreds, or, he would say, as many thousands as there were people there altogether. He was perfectly certain that, if the Palmer and Hodgkinson goldfields were down in this portion of the colony where they would attract attention, they would have a population settled upon them in a few years larger than the whole population of Queensland at the present time. It would be in the recollection of hon. members that, last night, he presented a petition from his constituents praying that a railway be made from Cooktown into the interior. He could not himself agree with the prayer of the petitioners, because they asked for an absurdity; and so long as he had a seat in that House he should never advocate any expenditure that he did not

conscientiously and honestly believe in himself. His constituents had asked for a railway from Cooktown to Cloncurry, *vid* different places; but, as he happened to know the district thoroughly, he could say that if they had asked for a railway from Cooktown to Maytown he believed that House would be studying the best interests of the colony by granting that railway and commencing its construction at once. He believed that honestly, and he could show clearly that such a railway would pay—that, looking to the future, it would be more profitable than any railway to the interior of the country at the present time, or branch lines either, because it was no use giving the railways to farming districts to facilitate the transit of produce if there was no market for the sale of their produce. At present there was no such market, or only a very poor one. The principal market was Townsville and Cooktown, as he could say from personal experience that two-thirds or three-fourths of the produce of the agricultural districts of the colony was shipped to those ports. Hon. members might be surprised, seeing the yield of the Palmer goldfields, that they had not prospered at a greater rate; but they would not be surprised, when they found that the cost of the carriage from Cooktown to Maytown was at one time £160 per ton, and he believed that the average rate from the time that the goldfields started to the present was about £75 per ton. Any hon. members who knew anything about goldfields would at once see that such a rate of carriage as this was bound to be disastrous to all prosperity. It could also be easily accounted for why population had not increased as it ought to have done, seeing the richness and vast extent of that field. The fact was the main road from Maytown was so utterly neglected that it was positively unsafe to travel over it; and he believed that there were not many members in the House who would attempt to ride over it without dismounting and leading their horses; and yet his predecessor in the representation of the constituency of Cook used to be twitted because he asked for expenditure in that district. He could assure hon. members that, in doing so, they did not know what they were talking about. He maintained that it was the duty of members of the House to inquire carefully before they ignored what was right and just, and did positive injury to certain portions of the colony and to themselves. For his part, while he was in the House he should weigh everything on its merits, and vote only for expenditure where he thought the Government was justified in granting it. With reference to the railway asked for by his constituents, as he said before, he would advocate a railway to Maytown being commenced at once; and in connection

with this he might further state that, in addition to the gold-mines in that district, Mr. Jack, the Geological Surveyor, had sent down a report in which he stated that a rich coal-mine had been discovered about twenty or twenty-five miles from Cooktown. It was evident to him that hon. members opposite were fishing, and he thought he might fish a little; and before the Loan Estimates were sent down he hoped the Treasurer would make inquiries and see if he could not start a railway to that coal-mine, which was on the direct road to Maytown, and could be continued to that place afterwards. With regard to the large amount of money they were spending, apart from any political influence being brought to bear upon the Treasurer, he hoped he would expend that money where it would best serve the general interests of the colony. He had told hon. members what the yield of the Palmer was as regards reefing, and he would now give them similar information with regard to the Hodgkinson, which he might say was a continuation of the Palmer, and possessed advantages which the Palmer did not. It was only sixty miles from the coast, and with very small expenditure on the road the cost of carriage would be a very small item indeed. Up to the present time the average cost of carriage since the field had been opened was something like £30 per ton. The yield of that goldfield was 50,930 tons of quartz crushed, returning 90,317 ounces of gold. His object in referring to these matters was because he was obliged to be absent from the House for a few weeks, and in the interests of his constituents he thought it only right and fair that he should lay these facts, which were honest truths—which he defied anyone to contradict—before the House, so that when sums were passed for permanent works which he hoped to see on the Loan Estimates, his district should have the support of hon. members on both sides of the House. The hon. member for Toowoomba (Mr. Groom) had referred to the cost of getting gold; and he (Mr. Walsh) believed the cost was about equal to the value, but the hon. member should not lose sight of the fact that nothing tended to the prosperity of a country like the introduction of gold miners. The hon. member would bear him out that the rapid development of the colonies was entirely due to the production of the gold-mines. The discovery of the gold-mines had resulted in the introduction of a large amount of capital and labour and the settlement of the colonies generally. Looking at the matter in its different aspects, he hoped that the district he represented would not be neglected. The people there did not want much, but the little they did want he trusted they would get. The colony expended a large amount on immigration and for other purposes, but he maintained, with all due respect to

the Treasurer, that the best way to increase the population would be by assisting to develop our goldfields. If the hon. gentleman did that he need spend very little on immigration, as people would come here at their own cost, and instead of having a lot of loafers we should have desirable colonists. The member for South Brisbane made some remarks with reference to the traffic that the railway from South Brisbane to the Logan would carry, but he (Mr. Walsh) thought that if there was water carriage no railway that was ever made could compete successfully with it, although the navigation of the river might be something inferior. The hon. member had shown that all the cultivation was on the banks of the river up which steamers could go, and all he could say was that he only wished they had a navigable river from Cooktown to the Palmer. If they had, and if he then asked for a railway, he should not be surprised if other hon. members said he was a fit subject for Woogaroo. He hoped that in the allocation of the loan all parts of the colony would be fairly considered, and that the Government would resist all pressure even at the cost of their seats, and that there would not be another Bundaberg Railway. He hoped the Government would rather resign their seats than commit the country to such unnecessary expenditure as that.

Mr. McLEAN said he had no doubt that some hon. members would think that he had been in collusion with the member for South Brisbane with regard to the motion before the House, as it dealt so much with the electorate he had the honour to represent. It might also be thought that the hon. member had tabled the resolution with the intention of drawing out the Government as to the policy with regard to branch lines. Nearly three years ago he (Mr. McLean) brought forward a resolution asking for a survey of the railway from South Brisbane to his electorate, and he thought, with all due deference to hon. members, that a member representing a district should know better than anyone else what were the requirements of that district. If he did not think that railway communication between the metropolis and the Logan was necessary, he should not have asked for £1,000 for a survey to be made. He had no intention of advocating the claims of that particular line at the present time, although he should do so before the session terminated. At the same time he wished to disabuse the minds of some hon. members, who seemed to think parts of the Logan survey passed over very rough country. The surveyor who surveyed the line so far had told him that it was as level as a bowling-green. When Ministers went travelling about the country they did not go on a railway survey expedition, but generally took the

road; and if the hon. Minister for Works travelled in that particular direction, and took the trouble to go over the surveyed route, he would find that it was not such rough country as it was stated to be. With regard to the competition between water and railway carriage, which had been brought up during the debate, he wished to remind the Treasurer that it was not many days ago that he had asked for a small sum to be spent on removing obstructions in the Coomera River a long way below where there was the largest settlement, in order that punts might get up to the sugar-mills there. Rivers, to be of any service, must be navigable from the source; but there was no river in Queensland which was navigable for any long distance from its mouth. Even the Brisbane River was only navigable to Ipswich; but since the railway had been extended to Brisbane the steamers had been compelled to knock off, as it did not pay them to run, people preferring to send their goods by railway. Some time ago a wharf was erected a little above the Brisbane Bridge, for the purpose of accommodating the farmers of Oxley, and before there was a railway it was no uncommon thing to see a large number of farmers' boats at that wharf; but now there was not one, for the simple reason that the farmers all availed themselves of railway communication. The question of water-carriage *versus* railway-carriage was one that hon. members had not sufficiently taken into consideration. He certainly was not going into it at the present time. He agreed with the member for South Brisbane in the motion before the House. There was no necessity for going into that now, as they had been told that the Government were prepared to support the resolution. Still, they did not bind themselves to anything in doing so, but only affirmed that such things were desirable. With regard to the last part of the resolution, he was not at one with the hon. member, as he considered that Government should retain in their hands the railways of the colony. There was now a movement in the home country, and also on the continent of Europe, for the Government to take the railways into their hands, and he thought that, as far as possible, they should be kept in the hands of the Government in this colony, because if it would pay a private company to make railways there was no reason why it should not pay the Government. The hon. member for Cook was rather severe on what had been said by some hon. members with reference to farmers not being able to find a market for their produce; but it was well known that not only did the farmers of Queensland have a market, but that a large number of farmers of New South Wales also found a market here. Vessel after vessel came from New South Wales loaded with produce, and they could bring

corn from that colony into Brisbane and successfully compete with the farmers here at the present rates of fares charged by the Government for bringing agricultural produce by rail to Brisbane from West Moreton. If the Minister for Works would give the matter fair consideration, it would be found that the Government could afford to reduce the tariff somewhat considerably on agricultural produce. They had been told how cheaply the Government were now making some twenty-seven miles of the Central Railway, and if that Central Railway could be made so cheaply why should not branch lines? At present it was proposed to expend £300,000 on branch lines, but if the Government were to come down and spend half of the three millions that were to be borrowed it would pay them far better to have branch lines than to build the Central line—that was, if it was built so cheaply as was stated. The great thing was this, in regard to branch lines, that there was always some obstacle in the way. Either it was considered that they would not pay, or there was water carriage; at any rate, there was always some obstacle in the way of making railways where they would benefit a large number of people, but if it was proposed to extend the railway to the western districts, or never-never country, no objection was made whatever.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: You are ranting.

Mr. McLEAN said he was not. The Government proposed to expend £1,500,000 on main lines and £300,000 on branch lines, and he contended that the reason why they would not spend the £1,500,000 on branch lines was because it did not suit their party. He believed, however, the time would come when their policy on that point would be modified, and they would take a little more into their consideration the interests of the large body of people who would be benefited by the construction of branch lines. He heartily supported the resolution of the hon. member for South Brisbane. There was no reason why, if they were now building a main line at from £2,400 to £2,500 a mile, they should not be able to build branch lines at one-third less.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said hon. members were making great capital out of the question of branch lines, and, therefore, he supposed he must have his say in the matter. He was not aware that the Government had announced any policy with regard to branch lines; but the hon. member for the Logan had made capital out of something said by the Colonial Treasurer in his Financial Statement.

Mr. GRIFFITH: What else have we to go by?

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said there was one thing certain—that the people in the settled districts under the Range would insist on having branch railways, and hon. members might just as well make up their minds that

they would do that. There was no occasion for him to give his ideas about the £300,000 until the proper time came; the question of branch railways was being brought up every minute, and he thought rather too soon. They should get the money before they said where those railways were to go; but they were cooking the hare before they got it. When the time did come, and the scramble commenced, he should take care to be in the scramble too—when there was a system of log-rolling for railways commenced he should be in it, and he had no doubt he should be able to prove that the district he represented was more entitled to branch lines than any other in the colony. He should, however, be ashamed to start such a cry if he had three navigable rivers running through his district. If it was proposed to have a line across Cooper's Plains to the Upper Logan and Beaudesert, where there was no water carriage, the case would be different; but to take a railway alongside of a splendid road such as that to Beenleigh, on purpose to get to farms on Logan River, was absurd. These cheap lines generally turned out to be costly ones, and after all their experience they never got them cheaper;—for instance, in the case of the railway between Ipswich and Brisbane an offer was held out to the Government to construct a line between those two places for £150,000, instead of which it had cost £450,000. The hon. member for the Logan said he could not agree with the proposition that the Government should allow private companies to come in and build railways; but he considered that as they had plenty of land, and seeing the poor state of the country and the small number of its inhabitants, if they could get men of capital to come into the colony and make railways it was just the thing which should be done; and if such a proposition was ever brought before the House he would give his word that he would support it. The hon. member also called upon the Colonial Treasurer to grant a sum of money to remove impediments in the river; but in America, which was a country very often referred to by hon. members, they made their vessels to suit their rivers, and not their rivers to suit their vessels, and he was satisfied there would be very little difficulty in making vessels to go up all these rivers without asking for a shilling from the Treasury. A great deal had been said about farming not having paid in this colony, and the cause of its not having advanced as was at first expected had been attributed to the great difficulty of getting produce to market. No doubt that had hindered settlement to a great extent; but he thought the right nail was hit on the head, a few evenings ago, by the member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge) when he said that all the little farmers who settled in this colony turned out to be little mimic

squatters. They did not go into agriculture at all, but thought that half-a-dozen cows were quite sufficient to keep them and their families. If a man went from one end of the colony to the other, he would not find one out of twenty farmers going into cultivation. The erroneousness of such a system was never seen until the last drought, when the farmers had not a thing to fall back upon—not a cabbage or potato. His idea had always been that farming and grazing should be combined, but that was not done here. Some of the settlers were now, however, perfectly alive to the necessity of combining the two; and it would be found that, although they were considerably injured by the drought, in a short time it would have a good effect upon the colony, as all farmers would see that they must grow something on their land. He was justified in saying that the smallness of produce hitherto produced was as much due to that as to the difficulty of getting it to market. There was, no doubt, a wonderful difficulty of carriage;—for instance, in the upper part of his district, at Eskdale, potatoes could be bought for £2 a ton, whereas if they could be got to market they would fetch from £8 to £10 a ton. It would also take a man and his two sons to bring a ton of corn to Ipswich, so that at the price it was now selling it would pay them better to give it to the pigs. In reality, cheap lines of railway were wanted. If it was the intention of the House to bring forward a scheme of branch lines at all, the first duty would be to decide what lines were most wanted. It would be acknowledged on all hands that the first call would be for a line to deep water. He would be glad to support a line to Sandgate if he could see his own way clear; but when he heard from the Minister for Works that such an undertaking would cost something like £10,000 a mile, he would be obliged to oppose it. But amongst the important places where railway communication was most required his own district stood first in the colony, both the upper part of the Brisbane River and in the direction of Fassifern. Better returns would be obtained from branch lines in those two districts than anywhere else, and when the time came for him to produce the necessary figures and calculations in support of that statement he would be prepared to bring them forward. He was every day expecting to receive petitions from his constituents for branch lines, and besides that he felt satisfied that the farmers generally in the settled districts were looking for branch lines. He endorsed every word the hon. member for Toowoomba had said in reference to the good lands round Mount Brisbane, Laidley, Lockyer Creek and district, and he hoped something would be done to develop them. He would also render every assistance he could towards the construction of branch lines,

but was satisfied that if they were undertaken at all his own district required them more than any others.

Mr. NORTON said that, on the occasion of his recently having a motion before the House, he had urged that the country had made a mistake in spending money on a river when it could have constructed a railway. As he had not given it as his own idea, he then introduced an American gentleman, and put words into his mouth which the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) now used as an argument of his own. The hon. member, in referring to America, said that there they built their vessels for their rivers, and did not suit the rivers to their vessels. That was just what his (Mr. Norton's) American authority said, only the hon. member for Stanley had been a little more outspoken than he (Mr. Norton) had, and used the words on his own account. But he also found, on the occasion to which he referred, that there were not many hon. members then who supported him in what he then said, that railways did occasionally outbid rivers for carrying purposes. The hon. member for South Brisbane (Mr. Mackay) supported him there; while the hon. member for the Logan was also a strong advocate of railways in place of river carriage; and so, after all, he found himself not so much alone in his ideas as he had supposed. With regard to the construction of railways generally, and particularly respecting the question before the House, he said at once that the construction of railways should precede and encourage, and not follow, settlement. In making that remark, he did not wish to be understood to say that he would not on any occasion deviate from that principle: but it was a general idea which they ought to bear in mind. There were two questions which naturally arose for their consideration—first, what lines Government should undertake, and, secondly, what lines might properly be left to private enterprise. With regard to those to be constructed by Government, they had not only to consider the mere money return to be obtained from an investment of this sort, but also to what extent the people generally were benefited by such expenditure. If the works when carried out proved a success, of course not so much objection would be raised afterwards to their having been undertaken; but, if they proved a failure, then they were a source of regret to the taxpayers who had to raise the money to pay interest on the cost of their construction. Therefore, railways undertaken by a Government should not be directly speculative—not to the same extent, at any rate, as those undertaken by private companies. He would illustrate what he meant by supposing that people residing on a river bank asked Government to send them a ferry-boat to conduct them and their goods backwards and forwards for their own

convenience; no one would support a proposal of that kind, for it would be admitted that it was an interference with private enterprise. The principle would be about the same, were they to ask Government to construct lines of railway in parts of the country where the land was already alienated. Such works might be remunerative, but they would be of too speculative a character, unless under very peculiar circumstances, for a Government to undertake. His argument, therefore, was that any work undertaken by Government should be of a national, and not merely of a local, character. To be that it was necessary that some object of a national character should be involved—for instance, the carrying out of such works as would enhance the value of the lands in the district through which the lines were carried, also to reduce the cost of the maintenance of roads for which Government were responsible, and reduce the cost of the conveyance of mails. In addition, there was the avoidance of such things as were carried by the Government railways, and entered as “non-paying traffic,” which amounted to a considerable sum in the course of a year. These were matters of general importance, and deserved notice when the undertaking of a particular railway was being considered by the Government. There were some who argued—he thought without sufficient reason—that, because the land in a particular district had been sold, therefore the Government should construct railways to make it accessible. That argument seemed founded on a fallacy. The persons who selected that land would not have done so if it had not been to a certain extent accessible. If railways were carried through a district where the land had already been to a great extent alienated, it ought to be shown that there was some other object by which the country was to be benefited—for instance, that it opened up a large quantity of good land beyond. Speculative works of this nature were to be deprecated. When a line was made by the Government, capitalists knew that the expenditure of the money would enhance the value of the public estate, not merely to the extent of the money expended upon it, but also by increasing the value of the land in the neighbourhood, and so giving a greater security to the lenders for their money. He might explain more clearly what he meant by supposing that £100,000 was to be expended on a certain line of railway. The national estate was increased in value to the extent of that money expended, and also to a further extent by the increased value given to the lands adjacent to the line. If the lands belonging to the Crown along that line were increased in value to the extent of £10,000, it was clear that for every

£100,000 spent in that way £110,000 would be added to the value of the national estate. He did not wish hon. members to understand that he believed in running a railway out west as far as they could go. It ought certainly to go further west than it went at present, but he could not support any scheme to carry one on simply because there was money to spend upon it. As far as possible, the expenditure of money borrowed by the Government for the building of railways ought to be expended on Crown lands. When lines were constructed through private property, the suggestion of the Colonial Treasurer, the other night, that the owners should give the land for the purpose, was very reasonable. The idea was not quite a new one, however, for he saw in a recent paper that one of the Ministers in New Zealand had seriously proposed the very same thing a short time ago. A man's property was vastly increased in value by a railway running through it, and he ought not to be paid for damage done to his property by making the line. This was a matter worthy of serious consideration, but the mover of the resolution touched upon it in a very cursory manner. Up to the end of last year, £111,000 had been spent for the resumption of land for railway purposes only, and of that sum over £60,000 had been expended on the line between Brisbane and Ipswich. He could not think the hon. member seriously believed that if his proposed line was carried out all the property-owners would be willing to give up their land for the purposes of the railway, especially when they knew that so large a sum as £60,000 had been paid to other owners of land on the line between Brisbane and Ipswich. Lines carried out by private capital ought only to be constructed in districts where the population was dense; and it was through one of those districts that the line recommended by the hon. member for South Brisbane was proposed to pass. In an investment of money by a private company an immediate return was looked for. It was in the nature of a speculation of that kind that there must be money returned to enable companies to pay interest to the shareholders. If the Government were to undertake such works, it would interfere with any chances of railways being undertaken by private companies. Without some claim on the Government, no private company would undertake to construct railways on Crown lands, particularly in those portions of the colony where population was sparse, and when there was nothing to be had in return for the expenditure beyond the mere traffic receipts upon it. It was only reasonable, therefore, that Government should allow lines of the kind proposed by the hon. member for South Brisbane to be carried on by private enterprise.

It was urged that such lines would pay, and that might or might not be the case. He was not prepared to say whether this particular line would pay or not, but if it would not pay a private company would not undertake it; and, if it would pay, there ought not to be very much difficulty in inducing some private company to go into it even without offering the guarantee the hon. member recommended. If the scheme was undertaken by the Government it was just possible it might not give the return anticipated, and Government would place themselves in a false position by undertaking such a work. If, after having constructed such a line, it was found not to be a paying concern, the Government would find themselves in a far worse position than they imagined on first adopting it, because they would have to go to the taxpayers to make up the interest on the capital expended in an undertaking by which private individuals alone benefited; and to the same extent as they failed in getting a proper return they would depreciate the credit of the colony.

Mr. Dickson said if it was true, as stated by the hon. member for Port Curtis, that Government had no right to construct railways except on Crown lands, he feared the unfortunate selectors in the oldest settled district in the colony would have to wait a long time before they got a railway. His belief was that railways ought to be made for the convenience and encouragement of agricultural settlers in the different parts of the colony. With regard to the resolutions now before the House, he did not think the hon. member who introduced them could feel a very large amount of gratitude to the Government for their acceptance of the two first. The first resolution, stating that settlement on a farming basis was hindered from those causes, was a proposition which must meet with acceptance on both sides of the House, and in accepting that the Government bound themselves to no action whatever. Neither did they bind themselves to any action by assenting to the second paragraph, which affirmed that it was desirable to commence a system of low-cost railways on certain principles. Their ready acceptance of those parts of the resolution did not very much assist towards carrying out the views of the hon. member. Their acceptance of the second clause might, at a future time, furnish the Government with a text for extending railways into the western country in order to accommodate settlers. He believed their ready acceptance was only given with a view to have that argument to justify them in extending railways into the western interior to provide for the requirements of settlers in that new country. He wanted to see the requirements of settlers in the older agricultural districts of the colony attended to, and he considered

that the gist of the hon. member's contention lay in the third resolution, where it was pointed out that a line should be commenced in a certain district which he considered specially adapted for the initiation of the system. The Government said they were constructing lines at a low cost, and, according to the statistics of the Minister for Works, they were apparently constructing the present main lines of railway at a low cost, even less than that referred to by the hon. member. But they were not constructing them to give accommodation to agricultural settlers, and to his mind that was the essence of the whole matter. He cared not whether the system was commenced at South Brisbane with a line towards the Logan, provided it was begun in some district where it would meet the requirements of agricultural settlers; nor was he going to advocate any particular railway. He awaited the introduction of the Loan Estimates by the Colonial Treasurer, who would, no doubt, disclose what lines the Government intended to proceed with. But he should strenuously contend that the requirements of the agricultural settlers in the colony should be met by a fair share of the expenditure of borrowed money for railway construction in the districts where agricultural settlement had taken root, but was hindered and confined on account of the want of means to enable the producer to find a market for his produce. The remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba were well worthy of consideration, and he (Mr. Dickson) believed that special agricultural rates, lower than the charges for ordinary merchandise, and based upon the value of the produce, might be fixed as in southern colonies. He, however, wished to correct an impression which appeared to have arisen in the minds of hon. members through a statement made by the Minister for Works in reply to a deputation he (Mr. Dickson) had the honour to introduce some time ago, which statement had been repeated in the House this evening. He must confess that he did intend, when the proper time came, to advocate the railway referred to—namely, *via* German Station and Sandgate towards the South Pine River, and thence to Caboolture, and he had no doubt that good arguments would be adduced in favour of its construction. An impression seemed to exist that the line would cost £10,000 per mile, but he would point out that that estimate was made upon the assumed cost of the first five miles from the city. They all knew that the first few miles of a railway from a large city running through valuable suburban property must be attended with considerable expense, but such expense could not fairly be taken as an average for the residue of the line. Therefore, he should protest against the impression remaining on hon. members' minds that, if such a

line were proceeded with, the average cost would be anything approaching the sum mentioned. He was convinced that the line could be constructed quite as economically as any other line that had been mentioned in that Chamber; but the first few miles going through valuable property would necessarily entail a comparatively greater expense. His chief object now was to impress upon the Government the desirability of acceding to the views of the hon. member for South Brisbane, by proceeding with the construction of lines for the convenience of settlers in the older districts of the colony. He should have wished to have heard some member of the Government address himself to the fourth resolution, which opened up the very large question respecting the desirability of offering a guarantee to capitalists under special conditions. Many arguments could be adduced *pro* and *con*. He believed in the State being the owner of the railways in the colony, but he could not shut his eyes to the advantages that might accrue to the colony through private enterprise being enlisted in the construction of railways under a Government guarantee. They had an instance in favour of the principle in the construction of a railway, 40 miles in length, from Echuca to Deniliquin, north of the Murray River, at a cost which has never been imitated by any construction carried out by the Governments of the different colonies. With such an example before them, they could not fail to see the advantages likely to result in a colony of such great extent as Queensland from the introduction of capital through the agency of contractors, by the incentive of a Government guarantee. It was a matter the Government would do well to express an opinion upon. He had not made up his mind fully on the subject, but he was not prepared to discard the proposition. He hoped the Government would give practical effect to the third resolution, however, by commencing the construction of lines which would benefit the agricultural settlers.

Mr. PATERSON would take the opportunity to make one or two remarks, as he would have to leave the House shortly. He heartily concurred with the mover of the resolutions in the objects he had in view. The hon. member had obtained an expression of opinion which would be of great value to him in any future action he might take in the matter. Having obtained that expression of opinion—which he presumed was the great object the hon. member had in view—he would suggest that he should now withdraw the whole of the resolutions, for the present.

Mr. BAILEY said that in those resolutions they had to look to the end—like the postscript to a lady's letter—to find the only one that was of any importance. Two

or three years ago he advocated a very similar system to the one proposed—namely, the construction of railways by foreign capital through foreign capitalists and foreign contractors, and that system he had seen worked most perfectly, and far more satisfactorily than the system at present adopted in this colony. The policy of railway construction had become such a bugbear that they were frightened at the very talk about railways. The colony had been led into such extravagances that this House was afraid to undertake anything except a grand scheme beyond their knowledge. They would more readily swallow a project for a line of 500 miles out west than one of fifty miles in a coast district. The State was attempting to do what was railway capitalists' and contractors' work. He was not surprised to hear from the Government side of the House the original proposition—that the proper persons to pay for the line were the present owners of the land through which it would pass. It was very natural the proposition should come from that side. Men who had paid for their land four or five times more than the actual value, improved that land, and paid a large amount of taxes, were to give up for nothing as much of it as was required for railways and roads. He did not think the proposition had been seriously debated, and he hoped the hon. member for South Brisbane would take another opportunity to have the one resolution considered, as such a policy would be of the greatest benefit to the whole colony.

Mr. GRIMES fully agreed with the expressions used in the 1st clause of the resolution, and endorsed the remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba, that the great hindrance was the cost of transit of agricultural produce. The information given showed that the people of New South Wales were fully alive to the advantages of offering facilities for the cheap transit of agricultural produce. The result of their doing so had been that the land they had in cultivation was three or four times the amount under cultivation in this colony, and was progressing at a fair rate. Last year the increase over the preceding year was 47,000 acres. By offering cheap transit from the interior the amount of land under wheat cultivation alone had increased last year by 36,000 acres. He fully agreed with the first part of the resolution, that it was desirable a system of low-cost railways should be commenced to offer facilities for the cheap transit of agricultural produce. He could not speak so favourably of the last clause. He was more inclined to the Government undertaking the construction of these railways than to their being placed in private hands. If a private company had a monopoly as regarded any particular dis-

trict it would probably fix high rates of carriage, and in some measure the object of the railway would be defeated.

Mr. GARRICK said he believed the Government had promised to vote for the first two resolutions. All he could say was, "Thank you for nothing;" because he could not see how there could be any difficulty in voting for them, as they affirmed principles that really everybody believed in. With reference to the other clauses, he took it they were an attempt on the part of the hon. member (Mr. Mackay) to force the hand of the Government. They had agreed to the two first clauses, but he believed they would not give any information as to the third. The proper time would be when they produced their Loan Estimates. In reference to the first clause, he might say that his electorate, the North Pine particularly, afforded an illustration of the great difficulties farmers had to get their produce to market. He had seen the strenuous efforts that farmers elsewhere had to make to bring in their produce, but he wished to allude particularly to the settlers on the North Pine. Those on the upper part acquired a piece of ground, and made a depôt on it for the reception of their produce, and in good weather they were only able to bring half a load to the depôt. It took a man a day to do this, and another day to return, and when he had got a full load at the depôt he came into town with it; and it was only in favourable seasons that farmers could reach town at all. This showed the great difficulties they had to contend with and the manly way in which they had endeavoured to meet them. Reference had been made to the increased value that would be given to Crown lands by the construction of railways; but if railways were to be constructed only in such localities it would come hard on the settled districts, for there all the good lands had long since been sold at good prices, and the proceeds had been taken to pay the interest on the railways constructed elsewhere, or to raise the capital for public works in other districts. In reference to the fourth clause they were jumping at a stile almost before reaching it, for it would take a long time before they would find any capitalists to construct railways here. The proposal should be reserved for some special industries, where the ordinary freight was not alone to be looked to—where there was some special industry concerned such as the development of coal, or to enable the sugar-growers in the northern part of New South Wales to get to our ports—in such special cases they might find individuals to construct railways on certain inducements being offered. These were the only instances which they would have to consider; but they would have no offer from capital-

ists to construct any section of our main lines, or any large portion of our branch lines. They might have offers similar to the one received from Mr. Hurley, of New South Wales, about a railway from Maryborough to the Burrum. If the Government had no proposal from Mr. Hurley, that gentleman had, at any rate, written letters to the late Government with reference to the construction of a railway for the development of the Burrum coalfield. He believed that the sugar company of New South Wales had submitted a proposal with respect to the construction of a railway to the colony's southern boundary. These were the only sort of instances in which any capital was likely to come into the colony for the construction of railways, and, no doubt, in such cases they should be favourably considered.

Mr. REA was understood to say, in reference to remarks made by previous speakers, that any person who had seen the working of the American system would know that railways there were run right alongside of navigable rivers, and that in many cases they competed successfully with the rivers—at any rate, the rivers did not prejudicially affect the railways. The advantage of a private company having a railway under control lay in this, that when they found a charge did not pay they would reduce it to one that would, and the farmers living near a railway were thus able to get their produce to market at prices that would enable them to make a living, at all events, from their occupation. It had been stated by an hon. member that selectors were merely mimic squatters; but what resource had they but to turn their grass to account if they could not get their produce to market?—and this was one reason why he had always urged that, in addition to ground for purposes of cultivation, there should be a large elbow of grazing attached. In this country, more than any other that he knew of, seeing that railways were especially in the hands of the Government, special experiments should be made to see what would induce farmers to send their produce to market. They should follow the example of New South Wales in this respect, for unless the Government reduced the rates of railway freight, so as to enable the produce of farmers to be got to market, farming in distant districts would cease to exist. The suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Mackay) touched a very vital point. He (Mr. Rea) did not say that the particular district named in it was the best suited to the commencement of a system of low-cost railways, but, if they were to begin, surely now was the time, when they were projecting a loan of three millions. A million and a-half was to be devoted to the experiment of extending main lines into the interior; but when a suggestion was made to try, on a small scale, an experiment for the benefit

of the farmers of the colony, squatting members opposite appeared to think that it was a subject about which they could not bother their minds. He repeated that this was the proper time for the suggestion—that it should be brought forward before the hurry-scurry took place over the Loan Estimates, because then there would be such a scramble that one would not know who were his friends and foes. He maintained that the experiment should now be made in some district, so that it might be ascertained whether, if the Government could not make “low-cost” railways, private individuals could be found to do so. The hon. gentleman who had last spoken had said that proposals had been made to the last Government for the construction of railways by private persons. He therefore held that this was an important question for the whole of the coast districts, and that before any other they should see whether they could not test it in a practical manner. A railway gave more relief to settlers than a road—it gave relief to them for miles on each side; and the necessity for ascertaining whether low-cost railways could be advantageously constructed on the system proposed was all the greater now, when selectors were warned by the Divisional Boards Bill that for the future they must make their own roads. A Ministry with comprehensive views would have initiated their projects with experiments of short branch lines in two or three districts, instead of taking a leap in the dark, for that was what the Government scheme to take 700 miles of railways into the interior really came to.

MR. WELD-BLUNDELL said he was exceedingly surprised to see that the hon. member who had just sat down should consider it his duty to point out that the Central line of railway should not be carried out.

MR. REA: No.

MR. WELD-BLUNDELL said that was practically what it amounted to—considering that that railway would probably benefit Rockhampton more than any line of railway that could possibly be constructed in this colony. He (Mr. Weld-Blundell) foretold that; and it must be easily seen by any hon. member that, in the course of three or four years, if that line were run out to Barcaldine Downs, the effect would be to make Rockhampton a really great and prosperous city—a city that would, he believed, compete with Brisbane most successfully—not that competition was necessarily desirable, but what he meant to say was that the population would probably exceed that of Brisbane. He quite agreed with the principles, that were involved in the resolutions now before the House—that was to say, that it was most desirable to try as cheap a line of railway as could possibly be devised in some district in which it could be made pay-

able—such a line that would assist in the development of the country through which it ran, and which would prove fairly remunerative. So convinced was he of the desirability of making some experiment of this character, that he intended to propose in the third portion of the motion a slight alteration, which he trusted would result in the commencement of a line of railway running through Clermont and Copperfield. If that line were started they should have a very rich, wealthy district fully developed;—they should have a line that would not only pay well—because he believed it would develop to the utmost the great mineral wealth which the districts of Clermont and Copperfield were allowed to possess—but it would be the means of settling the whole of the rich agricultural downs there. He believed it was impossible for anybody who had been in any portion of the Peak Downs district to have failed to find as great agricultural wealth there, which only required capital to develop it, as could be found in any portion of Australia. He had been over a good deal of the Darling Downs, and various portions of New South Wales and Victoria, and other colonies, and he believed there were very few, if any, portions in the whole of Australia that were more capable of being developed and settling a great population than the Peak Downs. It must be well known to all hon. members that the Peak Downs had for many years exported an immense wealth of copper; that that district, together with Copperfield and Clermont, maintained a fair population considering the short time they had been settled; and that there was a prospect in a few years of having a large acreage of country under wheat and a large export from that place. Wheat-growing was being tried at the present moment, and he believed there was no district in the whole of Queensland which was more likely to prove successful in the cultivation of wheat than the Peak Downs, because, being placed nearly within the tropics, it had undoubtedly a larger rainfall than any southern district of the colony. It had, of course, yet to be shown that it would be successful, and after a series of years grown with profit; but, so far as it had been tested, he believed it would prove a great corn-growing district. It was not his intention to enter largely into this question now, because he believed the proper time to do so was when the railway scheme of the Government was placed before the House, and he should then speak more largely upon the whole question. But considering as he did that the Southern districts of the colony had had so much money spent upon them in various ways for the development of the rich lands they undoubtedly possessed, he thought it was only fair that a tropical or semi-tropical

district like the Peak Downs should have a line of railway which would develop its great agricultural and mineral wealth. So far the Central Railway had gone through country of the most indifferent character, and the capabilities of the Peak Downs for corn-growing had not been tested by that means; and he believed a line of this sort running through the blacksoil country, so as to enable those who produced large quantities of corn to find an outlet for that produce, would tend largely to the settlement of that district. He therefore begged to move that, in place of No. 3 of the motion, the following words be inserted—

“That a line of railway running through the Peak Downs, connecting Clermont and Copperfield with the Central line of railway, with Rockhampton as an outlet, appears to form a suitable locality to commence the system; the great richness of the soil of the district through which this line of railway would pass being equal to that of any district in Queensland; and that a railway there would open up a rich and extensive agricultural district, and would greatly assist the development of the great mineral wealth which that district possesses.”

It was so patent, not only to the House but to those who knew anything about this district, that such an expenditure would prove more remunerative in this district than probably any other in Queensland, that he thought it most desirable that the branch line to Clermont and Copperfield should be made the trial line for the illustration of this cheap system of construction.

Mr. KELLETT said he was rather astonished, at first, at these resolutions, and thought the hon. member who introduced them had a good deal of audacity when he stated that the district which most required a branch line of railway was the Logan; but he thought the mover of the amendment went a good deal further in his audacity when he proposed to make a branch railway in the district of Clermont. Considering that one of the trunk lines went through that district quite near enough to suit the inhabitants, and considering, also, that the place was very sparsely populated, he was astonished that the hon. member should actually come before the House and tell intelligent members that that was the district which required a branch line. With regard to a railway to the Logan, he thought of all the branch railways that had been spoken of, with the exception of the Clermont line, that was least required. The hon. member must think that very few members travelled through that district for themselves; but he (Mr. Kellett) travelled through it a short time ago, and it had the best roads he ever travelled over in Queensland. But he could instance other districts, such as the one he had the honour to represent, where he might say that through the greater part of it there were no roads at all; and in advocating a branch railway

through that district he did so because he considered it was the duty of the Government to make some roads by which the people could travel: and he thought it had been agreed by a majority of the House that branch railways through a district where there were a great many settlers could be made as cheaply and kept in repair cheaper than a main road. He could assure the hon. member for South Brisbane that if he paid a visit to the valley of the Brisbane River, he (Mr. Kellett) could show him land that could not be excelled in Queensland—and, in fact, he believed there was very little equal to it; and he could show him places where agriculture was flourishing to a greater extent than he could possibly conceive. A practical farmer, who first started life on the Hunter River, lately visited that district, and he assured him (Mr. Kellett) that he paid as high as £2 10s. an acre per annum rent for land on the Hunter River which was not equal to that on the Brisbane. There were thousands and tens of thousands of acres of land there equal to the very best land on the Hunter for agriculture. That was the land where a railway would pay if it would pay anywhere, and there was already a large population settled upon it; but there had always been the great difficulty of getting their crops to market, which had very much crippled them. It would be worth the while of any person interested in agriculture to see the lands there, and if he did so he would see at once how much the people would be benefited by a short branch line of railway. The present was not the proper time to speak of branch lines, but the opportune time would be when the Loan Bill was before the House. He was glad to see that it was the opinion of the majority of hon. members that the inside districts were more entitled to branch railways than the outside districts.

Mr. KATES said he had listened to the speeches of hon. members, each of whom seemed to think that his district was the most suitable for a branch line of railway; but he could bring forward his own district as being particularly suited. It had been said that there was a glut in the maize market; but the article they produced in his district was wheat, for which there was always a demand. The member for Clermont told them that his district was suited to the growth of wheat if heavy rain fell; but that showed that the hon. member knew nothing about wheat-growing, as too much rain destroyed the wheat. Then the member for Cook wanted a branch line to the Palmer and other goldfields, and told the House that several millions of money had been produced from those fields. He (Mr. Kates) should like to know whether the people in the South had seen a sovereign of that money, except that the Bundaberg people sent

their maize to Cooktown. Goods even went direct from Sydney to Cooktown, and, although the distance was 600 miles greater than from Brisbane, goods were taken at a lesser rate. If the hon. Minister for Works would only reduce the freight on agricultural produce he would help the farmers a great deal. He had seen dozens of trucks going down empty to Brisbane, and if the hon. gentleman would assist farmers by reducing the freight to 15s. a ton from Warwick, they would be able to compete with the wheat-growers of South Australia, where the water-carriage was only 15s. a ton for 3,000 miles; whilst here the charge was 25s. per ton for 100 miles. There was no doubt that the two first paragraphs of the resolution were very good and desirable, and he had always been a great advocate of railways to connect the main trunk lines with the market towns. With regard to the last paragraph, the Government should either take the matter into their own hands, or, if companies were willing to undertake the construction of railways, let them do so without asking the Government for any guarantee.

Mr. RUTLEDGE thought there was a disposition on the part of some hon. members to under-value the laudable efforts of the member for South Brisbane to indoctrinate the people with a sense of the value which the hon. member himself attached to a system of cheap railways. There was no doubt that the hon. member applied himself, in the course of his travels, diligently to acquire information on many points which he conceived it would be for the benefit of the colony to make use of on his return, and he (Mr. Rutledge) thought that the fact of the hon. member having done so much and written so much that was valuable to the colony entitled his remarks to the most favourable consideration of the House. He was glad that the Government saw their way to support the two first resolutions. With regard to the third, he had foreseen that it was likely to give rise to amendments similar to that moved by the member for Clermont, and that a large number of amendments would be moved by members who thought they were likely, by the resolution, to be forestalled in respect to getting branch railways for their districts. In regard to the fourth resolution, there was no doubt that the Government were debarred from incurring the necessary outlay for branch railways by the jealousy of the various districts—not because they did not believe that a railway was required in a certain district, but because they were afraid, and properly so, of risking the jealousy which would prevail in other quarters; and, because the Government had not the funds to meet the demands of all districts, the alternative was that no district would get a railway. Therefore, he thought, where it would be for the development of any particular industry,

no matter what, and where a company saw there was a probability of a line paying interest on the cost of construction, that company should be allowed to undertake the outlay. The Government would not then incur any jealousy, and he was certain that no company would think of laying down a railway if there was any apprehension that it would not pay. The resolution might be amended by putting the guarantee in a different form. Instead of a guarantee of 4 per cent. on the capital invested, they should encourage capitalists by giving them a *quid pro quo* in the shape of land, because if they gave a guarantee of 4 per cent. they were giving what the colony should keep to itself. He believed there were capitalists to be found who, if the Government would give them blocks of land to afford a suitable return for the risk they ran in undertaking the construction of a railway, would be ready to make railways in many districts where they were very much wanted. It had been stated by his hon. colleague that in the neighbouring colony the experiment of allowing a line to be made by a company had been tried and been successful, and there was no doubt that if a chance was given to capitalists the line would be constructed economically and no money wasted. In the case of the Government they had to buy off so many people, and had always to keep a perfect army of officers; but capitalists would take care not to incur any unnecessary expenditure. He believed that if grants of land were given companies would undertake the construction of these railways, and arrangements might be made for the payment of a royalty, which would be better than giving a guarantee. There never yet was a man who was not laughed at on introducing a novel doctrine. Even George Stephenson was laughed at throughout the length and breadth of England when he suggested steam for locomotive purposes; and even the great Voltaire, the demigod of the French people, when he heard that Sir Isaac Newton said that certain prophesied events could not happen till a method had been invented by which men should be able to travel at the rate of twenty miles an hour, spoke of him as a dotard and a fool. He did not mean to say that the hon. member (Mr. Mackay) was either a Newton or a Stephenson, but the same principle applied in his case as in theirs, and if a man was persuaded a certain thing could be done, through having given that particular attention to the subject which others had not, he ran the risk of being, to a certain extent, misunderstood and ridiculed. He trusted his hon. colleague would continue in the position he had assumed, and advocate cheap railways until, in time, he would have his reward by seeing this colony covered with a perfect network of railways.

Mr. MACKAY said that he had stated at the commencement that his object was to obtain an expression of opinion from the House, believing as he did that a company might be formed to run a railway into the Logan district. That expression of opinion had been given freely. The question had been very freely discussed by both sides of the House, but he was not desirous of taking up the time of hon. members further. The discussion had also had this effect—that, instead of showing that one railway could be made to pay, a dozen could now be pointed out. In the particular instance of South Brisbane, he was personally prepared to go in and try to work it out so that a company might result, but for the present he thought it would be better, with the permission of the House and the mover of the amendment, to withdraw the motion with a view to bringing the matter forward in another shape at a future time.

Mr. REA said, in reference to the remarks of an hon. member, it was quite a mistake to suppose that Rockhampton was jealous of any of the other districts; on the contrary, they had always shown a desire to give fair play all round. Whatever his (Mr. Rea's) arguments in favour of short lines might be, his constituents had no wish to monopolise for their district an immense expenditure in railway outlay. On several occasions he had discussed the matter with his constituents, and also on the hustings at Rockhampton, and they all agreed that it should be clearly shown beforehand that a line could pay the necessary interest. The reason why he had agitated was not that he pressed the claims of any particular district, but that he desired to see the proper enunciation of some system which would show they were earnestly trying to overcome the natural difficulties of the colony.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL did not wish to press a division on the amendment he had proposed, and, since it was the wish of the hon. member (Mr. Mackay) to withdraw the motion, he was willing to withdraw the amendment. But at the proper time he should not fail to bring forward the claims of his district.

Amendment and motion withdrawn.

QUESTION.

Mr. GROOM asked the Premier:—

1. Have any steps been taken to carry out the provisions of the Friendly Societies Act, which came into operation on the 1st January, 1877?

2. Has the registrar of Friendly Societies, under the Friendly Societies Act of 1876, furnished any reports to the Government, and will such reports be laid before Parliament?

The PREMIER replied: In answer to the hon. member, I will read a letter just re-

ceived from Mr. Fowles, the Registrar of the Supreme Court:—

“Supreme Court Office,

“Brisbane, 10th July, 1879.

“Sir,—I have the honour to say, in reply to your memo. appended to Mr. Groom's question, that no special action has been taken, in this office, to carry out the requirements of the Friendly Societies Act 1876, beyond that in operation under the previous Acts.

“No provision has been made by the Government for providing clerical and other assistance to enable this office to do more than register the rules of societies, and such returns do come in from them; and as the staff of officers in this department is short of its requirements for the satisfactory discharge of its duties in connection with the administration of justice, I believe my predecessor, Mr. Shaw, found it impossible to do more than I have stated.

“Since my appointment to the office of registrar, I have made inquiries on the subject referred to in question 2, and I have been unable to furnish reports for the reasons above stated.

“I have, &c.,

“W. LAMBERT FOWLES,

“Registrar.

“The Hon. the Colonial Treasurer.”

MEAT CURING COMPANIES.

On the motion of Mr. KELLET, the House affirmed, in Committee—Mr. Norton, in the absence of the Deputy Chairman, taking the chair—the desirableness of introducing a Bill to provide a Bonus for Meat Curing Companies by an Assessment on Stock, with the addition that an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to recommend to the House the necessary appropriation to give effect to such Bill.

Resolution reported to the House and adopted.

BATHURST BURR.

On the motion of Mr. GROOM, the House went into Committee to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill for the more effectual Destruction of Bathurst Burr and certain Thistle Plants.

Mr. GROOM, in moving the resolution, said he might briefly state, for the information of hon. members, that he introduced a similar Bill four years ago, but, owing to his being unable to satisfy the committee what was a Scotch thistle, he was compelled, after six hours' worrying, to move the chairman out of the chair and abandon the Bill. On the second reading of this Bill he hoped to be able to satisfy the House that the Scotch thistle, as far as this Bill was concerned, was a hard reality. On the last occasion the hon. member for the Balonne said he would not believe the real Scotch thistle existed in the colony unless he (Mr. Groom) could produce one “of such dimensions that a Hielander could stand on the top of it and play his bagpipes.” He hoped to be able to satisfy the House that the Scotch

thistle did exist in this colony, and that it was a most dangerous pest and was extending in every direction. As far as the Bathurst burr was concerned, everyone knew what a source of danger it had become. Within the last fortnight he had occasion to go into certain districts, and he was surprised to find vast patches of the burr in the paddocks occupied by the pastoral tenants of the Crown, as well as on reserves and other places. He introduced this measure at the urgent request of the Darling Downs Bathurst Burr and Thistle Association, established three years ago. He had cheerfully undertaken the duty, because he was aware that more stringent measures of repression were imperatively needed.

Question put and passed.

On the motion that the resolution be reported to the House—

Mr. BAYNES said that without wishing to oppose the motion of the hon. member for Toowoomba, of the provisions of which he knew nothing, he thought that if the existing Act was carried out in its entirety it would effect all that was necessary. That Act was very plain; but it was evaded in almost every district in the colony. When the Bill came on for its second reading he should consider it his duty to oppose it.

Mr. GROOM said this Bill was the result of the mature deliberation of a number of gentlemen interested in pastoral and farming pursuits, and he felt certain that when the hon. member saw it he would deem it a considerable improvement on the existing law.

Mr. TYREL said he could endorse all that the hon. member for Toowoomba had said. In travelling up and down the line he had seen the paddocks in a disgraceful condition from the Bathurst burr; and as far as the Scotch thistle was concerned, he was prepared, on forty-eight hours' notice, to produce such a Scotch thistle as the hon. member for Balonne was not prepared to sit down upon.

Resolution reported to the House and adopted. Bill introduced, read a first time, and second reading made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

RUST IN WHEAT.

On the motion of Mr. HORWITZ, the House went into Committee, and the following resolution was adopted:—

That an Address be presented to the Governor, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to offer a reward of £1,000 for the discovery of a Cure for Rust in Wheat; which cure shall prove to have been successful for three seasons.

The House having resumed, the resolution was reported, and the report ordered to be received on Monday next.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House adjourned at ten minutes past 9 o'clock, until Monday next.