

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 12 AUGUST 1879**

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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Tuesday, 12 August, 1879.*

Questions.—Petitions.—Formal Motion.—No-Confidence Motion.

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

## QUESTIONS.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS asked the Colonial Secretary—

If it is his intention to continue to act as a Director on the Board of the Queensland National Bank (Limited), after the date when the agreement between that Bank and the Government comes into force?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) replied—

If the hon. member will ask me any question with respect to the Government departments under my control, or matters connected with public policy, I shall be happy to answer to the best of my ability. With my private arrangements he has nothing whatever to do.

Mr. MESTON asked the Minister for Works—

1. If it is the intention of the Government to make the Sandgate Line answer the purposes of a line to deep water?

2. If not, is it the intention of the Government to construct any railway line to deep water to facilitate the Export Trade of the Colony—in coal and other products?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) replied—

The Government have already disclosed their railway policy in the Loan Estimates.

## PETITIONS.

Mr. GARRICK presented a petition from the Residents of the North Pine District, against the Divisional Boards Bill.

Petition read and received.

Mr. COOPER presented a petition from Subscribers to the Cooktown School of Arts, praying that a sum might be placed on the Supplementary Estimates in aid of such Institution, and moved that it be received.

The SPEAKER: The petition cannot be received; the prayer is, that a sum of money be placed on the Estimates in support of the views of the petitioners. That is against the Standing Orders.

#### FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to:—

By Mr. HORWITZ—

1. That the Bill to enable the Trustees of an Allotment of Land in the Town of Warwick, granted for the purposes of a School of Arts, to sell the same, and to devote the proceeds to the purchase of other land more conveniently situated, or devote the proceeds to the building of a new School of Arts in a more central situation, be referred for the consideration and report of a Select Committee.

2. That such Committee consist of Mr. Beor, Mr. Tyrel, Mr. Groom, Mr. H. W. Palmer, and the Mover, with power to send for persons and papers, and to sit during any adjournment of the House.

#### NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH: I gave notice on Thursday last that it was my intention, on the resumption of the debate on the Loan Estimates, to move a resolution condemnatory generally of the policy of the Government, and yesterday I gave notice that the form of it would be this—"That the proposals of the Government in relation to the construction of public works are unsatisfactory to the House." I have selected this form of wording because I do not object to any one particular part of the proposals of the Government so much as to their whole policy. I propose to consider the policy as a whole, and as a whole I think that I shall be able to establish to the satisfaction of a great many hon. members of this House, and of a great many beyond them, and to the satisfaction of an overwhelming majority of the country, that the proposals now brought down are entirely unsatisfactory. This motion could not have been brought on at an earlier period of the session. We have spent already much time during the session and have made no real progress; but that want of progress is to be charged to the Government themselves, because, while they have been frittering away our time on a variety of matters of less importance, they have declined until last week to let us know what their real policy of public works was. We on this side of the House have been waiting and asking for information, from the beginning of the session, to hear what the policy was, or to have its principles disclosed. The hon. gentleman at the head of the

Government had a place of repentance, or, at least, a *locus penitentie*—it does not necessarily follow that that means a place of repentance—when he made his statement on introducing the Loan Estimates; but having heard it, I ask do we really know their intentions? I must say that I still have some lingering suspicion that they may turn round and say they did not mean this or that. We were told by the Minister for Works, this afternoon, that the railway policy of the Government was fully disclosed in the Loan Estimates, and we have also been told by the Treasurer that his financial policy has been fully disclosed. I am aware that the present is a most important crisis in the history of the colony, and I agree with what the Treasurer said last week that some loan is necessary during the present year. We are all aware that the money already voted and borrowed, or authorised to be borrowed, for some of our public works, is not sufficient to complete those works to which the credit of the country is pledged. Upon that point there is no difference of opinion, and there are also many other works in progress besides these railways which it is also necessary should be carried on. It is not to these two classes of works that we take exception, but it is to the new items disclosed in the policy that I intend principally to address myself. I shall not trouble the House with any remarks on those items in the Loan Estimates devoted to the purposes of carrying out railways already sanctioned to the termini which have been agreed on, and the plans of which have been approved by Parliament. In considering a matter of this sort, we are bound to look around and see what is the state of the colony. At the present time we know that we are worse off than during the previous history of the colony for many years. Our revenue, instead of receiving a yearly addition to it, is, if not falling off, at any rate stationary. Our population is not increasing as it was wont to do; on the contrary, the action of the Government has tended rather to decrease than to increase population. Our products are not increasing as they have done, and as they ought to, and we find ourselves, therefore, in difficult circumstances—not peculiar to Queensland, I must say, but shared in by nearly the whole of the civilised world at this time. That fact, however, is a most important element in the consideration of the affairs of the colony, and no Government has any right to bring down a proposition involving a large expenditure of public money without taking that fact into their serious consideration. I have no doubt the Treasurer will tell us he has considered it, but I maintain that he has not given due weight to this circumstance; and,

though I give him every credit for a knowledge of the world, I still say he has not given proper weight to them, and therefore the proposals he makes to the House under existing circumstances are unsatisfactory. I am a believer in party Government. I believe that general rules and principles prove the best in the long run for conducting public business, just as in the private affairs of men; but, if ever there was an occasion when one's faith in the principles of party Government could be shaken, it is the present. If hon. members on that side were free to express their opinions upon the policy now submitted, without endangering the position of the Government, that policy would be condemned by an overwhelming majority. If I am defeated on this motion, it will be because a sufficient number of the House prefer to keep the present occupants of the Treasury benches in their places rather than condemn a policy which in their hearts they do not approve of. We must, however, take things as we find them, and I would say that it is not with the desire of turning the present Government out of office that I move this motion. I wish that the matter could be disposed of on its merits entirely irrespective of the interests of the occupiers of the Treasury benches. I hope that a higher sentiment will prevail with hon. members than the interests of Government or of party. The present time is not one in which anyone need be eager to have the responsibility of conducting the affairs of the colony. I believe from my heart hon. members on the other side think so, too; but, from the fact that the circumstances of the colony are different now to what they were in prosperous times, it requires more skill and wisdom to pilot it through its troubles. That fact ought only to give rise to more caution and more care, and to call for the exercise of those higher qualities of statesmanship which we had hoped hon. members sitting on the Treasury benches possess, and which they ought to have been able to show now. But I have looked in vain this session for any evidence of that determined will which two or three members of the Government are accustomed to pride themselves on, or for any evidences of that higher statesmanship or grasp of the circumstances of the times. Before I condemn the policy of the Government it is necessary to discover what that policy really is. First of all we had the Speech delivered at the opening of the session; then we had some incidental things which happened; we had the Financial Statement of the Treasurer; and, lastly, we have the Loan Estimates, with such explanation as the Treasurer was pleased to give to us last week. Turning to the Speech delivered at the opening of the session we are certainly unable to elicit

much from that. For aught that appears in that document the Government had not made up their minds to any policy of public works at all. They tell us—

"My Ministers are of opinion that the settlement of population and the increase of land revenue depend upon the speedy extension of our facilities for internal communication. They are also of opinion that the slow progress of harbour improvements hitherto has deprived the colony of much of the advantage which ought to have been derived from the sums from time to time expended. You will therefore be asked to make provision, by loan, for carrying on these and other public undertakings with vigour."

Of course, that may mean anything or nothing, as the Government might afterwards make up their minds. There was not a word, be it observed, in that Speech about branch railways. There is a reference, as hon. members will have heard, to the speedy extension of our facilities for internal communication; but there is not a suggestion that the Government ever intended to do anything in the way of constructing branch railways, or, in fact, anything more than pushing on the trunk lines into the interior. Almost concurrent with that, we found the Government were dismissing all the surveyors employed in the colony in the survey of branch lines—if not all, certainly nearly all. When their attention was called to that early in the session, by myself, either the Premier or the Minister for Works said, in reference to those railways, "We are not going to make them." We thought that this might also be an additional piece of information, and that there, at any rate, was one sign of the strength of purpose which some of the members of the Government, when they were not in office, used to pride themselves upon possessing. As the session, however, went on, two or three members on that side of the House gave the Government to understand that they would not submit to a policy of that kind. There were two or three speeches made by hon. members on that side showing a little independence; and we, therefore, on our side began to expect that the Government would materially modify that policy. When the Financial Statement—the next document to which we may refer for a real exposition of the policy of the Government—came on we were told what was the intention of the Government up to that time. I shall have to refer to two or three passages in that Statement, in the hope that we may extract what is really that policy which I now propose to condemn. These passages must be taken altogether as showing the meaning of the Government, and I do not hesitate to say that with some of them I cordially agree. The first passage I refer to is this—

"Wherever unproductive expenditure on Loan Account could be revised without a breach

of the public engagements, it has been impartially cut down; and although my proposals show that no reduction of the gross outlay on public works is contemplated, the Government have been actuated by a resolute determination to ask your sanction to no appropriation which does not promise to augment revenue, either directly by utilising Crown lands at present inaccessible and comparatively valueless, or indirectly by removing obstacles from the path of promising industries or expanding commerce. It is only in a strict adherence to this determination that the Government can find a justification for proposing any further addition to the public obligations."

With the latter proposition I cordially agree. It is only by strict adherence to that determination the Government can find any justification for imposing further addition to the public obligations, and that is the test I propose to apply to the proposals of the Government now under consideration, not the ones under consideration at that time. I shall refer to another passage in that speech dealing with the Loan Account. The Treasurer said in the same speech—

"The diminution of traffic on our existing lines results, to a considerable extent, from the reduced area of country at present under sheep. (See table.) The causes of this reduction are the general failure of the coast country as the habitat of the sheep, the marsupial plague, and the bad seasons we have until lately encountered. It must be well known to this Committee that the richest lands in the colony, as well as those most available for close settlement, lie far to the westward, and have not yet been touched by any of our railways. The large increase in the Government rent-rolls for the western districts shows the extent to which settlement is there taking place. The Government are confident that when quick and certain communication is supplied in that direction by the extension of our main railway lines, not only will the necessity for additional taxation be avoided, but the former prosperity of the colony will be restored and established on a broad and unassailable basis."

From that we might infer that it was part of the policy of the Government, as was stated, to extend the trunk lines into the interior; and it was stated that this would cost a million and a-half, and that the Government looked to those extensions for restoring the prosperity of the colony to its former condition. The Treasurer also stated, with reference to the amount required to pay the interest on the loan of three millions—

"To provide interest upon this amount about £133,000 per annum will be required, and the Government, in selecting the works on which the loans should be expended, have proceeded with a view to provide interest from the land, and so avert the necessity of additional taxation. Every mile of railway by which the interior of the colony is penetrated makes available for pastoral occupation and for conditional and homestead selection, as well as for sale by other

means, an additional area of Crown lands previously almost valueless for any practical purpose. To the augmented land revenue thus procurable, and the revenue obtained from the increased railway traffic resulting from the extension of profitable settlement, the Government confidently look for ample means to defray the interest on the contemplated loan."

Then we pass on to the question of branch lines—

"In selecting the localities for the experiment of making branch railways in the more settled districts, the Government will be guided to a certain extent by the same principle, although it is important to recollect that the land in these localities having been mostly alienated from the Crown, cannot be looked to so confidently for the annual revenue necessary to meet interest charges. The Government, however, will select localities in which the construction of branch railways will stimulate the traffic on the main lines, and promote an export trade in produce. To this end, no more favourable locality presents itself to the Government for experimental branch lines than the farming districts of the Darling Downs."

The policy then, according to this, was that there were to be experimental branch lines and they were to be tried on the Darling Downs—a place in which it was well known no preparation whatever had been made for constructing branch lines up to that time, or at most only a few weeks before. It was well known, also, that at that time an election was pending for the Darling Downs district. There is a passage in the speech which relates to another question, which I may here refer to also—namely, the raising of revenue—though not revenue to go into the Treasury—

"Our present financial position, however, urges on us the necessity of economical reform, which we propose to initiate by saddling upon property the expenditure incurred for its improvement—"

A very admirable principle!—

Our disbursements from the Works Department go directly to the improvement of property, and a property-tax, to provide the means for such disbursements, becomes the natural and inevitable consequence. While the working-man is free to carry his labour to the best market, taxation solely for the improvement of property should not be allowed to encroach upon his means. The application of Customs revenue to public works would, therefore, be unjust to a large body of the taxpayers. How, then, is a property-tax to be raised?"

And the answer is—by the mode provided by the Divisional Boards Bill. These extracts contain a policy, so far as it can be extracted from the speech on the Financial Statement. The Treasurer said this was the policy upon which an appeal was made to the constituencies, and upon which the present Parliament was returned. I emphatically deny that this was the case. This was not the policy upon which an

appeal was made to the constituencies, nor was it the policy upon which the constituencies returned the Parliament to carry it out. I say without fear of contradiction outside the House, though I shall naturally be contradicted inside, that an appeal to the constituencies at the present time would show very clearly whether that was the policy that this Parliament was intended to carry out. The summary of that policy, so far as we can discover it, is this: Lines were to be made into the interior; branch lines were to be tried on the Darling Downs; trunk lines were to be extended to the interior. The only mode proposed for paying the interest on the loan of three millions was the augmented revenue to be procured from the extension of trunk lines, and the relief to the general revenue afforded by the Divisional Boards Bill. That was the whole policy, so far as public works are concerned, and if there was anything more in it it would surely have been pointed out in the debate on the Financial Statement, when the same objection was made as is now raised. Having seen how, in the early part of the session, the Government frequently changed front, and became advocates of things of which they at first disapproved, we waited till the Loan Estimates came on. The policy declared in them is somewhat different. Certainly with respect to branch railways there is an important variation. Branch railways are no longer considered an experiment to be tried on the Darling Downs, but as things that are to be carried out elsewhere. There are seven of them, two of which only are on the Darling Downs, the rest being in different parts of the colony. This is, in substance, giving effect to the objections made from that side of the House when those independent members to whom I referred said pretty plainly that they were not going to submit to this policy of the Government—to expend vast sums of money to carry lines into the interior and nothing more. I am not going to complain of the Government for changing their policy. They may change that as often as they like, and I hope they will change again once more, as I am quite sure they will, before the session ends. I do not complain of that. I have to take the policy as I find it. I do not say they are unworthy of confidence because they are driven about by every wind from one side of the House or the other. If they are supported by a majority of the House the minority cannot complain of their changing their policy. That is a matter entirely for their own honour. If they are, however, so to be driven about, and change their minds from time to time at the will of their discontented followers, I have no complaint to make except that it is a course of conduct which always brings its own

punishment in time, and that we on this side are perfectly contented to wait. Let us, then, deal with the policy as we have it now before us. The policy, as declared in the Loan Estimates, differs from that disclosed in the Financial Statement mainly with respect to the branch lines. I shall be told, no doubt, that this policy is the same as that of the last Government, in substance. That is a matter, again, I do not care to discuss. I shall not say whether it is or whether it is not; but I may say that the policy proposed now is, to a great extent, a part of the policy proposed by the late Government. But there is one great difference—that the late Government never made it their policy simply to borrow money. The proposition that I shall endeavour to establish is, that the only policy disclosed by the Government up to the present time is to borrow money simply. If you ask the question, "What will you do with it?" the answer is, "That is immaterial; we will borrow the money." If you ask, "In which direction will you take the lines?" the answer is, "We will settle that afterwards; let us have the money." If we ask, "Upon what principle will you construct these branch lines?" the answer is, "We do not know; there is at present no principle applicable, but we will find that out afterwards—only let us have the money." I will go through this policy, and show that there is nothing more in it, from beginning to end, but to borrow money; and I need not remind hon. members that that is a most unsatisfactory state of things. It is only a fragment of a policy, and it does not require any great business capacity or statesmanship to borrow money, if anyone will lend it to you; on the other hand, it is evidence of statesmanship to borrow money, spend it upon reproductive works, and establish a sound system upon which to pay the interest without ruining everybody by the process. This policy, it is perfectly true, embraces an extension of trunk lines of railway, and I may be reminded that we ourselves admitted that the trunk lines already authorised should be extended with the ultimate design of connecting them by a trunk line proper running from south to north, and I have not the slightest doubt, if I have the ordinary fortune of living the years usually allotted to man, I shall see that policy carried out. But it is one thing to lay down a policy of that kind; it is quite another to propose to the House how to carry it out. After all, I might remind the House that the first scheme of a railway running north and south was propounded by Mr. Macalister some ten years ago, and it was a line that would lead from Brisbane to the Gulf of Carpentaria. I hope to see that carried out some day; but because I so hope it does not

bind me at once to make a railway without considering any details as to how I am to pay for it, the direction in which it is to run, and the other numerous circumstances which must be attendant upon so important a public works policy. I remember that in the neighbouring colony of South Australia, a few years ago, Mr. Boucaut, then Premier, brought forward a comprehensive system of public works, but he brought forward with it a sufficient financial policy; and when he was defeated on the financial part of his policy he declined to go on with the remainder, as any intelligent Government would do, and as I suppose every Government that has ever, to the present time, brought forward a proposal for borrowing large sums of money has done. I say, therefore, the proposals of the late Government are perfectly immaterial to the question at issue. What we have to do with is the policy of the present Government. The late Government, while they wished to construct these main lines, intended also to make their construction contingent upon sufficient means of raising the interest to pay for them without burdening the general revenue of the colony. I have referred to the statement made in the Speech and in the Financial Statement of the Treasurer. The statement of the Treasurer upon the Loan Estimates told us nothing. He only gave us a running commentary upon the items of the Estimates. He gave us no general financial policy. He did not tell us how he was going to pay the interest. He told us a loan was necessary; but we were all agreed upon that. So far as we can see, therefore, the only proposal the Government made with respect to paying the interest on the loan was in the Financial Statement—namely, the saving of the revenue by the operation of the Divisional Boards Bill and the land revenue which was to be derived from the extension of the main trunk lines. That is all that was disclosed. I hope there will be something more disclosed yet, but that is all we have to go upon to-night. There is nothing, at any rate, analogous to increased taxation. There is no proposal to increase the population of the colony, nor any means definitely suggested for increasing the revenue. I am not going to fall into the error of prescribing too soon. I have no doubt we shall be taunted on this side of the House, as we have been already in the Press—that it is much easier to object than suggest, much easier to destroy than to construct;—I am perfectly aware of that. The late Government were quite prepared at the beginning of this year, when they intended to propose the borrowing of a sum of money for public works, to propose proper means for paying the interest; but I am not going, on the present occasion, to state the details

of that mode of raising interest, because, notwithstanding the blame which I know will be attributed to me for not doing so, I distinctly decline at present to make any proposals of that kind. It will be time enough afterwards, if we find it is absolutely necessary. If the Government cannot, or will not, make proper proposals, which are necessary corollaries to the proposal to spend all this money, we may be forced to save the country from the injuries which they are attempting to bring upon it. At the present time I am contented to confine myself to condemning the proposals of the Government. In considering the separate items of the Loan Estimates it must be borne in mind that this loan of three millions is intended to carry us over three years. All will agree that a million a year is quite enough to borrow, and it cannot be expected that anything beyond that will be added during the next three years. The first item is Immigration, for which service the Government propose to borrow £100,000, which, with the addition of £80,000 or £90,000 which the Treasurer says he has in hand, means a serious diminution in immigration. With a present debt of over ten millions, or about £50 a head on a population of 200,000, we cannot afford to increase that debt to the enormous extent proposed unless we have some proposition which will have the effect of increasing the population so as to divide the burden among a greater number of people. It is absolutely suicidal, without making provision to increase the population, to propose to increase the public debt to such an enormous extent. We must bear in mind that the only proposition made to pay the interest is by increased land revenue. How is it to be obtained? How will the proposed railways conduce to raise a revenue from the land applicable to the payment of the increased interest? I am quite aware that in conjunction with the construction of railways an increased land revenue may be raised; but the Treasurer has not proposed anything of the kind. He has told us, however, that his propositions are now complete, and we have to deal with them as they are. Where is the land revenue, then, to come from? Take the first item under the head of railways—Extension of Southern and Western line from Roma, 130 miles, at £3,000 per mile. The first question that suggests itself is, in what direction is the line going—west, south, north-west, or south-west, or where? The Treasurer says he does not know—he has not made up his mind. There is a proposition to borrow £400,000 for a line, and when the Treasurer is asked he says he does not know where it is to go. Was ever such a proposition seriously made by a Treasurer before? Since he first proposed the extension he had publicly stated that he had

not made up his mind. He knows that not a farthing of the money can be spent until the House has approved of the plans. It seems the Government have not yet made up their minds in which direction the survey will be made. The plans cannot be prepared before next year, and it is quite certain that, at the outside, the Government cannot ask the approval of more than fifty miles during next year. Which direction will the line take after that? Perhaps the House will then say, "You have surveyed in the wrong direction; we will not go that way." They will have secured their object in borrowing the £400,000, and in the meantime we have to pay interest on the money. How can an authorisation for that purpose conduce to raise additional revenue from the land? There is no connection whatever between this particular sum of money now proposed to be borrowed by the Government and any increased revenue from the land of the colony. But suppose we concede that the Government have made up their minds, they could not ask authority for more than fifty miles during the present session. They have only a trial survey—and that not further than Mitchell; but I will suppose they had a permanent survey, and that they could ask the House to approve of plans and specifications to Mitchell. Supposing that there is something definite in their scheme, and giving them the benefit of every possible doubt, what would be the result? The works would not be constructed for two years from the present time, and when would the 130 miles be constructed? Considering the state of progress of the surveys, and that the Government have not made up their minds, the 130 miles would not be constructed for four years from the present time. In the meantime, we have to pay the interest on the money.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS:** The money would be earning interest.

**MR. GRIFFITH:** Yes; the money would be earning interest, and I shall show that that is all in the scheme of borrowing money. The money would be earning interest—but, where? It is quite certain that it would not be earning interest through land revenue. It is so hard to deal with shadows of this kind: but suppose this line were extended to St. George—which proposition seems to have received consideration—how will that earn interest? I am quite aware that the extension of the line might be made to earn interest, but the Government propose to leave the law and the land revenue as it is, and have put forward no additional scheme. If auction sales were to be introduced, it is easy to see the sources from whence money might come. Suppose the line were extended 130 miles westward, would the mere fact of its extension increase the number of sheep in the Maranoa district? No

doubt it would not—but would it increase the number further west? I do not profess to be familiar with those matters, but, if my information is not entirely wrong, the country 130 miles west from Roma is not good, and the terminus is for all practical purposes as good as Roma. But at present the Government do not say they intend to extend the line west from Roma, and we have to deal with the subject as we have it. The Treasurer does not say he proposes to rely upon additional traffic on the line—he says he relies upon additional land revenue; but unless some change is made in the law no additional revenue will be derived from that source. Here is, then, a proposition simply to borrow money for an unknown, unascertained purpose, without any proposition as to raising revenue to pay any part of the interest. I expect by-and-bye the Treasurer will say he does not propose to borrow all at once; but, if he does not, let him borrow as much as he wants now, and, when he can show how to pay the interest, borrow more. Let him for the present borrow just as much as he knows what to do with and how to pay for. If he does not want to borrow three millions all at once, he has no business to ask for it all at once. I come next to the extension of the Central Railway from Retreat, 130 miles at £3,000 per mile. We do not know where it is to be taken to—due west, south-west, or north, and I presume the Government have not made up their minds where it will end. Does the Treasurer mean to say that the extension of that line will immediately have such a large practical operation upon settlement in the far western country as to create a largely increased land revenue?

**THE PREMIER:** Yes.

**MR. GRIFFITH:** The hon. gentleman knows better. He must know that such an extension will only shorten the immense distance that separates us from that magnificent country which he speaks of as admirably adapted for close settlement—which, I suppose, means that it can be made available for carrying more sheep. To suppose it suitable for homestead or conditional selections at the present time is positively absurd. We know it can be utilised, and made to return an increased revenue to the colony; but the Treasurer does not propose any such scheme. What additional revenue will there be from the land through the construction of that line? Will there be more land taken up? We have been told that runs there were not stocked for want of water, and that there are droughts for two or three years at a time—will that be remedied?

**THE PREMIER:** Yes.

**MR. GRIFFITH:** The railway cannot bring rain. Possibly the drought might be remedied, not by the railway, but by the money borrowed. It is not the construction

of the railway but the money authorised to be borrowed that is looked to remedy the drought. The mere construction of that line, which we know will not pay its working expenses, will not of itself, without some additional proposition accompanying it, increase the land revenue any more than the extension of the railway in the southern district. If this money is borrowed, the interest must come out of general revenue until some other proposition is made to relieve the general revenue. Then we have the Northern railway—where is that going? A proposition to construct a railway to the moon would be not much more absurd. They tell us one terminus but not the other. We know one is to be at Charters Towers, but we know of no surveys beyond there. The Government, in fact, propose to borrow money for 130 miles of railway before they have begun to survey the route. What is there to show that that extension will be immediately beneficial to the land revenue of the colony? It seems almost nonsense to ask such questions. It seems impossible that any set of men affecting to govern a country can make such a wild proposition—to borrow money about the mode of expenditure of which they know nothing. The only result would be that the country will be permanently saddled with the payment of interest for many years before there could be any possible return. So much for the trunk lines of railway, the construction of which I should cordially approve of if the proposal to construct were accompanied, as such a proposal always ought to be, with a proposition to meet the interest on the cost of construction. With regard to the item £418,000 for the completion of lines already authorised, I believe that sum is wanted, and I believe, also, that the figures stated are too low. When in the Works Office, some figures nearly analogous to those were given to me, but larger amounts; and I think it would be better to ask for more. A very small amount is put down for rolling-stock; but those are mere details. Then we come to branch lines. I have before referred to their history. First we knew nothing, then they were not going to be made, then experimental lines were to be constructed on the Darling Downs, and now we have these. Irrespective of any individual lines, the best commentary on this part of the Government proposal will be found in the speech delivered by the present Treasurer in the House last session, read with what he said last week when speaking on the Loan Estimates. On a motion exactly analogous to that which I have moved, the present Colonial Treasurer said on the 24th July—

“We know perfectly well that a Loan Bill cannot be passed through the House without certain items in it of a log-rolling character. When a Loan Bill has been brought forward the principal object of it has been apparent

enough—that is to get money for specific public works—but there has always been some items put in it for the purpose of getting the Bill passed.”

I wonder which are the log-rolling items here? The Treasurer recognises the axiom that such items must be inserted, though the principal object is to get money for specific public works. I think, on the present occasion, the principal object is apparent enough—to get money. The Colonial Treasurer told us that the line from Brisbane to Sandgate was put down at £4,000 per mile, and he asks £52,000 for that purpose. Yet he tells us that the Engineer-in-Chief estimates that it will cost over £6,000 per mile, exclusive of rolling-stock and purchase of land, and what is the use of the Colonial Treasurer asking for £52,000? Why does he not honestly say that he has put on the item only that it may be taken off again?

The PREMIER: I never said it would cost £6,000 to build this line. I said the engineer's estimate was £6,000 and mine was £4,000, and I stood by mine.

MR. GRIFFITH: I will read exactly what the Colonial Treasurer said—

“This is the estimate that I have put down for what I consider the best line of the Engineer-in-Chief—the route by the Albion. He estimates the costs at £6,322 per mile, for what he calls a first-class line. I do not consider that a line of this character is required, neither do I believe the colony would be justified in recommending such an expensive railway—and here I may add that the engineer's estimate did not include rolling-stock or the purchase of the land. I believe, however, that a line quite suitable for the purpose can be made for £4,000 per mile; and if it can, the colony will be justified in undertaking it.”

Is it not apparent that the Colonial Treasurer does not believe anything of the kind? If he supposed the line could be made for £4,000 per mile, he might have favoured us with some information as to how it could be done. When I took up the matter of cheap railways and tried to get information on the subject, he laughed, and said my propositions were wild.

The PREMIER: No; I did not say that.

MR. GRIFFITH: Well, it amounted very much to the same thing. Now, considering that the same Engineer-in-Chief says that the proposed Burrum Railway can be constructed for £3,000 per mile, and this railway for not less than £6,000 exclusive of land and rolling-stock, if the cost of this line can be reduced to £4,000, surely the cost of the Burrum line can be reduced to £2,000. But the whole £3,000 is put down for that line. It is quite evident that, as to the Sandgate line, the Government are not in earnest, but have put it down to make the Estimates look well, with the intention of having it left off. If the Treasurer believed in it he ought to show

how the reduction is to be made. The gradients are not steep—not more than one in fifty being required anywhere. The line is only thirteen miles long, but there will be two very heavy bridges to bring up the cost;—in fact, that item may be called simply a bogus item. The next proposed line is from Ipswich to Fassifern—thirty miles, at £2,500 per mile, and with regard to that the Treasurer simply says—

“The estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief was £3,400 per mile, but I have reduced it to £2,500 for something like the same reasons that I gave for reducing the Sandgate line, and with a thorough belief that the work can be carried out for the amount.”

When the Treasurer makes a Financial Statement, and tells the House what certain railways could be constructed for per mile, he ought to tell us something more than that he thinks so—he ought to say upon what principle and what gauge they are to be constructed. The next line is from the Southern and Western Railway to Mount Esk, the route of which has not even been permanently surveyed. For the Maryborough and Burrum Railway a provision is made of £3,000 per mile. It is well known that the country over which that will pass is about as level a piece of country as could be found in the colony. The Treasurer says that line is as good as any of the others. That is certainly an instance of “damning with faint praise.” He tells us that one, which can be done without the assistance of the Government at all, is as good as any of the others. Anyone listening to his remarks must conclude that he retains the opinion he enunciated last year, and every time he had spoken on the subject until he brought forward those estimates, that the branch railways are a very bad lot. Then there are the two experimental lines on the Downs to cost £2,500 per mile each. One is to go from Toowoomba to Highfields, but no one would suppose for a moment that a railway would be made there for that amount—the Treasurer knows it cannot be done. The other is proposed to be made between Warwick and Killarney—but has the surveyor even looked at the route yet? Those are two glaring instances of what the Colonial Treasurer called last year log-rolling items. If ever there was a time for log-rolling items, this is not the time; and the Premier will find that any attempt to catch votes by baits through which the hooks show so transparently will fail. Hon. members will not be led to sacrifice their principles or to bring the colony into serious difficulties simply by small baits of this kind being thrown out. Then we come to the Central Railway branch towards Clermont—£50,000. If there is anything insincere in the whole scheme, this item is the worst of the lot. The loan

is to serve for three years, and the Premier puts down £50,000 for a line towards Clermont. We know that the distance is sixty miles by the shortest way, and by the way that will open the best land it is considerably longer: and yet, all that he proposes to spend on the line for the next three years is £50,000, which amount, he knows perfectly well, will not make more than fifteen miles. What will be the good of that? It is evidently another bait. A petition came in from Clermont lately, asking for a branch line, and this is the way the Colonial Treasurer meets it. He knows that the amount down is perfectly useless. The insincerity of the item is transparent, and no man in his senses who really was in earnest would make such a proposition. The branch line scheme, however, is not more remarkable for the mites put in with such glaring insincerity, than for the absence of lines which should have appeared. The Government propose to open up a new coalfield on the Burrum River, for which the intervention of Parliament is not wanted, because private persons are ready to build the line that will be required: but with respect to the old existing coalfields the Government have not a word to say. When they are asked whether they will construct a railway to open them up, they reply that their intentions are fully disclosed in their Loan Estimates. It is perfectly clear that they do not intend to develop old-established coalfields; but they are willing, when not asked, to develop new ones which have not yet been thoroughly proved. I shall not say much about the other items. I believe we should go on with the harbour and river works that we have in hand, and that we require more dredges; but there are items here, also, which are put in to make the Loan Bill pass. Who asked for £10,000 for the improvement of the Logan River? “Do not say anything about not getting your railway; you shall have £10,000 to improve your river”—that is what the Government virtually say to the people of the Logan. I do not believe that the people of the Logan care much for the proposed expenditure. Where are the Government going to spend the money? Then there is £10,000 down for the Endeavour River, where there is a remarkably fine harbour with room for the largest ships to come and lie alongside the wharves. I have seen them lying there myself. However, I will not condescend to details, for I condemn the Government policy as a whole. As to the provision for roads and bridges, we have heard speeches from members of the Government that it is improper to borrow money for such a purpose; but the pill they want the House and country to swallow is £1,170,000 for main lines—and it requires a lot of gilding; hence all these items. Part of the Government scheme was the Divi-

sional Boards Bill, by which they were going to relieve the revenue and set free a large sum of money which would be available to pay interest. That Bill will not suit, however. The Colonial Treasurer must see that there is not the remotest chance of it passing in its present form; so that, as a sop to the objectors, £100,000 is put down to meet the first expenditure of road boards and shire councils. I fail to see how that is to bring about any difference in the position. As to the items for buildings, water supply, and telegraphs, these are matters of detail which I shall not take the trouble to criticise, and of course the Government do not regard them as involving any vital principle. There is £10,000 down for the defences of the colony, but the Government do not know how it is to be expended. What does the whole scheme come to? We have a proposition to borrow £1,200,000 for trunk lines; but as regards two-thirds of the amount, the Government do not know what they are going to do with it; with respect to the other third, I presume they know, although they have not told us, in what direction the line is to go. As for the branch lines, they do not intend to construct them for some time to come. Has there ever been an instance known in this colony of Parliament authorising the borrowing of money for railways before sanctioning the lines to be constructed? Has Parliament ever authorised the borrowing of half-a-million without first knowing where the lines were to go? The usual practice was to get the lines authorised, and then to ask for the money; but this is to be exactly reversed, and the House is to be asked to borrow the money without sanctioning the works, and with the knowledge that the Government will not be in a position to ask the House to authorise them for two years. All that the Government can ask the House to sanction this session is the construction of thirty or forty miles out of the 390 miles of trunk railways, and out of the whole of the branch lines that they mention in the Estimates. They tell us they want the money, but until the works become reproductive how is the interest to be paid? The only answer is "by the increased land revenue." If they get an increased land revenue it will not be from these railways, and no scheme has yet been disclosed how it is to be derived. I said some time ago that the only real principle in the policy of the Government is to borrow money, and I have pointed out that to a great extent the Government do not know what it is to be borrowed for. What is to be done with it when it has been borrowed? The Treasurer may tell us that we are spending at the rate of nearly a million a year on public works. I grant that; but does he mean to tell us that we are

always to go on expending that amount on public works? The money wanted for public works already in progress is about £500,000. It is quite clear that we shall not run short of funds if we borrow that money, but we are told that the rest of this loan must be borrowed for the purpose of keeping public works generally going on. I say we cannot keep this on. By the time the Premier gets to Roma and Charters Towers he will have nothing authorised to proceed with, and the effect of his proposal will be to bring money into the colony which must lie idle until Parliament determines where it shall be spent, and that will be only when Parliament has the requisite information before it. The money will lie idle, and will be put with the Government bankers, whoever they may be. We have no right to borrow large sums of money which cannot be applied for any practical purpose. The Government have made no proposal for the real expenditure of the larger part of the sum which they intend to borrow. I say, therefore, their scheme is entirely unsatisfactory to the House, and if it is not unsatisfactory to the House it is so to the country, as no one knows better than the Government. I hope the House will pause before they sanction the borrowing of this enormous sum without any provision for the payment of the interest. I do not know whether all members of the Opposition agree with me; but, for my part, I will say that I am willing to borrow for the construction of the lines previously advocated by us, but I do protest against the borrowing of money when the Government have no proposition to stand by, when the plans are not ready, and the necessary authority for its expenditure cannot be obtained for some time, and when it will be necessary to let the money be idle—or, rather, as the Minister for Lands put it, when it will be simply earning interest by being placed on loan. Such a policy would be absolutely ruinous for this colony to enter upon. I do not know whether I shall be able to carry my motion; but I am satisfied that the general disapproval of the Government propositions will be so strong that the Government will not be able to carry them out. I have no objection to their retaining office so long as their supporters are intent to keep them there, but I believe that one result of my motion will be that these most iniquitous proposals will not be carried, and I shall be perfectly contented if I gain that object by this debate. The proposals are too monstrous for any Parliament in its senses to assent to—and I am convinced there is so much good sense that, in committee, they will be so modified that the Government will not recognise them. I regret that the Government did not use their strength as

they should; and that they did not come before us with some proposals which they believed in and would stand by. If they had shown to the House that they themselves believed in their scheme, they would have got much more support than they will; but they have vacillated so much, and have made propositions which are so clearly impossible of being carried out, that I feel myself justified in moving—

“That the proposals of the Government in relation to the construction of public works are unsatisfactory to this House.”

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith): I am sure, when the leader of the Opposition gave notice on Thursday of a motion which amounted to a vote of want of confidence, hon. members thought that in his opinion the right time had come in his opinion for exposing the whole policy of the Government. The hon. member has got credit for showing wisdom and caution in waiting his time to challenge the policy of the Government; but I am afraid that he has got more credit than he deserved, judging by the speech he has just concluded. The whole substance of that speech was delivered by his colleague, the hon. member for Maryborough, two months ago, when he himself ought to have spoken. Why did he not bring forward his motion then? He has said that he waited until he heard our policy fully explained, and now, after hearing it, he has not more to say than his colleague said two months ago. The hon. member in his opening remarks said it was necessary to wait this long time in order to see the Government policy thoroughly brought out. I have said it before, and I say again, that this Ministry have disclosed their policy sooner in the session than any Ministry which preceded them; and I can only contrast our conduct with the miserable position the Government in which the hon. member held a portfolio took up last year. We had to wait until the end of the session before we heard an announcement from the Treasurer that he had a loan to propose, although it comprised one of the most important points of the Government policy. We waited three months for the announcement, and, at last, I had to bring down a vote of want of confidence—not on the policy disclosed, but because the Government had disclosed none at all. Then and only then the Government proposals were brought out. If I may use an Irishism, the hon. member began with a peroration. What does this speech amount to?—simply that the policy of the Government is to borrow. By reference to a few little detached expressions that I have used at various times in different places, and by drawing a lot of small arguments from the details of the Loan Estimates, the hon. gentleman tried to prove that our only policy is to borrow. There is a great

deal more truth in that assertion than he meant for. I am sorry to say that it must be the essential part of the policy of any Government, just now, that money must be borrowed. Who has brought me into that position? Why am I bound, as Treasurer, to make a loan an essential feature of my policy? Simply because hon. members opposite, when they were in office, forced the country into such a position that we are bound to go on borrowing to avert disaster. At the present time there are between 45,000 and 50,000 adult males in the colony, and by the action of the hon. members opposite, during the five years they were in office, 5,000 are directly in the employment of the Government, and 4,000 are indirectly, so that one-fifth of the adult male population of the colony is in the employment of the Government directly or indirectly. What Treasurer staring that fact in the face, and remembering that our expenditure is one million a year from loan, which is nearly equal to the product of each of our chief industries—gold and wool—would doubt that he was bound to go on borrowing in order to carry on our public works policy? We are bound to carry on the public works in progress, and to see that a large number of people are not thrown out of employment. They have also been working up a large system of immigration for many years, and have brought many immigrants to the colony. I say that a large loan is necessary owing to the action of the Opposition when in office, and the Opposition should be the last persons to complain at our scheme. Our position as a Government was very plain. We took office at a bad time, when population was possibly decreasing, although on that point there was no certain evidence—but when, beyond doubt, production was greatly decreasing, when the revenue was falling off, and the colony was in a depressed state as a whole. This was the policy we were bound to pursue. We had to see that we carried out public works, at all events, to as great an extent as before, so that population was not forced out of the colony. The next thing we had to consider was, what public works should we encourage, seeing that a public works policy was actually necessary. That is a subject I have maturely considered and that my colleagues have maturely considered, and our ideas do not come before the House for the first time. I have let my ideas be made known for years. Last year I made them known in a very elaborate form, and we come forward with the same policy now as I advocated last year. Having to carry out a public works policy, we said that public works of the best character should be undertaken—works which would show the greatest remunerative properties, which were more likely to be reproductive,

and were actually required in the interests of the country. This policy is embodied in the Loan Estimates. Has the hon. leader of the Opposition challenged the items in the Estimates?—has he dared to say anything against them except to impute motives to us in proposing them? He would not say that they were wrong items to be there, because he could scarcely single out one with which he himself and the other leading members of the Opposition had not identified themselves. The hon. member's opinion against our works policy is worthless, because there is scarcely an item in it that he himself has not advocated. When I brought forward my motion of want of confidence last year, the hon. gentleman was not only a believer in it, but was actually struck with the fact that it so closely approximated to the policy he and his colleagues had had under consideration a short time before. He actually sneered at us across the House, and intimated that surely we must have stolen the policy of the then Government. He, at all events, said that the loan estimate I then proposed was exactly the same, so far as the items were concerned, as the policy that they had discussed in the Cabinet with approval; and his colleague, the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), supplemented that information by stating that it exactly agreed, or very nearly so, so far as the amount was concerned; and the policy I now bring before the House is virtually the same as that I proposed when leader of the Opposition, and which was endorsed by those hon. gentlemen, one of whom was then Premier and the other Attorney-General. I have only to refer to their speeches in support of my statement. Here is what the hon. member for Maryborough, then Premier, said, criticising the Estimates, which were virtually the same as those I now put before the House:—

"I am quite willing, upon some matters at all events, to learn from the honourable member (Mr. McIlwraith); and I am happy to learn to-night that his scheme, so far as the amounts he mentions, really does not materially differ from that which the Government have lately been seriously considering. The honourable gentleman referred to items, and I am quite willing to refer to items, if he pleases. I believe that our deliberations upon these points have certainly preceded his."

They were actually so anxious that I should not have credit for being the father of this policy, that he says they must be entitled to precedence. Then, what does his colleague, who was then Attorney-General, say on the same question—

"I must confess I was surprised when the honourable member read down the list of proposed items: immigration, harbours and rivers, defences, municipalities, branch lines, extension of trunk lines. I was amazed, and, if I did not know such a thing was impossible,

I should have imagined that some person had surreptitiously obtained possession of written documents which had been in the hands of the Government weeks ago. I was amazed at the extraordinary coincidence, not in the figures but in the headings."

The Attorney-General answers for the headings at the very least, and his colleague, the Premier, answers for the figures, so that it would almost appear as if I had stolen the documents themselves. This, is the policy which those hon. gentlemen now say should not be endorsed by this House. I do not say the inference to be drawn is either right or wrong, because the opinion of the hon. member for North Brisbane is against it; but what I say is, that the opinion of that hon. gentleman is worthless, because he advocated last year exactly the same policy that he says is unworthy of the confidence of the House this year.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The PREMIER: I say that is the position I take up—that the hon. gentleman's opinion is worthless because he advocated in the strongest way possible, last year, the very policy which he now condemns.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No;—do not misrepresent me.

The PREMIER: I will deal with the hon. member from his own speeches. He says I have misrepresented him; but let us see what he says further on. First, the hon. member for Maryborough said—

"We are quite willing to admit the importance of the North, and I may say that we propose in our future railway policy to proceed with three main trunk lines into the interior. I mention this, as it is evident that there are two branch lines that must penetrate the interior, and there is a third also—namely, from Charters Towers—which must in time be extended. We believe that these lines should be vigorously pushed into the interior, as they would open up country which is at present perfectly secluded and unpeopled, but which when made accessible by railways will become more settled."

Then the hon. member for North Brisbane followed up the Premier and said—

"I believe that our main lines must be extended—the Southern and Western, the Central, and the Townsville—and it is quite clear that during the next five years we shall have, in addition to those extensions, to construct branch lines on a more economical principle. I am even more sanguine on this subject than the hon. the Premier, as I believe that these lines can be made for much less than £3,000 a-mile. That has been my opinion for many years; and I remember that on the first occasion of my addressing electors of this colony I alluded to the subject, and expressed the same opinion."

While speaking on this point, although it is rather digressing from the subject, I may say with reference to the statement of the hon. member, that on one occasion in

this House I laughed at him because he said he believed cheap lines of railway could be constructed for £2,500 a-mile, that I never laughed at him for that reason. What I did laugh at, at the time referred to, was the fact that he seemed to consider that he had made a discovery; while Mr. Ballard had actually reported to the House on the subject, and his report was in print some years ago. That is what I laughed at, and not at the idea that railways could be constructed at that price, because I have always been a strong advocate for cheap lines. I think that I have identified the leader of the Opposition with the main trunk line policy. Next comes the branch lines policy. I do not think I require to enforce on them very strongly that they have advocated this policy, though always indefinitely, because they raised a cry on this question in the hope of setting the farmers against this side of the House. That was the object of the cry; but it was always an indefinite cry, although some members put it into words, and told us what branch lines they would advocate. Now, for the purpose of showing a comparison between the branch lines I advocate and those advocated by hon. members opposite last year, let us see what were the lines they mentioned. In reply to a question of mine relating to their policy connected with branch lines, they said their policy would embrace these special lines—Brisbane to Logan, Ipswich to Fassifern, Toowoomba to Highfields, Brisbane to the Pine and Caboolture, Oxley to South Brisbane, and the Railway Station to the Northern Suburbs *via* Victoria Park, and Emerald Downs to Clermont. All those branch lines were advocated by both those leaders at the very end of last session, and the only reason they gave why they did not bring forward that policy was that, at the end of a Parliament, it was not the proper thing to submit such a gigantic proposal—when Parliament was in a moribund state—and that the proper course was to refer the question to the constituencies. It has been referred to the constituencies, and, as I said in my Financial Statement, the constituencies have decided in our favour, and that is the reason we occupy the position we do at the present time. The hon. gentleman made his charges against me, I think, under three heads. The first was, that my great object was to borrow money; the next, that my great object was to pass this £1,200,000 for trunk lines; all the rest was log-rolling—to gild the pill, as he called it. The next charge was that I had made no provision for interest on the loan that I have submitted to the House. I hope I have met the objection that our great cry was to borrow. I admit at once that to borrow was the necessary position of the Treasurer at the present time. That position was

necessitated by the action of previous Governments; and I say that any Treasurer coming into office could not avoid taking up the position I have assumed. I do not attempt to justify that position, because whoever should take my place—if I should lose it—would require to do the same thing. It is an inevitable position—we must borrow. What is the best way to borrow? I know hon. members opposite will differ from me as to that way. During the time that the present Opposition were in power, or during the last four years of their time—from 1875 up to the end of 1878—they borrowed to the extent of £4,942,800. In 1875, £1,695,000; in 1876, £740,700; in 1877, £1,322,000; and in 1878, £1,184,800. Not a year since 1875 was allowed to go over without the late Government borrowing a good deal more than a million, and in one case nearly a million and three-quarters. That is a policy I do not approve of, and it is a policy the late Treasurer does not approve of, because in one of his eloquent financial statements he points out the danger of constantly, year by year, appearing before the financiers of London as borrowers. When he proposed the sum of £1,322,000 he made that speech, and he repeated it in still more eloquent language when he borrowed the £1,184,000 the next year. I strongly object to loans being brought forward on new ground every year, because it has a prejudicial effect upon the colony in the estimation of those from whom we borrow. It is much better to let our position be known as far as possible to those from whom we borrow. If we ask for a million this year and another next year, and so on for years, they will say, "this thing is to go on for ever;" and they will get tired of it, at last, of constantly meeting our demands, and will want to know with what object we are asking for the money, and what public works we intend to carry out with it. What I have tried to do is to form a scheme which will embrace the next three years, and place before the public the works we desire to carry out during that period. That will be something like a definite scheme, and with that information we can confidently appeal to the financiers at home. It may be said, and I know will be said, that it will have a depreciatory effect upon our sales if it is known that we were going to launch this large amount of money—three millions—on the home market. But we know perfectly well that we will require this three millions of money during the next three years, and we should not try to conceal our position from those from whom we borrow. The suggestion of the leader of the Opposition is that we should disguise our position, take a million this year, and let them know nothing about our intention to ask for another million next year. But is it not much better to say

exactly what we want—that we will want a million this year, another next year, and another the year following? That is something like a clear and definite scheme; but to ask for a million and say nothing about our future intentions is simply to deceive. I quite admit that we would get a better price for the first million if we were to pursue the course suggested by the leader of the Opposition—by deceiving the men who furnish us with money; but I think it is far better to be clear and straightforward. We would not get so good a price for the second. I think I have shown pretty plainly good sound reasons why I should have brought forward a three-million loan. I have also shown—although I have not made a special point of it—that, so far from going into a gigantic scheme of borrowing money, I am actually borrowing less than the average annual amount that has been borrowed by the last Administration. The next point is, that I have not provided interest for this loan. The hon. gentleman said that I had given no intimation as to how the interest is to be provided, but he misquoted my words.

MR. GRIFFITH : I read what you said.

The PREMIER : When the hon. member, for another argument, had occasion to quote my words, they came out all right; but in the course of his argument he said over and over again that I had given no indication whatever of any increase of revenue to meet this increase of interest, except one thing—that is, increased sales of land. But I did more than that, as the hon. member will see when I read that portion of my speech over again.

MR. GRIFFITH : I did not say increased sales of land, but increased land revenue. I quoted the exact words of the hon. member.

The PREMIER : I will take the hon. member's statement, which is the same so far as my argument is concerned. What I said in my Financial Statement was this—

“To the augmented land revenue thus procurable, and the revenue obtained from the increased railway traffic resulting from the extension of profitable settlement, the Government confidently look for ample means to defray the interest on the contemplated loan.”

That was my opinion then; I have not changed it since, and the hon. member has not met that. He says it is the duty of the Treasurer in putting a scheme of this sort before the House to intimate how the interest is to be got; but did the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), when he asked for the loan of £1,184,000, say anything about how he was going to find the interest for that? Was he told by the then Opposition that it was necessary to increase taxation for that loan? When the loan for £1,182,000 was asked for,

was he told that he must propose increased taxation to meet the increased charge for interest? Was it considered the paramount duty of the Treasurer then, by his colleagues, to provide for that interest by increased taxation? I challenge the leader of the Opposition to give a single instance in which the Treasurer has come down to the House with Loan Estimates, and informed that House that he was going to increase the taxation of the country for the purpose of finding the interest on the money he proposed to borrow: it would be the strongest argument I could bring forward against my own estimate if I said anything of the kind. The statesman to whom the leader of the Opposition referred, and whose example he says I ought to follow, was Mr. Boucaut, who brought forward a great scheme, comprising something like four or five railways and other public works, in South Australia, and at the same time introduced a scheme of increased taxation for the purpose of paying the interest. What was the result of that proposition by this great statesman? The consequence was, that the Parliament condemned the whole scheme on account of the proposal to increase taxation, and the Government were thrown out. Their successors came into office, carried out the part of the scheme relating to the construction of railways, leaving out the portion increasing taxation, and they are sitting there still.

MR. GRIFFITH : They are not sitting there still.

The PREMIER : The party are sitting there still.

MR. GRIFFITH : There have been several changes since then.

The PREMIER : I know there have been some changes, but the party are still in power. That is the precedent the hon. gentleman wishes me to follow; but I disclaim it. I challenge him to show a single case in which it has been said that it is essential that Ministers should come down and ask for an increased taxation on proposing a loan. I have said as plainly as possible that increased taxation is not necessary, and especially so in connection with these works, for which I propose to borrow £1,200,000, and that met with the animadversion of the hon. member. I repeat, and I can prove thoroughly, by looking to results in New South Wales and Victoria, that the increased land revenue that will be derived from the construction of these works will do a great deal towards paying the interest, so that there is not the slightest reason why we should ask for increased taxation. My chief object of anxiety in pushing these railways into the interior is not, as has been insinuated by hon. members opposite, that I have any private interests to foster by having railways ex-

tended there—because I can conscientiously say that individually I have not the slightest knowledge that I will in any form be benefited by the extension of railways out west, or by the carrying out of a single item in the whole of my Loan Estimates; but my anxiety in connection with this loan has mainly sprung from the fact that to the increased land revenue from those districts we must certainly look, not only to pay the interest but the principal of the loan whenever we make up our minds to do it, if it should become necessary to pay it from such a source. It is because I am thoroughly confident it will be met from the revenue provided from that quarter that I am anxious to see the rich lands out there tapped. And, sir, who are the men that question whether this source is sufficient to meet the interest on the loan that I have brought forward? They say that my provision for interest is insufficient; but while I have at my disposal—and I am speaking now for the Ministry—while we have at our disposal for sale by auction, or selection, or any other process defined by law, the great bulk of the land in the western interior of the colony—I say while I have that at my command, it is questioned by the other side that I have sufficient to pay the interest of the loan. Now, what has been the legislation that has distinguished the other side for the last three years? Why, that they believe that they will be able to raise sufficient money from sales of land, not merely to pay the interest that accrues annually, but to pay for the construction of the lines themselves. I say if there has been one distinguishing feature of their policy it has been that; and yet they now come forward and say I have not made provision for interest. I think I have answered pretty well that charge; but let us look the matter a little more in the face, and see what provision the hon. member says I ought to have made. He makes it very large. He says I have to provide interest to the amount of £130,000; but does he suppose that none of these works are to be reproductive? I can give him my opinion that there is not a single one of these works that I do not confidently believe will be at least as productive as the railways we have at present;—there is not one of them that will not yield as much interest as the works that are actually constructed and in operation at the present time. Let us see what interest I have to provide for, and then it will be observed that the reproductive works I have to make will yield as large an interest as that given by the railway works already constructed—which is  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. The total of the loan for which I ask is £3,053,000, of which I estimate £139,000 as the amount of depreciation for the last debentures

sold. The total amount to be received will therefore be £2,914,000. I will take out of those Estimates all works which are not reproductive. First, there is the sum of £100,000 for immigration—I strike that out; also, £249,000 for harbours and rivers; £62,650 for roads and bridges; £100,000 for road boards and shire councils; £80,000 for buildings, and £10,000 for the defence of the colony: making a total of £610,650. That amount shows the non-reproductive portion of my estimate, and the whole of the rest is as likely to pay  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. interest as the works actually constructed at the present time. This leaves the reproductive portion of the estimate to amount to £2,312,350; the interest on that, at  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., is £75,151, and, as we shall have to pay for the whole amount £131,131, the difference between those sums is the amount which the Treasury will have to find in addition as interest on the loan, which, in round numbers, is £56,000;—and yet gentlemen who contemplated last year spending something like £700,000 or £800,000 on works to be paid for out of sales from railway reserves are wroth because, for the loan I have proposed, I have not made provision by taxation to raise £56,000 for interest. But I could make out a great deal worse case against the other side; for, while they anticipated obtaining that large sum out of the railway reserves, I have the whole colony to go to. I did not confine myself to the railway reserves when I thought of how to pay the interest; I saw that I had the whole of the colony to look to—not like the leaders on the other side, who said we could get this amount from the railway reserves in some way or other, only to find out in the end that it was impossible to raise the money from that source. I have not allowed my reason to be blinded as they did, and I hold that the normal land sales of the colony will be perfectly sufficient to pay for the interest on any moderate loan that we are likely to incur. I have no idea of looking for the money to a certain portion of land only. I look to the whole of the lands of the colony to provide the interest required for this loan. I might have made this comparison a great deal better for myself, because the railways hitherto constructed, and which are paying  $3\frac{1}{4}$  per cent. on the amount spent upon them, were constructed under considerable difficulties and at great expense. Not only can we construct railways cheaper now than we could then, owing to better appliances, more capital in the colony, and a better stock of labour, but in all further extensions westward the difficulties in the way are nearly overcome. Instead of the average cost of future extensions being as it was up to the end of last year, when the railway reached Dulacca, an average of £9,000 a mile, it will

in future not exceed £3,000, or at the most £4,000, per mile. My estimate is £3,000, and I believe that all future extensions westward will be done for that amount. That makes the problem a great deal easier, because the railways which have cost £9,000 a mile pay at the rate of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. It was not going beyond reasonable anticipations to estimate that these extensions which will be made so much cheaper will pay considerably more interest per cent. of expenditure. The leader of the Opposition passed by a very considerable item, viz., £418,000 to complete the construction of lines actually in progress. He said he would pass that item by because it was an amount which ought to be granted, as they were works to which the country stood pledged. But that very fact reflects most seriously on the administration of the late Government, because the amount was necessitated by the extravagant scheme of public works which they passed without attempting to obtain consent of the House. All those lines—the Western Railway to Roma, the Warwick to Stanthorpe, the Maryborough to Gympie, the Bundaberg and Mount Perry, and the Central Railway to Retreat—were never advocated on their merits in this House. A scheme was put forth by the late Government by which railways were to be constructed without money at all, but were to be paid for out of land taken from the reserves in each district. The consequence was that the House allowed those lines to pass in a body to the serious detriment of the colony, for we are now obliged to go back to the old system of borrowing money in order that they may be completed. The hon. member's last charge was that I have put forward the whole of these small items in order to get the £1,200,000 passed through for the purpose of extending railways into the interior; all the rest being, to use his own words, the gilding to the pill. In making that charge the hon. gentleman is very unfair to me, seeing that I have been so consistent in my advocacy of almost all the items put down on the Estimates. Take the £249,000 for harbours and rivers. There is not a member who has been a more consistent advocate for giving facilities for foreign shipping in our different ports than myself, and I have never lost an opportunity of bringing that question forward since I have been a member of the House. If the hon. member says that I have put down that item outside of my convictions, and as gilding to the pill, I do not think his remark is justified by facts, and I challenge him to point out anything I have ever said in disparagement of such works; and I have taken the first opportunity in my power to put them prominently before the House. Then there is the item of £100,000, to meet the first expenditure

of road boards and shire councils. If the hon. member had said that that was merely a gilding to make the Divisional Boards Bill more palatable, he might have been nearer the mark; but, whether subject to that objection or not, it is perfectly plain that the item is very necessary, and must be brought forward by any Treasurer. The next item of £200,000, is the sum which by law we are bound to provide by way of loans to municipalities. That cannot be called gilding to the pill. The vote for buildings is a matter almost entirely departmental. We are bound to provide buildings necessary for carrying on business throughout the colony; and, so far from this item being gilding to please any particular constituency, I may say that, personally, I am acquainted with very few items put down, and have taken the most of them from the estimates supplied by the Works Department. The next item, of £18,250 for water supply, cannot be called gilding, for it is an amount rendered necessary by the maladministration of the late Government, and a great portion of it has been actually expended. As to the vote for £70,000, for electric telegraph construction, I have always advocated the extension of telegraphs wherever practicable and profitable. I have now gone over all the items which the hon. member said were gilding to the pill, in order to induce the country to swallow the extensions of the three trunk lines of railway into the interior; and there is not one of which I have not been a strong advocate ever since I have been a member of the House. I have now met the three objections taken by the hon. member to the policy of the Government. After stating those objections, the hon. gentleman went into details and questioned the policy of the Government in having put down so small an amount as £100,000 for immigration; but, as I have explained before, there is an amount of £90,000 in hand for that purpose, so that the sum actually available will be £190,000. I have also given very good reason why immigration should be suspended at the present time, and I have not altered my mind on that point. I think it a proper policy to pursue under present circumstances, and in proof of its wisdom I need only point to the proof given by the leader of the Opposition himself, when he said that it would be folly to pour immigrants into the colony when they were actually leaving it as fast as they could. It was perfect nonsense for the hon. member to say that it was owing to the action of the Government in dismissing some of the workmen from the Ipswich shops that those people were leaving the colony. The agitation in this matter had certainly served most effectually to bring the Government into a good deal of unpopularity. It had been used by the leaders of the Opposi-

tion to mislead the public, and the result had been to lower politics in the eyes of all who took an interest in them. The dismissals were a necessary departmental reform, which I have not since seen the slightest reason to regret. I believe it will be conducive to the good of the colony, and people are beginning to see that now, in spite of the wrong statements put before them by the leaders of the Opposition. When we took that step we said it was an improper thing to be keeping men there on loan—because most of them were paid out of the Loan Fund—on work which would not be required for more than two years. And yet the leaders of the Opposition say we must not borrow the money, and in the same breath that we must not dismiss the men who were living on the borrowed money. Can any position be more untenable? With regard to immigration our ideas are perfectly plain, and are not open to the insinuations made upon them by the hon. member for North Brisbane, that we do not believe in immigration. I wish to see Queensland a populous colony, and I have advocated every measure that would tend to accomplish that object; and as soon as we can see our way to resume immigration we shall do it. I have intimated that over and over again. The hon. member asked—but he must have been speaking in ignorance—what additional benefit would be given to the country by the extension of the three trunk lines 130 miles further west? If the hon. gentleman cannot understand that, I cannot explain it more fully than by saying this: that such extensions would bring the country through which they run under a higher kind of settlement, and would bring settlement where there is now no settlement at all; while all the land from the extreme point of the extensions to the present termini would be increased in value. A better reply still is, as I have often explained: separated from the west districts by a large space of comparatively barren country, these extensions will open to the highest class of selectors millions and millions of acres of the best land in the colony. That is a perfectly intelligible argument, and the Government, in doing so, would be acting like a wise proprietor of a large estate who wished to bring his land under the best system of occupation. The hon. gentleman also asked such a foolish question as—“would railways prevent drought?” And yet even in that question there is half a truth. Most droughts were caused, not because sufficient water had not fallen, but because there were no means of making dams for storage of water at anything like remunerative rates. With the facilities given by a railway a district could be covered with dams, and a drought would be a thing of only secondary consequence, and their

disastrous effects would be comparatively unknown. In that sense there is not the slightest doubt that railways will prevent droughts. Another piece of information given by the hon. gentleman was that Mr. Macalister was the first to broach the subject of a main trunk line of railway. I do not wish to take away any credit to which Mr. Macalister is entitled, but the scheme which he publicly propounded ten years ago he got from myself and another gentleman. That is recorded, as is well known, in the pages of *Hansard*. I do not claim for myself the merit of originality, because I know that such a scheme was propounded years and years before I took the slightest public interest in the matter;—indeed, I might say that it actually preceded the settlement of the country, and that the object of the expedition under Sir Thomas Mitchell was not for purposes of settlement, but to find a north-western route between New South Wales and India. So that the idea goes a long way further back than Mr. Macalister. The hon. gentleman also said the first thing we did when we got into power was to dismiss surveyors, thus showing that we did not intend to go on with branch lines. I do not see how he can have arrived at such a conclusion. We did not dismiss those surveyors because we had no intention of going on with branch lines of railway, but because we did not intend to go on with those branch lines on which they were engaged. A certain number of surveys were being carried on by the late Government for party purposes—that is, they were being done to please constituencies, to make them believe they were going to have a railway, thus doing what I before accused the hon. member for Maryborough of having done with regard to road parties. We stopped all those surveys, and I think we did a good service in so doing. No money is rightly spent which is not spent in accordance with the wishes of Parliament, and we were complying with the wishes of Parliament in stopping expenditure which was not authorised by it, and on works which we did not consider would be required. This is not the first time that the insinuations made by the other side of the House, that this Government in bringing forward a loan of this magnitude have no other intention than that of getting the money and putting it into the monetary institutions of the colony. With the easy facility of an astute lawyer accustomed to practice in court, the hon. leader of the Opposition took advantage of an interjection made by my hon. colleague—that the money, if not employed in the construction of public works, would be earning interest in the banks—to try and force a policy on the Government which I myself, as Treasurer, have done all I can to dispel. When the Colonial Treasurer plainly intimates

what his policy is, that policy ought to be understood from his words, and a different construction should not be put on them from a chance misinterpreted interjection. I cannot say too plainly that it is not the intention of Government to launch their loan all at once; it is not their intention that Government shall have any large sums of money at any time in the possession of any bank either in this or in the other colonies. Their distinct plans are to have nothing more than sufficient money to carry on public works; and I do not think, in spite of what the hon. gentleman had said, that we shall have at any time such large balances as the late Government has constantly had in the banks for the last three or four years. That statement of the Treasurer should be sufficient to intimate our policy. That assurance I have given before on two or three occasions, and I repeat it now, that every constitutional check that can be used by the House to confine the Ministry to the intentions thus expressed by me I am prepared to accept. I cannot give a better assurance than that of my intentions, and it does not do much credit to the leader of the Opposition that he should deal with insinuations as to what our intentions are. I have proclaimed what our intentions are, and it is quite within his power, if he doubts them, to suggest some means by which a constitutional check can be put on the action of Ministers. The hon. gentleman, in his attack upon the policy of the Government, seemed to have forgotten the way in which business has been managed in the House, and to have ignored the manner in which this class of business is done—not only here but in all the other colonies. He said it was unheard-of, unconstitutional, unprecedented, that a loan of this sort should be proposed without the actual works being specified and the plans and specifications produced. I challenge the hon. gentleman upon that point;—I say it has not been the practice of the House. In a neighbouring colony, within the last four weeks, there have been £7,000,000 voted for railways, and not one single plan or specification accompanied the Estimates, and those plans have not been approved of yet. I can point to similar legislation in New Zealand on two or three occasions within the last two or three years. Only general proposals have been made, but the money was voted. This is not only consistent with the way business is managed here, but with common-sense; because, when we make up our minds to a railway in a certain direction, it is not necessary that the House should have all the information before they vote the money. We make up our minds and have a general idea how much a particular railway will cost, and we ask the sanction of the House, and then proceed as a matter of course to find

out whether we can raise the money. Then it is time enough to ask the approval of the House for plans and sections, and that is a course the present Ministry will be quite prepared to follow. The hon. member seemed to consider he had made a great point of an answer I gave to a deputation to-day, which waited upon me for the purpose of getting a diversion of the Roma extension from a westward to a southerly direction: what his point was I failed to understand. The policy of this House has been, not from this side but from both sides of the House, affirmed in favour of extending our Southern and Western line westward, and with the particular object of reaching the rich lands of the interior. It has been affirmed on both sides that the extension of our main lines must take place from two or three points where nature has given facilities for harbour accommodation. I do not think these lines require to be more completely indicated than they have been by me. It is sufficient for the House to come to a judgment upon the matter when I say that it is to carry out the principle initiated so long ago in this House of tapping the country in the west. The Central line will be carried as near as possible west from its present terminus at Emerald, and I say that line will do good service when it reaches the point to which we intend to carry it, although it will not reach a town. Does the hon. member suppose that when this House voted so much for the construction of the railway to Roma it was simply to reach the town of Roma? The interests of Roma were not considered paramount. The great object was to develop the country, and the same object is in view, although there may not be a town at the end of each section of the proposed lines. I have avoided all through, in my Financial Statement and in speeches that have been forced upon me in defence of that Statement, as much as I could, local jealousies, and have done what I could to develop the general interests of the colony in the Estimates I have put before the House; and I certainly did not expect that the speech of the hon. member would tend to stir up those jealousies. He says that putting down on the Estimates a railway from Maryborough to the Burrum was a proof that I had no intention of developing our proved coalfields at the present time. Now, I have given great attention to the development of our coalfield on the Brisbane watershed—I have thought about the subject often; I have been identified with the interest myself, which has forced the matter more particularly upon my notice, and I can tell the hon. member the Government have not neglected these interests. Were the Government to see any means by which a railway at the present time to deep-

water would have the effect of developing the coalfields of the Brisbane watershed, they would do it at once. In spite of the charges brought against me, that I am inimical to Ipswich interests, I will tell the House plainly what I have told them before, that the coal trade languishes not on account of the want of railways, but on account of the friable character of the coal. We know there are empty ships leaving this colony constantly, and nothing would give a greater impetus to the shipping trade than the fact that we could send our coal to foreign ports; but every shipper is aware that he cannot here get the coal he requires, and this is why that industry does not take the position that is expected of it. We have not reached the quality of coal to be got at Newcastle—that is the secret, and when that is done the trade will be developed. It is not, I repeat, a question at all of the cost at which the coal could be delivered in Brisbane, for they can be delivered cheaper in Brisbane than in Newcastle. The question is the quality of the coal, and then, when that is improved, the present accommodation in Brisbane will be sufficient to develop the trade to compete with Newcastle. When the coal becomes more marketable, I have no doubt the proper thing will be to give the required railway communication; and, if this Government are in office, they will have both the ability and the wish to do whatever they can to assist this valuable industry. I have now gone over the various points touched upon by the leader of the Opposition in his attack upon the Government. The hon. gentleman said that he had lost faith in party Government.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No; I did not.

The PREMIER: He said he had always been a believer in party Government, but the shape in which these Estimates had been placed before the House had shaken his faith. My faith, also, is shaken when I find the hon. gentleman taking the position he has in making this attack. He waited two months to make it; but anyone seeing him speaking to-night would say that he was speaking as an advocate holding a brief, and not as a politician. He was condemning a policy which, under different circumstances, being in office, last year, he most strenuously advocated.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No!

The PREMIER: Yes; and a few more extracts from his speech would confirm every word I say. The hon. gentleman was condemning a policy of which he previously approved, and he failed to show that I have been inconsistent in taking it up now. The policy that finds expression in the Loan Estimates is not a new policy of mine; it is one I have always advocated; and I was glad to see that the hon. gentleman's ideas agreed so much with

mine, and to think that whether we were on one side of the House or the other we should, at all events, work together for that one object, and try and find out a policy that would develop the country—a policy which the country is much in want of at the present time. I expected something different from what has happened, and I have lost some faith in party Government, because I find the hon. gentleman assuming the position he does. I can contrast his conduct with the loyalty with which I have stood to my principles in this House. What was the principal legislation last year? What will distinguish last year in the political annals of the colony? Will it not be the Local Government Act? I was then leader of the Opposition, and had a splendid chance, if I had taken advantage of what the hon. gentleman and his friends have taken advantage of—I might then have appealed to all the farmers of the colony, and told them that the Government were bringing in a Bill to tax them for making their roads and bridges. I might have used all the influence of the Press which the hon. member has brought to bear. I might have got up the same class of meetings against the Local Government Bill which he and those working with him have got up against the Divisional Boards Bill; but I was loyal to the principles of that Bill, and assisted it in the best way I could to pass through the House. I contrast that behaviour of mine as leader of the Opposition with the action taken by the present leader of that position. I am proud of what I have done, and am not to be moved from the position I have taken up by any insinuation or charges that I am working for one object—and that object the extension of main lines of railway into the squatting districts. By the policy embodied in our Bills and Estimates I will stand or fall. I don't care what charges are brought against me—I say it is the true policy of this colony. I believe in developing every interest of the colony, but it will be a sad thing if, after expending thirteen millions of money, we find we leave unreached land which is comparatively unutilised and still lying vacant, and without anything to pay for our indebtedness. I say the safety of the colony depends upon our reaching that rich country, and it is the only thing that will increase our revenue. I gave every credit to the hon. member when he stated he did not want office at the present time. I gave him credit for his shrewdness in saying that office would not suit him now. He has been, up to the present time, a fair-weather political sailor, crowding on the greatest press of sail he could carry and making great speed. There never was a time when he could not pass a Loan Bill through the House. When he was in office we were always in a better position in the English

loan market than we are at the present time. Now a different time comes upon us. As he says himself, the population of the country is or may be decreasing, and there is not the slightest doubt our produce has been decreasing. Our exports have been decreasing; the incomes and wealth of all classes of the community have been decreasing. These are so many difficulties in the way of a politician thirsting for office, and who has the sense to realise what they mean. Therefore, I give credit to the hon. member for knowing that he would be better off the Treasury benches just now, and that it would be even to his advantage as a politician, eager to find favour with the country, if he were out of the House altogether. He would have saved the country, at all events, seeing a politician taking such a retrograde step as he has done, attacking the policy he previously advocated, and attacking it on principles which actually impugned the honesty of the members of the existing Government. I do not thirst for office at the present time either—it is not by any means a bed of roses; but I consider it is a matter of duty to stick to it, and I will stick to it so long as I can and the country calls me to be here. I have enunciated my policy as well as I can in the Loan Estimates and in the Bills before the House. That policy I consider to be a remedy for the evils which beset us; and if the House does not consider that it is a suitable policy, I shall be one of the happiest of men if I am released from office.

Mr. DICKSON: The Colonial Treasurer never appears in better form than when he is defending the policy of his Government; he claims to have produced a policy earlier in the session than has been done by any preceding Government, and has expressed himself in such a way that it almost seems as if he actually believed he had a policy. I, however, with other hon. members, should have been glad if he had added to his remarks some information as to where we are to find that policy—whether in the speech from the Governor, the first Financial Statement, the supplementary statement, or the whole three of them together. I have endeavoured very carefully to go through the whole of these three memorable documents; but there are inconsistencies, ambiguities, and contradictions which prevent me from gathering a clear insight into the policy of the Government for which the hon. member claims credit. And I must say, if the policy be no more clearly delineated in these documents than in the speech we have heard, it is extremely vague, because that gentleman, notwithstanding that he has occupied the time of the House for a considerable time in a forcible speech, has sailed all around the salient points of his loan policy without once com-

mitting himself to a decided expression of opinion, and without giving that definite information which in the interests of the country the House has a right to, and which have been demanded in the clearest manner by the leader of the Opposition. The Colonial Treasurer has not answered the very exhaustive comments made by my hon. friend, this evening, concerning the policy of the Government in connection with their loan proposals. The most consistent and definite line of policy adopted by the Colonial Treasurer is continuously to charge his predecessors with all the faults he could, and justify himself by loading them—I will not say with obloquy—but with charges of incapacity and all other faults that would be injurious to an Administration, and he contends that his position at the present time is caused by the action of his predecessors. I say there is not the slightest scintilla of fact in such a statement. The action of the late Government did not commit the present Government to the necessity of proceeding with a three-million loan. It certainly did entail upon them the necessity of carrying out works already authorised, but not to commit the country to such a loan, or to asking power from the House to grant it all at one period. The hon. gentleman says he has been very explicit in informing the House concerning these loan proposals, and he comments upon our own action with regard to the loan of last year. There was a reason, however, last year, why the loan proposals did not come forward early in the session—they were purposely delayed on account of the unfavourable condition of the London money market; and, as was stated in the House last year, the proposed loan was delayed until the old loan then in the market was floated. The hon. gentleman has dilated upon the effect of the present loan proposals being similar to those of the late Administration: no doubt in certain services they are similar, but the similarity entirely terminates there, because there were definite proposals made by the late Administration, in last January, in which they showed the country that, while they were prepared to proceed with a comprehensive loan policy, they were also prepared to introduce a special scheme whereby special revenue would be raised to make provision for the increased interest. That is the essence of the present contention. We say the Government have not disclosed how they can obtain from ordinary revenue a sufficient amount to provide for the interest upon this money proposed to be borrowed. That is a point upon which the Colonial Treasurer has failed to give direct information which he is called upon now to do, because the present debate is, to a great extent, the outcome of ambiguous statements made by the hon.

gentleman in his first Financial Statement. The hon. gentleman's remarks chiefly go to show that he considers there exists a necessity for borrowing money at the present time for the purpose of keeping up the credit of the colony—or, in other words, to provide against the stoppage of public works through want of loan funds. He objects, however, to borrow such sums as may be conveniently obtained from time to time, but prefers to go in for what he terms a comprehensive loan policy, covering a sufficient amount for all purposes during the ensuing three years. But he shows no necessity for adopting this course. He says he is only following the example set by previous Treasurers, who asked from time to time for such money as was required, whereas he intends to ask in advance for the same amount of money as would be required by other Treasurers at annual periods. I cannot observe that he has advanced a single argument to show that any saving or benefit to the colony will result from borrowing so large an amount of public money in one estimate. He added, subsequently, that he did not intend to float the whole of the loan at one time; but if the Loan Bill is passed, he will be able to act as he likes, and no restrictions can be imposed upon him. He knows it was an empty vaunt to tell us that we could impose restrictions upon him, because, if the Loan Bill is once passed, he can sell the debentures as he pleases, and no enactment could prevent him from doing so. Nor should I recommend the House to impose any such restriction, inasmuch as the Executive has a right to accept the full responsibilities of their action, and accept the responsibilities of selling the loan at once, by deferred instalment or such other manner as they may consider conducive to the interests of the colony. The Colonial Treasurer has no right to tell the Opposition that they may relieve him of his responsibilities by preventing him from selling the loan in any larger portion than the Opposition consider best. He abdicates his proper functions if he asks either the House or the Opposition to prevent him from having that full control which the Administration ought to possess so as to deal with the funds of the colony in such manner as they consider most beneficial. The Colonial Treasurer said that in the interest of the public creditor he was desirous of adopting this course, and that he considered it honest and straightforward to do so. I was certainly amused at the consideration shown by the hon. gentleman for the feelings of the buyers of our debentures: to my mind that consideration is entirely misplaced, because those buyers are sharp business men, well able to look after their own interest without the interposition of the Treasurer. Depend upon it, they are able to look after their own interest suffi-

ciently well, as we observe they did in the purchase of the last loan sold in London in the beginning of this year. If a little more consideration were shown for the interests of the colony instead of this extreme solicitude for the public creditor, perhaps it would be more desirable. But the Treasurer made a point out of this which I cannot pass over. He makes an *ad misericordiam* appeal to the House—to learn why was he called upon particularly to disclose the source of revenue from which he proposed to pay interest on the loan? He points out what is perfectly true, that no previous Colonial Treasurer has been called upon to make such disclosures—that I was never subjected to such inquiry; and he considers that the demand, being unusual, should not be made to him. But the circumstances of the colony at the present time are exceptional. I would put four reasons—substantial reasons—why he is bound to satisfy the House and the country of his ability—I know that he has the desire—to raise sufficient revenue to provide interest upon this loan. He commenced the financial year on the 1st July with a debtor balance of £177,000—an exceptional amount to be at the debit of the Consolidated Revenue, which should make any Treasurer feel the grave responsibilities of the financial position of the colony at the present time. Not only so, but he came down to the House, and, not looking the stern necessities of the State in the face, he submitted a statement of estimated receipts and expenditure which showed a very small margin for unforeseen expenditure. Even if those estimates were realised, the inexorable expenditure, always largely in excess of anticipated expenditure, will exceed that small margin. According to the Auditor-General's report, I foresee that the unforeseen expenditure which, extremely heavy in itself during the last four months of the year ending June, 1879, will result in larger Supplementary Estimates than those of any previous Treasurer. For the year ending in June, 1880, the Treasurer's statement of revenue and expenditure for 1879-80 discloses a margin accruing from revenue over expenditure of only £50,000. Seeing that the estimated receipts are unfortunately to a great extent problematical—and I should be glad to see the revenue recover its elasticity and surpass the Treasurer's anticipation—but, judging the expenditure by the last six weeks or two months of this year, I say that the margin will be so narrow that the Treasurer will not find himself able to cover the supplementary expenditure, much less to cover the interest on this large debt. That is quite sufficient reason for demanding from the Treasurer a statement of how he proposed to provide interest on this large amount of

three millions. In addition to that the Treasurer has not faced the difficulties by proposing any scheme of administration or legislation to improve the position of the revenue—it is left to take care of itself; and in the face of diminution of receipts the Treasurer still persists that he will be able to get a sufficient amount to pay the interest on this loan. He has told us already that he looked chiefly to the land revenue; but I contend that this head of receipts, more than any other source of revenue, is likely to be depressed during the ensuing twelve months. Without wishing to re-open the question of anticipated revenue, I much doubt whether the land revenue, any more than the revenue proper, is likely to be realised. I pass on to another phase of the question. The Treasurer took credit to himself for making what he termed a second Financial Statement, and in other places was awarded credit for having given such full information to the House as to his loan proposals. He took credit for this new custom, which he alleged previous Treasurers had not attempted to introduce. But the credit, if any, is due to the hon. member for North Brisbane, who wrung this statement from the Treasurer by putting to him a question as to whether he intended to make such a statement to the House. I was rather surprised to hear the Treasurer answer in the affirmative, as such a course might have been exceedingly inconvenient. He ought, however, to have followed up his other Financial Statement by its proper complement showing how he expected the land revenue specially devoted by him to this object was to accrue. Had he in a few words explained to the House where he would obtain a sufficient revenue, a great part of this discussion might have been avoided, and in that respect the hon. gentleman has not met the hon. member for North Brisbane's scrutiny of his loan proposals. The Treasurer dwelt upon the necessity for a loan at the present time, and I will comment briefly on the position he has taken up. I am not at all opposed to a loan, provided the Treasurer complies with two conditions—gives us proper information as to the destination of the money; and, secondly, full and satisfactory explanation as to where the revenue is to be obtained from to pay the annual interest to the public creditor. Those are the two main questions, and the Treasurer need not imagine he is answering this objection when he says that he will be receiving  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. interest from railways. He may receive that return when they are constructed; but the present loan is to extend over three years, and the several lines proposed, even if sanctioned, will not be completed within that time. Where is the interest, meanwhile, to be found to pay for the money not employed or being employed in the

construction of these lines? That is the whole gist, or a very important part, of the present contention. The works which he calls reproductive can only be so after construction; in the meantime, where is the interest to be obtained? The Treasurer chiefly points to the fact that the loan is required. He says—

"I have to direct the attention of the House to this fact—that it is very necessary the Loan Bill should be passed as soon as possible."

And again—

"I do not think the Loan Fund will be sufficient for longer than the end of the financial year. I need not, therefore, enforce upon the House that it is absolutely necessary that the Government should be in a position to carry on the works when the funds in hand are exhausted."

And again—

"For the reason, however, that we will actually require money at the end of the financial year, and from the fact that we must know as soon as possible whether the debentures will float, I urge upon the House to put through the Loan Estimates with despatch. There is not the slightest doubt that we are forced to go into the market for a loan."

These expressions justified my hon. friend in stating that the burden of the song of the Colonial Treasurer was, "Grant us this loan—we must have this loan." It was not so much the desire to employ money in works as an *ad misericordiam* appeal for the purpose of replenishing the decreasing loan balances in the Treasury. At this stage I enter my protest against this system of borrowing money. I say that this system must have a termination sooner or later. If we are simply to go on borrowing money for the purpose of keeping up our loan balances, depend upon it it will soon have a disastrous conclusion. We are endeavouring to extend our credit far beyond the gradual increase of our capital, and there can be but one termination to such a disastrous procedure. In the year 1869 we had loan obligations to the extent of £3,021,000, or an average of £28 per head, our population being 110,000. With the loan now proposed we will have a total loan obligation of  $13\frac{1}{2}$  millions, being an average of £64 per head approximately for a population of 210,000. These figures do not, perhaps, fully disclose the actual strain such a loan has upon our resources. In the year 1869 our receipts from customs and excise amounted to £316,000, and the annual interest payable by us on our loan liabilities was £181,000, and we were paying exceptionally high interest at that time—namely, 6 per cent. We find, now, that with the proposed loan our annual charge for interest will be £600,000, or in excess of the joint production of customs and excise at the present time. I will not take up the time of the Committee by comparing

our rapidly progressing interest expenditure annually with other items of revenue; I have simply taken the two principal items of our public revenue—as customs and excise must be for many years—and by that test we observe that, under the new loan proposal, the whole of our receipts accruing through these principal sources of revenue will be absorbed in the annual payment of interest. I do not deprecate borrowing, but we ought to take warning by our present position to borrow only for reproductive works. That should certainly be the key-note of our further loan proposals. In the past we have been borrowing, if not too largely, certainly not wisely, and we ought to be warned by the errors of the past; and the Treasurer of the day, to whichever party he belongs, should take care that the country is only committed to loan obligations which will be re-invested in works of a sufficiently reproductive character to provide interest upon such increasing obligations. Unless we adopt that principle as our safeguard, we shall launch the colony into grave financial difficulties. As I have already shown, nearly one-half of our annual revenue will be absorbed in payment of interest when the proposals of the Government are accepted; and therefore I contend I am justified in entering my individual protest against such unprofitable expenditure as is disclosed in the present loan proposals. The line of action I now recommend I endeavoured to give effect to when in office, in support of which assertion I refer hon. members to the Opening Speech of last January. While I advocate borrowing, and see the great advantage of a young colony possessing the confidence of English capitalists, I contend that our true course is to confine ourselves to borrowing solely for reproductive works. If the Treasurer can show us *that* feature in these loan proposals, I should withdraw from my objection; but, even assuming that the extension of the three main lines which he proposes should become reproductive, which is very problematical—I question whether they will become remunerative in the next ten years—it is the duty of the Treasurer to be particularly careful that he does not commit the country to a large expenditure in this direction, which will not only saddle the country with an annual burden, but will be part of a scheme that successive Governments of the colony will have to extend. We shall have to continually extend the scheme, continually increase the burden of our obligations, and continually add to the burdens of the people. This is but the beginning of a large scheme, and I object to it at its commencement on the ground that the proposed investments in the shape of these main trunk lines will not produce revenue, as the lines are not likely to become reproductive works, in the

actual signification of the term, for a considerable time. The Treasurer, in his Financial Statement in June, coincided with my views, for he then said—

“Wherever unproductive expenditure on Loan Account could be revised without a breach of the public engagements, it has been impartially cut down; and although my proposals show that no reduction of the gross outlay on public works is contemplated, the Government have been actuated by a resolute determination to ask your sanction to no appropriation which does not promise to augment revenue, either directly by utilising Crown lands at present inaccessible and comparatively valueless, or indirectly by removing obstacles from the path of promising industries or expanding commerce. It is only by a strict adherence to this determination that the Government can find a justification for proposing any further addition to the public obligations.”

That paragraph is one which must commend itself to general acceptance; but the Treasurer has departed from it, because he does not show in his new loan proposals—I say new advisedly, the August proposals being different to those made in June—that he is prepared to confine himself to reproductive works, and to curtail the liability of our loan engagements to that particular class of transactions. In June the Treasurer told us that for carrying out the Government proposals he should require a loan of about three millions, which was to be expended as follows:—Immigration, £100,000; extension of main lines, £1,500,000; branch lines, £300,000; electric telegraphs, £40,000; loans to local bodies, £200,000; harbour and river improvements, £200,000; public buildings, £60,000; and he added—

“To provide interest for this amount about £133,000 annually will be required, and the Government, in selecting the works on which the loans should be expended, have proceeded with a view to provide interest from the land, and so avert the necessity of additional taxation.”

Had the hon. gentleman demonstrated how this was to be done from land, the contention would cease so far as the question of interest is concerned; but I will put it to any hon. member whether the Treasurer to-night, or in his financial statement on last Wednesday, dealt with this particular phase of the question. Not only has he failed to do that, but he has altered very materially his proposals as made in June. He then proposed to borrow one and a-half millions for extension of main trunk lines; now he puts it at £1,170,000, and there is one noteworthy feature in his statement of Wednesday—namely, the constant expression of regret which pervades it that he is unable to maintain the larger expenditure for main lines. There is no lack of sincerity on his part regarding these lines, whatever insinuations or

suspicions may be levelled at him under the head of branch lines. With regard to branch lines I will only note, in addition to the able comments of the leader of the Opposition, that the amount has been increased on the Loan Estimates from £300,000 to £418,000. The provision for buildings has also been increased from £60,000 to £80,000, and for electric telegraphs it has been raised from £40,000 to £70,000. With regard to the extension of these main trunk lines of railway, I have always stated that I am not opposed to such extensions; but I take up this position: Up to a certain point they have been constructed at a charge upon the general taxpayers of the colony, to provide both for interest and maintenance. I say the time has now come when special provision ought to be made to provide the interest on the cost of the construction of those lines, if they are to be extended at all. That was the policy the late Administration constantly had in view, and it must be borne, also, in mind that that Administration had made special provision for the interest upon these lines—a provision which is now sought to be swept away by the Treasurer, on the ground that he will have the whole lands of the colony to look to to supply a revenue for this purpose. But he does not observe that, while he may have all these lands to look to for the interest on this loan, he is doing away with a safeguard of the Consolidated Revenue itself. The present Railway Reserves Act provides that special portions of public land shall be dedicated to the purpose of paying the interest, thereby relieving—and, in fact, preventing—the Consolidated Revenue from being charged, as it otherwise would be, with the interest—the inexorable interest annually accruing upon these loans. It may be said that the Consolidated Revenue will be reimbursed from general sales of land throughout the colony; but we know well what past administration has done and what present administration is likely to achieve, from which we may confidently assume that it will be practically impossible at the present time to provide from sales of land the interest accruing upon our national indebtedness, increased by the present loan, and representing something like £600,000 per annum. I contend that any action, legislative or otherwise, which the Treasurer intended to take with a view to carrying out his proposals concerning an increased land revenue ought to have preceded these Loan Estimates, because we would then have been able to judge how far his expectations were likely to be realised. He has told us that he intends to relieve revenue by the provisions of the Divisional Boards Bill; but I have considerable doubts whether that Bill will ever become law—at any rate, why does he not try to make it law? I am amazed,

considering the warm interest the Government and their supporters take in that Bill, that there have not been more petitions received in its favour. All the petitions that have been received are, I think, on the negative side; there are none affirming the desirability of passing the Bill; and, considering the unanimously expressed opinion of the country against it, I hold there is little probability that it will become law this session; and, should it not become law, how is the revenue to be relieved, and how will the Treasurer be able to provide, not only the necessary disbursements upon roads and bridges, but also the increasing amount of interest that this loan will necessitate? The whole thing is a fallacy, and the sooner the Treasurer recognises that the better. I admit that the Treasurer of the colony is placed in a peculiar position this year financially, but it is a position he should look in the face. It is no use temporising, and trusting to an improved revenue and possibilities that may never arise. He should have been prepared when he made his Financial Statement to provide for decreasing revenue and increasing expenditure—more especially having steadily in view large loan proposals, which must, at the outset, call for considerable increase of revenue to provide the interest upon such loan until the works become reproductive, if ever they do. As a member of this House I protest against the new system the Treasurer seeks to introduce, and which I may term “Victorianising” our institutions—that, because the Victorian Legislature has passed a loan for seven millions without inquiry—

AN HON. MEMBER: New South Wales.

MR. DICKSON: It does not matter.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is somewhere.

MR. DICKSON: It is something like the Government railways, uncertain and vague. I say that the fact of a sister colony having passed a loan without inquiring minutely into details is no argument that the same thing should be done here. The House has a right to scrutinize such a large loan proposal as this, and I consider it an insult to the intelligence of hon. members that they should be asked to vote something like a million and a quarter for the construction of railways which the Government themselves have not the slightest knowledge of. They have no surveys in their possession; they know nothing of the character of the country these lines must traverse or to what point of the compass they intend to go. I say, under these circumstances, the proposal is a most monstrous one; and I am sure that even hon. members who may ardently desire to see the construction of these main trunk lines—and I class myself amongst them, if it be done upon a safe basis—

will agree with me that no Government has a right to solicit the confidence of hon. members to the extent that they are to be given the command of three millions of money to construct railways to lead anywhere and nowhere. If the Government had come down and said they intended making these lines to certain points, we might respect them for having carefully considered the matter and obtained due information; but I say that such a proposition as this surpasses all the bounds of decency and propriety in constitutional parliamentary Government. I would ask what inducement can the Government set forth at the present time for proceeding with such large extensions into the interior? If the Treasurer could show us from late statistics that the railway returns were of an extremely satisfactory character—that the traffic and revenue were constantly increasing—there would be some justification for this demand; but what do we find in the *Gazette* returns since last July?—one continual downward tendency, in passenger and goods traffic, upon all our lines. This fact at the present time should inspire mistrust in the policy of rushing our railway lines into the interior without really considering whether there is likely to be traffic or revenue commensurate with the expenditure. The Treasurer has given a cheerful view of the possibility of increased revenue; but the facts disclosed by the *Gazette* returns for the past year show a general decrease of railway revenue which I much regret. I should have rejoiced to see an increase upon previous years; but unfortunately it is the other way, and there is no encouragement in the shape of reproduction in its true sense to be learned from the statistics of our present lines. I have no doubt that in the future these lines will pay, but surely it is only right and proper to proceed with their construction to the extent demanded when the necessity for it arises. Why the extent of 130 miles should have been selected any more than 150 I do not think the Treasurer himself could satisfactorily answer.

THE PREMIER: Yes; I can.

MR. DICKSON: It brings the loan, as suggested by the leader of the Opposition, to three millions. That reminds me that the Treasurer, in his second financial statement, explained a necessity which embarrassed and compelled him to reduce the amount of his loan from £3,300,000 to £3,000,000. He does not think he could float a loan for £3,300,000, but he could for £3,000,000. There must be some magic in three millions which does not appertain to any other sum. He makes his railways fit into the size of his estimate, rather than frame his estimate to the extent of railways required; and those rail-

ways are to lead anywhere or nowhere, so long as they do not exceed that sum. I suppose it is to maintain consistency with his loan proposals when leader of the Opposition that he has fixed the amount at this sum. The hon. gentleman, in referring to this loan, said we should consider the feelings of lenders; but I am of opinion that it would be better if the Government accompanied their loan proposals with reliable information as to the destination and direction of these railways, which would inspire confidence in the public creditor. I think the vagueness of the loan proposals reflect no credit on the Government, and will have a very injurious effect upon our borrowing powers. We have been accustomed, in transmitting loans to England, to accompany them with statistics showing the position of the colony, the nature of the works embraced in such Loan Estimates, and, in short, giving every information to the buyers of our debentures at home; but that information it will be out of the power of the Treasurer to convey because he is not in possession of it, and his Loan Bill will be received as not having received that careful forethought and attention which it ought to receive unless accompanied by that information. The Treasurer, in reply to the hon. member for North Brisbane, indulged in a very glowing picture of the splendid country to the far west, which he tells us is so admirably adapted for close settlement; and I inferred from his remarks that the 130 miles of railway would land us in the midst of that fertile country. But I am inclined to think, from information I have received, that the proposed 130 miles of railway will fall far short of landing us in that country; that it will probably take another 130 miles to complete. At any rate, the whole scheme is, as I said before, committing the country to an immense expenditure for part of a scheme which must be proceeded with, no matter what the results may hereafter be in a pecuniary point of view; and if these lines are carried out without any provision being made for the payment of the interest, we will saddle the country with a perpetual load of debt which will have to be met by the Treasurer of the future. Branch railways are a matter on which a large number of people in the colony have set their hearts, and when the Loan Estimate made its appearance it was considered by many people outside the House as showing a sincere desire on the part of the Government to meet the requirements of dense agricultural settlement. I am sorry to have my sincerity in the proposals of the Government completely shaken, not only by the Financial Statement made by the Treasurer on last Wednesday, but also by a sentence he introduced into his speech

to-night. He referred to the late Government having endeavoured to set the farming classes against that side of the House. The advocacy of branch lines was not promoted by this side of the House with any desire to create class antagonisms, but simply to demand, on the part of the agricultural settlers, those facilities of communication which they saw were not being given to them, while railway extension of a costly character was being provided into the interior for the benefit of one class chiefly. I should have liked to see the professed sincerity of the Colonial Treasurer borne out by his remarks of last Wednesday; but such is unfortunately not the case, inasmuch as he has put down sums for branch railways which his own Engineer-in-Chief considers totally inadequate for their construction. The natural inference is, that the Treasurer put them down to induce hon. members to support his Estimates; but, feeling the uncertainty of being able to construct them for that amount, he tells us the country ought not to proceed with expensive lines of railways in these directions, but if they can be constructed for those sums they may be proceeded with—the meaning being that if a certain thing come to pass, which was extremely improbable, he would consider the further necessity or merits of the case. We do not find any such uncertainty in his language about the main lines of railway—they are to be proceeded with without any hypothetical “if” in the way, whether they cost more or less;—not so the branch railways. Speaking of one line of railway, the hon. gentleman said—

“I believe, however, that a line quite suitable for the purpose can be made for £4,000 per mile; and if it can, the colony will be justified in undertaking it.”

When they observed such a marked discrepancy between the Estimates of the Treasurer and the Engineer-in-Chief, I can only come to the conclusion that the Treasurer has very little expectation that he will be called on to build these branch railways at all. This is not my individual opinion only. My constituents are as much interested as the residents in any other district in having one of those branch lines of railway; but since the statement of the Colonial Treasurer, last Wednesday, I have been waited upon by several of them not to attempt to obtain a line in my electorate to the detriment of the colony generally, but to lend my individual weight as a member of the House to obtain from the Government certain definite information which they consider necessary in the interests of the colony in connection with the railway loan proposals of the Government. And no doubt other hon. members who desire to see branch railways through their respective districts will at present

subordinate that feeling until they see that the loan proposals of the Government are placed on such a basis that they will be acceptable to the colony, and will not press as a burden and a drag on its prosperity for many years to come. The hon. member for North Brisbane referred to the absence of plans and specifications: I shall not at present refer to that further than to say that these Loan Estimates should have been preceded by such information as Government had at their disposal in connection with the branch railways. If they had not working plans in readiness, they have certain surveys which ought to have been submitted, and the Government ought to have announced at an earlier period of the session their intention of proceeding with the construction of the lines. While I am glad to see provision made for increased expenditure in connection with some of our main rivers, yet I consider the sums put down for many of them are unnecessary, and I can only conclude that they have been put down in order to make the estimate agreeable all round. Allowing that the Government were sincere in their proposals, the sum of £30,000 for the Pioneer River is one which may or may not be judiciously expended. It is a work which has hitherto taxed the ability of the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers; and, until he is in a position to give some authoritative information as to how that money can be advantageously employed in permanently improving the Pioneer River, instead of being thrown away, as former expenditure has been, to the serious loss of the colony, I shall object to that vote being obtained by the Government, even though they profess the utmost sincerity in the matter, unless accompanied by satisfactory professional information. I am very sorry to see an intimation that that great work at Cleveland Bay—the jetty or breakwater—which would have transformed it from an open roadstead into one of the best harbours on the coast, is to be abandoned, in order to remove a ledge of rocks from that miserable ditch Ross's Creek, which can never be made into a navigable river in its true sense. It was pitiable to see that the Government had been induced by political influences to desist from an undertaking which is looked upon by every person in Queensland as one of its most important public works, and one which, if finished, will redound to the credit of the colony. But these are matters of detail, and I shall express my opinion more fully upon them afterwards. I now pass on to the item of £100,000 intended as a sugar-plum to the agricultural settlers, to take away the disagreeable flavour of the Divisional Boards Bill. This the Treasurer himself admitted to-night, and I say it is a departure from the legitimate loan policy of the Government to take this £100,000

out of the reproductive category and make it a free gift—for it is nothing less—to induce the agricultural settlers to accept the Divisional Boards Bill and get their share of that money. It will be, first come first served—let them all come and commence their reign gloriously. But I can tell the hon. gentleman that from all I have seen and heard it will take a much stronger inducement than a share in this £100,000 to induce the agricultural settlers to accept such an obnoxious measure as the Divisional Boards Bill in its present form. I demur to the Treasurer shifting his ground. He has no right to borrow from the public creditor to make gifts therewith. He should make such gifts out of his revenue, if he has a surplus. It is nothing else than providing for the construction of our roads out of loan expenditure. That is a system which the hon. gentleman has frequently deprecated, as I myself have; and, although I was once compelled to adopt it, I am distinctly opposed to it as a system. I do not say I am guiltless in the matter, but there were special circumstances in connection with my obtaining £100,000 for roads on Loan Estimates in 1876. But, granting that such a thing has been done in the past, that is no reason for its repetition in the future. I agree with the Colonial Treasurer in deprecating the system, but his deprecation is not followed by amendment, and he actually returns to the old way to which he himself objects. It may be a convenient mode of providing for the expenditure on roads which will be necessary on account of the manner in which the revenue estimates have been prepared. The Minister for Works must see dangers thickening round him in that direction, and must know that the roads of the colony are now getting into a disgraceful state. Although it may be convenient to relieve the revenue estimate by obtaining a sum of £100,000 from the loan vote for road maintenance, still I should have expected that the Premier would have resisted the importunities of his colleague, and would have made provision for repairs of roads from its legitimate source. Another objection I have in connection with this Loan Estimate is that under the head of electric telegraph construction. This forcibly bears out what I stated previously in regard to the Loan Estimates for public works. Our loan expenditure in this department rises to nearly half a million of money, including these proposals; while our annual revenue from this service is nearly £36,000, against £56,000 expenditure, showing an annual deficiency of £20,000 in this department; and, if we add the annual interest, we shall find that electric telegraphy causes a loss annually to the Treasurer of £40,000. I am of opinion that the proposals for these extensions are unneces-

sary. £70,000 is put down for them; the principal item of which is to be spent on a line between Aramac and the Diamantina—namely, £22,000. What justification is there for this expenditure, especially if we desire to be careful in limiting our expenditure from loan to reproductive works? I have shown that this department loses £40,000 annually, and, therefore, we may very well dispense with such luxuries as this line from Aramac to the Diamantina. The Treasurer, last June, in making his financial statement, promulgated these four articles of his financial belief—

“1. We should appropriate to the Consolidated Revenue the entire proceeds of land sales. 2. We should not permit large sales of land in advance of railway construction which do not lead to settlement. 3. We should remove from the responsibility of the Central Government a portion of the cost of constructing local works, and saddle, by means of local government, that cost on the classes of property which the expenditure benefits; and, 4. We should curtail the expenditure upon our Civil Service.”

How does the Colonial Treasurer propose to give effect to these propositions? He has not even attempted to abrogate those clauses of the Railway Reserves Act which enforced special provisions for interest on loan, and which were the justification of the late Administration in their loan proposals. He has since done nothing of the sort; and, although he condemned the railway policy of the late Government, yet it has been the means of enabling the Treasurer to obtain from the Railway Reserve Fund a transfer of £130,000, which stands him in good stead at present, and which, should he repeal the Reserves policy, he will not be able to fall back upon in future. And in case of a further decline in the revenue receipts, he will, at the end of the next financial year, be in a position to require equal if not greater assistance. I say that the Treasurer, in asking for this loan, ought to have been in a position to satisfy hon. members on both sides of the House, for many hon. members who support the Government do so not because they approve of the Estimates, but because it is a party question, and in their heart of hearts disapprove of that reticence which prevented the country learning satisfactorily what were the reasonable probabilities of providing for the annual interest, and of learning from these proposals the *raison d'être* for such a large railway policy, and why the Treasurer asked the House to sanction three railway lines to penetrate the interior 130 miles without any distinct information as to their direction or the probability of revenue being derived from them. The country has looked forward to this debate, and I hope it will receive some better assurance than has been vouchsafed by the

Treasurer of the sincerity of his loan proposals, and of the ability of the revenue to provide the interest on the money borrowed. I quite agree with what has been said by the hon. member who introduced the motion, that these proposals are at the present time extremely vague and unsatisfactory.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer): I look upon it as a special dispensation of Providence that the members of the Government are not of a very nervous disposition, for I am sure that the tremendous flourish of trumpets with which the mover of the vote of censure on the Government gave notice of his intention on Thursday last, and the fact that this awful motion was hanging over our heads would have so frightened us, if we had been of a timid temperament, that we should never have slept in our beds. After all the fanfaranade, I must say I was astonished at the weak displays of the hon. gentleman who introduced this motion and the hon. gentleman who supported it. Such a miserably weak attack from such a source as the hon. member for Brisbane, who, when his heart is in his work, can make a strong and determined attack, I have never witnessed, and I can only come to the conclusion that he really did not believe in the motion he brought forward. I can come to no other conclusion, because, from his well-known ability, the evidences of which we have frequently had in this House, we know that he would have acted far differently if he had really believed in what he was doing. The debate, so far as it had gone, has also astonished me. The loud trumpet sounds with which it was ushered in, and the imposing announcement to the country, which has brought the largest gathering I have seen in this House in both galleries for some years, have had a result which reminds me very much of an old fable. I wonder the hon. gentleman who last addressed us did not treat us to a little more of that classical language which he is so much in the habit of using; but I did notice that he straggled into some stray French. He puts me in the mind of nothing so much as the old saying—"Parturiunt montes nascitur ridiculus mus." What has come out of all this nonsense and fanfaranade I leave the House to judge for themselves. The two hon. gentlemen who have spoken put me also in mind of the prudent housewife who, as I was told in my boyish days, was in the habit of saving all the scraps of the week to make a grand Saturday's stew. These hon. gentlemen have evidently treasured up every speech made on this side of the House this session, to produce what?—a remarkably bad stew on the present occasion, consisting principally of froth. The speech of the hon. member for Brisbane has been so completely and thoroughly answered by my hon. friend, the Premier of the colony, that I need

hardly refer to it, and I shall only do so to notice a few remarks which escaped my hon. friend's attention. The hon. gentleman began by assuring us that it was his conviction that, notwithstanding the trouble the Treasurer has taken to lay down his policy, we have no policy at all, and that if we have one we are very likely to change it. Looking back to the whole history of the previous Ministry, I think the hon. gentleman must have been judging us by themselves, for it will be in the remembrance of the whole House—and, indeed, the whole country—that when they formed a Ministry we proved over and over again, from speeches made by the members of the Government during their election tours, that they had no idea of carrying out any railway policy at all. It has been proved by every speech of every member of the late Administration, that they even deprecated a railway policy, and any policy they had we on this side of the House forced upon them. We forced them on from one thing to another, until at last they got out of their depth, and landed themselves on that bunch of railways which brought the colony into the financial condition in which it now is. The hon. gentleman, therefore, measures us by himself and colleagues. He knows they were a Ministry of no policy whatever; that we drove them from one point to another; that the Opposition of the day did exactly what they pleased with the Ministry. We carried almost every point we wanted to carry, and they were to all intents and purposes the most squeezable Government that ever existed—certainly in Queensland, and, I believe, on the face of the earth. But though we did pretty much as we liked, they are not to imagine that we shall be like them. I can promise the hon. gentleman he will not find us very squeezable. They have not squeezed much out of us yet; and they will not. He will find, as he has already done, that we are very dry; and, in short, a very hard nut to crack. Any difficulties in which this colony is now involved—putting aside the crisis from which all the world, more or less, is suffering—has been mainly brought about by the action of the late Government in plunging us into so many railways at a time. Their system of bunching railways, which they could not carry singly, has brought upon the country almost all the difficulties in which we are involved.

The Hon. G. THORN: Oh, no!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That hon. gentleman who had travelled so far and learned so little will be good enough not to interrupt. The hon. gentleman will have an opportunity to-morrow, and all next week if he likes, to express his sentiments, and I hope he will give us a full account of his travels, for it would be very

amusing to the House. The hon. member for Brisbane commenced his speech by telling us that this motion was not brought forward with any intention of turning the Government out. Then, why was it brought forward? What is a motion of want of confidence brought forward for, except to turn out the Government of the day? What is the object of the motion? Is it to waste time as we have been wasting it all through the session? Is it simply to annoy us, or what does the hon. gentleman hope to gain by his motion? He informed us that he did not bring it forward for the purpose of turning the Government out, but he at the same time failed to inform us for what he brought his motion forward. I desire to return my thanks to the hon. gentleman for the magnanimity he showed towards the Government when he informed them that if we had a majority he should be quite willing to allow them to remain in office. I am sure we ought to be very grateful. One of the charges he brought against us was that our first act in coming into office was the dismissal of the railway surveyors that were then in the Public Service; but we did nothing of the sort. We dismissed surveyors on lines which had never been sanctioned by Parliament; and perhaps the hon. gentleman forgets that the Railway Act positively prescribes that no railway shall be surveyed until it is first sanctioned by Parliament. In the Act to Amend the Railway Laws, which was passed in 1872, the second clause says distinctly—

“Whensoever Parliament shall have approved of a survey or surveys being made for the purpose of extending existing lines of railways or for making others the Government shall cause to be prepared plans sections and books of reference of every such railway and shall also cause the commissioner to have levels taken and surveys made of the country and lands through which such railway is to be carried together with a map or plan of the said line and of the lands through which it is to pass.”

That distinctly shows that the intention of the Legislature is that surveys shall not be undertaken on the authority of the Government alone—not even preliminary surveys—but that it shall be ordered by Parliament in the first instance when the surveys shall be made, and that then is the proper time for making these surveys and carrying them out. The previous Government disregarded that Act of Parliament, for they had surveying parties out in all directions—for what purpose I will not say, but they had surveyors out, as I state, in all directions—and in doing so acted contrary to the Act of Parliament. Therefore, one of our first acts, and very properly so, was to dispense with the services of these surveyors. Then the hon. gentleman gave us the example of South Australia, and told us that it

was the practice in that colony that, where any prominent part of the policy of a Government was defeated, it was their duty not to go on with their policy as a whole, but to give it up. I should like to know whether the late Government adopted that practice when they were beaten in obtaining two members for Fortitude Valley—was not that a prominent part of their policy? Then we were accused of having stopped immigration, and by doing so of having caused very material harm to the colony; and almost in the same breath the hon. gentleman told us that we had driven a number of people out of the colony. I should like to know what was the good of continuing immigration if it was only to fill still more a labour-market that was already so full that people were leaving the colony? The hon. gentleman contradicted himself when saying that we had driven people out of the colony. I deny the fact that our act in dismissing some of the artisans from the Ipswich railway shops had a tendency to drive people out of the colony, for although we deemed it our duty to lessen the number of people who were and even now are only half employed in those workshops, we found that by giving certain contracts in the colony we were furnishing employment to mechanics of the same description. That being the case, how can it be said that our administration had the effect of driving people out of the colony? The tendency of labour is always to find its own level, and no doubt what has taken people out of the colony has been the erection of the Exhibition buildings in Sydney and in Melbourne, which have attracted an enormous number of artisans. I have no doubt whatever that when the strain caused by the very large buildings is removed, as it shortly will be, the labour will find its way back to this colony of its own accord, without any attempt on our part to force it. The way to attract labour is to find work for it when it comes, and that way is the one which the Government have adopted by their proposal to borrow large sums for public works. The revenue will be improved by population, and I am positive that as population comes back to the colony the revenue will rise with it—not only the revenue, but land sales will rise; for it is the tendency of people, when they accumulate money, to settle on the land, and thus we shall reap all the benefits. Hon. members opposite, who have addressed the House this evening, have spoken as if they believed the colony was always to be in the same depressed state as it is now in; but I believe myself that just as bright days will arise as there have ever been, and although the depression is, no doubt, very severe, and we all feel it, I do not believe that the colony is going

to the dogs. Then the hon. gentleman spoke as if all this three millions of money were to be raised at once; but my hon. colleague, the Treasurer, has over and over again stated that, if it was agreed to raise that loan, it would be raised from time to time, and that his intention was not to raise it all at once for the purpose of placing it in the banks. His intention is to raise it when wanted; and I say it is much more honest, much more straightforward, and much more manly to go to the public of England, from whom we principally borrow money, and to tell them that we want to have a loan of three millions if we can get one, than to go in for peddling loans year after year. This is not a new policy with this Government; it has been our policy for years when we were sitting in Opposition, as we were sure that in the long run we should establish more confidence and get a better hold in the English market if we were to tell them straightforwardly at once what we want for the next two or three years, than if we were to go in for a little peddling loan policy. We have not altered our policy, but have endeavoured to carry out the same that we always held when in Opposition. Notwithstanding the statement made by hon. gentlemen opposite, that when once the Government had the power there was nothing to prevent them from raising the whole loan at once, I think that the word of the Treasurer, when once passed—that he will not raise more than is absolutely necessary at a time—should be quite sufficient for hon. members. I believe myself that the word of the Treasurer will be quite binding on him, and will be accepted in the English market. We have had an example of that lately. When Mr. Berry, the Premier of Victoria, was at home, although authorised to borrow five millions, he only raised three millions, giving at the same time a promise that he would not borrow more until a stated time. That promise was accepted at home, and I am sure that a promise given by the Treasurer of this colony will be quite sufficient when he gives his word that, although he wants to borrow three millions, he does not intend to raise it except at stated intervals. I think it is more honest to state what we mean, and not to deceive the public in England, who know quite as much, and perhaps more, of the colony than many of us do ourselves. The power of borrowing is not regulated so much by the actual state of the colony as by the state of the money-market at home. When money is plentiful it can be raised without difficulty; but, if the money-market is tight, there will be a great deal of difficulty in borrowing, no matter what security you may have to offer. I believe that the Government of New South Wales have had authority standing over for years to borrow a consi-

derable amount of money; but they have not put that authority into execution until very recently, and they are now about to act upon it. There is no reason whatever why the Government of this colony, having the same power to borrow, should not use it until they find it absolutely necessary to do so. I think I have taken up all the points of the speech of the hon. member for Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) which escaped the notice of the Treasurer, and I shall now have a few words to say upon the speech of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson), which, as usual, was distinguished by long words more than by argument. He followed his usual custom, and, to use his own metaphor, "sailed round the salient points" of the Treasurer's speech without going into the arguments contained in it in any way. The hon. gentleman quite forgot to tell us that it was mainly his action as Treasurer of the late Government that brought us into all our difficulties. It was his prognostication of revenue which has never been derived from the Customs or from any other source from which he expected to get it, that led the late Government into difficulties. They were frequently warned by the then Opposition of the dangerous shoals towards which they were drifting; but, instead of accepting the warning, they went on spending money as fast as they could and creating offices everywhere. I blame the late Treasurer, as pilot of the ship, for not having warned his colleagues of the dangers into which they were drifting; of dangers which have landed the colony in a deficiency of £180,000, which the hon. gentleman appeared to glory in when speaking of it, and for which he was cheered by the hon. member for Moreton (Mr. Garrick). It seems as though the hon. member for Moreton gloried and exulted in the deficit of £180,000 because it has tended to place the Government of the day in rather an embarrassing condition, and the ex-Treasurer himself seems to think it a very fine thing; but I do not know what he can find to be proud of, unless he is like the fox that lost its tail and was proud of it. I was rather struck with the want of political honesty in his enunciation, not made now for the first time, that if we conceal our want and go in for a small loan we shall do a better thing on the London market. I find, in a speech he made last year, he said—

"The position I have all along taken up is that supposing our last loan had not been successfully floated—and up to a week of the time it was floated considerable doubts existed in the London money-market as to the result of that operation which fortunately turned out so well—I say that had that loan not been successfully floated, I have all along contended that we should not actually require to put a loan before the country this year; and hence my reticence,

in making my Financial Statement, in referring to the desirability of floating any further loan this year; inasmuch as had that Statement appeared it would, undoubtedly, have disturbed the tenders which were received for the loan just then being offered in the London market."

The political honesty of such a statement as that was not likely to improve the prices of our debentures on the London market. He goes on—

"My view is fully borne out by the latest Stock Exchange report received only three days ago at the Treasury, which states that up to the week within which the last loan was floated considerable doubt existed in the market amongst capitalists and others as to investing in colonial securities, but by a partial dissipation of the gloom connected with the Eastern question those securities rose in favour, the first investment being the Queensland loan, followed by the New Zealand 5 per cent. loan, both of which were tendered for at a much higher price than could possibly have been obtained if placed in the market a fortnight earlier."

Then, mark the cunning which the hon. member calls finance—

"I did not give prominence in my Financial Statement to a question of a loan this session, because if the last loan had not been successfully floated it might not have been a seasonable proposition to submit to the country. When that loan was floated, the day after my Financial Statement was made, in replying to the debate on that Statement, I intimated that the hands of the Government were free to consider what further action would be taken in the matter of the loan."

MR. DICKSON: I got a better price than you.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I admit the hon. gentleman's cunning. He might say that his loan had been better floated, but it is rank arrogance for the hon. gentleman to claim to himself that through the fact of his being Treasurer at the time one penny more was got than would have been got had any other member of the House or any other man in the country been Colonial Treasurer. The investing public of England had probably never heard his name, and could not spell it now unless they had a debenture before them; so that when he said he got a better price he is assuming a great deal too much. What I object to in the whole statement—though no doubt the hon. member thinks he was remarkably clever—is the way he has—I will not say cheated, but—misled the money-lending public of England. He held back information which I say he was bound to give, and it was disingenuous, if not dishonest, to withhold it. I prefer the plan of the Treasurer, who says—"We want three millions, and we propose to take authority to borrow that amount, and let you know beforehand what we want now and what we shall want." We may get a little less for our debentures, but

I am quite sure that they will on the whole command a steadier and better price when it is known that no attempt is made to mislead. The hon. gentleman dwelt a good deal upon the necessity of the Treasurer informing him how he was going to provide for the interest from ordinary revenue; but the Treasurer never said he was going to do so. He entered fully into the question of the probability of being able to provide a great deal more than that from the increasing revenue from land and the sale of land. A great deal of capital was made by both the hon. member for Enoggera and the hon. member for Brisbane, by saying that extending the railways 130 miles would not bring us nearer to the good country; but it is evident that the 130 miles of rail must bring us 130 miles nearer to the good country. No one said that either of the three railways would go into the best country, or that they would reach their ultimate destination. The hon. member for Enoggera twitted us with not having come down to the House with a complete plan of railways, overlooking the fact that the cost of such a complete system carried to the South Australian border would be about fifty millions. I never heard anything so absurd in my life. No one on this side who has any knowledge of the subject will say that by extending those railways 130 miles we shall bring them to the heart of the good country, and no one on that side will say that we shall not bring them 130 miles nearer to it. By carrying them 50 or 100 miles further we shall answer every purpose intended. It is not necessary to carry them into the heart of the country in order to bring that country into the market—if we can get through the bad country intervening between the coast and the good country so that settlers with their drays can come to the railway, we shall have done all that will be necessary for years to come. To talk about a complete system is downright nonsense, considering our present population and present revenue—or even the amount of land we have to sell. We have been told by the ex-Treasurer that no Treasurer has ever been obliged to come down to the House with such enormous Supplementary Estimates as the present Treasurer's would be. Surely he must remember he is speaking of the legacy left by him. It will be owing to his garbled Estimates of last year, in which everything was cut down to the lowest possible figure, in many cases against the advice of the heads of the departments, who warned the ex-Treasurer that his Estimates would not be sufficient, that the enormous deficiency—if it is so enormous as he asserts, but which I doubt—has been caused. It will have been brought about entirely by

his own action in putting down amounts on the Estimates which he knew would not be sufficient for the purpose. If he means to bring that statement forward as a proof of the inefficiency of the Government, his argument may be understood by himself, but it cannot be by anybody else. Then the question of how the interest is to be provided for had been repeated over and over again until one is sick of hearing it. Do those hon. members forget that no interest can by any possibility begin to accrue before the 1st July next, supposing the Loan Bill passed and part of the loan floated—and then only the interest on the part floated will have commenced to accrue. They have started with the idea that the interest on the whole of the three millions will begin from the jump, and that the Treasurer is bound to provide for the payment of the interest upon the whole amount at once; but the Treasurer has already told them that he does not intend to float the whole at one time. The hon. member for Enoggera also assures us that the second financial statement was brought out by the action of the hon. member for North Brisbane; but that hon. member will hardly venture to assume that credit. If the Colonial Treasurer had not chosen on his own account to make that statement, no hon. member of the House could have dragged it out of him. The necessity for a loan has been admitted by both speakers on the Opposition side.

MR. GRIFFITH: A loan.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is what I said—I know the difference between “a” and “the.” I do not say “the” loan. They could hardly avoid admitting the necessity for a loan after the samples the Treasurer has given from their speeches last year. They have gone back a great deal from what they then advanced, but they can hardly draw back from their advocacy of the necessity for a loan. And there is a necessity for a very large loan. If the House only looks the question in the face they must see the necessity for carrying on the public works of the colony. We have been told by the Treasurer that the present loan will be exhausted in rather more than eight months. That loan has been the means of keeping a large number of men in employment, and unless hon. members are prepared to say that all public works in the colony shall cease at that time, and those men be thrown out of employ, and thereby driven out of the colony most thoroughly, they must admit that there is a necessity for a loan, and for a large one. Having been driven into an extensive system of works by the previous Ministry, it is impossible for the Government to put the drag on all at once without ruining the country completely. I deny entirely that the Colonial Treasurer in making his application to the House,

and saying he wished to borrow, borrow, borrow—the word has been repeated over and over again like a parrot’s cry—made any *ad misericordiam* appeal to the House. He did nothing of the kind, and his speech presented a very strong contrast to that of the hon. member who introduced this motion, both in manner, substance, and the style in which it was delivered—and there was not a particle of *ad misericordiam* about it. The hon. member for Enoggera seems to forget everything he ever did, and every policy he had ever held. He forgets the railway reserves and the proposed policy of the Government of which he was a member; and he forgets entirely that we are not bound down to the railway reserves. We have the whole of the colony to pick and choose from, and can sell any part of it on giving proper notice. The hon. member also indulged in some dark forebodings; but, judging from his past predictions on financial matters, judging by his forecasts regarding the revenue being seriously out in every item—being utterly wrong—I am very much inclined to think that his frightful forebodings now will turn out just as much the other way as his previous prophesies were false in a contrary direction. I believe we shall not always be in the low state that we are now, and that with an increased expenditure by public works, and with the people that must follow on work being offered, the revenue will rally, and we shall, out of revenue alone, be able to pay a large proportion of the interest on the proposed loan, as well as on other liabilities. Then, he told us that he had always supported main lines. He did when in office, and we know that other members of the Ministry with which he was connected made statements as to their support of main lines inside and outside the House, but much more straightforward when outside it. I have a report of a speech made by the leader of the Opposition at Charters Towers, when he was speaking what he really thought. I will read an extract from that speech *apropos* of the doubt thrown by the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) upon the statement of the Treasurer that light railways could be made for £2,500 per mile. The hon. member said broadly that he did not think the Treasurer believed it could be done, and that he was only holding it out as a bit of gilding. Now, he will hear what his colleague said at Charters Towers. His colleague was only a young Minister for Works at the time, but he seemed to have studied the question; and I have a great respect for his opinions—especially when I agree with them. The present leader of the Opposition then said that he had

“Always been an advocate for cheap railways. When he first addressed his constituents he believed that railways could be made for £1,000

per mile on the Queensland gauge, but he had seen fit to modify that opinion, and now believed they could be built for £2,000 per mile; and when that was accomplished a new era would be inaugurated in the public works policy of Queensland. His Government had consistently advocated railway extension, but they must cut their coats according to their cloth."

Now we have the ex-Treasurer attempting to throw considerable doubt upon the Premier's statement that railways can be made for £2,500 per mile, whilst we have his colleague saying, at Charters Towers, that at first he thought they could be built for £1,000 per mile, but he had since modified his opinions and he now believed that lines quite sufficient for the wants of the country could be made for £2,000 per mile on the Queensland gauge. I think the hon. member wasted a great deal of eloquence and used some tremendously long words—words which I hardly knew the meaning of—in trying to make it appear that the Treasurer did not believe what he had laid down in the Loan Estimates. Then he got quite indignant at the idea that the House was not to scrutinise the Loan Estimates. Who denied their right to do so? They have the right to scrutinize every vote brought before them, but it should be done fairly, honestly, and straightforwardly. Again, he wants to know why the Treasurer did not bring in Estimates for extensions 150 miles long instead of 130. Why did he not ask why extensions for 1,000 or 2,000 miles had not been brought in? What is the use of asking such a ridiculous question? It is a mere question of expense, and the difference is just sixty miles, or £180,000. In addition to the speech made by the leader of the Opposition at Charters Towers, I beg to remind the House that your own Estimate, Mr. Speaker, for the Maryborough and Gympie line was not to exceed £2,000 per mile, and I have always been exceedingly sorry that it was not adhered to, and that we did not vote a railway on that Estimate. It would have proved whether the scheme was practicable or not. I believe myself suitable railways can be made for £2,000 per mile. Then the hon. member twitted the Treasurer with offering a bribe of £100,000 to gild the pill of the Divisional Boards Bill. Does he forget that it was openly stated by the Treasurer that he always intended to start the road boards and shire councils into life with a gift from the Government? If the hon. member does not remember this he ought to, and he certainly ought not to make the statement that the £100,000 was intended as a bribe, considering that the Premier announced on the second reading of the Divisional Boards Bill that it was impossible the shire councils could come into existence unless help was given them during the first year. The

hon. member forgets that in every loan he has introduced he has borrowed for roads and bridges. In his 76-77 loan he borrowed £100,000, and, to show the squeezability of the Government, I remember distinctly that I succeeded in getting £14,000 in addition out of that very pliant and squeezable Government. Does the hon. member forget these facts, or has he ignored them? He puts me very much in mind of the proverb—

"The devil got sick, the devil a monk would be;  
The devil got well, the devil a monk was he."

He was very ready to borrow when in office; but now that he is not on the Treasury benches, but on the Opposition, it is downright sin and a shame. The force of folly can no further go. The hon. member informed us that if the Treasurer had not got £130,000 transferred from the Railway Reserves Act he could not have gone as far as he has. He knows very well that not a shilling has been transferred yet. If our policy is carried, and we repeal the Railway Reserves Act in the way that we intend, no doubt the Treasurer will get the amount; but the hon. member with his experience must know, or ought to know, that the Treasurer cannot have a shilling until the Railway Reserves Act is repealed. He must know in "his heart of hearts," to use his own phrase, that his statement was not literally correct. I have not much more to say, having already spoken unusually long—for me. I shall be satisfied with the decision of the House, whatever it may be, on our policy. We are not particularly anxious to stick to the helm of State in the present troublous waters. We will not waste many tears if this motion is carried, and will endeavour to retire as gracefully as we can; but until we are defeated we shall try to hold our own, and to keep a fast hold of the wheel, and we will not be "squeezed."

MR. THORN: I intended to have spoken at some length on the Loan Estimates, but after the exhaustive speeches of the two gentlemen sitting on the Opposition Benches, I will endeavour to compress what I have to say in a small compass. First of all, I will refer to a very serious charge that has been made with regard to the floating of the loan in England by the late Treasurer. I was in England at the time it was floated. Money was very tight then; for fixed deposits 4½ per cent. interest was being given, and discounts were higher than they had been for years; still the late Treasurer floated his loan better than the present Treasurer did his, notwithstanding that the present Treasurer had everything in his favour, money being easy and discount 1½ per cent. I consider that the action of the late Treasurer is to be commended, for he saved the colony £50,000 or £60,000 by his shrewdness, sagacity, and, I may say, ability. In that

transaction he displayed great sagacity, which, I must say, is wanting in the present Treasurer. The hon. gentleman accused me of including in a loan £100,000 for roads and bridges. I admit that I did, and that I made a mistake which will never be repeated should I again sit on the Treasury benches. I am astonished, however, at the present Government including such an item in a loan. I was twitted by the present Minister for Works, last evening, with having gone in for such a loan, but it must be remembered that there was good reason for my action at that particular time. The roads had been torn up in all directions by the disastrous flood which occurred in that year, and the country was crying out for the repair of the roads and bridges. I put on the amount to repair the damage done by the flood, but since then have found that I made a mistake. No doubt a judgment came upon the colony in consequence, for no rain fell until the other day; the colony went without rain for two years after I committed the error. I am not ashamed to acknowledge that I committed a mistake, and I hope hon. members opposite will make the same acknowledgment in regard to their proposals to devote a great part of their loan to unproductive works. The hon. member also stated that I was responsible for all these sins—that I was the great sinner on that side of the House. I know he intended his remarks for me with reference to the making of surveys. I am quite aware of the Act of Parliament that was read by the Colonial Secretary, and that I had no right to make surveys contrary to the provisions of that Act; but if that Act had been carried out strictly the great central line would never have been extended. I ask the present Minister for Works whether he is not at the present moment making surveys in contravention of that Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. THORN: I have not the slightest doubt that he is making them at the present time; and I can tell him further—I do not make this statement myself, but as it has been told to me, and I repeat it for what it is worth—that surveys are being made through friends' land—through the lands of good straight voters at the last election. I can tell the Minister for Works that in the district I once represented—Fassifern—there were two surveys made, one by myself and another by the Minister for Works who succeeded me; but the present Minister for Works is going to have a third survey, and it is stated in the West Moreton district, and has not been contradicted, that the last survey is being made through the land of people who at the last election voted for the supporters of the present Government. I hope the Minister for Works will be able to contradict that statement. There are lots of petty little

things that I do not intend to go into, and I shall come at once to the loan policy of the Government. With regard to that policy I may state at the outset that I am not at all opposed to the loan. I am not in favour of a stoppage of our public works, and should be only too happy to see the Government get a loan to-morrow to carry on those works; but I cannot endorse their action and policy at the present time. I can state, sir, that the Government are not anxious for this loan; that they are anxious for a rest-and-caution policy just now. They are anxious to dangle this loan before hon. members and the country—to let them smell it, and nothing more; they are not anxious that they should bite. I am perfectly certain of that, because otherwise we should have had the Treasurer coming down with plans and books of reference of the proposed railway. When I was Minister for Works, the present Treasurer insisted, before I talked about railways, before they were mooted, that all information—plans and books of reference, routes and cost—connected with those railways, and the reasons why they should be carried out, should be placed on the table of the House. In proof of that I will read a speech made by that hon. gentleman when leader of the Opposition. It will remind him of the contradictory statement he made to-night; and I would also point out that he made a great mistake with regard to the practice in New South Wales and South Australia. There the surveys are made first, and the information has not to be squeezed out of the Government. The practice on the Burke line—and, in fact, all the lines in New South Wales—has always been to afford every information to the House when a line is asked for. That is what I did, when I was Minister for Works; I gave every information, and yet the present Treasurer and Colonial Secretary were not satisfied. The day before I laid the plans and book of reference on the table the present Colonial Secretary wanted further proof that the railways would be reproductive, or he would not sanction my proceeding. Here are the words of the present Premier, Mr. McIlwraith—

"The manner in which the Government had put forward their railway policy, throughout the session, had been extraordinary. He could challenge any honourable member to bring forward an instance where the plans and specifications had not been produced at the time the desirability of making the line was being discussed, and other matters in connection with it."

How does the hon. member reconcile that speech with his statement to-night, that it is not necessary to place plans and sections on the table of the House? I tabled a motion yesterday, and I was sure it would be allowed to go as formal. I wanted that information for the country—the hon.

member would say the House is the country, but I question very much whether this House is the country: I should like to try conclusions with him on that point. And I can tell the hon. member further, that if I had been here we would have had a different House. I can also say that there are worse gentlemen at the head of the Governments in the different colonies—far worse than the gentleman who sits there now. In connection with my statement respecting the information demanded from me by the Treasurer, I may say that when I took office as Minister for Works I was given very little time—only three weeks—to go to the country and formulate my policy; but the present Government have had four months, and even now they have no policy at all, and are not likely to have so long as they remain where they are. When I laid the plans and sections and routes and estimates on the table, the present Colonial Secretary complained that I had not given any reasons why the lines should be made. He said—

“They had given no information whatever; they had not brought forward any tables or statistics or anything to prove that any one of these lines would prove a commercial success; and before they voted away money in this headlong manner, he thought it was the duty of members of the House to satisfy themselves that there was a reasonable prospect of the lines being remunerative.”

I ask the leader of the present Government why he has not brought forward figures to-night, or why he did not bring forward figures the other night, when he introduced his Loan Estimates, to show that these projected lines of railway will prove a commercial success? Not only have they not proved that, but they will not give us any information; they have no plans to show the routes the lines will take, or any information whatever. With regard to branch railways, we know that unless they meander through agricultural districts they are absolutely useless. In England we find them meandering throughout the best farming districts, and I will not support any branch lines, or any lines in the colony, unless I know the route and that the greatest number of people will be benefited by such lines. With regard to main lines, I am an advocate of them. I am not going to retrograde from my former policy in that respect; and I will give my reasons why those lines should be carried into the interior, and I am certain they will be approved of—we know from experience that farming will not pay unless farmers are able to keep sheep or something that will ensure a certain return every year. In East Moreton there are no sheep; in West Moreton and the Wide Bay and Burnett there are very few. If our trunk lines are extended into the

western interior sheep will take the place of cattle on those vast prairies, and squatters' cattle will not come into competition with farmers' cattle as at present—which is the cause of the prevailing low price of cattle in the coast districts. It is time that at least two of the trunk lines were rendered more profitable, which can be done by making branch lines from each of them. I should like to see the Balonne district tapped by a branch railway from Yulebah to St. George. Such a line would absorb the whole of the trade of that district and a portion of that of New South Wales. That district is often very hard up for supplies, and I think the country would approve of such a line as I suggest. I should also like to see a branch line from Emerald Downs to Clermont, and it as well as the other could be made to pay at once. A third line I should like to see is the one from Brisbane to deep-water, the omission of which from the Loan Estimate is looked upon by the people in Brisbane and in West Moreton as a stab at the district of West Moreton. This little branch will be a good paying line, and instead of ships going away in ballast to Newcastle and other places for coal, they would load with coal here, and trade here would increase and the whole of the southern district be benefited. A line to Burrum is proposed. I am not going to oppose that line, but after they had made it they would not be able to ship their coal without expending a quarter of a million in making a proper port. That line, equally with the one in the south, ought to be constructed. As to the Ipswich coal being of an inferior quality, as stated by the hon. gentleman, I can tell him that such is not the case. The reason why it does not appear so good is that it has to be transhipped three or four times, to its great apparent detriment. I need only ask hon. members to compare the quality of the gas at Ipswich with that at Brisbane: the difference is infinitely in favour of the Ipswich gas, and it is even contemplated to send gas down from Ipswich to Brisbane by mains. I know the Burrum coal is of an excellent quality, but so is that at Ipswich, and a branch line of only two miles for the latter would at once raise the export from £30,000 or £40,000 to £100,000 a year, besides acting as a feeder to the line between Brisbane and Ipswich. I have objected to the loan policy of the Government because they have given us no data to go upon. We do not know what the lines will cost, nor what expenditure their policy will land us in. I expected the Colonial Treasurer would have given us all the necessary information when he introduced his Loan Estimates, instead of the meagre statement which he himself, I do not think, believes in, and which I have no

doubt he is anxious the House would not agree to so long as he is allowed to keep his place on the Treasury bench. Another objection I have to their loan policy is that we ought no longer to borrow money for unproductive works. We have done enough in that way in the past, and that is the cause of our present heavy indebtedness. I do not care how much you borrow for railways so long as our future prospects continue bright. The Premier, in his statement, said the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line was my idea. Certainly it was; but he endorsed my action with regard to it, for he said it was the line which above all others would pay the best. The hon. gentleman favoured that line for three reasons. He was then beginning to be ambitious and aspired to the Premiership of the colony; secondly, he had sitting alongside him a gentleman representing that electorate who supported the railway policy of the then Government; and thirdly, he wished to represent that electorate in the House, which he does at the present time, although how he got returned for it I need not say on the present occasion. When the construction of that line was proposed copper was 25 per cent. higher than it is now, and there was every prospect of the line being as remunerative as any of the others; and I trust it will be so yet. The hon. gentleman in his speech on that occasion said that the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line the Government ought especially to make if they made any line at all in that district. That line, as I acknowledge, is a weak one, but I hope to see it in time as remunerative as the others, and I am not at all sorry that we decided upon its construction. My railway policy was a moderate one; it did not demoralise the country like that of the present Government. But I do not think they wish to carry out the whole of their proposed policy, and I believe they would be glad if this side would thwart them in carrying it into effect and, at the same time, allow the present Ministry to occupy the Treasury benches. I also object to their policy because they will not tell us how they intend to meet the interest on the proposed new loan; and that is the most serious objection I have to it. The Colonial Treasurer proposes to pay it out of land revenue; but I can tell him that if he thinks so he never made a greater mistake in his life, when landholders have the land tax and the improvement tax looming before them. No one would take up land under those conditions in the outside districts, while the squatters would be able to keep their runs intact for ever. I say now, as I said before, that if the Divisional Boards Bill is carried in anything like its present shape it will prevent the sale of land. The amount of land hitherto sold is but an infinitesimal portion of the whole;

and although there is a vast amount of rich land yet available in the west, it is not likely to be sold if the Divisional Boards Bill were to pass. By shelving that Bill the interest on the loan may be met from the sale of land; but, if it should ever come into operation, I may tell the Treasurer plainly that the money realised on all lands sold in the outside districts he will be able to jingle in the tumbler on the table. If the hour were not so late I might give many other minor reasons why I object to the policy of the Government. There is one item in the Works Department which I notice is reduced, and that is the Commissioner's estimate for rolling-stock. I can tell this House that the Commissioner has always kept these expenses within bounds—in fact, he has, if anything, been rather niggardly in the matter—and the Minister for Works has made a great mistake in reducing the amount for rolling-stock below the Commissioner's estimate. The reason that he has reduced the amount is plainly this, that he does not intend to carry out his policy, for if he does he will require at least double the amount. It is no use shirking the question: if these railways are to be made, rolling-stock must be made for them; and it is only deceiving the House and the public to say it will not be required, for the rolling-stock is part and parcel of a line. We have not been told anything about the price of the land which will have to be purchased, but only that railways are to be made at £2,500 a mile, as is being done in the northern extension. Everybody knows it is not the construction of the lines which costs the money; it is the building of the stations and the purchase of rolling-stock and land. That is where I differ with the Colonial Treasurer in his estimate of the cost of branch and main lines. Besides, he is not justified in going into any designs for railway construction without first having made proper investigation. It will have to be recollected, also, that the Southern and Western Railway and the Northern Railway are not yet complete, and that rolling-stock must be supplied to meet their increasing requirements every year; thus, if these lines cost £3,000 a mile this year, next year they will cost probably £3,200; indeed, there is no finality to the cost of railway lines. It is just as well to go in for the amount of rolling-stock which is required at once. In regard to branch lines, I see that the estimate which the hon. member has laid on the table for the three lines differs from that of the Engineer-in-Chief to the extent of £105,000 without plant or rolling-stock, and I think we shall be led astray unless some further information is given about them. So far as they are con-

cerned, they will cost double what the Treasurer expects, unless the parties in the districts through which the lines pass give up the land. There are no particulars given of the Warwick to Killarney line, but I may tell hon. members that if it takes a straight course it will go through one man's property all the way—Canning Downs—and the only way to avoid it will be to take a circuitous route. When the hon. member moves for that line I expect to have some information about it, and to see the plans laid on the table of the House, and I can assure the hon. member I shall not be a party to voting money for that line unless I get far more information from the Government than there is at present. I have been trying to get information I want, but I must admit I cannot fathom the present Premier. I now come to the estimate for harbours and rivers, for which there is a quarter of a million of money asked, and I may suggest the question, who are the people to be benefited by it? Are the farmers to be taxed for improvements from which they derive but little benefit? And should not the people who are most benefited be specially taxed for these works? In France that system is carried out, and in Brittany I recollect that a very heavy tax was being levied there for the improvement of harbours. I don't see why the mercantile community should get all the benefit of these improvements, and the poor hardworking man be ground down and be driven out of the colony to more favoured colonies, as they inevitably will be if the Divisional Boards Bill should pass. Why should not the rich merchants be taxed for the improvement of harbours and ports as well as the poor farmers?—for I don't see why people who receive special benefit should not also pay for them. I am not in favour of this vote, though I shall not be a party to repudiation. I am sorry the Government are not carrying out my policy in regard to Townsville. You can never make a port of Ross' Creek, and to spend money on it is simply throwing it into the creek—in fact, it is a bribe. I look to see the jetty carried out, and acting not merely as a breakwater but as a landing-place for any vessels trading on the coast. Then there is £30,000 for the storage for water in the interior. That is another very large question; but I do not see why outside districts should escape scot-free for their water storage, when people in the municipalities have to pay 5 per cent., and even more, on the money the works may have cost. What is fair for one is fair for the other: there is no reason to make fish of one and fowl of the other. In one case the water-rate in a town was 2s. in the pound, or 10 per cent. I will here contradict a state-

ment by the Treasurer, that the additional means asked for for water-supply is entirely owing to the mal-administration of the former Government. The hon. member forgets that fresh mains are always being laid in—just as in the case of the rolling-stock, and that the managers of waterworks have to extend their operations frequently. The Treasurer showed gross ignorance in being unaware that, as streets were always being opened up, and waterways put down, so much more would the water supply cost;—fresh pipes had to be paid for, and had to be laid. I was on the Waterworks Board myself at one time, and it was astonishing the number of fresh proposals which were continually cropping up for water in new streets, and it was not the mal-administration of the late Government that necessitated more money being asked for. I see £10,000 for the defences of the colony. We have had quite enough of that, and instead of spending money on volunteers, I hope the House, when in committee, will be no party to voting any further sum for the defences of the colony. I would rather take the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government benches as a leader than half the officers at the present time, and I would rather march under his banner than under that of many of the *quasi*-knowing ones. The hon. member would be a far better judge of what defences there should be than would be obtained from the opinion of imported new-chums from the old world. It is time it was stopped and that we looked to ourselves, for there are just as good men out here as there—and, in fact, far better. If instead of coming down with these Estimates the Treasurer had gone throughout the colony and preached self-reliance to the people he would have done better. If he had taken a speech delivered by Gambetta some six months ago, and delivered that all over the colony, it would be far better than to ask the country to agree to these unreasonable proposals—he might say, these unstatesmanlike and demoralising proposals. It is utterly impossible that any of these projected lines can be commenced for the next two years. We have had no information of the routes or the probable cost, and there is nothing to show they are likely to pay. I think at this late hour I have said quite sufficient, although I could go on much longer. I have already said that I am in accord with the Government in respect to pushing on public works, but in opposition to them as regards their loan policy, which I do not believe they are sincere in themselves.

On the motion of MR. BAILEY, the debate was adjourned.

The House adjourned at seventeen minutes past 10 o'clock.