

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 22 AUGUST 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 22 August, 1879.

Petitions.—Order of Business.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 10 o'clock a.m.

PETITIONS.

Mr. SWANWICK presented a petition from the female relatives of the late illustrious Australian navigator, Captain Matthew Flinders, praying that their situation may be taken into account by the Government, and such relief afforded them as may seem fit.

Petition read.

Mr. SWANWICK moved that the petition be received.

Mr. DICKSON said the petition asked for pecuniary assistance, and therefore came within the category of petitions which could not be received by the House.

The SPEAKER said the petition asked for no definite sum of money. A great number of petitions had been presented involving the expenditure of money, though they had not asked for it in definite terms. However, the rule had been to receive such petitions, so long as no exact sum of money was asked.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) presented a petition from residents in the Burnett district, praying that tenders be called for the extension of the Bundaberg-Mount Perry Railway to Mount Perry.

Petition received.

Mr. HORWITZ presented a petition from the Eastern Downs Horticultural and Agricultural Association, and others,

stating that the withdrawal of the Government subsidy would be a serious blow to the association, and praying for relief.

Petition read and received.

Mr. Low presented a petition from residents of the Balonne District, praying for the extension of the Southern and Western Railway from Yulebah to St. George.

Petition received.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

On order No. 1—Bankers' Books Evidence Bill; consideration in Committee—being called,

The PREMIER moved that it and the remaining five Orders of the Day be postponed until after the consideration of the Government Order of the Day. In making the motion he wished to draw the attention of the House to the state of the Government business at the present time. It was on Tuesday, August 12th, that he moved that the House should go into Committee of Supply, for the purpose of considering the Loan Estimates. They had thus consumed a fortnight, and in it were included more than half the time devoted to private members, and the day on which they had sat twenty-four hours as well as the one on which they had sat eighteen hours. During the whole of that time they had never got further than simply carrying the motion that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House go into Committee of Supply. Not a single bit of Government business had been done, not a single motion had been carried, for the last fortnight, with the exception of the vote of £100,000 for immigration. The leader of the Opposition, in referring to the state of the Government business last night, told the House plainly that he considered fair average progress had been made with it, so far as the session had gone, and he went through the notice paper to prove it; but had he summarised his remarks the result would have startled him, as it justified his (Mr. McIlwraith's) statement that with respect to the Government business at least one-half of the session had been taken up in discussing the policy of the Government, or matters intimately connected with it, and the real business of the Government—their Bills and Estimates—ignored altogether. By reference to what was done on each day that was devoted to Government work his assertion would be proved. The session commenced on May 13, which day was taken up by the debate on the Address in Reply. The 14th and 15th May were given up to the same subject. On the next Government day, the 21st, almost the whole day, with the exception of some formal business, was taken up by a discussion on the dismissals from the Ipswich workshops, brought on by the Opposition.

Every particle of the next day was devoted to the same subject. The next Government day was the first one allowed by the Opposition to be devoted to the real business of the Government—the second reading of the Mines Regulation Bill. On the 28th, half of the day was used for a debate got up by the Opposition as to the standing of certain members in the House who were members of the legal profession, on account of their having accepted fees from the Government. On the next Government day the Electoral Rolls Bill came on, and the day was devoted entirely to Government business. The next day was commenced with the Financial Statement. The following week the discussion on the Statement began, and instead of taking two days, which was about the maximum time, it took four whole days—two Government weeks. On the 24th June, the second reading of the Divisional Boards Bill was passed after a discussion of two days. In the next week the half of the first day was occupied by a discussion on the Ipswich workshops, which subject had already taken two days and a-half of Government time. The next day was given to the Land Bill, and the disgraceful waste of time caused by the Opposition formed a very conspicuous episode in the way in which work had been done during the session. After the first hour the discussion might have closed, but the Opposition insisted on its being carried on, and this small Bill occupied the attention of the House for two days. The next two weeks were devoted to Government business entirely. Then the Government obtained Monday as an additional sitting day, and the half of the first Monday was taken up by a discussion brought on by the Opposition on the John Kelly case. The next day was the second given to the Land Bill, on which the Opposition, after having protracted the discussion simply for the purpose of talking the Bill out, came to a decision which the House could have arrived at perfectly well at a much earlier period of the evening. The matter illustrated the waste of time caused by the Opposition. One whole day was consumed by them in talk, after they saw that a majority of the House was resolved to carry the point that they wished. The next day was given fairly to Government business—to the Estimates. The succeeding Government day was devoted to a discussion on the Government banking account, brought on by the Opposition. The next two days were given to the Estimates. On Wednesday the Financial Statement on the Loan Estimates was made. Monday was devoted to Supply; on the 12th, on his motion to go into Committee of Supply, the want of confidence motion was moved and occupied three Government days of that week. It also occupied practically the greater part of this week, in-

cluding private members' day. Altogether, up to the present time, there had been devoted to Government business thirty-seven days; out of that nineteen had been exclusively to the consideration of the policy of the Government, forced upon them by the Opposition. All that time had actually been taken out of the period devoted to Government business, so that the Government had had only eighteen days; so that more than half the time devoted to Government business had been occupied by talking generally on the policy of the Government. He thought, from a very careful analysis of the business of the session, he had proved thoroughly that the position of the Government business at the present time was due entirely to the action of the Opposition. That would be rendered perfectly apparent if they looked at the composition of the Opposition. No matter what business had come before the House since the beginning of the session, whether Government or private business, or business arising incidentally, there were fourteen members of the Opposition who considered it their duty to themselves and their constituents and the country to address themselves at full length to every subject brought before the House. If that was to go on, it would be physically impossible to get the business of the session through at all. No doubt they all admired the eloquence of some hon. members opposite; but no matter how eloquent they might be it was of the greatest importance that the public business should be proceeded with, and they might very well have been spared three-fourths of the speeches that had been made. They threw no additional light on the subjects under discussion, nor had they been characterised by any great amount of talent, but rather by the want of that quality. The twaddle talked by hon. members on the Opposition side had gone a very long way to disgrace the pages of *Hansard* this year, and it was well for many of those hon. members that the greater portion of what they said had not been reported in full; and he himself thought that if all they uttered had gone forth to the public of Queensland the evil would have wrought its own cure. He wished the country distinctly to understand how the time of the House had been spent during the last fortnight by the action of the Opposition. The whole fortnight, including the time that should have been devoted to private business, including, also, the whole of the time between the ordinary sittings of the House from day to day, had been taken up by the Opposition, and during the whole of the last two nights they had been met by hon. members opposite with a stern refusal on their part to discuss the Government business at all. The Loan Estimates had been before the House for discussion a fortnight, and

during the whole of that time the members of the Opposition had positively refused in the most determined manner to approach actual business at all. They had, in a desultory way, on the motion of want of confidence, sometimes touched upon some of the items in the Loan Estimates, but they had refused to approach business in any practical way by moving any amendment on those Estimates as submitted to the House. At the commencement of the business of the last two days, when an attempt was made to proceed with certain items of the Loan Estimates, the Opposition plainly stated that they declined to proceed with those votes at all. Nothing could be more cowardly than that style of doing business. Was passive resistance of this kind to work a Government out? Surely they could say something intelligent on the items he had submitted in these Loan Estimates, so as to influence the judgment of the Government and their supporters in coming to a decision. Were they frightened of a decision? They knew perfectly well that a decision must be faced, and that the Government would never be coerced by passive resistance which refused to consider matters that they placed before members of the House. The resistance to this vote was commenced by a distinct avowal by the hon. member for Toowoomba to move that the amount proposed for trunk lines—£117,000—should be reduced a shilling at a time; but the members of the Opposition had not attempted to carry that out. If they had done so, without giving themselves the trouble to talk at all, or going to the expense of printing *Hansard*, it would have taken 237 years, sitting every day in the week, by simply calling for divisions, each division taking five minutes. But they were cowardly enough to evade even that mode of deciding the question, and refused to consider the matter at all. The hon. member for Enoggera moved that the vote be reduced to 1s., but that motion had never come before the House for decision up to the present time, because hon. members opposite had simply refused to go to a division, but had wasted time by talking about all sorts of matters outside the question, and dividing the House on motions for adjournment. With the exception of the hon. member for Carnarvon (Mr. Tyrel), who certainly spoke to the point by offering what he considered objections to the Loan Estimates, there had not been the slightest attempt made by any member of the Opposition, during the last two nights, to get on with business at all. When the hon. member for Enoggera commenced speaking, the other night, he (the Premier) listened to him attentively, and the first portion of his speech did bear on the Estimates, and he

brought forward certain arguments that ought to be answered. He asked for a great deal of information that he (the Premier) was quite prepared to give at that time, but the extreme verbosity of the hon. member precluded him from any chance of doing so, for he spoke for two hours and a-half, and intimated as plainly as possible that his object was to waste time, and that he really did not want information. Therefore he did not add that hon. member's name to that of the hon. member for Carnarvon as having assisted in any way whatever in the discussion of this matter. Hon. members opposite had simply taken up the dogged position taken up by the leader of the Opposition, that they would not discuss Government business at all. The Government occupied a very plain position and their duty was perfectly clear. It had been said that they had lost their temper, but he was sure that no outside spectator looking on the proceedings of the last two nights would accuse the members of the Government or their followers of having lost their temper. On the contrary, they had behaved with the greatest consideration to the members of the Opposition, who it was perfectly plain had lost their temper, or they would not have taken up the position they had adopted of refusing to consider or proceed with Government business. No approach to conciliation had been made by the Opposition who would not go on with business now, nor had they indicated either by private arrangement or publicly whether they were prepared to proceed with the Estimates next week. The hon. member for Enoggera said that morning that he blamed the Government strongly, and especially the hot temper of the Colonial Secretary and himself (the Premier), for not having come to some compromise with the leader of the Opposition as to the conduct of business. He (the Premier) denied that statement completely. He had met the leader of the Opposition and urged him repeatedly to try and find some common ground of compromise; but the position that hon. gentleman took up, and from which he had never budged, was that he could not possibly remove from the position he had assumed—that he could not consider Government business at all. That had been the position taken up by the Opposition all through. The Government could not possibly recede from their position, which was that Government business should be gone on with. Their duty was perfectly plain—to devote every day they could to Government business, and, as he had stated before, not only that, but the days which under ordinary circumstances would be given to private business must be devoted to Government business until the Loan Estimates were in such a state as to justify private business

being proceeded with. That was the position the Government took up, and he thought the hon. member who now seemed to lead the Opposition would this morning have been able to say, after the amount of physical fighting over these Estimates that had been gone through, that he was prepared to bring up his party in a more conciliatory mood and ready to do business. But they had received no indication of that character, and he was perfectly satisfied that the country was watching the conduct of those hon. gentlemen. They had gone in for obstruction pure and simple, unrelieved by any display of talent. He had seen obstruction before, but then the obstructionists were always able to keep the House moderately well amused. But on the present occasion the dull obstruction of the Opposition simply resolved itself into waking hon. members from their sleep and making them walk from one side of the House to the other, and they had actually to appeal to the talent of hon. members on the Government side of the House to keep themselves from falling asleep. Stolid obstruction of that kind would fail to find appreciation from any of the people of this colony. The Opposition had managed, very much to the detriment of their tempers, and certainly not to the improvement of their physical appearance, to keep the House together for the last two nights. The hon. member for Moreton (Mr. Garrick), who had done almost less than any other hon. member on that side of the House, looked seedier than any of them. If this motion were carried they would then proceed to the next so as to get down to Supply, where they left off when the House met this morning; but he had very little hope—especially seeing the temper of the hon. member for Moreton, who seemed to have attained to the position of a sort of dictator to the Opposition, and exercised a little bit of power—that much business would be done before the House, according to the sessional orders, must adjourn. However, if the hon. member was in bad temper this morning, no doubt he would come with better grace to the consideration of the Estimates next week. He could already see signs of that, because the hon. gentleman had been in a funk all through with regard to his conduct in connection with these Loan Estimates; and he would find when he spoke to the electors of Moreton that he would not have such an easy time of it as he had at the last election. He would have to do all his electioneering himself, and pay the whole of the expenses out of his own pocket. He would not find the same kind godmother that he found in the Government on the last occasion, and parties running from one end of the electorate to the other doing his electioneering for him. At the next election he would

have to look to his political character to get him into that House, and that he would get in for the electorate of Moreton at all he (the Premier) very much doubted. They had forced him to be quiet, frequently;—not that that had been any loss to the House, because the quieter he was the more likely they were to get on with the business—but they had frequently forced him to be quiet when he would otherwise have occupied the time of the House. The hon. member who was the coadjutor of the hon. member for Moreton in leading the House that morning was always in an amiable temper. He was never put out, but still he was a very good obstructionist, and as he had not got a railway in his electorate he was in a very much better position than the hon. member for Moreton. The hon. member for Enoggera had not the onerous duties of leader of the Opposition pressed upon him by the tail of his party, who were rather desperate at the present time, and he believed, after the lesson the hon. member had been taught this week, he would come to the consideration of the Loan Estimates with a much better grace on Monday. He might not talk so long, but he might talk a great deal more sense than he had during the last two obstruction days. He could depend on that hon. member if he continued to act as leader of the Opposition, which he appeared to have a fair prospect of doing, because if the party were deserted as it had been by the leader of the Opposition during the last two days, they must certainly look out for another leader, but whoever that leader might be he certainly hoped it would not be the hon. member for Moreton.

Mr. DICKSON said he should not address himself to the remarks of the hon. the Premier in reference to his friend the member for Moreton (Mr. Garrick). The hon. gentleman had sown a whirlwind, and he would certainly reap a storm from the hon. member for Moreton, and he (Mr. Dickson) did not propose to enter upon a matter which would be much more ably dealt with by his friend (Mr. Garrick). He (Mr. Dickson) expected that the Premier would, upon the Order of the Day being called, move that Supply should take precedence of private business, and that he should have made a motion to that effect without any discussion; but he was surprised to see how the hon. gentleman loaded his argument with apologies, and he could only say that the case must be extremely bad when it required such a large amount of apology to defend the motion he had made. If the hon. gentleman had told them what probability there was of arriving at a practical consideration of his Loan Estimates by going into Supply on this occasion, he (Mr. Dickson) should have been glad, as one member of

the House, to have acceded to his request. His desire was to see the Government proceed with their business, and if the Government were prepared to do that, and to give that amount of information which ought to attend the consideration of their proposals, he, for one, would be no obstructionist whatsoever. He regretted that the leader of the Opposition was not present on this occasion, because in the midst of the innumerable apologies which the Premier introduced into his speech this morning, he had dissected the speech of his hon. friend in such a manner that that gentleman alone could give him a satisfactory reply. But on looking to the *Hansard* report of last evening he observed that the leader of the Opposition clearly pointed out the position in which the Government stood by their untimely desire to proceed to the consideration of the Loan Estimate on private members' days, and he also pointed out, what had been entirely left untouched by the Premier—namely, that the reason why they had made so little substantial progress with Government business during the session was owing, chiefly, to the very imperfect manner in which that business was introduced, and that they themselves were to blame that so much time had to be taken up in the consideration of Government measures. The hon. gentleman said—

“If the Government would set themselves to the business of the country seriously, and not wear quite so much of that air which had given rise to the expression ‘a bull at a gate,’ they would get on more pleasantly and comfortably. The Opposition had assisted more in the conduct of the business of the Government than the Government themselves, and were entitled to better treatment than to be told that the only private day members had in the week should be taken from them. The Government would gain nothing, but might lose a good deal, by persisting in keeping hon. members sitting for forty-eight hours at a stretch.”

That was the reason why no progress had been made in the consideration of these railway estimates. The Premier had said that the Opposition had declined to give any consideration whatever to the Loan Estimates—that they intended to obstruct them *in toto*; but that statement had no foundation whatever, except in the imagination of the hon. gentleman. The vote for immigration, upon which they got a reasonable amount of information, was passed without any large amount of discussion, and he did not hesitate to say that if the hon. gentleman had consented to postpone the consideration of the railway vote, on which a large amount of information must necessarily be asked, and had proceeded with other items on the Estimates, he believed substantial progress would have been made with a certain portion of the Estimates, the necessity for which was thoroughly understood.

The primary objection to proceeding with these Estimates was the action of the Government in insisting on that business being considered on private members' days, and, also, because the Government proposed to proceed to the consideration of that matter when they had business on the paper which should have been proceeded with equally with their Loan Estimates. The Government entirely ignored the further consideration in Committee of the Divisional Boards Bill, which was the basis of their scheme of finance, and if it were not carried through, they would certainly have to alter the position of their revenue estimates. It was certainly their duty to have obtained the opinion of the House as to the acceptance or rejection of that measure, upon the propriety of which the public mind was at present considerably exercised. But they endeavoured to proceed with matters which might interest the Government, but which did not interest to the same extent a large number of people in the more populous districts in the colony—namely, the extension of the main trunk lines of railway. The Government had themselves, therefore, to blame for the unsatisfactory progress that had been made with the Loan Estimates. He challenged them to say that they had made any satisfactory progress with their revenue estimates. The Colonial Secretary had received a very large amount of encouragement and assistance in the progress which he made with his Estimates-in-Chief—in fact, there had never been a Colonial Secretary during the last four years who had received the same amount of assistance, or whose Estimates went through in a shorter time than the present Colonial Secretary.

THE PREMIER: Why?

Mr. DICKSON said he would anticipate what the hon. gentleman would say, and that was that the Colonial Secretary had displayed more acquaintance with the Estimates of his department—having been previously in office—than any other Colonial Secretary had been able to show; but whatever proficiency or knowledge that hon. gentleman might possess in his own department, he was met by the Opposition side of the House with a better-natured reception than was usually accorded to a Colonial Secretary. He was not subjected to the catechism which was sometimes attempted by hon. members in reference to that department. On the question of colonial stores alone, he (Mr. Dickson) had seen one of his colleagues, who was Colonial Secretary, prevented from carrying through £18,000 or £20,000 until he furnished particulars of the most minute details of goods supplied to that department. A system of obstruction was initiated by the then Opposition, which subjected the Minister at the head of that depart-

ment to a course of cross-examination that had not been the case during the present session. Instead of the Opposition being resolved, as they were told by the Premier, to obstruct his Loan Estimates, they really had shown no disposition to do so until the Premier attempted with an iron-hand to insist upon a large amount for railway services being voted without giving the House any information on them whatever. The hon. leader of the Opposition stated that he declined to consider those Estimates, not so much on the ground of any fault he found with the Estimates, but in consequence of the Premier insisting on the discussion of them on a private business day. It was the duty of the leader of the Opposition to protect the privileges of private members on his side, and to see that they had their business proceeded with on their own sitting day; and he (Mr. Dickson) had been exceedingly sorry to hear the Colonial Secretary, last night, say that the Government would not allow any kind of business to proceed unless Government business was allowed to proceed in equal proportions. He (Mr. Dickson) did not see why private members should be visited with the sins of the Government. Had the Government shown any capabilities for carrying on business they would have received the assistance of the Opposition; but they had not done so; and why, then, should hon. members be made to participate in the inconveniences which resulted from the disabilities of the Government. Had they shown that courtesy to private members which they should have shown; had they asked them to consent to the postponement of their private business as they ought to have done, and had they obtained that sanction, then the Premier might have come to the House and have shown that there was some propriety in proceeding with Government business on a private members' day. It was well known that hon. members opposite had, from party feelings, been quite willing to forego the transaction of their private business, but that should not have been allowed to interfere with the wishes of those on his (Mr. Dickson's) side of the House. It would be seen that private members were introducing measures of more importance, even, than those of the Government. For instance, the Government stated that they intended to proceed with a Bill for the better regulation of the Civil Service; but they had done nothing of the kind; and now the hon. member for Stanley had introduced a Bill for the disqualification of Civil Servants—a Bill which should have been introduced by the Government, and which should have been embodied in a measure for the better regulation of the whole Service. That was only one of the matters he could mention. Next came the hon. member for Blackall

with one of the most important motions ever introduced into that House since the year 1869, in reference to the squatting tenure; and what was the object of that motion which the hon. gentleman had put on the paper in such a quiet, unobtrusive way? It was a motion for granting indefeasible leases to the pastoral tenants as against obtaining from them an increased rental. It was not his (Mr. Dickson's) intention to discuss that motion at the present time, but it was one of very great importance, coming as it did from an hon. gentleman who was known to greatly assist the Government, who might be regarded as a Minister without a portfolio, and who was so largely honoured with the confidence of the Government with which he was allied. That being the case, hon. members could only come to the conclusion that the motion was introduced after it had received the assent of the Cabinet.

Mr. ARCHER rose for the purpose of making an explanation. He denied that the motion had been considered by the Cabinet at all. He had drawn it out a day or two before he introduced it to the House, and he had told the Government what he had done; but he had never so much as asked them to consider it for a moment. He had shown it to the hon. member for Leichhardt (Mr. Macfarlane), and no one else knew that he was going to bring it forward.

Mr. Dickson said that he did not charge the hon. member with bringing forward a motion by direction of the Government; but what he did say was that from the importance of the subject embodied in the motion, the inference on his mind, and on that of several other members, was that the hon. member for Blackall had mentioned to the Government the desirability of bringing forward such a motion and that the Government were not willing to accept the responsibility of it. He considered that a motion of this vast importance should have proceeded solely from the Government, and ought to have preceded the consideration of the extension of the trunk lines. The Government ought not to have hesitated to enter into some consideration of this question, as by so doing they would have shown that their object was to obtain an increased rental from the runs for the construction of the trunk lines. Although he (Mr. Dickson) should always enter his protest against indefeasible leases being given, he should have considered that there was some extenuation for such a proposition if it was shown by the Treasurer that it was for the purpose of getting increased rents for making railways. But the Premier had not shown how it was proposed to provide the necessary revenue for the extension of those lines. He had been pleased to hear the hon. gentleman say that when he (Mr. Dickson) commenced

his arguments two nights ago he considered he had addressed himself seriously to the subject and that he was prepared to answer his arguments. He (Mr. Dickson) did address himself most seriously to the subject, but he felt that he laboured under the disadvantage of having to address members who were not inclined to listen to any request made from his side of the House. But the hon. gentleman omitted to state this, that after he (Mr. Dickson) had spoken for half-an-hour he had put certain questions to the hon. gentleman and had resumed his seat in order to give that hon. gentleman an opportunity of replying to these questions, which, however, the hon. gentleman did not do. The hon. gentleman had, however, now told them that he was inclined to reply to any questions from the Opposition, provided they had some relevancy to the question under discussion. That was one concession which the hon. gentleman had seen the propriety of intimating his desire to make. Considering the condition of chaos to which the House had been brought by the obstinate persistence of the Government on that point, the hon. gentleman should follow up his expressed desire to give that information by adjourning the House until Monday, when, as had been already intimated by the hon. leader of the Opposition, he would be prepared to discuss the matter seriously. For his (Mr. Dickson's) part he should be prepared to go into the whole matter fully and fairly if the Premier was prepared to give such satisfactory information as would enable the House to discuss the question on its merits. At present the question had not been discussed at all. It had been stated that the Opposition were afraid to take a division: but it was nothing of the kind. All they desired was to have some information given to them by the Government first, which information had never been attempted to be disclosed. Had the Premier stated previously what he had done that morning the whole case would have been different, but the fault of the Government was that they insisted on forcing through, on a private business day, a system of railway extension larger and more comprehensive than any system which had ever been submitted to the Parliament. He trusted the Government would adjourn the consideration of their Loan Estimates until the first Government day. His hon. friend, the leader of the Opposition, had never objected to consider the question of the Loan Estimates on their merits, but he had objected to discuss them solely because they were introduced by the Government to supersede the business of private members, and the hon. member had thus shown a consideration for private members which he (Mr. Dickson) submitted it was incumbent on the Govern-

ment to have equally observed. The Premier stated, also, that there had been too much speaking on the Opposition benches; but he (Mr. Dickson) could not agree with the hon. gentleman, as he had been glad to see that such a large amount of intelligence had been imported into the House by the introduction of hon. members who, although new to the House, were not afraid to address themselves to the important questions of the day. It was not desirable to have in the House gentlemen who merely advocated questions from party views, and therefore it was a mistake for the hon. gentleman to have said that too much talking had been done by members of the Opposition. He would repeat that the hon. gentleman had no ground whatever for making the statement that the Opposition were not inclined to meet him in the consideration of his railway estimates. The leader of the Opposition had over and over again stated that he was prepared to proceed with the discussion of them on the first Government day, and that if the Opposition then took a course of obstruction it would be quite time for the Premier to charge them with any delay that might exist in the settlement of that important question. If he (Mr. Dickson) could see that any benefit was likely to accrue that morning from the House going into Committee of Supply, he should not object to such a course being followed, even although it was a private members' day; but if they were to resolve themselves into a Committee of the Whole merely for the purpose of continuing proceedings which would not do any credit to them, he should certainly oppose such a proposition, and he should throw upon the Government the responsibility of forcing the Opposition to such a course of procedure. It was not at all likely that in the next two hours, at the end of which they must adjourn, they could make much progress, as, after the acrimonious discussion of the last two days and the want of rest from which they were all suffering, hon. members would not be in a frame of mind to consider the Estimates, unless they were prepared to accept the Government proposals without any investigation whatever. He objected to go into Committee for these reasons—first, on account of the invasion on the rights of private members; and, secondly, because they could not go into the consideration of the subject in that calm and deliberative mood he should like to see.

Mr. REA was understood to say that there were two or three assertions made by the Premier which had escaped the attention of the hon. member, for Enoggera. One was that the Premier had accused the Opposition with obstruction, whereas it was the Colonial Secretary who started the obstruction when he said that he could sit

out the Opposition, that he could talk it out, and could drink it out.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that as a similar statement had been made by the hon. member for the Logan, he felt bound to contradict it. He never said anything about drinking the Opposition out.

Mr. McLEAN said that if he had wronged the hon. gentleman he was quite willing to apologise; but he had certainly understood him to say that the Government were prepared to drink the Opposition out, to talk them out, to sit them out, or even to kick them out.

Mr. REA said it was from a Minister of the Crown that such a challenge came: had it been from a private member he should not have noticed it. After such a challenge, where would be the manliness of the Opposition if they had not accepted it? Therefore, the Premier forgot half his case when he forgot what give rise to the obstruction. The hon. gentleman forgot, when making his statement of the business the Government had done day after day, that that statement contradicted the complaints he had made of the obstructive tactics of his (Mr. Rea's) side of the House. The hon. gentleman complained of the time that had been occupied in the discussion of the Financial Statement, but if there had not been that discussion the hon. gentleman would have had just cause for complaint; and the Opposition would have been wanting in courtesy to the Government had they not deliberated fully the extraordinary things contained in that statement. Then the hon. gentleman talked about the time which had been occupied in passing a single Bill, but he forgot the number of Bills which were read a second time in one day—because they happened to be properly introduced. If the hon. gentleman was referring to the Electoral Rolls Bill, it was well known that even the Government themselves were ashamed of it, as they had equal reason to be ashamed of their so called Land Bill, which was brought in under false and fraudulent representations. Then there was the Divisional Boards Bill: they had admitted their incompetence to draw up that Bill, and it was well known that they had no intention of facing the country with it. Those were considerations which should be noticed when such charges were made against the Opposition side of the House as that of obstruction.

Mr. GROOM said that there was one remark made by the Premier which he was desirous of correcting. The hon. gentleman said that members of the Opposition had proposed amendments at the dictation of himself (Mr. Groom), but nothing of the kind had been done. So far as he was concerned, he had attended one meeting called by the leader of the Opposition, when it was proposed to bring the vote

of want-of-confidence motion forward, but since then the leader of the Opposition had through professional engagements been unable to attend any meeting, and any action on the part of hon. members had been entirely spontaneous. As to his own conduct in regard to these proposed trunk lines he had acted quite independently, as his opinion was that if the lines were to be extended out west the runs should be assessed in order to pay interest on the cost of construction. He believed that was the opinion of his colleague, Mr. Davenport, with this difference that that hon. member was in favour of either selling the lands or assessing them. He (Mr. Groom) objected to selling the lands, and had always done so. He gave his strongest opposition to the Railway Reserves Act of the late Government after he had seen the working of the first Reserves Act and the bad effects of it in the neighbourhood of Roma. However, he had merely risen to explain that the leader of the Opposition had not yet had an opportunity of calling them together to discuss their mode of proceeding. Hon. members on the Opposition benches held different views on the question of these lines, but he had no doubt that when the leader of the Opposition called them together those little differences of opinion would be very easily settled. To say that any hon. member had proposed anything at his dictation was not consistent with the facts.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was hardly necessary for the hon. member for Toowoomba to inform the House of the difference of opinion which existed on the Opposition side, because it was patent to every member that the greatest differences of opinion existed amongst them. There appeared to be no leader of the Opposition at present. One hon. member (Mr. Stubbley) had entirely thrown off his allegiance to the leader of the Opposition, and had informed the House that he would do as he pleased; and that declaration had been cheered by other members on that side of the House. The hon. member for North Brisbane was ostensibly the leader of the Opposition, but who the *de facto* leader was nobody could tell. The hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson) had apparently assumed that position to-day, for he had offered to guarantee that if the Premier would adjourn the House now the Opposition would take the question into serious consideration on Monday. He did not know on what grounds they could accept such a guarantee, even if the Premier were willing to adjourn the House until Monday. He would do the hon. member for Toowoomba the justice to say that he never got up to speak without having something to say; and his remark, that if the railways did not pay the interest on their construction the assessments of land should be increased,

was worthy of consideration, and it had been considered by the Government. The Minister for Works last night, although, of course, he was not in a position to pledge the Government, pledged himself individually—and his remark had the concurrence of the whole of his colleagues—that provided the whole of the railways were put into the same category, there could be no possible objection to assess the lands benefited by the railways to make up for any deficiency which might exist. The members of the Government were unanimous, as indeed they had been in every instance on questions of public policy, that there could be no objection whatever to such a course of action; and if that was the only obstacle preventing the railway votes from going through, he trusted that by Monday the Government would be able to clear away all clouds from the political atmosphere in that direction; but it must be understood that the rule should apply to the whole of the railways. It was well known that some of the lines at present in progress, initiated by the late Government, never would pay for the grease of the wheels. How on earth could they expect the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line, and the Maryborough and Gympie line, to pay? Talk about wanting information!—they had been wanting this information, not only for weeks, but for years, and had never got it yet. What interest was the Stanthorpe and Warwick line likely to pay? They had no information on that subject, although they had been asking for it so long. If that line were extended over the border, which would be a matter of many years, it might, perhaps, pay, but at present there was nothing whatever to show that the traffic on that line was likely to pay. The production of tin in the district had fallen off very considerably indeed, and any revenue calculated to be derived from that source would go down to zero. Nothing could be fairer than the proposal to which he had answered, for his own part, that lines benefited by railways should, in the event of a deficiency, be taxed for that purpose, provided the assessment be made general; at the same time, he hardly knew on what grounds hon. members could ask that trunk lines leading into the interior where there was no freehold property, and where the pastoral lessees were only in possession of the grass, should be taxed, while the freeholders were allowed to escape free. According to reasoning it ought to be the other way, for the man who held land in fee-simple was permanently benefited by the railway; and he should be the man to be taxed, and not the other. But apart from that, he was perfectly willing to admit that the lessee, who was only nominally in possession of Crown lands, and who only had a six months' tenure, should, if it could be

proved that he was in any way benefited by the railway advancing in his direction, be taxed to pay for it, and would willingly bear any assessment for that purpose. As far as his own experience went, with regard to the Central railway line, which he knew most about, he could say that, with the exception of one or two seasons of drought, since that railway had been extended from Westwood, the further it had gone the more the squatters had had to pay for carriage from the railway terminus than was originally demanded by the carriers to Rockhampton. That was an extraordinary fact, but he would pledge himself to the truth of it. Notwithstanding that, he did not assert that the squatters in that district had not benefited by the railway, for they had benefited in time. Their goods went quicker than by dray, and their wool went down to the port of shipment in a similarly shorter time. To imagine that because a railway ran 200 miles towards squatting properties every squatter must benefit in proportion from it was a mistake. Another reason for that was, that the railways charged more than the carriers did for the same distance, and the tariff for many articles was very heavy indeed. The hon. member for Enoggera was pleased to insinuate in his usual style that the notice of motion given by the hon. member for Blackall had been done at the instigation of the Government. That hon. member (Mr. Archer) had already distinctly denied that he had had any communication with the Government on the subject; and he (Mr. Palmer) could say for himself that until within five minutes of the notice being given, when the hon. member showed it to him in the Chamber, he had never even heard of it. But the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) might rest assured that if the Government were convinced that it was their duty to support any motion of the sort they would take the responsibility on their own shoulders. They had, at all events, the courage of their own opinions, and if they came to the conclusion that the country would be benefited by letting out Crown Lands for a term of years at an increased rent, they would support such a proposal. He hardly knew what was meant by an indefeasible lease. If it meant that a man should have an extended tenure of a portion of his run at an increased rent, and should not be disturbed in his occupation for seven, ten, fifteen, or twenty years, paying in proportion, he could understand it. He should like to have the opinion of the only lawyer on the Opposition benches as to what was an indefeasible lease. There was not a lawyer in the country who could tell him what an "indefeasible lease" was. It was something like defining "residence," which no lawyer had ever yet

been able to do. The proceedings of the Opposition during the last two nights showed that they had not even the courage to take a division on that motion of theirs—that one shilling only be granted for the trunk lines; although it was not a test question, and would not affect the sum to be granted in any way. If they had made their amendment “that one shilling be granted,” and had carried it, they might have blocked the larger sum, but they had not been quite clever enough for that. They had not dared to go to a division on their own harmless amendment.

Mr. DICKSON: We want more information.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman wanted “to see wheels go round;”—he was never satisfied. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickson) had again favoured the House with his opinion that he was proud of the young speakers on the Opposition side. He wished the hon. gentleman would point out the young speakers of whom he was so proud. With the exception of the hon. member for Rosewood, who on the rare occasions he had addressed the House had always given them his own ideas and information, which, although on subjects on which they did not need to be enlightened, showed that he had information and knew how to impart it—with that exception all the other young speakers of the Opposition had talked like parrots. The young members of whom the hon. gentleman was so proud had done nothing but repeat the speeches made in the earlier part of the discussion; and, as they all knew, talking was not reasoning. Not one of them had, during the last two nights, made a speech, but had simply talked like so many poll-parrots, repeating only the worst parts of the speeches that had been delivered, and without having enunciated one single new idea. The hon. member had given as an additional reason for the adjournment of the House that they were all sadly in need of rest. Looking round he could see that the Ministerial supporters were all as fresh as paint; and the Opposition, working as they did in relays, ought not so soon to show signs of the breaking up of the constitution. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) did certainly look very ill, and he had noticed that fact to a friend when the hon. member came into the House this morning. The hon. member had not the bloom of health on his cheeks, and looked utterly worn out—something like a penn’orth of soap after a hard day’s washing. He was afraid that if they had to go on sitting up all night there would not be much of the Opposition left. The hon. member for the Logan seemed to bear it best; but even he looked utterly sick of the dribble he was hearing from his own side of the House, and was only kept in spirits by the hon. member for Mitchell’s

amusing lecture on asses. But for the efforts of this side the Opposition would never have survived till morning. The complaint of want of rest was nothing, and was not a sufficient reason for adjourning the House. The Government side were quite prepared to go on till to-morrow night, but they would not force it on this occasion. They would try what effect a Sabbath’s rest had upon the members of the Opposition. Certainly, if some of those hon. members preached as they talked, he could not understand how they could get congregations to go and listen to them. He should like to have the opinion of the hon. member for Moreton about “indefeasible leases;” and if he could make it half as amusing as the hon. member for Mitchell’s lecture on asses he would carry the House with him.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said he felt so fresh after the two nights’ debate that he was quite prepared, if the Colonial Secretary wished, to go on for another day or two. The hon. gentleman himself set an admirable example of talking against time. He (Mr. Douglas) kept awake the whole of last night when the hon. member for Mitchell was in a deep and heavy sleep, and had to call the attention of the Chairman to the fearful disturbances the hon. member was making. The Chairman having failed to invoke the intervention of the Sergeant-at-Arms, he (Mr. Douglas) was obliged, in the cause of order, to exercise some allaying influence on hon. gentlemen on the opposite side, and had several times to arouse his hon. and ancient friend, the member for the Balonne, to a sense of his duty with regard to the disturbance he was creating in the Chamber. He (Mr. Douglas) would refer but slightly to the hon. member for Mitchell’s lecture on the wild ass of the wilderness—and in this matter he had really surpassed himself. Humorous as were the hon. member’s illustrations, he felt at the time that there were certain properties of the wild ass of the desert in which the hon. member himself to a great extent participated. The wild ass was known to be a perfectly untameable animal; no man had ever compelled the wild ass of the desert to subjection, and he was quite sure that no man would ever compel the hon. member for Mitchell into that due sense of compulsion which he would ultimately feel if he were well saddled and bridled.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he could not understand how an hon. gentleman, who had once called him a servile follower of the Government, should now call him an untameable animal.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he would do the hon. gentleman the justice to say that he had no servility in him, and that he was, and would always remain, the untamed ass of the desert. If once he (Mr. Douglas) could succeed in saddling and bridling him

he could ride him round the world and challenge all competitors. No animal on the face of the earth would go better than the hon. member for Mitchell when fairly mounted by himself (Mr. Douglas); and if the hon. member would submit—which he feared he would not do—he would undertake to exhibit him at the Sydney Exhibition. Passing to a perhaps more serious aspect of the question, he was convinced that the Colonial Secretary rose simply to talk against time, as the supporters of the Government had done all night when the hon. member for Mitchell amused them for two or three hours, and was then followed by the hon. member for Dalby, who occupied the time till the adjournment for breakfast, insisting upon his right to address the Chair. The morning dawned on such a sight as he had never witnessed before. Only about three members—the hon. members for the Logan and Dalby and himself—were awake; all the rest being wrapped in profound slumber. The farce had told very heavily indeed on the Colonial Secretary, who had finally succumbed to the overpowering influence of sleep; and he (Mr. Douglas) was glad to see him so comfortably established.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY denied that he was ever asleep in the House last night.

Mr. DOUGLAS said it was not worth while to contradict the hon. gentleman. As to the Opposition being afraid to divide, there were several occasions last night when they divided with, owing to their being in a small minority, the certainty of defeat, but they did not shrink on that account from testing the opinion of the Committee. The hon. gentleman had indicated the way in which the Opposition must proceed in the future if they really wished to obstruct. He had now a few words to say concerning matters that demanded serious consideration. He felt that there had never been more serious questions to be discussed than those which they were now treating. The Government would find that the Opposition were very willing to discuss them in their length, breadth, height, and depth. The Premier, as in many matters with regard to the administration of affairs, had not taken a wise course when on Wednesday morning last he insisted on going to a division on the vote for a three-million loan. He could not have expected, under those circumstances, that hon. members would be willing to go on with the discussion, and his action naturally gave rise to that instinctive feeling of resistance to what hon. members felt was not a proper and fair course. It was quite possible that the members of the Government might have desired to create that feeling in order to induce the Opposition to block the business. The hon. gentleman referred to the fact that the Opposition was disorganised; but he would tell the hon.

gentleman that beneath the apparent disorder, if there were any, there was a good deal of discipline. The Opposition, at present, were fighting in open order, and while he (Mr. Douglas) was willing and desirous to recognise the leadership of the hon. member for North Brisbane as the most competent man in the House without exception, and the most conversant with Parliamentary matters, there were some other members who had not made any agreement on all subjects. They did not expect perfect agreement, and it was not demanded by the organization of the party. No doubt many of the hon. members on the Government side differed in their opinions just as hon. members of the Opposition did. The hon. gentleman claimed that the hon. member for Enoggera had given a pledge which was not given by the head of the Opposition; but the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) said yesterday that he hoped the House would really get seriously to business next week, and that was just as much an expression of opinion in the direction of conciliation as any made by the hon. member for Enoggera. It might mean a great deal, or it might mean nothing. The term "serious consideration," which the hon. gentleman accepted as a statement of policy, could admit of a variety of meanings. It was merely the expression of a cautious man who felt he could not commit himself to a final decision on this subject in the form which it had now assumed. He would now say a few words with regard to his own opinions. In doing so he did not profess to express the opinion of the combined Opposition. He had the strongest objection to the proposition in the form it was made, and he had pointed out that there was no necessity for forcing on the consideration of the item while there were other matters more immediately pressing and very much more important. If he could induce the Government to postpone that item until others had been considered he should be very well satisfied. As there were such great objections on the part of an important minority in the House, and he believed a large majority outside, to this item, why should not the Premier make a separate subject of it altogether? That item would then be disposed of for the time and other business could be proceeded with? They were told that the session was now far advanced, and that unless pressure were brought to bear the termination would be indefinitely postponed. In 1877 when a large amount of very important business was done the session lasted from May till November; and he did not see why they might not sit until November now. There were much more important questions for consideration. The position of the colony was now more critical. Then it was in the heyday of prosperity; but circumstances were differ-

ent now. The position of affairs demanded the calmest and most careful consideration, and this was a time when the interests of party or prejudice should be subordinated to those high considerations of the influences which should guide the destinies of the colony. The proper course for the Government was to appeal to reason and all those methods of persuasion which could be brought to bear on hon. members, and which the hon. gentlemen opposite were perfectly capable of bringing to bear. They had experience and could command all the sources of official information, and they should avail themselves of those means to persuade hon. members. If those hon. members were reluctant to sit after days and nights of tedious debate, the Government should yield to what they might consider the follies even of hon. members. Did they not know that the weak invariably became strong when driven into a corner and brought under the heel of authority, and that the desperate under such forms of compulsion would find remedies? Why did not hon. members look at the matter in that light? In that direction they might make far more creditable conquests than they could under the compulsion of force. If it were necessary to spend even two months more it would be better to do so rather than apply a system of compulsion which was opposed to all the best conditions of Parliamentary practice. Yet the Premier, influenced, no doubt, by the Colonial Secretary, invariably enforced those methods when he could not get his own way by any other means. The system of Parliamentary Government must always be one of compromise. The hon. gentleman would make no terms. He said in effect that the vote must be passed between 12 and 1 o'clock at night and 12 the next day, or he would enforce by compulsion that which was the mere dictate of his will. But that was not the best way to persuade unwilling men. It was much better at times to give way a little and to give good reasons, rather than resort to force. Argument would always be recognised by the people the House represented as more effective than the grosser forms of material compulsion the Premier was having recourse to. He wished to say a few words with regard to the land question in connection with the proposition to run lines into the far interior. The House had been told that if the lines were granted the Government might come down at some future time and ask power to revise the conditions under which the pastoral tenures were held. The Colonial Secretary, while objecting to expressions used in the terms of the motion introduced by the hon. member for Blackall, leading hon. members to suppose that it had not his sympathies, said he was quite prepared to reconsider the present

rents paid by pastoral leaseholders when it was proved that the results of the railway policy made such a course of action necessary. But when would that be? When the present extensions were completed it might be found that the lines had not yet been driven far enough out; and the good time when an additional income would be derived from that source would be put off indefinitely. The plain, honest, straightforward course was, as in private affairs, to show the public creditor an increase of resources at command, in order to be in position to obtain as good terms as hitherto. It was only simple justice to ask the leaseholders to assist the colony by a revised tenure, seeing that they were helping, by the support they gave to the party at present in the majority, to force upon the House this policy of railway extension. How reasonable and just it would be, as they were so desirous of carrying that railway policy, to say at the same time, "We are willing to revise the conditions on which we hold our properties in virtue of the greater convenience we shall enjoy, and the greater facilities of carriage that will be at our command." They did nothing of the kind, however;—that part was to be deferred to a future day. The House was now to borrow, on the security of the people at large, an amount of money for their benefit; and when a deficit in revenue came, and the necessity for increased taxation, then the pastoral lessees would be prepared to consider the claims the people might have upon them. In this matter the Opposition side of the House represented the intelligent and experienced people inhabiting this territory; who might justly say, "We refuse to increase our public burdens until we see our way to revising the conditions on which vast areas of the public estate are held." Those opinions had not been taken up by him recently, or for the purpose of this debate: he had expressed them very strongly in addressing his constituents when occupying the position of leading Minister in the late Government. On that occasion he had distinctly pointed out that the extension of those railways must involve a revision of the whole fiscal system and of the tenure upon which Crown lands were held. He had also endeavoured to give expression to the same opinions by moving, on his own personal responsibility, an amendment on the Financial Statement; and he should endeavour to secure such a revision before giving his consent to such a large outlay as was contemplated. The Colonial Secretary had shown to-day how little he appreciated the real position of affairs when he contrasted the positions of the leaseholder and the landholder. Why, he asked, should you revise the tenure of the leaseholder without revising the condition upon which the freeholder

held his land? The freeholder had given real value for his land, and the leaseholder had not—that was the answer. The freeholder was a permanent occupant of the land, who had given hostages for the future that he was a partner in the condition on which the prosperity of the country was based; the leaseholder merely occupied land at a rack-rent, gave insufficient value for the land, was a mere temporary occupant of the property he used, having no permanent or lasting interest in it, and in many cases was a mere speculator. The Colonial Secretary plainly showed he had not gauged the difference. There was another matter of very great importance, to which he must refer. On a late occasion he had 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 hon. gentleman replied in terms not quite befitting the occasion—

“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.”

And he added, *sotto voce*, something about his (Mr. Douglas's) private arrangements. He wished to have nothing to do with the hon. gentleman's private arrangements, but he should not be prevented from referring to the present matter on any such plea. He would point out that when the agreement with the Queensland National Bank came into force, as it would on the 10th September, that bank would become the contracting bank for doing the business of the colony on certain terms, and would be in that respect a public and not a private institution. Under no circumstances could a bank issuing notes and receiving deposits be viewed as a private one. The whole tendency of legislation on the subject went to show that those institutions—useful, important, and essential as they were for carrying on business—could not be looked upon as private institutions. The welfare of the people was in many respects intimately connected with the matters dealt with by those institutions; and he would tell the hon. gentleman that at the bottom of the real and earnest opposition at present existing to the Government was this question in connection with the bank. He hoped the hon. gentleman, on a fit opportunity, would take serious counsel with his colleagues in connection with this matter. He had no wish to make any personal references, but he intended to treat the subject as a great public question demanding the attention of the House; and he was quite sure the

hon. gentleman would consult his own interest and the best interests of his colleagues, his party, and the colony, by being very careful as to his relations with this bank.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Do you think it fair, Mr. Speaker, when the hon. gentleman knows that I have no right of reply, that he should go on in this style? I treat his opinion with the greatest possible contempt, and had I the right of reply I should not object to his remarks. He knows that the House will adjourn in half-an-hour, and he wants to get his opinions into *Hansard*. I care no more about them than the fifth wheel of a coach. As far as business matters are concerned, an opinion which I despise more than his it would be impossible to find.

Mr. DOUGLAS said if the hon. member held that opinion of him he was sorry, but he was not to be treated with contempt on these matters. The hon. gentleman would have ample opportunities of discussing the question. He hoped, however, the Government would take the matter into their serious consideration, because the position of the hon. gentleman as a member of the Executive, and his position as a director of the institution which, in a short time, would become the Government bank, were, in his opinion, quite incompatible. Public opinion on the subject would make itself felt and demonstrate that he was right. The hon. gentleman had hardly gauged the extent to which those influences might be brought into conflict with one another. As a member of the Executive he was placed, together with his colleagues, in the highest possible position as trustee to the people of this country—the most confidential position that any man could be placed in in this community. They were trustees to the people and the advisers of the Governor, and to them was committed the management of the administration—in fact, in them were combined all the powers which the colony exercised as a State. As trustees to the people of the colony for public purposes the most profound trust should be placed in them, and any derogation of that trust should be looked upon as an offence against the confidence of the people. He was not about to assert that there had been any breach of that trust; but he would say that, if the hon. gentleman continued to maintain the position he now held after the period when the Government and the bank had become intimately connected, he would then occupy an equivocal position which a member of the Executive ought not to occupy. A member of the Executive should be above suspicion, and every endeavour should be made to place all high officials above suspicion. That could not be done so much by law as by public opinion, and the conscious

sense of discharging duties appertaining to high position of responsibility such as those occupied by the Executive. If the hon. gentleman continued to occupy the dual position, he (Mr. Palmer) should consider that, as trustee of the public funds authorised to be raised by the Loan Act which would probably result from the present discussion, he would be called upon to take the best steps to keep that amount of money beyond any chance of loss, as money which had been voted by the country and lent by those who confided in the country. What might be the possible result of the operation of this policy of raising a large loan in respect to the hon. gentleman's connection with the Government banking institution? He might be called upon to provide for the proper custody of the public funds, and in his private capacity he would be called upon to exercise judgment and discretion with those funds which might ultimately find investment in private channels. He had previously referred to this as the great danger they had to encounter at the present time. If there was a recommendation with the other side of the House for this vote, it was that a large amount of money would be made available for investment in this country, and that such investment could be made of greater utility than by investing it in public works. It was quite possible it might be, and yet they should consider the danger which would be involved, and all the risks that would be run, and the suspicion which would be attached, if these large sums of public money were disbursed through a private agency—that was the strongest objection to the proposal now made. Underneath the proposition lay the question of what they were going to do with the public moneys. It might be the salvation, pecuniarily speaking, of many of their most enterprising colonists that they should be afforded facilities for obtaining advances from that bank. It was a contingency which might arise, and, as it was probable it would, the hon. gentleman might find himself occupying a position which he could not feel to be consistent with his position as a member of the Ministry. He (Mr. Douglas) had not one word to say against the hon. gentleman's personal and private character; he had always believed him to be an honourable and straightforward man, and he thought so now. He (Mr. Douglas) had only come in contact with him, and also into antagonism with him, as a politician, but he had never come into contact with him in his private capacity. He asked the hon. gentleman to consider most seriously, for the sake of himself, for that of the party to which he belonged, and for his public reputation—

Mr. PALMER: Leave my reputation alone, and look after your own.

Mr. DOUGLAS, continuing, said he was willing that anyone should look into his private character. If the hon. gentleman had any accusation to make against him let him do so if he felt it to be his duty, but he (Mr. Douglas) would not hesitate now and hereafter—if a course of conduct was not pursued by the Government to place them above suspicion—to direct attention to it when there was a possibility that dangerous complications might result, and to which that course of conduct might commit them. It was not essential that the hon. gentleman should be a director of the National Bank. He (Mr. Douglas) presumed that, the proprietary being an influential one, the hon. gentleman—

Mr. AMHURST, rising to a point of order, asked if the hon. member could debate the private affairs of the bank?

Mr. DOUGLAS: I am now discussing the position which one of the Ministers holds in relation to it.

The SPEAKER: I am not aware that there is any regulation to prevent an hon. member discussing the private affairs of corporations or of people outside the House.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that it was from a sense of public duty he asked the Government to review their position in this matter. That duty he was going to discharge, and he would accept any obloquy or any results which might arise from his obduracy in this respect rather than forego what he conceived was, as a public duty, imperative on him. It was most desirable that before the new contract came into effect the relations of the Colonial Secretary with the National Bank should be altered.

An HON. MEMBER: You will not alter them, at any rate.

Mr. DOUGLAS did not suppose he should, but he was there as an exponent of public opinion—a public opinion which prevailed far beyond his circle, and which was widely entertained throughout the length and breadth of the country. Whether he was successful or not in his effort to place the position before the Government, that opinion would prevail in the future unless the Government consented to revise their position. The hon. gentleman must see what would be the difficulties of his position as a director of the bank, being also a shareholder and participator in the profits of the institution contracting to do the work of the Government, when the contract came into force. There were matters which demanded his consideration before he persisted in maintaining a position which could not be justified. He (Mr. Douglas) believed that the hon. gentleman was constitutionally debarred from sitting in the House, in consequence of his being a participator in the management of the institution.

Possessing as the hon. gentleman did a majority of the House, a majority cemented together as they were by strong ties and alliances, he (Mr. Douglas) might not be able to pass a resolution to that effect; but their convictions would not the less remain that the position the hon. gentleman occupied was unsatisfactory and positively unconstitutional, and if the hon. gentleman persisted in maintaining his position he would, in legality, have forfeited his seat in the House. When the question was discussed, as no doubt it would be on another occasion, he hoped it would be divested of all personal aspect. His (Mr. Douglas') personal motives were nothing. Such interests as he had were in another direction, but when he saw that which might lead to great evils and that a bad example was likely to be set them, he was bound in the duty he owed to the country to do his best to allay and abate what would evidently prove to be a serious public evil. To this matter, having drawn the attention of Government to it, he would not now further refer except to say that he had reasonable grounds for asking a reconsideration of the question, and he trusted that Government might be induced to make some alteration before the contract came into effect. The Colonial Secretary had been pleased to refer to the Maryborough-Gympie Railway, contrasting the policy which led to the construction of that line with the policy of the schemes advocated by Government. Gympie had been one of the colony's best goldfields, and, at any rate, the conditions of traffic existed in that case, as there was population at the extremities of the line, and that traffic before long would develop more traffic, as the line passed for a great portion of its length through fertile country. He pointed out, at the time, that the justification for the Maryborough-Gympie line was very much more than the justification for the Ipswich line when that was first commenced. The traffic on that line was at first very small indeed, and the Gympie line presented far superior inducements than some of those now advocated. A reference had also been made to the Stanthorpe line and doubts expressed as to the policy of constructing it, but that line would eventually become a trunk line between New South Wales and Queensland; while here they were asked to authorise railways of which they had no experience whatever, such as the Charters Towers extension. However important, too, the branch lines might be, they were not to be put in contrast with the Stanthorpe line, which was the main line of communication between this colony and New South Wales, and connected us with a portion of territory which was even now anxious to ally itself with Queensland. There had only

recently been agitations in favour of annexation to Queensland, simply on the ground that, as much communication had been brought about by our railways, they foresaw greater advantages in the future in connection with Queensland than with New South Wales. The Stanthorpe line was probably one of the most important ever sanctioned; it brought us into communication with a neighbouring colony, and it provided a market for our imports and opportunities for the exchange of commodities between New England and their colony. He questioned much the sincerity Government claimed in this vote for railway extension, and he could only fall back on the theory which his hon. friend (Mr. Griffith) had propounded—that this loan was not required for the formation of railways, but principally to raise money for investment here, to a large extent, in the banking institutions of the colony. He was entitled to fall back on that statement, and which was one he believed to be correct, that the great motive which influenced hon. gentlemen opposite was to be found in the desire there was to obtain public money for the purpose of building up private credit. That was the great aim;—that was what underlay the whole contention at the present, the position being that a demand was made for money: "Your money or your life—give us your money, and if you won't we will sit here till we get it." Then, when they had got the money, the authority for constructing the lines would not be asked; it would be postponed indefinitely. After they had passed the loan they would never be asked for authority to construct the lines; and, in a fortnight or three weeks from the time of its passing, the business of the House would be brought to a close and no further effort made to advance the work. What he recommended now was to ask only for the money which was necessary for next year. He had no objection to grant that without hesitation, and even more; but do not let the Government ask under present circumstances, in the present conjuncture of events, at a season and at a time when the affairs of the colony were in a critical position, when they had a very failing revenue which showed no signs of recovering—under these circumstances it was their bounden duty to be cautious not to authorise the raising of large sums of money beyond what were reasonably required for the construction of existing works, and such other minor undertakings as might be approved of by the House. He should be sorry to confine the Government solely to the amount of money necessary to carry on existing public works; there were others which might be fairly considered, but they should not commit themselves irretrievably to a large system of railway extensions as

to which they had very defective information and no engineering Estimates. He agreed with his hon. friend, the member for Enoggera, that the Engineer-in-Chief ought to be examined at the bar of the House. It was roughly proposed to construct 590 miles of railway, and the proposed expenditure was £2,700 a mile; but there were no estimates, and he entertained a firm conviction that these lines would not be made for anything like the money. The Premier and Minister for Works, no doubt, held different views, and he hoped they would succeed in showing that they could do what they promised; but he (Mr. Douglas) was not prepared to accept their bare assertions against all experience of the past, and he should like to ascertain from the Engineer-in-Chief what were the probabilities of these estimates being realised for the amounts set down against them. Even if the House spent a few days in ascertaining this matter, they would be discharging their duty more effectually, and be, at any rate, subjecting themselves to the opinions of reason and experience rather than of mere compulsion and assertion. Every legislature that was conscious of its own dignity should endeavour to discharge its duties in the most effective manner, and unless it did so it failed to fulfil the functions for which it existed. In making these remarks he had expressed his own opinion: he would much rather see the Assembly go into a friendly conference upon these matters of public importance, than that they should at the present time be dealt with by two distinctly defined parties rigidly bound to one line of policy. He did not think at the present time the people whom they represented would benefit by any such rigid lines of demarcation. He saw no prospect, except under extreme circumstances, of a change for the better, by any change of administration, but he did see reasonable grounds for a change of policy on the part of hon. gentlemen opposite. The way was open to them. What they had to do was to defer this particular vote to a future period—make it a subject of special enactment if they chose, but let them defer the consideration of these matters until other things were disposed of, and other matters on the Loan Estimates, as to which there was practically no dispute, were disposed of. Let them make things safe, and let them see that what was unsafe and risky or speculative, as the present vote was, should be deferred—not necessarily beyond the time sufficient for consideration this session, for there was ample time even to develop a change even in the land policy in connection with the leaseholder of the vast interior of the country.

AN HON. MEMBER: By auction?

MR. DOUGLAS said he was not wholly an apostle of sales by auction. He was an

advocate of obtaining real value—sometimes by auction, sometimes by real settlement, and a very considerable additional proportion might be obtained from the great public estate, which was now rendering an insufficient value, without any detriment to the interests of the leaseholders in the colony. Until they obtained a sufficient value for this public estate they would not be justified in incurring a large expenditure for doubtful objects. Some hon. gentlemen opposite were evidently not much concerned about the extension of these railways. The members for Normanby and Gregory had led the House to understand that the pastoral lessees did not care much about them. Why, then, should the Government urge upon the House a course of conduct to which they objected? He had come to the conclusion that the members representing the outside constituencies were representing them best when they urged that these railways were not necessary to the interests of the pastoral lessees. He would say more—they were not essential for the settled districts, nor desirable, without further consideration of the whole leasehold tenure of the unsettled districts. He had been encouraged to make these remarks by the opening given him by the Colonial Secretary. He had no intention of speaking when he entered the House, but observing the hon. gentleman was anxious to excite discussion he felt he was justified in availing himself of the opportunity offered.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY thought after the personal allusions made by the hon. gentleman he would take the opportunity of saying a few words, although the hon. gentleman, doubtless to prevent him replying to him, had taken care to speak to within three minutes of the time he knew the Speaker would vacate the chair. This was in itself a mean course of action—let that for the present pass. For the opinion of that hon. gentleman on business matters he (Mr. Palmer), in common with the greater part of the community, had the most sovereign contempt. The hon. member had never shown in any one transaction of his life that he possessed business capacity. From the first transaction in business on his own account to the last with which he was connected on account of the Government, he had proved himself thoroughly and utterly incompetent. Was there ever a Colonial Secretary in this or in any other colony who would have been such a fool—so utterly ignorant of the first rudiments of business—so ignorant of the value of land, as to buy, at Toowoomba, for the lunatic asylum, land at £18 an acre, which might have been purchased for £5? That was an instance of corruption, if they pleased, palpably brought before the House on conclusive evidence. It was shown that land was sold the year before at

£4 an acre that would have answered the purpose; and yet the hon. gentleman flung away the Government money on a patent job, to give a personal friend £18 an acre for land not worth £5. Was there ever incompetency like this heard of in the whole world? Yet the hon. gentleman dared to lecture him on the position he chose to hold as a director of a bank and a member of the Government. If the country was not satisfied with him (Mr. Palmer) as a member of the Government they might put the Ministry out. As to his position as a bank director the hon. gentleman had nothing to do with it. He told him before that it was a matter for the shareholders to consider, and as the shareholders had re-elected him they had shown that he possessed their entire confidence. He (Mr. Palmer) would say again that there was not a member of the House who, under the guise of a gentlemanly demeanour and pretensions of hurting nobody's feelings, said more impertinent and unfair things than the hon. member for Maryborough. Just to show the House the ideas of fair-play by which that hon. gentleman was actuated, he would read an extract from a speech he made some days ago just before the rising of the House, when he followed out the same tactics as he used on the present occasion. He tried to make an attack, at the same time depriving the person attacked of an opportunity of defence. This showed the hon. gentleman's downright cowardice, and that he was not game to stand fairly up and defend the position he assumed. The hon. member said of him (Mr. Palmer)—

"He would secure a large amount of the public funds, perhaps half a million, and that money would be discounted by the bank on the advice of the hon. gentleman. Having secured the public funds, he might devote them to his private account, although he (Mr. Douglas) did not mean to say that he would do so, because he believed he would be precluded by the regulations of the bank. It was quite possible, however, and he did not think the hon. gentleman would be above putting facilities in the way of discounts to his supporters. It was, at any rate, a possibility, and, being human, and a strong party man, the hon. gentleman might find his way to do that. The position was such as to justify him (Mr. Douglas) in saying what he had."

None but a man whose sentiments were thoroughly bad could ever entertain such an opinion of another. It was what the hon. gentleman himself would have done, and it was what he had done in connection with this scandalous job at Toowoomba. The hon. gentleman was a downright coward, and if he—

The SPEAKER: Pursuant to the sessional orders of the House, the House now stands adjourned until Monday next.