

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 25 AUGUST 1879

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

*Monday, 25 August, 1879.*Petition.—Personal Explanations.—Order of Business.—
Supply—Loan Estimates.

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

PETITION.

Mr. BAILEY presented a petition from farmers, selectors, and others residing at the Two-Mile, Gympie, protesting against the Divisional Boards Bill.

Petition read and received.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS.

The Hon. G. THORN moved the adjournment of the House to make a personal explanation. He regretted that the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer) was not present, as his remarks would be in consequence of what that hon. member said. It would be in the recollection of hon. members, that some few days ago the hon. member (Mr. Archer) had made a statement to the House of what he (Mr. Thorn) had said in the train going to Ipswich. He might say, in passing, that it was greatly to be deprecated that members should retail to the House any conversation they might hear, either in the smoking-room, the street, or anywhere else outside. He regretted that the hon. member should have done so, because he had supposed he would have been the last man to do it, and also because, if the time of the House were to be taken up in considering statements which were made outside it, they might do nothing else. The conversation the hon. member had referred to was, that he (Mr. Thorn) had told the hon. member (Mr. Archer) he had acted wisely in coming away because there seemed every probability of the House sitting till 10 o'clock next morning. He (Mr. Thorn) had not consulted with any hon. member, nor had any hon. member consulted with him, as to what was going to take place; but he knew, from the temper of members on both sides of the House, that there was not any likelihood of business being got on with, and he knew, further, that, from two faithful supporters of the Government not being present in the train, mischief was intended by that side of the House. Anyone but a ninny must have understood that there would be obstruction, judging by the temper of the leaders. He came to the conclusion himself that there would be a long sitting, and he was right in his prediction. He regretted that things said outside the House should be retailed in it, but what he had said did not mean that a long sitting was premeditated. He held his seat as an independent member, and took whatever course he deemed best for the good of the country. He was no party to it, neither did he know that hon. members of

the Opposition intended to resist all night, any more than that Government intended to push through their trunk-line policy.

Mr. HENDREN also took advantage of the motion to explain that what he had said some evenings ago at a public meeting at Peak Mountain, and which had been contradicted in the House by the hon. member for Fassifern (Mr. Persse), was correct. At that meeting he had rehearsed a conversation he had with the hon. member in the smoking-room. In both the Ipswich papers he (Mr. Hendren) had, since the meeting, read letters denouncing him. The hon. member had said he (Mr. Hendren) had told a lie in the House and had repeated it in the papers. He (Mr. Hendren) maintained he was correct. As he had been virtually called a liar behind his back, it was only right he should say, now, that he had told the truth and no lie. He had hitherto respected the hon. member for Fassifern very much, but the hon. member had made a mistake, and should withdraw what he had said.

Motion for adjournment put and negatived.

ORDER OF BUSINESS.

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 said that as several hon. members of his side of the House were away he hoped a short adjournment might be granted, as he had not had time to consult with his supporters on the course to be taken. All the members of his side of the House had not yet been able to meet, and until they did so it would be inconvenient to proceed. He regretted this, as he had hoped when the House met to be able to make some definite statement of the views of the Opposition as a whole; but as he had not heard what those were, he was certainly entitled to hear them before he made any announcement to the House. He hoped the Treasurer would allow the Orders of the Day to be deferred until after 6 o'clock, when he thought he would be in a position to make a definite statement, and other business could be taken meanwhile. It was an unusual request to make, but it would be of great advantage in the conduct of the business of the country if he were allowed the opportunity he asked.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman might have given a stronger reason why business should go on, because he (Mr. McIlwraith) had affirmed several times to the House that Government would not take any other business until progress with the Loan Estimates had been made. When the hon. gentleman asked him to take other business he should consider that the pro-

position to go into Committee of Supply had been made that day fortnight; they had done no business since then, and it was not reasonable to ask them to take either private or public business until that before them was concluded. He was surprised the hon. member had not been able to obtain a full expression of the feeling of his party, but that he had not done so was entirely his own fault and that of his party, who at least should have consulted together before taking up the obstructive position they did last week. It was a matter which ought to have been discussed before. He had consulted his own party, who quite knew what they were going to do, and the leader of the Opposition had had plenty of time to consult his supporters as to what they were going to do. Were the House adjourned until 6 o'clock, would the hon. gentleman then be in a position to make a definite statement?

Mr. GRIFFITH said that 7 o'clock would be the earliest hour, considering that several hon. members were absent, and might probably be detained by the state of the roads.

The PREMIER said that he understood the leader of the Opposition to mean that he would before 6 o'clock consult with his party, and let him (Mr. McIlwraith) know what likelihood there was of getting to business, so as to give him (Mr. McIlwraith) an opportunity of conferring with his own side. On that understanding it would be best that the Speaker leave the chair, and resume it at 7 o'clock.

The SPEAKER, with the consent of the House, left the chair accordingly.

SUPPLY—LOAN ESTIMATES.

On the resumption of the chair by the SPEAKER at 7 o'clock, the House, upon the motion of the PREMIER, went into Committee of Supply, the original question being that the sum of £1,170,000 be voted for the extension of railways; to which an amendment had been moved that only one shilling should be granted.

The latter question was accordingly put.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was probably expected that he should at this stage of the proceedings say something with respect to the difficulty which arose last week. He asked for a brief adjournment that afternoon, in order, as he explained, that the Opposition might have an opportunity of meeting together and considering the position, the more so as they had had no opportunity of discussing the matter since the division on last Wednesday morning, when the motion he moved disapproving of the public works policy of the Government was negatived by a majority of three. He was induced to ask for that brief adjournment more in consequence of what had been said outside of the House than what

had been said inside. Although he had been absent, greatly against his will, from the discussions that took place between Wednesday and Friday, he had read and carefully considered the reports of the debate, and found there was nothing inconsistent with the position he himself took up on Wednesday—viz., that the Opposition, being a powerful minority in the House, were entitled to a fair time to consider the proposals of the Government and discuss them in detail in Committee of Supply. Nothing was said, so far as he could discover, indicative of any other determination on the part of the Opposition. It appeared, however, that many people supposed that the Opposition had determined from the first to oppose the proposals of the Government with respect to trunk railways, irrespective of any discussion on their merits, and that it was a foregone conclusion that they would oppose them by obstruction or any other means. As he stated last week, there was no such determination on the part of the Opposition up to that time. From what had appeared since, he gathered that some people thought there was such a determination. Under these circumstances, it seemed only fair that they should have an opportunity of consulting together, and, under somewhat exceptional circumstances, the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government was courteous enough to agree to the proposal he made this afternoon. He (Mr. Griffith) now desired to say a few words on the question of obstruction. What he was about to say would be merely his own opinion, which opinion, he had reason to believe, did not entirely coincide with the opinion of some hon. members on his own side of the House. His opinions, however, were not formed to-day, or even this session, but had been the result of long and cool consideration. He regarded the right of obstruction—which was, in fact, the right to take advantage of the forms of the House—as a most valuable parliamentary weapon. It was provided by the Standing Orders, and had been provided by the wisdom of centuries, for certain purposes. Tactics of that kind might properly be applied for the purpose of securing freedom of debate and preventing any attempt of the majority to coerce a minority without full discussion. As to the circumstances which might justify the exercise of these tactics, that was a matter of opinion for which those who adopted them must be responsible. If they were wrong they would be condemned by public opinion; if they were right they would not be. He—expressing his own private opinion—thought, therefore, the tactics of obstruction might be applied to answer temporary purposes. He did not wish to be understood to say that there were not other circumstances in

which they might not be applied. He would give instances. Suppose, for instance, a project was formed by a small majority in the House to carry out which would involve the country in irretrievable ruin, which there would be no opportunity of correcting afterwards—as, for example, voting a large sum of money the destination of which could not afterwards be controlled; or, if it was proposed to subsidise some particular person, respecting which he might instance the case of a Governor in Victoria. Another case might be that in which the Government brought forward revolutionary proposals to alter the Constitution—or something of that kind. Another case would be where the Government brought forward a matter which was clearly against the plainly expressed public opinion of the colony, and which an appeal to the constituencies would reverse. These would be exceptional circumstances, and they might be taken by way of illustration; but he thought, for his own part, that tactics of obstruction should be admitted as a fair parliamentary weapon to secure discussion on an important matter. For this purpose, those tactics were adopted last Wednesday night. Without any previous concert, it was done on the spur of the moment, when the head of the Government, somewhat to their surprise, announced that it was intended to take the vote for the trunk railways that evening. Members on his side thought that was rather a strange proceeding, and, when told they would have to pass the vote before they went home, they declined to do so. No doubt the Premier had not receded from his opinion that that conduct was unjustifiable; and they, on the other hand, had not receded from their opinion that it was justifiable. But that was now passed, and they were desirous to deal with matters as they found them. As to this particular proposal of the Government, two objections in particular had been urged from this side—a large number of hon. members entirely disapproved of the extension of these trunk lines, while others—of whom he was one—without condemning the proposed extensions altogether, thought they should be accompanied by some practical scheme for relieving the general revenue of the interest on the amount expended upon them. Upon those matters of policy they had tried conclusions with the Government, and had been defeated. For his own part, he believed that when a minority had been defeated in fair fight they ought to accept their position, and then do their best to mould the policy of the Government in accordance with their wishes. If they could do nothing in that direction they could not help it, but so long as they did their duty no one could blame them if they were not successful. For the purpose of defeating the deliber-

ately expressed policy of a Government, he did not think tactics of obstruction were desirable—unless there was a chance of their being successful—and that was an opinion he had often previously expressed in that place. Under those circumstances, the Opposition, being a strong minority, were prepared to discuss the question in the same manner as they would discuss any other on being defeated after fair fight. If they could succeed by reasonable discussion in convincing the Committee that the proposals of the Government ought to be modified, they hoped to be able to do so; if not, they must accept the decision of the majority. He had mentioned, as one justification for obstruction, a proposal of the Government which would lead the colony into irretrievable disaster. His great objection to the present proposal was that it would not be reproductive for some years; and his contention was that some special provision should have been made for bearing the burden that would accrue to the colony. Even if a majority of the House did not think that such provision should be made now, they ought all to distinctly understand that it would have to be made sooner or later. They all knew, though they might not like to confess it, that the proposal would entail additional taxation in some form or other upon the public, unless what was strictly called taxation was relieved by territorial revenue. It was certain that during either this or next session the House would be obliged to accept the position that it was necessary to make such provision out of territorial revenue. The money must come out of those western lands which these extensions would to the greatest extent benefit. Although the Government were in a majority, still they would not always be in a majority. Some day they would be in a minority, and then, if it was found—as it inevitably would be—that the revenue was insufficient to bear the burden, it was the fixed determination of the present Opposition to place that burden upon the proper shoulders. He would have much preferred that a proposal of this kind had come with the proposal to incur the liability; but the time would assuredly come when that essential part of the policy would have to be carried out, and it would be done by this side of the House, if declined by the other side, at the earliest opportunity. The only justification offered for these extensions was, that they would render the western lands more useful to the colony by increasing their productive power and increasing the revenue derivable from them to the State—not merely that they might maintain double or treble the present number of sheep, but that they might directly add to the revenue and indirectly to the general welfare of the community. The Government had

only gained a temporary advantage, for it was certain that those western lands would ultimately have to bear the burden of the interest on railways from which they would almost exclusively benefit. Such being the case, and bearing in mind the principles of Parliamentary Government, the Opposition proposed to discuss the matter in a manner in which a defeated minority should discuss the propositions of a majority. If they could succeed in modifying them they should be glad, and still more glad if they could defeat them; and if they could not succeed in doing either, they would at least have the satisfaction of knowing that they had tried to do their duty.

The PREMIER said that in his remarks he should adopt the same conciliatory tone that had been displayed by the leader of the Opposition. At the same time, as the hon. gentleman had attempted to justify the obstruction made to the proposal of the Government, he should attempt to justify the position taken up by the Government. He regretted the diffident manner in which the hon. gentleman had spoken, considering that he occupied the position of leader of the Opposition, and would much rather he had been giving utterance to the opinions of his party as a whole than to his own individual opinions.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that in stating the circumstances under which obstruction was justifiable he was expressing his own opinions; as to the rest he must be understood as expressing the opinions of the Opposition.

The PREMIER said he was very glad to hear it. While agreeing with much the hon. gentleman had said as to the justification for obstruction, the question was, was such obstruction justifiable in the present instance? As to securing freedom of debate, it had been his great object to allow the utmost freedom to both sides to discuss every question he had brought before the House; and especially had that been so on the present question. As to the proposal involving some great possible disaster to the colony, he need only say that the vote asked for was £1,170,000 for trunk railways. No one had ever hinted during the debate that the extension of trunk railways would be disastrous to the colony, and as a matter of fact those lines had been gradually extended for the past few years. The disaster, then, if any, must be in the amount of the proposed vote. But he was not asking for money to push them on at a faster rate of progress than had been going on for the last three years: on the other hand, the Government, it might be said, were rather curtailing their operations. During the last three years the amount spent in extending the Southern and Western Railway was £896,433, and the Central Railway £451,580—together, £1,348,013. He now asked for a further extension of

those two lines, and the extension of an additional main line commenced by the late Government, for the next three years, a sum of £1,170,000. Where was the extraordinary change in policy; and where did the disaster come in? It must be admitted that any Government must go on extending those lines. The hon. gentleman had now given, what was wanted before, his arguments against the proposition made by the Government, and he had already intimated that, in his opinion, all the rest of the items after that for main lines might pass.

MR. GRIFFITH: I did not say so.

The PREMIER said he had understood the hon. gentleman, in the course of his previous criticisms, to say that there would be no attempt made to alter the various items that followed that one.

MR. GRIFFITH: I don't remember having said so.

The PREMIER said he understood the hon. gentleman said so. The hon. gentleman had directed the attention of the Committee, evidently for the purpose of misleading the country, to the one item of £1,170,000, as though the whole of the interest of the loan were required on account of that one item. The whole interest required to pay the amount proposed to be borrowed for extending those three lines would be under £50,000; and even should the railway returns be lower than at any time previously, not more than one-half of that sum would have to be raised from general revenue. So that only a matter of £25,000 a year would have to be provided by the outside districts; and yet the hon. gentleman would lead the country to believe that it was being plunged into difficulties and being made responsible for the whole amount of interest required to cover the whole loan, £133,000. That was not so, however;—only a small amount of the interest would be required for the main lines. The hon. gentleman's scheme to make property bear the difference between the amount actually realised from these reproductive works and the amount of interest paid for them was a perfectly fair one. He (the Premier) was of opinion that property ought to bear that, and he was prepared to bring in a scheme, not to apply to the outside districts alone, but to the whole colony. Property improved by the construction of those lines might fairly be taxed, and he should be quite prepared, on whichever side of the House he might be sitting, to assist any Government in carrying such a scheme through the House. He was glad the hon. gentleman had expressed his opinion in favour of what would be the policy of any Ministry who wished the country to go ahead. In the present state of the session, however, he did not think it advisable or necessary that such a scheme

should be put into effect this year. He had now noticed the two objections taken by the hon. gentleman. He had shown that the amount proposed to be expended was much less than the amount the colony had been spending on similar lines during the last few years, and that the matter of interest was no pressing necessity of the present time. From the indication the hon. gentleman had given as to how any deficiency in the interest might be raised, he had no doubt they might easily find mutual ground on which they could agree. From what he (the Premier) had said, no hon. member on either side would suppose that he wished to absolve the landholder or the leaseholder from their liability to pay any deficiency in the interest. He believed they were entitled to do so, and he had always advocated the principle that the landholder or leaseholder who got his land improved either in the outside districts or elsewhere should be called upon by the Legislature to pay the interest. That was a point which had been advocated eloquently by hon. members on the Opposition side. There was, though, the difficulty of the case of the leaseholder. As long as he held his tenure at will or six months' notice it would be very unfair to make him commence to pay interest before it would be conceivable that he could derive any interest from the railway. But if the tenure were fixed he did not think that any hon. member, however interested in the country, could object to such a scheme. He was sorry the hon. member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles) was not in his place, because he wished to refer to the speech made by the hon. member the other evening. The matter did not appear to be worth noticing at the time, but as it had since been taken up by the Press in a spirit inimical to him, he would refer to it. The hon. member read an extract from a Scotch newspaper, which had evidently appeared originally in a colonial newspaper, and had in a round-about way come to this Chamber. It was as followed:—

"On the eastern boundary of the colony adjoining Queensland, and between the 24th and 18th degrees of latitude, extending west towards the telegraph line, a large amount of country has been taken up for pastoral purposes within the past six months, the pioneers of the present movement being Messrs. Forrest, Collins, McIlwraith, and others, who have secured blocks of several thousand square miles, are vigorously searching for water, and are taking stock over from Queensland. These holdings are principally within the 136th to the 138th degrees of longitude, but the intervening country towards Tenant Creek and Alice Springs is also being rapidly taken up. The conditions of holding are, that the lease shall be for a period not exceeding twenty-five years, at a rental of 6d. per square mile for the first seven years and 10s. per square mile for the remainder of the term. The run must be declared stocked within three

years, with at least two head of great cattle or ten head of small cattle, for every square mile. Numerous applications have been received and continue to be received for selections, and it is believed that large quantities of stock are being sent to the newly-claimed country in the districts of the Herbert and James Rivers, having been driven out of the neighbouring colonies from want of water. Queensland and New South Wales squatters are taking advantage of the liberal terms of settlement, and on Wednesday, October 17, Messrs. McIlwraith, Tully, and Drury, of Queensland, took up 8,500 square miles. On the 8th Mr. McIlwraith also took up 2,400 miles, and on the 19th 2,000 miles were taken up by Messrs. Brown and Kilgour, of New South Wales, more to the southward, or just within the tropic of Capricorn between E. longitude 136 and 138. On the 10th Mr. De Burgh Perse, of Sydney, took up 6,000 square miles in a more central direction, west of the other selections."

The quotation was evidently made for the purpose of showing that the railways were to be made so as to benefit him (the Premier) personally. Had the hon. gentleman given the date there would have been no need for an explanation. As to when Mr. De Burgh Perse took up the above land he knew nothing, but he (the Premier) took up his in 1877: after they had gone to some trouble and expense to fit out an expedition to prove its quality, the result was so unsatisfactory that the country was forfeited long before he (the Premier) became a Minister of the Crown.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to notice one observation the hon. gentleman had made. He (Mr. Griffith) had given as a reason why obstruction would not be justified, that the policy of the extension of trunk lines was not irretrievable. The hon. gentleman appeared to think he was combatting his argument, instead of which he was insisting upon it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the leader of the Opposition only repeated what he had said before. Practically he said, "I am in a minority now, but the day will come when I can take my revenge: we are compelled now by a truculent majority to force railways into the interior, and therefore we will tax the pastoral tenant." But the pastoral tenant did not care if the railways remained where they now were. They were to be extended on account of the pressure brought to bear by inhabitants of the towns, and not for the benefit of the pastoral tenant, who would be quite as well without them. It was the inhabitants of the coast towns who benefited through the running of railways into the interior, and he defied any hon. member to contradict him. No greater injury could be done to a pastoral tenant than to put a railway through his run or near his run—at all events, within 200 miles of it. No intelligent pastoral tenant wanted to see a railway nearer than that. The

hon. member intimated that he would take his revenge on the pastoral tenant; but why should not the inhabitant of the town, also, be taxed? He made his money out of the squatter, and was the unfortunate squatter always to be mulcted in every direction? The western squatters did not want the railways one mile beyond where they were at present.

Mr. GARRICK: Don't vote for them.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had not said he should; perhaps he might not. Would the hon. member wish him to vote for the line to Sandgate? Some two years ago, when at Sandgate, he had suggested to the leading hotel-keeper there that the hon. member was not a fit and proper person to represent such a constituency, and that he would not get the railway; to which the hotel-keeper replied, "We won't put 'un in if he don't vote for it." Those were the petty politics of the district the hon. member represented. The Committee had been told—he regretted to say, by members of this (Ministerial) side, assisted by members on the other side—that squatters would submit to extra taxation if they got what was called fixity of tenure or indefeasible leases. As long as he was a member of the House he should oppose that to the end. It was a most improper proposal, and could only tend to damage the cause it was intended to protect or support. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) had been defeated in fair fight, though certainly he had not stayed while the obstruction was going on. He did not believe it had his countenance—at all events, he took care to go away and make himself comfortable at home.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I entirely concurred.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman certainly did not say that he entirely concurred until now. He had not given an exposition that would lead the Committee to believe that the Opposition had accepted their defeat fully and freely. He had said, virtually, "We accept our defeat now, but look out for the morrow." That was not the position the leader of the Opposition should take up. In the first place, it was a mistake to expose his hand as to what he would do when he got into power, because it might prevent certain members, of which he (Mr. Morehead) was not one, assisting him to get into office unless he supposed, with the disingenuousness of the profession to which he belonged, that these statements would not be carried out. The explanation was not satisfactory, and not one that he would accept. He was certain the hon. gentleman wore a mask, and was fighting the Government behind it. The hon. gentleman said that he was only expressing his own opinions, and could not answer for the opinions of his followers, which meant that he was more of a free lance than the leader of the

Opposition. He claimed to be the leader of a large minority, and yet in the same breath he said it was divided. The Government supporters were not divided. It seemed to him (Mr. Morehead) that the policy of obstruction, which was a manly policy, was to be replaced by a policy of deceit. When they heard the supposed leader of a party say that he was speaking for himself and not otherwise they were fighting against a divided force, and did not know whether they were to be attacked in flank or from the rear. The explanation was simply a trick intended to deceive, and he should not accept it until the hon. gentleman came down and said he engaged himself on behalf of the Opposition, as the Premier was prepared to do on behalf of his followers.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the hon. member seemed to have misunderstood him. He announced distinctly and plainly the course of the Opposition in the matter before the Committee. They proposed to deal with it in the same manner as any other matter which came before the House in Supply. He had said at a certain part that he was expressing his own opinions; but they were not on matters of policy or the present conduct of business before the Committee. For the rest, he thought he was representing the Opposition.

Mr. MOREHEAD wished to know whether the hon. gentleman had spoken for the Smith party as represented by the hon. member for Maryborough?

Mr. McLEAN said that, before the vote was taken, he wished to speak his own opinions about it. He was one of those who did his best during last week to prevent the motion going through, and he was one of those who was prepared to do his best for the next six months to prevent it. He had thought over the question before and since the no-confidence motion; and he could bring himself into no other position than that of opposition to it. This colony had a population of something like 200,000 souls, and they had been told that, of the 45,000 adults comprised by this number, 10,000 were receiving Government money; yet they now proposed to go into the money-market for a loan of three millions to increase the number of people who were dependent upon Government expenditure. Such a policy he did not believe desirable for the colony. He had also heard that, in the event of the vote passing, it would be but right that a certain section of the community should bear the interest upon it; but he would ask the Committee whether they were justified in increasing the country's liabilities, even if a certain section of the community were willing to meet the interest? They were about to increase their liabilities by something like £1,100,000; but that was only the beginning, and the end they did not

know. They proposed to increase their liabilities by £3,000,000, and before the three years had expired which it was to cover there would have to be a further increase of £3,000,000. The Premier had asked whether there was any justification for the Opposition obstructing, and he would reply that he believed there was, though of course the Government and their supporters would hold the opposite opinion. He would repeat his opinion that the Opposition were justified in obstructing, and would add that they would be justified in going much further than they had done.

Mr. HILL: You can't.

Mr. McLEAN said he was just the man who could, but he was not going to set himself against his party, nor would he be put down by interruptions; he was prepared to take his beating like a man. He was speaking his honest convictions, and felt very strongly on the question, and would allow that hon. members opposite also felt strongly. It was a serious question that this colony, with a small population, should be launching into an expenditure of this character for certain railways about which they had no reliable information. If they had a large population in the settled districts who were likely to take up the country towards which the railways were leading they might be justified in adopting such a works policy; or if they were like America, in the vicinity of Europe, and could receive from it a large number of people to send to these lands, they might be justified; but they had not the population in the settled districts, and for a number of years they could not introduce a stream of immigration likely to settle upon the western lands. Taking this into consideration, and also the different views held upon the question, the Opposition were justified in obstructing to the bitter end, if necessary. The hon. member for the Cook had said he thought the House was in a position to limit the Government to an expenditure of £3,000 per mile upon the railways, but they could do nothing of the kind; and besides, he (Mr. McLean) would not do such a thing. If the Government made a mistake, and had undertaken railways under the idea that they could be constructed for £3,000 per mile, it would be foolish for the House, after making the discovery that the amount was insufficient, to say that the lines should go no further. He also objected to the policy on the ground that they had only the assurance of the Government that the railways could be built for £3,000 per mile. Victorian contracts had been quoted, but they did not know the circumstances under which they had been undertaken. They did not know the nature of the country or that the contracts would be carried out.

The PREMIER: They are finished.

Mr. McLEAN said it was, at any rate, not long ago that the contracts were made. However, they knew that many men took contracts with a determination not to finish them. He knew a work near Brisbane the contractor for which did not intend to finish it; the man had received now 75 per cent. upon it, and it paid him better not to complete it. They had no guarantee that the Government would be able to construct these railways for £3,000 per mile provided they passed. He would enter his emphatic protest against the vote: in the present position of the colony they were not justified in going into it. If the House considered they were he was not going to set his opinion against it, but he should still retain his opinion.

Mr. DICKSON said, with a view to obtain some information, he would ask the Colonial Treasurer how he intended to provide for the expenses connected with the survey of these extensions? His vote for railway surveys was nearly exhausted; he had not more than £5,000 or £6,000 in hand, and seeing that the Estimates provided for the construction of 595 miles of railway, branch and trunk lines included, he would ask how it was the hon. gentleman had omitted to make provision for railway surveys on Loan Estimates which were to cover a period of three years according to his statement? He (Mr. Dickson) was much inclined to think that the hon. gentleman would find that the loan would fall considerably short of being sufficient provision for the next three years, on account of the large expenditure which would be necessary. However, he should be glad to learn from the Treasurer how or where he intended to find the amount to provide for these surveys. He regretted that the Treasurer in introducing this Loan Estimate had not introduced it so that it might bear investigation by the light of that favourite measure of the Minister for Works—the Financial Separation Bill. When they came to analyse this Loan Estimate by the Financial Separation Bill introduced by the Government this session, he thought it would appear that the estimate was not based upon those equitable principles of expenditure which the advocates of that measure claimed as its chief merit, because he found on looking at the expenditure for the three districts—Central, Southern, and Northern—these results:—In the Central district, up to the 30th June this year, the loan appropriation represented a total of £1,792,684, which on the population represented something like £71 per head of loan money for that district; and the provision upon these estimates, including the railway votes, amounted to about £587,000, or £23 per head of population. In the Southern district the provision on this Loan Estimate represented about £1,320,000, or something

under £9 10s. per head of loan expenditure. In the Northern division the loan appropriation to the 30th June this year represented £657,000, or £21 per head of population; and they found provision on the Loan Estimate for an additional £600,000, or about £20 per head of the population, so that the expenditure per head on this Loan Estimate stood at £23 for the Central, £20 for the North, and the Southern only £9 10s. In introducing this consideration of the Loan Estimate, he desired to show that while the Government advocated a scheme of financial separation, these Loan Estimates did not at all bear out that fair distribution of loan expenditure which had always been claimed as the chief merit of the Financial Separation Bill introduced by the Government. And again, he wished to point out the consequences which the Treasurer must look in the face—that was to say, that if this Financial Districts Bill were passed in connection with this loan under that Bill, the revenue of each district would be charged annually 5 per cent. upon the capital sum of loan expenditure. According to that the Central district would be annually charged £119,000 alone on loan expenditure, and the total income, assuming Customs to be general, which was a feature of the Bill introduced by the Government, would be only £108,000; so that the sum they would have to pay for interest would actually be in excess of their revenue, treating Customs as general. Again, the Northern district would be charged 5 per cent. interest upon loan to the extent of £1,253,000, or £62,600; while their total revenue, treating Customs as general, was only £39,000, showing a deficiency of about £23,000. They also knew, from the accounts already furnished, that the Northern district, treating Customs as general, showed a debtor balance for the year ending on the 30th June, 1877, of £14,000. He therefore desired to learn from the Treasurer whether, in proposing a Loan Estimate of such magnitude as the present, he intended to carry out the principle of the Financial Separation Bill in the strict sense he had always advocated? He must confess that he had grave apprehension with respect to this vote of £1,170,000 for the extension of these three trunk lines, and that apprehension was caused, not from any desire to prevent those extensions being carried out in due time, but on the plain intelligible ground that they were asked to vote the money for railways of which they absolutely knew nothing. At the present time they had no information as to the destination of these railways, and, in the present financial difficulties of the country, with the probability of there being a large deficiency at the end of the present financial year—because the Treasurer had taken no steps whatever to increase the revenue, or

to decrease expenditure to any appreciable extent—he said that, during the present serious financial situation of the colony, the Treasurer should, before inviting a vote of this magnitude, have shown the House that, by an increase of his ways and means, he was prepared seriously to grapple with those difficulties, and to make provision for the interest on those Loan Estimates which, undoubtedly, a future Treasurer would have to do. If the Treasurer, or the Minister for Works, had come down to the House with plans, books of reference, and surveys of these extensions, and had asked for a sum sufficient to enable him to proceed with those extensions to the extent of his surveys, he (Mr. Dickson) for one should not have raised a single word in Opposition to his request; but he did protest against the principle introduced by the Government, of asking for a vote so large as the present on account of works of which they themselves had not the information at their disposal to enable them to proceed with their construction at the present time. He could not see how the Treasurer was in a better position now to borrow £3,000,000 than to borrow what he actually required at present, and hereafter a further amount to proceed with the completion of these lines. He (Mr. Dickson) admitted that the extension of these trunk lines was only a question of time, but he said they ought not to be continued until they were well considered, and that the means to provide for their construction ought not to be asked until the surveys had been completed, and until the Treasurer was in a position to show that the construction would not involve any extra charge upon the revenue beyond what would be recouped by the traffic or revenue accruing from the lines themselves. At present they had none of this information. However, he should be glad to learn from the Treasurer what provision there was for railway surveys, and also whether he had taken the effect of this Loan Estimate into consideration in connection with the Financial Separation Bill now before the House.

The PREMIER said when he made out his Loan Estimate, on inquiry at the Works Office he found that there was something like £6,000 or £7,000 still available for surveys: that he considered would be quite sufficient to make the necessary survey for the branch lines; and the provision made for surveys was considered sufficient with regard to the main lines. It was rather strange that, while the hon. gentleman advocated the principle of financial separation, he never brought down his Loan Estimates on that principle, but the moment someone else brought down Loan Estimates he asked why were they not based on that principle. But the

hon. gentleman did not appear to understand the principle of the Bill, which was that the colony should be divided into certain districts, and each district was to pay the interest on its own loan; but there was no principle in it that, because one district wished to prosecute public works, every other district should be obliged to do the same. For instance, it might be a good thing to have a number of branch lines in the Southern districts; but according to the principle of financial separation, the Northern districts would say, "You shall borrow money for the lines you want and pay interest on it, and when we want lines we will borrow money and pay the interest on it." So that, really, there was nothing at the present time to cause the Treasurer to come down and allot the interest to be paid on the lines by the various districts through which they passed until there was financial separation. For the hon. member for Enoggera to come down with a whole column of figures and expect him (the Premier) to reply to them on the spur of the moment was absurd; but he had not the slightest doubt that his hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, would be able to answer the hon. gentleman most completely, and to show by figures that the Central and Northern districts would have nothing like the amounts expended on them from the proposed loan that the Southern districts would have.

Mr. THORN said that the Government with which he was connected for some years brought in an excellent measure in the shape of a Railway Reserves Act, which would have provided against any difficulty such as that now proposed. The present Government had shown that they wanted no financial separation whatever in connection with railways. Hon. members on both sides of the Committee knew very well his opinion on the question of trunk lines, and that he had always been in favour of them; but still he questioned whether the Opposition were not right in obstructing the present vote until the Government gave all the information which not only the Opposition but the country required. With regard to the first line on the list—and he wished the attention of the Committee had been confined to that, instead of having a debate on the whole question—which was the extension of the Southern and Western line from Roma for 130 miles, he might mention that when he was in office he had a trial survey made to Mitchell Downs, and on the Central line he had a trial survey made to the Belyando, and he believed that in both instances the distances were the same—namely, sixty miles. As to the extreme Northern extension from Charters Towers, which was part of his policy—although he questioned very much the wisdom of proceeding with it in the present position of

affairs—the hon. Minister for Works had not told them what route he intended to take beyond Charters Towers, and it was a question whether such an extension would be a commercial success. There was no doubt that the extension of the Southern line would be a success, but, as it was not possible to complete the line between Townsville and Charters Towers within the next three years, he considered it was premature to say how far they should extend that line at the present time. He was very anxious to see that line a success, but a good deal would depend upon the direction it was made to take, and until that information was given he thought that the vote for it should not be passed. He believed that branch lines would pay—one, for instance, from Oxley to South Brisbane, to carry the coal traffic; and he very much questioned whether it would not be wise on the part of the Committee, seeing that the line from Townsville to Charters Towers could not be completed in three years at least, to vote the money put down for the extension of that line to make the branch line he referred to. Seeing that the Treasurer asked for a loan to go on with for three years, and that the money required for the Northern extension could not possibly be required before the end of that period, he would suggest whether it would not be better to devote it to the construction of a line from the Brisbane to the Upper Logan where there was most excellent land, and also a coal line from Oxley to South Brisbane. Both those lines would be good paying lines, that to the Logan being little inferior to the coal line—and yet no mention of them was made on the estimate. He would ask the Treasurer to withdraw the third extension on the list, and to make the two branch lines he had mentioned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was wonderful to hear the amount of information the hon. gentleman had acquired since he came back to the House; but it was a pity he was not present a few evenings ago to stop the fervid and impassioned speeches made on his own side of the House respecting the want of surveys of trunk lines. Why did not the hon. gentleman inform his friends that he had made these surveys to the Mitchell Downs and to the Belyando? He (the Minister for Works) nevertheless took the liberty of doubting whether a permanent survey was made to either of those places when the hon. gentleman was in office. The fact was known now because he (Mr. Macrossan) had made it known. As to the hon. gentleman's opinion about the Charters Towers line, it was not worth much. The Charters Towers line was begun at the demand of gentlemen opposite. The money was voted in 1877; and yet the hon. gentleman came down, now, to tell the Ministry that they

were not justified in voting money to carry the line beyond Charters Towers, because it would not be wanted for many years. He (Mr. Macrossan), on the contrary, begged to state that it would be wanted within two years. The tenders for the second section would be opened on Friday next; the plans and sections would be put upon the table for the whole of the line to Charters Towers, and it would take little time to complete the 130 miles westward. The hon. gentleman need not be afraid of the power of the Government to push on that line, or that they would not have it made a long time before he anticipated. He (Mr. Macrossan) should not reply to what the hon. gentleman had said respecting the Central and Western lines, because his attack was principally made upon the Northern line. This was just of a piece with the policy pursued by him when he was in office, viz., to take away money from the North and use it for the advantage of railway lines in the South. That was a policy, however, that the House, as at present constituted, would never listen to. He (Mr. Macrossan) also declined to discuss the principles of financial separation to-night as raised by the late Colonial Treasurer. Those principles had been discussed at great length and often enough, and not to the advantage of the hon. gentleman himself. The hon. gentleman produced a great amount of figures. He (Mr. Macrossan) was not able to follow him very well, but understood him to make out that the interest upon the debt which would be incurred for the Northern and Central districts (allowing this item to pass) would amount to £175,000—£113,000 for the Central district and £62,000 for the Northern district; and the hon. gentleman said that the income derived from those two districts would not be sufficient to clear the interest. The hon. gentleman's figures would not bear a moment's examination. He (Mr. Macrossan) had also some figures compiled on the subject, and found that from the Customs and pastoral rents alone of those two districts there was derived, last year, at the end of June, £261,000—leaving out of the question land sales, goldfields revenue, and receipts from the railway.

MR. DICKSON: Your Bill makes Customs general.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was not dealing with that question at all—he was dealing with the facts as they stood; and he repeated that from those two sources of revenue alone, in those two districts, they derived, last year, £261,000; and therefore, taking the hon. gentleman's own figures as correct, they had a balance of £80,000 or £90,000, independent of the sources of revenue which he had mentioned.

MR. THORN explained that if the hon. gentleman inquired into the rate of progress which had been made by Mr. Ballard

up to the present time he would find that the line to Charters Towers would take considerably more than two years to complete. He was and always had been in favour of the extension of that line, but, as he had previously stated, he doubted the wisdom of borrowing money for an extension that could not be proceeded with for three years. With regard to the plans he had mentioned, he believed he had, before leaving the colony, told the present Colonial Treasurer that they had been made. He was the first to call the Premier's attention to them.

The PREMIER rose to correct the hon. gentleman. He had examined the plans only three weeks ago in the Works Office.

Mr. THORN said it was his information which the Premier had given to the House; the Premier did not till then know anything about them. He (Mr. Thorn) had stopped the survey to Mitchell Downs for reasons which it was unnecessary he should give now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the information the hon. gentleman had given to the House was not correct, as the plans were not even yet completed. How could he have seen them two years ago?

Mr. THORN said that some plans were never completed as fresh surveys were entered on. He knew of those surveys for the Fassifern line—two of which were complete, and a third in progress now. There never would be complete plans if the Minister for Works went in for alterations every week.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had altered no plans of the Mitchell Downs extension, or of the Fassifern line, since he had been in the Works Office.

Mr. THORN wished to know if the Minister for Works would answer his statement, whether there were not three surveys for Fassifern in existence—two complete, and one now going on?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I'll give the hon. gentleman every information upon branch lines when they are before the House.

Mr. AMHURST recollected the time when the hon. gentleman (Mr. Thorn) had brought down several lines and forced them on the House *in globo*. Did he remember having a pile of maps and plans six feet high on the table, and declaring that there were only two deviations for the Gympie line among them, whereas hon. members had been able to see for themselves that there were three or four, some of them going through the property of the hon. member for Wide Bay? That was a curious coincidence of which the hon. gentleman seemed unaware.

Mr. MESTON considered he had a right to say something now, as he had sat in his place during the last week and had only heard an unintelligible flood of utterance.

What he proposed to say was in justification of the actions of the Ministry, although that justification might not be of a character loudly to be applauded by them. These Loan Estimates were the original outcome of a process of syllogistic reasoning. The Ministerial syllogism consisted of three proposals—first, that they were the only Ministry to save the country; secondly, that the Cromwellian axiom was right—namely, that the safety of the State justified any measures to save it; thirdly, that before they could save the State it was necessary to save themselves. They came into office with no idea of a policy; no one knew their intentions, and until their intentions were embodied in the Loan Estimates they had no other idea than to retain office. All their measures and proposals were subordinated to that fixed idea. They said in effect, "Let us first see what the Opposition want, then what most of the members of our own side want, and we will draft our policy accordingly." Originally, they had no intention of constructing any of the branch lines now mentioned. They intended constructing the three trunk lines, but no branch lines. They knew very well that a trunk-line policy would not command a majority of the House. They came down like Prometheus with a mass of unformed clay—

The clay well tempered to informing skill
Might just be moulded to what shape you will.

It was moulded, and re-moulded, and, like another Prometheus, they stole the fire of genius from the Opposition, animated this clay figure, and the result was the loan policy now before the Committee. Perhaps hon. members would not be justified in assuming that the Ministry were insincere except for the extraordinary transition that had taken place. In the Financial Statement no branch line was mentioned, save one on the Darling Downs, which was a branch line trifling in comparison with others now mentioned—for instance, the branch line to Fassifern and the branch line to Mount Esk. Changes of opinion were perfectly justifiable. He did not mean to say the Ministry made a mistake in changing their opinions so much as in not candidly avowing that they had changed them for the sake of remaining in office. They held that they were justified, apparently on the ground that they and they alone could save the colony. Cicero, in the Roman Senate, some two thousand years ago, was placed in exactly the same position as the Ministry when they came into office. He said that ancient records and annals handed it down to us as the words of the wise and noble that the same opinions and sentiments were not invariably to be supplied by the same individuals, but that they ought to adopt those which might be required by the circumstances of the times,

the position in which the State was placed, and according as the peace and agreement of parties might require. The Ministry held that their position was necessary for the peace and agreement of parties. Hon. members had probably read that very interesting volume the "Arabian Nights," and would remember the story of Prince Ahmed and the fairy. There was an enchanted castle and in the centre of the courtyard a fountain, from which flowed water which bestowed every happiness upon the possessor; but the entrance to this courtyard was guarded by four lions, and it was impossible to pass them except by cutting up a sheep into four quarters and flinging one to each lion. Here they had ten branch lines, ten quarters of mutton flung to ten lions in the Assembly, in order to get into the enchanted castle of three millions and the fountain from which flowed the magic water of trunk railways that would bestow every happiness upon the squatters. The Ministry, when they came down with this loan policy, probably thought, under these circumstances, that the Opposition would have no alternative but to rise in a body and go over to the Ministerial side of the House. There was a great deal of this loan policy he could agree with, and a great deal that he disagreed with; but he should deal with the whole, impartially supporting what he believed in and voting against what he objected to; and this he should do in exactly the same way as if the proposal had come from his own side of the House. The trunk lines were to be extended into the interior, professedly for the purpose of benefiting by the presumed increased traffic in sheep and cattle. The line to the western country beyond Roma—or, rather, the western country itself—would be in exactly the same position as the Darling Downs would be if there were no agriculture there. There would be no agriculture beyond Roma, possibly, for the next twenty years. The question was, would the railway across the Darling Downs pay if there were no agriculture? He said it would not, and, consequently, as there would be no agriculture beyond Roma, the question was would that line pay? He acknowledged the fact that the extension of the trunk lines not only brought a certain traffic to itself but distributed it along the whole of the line, and, consequently, the longer the line was the more likely it was to pay if there was any traffic likely to warrant its construction. He doubted whether there would be an immense increase in sheep beyond Roma when the line was constructed. The number of sheep in the western country would be determined henceforth by the maximum carrying capacity of the country, and not by any exceptional facilities the squatters might have to get those sheep to market. Consequently, the increase of

sheep would be very trifling. The only present effect of an extension of the line beyond Roma would be to transfer the traffic from the drays to the railway, and whether that would be sufficient to make the line pay he was not prepared to say. No comparison could be instituted between our trunk lines and the extensions in New South Wales, because in the settled districts of the latter colony there was a large surplus population waiting to overflow whenever there was a highway to overflow along; while our settled districts were not one-half or one-third populated. These extensions, then, could only be run out for the benefit of the pastoral lessees, and he was somewhat surprised how gentlemen who objected to a railway going within 200 miles of their stations should be so enthusiastic about the proposals of the Government. Amongst these extensions that of the Central Railway seemed the most justifiable, and that extension he would not oppose—indeed, he would not oppose any of them if it could be shown, as he feared it could not, that they would not be a burden upon the country. He was not one of those who thought that all the trade of Queensland should centre in Brisbane. Brisbane was the natural seaport for an immense extent of territory, and Rockhampton was the natural seaport for an equally immense extent of territory; and it would be worse than folly to attempt to divert that which naturally went to one seaport into another. Meetings had been held at Rockhampton approving of the railway policy of the Government, but that approval, no doubt, applied to only that part more nearly related to Rockhampton. If all the other towns in the colony hostile to the Ministry had been assigned a similar sum to that to be expended at Rockhampton, they too, no doubt, would have offered a jubilant support to the railway policy of the Government. But he had far too high an opinion of the intelligence and patriotism of the people of Rockhampton, and of their representatives here, than to think that, because their town was down for a large expenditure, they would support a policy that might be ruinous to the rest of the colony. With regard to branch lines, objection had been taken to the decrease in the amount for surveys. In his opinion it was high time a stop was put to surveys. From the returns lately tabled he noticed that during last year and the first four months of the present year no less than £30,340 had been spent on surveys for branch railways. No survey should be undertaken without a definite intention on the part of the Ministry to construct a line along the route of that survey. An immense amount of money had been foolishly wasted on surveys, and it was high time they were put a stop to. He should support most of the branch lines, particularly

those to Fassifern and Mount Esk, which passed through a splendid country, and the traffic along which would justify their construction. He regretted very much the omission of a line to deep-water, for, notwithstanding what the Premier had said about the Ipswich coal, there was coal in West Moreton superior to any that had yet been discovered in Australia for either gas, house, or steam purposes. It was hardly wise on the part of the Ministry to undertake the construction of a line to the new field of the Burrum and ignore the old coalfields which for years had been striving to establish an export trade under considerable difficulties. However, the Premier had undertaken to take this line into consideration, and he hoped it would be undertaken this year. As to the acrimonious debates of the past week—and, indeed, of the whole session—he hoped to see the old hereditary antipathies of the past swept away, but he did not clearly see how that could be done so long as hon. members would rake among the dust-heaps of the past for fossil bones to pelt at each other's heads. In conclusion—as he had no intention to waste time—he hoped the public works scheme of the Government would be somewhat modified before it left the Committee, because if carried out in its entirety it would have the effect of paralysing the colony for the next twenty years.

MR. SIMPSON said he thought the hon. member (Mr. Meston) had been studying under Professor Baldwin. He could only have been present in the spirit during the debates of last week, and yet he professed to know what had passed through the minds of the Ministers during the whole of the sitting.

MR. GRIFFITH said he wished to ask for some information as to the direction in which the lines were to run? As to the Central line, the Committee had been informed this afternoon that it was intended to construct it to a point fixed on the Belyando River. In what direction was it proposed to take the Southern and Western Railway, and was it intended to place plans and sections on the table and ask for parliamentary approval of them this session?

The PREMIER said the Government intended to lay the plans and sections of the Southern and Western Railway extension on the table, and ask for their approval, this session. Its direction would be west as far as Mitchell, and then there would probably be a deviation to the south. The plans and sections of the Central line were already on the table, and those for the Northern line, as far as Charters Towers, would shortly be laid on the table. Government intended to ask for the approval of all the three at the same time.

MR. GRIFFITH asked if the Government could give any information as to the

distance beyond Roma for which they would ask sanction this session?

The PREMIER said the deviation, if made, would be a little to the north, and it would be not nearer than 35 miles from Roma.

MR. THORN said he was altogether opposed to any line going south unless it were a branch line. Both the trunk lines ought to go westward, and a branch line from Yulebah would catch the New South Wales traffic. That would tap the important sheep district of Balonne; and he understood that a deputation had waited upon the Government with regard to that line. Such a line, as a branch, would correspond in the southern district to the branch to Clermont in the central. If the Southern and Western line were diverted into a southerly direction it would meet with disfavour.

The PREMIER said he had never indicated the slightest intention to take the western line southwards.

MR. THORN said that any deviation to the south would be received as an act of partiality on the part of the Premier in favour of another division of the colony. The main lines had now arrived at points which would enable the land now under cattle to be put under sheep, and the time had arrived when, perhaps for a short time only, their extension might be stopped. A branch should, however, go south to catch traffic which would otherwise go to New South Wales. That colony had gone in for a large loan, and plans of several lines were laid on the table of their Legislature which would take the traffic of the Warrego and the Balonne districts, unless the Queensland Government were prepared to send branch lines south. He threw out the suggestion that during the present time of depression the main-line extension might be delayed for a time and branch lines made to prevent New South Wales from taking the traffic from the cream of the Queensland sheep country, which would be the case as soon as her line touched Bourke. In order that coast cattle might be protected from the cattle in the interior it was very desirable that the fine prairie country in the interior should be occupied by sheep; and occupied by sheep they would be when the lines were extended. At the present time very little profit was made by cattle-raising, and the occupation of the land by sheep would be found far more profitable, and sheep would employ a deal more labour, and render profitable or payable our railways. He hoped that before the session was over the Government would come down to the House with plans for the profitable branches he had named. Around Clermont there was a large pastoral and mining population to support a railway; and the traffic from the Balonne district would go by a branch from Yulebah to St. George, instead

of being diverted to New South Wales. On no account should the extension from Roma go at all southward. In his opinion there would not be the great competition between the Southern and the Central lines that some hon. members seemed to expect, as the Central line would only take the traffic that actually belonged to it.

Mr. Low said he had presented a petition from residents of St. George for a railway from Yulebah to that township, but since he had received letters from squatters and storekeepers saying they wished the railway to go anywhere but there. The hon. member talked about the country being good sheep country, but he (Mr. Low) had a station in the Sydney market with 30,000 sheep, and his reason for wishing to dispose of it was, that it was not good country for sheep though it might be very good for cattle. From Yulebah to St. George and from St. George to the Macintyre, for a distance of two hundred and fifty miles, there were not 50,000 sheep. There was a diversity of opinion as to the direction of the railway, and he wished to advocate what would be to the interest of all parties.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was rather astonished to hear the hon. member for Northern Downs, with his intimate knowledge of European nations, say that New South Wales was a colony favouring the construction of branch lines. It was well known that the policy of New South Wales was to construct trunk lines; and when a proposition was recently made to construct a suburban line round Sydney, a town with a population equal to the whole of Queensland, the proposition was thrown out. Yet the hon. member had the unparalleled presumption to get up and intimate that the adjoining colony advocated branch lines, and to hold it up as an example to us. The policy of that colony was to construct trunk lines, and not branch lines. Branch lines might be made to pay afterwards, but it was trunk lines that created great colonies. They were the arteries through which trade to the towns must be carried, and by which colonies would be developed. As far as railways were concerned, the hon. member had been as far as Miles, and to the extent of the extension from Rockhampton, and might be able to express a limited opinion, but beyond that he did not know very much about the colony. He talked learnedly about the interior of the colony producing sheep and cattle, but he was only saying what he heard; and he recollected just what he chose to bring into an argument. He knew one thing in connection with railways—how to get the railway vote, and no one knew it better. Through a happy fortuitous combination of circumstances, the hon. gentleman was once Premier of the colony, and he (Mr. Morehead) had before expressed a wonder

that Her Majesty, when she beheld him, did not bestow some decoration upon him. Had he (Mr. Morehead) occupied that exalted position he should have heaped every possible decoration upon the hon. member. He was of opinion, however, that the hon. member did not know anything of what he had been talking about.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to have some information as to whether the Southern line would eventually be extended towards Charleville or towards Cunnamulla; and also whether the proposed extension would cross the belt of bad country said to intervene between the coast district and the good country, or where it would land. Perhaps the hon. member for Cook, who was said to be thoroughly familiar with that country, could give some information to assist in removing doubts lingering in the minds of hon. members as to the desirableness of those extensions. Had the Government any idea of the general course of the line, because it must be remembered that the Colonial Treasurer said that when it had got the distance proposed, any further extension must be by land grants?

The PREMIER said it was simply a matter of opinion, no surveys having been made beyond Maranoa. His own opinion was, as near west as possible after that.

Mr. MESTON said, in regard to what the hon. member for Mitchell had stated about there being no branch railways in New South Wales, that there was no similarity between the conditions of the two colonies. On the whole of the coast district of New South Wales there were splendid facilities for traffic and large navigable rivers. On the coast districts here there were no navigable rivers.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, with the exception of the Hunter and the Hawkesbury, upon which latter, however, there was no traffic, there were no navigable rivers in New South Wales. At the Hunter a harbour had been made at an enormous cost to the State. Every one of the other rivers alluded to had a dangerous bar.

Mr. WALSH said he knew something about the country in the direction of which the Western Railway should go. In his opinion, the line should be taken a little south of west and strike the Warrego somewhere about Clapperton Downs or Williams' Station. When it got to Charleville it was only at the head of good country. Clapperton Downs was about 260 miles from Roma, but by a direct line it was much nearer.

Mr. STIMPSON was surprised at the ignorance of members representing southern constituencies as regarded the western country. A route a little south of west of Roma would be the best one for the railway, and would tap good country. The New South Wales railway to Bourke would

be finished in about two years, and would tap a corner of Queensland country which was as good as the Riverina district, and was capable of carrying six or eight millions of sheep. The wool and traffic of it at present went by the Darling River, but he was certain an extension of the Western Railway would compete successfully with the Sydney line and the Darling River.

Mr. MOREHEAD said, with reference to the objection that the extension beyond Roma passed through bad land, he would remind the Committee that had it not been for the action of the last Government the line would have passed through fifty miles of good country; but the late Government took good care that it was alienated, and it had fallen into the hands of capitalists who had no wish to become the holders of it. The Opposition had therefore no right to condemn the extension when fifty out of the first eighty miles had become barren by the action of their own leaders.

Mr. GRIFFITH could not understand how the last Government could be made responsible for the wilderness said to exist west of Roma. With respect to his question it had reference to the line beyond Mitchell. They knew that there was a great deal of bad land beyond Roma, and he wished to know whether 120 miles would take them through it. Apparently, however, an extension of 200 miles was necessary. There was also a difference of opinion in the Press upon the subject, and the Opposition hoped to get information from the Government; if they did not they would be still in the dark, as he had said last week.

Mr. SIMPSON said the fact that every inch of country was occupied with stock was sufficient proof that the 130 miles beyond Roma were not a howling wilderness.

Mr. THORN, in reply to the hon. member for the Mitchell, said that no doubt a certain amount of good land had been sold under the Railway Reserves Act, but land equally as good if not better was still unalienated in the western district. The quantity sold was a mere infinitesimal part of the good land remaining in the western and south-western parts of the colony. The hon. member for Dalby had spoken about the ignorance of Opposition members, but they knew far more about the colony than he did, and some knew more about it than he did before he ever thought of coming into the country.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that if the last speaker asserted that the pick of the country included in the Western Railway Reserve had not been alienated he knew nothing about the matter.

Mr. REA should like to know which side of the Committee was obstructing business now, and thought the Premier should call his subordinates to account. One good

result had followed from their action of last week. They had got, at last something like specifications of where some of these railways were to go, and were promised the Northern bunch in tendays. That, if nothing else, justified the Opposition in the course they had taken. The Premier had made an important speech which should have been kept back by him until the hon. member for Darling Downs was able to be in his place—he (Mr. Rea) referred to the statement the hon. member had made to the House that he held no interest whatever in the country on the other side of the border. He (Mr. Rea) understood him to say that he had forfeited and abandoned the whole of that country, and had no interest whatever in it; but he (Mr. Rea) held in his hand a map he had recently obtained from Adelaide showing the persons resident in Queensland who had runs in South Australian territory, and it was upon authority that no member of the House could call in question. It was dated the 12th August, and showed in green the forfeited land on the 31st January last, and in red those persons resident in Queensland who held runs there up to the 12th August. He certainly found a great number of forfeited pieces, occupying thousands and tens of thousands of miles of territory. He found there the names of Mr. Tully, Mr. Drury, Mr. McIlwraith, and G. and G. Lukin; but he found, also, a tremendous principality still in the name of Mr. McIlwraith and his partner. Here were the areas:—Mr. McIlwraith, 3,170 square miles not forfeited;—he had forfeited more than that much, but they all knew the dodge of forfeiting—to take it up on better terms afterwards. There was also a gentleman of the name of Collins, who, he believed, was a partner of Mr. McIlwraith, and who held 2,900 square miles; so that the nice little area still held by these two gentlemen was 6,070 square miles. There was another gentleman of the name of Smith, who, he believed, was another partner of Mr. McIlwraith, but who had abandoned a great piece of territory. He also found the name of Mr. De Burgh Persse, 8,000 square miles; and a gentleman named Morehead had 2,500 square miles. That hon. gentleman did not want railways out to the far West—not within 200 miles: but all those who held runs 200 miles distant ought to be doubly taxed, because at that distance there was no fear that they would be troubled with selectors. A gentleman named Forrest also held 6,500 square miles; so that Messrs. Morehead and Forrest held 9,000 square miles. And yet those gentlemen said they had no interest in long lines to the west. He thought the Committee and the country would see the real state of affairs. The hon. member for Mitchell had attributed

to that (the Opposition) side of the House a policy of deceit; but did not the deceit come from those on his own side? Was it not a policy of deceit to represent to the Committee that they had no interest whatever in that South Australian country when it was clear that they had? These were matters that ought to be remembered when these railways were being carried out. These were some of the things which justified hon. members on that side of the House in standing out to the last moment to get information with regard to this three-million loan; and he was very glad indeed that they did stand out until they got the information that had been supplied. He did not agree with all that had fallen from the leader of the Opposition as to the causes that would justify a blockade. He believed that there were other causes in addition to those mentioned by the hon. gentleman which would justify a blockade, and one of those was when they found a Ministry in power that carried everything before it by the united vote of one interest in the country, and that the squatting interest. He challenged any hon. member to point to a similar case in all Australia. The members of the Government had stated that they were ready to tax those who would be benefited by these railways; but why did they not bring in a Bill to allocate the taxation so as to make up any deficiency that might arise? Until they did that he should hold that their policy was a policy of deceit.

Question—That is only be granted—put and negatived.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) moved, as an amendment on the original motion, that the extension of the Northern railway be reduced by thirty miles, or £90,000. His object in proposing this reduction was for the purpose of enabling the Government to construct a line from Oxley to South Brisbane. A good deal had been said about this line not being placed on the Loan Estimates, and there was no doubt that it would materially assist in developing the coal trade of East and West Moreton, and by that means increase the population. It was not a local matter merely, because the increase of the population would be so great in the mining districts that it would be a benefit not only to the particular district but to the whole colony. An increase to the population meant benefit to the whole colony; and if they could supply the demand which would spring up for coal, they would benefit the whole colony as well as the district concerned. He should like very much to test both sides of the House with reference to this particular line. While the trunk lines would be a benefit to a certain part of the community, there was not sufficient population in the colony to warrant Parliament in making lines into the distant in-

terior. In the western and other sheep-growing districts it could not be said that they clipped the sheep once a month, and, if sheep-shearing once a year was going to keep these railways working and paying anything towards working expenses, he should be astonished indeed. He was in favour of railways anywhere and everywhere if they could be made to pay; but he did not believe these Western lines would pay for many years to come, and for that reason he was inclined to oppose the trunk lines altogether;—but seeing that it had been decided otherwise he should content himself by proposing the amendment he had read—or, as he had been told that he could not propose it on one single line, he would propose that the total sum be reduced by £90,000.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the proposal of the Government was that the loan should extend over three years, but he submitted that many of the works proposed would not take so long to complete and could not be completed for the money asked for; and that, therefore, there would be a number of unfinished works left on their hands. He believed hon. members were all agreed that most of the works proposed could not be completed for the money put down for them. On the other hand, some could not occupy three years in completion—for instance, the expenditure of £50,000 on the extension of the Central line to Clermont—and it would therefore be absurd to say that the expenditure on them should extend over three years. It was a very serious thing to say that they should borrow a certain sum and no more for three years, as he, for one, held that there was every reason to suppose that in less than three years the country might be in a far better position to go on with large public works. There was one work that could not be completed in three years—namely, the extension from Charters Towers; and as the Premier had admitted that there were other works in the Central and Northern districts he would like to recommend, it would be much better to deduct a portion of the amount put down for that extension and expend it on those works. If that was not done—if the votes for the trunk lines were not reduced, how could money be found for other lines, a necessity for which might arise, as the Government said that no more money was to be borrowed for three years? He thought it might be better to take an amount sufficient for two years only. It was proposed to extend the Northern line at a cost of £390,000, and it was not proposed to vote any money for the completion of the jetty at Townsville, on which work already a large sum had been expended, and, consequently, the money which had been spent might just as well have been

thrown away. He considered that if, according to the report of the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers, the jetty could be extended, at a further outlay of £100,000, to allow steamers to lie inside of it, that sum should be taken out of the loan for the Northern Railway. Deductions could be made from the Central trunk-line vote for completing the branch to Clermont, and from the Southern trunk-line vote for the purpose of carrying out branch lines and other works; and with that view he would move that the whole vote be reduced to £750,000, and thus leave £420,000 for other works which might be required during the next three years. They knew now all the information they were likely to get from the Government with regard to the three trunk lines, with the exception of the extension from Charters Towers, and he should like to know in what direction that would probably go?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the extension of the line from Charters Towers would be by the head waters of the Broughton, across the Campaspe to the Cape River, and thence towards Hughenden, nearly due west.

The PREMIER said he could not allow the amendment of the leader of the Opposition to go to the vote without some remarks. The object of the hon. gentleman was to reduce the amount of the estimate by a certain sum which was to be applied to new works which might probably be required within the next three years. It was quite enough to say that, after the long debate which had taken place during the past week, the Government could not possibly assent to such a proposition. The hon. gentleman had not shown the slightest reason or adduced the slightest argument in support of his amendment, nor had he shown in any way why the Government should consent to his proposition. On the contrary, although the hon. gentleman had objected to the present estimate on the ground that the Government had not shown any plans or specifications of the extensions on which they proposed to expend money, he himself advocated money being reserved for lines of which no plans were made, but which, he said, might possibly be required within the next three years. The Government would certainly oppose the amendment, as it would have the effect of cutting away the principal portion of their policy—namely, the extension of the trunk lines, and if the hon. gentleman wished to have new branch lines he certainly would not attain that object by his amendment. As to the impossibility of expending the money proposed within the next three years on the trunk lines, he would remind the hon. gentleman that they had spent £1,348,000 on main lines during the last two years. Yet in the face of that the hon. gentleman

asked them to confine their expenditure, during the next three years, to half that amount. The Government would oppose the hon. gentleman's motion, and he trusted it would be put to the vote as soon as possible.

Mr. THORN considered the proposition of the leader of the Opposition was a very good one, as it would be the means of providing for an expenditure on branch lines that were very necessary. It was stated that evening by the Premier that he had plans for sixty or seventy miles' extension on each of the branch lines; and, presuming the cost to be £3,000 a-mile, that would leave a balance to be expended in useful works in places where a return would be obtained at once—probably the Clermont line, that from Yulebah to St. George, and the extension to Cunnamulla and the coal line. It would take the Minister for Works all his time to finish the line to Charters Towers in three years, judging by the rates of progress which had been made in other lines during the last few years. The hon. member's proposal would let loose a large amount of money. Were the branch and trunk lines to go on simultaneously? He presumed they would, but the farming districts would not be satisfied with the present branch line proposals.

Mr. PATERSON said the proposal of the leader of the Opposition was more liberal than that of the Government. As he understood him, a certain sum should be deducted from the gross amount set down for trunk lines, but the sum should not be taken away from the respective districts to which it was appropriated, but should be applied to other works in those districts. The sum, for instance, taken from the Townsville-Hughenden line might be set aside for the breakwater at Cleveland Bay, and other amounts on a similar principle could be devoted to works within the respective districts, as the Clermont railway in the Central district. The hon. member (Mr. Griffith), in fact, proposed that the money to be voted for each section of the colony should not be diminished, but a portion of it distributed over other necessary works, and be spent in two instead of in three years, and that the expenditure on railways alone should be £375,000 a-year instead of £390,000. Were the proposed railway to Charters Towers carried on as speedily as the Central line it would take five years to get it to reach Charters Towers. Mr. Ballard completed the extension of the Central Railway to Blackwater Creek—a similar distance, or nearly so, to that required on the Northern line to Charters Towers—in five years, and no one would doubt that he made as much speed as possible. The same difficulties and delays which had occurred then would occur now, and it therefore was certain that it would take at

least four years under most favourable circumstances, from the present day, to reach the Towers. That being so, there was no reason for their making provision for a further extension in the present Loan Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said that if the hon. member for Rockhampton thought that by supporting the amendment of the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) he would get any reduction of the money to be spent on the Central line for any other expenditure in his district he was greatly mistaken. If he did carry the amendment, it was certain the leader of the Opposition could not direct the Government as to how they were to apply the reduction to any other purpose, and he might tell the hon. member, further, that the Government would not do it. If the hon. member thought he was going to escape a difficulty with his constituents by voting against an extension of the Central Railway with an idea of turning the money to other works, he (Mr. Palmer) told him, on the authority of the Government, he was utterly mistaken. If the hon. member voted against the loan, he would vote against an extension of the Central Railway to that extent. If a majority of the Committee chose to reduce the item by £420,000 they could do it, but they could not direct the Government to apply it in any other direction;—more than that, they should not do it.

Mr. PATERSON said he had not suggested that the House should direct the Government in that way. The subject was introduced by the leader of the Opposition, and he (Mr. Paterson) was in exactly the same position as regarded what it meant as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Palmer). It had nothing whatever to do with his constituents. It would not place him in any difficulty, and the hon. gentleman knew it: perhaps he would give him a little credit for possessing some of the same sort of stuff as he himself was made of, and allow that he was not afraid to record any vote. The Colonial Secretary had misunderstood him—unwittingly, perhaps. All he suggested was that, if Government approved of the idea of the hon. member for North Brisbane, they should place the reduction in the Supplementary Loan Estimates, otherwise he would not vote for the reduction. They had not attempted to dictate to the Government who had taken the course they were entitled to, and he did not see why the Colonial Secretary could not have expressed himself in the same courteous and quiet manner as that in which the proposition was put before him.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Rockhampton need not think he was not voting against an extension of the Central line in supporting the

amendment. The hon. member seemed to gather from the remarks of the leader of the Opposition that any sum which might be knocked off the main extensions should be applied to such works as the Townsville jetty, the Clermont extension, and other similar works. If the reduction were made the Government must take it that it meant a reduction in the amount to be expended on trunk lines, and in voting on the subject every member must know he was voting for that and for nothing else. As to the Clermont railway, that was a matter for consideration outside this question. As to the hon. member's surmise that the people of Townsville were more anxious to see the jetty carried out than the railway, he could tell them that though the Townsville people were very anxious for the jetty to be carried on, if it came to be a question between the jetty and the railway they preferred the latter.

Mr. REA said that the Colonial Secretary seemed to have forgotten that the Premier a few nights ago had requested hon. members of the Opposition to make suggestions, and now that the first one had been made the Colonial Secretary got up in a bumptious manner and said he would not allow his men to vote but one way.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that what he suggested—and it was only a suggestion—was that the time for expending the loan should be two years, and that in the meantime they should carry out other works equally as necessary as the trunk lines; but his proposition did not limit the extension of the trunk lines, and it was of no use the Minister for Works trying to misrepresent him by making out that he had done any such thing. He did not wish the colony to bind itself in a manner which might be disastrous before three years were over, as had been the case in South Australia. By their proposition the Government were pledging the country in advance, and whatever their requirements might be during the next three years they would be unable to consider them. His suggestion would in no way interfere with the railway policy of the Government except in the manner indicated, which would be quite as profitable, and was much more satisfactory to the districts interested. However, he had attained his object in making his proposition, and as the Government declined to accept it he would withdraw it.

Amendment withdrawn accordingly.

Mr. MACFARLANE (Ipswich) moved that the item be reduced by £90,000.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 9.

Messrs. McLean, Meston, Mackay, Bailey, Grimes, Hendren, Horwitz, Griffith, and Macfarlane (Ipswich).

NOES, 26.

Messrs. Walsh, Macrossan, McIlwraith, Perkins, King, Rea, Palmer, O'Sullivan, Norton, Stevens, Kellett, Sheaffe, Stevenson, Amhurst, Simpson, Beor, H. W. Palmer, Baynes, Cooper, Paterson, Hill, Swanwick, Hamilton, Archer, Low, and Morehead.

Question, therefore, resolved in the negative.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said it was quite right to go to a certain length in a constitutional endeavour to resist what was believed to be injurious to the best interests of the country. The Opposition had striven to resist the enforcement of three trunk lines on the colony—a work which the present resources of the colony did not justify. Finding it impossible to resist any longer with any prospect of success, they bowed to the inevitable. He (Mr. Rutledge) rose, now, to record his individual protest against the attempt on the part of the Government to use their numerical strength in order to force an unwelcome policy on a most unwilling people. He only hoped that, when it came to the turn of the Opposition to occupy the Treasury benches, those hon. members now sitting there would retire with the same grace when they found themselves in a similar position. They could justify the action taken by them last week. He now, for the last time, protested against the Government using their great power for the purpose of carrying out a policy which, he was satisfied, would plunge the colony into financial disaster. He hoped it might be proved that he was wrong in his conjecture; in which case no one would be more ready to acknowledge their error and try to make atonement than he and those other hon. members who had endeavoured to “stonewall” the Government during the past week. It was his duty to make those few remarks to justify to his constituents the course he had taken, because, if he and other hon. members were silent, it might be said that they had no justification and were partly ashamed of themselves. They had done nothing they need be sorry for in offering the most stubborn resistance to policy from the effect of which the colony would not recover, unless he was much mistaken, for very many years.

Mr. BAILEY said he had received a telegram from his constituents instructing him—or, if possible, ordering him—to continue the course of stonewalling commenced last week. But he, for the reasons that had been stated, must decline to continue that course. He remembered that a report of an English commission upon prisons once said that the hardest punishment was turning a crank and grinding nothing but wind instead of good corn or grain. The very fact that the man knew his labour was useless made the punishment ten times greater than it would

otherwise have been. He felt, now, that further stonewalling would be a kind of crank-turning to grind only wind, and as painful to him as to the members of the Ministry. The Premier had, however, blamed the members of the Opposition for obstructing his measures several times during the session; but he was peculiarly unfortunate in the instance he gave. There was a story of a gambler who was in the habit of concealing a trump card, and who was doing so on one occasion when his opponent stuck a fork through his hand, pinning it, together with the card, to the table, exclaiming at the same time, “I will beg your pardon if the knave of clubs is not under your hand.” In each of the cases of obstruction mentioned, the knave of clubs had been under the Minister's hand. The first occasion was when some 103 workmen were dismissed from the Ipswich workshops. The Opposition were anxious to find out whether they had been dismissed in a proper legitimate English manner, or whether the discharge was settled in a back parlour in Ipswich. They tried all manner of ways and got all manner of replies, but it turned out that the knave of clubs was under the hands of Ministers, where it remained still. In the case of the Crown Lands Bill, again, the Opposition were charged with obstructing. That was a measure brought forward apparently for the disposal of 20,000 acres of land acquired at Allora at the cost of the people to promote agricultural settlement; but it was found that clauses had been inserted by which that object would be defeated, and the lands thrown into the hands of speculators without the country getting any benefit. The knave of clubs was again under the Minister's hand. They were exposed in that case and the Bill had been kept back, though the Government threatened to sell the land by auction and allow the speculators to have their way. Then came the bank business, and, though loth to refer to it, he would say that it was not creditable to the Government or to the Opposition that the banking business should have been allowed to be settled as it had been. The knave of clubs was under some one's hand there, and time would show whose. About the trunk-line policy, again, there was a concealed card under the hand. There were a lot of branch lines on the Estimates, but at the top were the three trunk lines, and they might be sure the knave of clubs was under the hand: although the card might not yet be seen, the fork was driven through the hand, the hand was fixed to the table, and if it should turn out that the card was not there they would beg pardon.

Mr. GRIMES said, before the question went to a division, he wished to enter his protest, as representing an important con-

stituency, against increased burdens of taxation being placed upon the people.

Mr. HENDREN said he was not in the House when the last amendment was proposed. He believed that an equal amount should be spent on branch lines as was proposed to be expended on trunk lines, and therefore he begged to move that the item be reduced by £20,000.

Question put and negatived.

Original question—That the sum of £1,170,000 be granted—put.

The Committee divided:—

AYES, 27.

Messrs. Palmer, McIlwraith, Macrossan, King, Cooper, Perkins, Sheaffe, O'Sullivan, Kellett, Walsh, Norton, Low, Stevenson, Hill, Baynes, Paterson, Stevens, Thorn, Simpson, Lalor, H. W. Palmer, Amhurst, Morehead, Hamilton, Archer, Rea, and Swanwick.

NOES, 12.

Messrs. Garrick, Dickson, McLean, Bailey, Hendren, Rutledge, Beattie, Grimes, Horwitz, Mackay, Macfarlane (Ipswich), and Miles.

Question, therefore, resolved in the affirmative.

The PREMIER moved that £418,000 should be granted to complete railways already authorised.

In reply to Mr. Thorn, the PREMIER said the amount down for the line—Bundaberg to Mount Perry—would complete it to the latter point.

In reply to Mr. Griffith, the PREMIER said he was satisfied the amount asked for was sufficient to complete the lines specified.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, a sum of £20,000 was granted for re-construction, Central Railway; and buildings and sidings, Southern and Western Railway.

The PREMIER moved that £416,000 should be granted for branch lines.

Mr. COOPER was understood to ask what the intentions of the Government were with regard to the Burrum line?

The PREMIER was understood to reply that no further communication, either verbally or by correspondence, had been received from the originator of the scheme for the construction of the Burrum line by a company.

Mr. THORN asked whether the Premier was prepared to give the Committee a guarantee that the branch lines could be constructed for the amounts mentioned in the Loan Estimates? The Engineer's estimates for the first four branch lines were, he understood, about £104,000 in excess of the amounts asked for.

The PREMIER was understood to ask what kind of guarantee the hon. member required? He could give no other guarantee than the one he had already given. He believed the Sandgate line could be made for £4,000 per mile, and if it could

not he would not propose it. The Engineer's estimate was between £6,000 and £7,000, but he (Mr. McIlwraith) believed it was for a far too expensive line.

Mr. THORN was understood to say that the Estimates would lead the Committee and the country astray. He did not believe the Sandgate line, including rolling-stock and the purchase of land, could be constructed for £10,000 per mile. The land alone would cost £4,000 per mile. The branch lines proposed would cost something like a quarter of a million in excess of the amount on the Estimates.

Mr. MILES said if the hon. member for Northern Downs would take a guarantee from him he would give him one—it was that the Premier did not mean to construct the Sandgate railway at all.

The PREMIER, in reply to Mr. Griffith, was understood to say that it could not possibly be the practice for the rest of the session to adjourn shortly after ten o'clock. He would admit that the question before the Committee was an important one, but the Government were prepared to give all information upon it. He hoped hon. members would not take the same time to discuss it as they had done for the other items.

Mr. KELLETT was understood to say that the Committee had been delayed with useless talk until ten o'clock, and they should go on with business until at least another two hours. Members sitting on the Government side had submitted to too much altogether, and many were getting tired of being brought to the House night after night without any business being done.

Mr. THORN was understood to say that when he was on the Treasury benches the then Opposition always obstructed business after ten o'clock. It was eleven o'clock now, and a fair thing to adjourn; an additional reason lay in the fact that several members were absent simply through the alteration in the running of the trains by the present Government. The members interested in the Highfields line, for instance, were absent. The vote was likely to lead to a long discussion. He should like to know whether the Warwick line was to go straight to Killarney or take the farms in its course? The Highfields line would be useless unless it was extended further; and as to the branch towards Clermont, which he had always advocated, the provision made by the Government for it would lead the country astray. The Committee had been told the Government did not intend to borrow for three years, and the provision of £50,000 for the Clermont branch was therefore insufficient, and would leave the line where it would be useless. He also wanted to know the course of the Fassifern line? The Government ought to

be satisfied with having passed half of the loan, and adjourn.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member talked a great deal, but they all knew that his sole object was to catch the quarter-past 11 train to Ipswich. He said he did not intend to obstruct but he had obstructed a great deal, and, judging from analogy, he would do exactly on this vote the same as he did on the last—talk a great deal against it and vote for it. What was the object of all this? Every member of the House knew how he was going to vote, and they might as well come to a decision at once. If there was any amendment to be moved, let it be moved; but they knew that if they talked until next year they would not alter a solitary vote, and after all the time that had been wasted by hon. members opposite it was only fair that they should go on with business.

Mr. STEVENSON said no doubt the hon. member for Northern Downs was a very wise man and had profited largely by his travels, but he reminded him of a couplet from Cowper—

“How much a dunce that has been sent to roam
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home.”

With regard to the question before the House, hon. members who had to come long distances, and whose only business was to attend the House, deserved some consideration. Business should be proceeded with so as to bring the session to a close within a reasonable time.

Mr. BEATTIE hoped these items would be postponed until to-morrow. He desired some information as to the route of the Sandgate railway, and, as the Premier stated that he would be prepared to give all information to-morrow, it was very ungracious of his supporters to try and force on business.

Mr. MOREHEAD could quite understand the Opposition members being opposed to the trunk lines of railway, but he thought the branch lines were the very thing they wanted, and that whatever opposition there was to them would come from members on the Government side. As far as information was concerned, the hon. gentleman in charge of the vote could give every information now, and he (Mr. Morehead) would not consent to any further time being frittered away and wasted as it had been.

Mr. LOW thought they ought not to delay till to-morrow what they could do to-night. The hon. member for Northern Downs had talked about hon. members being absent, but if they were absent it was their own fault and they must take the consequences. They could not delay the business of the country for their convenience, and he proposed that, as their lamps were lighted and their loins girt, they should go on until this business was finished.

Mr. WALSH was anxious to see business proceeded with, but still thought they should not crow over their victory, but that the interests and feelings of the Opposition should be considered, and he, for one, hoped the Premier would accede to their wishes.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said when he previously spoke he was not aware that the Premier, in reply to the leader of the Opposition, had stated that he was willing to move the Chairman out of the chair in order to give any information that might be desired. Having made that pledge, of course, he could not recede from it, and his supporters were bound to follow their leader.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked if there was any objection to postpone this vote, and proceed with the other items on the Loan Estimates?

The PREMIER said when the leader of the Opposition consulted him as to the business they intended to do, he said if they passed these two votes he would be quite willing to move the Chairman out of the chair;—but perhaps hon. members did not hear him. The leader of the Opposition said there was a large amount of information desired which he (the Premier) thought hon. members were perfectly entitled to; and, in accordance with that arrangement, he now moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report progress, and ask leave to sit again to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at eleven minutes past 11 o'clock.