

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 14 JULY 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 14 July, 1880.

New Bills.—first reading.—Petition.—Questions.—Formal Motions.—Motion for Adjournment.—Suspension of Standing Orders.—New Member.—Supply.—Ways and Means.—Appropriation Bill No. 1.—Mail Service Contract.

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

NEW BILLS.—FIRST READING.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the following Bills, brought down by Message from his Excellency the Administrator of the Government, were read a first time, and their second reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow :—

1. A Bill to make further and better provision for the appointment of Licensing Boards under the Licensing Boards Act of 1879.
2. A Bill to prevent the influx of Foreign and other Criminals into Queensland.

PETITION.

Mr. MOREHEAD presented a petition from Mr. Tom Coward, setting forth certain grievances under which he alleged himself to be suffering, and praying for relief.

On the motion of the hon. member, the petition was read and received.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. BAILEY, pursuant to notice, asked the following questions of the Minister for Works,—

1. Are the 15,000 tons of steel rails recently purchased by the Government guaranteed, as is usual in such contracts?
2. Does the guarantee extend over five or ten years?
3. Was the usual discount of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. deducted from the amount of the contract?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied,—

Nos. 1. and 2. The Department has no advice that guarantees are usually given on rails purchased by the Government; but the specification

furnished with the last contract entered into contains the following extra clause, viz. :—

“The contractor is to maintain the said rails, after making due allowance for wear and tear, for a period of five years from the date of the last delivery in the colony.”

No. 3. It is not usual to obtain discount on material let by contract after competition.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

On the motion of Mr. BAILEY, it was ordered—

That there be laid on the table of the House, a copy of the Contract for the supply of Steel Rails made between the Government and Ibbotson and Co. about last October, together with all correspondence connected therewith.

On the motion of Mr. DAVENPORT, it was ordered—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Return showing the total costs incurred in alienating Land in the construction of—

1. The Maryborough and Gympie; and
2. The Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway Lines.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS rose to move the adjournment of the House in order to call attention to certain proceedings that took place on the previous day in the Supreme Court. He observed from the report of those proceedings, that when Mr. Justice Pring presented his credentials as Acting-Judge of the Supreme Court it transpired that the terms of the commission ran thus: “To be a Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court of Queensland, and one of the three Judges aforesaid, from the date of these presents, until a successor shall be appointed to the office vacant by the death of the said Alfred James Peter Lutwyche, or until other provision in respect thereof shall be made by the Legislature.” This was an exceptional form of commission, and exception was taken to it by learned counsel on behalf of the court. Mr. Griffith pointed out that it differed materially from the commissions by virtue of which other Judges held their seats on the Supreme Court Bench, and, in adverting to this, remarked they had a somewhat similar case in 1873, when Mr. Justice Sheppard was appointed Acting-Judge of the Supreme Court, and took his seat on the Bench. He should not now refer to the arguments based on that proceeding further than to say that, although the then Chief Justice, Sir James Cockle, admitted the commission so far as to submit that he must recognise it, and he could not therefore object to Mr. Justice Sheppard taking his seat, yet such grave doubts were expressed at the time that Mr. Justice Sheppard never subsequently acted on the commission he then held and presented to the court. Similar doubts seem to have passed through the minds of the Chief Justice and Mr. Justice Harding, in connection with the commission borne by Mr. Justice Pring. The learned counsel who acted as *amicus curie* said the appointment, if made at all, must be made under the Supreme Court Act of 1873. He (Mr Douglas) said that on the broad constitutional ground, and apart from the legal bearings of the case, it was exceedingly undesirable that a Judge should be appointed to sit on the Bench of the Supreme Court with a doubt overhanging his position as such. Of late years, and for very long, it had been the soundest constitutional policy to confer the largest amount of independence on the Judges, subject to good behaviour. It would seem on this occasion that Mr. Justice Pring was not accorded that full independence of the

position of Judge as the other Judges possessed, and which his predecessors had hitherto enjoyed. He observed that the Attorney-General, in arguing the case, took a somewhat different view from that which Mr. Griffith maintained, and urged that the appointment was not during pleasure, and the terms of the commission showed that it could not be so. Nevertheless the Chief Justice seemed to have entertained very grave doubts. He could not further enter into the arguments than to say that the Chief Justice was to a great extent guided by the precedent made for him by Sir James Cockle when he admitted Mr. Acting Judge Sheppard to the Bench. He evidently entertained some very grave doubts as to the present position of Mr. Justice Pring. He did not, however, consider they were sufficient to justify him in refusing to grant the commission. He said, "I refrain from giving any judgment upon the status of Mr. Justice Pring—whether he is a Puisne Judge permanently (in which case there would be no doubt as to his right to form part of the court), or whether he only occupies that position until a successor shall be appointed to the seat vacated by Mr. Justice Lutwyche,—whether the commission is good down to the words 'these presents,' or whether the following words operate. That being so, as far as I am concerned, I shall not refuse to permit Mr. Justice Pring to take the oath." The Chief Justice's position evidently was, that although not satisfied he was bound to recognise the commission as far as it went. Mr. Justice Harding concurred, and in doing so said that he had some doubts about the matter which he hoped would be shortly settled by the proper authorities. This was a point on which some statement should be made by the head of the Government. How was Mr. Pring's appointment to be dealt with? If it was to be dealt with it ought to be dealt with at once, for it was highly undesirable that any doubt should overhang the status of a Judge. They had always recognised the policy of the independence of the Bench, and he hoped it would be cherished by all who valued constitutional precedents; if any doubts existed they ought to be set at rest as soon as possible, and he hoped they would receive an assurance from the Government to that effect.

The PREMIER said that it was the intention of the Government at an early day to introduce a Bill with the object of reducing the number of Supreme Court Judges in the colony to three.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that it was a subject of so much importance that it deserved more consideration than it seemed to receive at the hands of the House. A serious question had arisen, which might be found to invalidate the proceedings of the Supreme Court. Nothing more serious could happen to the colony, for virtually there would be no Court. What the hon. gentleman said made the matter even more doubtful, for it seemed that although the Supreme Court Act said that the Judges held office during life, or during good behaviour, which were practically synonymous terms, as a matter of fact it was now found that one of them held office till it suited the convenience of the Government to abolish it. The question deserved the best attention of the Government and the House, and ought to be adjusted as soon as possible. If the doubt expressed was well founded Mr. Justice Pring was no Judge at all, and there were only two Judges here. He sincerely hoped that the Government would settle the matter at a very early date. As long as the matter remained open very serious consequences might ensue. Everything that was done might be illegal. If a member of that House were adjudged insolvent and his seat were vacated, and a writ issued, the whole proceedings

might be void. Yet he supposed that the adjudication would be acted upon, and the new member would subject himself to penalties. This question would affect every possible state of society in the colony. There could not be anything more serious, and he hoped that it would not be allowed to continue longer. Both sides would give the heartiest attention to anything that was proposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member put him in mind of the old proverb "when the sky falls we shall catch larks." He (Mr. Palmer) did not believe the Chief Justice had any doubts at all: the fact that the Judges present swore in Mr. Justice Pring was against such a theory.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that, notwithstanding what had fallen from the hon. Colonial Secretary, he would remark that, although he was in possession of no further information that what had appeared in the public Press, he was of opinion that both the Judges had very considerable doubts on the subject, and that, although they did not think fit to refuse the commission, they still doubted the validity of it. He trusted he might be allowed to urge upon the Government the desirability of such an important question not being left in doubt. For his own part, he was prepared to deal with it in the most impartial spirit, and, indeed, there was no question which should be approached in a calmer spirit by members on both sides of the House. There should be no doubts as to the status of our Judges, but he could not shut his eyes to the fact that there was a doubt still hanging over the validity of the appointment of Mr. Pring.

Mr. HILL said that he had read the report in the newspaper, and he could not see that there was any doubt on the part of the two Judges. He thought that if they had any doubts they would not have sworn in Mr. Pring as a Judge of the Supreme Court. They were constantly troubled in that House by hon. members reading extracts from newspapers published either in Brisbane or in the country, but in the present case the fact spoke for itself that the Judges had actually sworn in Mr. Pring. Whether that was for the time being or not, he took it, was met by the statement made by the Premier that afternoon, that he intended to introduce a Bill to reduce the number of the Supreme Court Judges to three, which he (Mr. Hill) considered were quite sufficient for the population of the colony. The reduction of expense by such a change would be in accordance with the policy of the Government, who came in as a Government of retrenchment; at the same time, he supposed that when the Bill was introduced he would witness, for the second time since he had been a member of the House, the sight of all the legal members voting on the one side. As regarded the appointment of Mr. Justice Pring, he believed it was a most proper one.

Mr. SCOTT said he had read some of the reports in the newspapers of what had taken place in the Supreme Court yesterday, and the opinion he had come to was certainly contrary to that formed by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), as it appeared to him that the Judges had no doubts whatever on the subject of Mr. Pring's appointment.

Question put and negatived.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The PREMIER said it was rather earlier in the month than usual to bring forward a motion of this kind, which did not usually take place before the 18th or 19th of the month, but he had been compelled to bring it forward thus early on account of next week being Exhibition week; and, as it would be necessary to pay the Govern-

ment accounts for the month, he did not like to risk the chance of there being no House. It was also a little later in the year than usual, but that was owing to the House not having met until a later period in the year. He might mention that the amount to be asked for would be similar to that in previous Appropriation Acts—namely, £100,000, or an expenditure for one month. He would move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as will admit of the immediate constitution of the Committees of Supply and Ways and Means, and of reporting resolutions on the same day on which they shall have passed in such Committees; also, of the passing of an Appropriation Bill through all its stages in one day.

He need not explain that the amount expended by the Government would be on the same scale as was provided by last year's Estimates.

Mr. DICKSON said he did not anticipate that any opposition would be offered to the motion, but he would point out to the Premier that when the present Government were in opposition they were most persistent in their opposition to the then Government obtaining votes on account, and had invariably objected to them being proposed. He should have liked this session to have seen the application for a vote on account preceded by the Estimates, as hon. members would then have been in a better position to judge of the intentions of the Government. It would not have been out of place of the Premier, when moving the resolution, to have stated when he intended to make his Financial Statement, although the hon. gentleman had certainly referred to it on the previous day. He considered that the balance of the appropriation for last month would go a great way towards defraying the expenses for this month. Whilst there would, he imagined, be no objection to the motion, he thought some information should be given as to when the Estimates would be laid on the table, and he trusted that information would be given.

The PREMIER said he ought to apologise to the House for not having given that information. The hon. member who had just spoken knew perfectly well the large amount of labour there was in compiling the Estimates, the whole of which had been on his (the Premier's) shoulders since he returned to the colony. In addition to the ordinary labour there were exceptional causes which had made the preparation of the Financial Statement, this year, excessively laborious. He could, however, see his way clear to make his Statement early next month, but not sooner; and he might get the Estimates laid on the table in the course of ten days.

Question put and passed.

NEW MEMBER.

The SPEAKER announced that he had that day received a writ returning Henry Rogers Beor, Esq., as member for the Electoral District of Bowen, and also a proclamation issued by the Administrator of the Government to the same effect.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Mr. Beor) was then sworn in, and took his seat.

SUPPLY.

The SPEAKER read the portion of the Speech of the Administrator of the Government addressed to the Legislative Assembly upon this subject.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into a Committee of the Whole to consider a grant to Her Majesty, and it was resolved that the sum of £100,000 be granted towards defraying the expenses of the various departments of the services of the colony,

The House resumed; the Chairman reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, and obtained leave to sit again the following day.

WAYS AND MEANS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee of Ways and Means.

The PREMIER moved—

That, towards making good the Supply granted to Her Majesty for the service of the year 1880-1881, a sum not exceeding £100,000 be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Queensland.

Question put and passed.

The resolution was reported to the House, adopted, and leave given to the Committee to sit again to-morrow.

APPROPRIATION BILL No. 1.

The PREMIER introduced a Bill to give effect to the foregoing resolution; the Bill was read a first and second time, and the House went into Committee to consider it in detail.

Mr. DICKSON said he understood the Premier, in introducing the resolution, to state that the expenditure would be upon the same scale as during the past year. He supposed he might also understand from the hon. gentleman that no new services would be entered into, beyond those absolutely necessary, until the Estimates were dealt with?

The PREMIER said he did not know what the hon. gentleman referred to. Did he imagine that they were going to add to the Supplementary Estimates? The Government had no intention of increasing the services.

The various clauses of the Bill having been passed,

The CHAIRMAN reported the Bill without amendment, and the third reading was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MAIL SERVICE CONTRACT.

Upon the Order of the Day being read for "consideration in Committee of the Whole of proposed ratification of the contract made on the 6th May, 1880, between Thomas McIlwraith and William Mackinnon, Eli Lees, William Patrick Andrew, Peter Denny, Alexander Fraser, Archibald Gray, and Edwyn Sandys Dawes, for a through Steam Service between London and Brisbane,"

The PREMIER said, in moving this Order of the Day, he thought it was advisable to put the case of this mail service before the House previous to the Speaker leaving the chair, as he intimated yesterday. In the remarks that he would feel called upon to make with regard to this motion, he would leave out a large amount of historical matter which the House had before it both last session and this. Most detailed information with regard to the working of the mail contracts, with regard to the efforts made by the Government to make contracts with the old company, or any other company, for the continuance of the old service, and also with regard to the same efforts made in England, had been put before the House and fairly digested before this time, he had no doubt. At all events he would only use that material, not for the purpose of making up a speech, but simply where he required to refer to it in order to assist his argument. Now, the first point of importance with regard to this contract was, that it involved a large amount additional to what the colony had been paying previously; that whereas before they had been paying £20,000 a-year, this contract would require £55,000, and, in fact, something more than that, because one of the conditions of the contract was equivalent

to an additional amount of subsidy—that was, that all steamers employed under the contract were to come free of harbour and light dues, so that it might be reckoned that the service was one that would cost more than £55,000. However, the Government found from their efforts to get a contract for carrying on the old service that the same could not be obtained—or rather that they could not get a ten-knot service under £35,000 a-year, and that saddled with the condition of allowing the steamers to go on to Sydney, and making Sydney the terminus of the line, receiving at the same time from the New South Wales Government a subsidy which they had promised, or, at all events, undertook to submit to Parliament for its approbation. That would reduce the expenditure required on account of this colony to carry out that service to about £30,000 a-year. He objected strongly to the expenditure of such an amount for what was simply a branch service after all. He thought great advantages were to accrue to the colony from a through service, but the only advantage arising from the Eastern and Australian Company's service being continued would be that the northern parts of the colony would be better supplied than they would be if we adopted the alternative plan of having our mails sent by Melbourne. From these remarks it would be seen at once that he was not called upon, nor did he intend, to defend this mail service as a mail service exclusively. It was not as a mail service alone that he could defend it; but he put the points before the House in the way in which they influenced the Government, so as to give, at all events, due credit to this contract for the amount of work it actually did in the mail service. Speaking in round figures, the Postmaster-General had ascertained that our mails could be sent *via* Melbourne, Suez, and Brindisi at a cost of something like £16,000 a-year. That was what it cost at the present time; that was to say, the amount of mail matter that passed through the Post Office at the present time would cost the Government, if they went *via* Melbourne, under the arrangements that had been proposed by the Victorian Government, and by the arrangements that we had at the present time with New South Wales and the proposed arrangement with the A.S.N. Company, £16,000 per annum. It would be seen at once that, as this £16,000 was reckoned at so much per ounce upon the mail matter carried, the sum would increase each year as the postal matter itself increased. He had no doubt that hon. members would admit that our postal matter would increase in at least the same ratio during the next eight years that it had increased during the past eight years. He himself believed it would increase in much greater ratio; but, computing that it would only increase in something like the same ratio, they would have by this calculation an average of 50 per cent. more than the £16,000 to pay, under this arrangement, on an average. That was, that whereas we were now paying £16,000 a-year—he believed he should have said £17,000, as that was nearer the amount—he had very little doubt that at the end of eight or ten years we would be paying double that amount. Taking, therefore, the increase at something like 50 per cent. on the amount we started with, he believed the average amount of mail matter carried *via* Melbourne during the next eight years would amount to £23,000. That was what he reckoned our mails might be carried for in an efficient manner between Brisbane and England under the arrangements they had before them—by the P. and O. Company to Melbourne, by rail from Melbourne to Sydney, and by the A. S. N. Co.'s steamers from Sydney to Brisbane. So much for the cost. The next point they had to consider was how this service would agree with regard to the time

of the delivery of the mails at the various ports with the time that they would be delivered by the P. and O. service, by rail from Melbourne and by steamer from Sydney. No doubt hon. members had by this time read the contract, but he would shortly explain the mode of working the lines set forth under that contract. Every four weeks a steamer, propelled at the rate of 220 miles a day, would leave London and Brisbane. It was provided that the steamer that left London was to be the same that arrived in Brisbane. There was to be no transhipment except a temporary provision for the first year, which he believed would not be required. But in order to take advantage of the much greater speed at which the service of the P. and O. Company was conducted, the mail was obliged to meet the P. and O. Company's boat on its arrival at either Batavia or Singapore, to which point from London the mail had been carried at the rate of eleven knots an hour. There the British-India Company's vessels picked up the mails and carried them on to the terminus at Brisbane, calling at the ports specified. It would be seen, therefore, that by this arrangement we had exactly the same advantages of the English mail service through the P. and O. Company as we had before, and we had also the advantage of a slightly accelerated speed, but not very considerable. The contractors were confident of being able to do what they professed with the class of ships they were bound to put on the line, which were to be a minimum register of 2,000 tons. He knew well, from long discussions he had had with the projectors of the line, what their intentions were; and he could inform the House that from his most recent information they proposed to start immediately building ships of 2,600 tons, and he had received a telegram later than that intimating that they considered they would be justified in starting the building of a steamer of 3,000 tons, at least. From the size of the vessels that would be built they would be able to accomplish a speed a great deal more than 220 miles a day. But the promoters also calculated on a considerable trade at the ports of call; and, while willing to bring the mails in the shortest time, they wished to have time in their hands to enable them to transact their cargo business at the various ports. While intimating their ability and determination to deliver the mails in Brisbane in the same time as they would be delivered by the P. and O. Company *via* Melbourne, they were not to be subjected to fine for any delay as long as they kept the time up to 220 miles a day. He anticipated they would be able to deliver the mails in Brisbane, in fact, sooner than they were delivered *via* Melbourne; but if the contract time was carried out, and they did not accomplish the voyage in a shorter time, the Melbourne mail would arrive in Brisbane in two days twenty hours less than their vessels would arrive. To show the effect of this he would give a few figures based upon the contract speed of the P. and O. Company from London to Melbourne, and the time occupied by the transfer of mails from Melbourne to Sydney and from Sydney to Brisbane:—

Name of Port.	Via Brindisi. British India Co. Days from London.		Melbourne-Galle <i>via</i> Brindisi, P. and O. Co.	
	Days.	Hours.	Days.	Hours.
Brisbane ...	46	20	44	0
Keppel Bay ...	45	2	45	22
Bowen ...	43	16	47	11
Townsville ...	43	2	48	3
Cooktown ...	41	16	50	10
Thursday Island	39	12	52	9

Hon. members would see that they gained no advantage as far as Brisbane was concerned; on the contrary, Brisbane would be at a disadvantage to the extent of two days and twenty hours, but all the northern ports would be at a considerable advantage, increasing from Keppel Bay as they went north. Of course, in making these calculations, he wished the House to understand that he had taken for granted that the Queensland mail delivered by the P. and O. Company's vessels in Melbourne was taken immediately from the ship at Melbourne coming this way, and the Queensland mail from London to Queensland was taken immediately from the ship, and within two hours the mail started overland to Sydney, where a vessel was waiting to bring the mail on in the same way. Hon. members would see that this was a chain, and any one of the links being broken might cause a delay. There might be delays on the other line, but the advantages were in favour of the British-India line, when it was considered that there would not be three different companies having charge of the mail at different times. He had said so much of the aspects of the contract, so far as it was considered as a mail contract. He had given his own opinion very plainly to the House that, as a mail contract alone, it could not be justified; nor did he attempt, as such, to justify it. There were very much higher considerations to look at than the mere carriage of mails. He never believed in having a mail service of our own simply from the vanity of boasting as a Queenslander that she had a line of steamers of her own like other colonies; but he thought he would be able to show the House that there was a sound substantial advantage to be got by having their own line of steamers, and if he could not show that to the House he recommended the House to reject the contract. It must be apparent to anyone who had watched the colony during the last two or three years that a great change had taken place—a change the origin of which it was difficult to trace, because it had been complicated by the bad times they had passed through. Most people had arrived at the conclusion that the want of shipping in the Queensland ports was in consequence of the bad times. That, however, was not altogether the case. It had arisen, to a great extent, from another cause altogether, and one that, during the last two or three years, had done more to weaken the commercial prosperity of the colony than anything that had happened during the twenty years before. It was admitted everywhere in shipowning circles that the days of sailing vessels had gone past, even for the very lowest class of cargo; because, most hon. members would be aware that at the present time the lowest class of cargo was taken out to India and China by steamers simply because the same amount of money invested in steamers yielded a better return than an investment in sailing ships. It might be said, after all, that if that was so the colony ought rather to reap an advantage by the change. But Queensland, commercially weak compared with her two big neighbours, suffered severely by the change. Those who were leaving their connection with sailing vessels did not like it because they lost their trade. Those who were going into steamers were in competition, trying to shove out the old system of sailing ships, and having to run at lower prices than was profitable to themselves; the consequence was that they selected the very best fields in which to carry out their operations. That was the kind of thing that was injuring Queensland trade. No steam vessel could possibly at the present time compete with sailing vessels here, because the owners of the steamship would be ruined by waiting here for cargo. They must get cargo where it was to be found in quantities ready for loading, and the expenses of a sailing ves-

sel waiting for cargo were not to be compared with the expenses to which a steamer would be put. The consequence was that steam vessels could not attack a trade where they were not perfectly sure of getting immediate cargoes, and that was why no steamer came to the colony in the direct English trade. It was altogether different with Melbourne and Sydney; there the owners of steamships saw their way to knocking into the trade and cutting out the sailing ships; and Queensland, by allowing her direct British trade to be diverted to Sydney, was contributing to the future destruction of her commerce. It was very annoying to reflect that the cream of cargo coming to Queensland was taken first to Melbourne and Sydney, and the goods which used to come direct by sailing ships were now being brought to us from Melbourne and Sydney by the A.S.N. Company's steamers. This he could prove by figures. The result was quite plain, namely, that unless the colony made a strong effort to divert the trade from Sydney and Melbourne we should lose our direct trade with England. He did not require to prove to this House by statistics that it would be a disastrous thing to this colony were all the trade between it and England to be transacted *via* Sydney. The colony had shown its belief in its capabilities by spending £800,000 on the harbours and rivers of the colony; not that the A.S.N. Company might find wharfage accommodation, but that the direct trade to England might be encouraged, and with the same object in view, they had sanctioned another £300,000 in the hope by improving our ports to encourage the direct trade with the old country. In one of the papers he had prepared for his Financial Statement he found the following figures, proving the ground he had taken up:—In 1878 the tonnage inward from the Australian Colonies was 411,339; in 1879 it was 508,574; there had been an increase, therefore, on the year of 97,235 tons. In 1878 the tonnage inwards from all the other countries was 130,511; and in 1879 it was 129,121, leaving a decrease on the year of the imports from foreign ports of 1,390 tons. The total inward tonnage from all sources in 1878 was 541,850; and in 1879 it was 637,795, showing an increase in 1879 of 95,845, and thereby proving that there had not been a decrease but an increase in the trade. These facts proved the point which he wanted the House earnestly to consider—namely, that our trade had not decreased. Our total inward trade had increased by 93,845 tons, but 97,235 tons of increase was due to the Sydney trade, and there had been an actual decrease in the direct trade. If hon. members would consider those figures they would see that they meant a great deal, so far as the commercial prosperity of the colony was concerned. Taking our outward trade from the Australian colonies the figures proved his position just as strongly. In 1878 the amount was 417,328 tons, and in 1879 499,069 tons, or an increase of 81,741 tons. To all other countries the tonnage was 107,580 in 1878, as against 119,630 in 1879; so that while the total increase in the export trade of Queensland was 93,791 tons, 81,740 tons of that went away through Sydney, and only 12,050 tons went direct. Those were telling figures; but he would go a little further and consider the position of one port, the port of Brisbane, and show that the port of Brisbane was much more affected by the encroachment of the Sydney trade than the northern ports. At Brisbane an immense falling off in the shipping trade had taken place direct with England, and the figures he would place before them would still better strengthen the position he had taken up. At the port of Brisbane in 1877 the arrivals from Great Britain were 30,647 tons, in 1878 29,579 tons, and in 1879 23,593 tons. That was to say, there was a falling off of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. between 1877 and 1878, and a falling off of 20½ per

cent. between 1878 and 1879—or in round numbers the falling off in the trade of the port from 1877 had been 25 per cent. During that time the tonnage entered from Sydney was 92,625 in 1877, 96,618 in 1878, and 106,649 in 1879. In other words, during the whole of that period of depression the tonnage from Sydney had increased 4 per cent. from 1877 to 1878, and 10½ per cent. from 1878 to 1879. Taking the totals, they found that the inward tonnage to Brisbane amounted to 123,272 tons in 1877, 126,197 in 1878, and 130,242 in 1879, which proved that trade had not diminished. Hon. members would see at once that those figures—which he would place in their hands for further analysis—proved two things—namely, that the tonnage had been actually increasing for the last two or three years, and that the amount of trade with Sydney direct had increased to a considerable extent, while the direct home trade had been falling off. What had been done in the last few years was nothing to what he anticipated in the future. He expected to see sailing ships actually put out of the trade, not by direct steamers, because those could not be introduced now, but by the steamers that went to Sydney. He saw that time coming, and he wished to direct the attention of the House to the immense advantage it must be to the colony to get the trade back. If once the country got into the position that she was supplied with goods of English manufacture from Sydney, it would be a very difficult matter to get back into a healthy state of affairs. Why had they expended a million of money on their harbours and rivers but to keep the direct trade within their own boundaries?—and that was the object he had in view in the present proposal. Hon. members would see at once, judging from the large class of ships intended to be employed, that unless the company could get a large direct trade from London to Brisbane their postal contract would be a very great loss to them. But they had based their calculations on that, and they anticipated that by putting on those large steamers they would be able to compete on fair and equitable terms with the steamers running to the large cities in the south, and that in the course of a few years they would make a trade which would justify them in putting on even much larger steamers. He need hardly dwell on the advantages that a service of this kind would be to the colony. He believed it was the thing they had been looking forward to for a long while to develop their coalfields, and bring the coal of the colony into greater commercial use. The reason why better coal had not been produced was, that not sufficient capital had been invested in the mines. This service would provide a market. There was no doubt the district of Moreton was one of the greatest coal-beds in the world, and only capital was wanting to get out coal as good as the best from Newcastle. From what he had seen, and from the opinions of men entitled to judge, he felt satisfied that that would be the result. In entering upon the contract the company had calculated upon getting coal at Brisbane. He had distinctly told the company that the coal at present delivered was not nearly so good as the Newcastle coal; but they were satisfied from what they knew, and from one of the directors who had inspected some of the mines not many years ago, that coal of a far better description would soon be found—at all events, they had taken that into their calculations. He would say nothing about the difference it would make to the trade of the port having direct communication with the old country by a line of large steamers having its terminus in Brisbane, because its advantages must be apparent to everybody. He might say that he had not much trouble in enforcing upon

the parties to the contract the *sine quâ non* that the terminus should be at Brisbane. They were perfectly willing to agree to it, because they had no wish to interfere with the Sydney trade, and it had always been their policy to work on amicable terms with the P. and O. Company, which might be destroyed were they to make Sydney their terminus. From the remarks hon. members had already made, he felt certain that his next point would touch the very heart of the opposition he expected meeting to his proposal. He would say at once that the advantage of this service to pastoral tenants and all owners of stock throughout the colony would be very considerable indeed. He was very much interested in the question, and it possibly added much to the zest with which he carried on the labour of bringing the contract to a conclusion. How far self-interest might have actuated him he could not tell, but he was interested to a considerable extent, and should like to see a line of steamers going out every month with a cargo of frozen meat. He hoped to live to see that day, for when it came about it would be a happy day, not only for Brisbane, but for all the ports on the coast. At the time when the contract was entered into the minds of Englishmen, as well as those of Australians, were exercised over the meat question, and there could be no doubt that that subject was thoroughly taken into consideration by the contractors. Hon. members would do well to consider not simply the advantages which were likely to accrue to the pastoral tenants of the Crown, but also the benefit which would result to every member of the community. He knew of no class which would be so much benefited as the selectors, especially those occupying lands between the coast and the coast range. Everyone who had studied the land question recognised the fact that the great cause of depression among the farming class was the want of some article of export which could be produced on the farms and depended upon to realise something like a fixed price. With the exception of sugar no such article of export had been produced hitherto, and the farmers were therefore dependent in all other cases upon the local market. This was unsatisfactory to the farmer, because when one had a good crop his neighbours had good crops also, and the demand being limited prices naturally fell; so that it was often questionable whether the farmer was better off then than he had been in a bad season. If they were placed in a position to adopt the plan followed by their brothers in America, they would add to the yearly incomes a moderate certainty, and so obtain the end they had always been looking for. Similar land to that found between the coast and the coast range, and even much inferior land, was used in America for the purpose of feeding cattle for the British market. A farmer would go into one of the yards in the large western towns and buy 100 or so head of store cattle—or, if he could not buy, obtain them on terms from a man with capital—and he would keep them for from three to six months, fattening them on the ripe corn and making a considerable profit. By this system the profits of cattle and sheep grazing were not confined to the men of large capital; but, on the contrary, the industry was generally one of the first a man of small means went into, because it required very little labour, and plenty of men could be found willing to find the capital. The system was thoroughly well adapted to our coast lands;—it could be extended to those further back, but he was simply referring now to those which were already settled upon. If hon. members would turn their attention for a short time to the contract they would find that by the second clause it was provided that

the steamers employed should be of not less than 2,000 tons burden, and the classification 100 A1, that indicating the best class of ships built; and that the ports of call should be Naples, if required by the Postmaster-General, Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Batavia, Thursday Island, Cooktown, Townsville, Bowen, Keppel Bay. Power was given, by arrangement, to alter the ports of call, if necessary. The following clauses to clause 13 provided for description of service, terminus, speed, and other matters to which he had referred. Clause 13, which was a rather important one, provided that no letter other than Her Majesty's mails should be carried between Brisbane and London. He might mention here that after that clause was inserted the contractors intimated to him that they had a contract with the Portuguese Government for carrying a mail from Gibraltar to Batavia, for a few hundred pounds a year, and he had given them leave to carry that mail, notwithstanding the provision of the 13th clause, always provided that carrying it did not entail any inconvenience to the working of the Queensland service. The service under the agreement was to commence from October next, when the contract with the E. and A. Company expired, and to continue in force for eight years. He had tried to obtain a contract for a shorter period, but a little difference arose, and he had to concede the point, the contractors showing that it would take at least a year to build the five steamers which they reckoned they would require. Clause 22 provided that the Postmaster-General should not arbitrarily withhold his consent to an assignment of the whole contract to an effective company in which the contractors held a substantial number of shares. This clause was put in because it was not the intention of the parties who had signed the contract to work the company as part of the British-India Company, but to form a separate Queensland Company to work amicably with the other. William Mackinnon was chairman of the British-India Company and also of the British-Netherland Company, two of the largest steamship companies in the world; Eli Lees and J. Andrew were two of the directors in those companies; Peter Denny was the iron shipbuilder in Dunbarton; Alexander Fraser was a director in the Netherland-India Company; and Archibald Gray and Edwyn Sandys Dawes were merchants and shipowners in Austin Friars. Clause 25 contained the terms of payment, and, in connection with that, clause 26, remitting harbour dues, would have to be taken into consideration. Clause 27 provided for proper arrangements being made at Colombo and Batavia for interchanging traffic, and indicated the intention of the projectors of the service to cultivate trade between the Indian ports and Queensland. The port of call for interchanging traffic to and from China was to be Batavia or Singapore, at the option of the contractors. At present the port of call was Singapore, but the contractors considered that for purposes of trade between Queensland and the East Batavia would suit them a great deal better. If they chose to make that the port of call they would arrange to have a swift steamer waiting for the P. and O. mail steamers at Singapore to bring the mail on to Batavia, so that no delay would result. Clause 23 referred to immigration, a portion of the subject to which he had not yet alluded. It was necessary that some provision should be made for the immigration service, and he and his colleagues considered that if the proposed route was found to be adapted to the purpose of immigration—as he thoroughly believed it would be—the service would be of immense advantage in inducing a larger number and better class of immigrants to try our shores. The passage would be only

fifty-five days instead of the present average of about 100 days; and notwithstanding the objections urged against the route on the score of heat, he was of opinion that the hot weather encountered on the passage would be nothing as compared with the heat experienced by immigrants when lying under the equator in sailing ships. However, as the arrangement for bringing out immigrants by this route was experimental, provision was made that, if after a fair trial the route was found to be unsuitable, the contractors should have no claim upon the Government. As the amount to be paid—£16 per head—was under the average amount paid under the present system for many years past, it was fair that the difference should be regarded as a slight set-off against the £55,000. Referring to the clause which provided that the company should have a year to get the ships required for the through service, he would remark that for the first twelve months the company would be allowed to tranship at Galle; that was to say, one steamer would go on from London to Galle and another would then proceed from Galle to Brisbane. However, he had been informed by telegram that the company were endeavouring to make arrangements to commence the through service at once, so that the clause would not be likely to come into operation, and the arrangement would be of considerable advantage to the colony. He had now gone pretty fairly into the matter, and had represented it as well as he could, but in replying he would make clear any points that he had not fully dealt with. Before he concluded he would say a few words upon a remark that he had heard fall, yesterday, from the leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman said he hoped this would not be made a party question. He had heard the same remark before from the hon. gentleman on other questions, and had found that it meant that the Government should not make the matter a party question, so that the Opposition might have a chance of securing a few votes from the Ministerial side, but that the Opposition would consider it as a party matter and vote for it in that light. He would not take the hon. gentleman's advice. So far as he was concerned, he considered this a Government measure of the greatest importance; and, if the House had not faith enough in the Government to follow their policy in this important contract, it was time that it took steps to get other men to fill their places.

Mr. DICKSON said he was sorry the Premier had concluded a very excellent speech with an intimation that hon. members on the Government side would be expected to unhesitatingly vote the subsidy for a contract of the extraordinary character that the one before the House had been shown to be. The hon. gentleman might very well have allowed hon. members opposite to deal with the question on its merits. During the present session quite a sufficient amount of grave political questions connected with local administration would doubtless come before the House and be considered as party questions without the hon. gentleman binding the large majority that he possessed to accept unhesitatingly a measure which, if reported speeches were any indication of hon. members' views, was not acceptable to several members opposite. It would have been better for the country, and more to the credit of a Government so strong as the one now in office, to have allowed the question to be discussed dispassionately without the intimation that the Premier had been pleased to give. There was no doubt that the question was one which had exercised the public mind attentively, and that it could hardly be expected to pass through the House without a large amount of criticism—fair, impartial criticism he trusted—

and without being analysed in all its bearings. And he hoped that, notwithstanding the Premier's intimation, hon. members opposite would afford the country an opportunity of learning the reasons why they supported the contract, even if they did not feel at liberty to oppose it. He apprehended that they would not feel disposed to vote against the measure after hearing the Premier's announcement, yet he trusted that they would give some reason for the faith that was in them, and enable the country to judge whether the question was being supported by them on its merits. He was not quite prepared to follow the Premier through his tables, and thought it was unfortunate that the hon. gentleman had not circulated them at an earlier period so that members might have had an opportunity of studying them. It was an easy matter to put a mass of figures before members in the course of a discussion, but it was not fair to expect members who had not had an opportunity of considering the figures to take them up at a moment's notice and dispel the reasons which had been deduced from them. He did not intend, therefore, to follow the Premier through his statistics, but would take his speech as a whole. He was very much disappointed with it, because it resolved itself into this—that the subsidy was to be a monopoly to a commercial company. It was not to be a subsidy to a mail or immigration company; but to a certain syndicate, to enable them to transfer a most lucrative contract to persons who were not known. The contract had been placed before the House as for a mail and immigration service; but he would ask whether it satisfied the country's requirements in either respect? The Premier admitted that as a mail service it would be a decided failure, and upon the question of immigration he had not touched except when going over the details of the contract, and those details showed that the immigration service was of that character that it was quite optional with the company to take immigrants. They were not bound to carry out an immigration service at £16 per head;—it was entirely optional with the gentlemen who would eventually possess the contract to take immigrants—if they chose to refuse to carry immigrants, the Government, under the contract, could not insist upon their doing so. To put this, therefore, before the country as a mail or immigration service was decidedly doing so under a misrepresentation. As to its being a subsidy to a commercial company, he was very sorry indeed that they were going back to the old days of monopoly, as they would be doing were they to bolster up their commercial prospects by subsidising a trading company, and it was in that light only that the Premier attempted to justify the contract. He did not accept the hon. gentleman's reasons for the trade slipping away from the colony. His statistics showed that their trade was increasing, but that their British trade did not keep pace with their intercolonial one. The hon. gentleman thought this important, but he would take him on his own ground, and would say that the present arrangement would not tend to increase British tonnage; on the contrary, it would confine British tonnage simply to vessels belonging to the company which received a subsidy of £35,000 per annum, and, assisted by the immunity from harbour dues that the company possessed, would drive every other bottom out of their ports. They could not expect that vessels which would be handicapped by their heavy port, harbour, and light dues—heavy though necessary exactions in the state of the revenue—could compete with the company's ships. Even vessels which only paid the dues periodically would be to a certain extent handicapped by the

favour that had been shown to the new company. The hon. gentleman would be aware that the E. and A. Company paid port and light dues annually, and that even this had been made a ground of protest to the Treasury. The Netherlands, A.S.N., and other companies, had remonstrated with the Government at these facilities being given to the E. and A. Company; but now they were going to abolish harbour, port, and light dues in favour of the new company, and they would thus be making a concession of between £2,000 and £3,000, which sum must be added to the amount of the subsidy demanded from Government. It seemed almost a waste of time to adduce arguments as to the company not being in a position to conduct an efficient mail service: indeed, the Premier had not attempted to defend its claims on the ground of the mail service, and the considerations of the question had been, therefore, greatly narrowed down. The Premier, in the course of his remarks, had pointed out that he considered one justification for granting the subsidy to the company was the fact that they were at the present time paying from £16,000 to £17,000 per annum to the P. and O. Company for transmission of mail matter *via* Melbourne, and he inferred that with the progress of the colony during the next eight or ten years that subsidy would advance from £17,000 to, possibly, £25,000.

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. DICKSON said that that was what he understood the Premier to infer—that such would be the case unless they had a mail service of their own. He (Mr. Dickson) would point out that, whatever might be done in connection with the present contract, the mails would undoubtedly go by the quickest route. The heaviest portions of business correspondence with Europe were carried at present by the P. and O. Company. The Torres Straits service was at present very little used by the commercial community—that was corroborated by the statement of the Premier—and the large amount of mail matter carried by the P. and O. Company would be further increased if they entrusted the transmission of mails to a company which could not compete with the P. and O. Company either in celerity or in regularity. A fortnightly service was much the most convenient, and the hon. gentleman had not adduced a single argument to prove that the amount of mail matter expected to go by the British-India Company would not continue to go still by the P. and O. Company, notwithstanding the new contract.

The PREMIER: We will take care it does not.

Mr. DICKSON said the hon. gentleman might say he would take care that it did not; but he might as well attempt to make water flow up hill as endeavour to prevent business men adopting the speediest mode of communication for their business transactions. It had not been proved that this would be an expeditious mail service; on the contrary, the Premier had admitted that as a mail service he could not recommend it to the House.

The PREMIER: I never said anything of the sort. What I repeatedly said was, that exclusively as a mail service I did not recommend it; but I believe it would be a far better mail service than we have at present.

Mr. DICKSON said his ears, then, must have deceived him. However, he maintained that whatever action the House might take, the mails would go by the quickest route. Here they were to have between Singapore and Queensland a service of a little over nine knots, while the P. and O. Company ran a ten and a-half knot service between Melbourne and Galle. He maintained,

therefore, that these letters as at present, instead of going by the Torres Straits route, would go by the most expeditious service. He (the Premier) was not prepared to say that he did not intend to recommend this as an immigration service. The hon. gentleman had a habit of modifying his opinions when they came to be criticised. The hon. gentleman did not condemn this service, but he had damned it with faint praise as a mail service. As an immigration service, it was not compulsory upon the British-India Company to carry immigrants; but the Premier had not said anything to discourage the idea of bringing out immigrants till it was found to be unsuitable.

The PREMIER: I strongly recommended it.

Mr. DICKSON said the hon. gentleman nevertheless gave the company the opportunity of saying they would not take one immigrant. Where, then, was the earnestness of the Premier in his belief that it would be an efficient immigration service? He actually asked the House to ratify a clause which did not bind the British-India Company to carry immigrants, but left it optional with them; and he reserved to the Government the right of discontinuing the service at the end of three years' time, should it be found unsatisfactory or disadvantageous. He would just ask, if immigrants were to arrive along the coast and be landed at the various ports by the British-India Company, what facilities the Government possessed to receive them? A vessel of 2,000 tons would hardly enter Cooktown; a vessel of 2,000 tons would have to lie in the open roadstead at Townsville; a vessel of 2,000 tons would certainly not find shelter at Flat-top Island, or if she could that would be all. Such a vessel could not land at any of the ports he had named without steamers of sufficient capacity being provided to take the immigrants and their luggage alongside the wharves. At Cooktown, Townsville, and Mackay, Government possessed none of those facilities, and they would require to have powerful steam-tugs in readiness to land passengers and cargo. This necessity would arise once a month, and during the rest of the time, except at Townsville, he did not suppose these steamers would be continuously employed. He wanted to show that it was not only to the mail contract that the country would be committed, but also to a large increase in the Harbours and Rivers Department. They would have to build additional harbour steamers, man and equip them. It would add largely to their expenditure to attempt even this so-called immigration service, as to which the Government were evidently themselves somewhat doubtful, and reserved to themselves the right of discontinuing the service at the end of three years. It was obvious, if these vessels were to carry immigrants, they would not be selected by passengers as a favourite mode of conveyance. Not only would they not possess the desideratum of speed, but would have all the additional discomfort attendant on carrying immigrants, and all the possible delays and interruptions at the ports touched at, and would be subjected, more or less frequently, to quarantine regulations. Those were matters to be strictly borne in mind when it was alleged that this line of steamers would open up a profitable business connection and would afford means for carrying passengers lucrative to the company themselves. For himself, he did not believe that the British-India Company would comply with the immigration clause at all, because they would find it interfere with the comfort and number of their passengers between Queensland and the mother-country and the East. Then, again, in the contract he saw that everything was to depend upon

the company having immunity from accidents. Their steamers were to leave London and Brisbane on the same days to meet the P. and O. steamers at a certain time, and, in short, they were to dovetail in such a manner during a long voyage that without any provision in the contract being made for interruption, supposing accidents occurred or a steamer broke down, not only would there be a complete interruption of the service, but for some months it would be more or less disorganised. There was no provision, as in Mr. Holt's tender, for spare ships so as to bring on the mails or passengers coming by the P. and O. Company. It had been contended this service would keep the trade of the ports of the colony within their own territory; but this idea was a complete illusion, for although clause 5 said—

"The port of Brisbane shall be the terminus of the line, and none of the contractors' mail steamers working under this agreement shall proceed to any port south of Brisbane without the sanction of the Postmaster-General,"

what did note A say—a clause about which the Premier was very reticent, but which was the very pith of the whole thing? That note was as follows:—

"In consideration that you will this day sign (in the form in which, subject to this letter, it has been settled) the contract between the Queensland Government and yourselves, for the establishment of the London and Queensland line of steamers, I, on behalf of the Government, beg to state that it is understood and agreed between us that for twelve months, dating from the time the contract comes into force, you shall be at liberty to work the service as far as Colombo by steamers from London exchanging traffic at Colombo with steamers from Calcutta, which latter steamers will proceed thence *via* Batavia (or Singapore) to Queensland ports; after that time the services to be worked by steamers running through from London to Brisbane and from Brisbane to London. It is also understood that you commence the service from the London terminus four weeks after the last mail of the Eastern and Australian Company leaves, but will be allowed sufficient time for your steamers to reach Brisbane before starting from that terminus. Further, with reference to Clause V., I am willing to agree that no objection will be raised to your ships, when necessary, proceeding to any southern port for the purposes of docking and repairs, so long as Brisbane does not possess the necessary facilities; and in respect of Clause XIII., touching the carriage of mails for foreign Governments, no objection shall be raised to your carrying mails to any intermediate port of call for the Dutch or Portuguese Governments, provided your doing so does not entail additional ports of call, length of service, or any inconvenience to the working of the Queensland service."

He had pointed out in the course of his remarks that the service would be ineffectively as a mail service, and, as he had before remarked, even the Colonial Treasurer had not spoken in a sufficiently recommendatory manner to the House on that head, and the company were not bound to carry immigrants at all. The Government, moreover, were evidently of opinion that even as an immigration line it was purely tentative, and one which they would assert to themselves the right of altering at the end of three years, should the company choose to carry immigrants, if it were found advisable to do so. By carrying immigrants, he would repeat, additional steam plant would be required to land immigrants on an open and difficult coast like ours. It was said this service would be of grand commercial value, but he deprecated the working of the whole system of

subsidies in connection with any private enterprise. It was a step in the wrong direction, because the freer private enterprise was the greater would be its remunerativeness. This mail service was introduced to the consideration of the House under a guise which was not substantiated by investigation of the contract. The 5th clause stated that none of the contractor's mail steamers working under this agreement should proceed to any port south of Brisbane without the sanction of the Postmaster-General. This was, in effect, what the Premier had stated in his speech: that the contract would keep the services—whether they were mail, pastoral, immigration, or commercial—entirely within their own ports; and, if it could be done, this was the strongest recommendation of the service. But the Premier was singularly reticent regarding the letter on page 15, which completely waived the condition under clause 5, to which he (Mr. Dickson) would again call attention. The Premier had informed the House why he agreed to provide for a Polynesian and Java service, but it was rather singular that the hon. gentleman did not refer to this letter which completely nullified clause 5. He would ask by what time would the port of Brisbane be able to receive into its docks vessel of 2,000 tons? In connection with that matter he would refer hon. members to the report of the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers for the year 1877, which was a very exhaustive report indeed. According to that report, to dredge the River Brisbane, from the entrance channel to the Dry Dock, to a depth of fifteen feet at low-water ordinary springs, would require the removal of 3,500,000 cubic yards of stuff. The "Groper" dredge, without taking into consideration the time required for necessary repairs, was calculated to remove 250,000 cubic yards per annum, and the dredge now in course of building would be able to do the same; therefore, a total of 500,000 yards would be all that could be removed per annum when they had the two most powerful dredges at work. Hon. members would see, therefore, that, before they could attain a uniform depth of fifteen feet at low-water, seven years would be required even with two most powerful dredges. Although some parts of the channel might have a greater depth than fifteen feet, still the smallest obstruction would impede the whole, and would prevent the vessels of the British-India Company being docked in this port until all obstructions were removed. What he had stated were facts which could be substantiated by reference to the report of the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers; but, if he (Mr. Dickson) was mistaken, it would be satisfactory to the House if the Premier would invite the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers to the bar of the House, and let him give information as to when steamers of the capacity of those of the British-India Company would be able to dock here. Taking into consideration that for three-fourths of their voyage those vessels would be in tropical waters—and it must be remembered that vessels constantly in tropical waters required more frequent docking than vessels in the temperate zone—they would require to be frequently docked, and thus their owners would be enabled to insist on the removal of the condition referred to in clause 5, and enjoy what to them would be a very lucrative trade—namely, that between Singapore and Sydney. Yet, under the letter of the Premier which he had read, they could do that. He really trusted that hon. members, especially those who were interested in the shipment of our coal—and for his part he should like to see facilities given to the development of that trade—would not be beguiled by the statement that the vessels of the British-India Company would be kept in Moreton Bay and necessarily be

supplied with coal from the coalfields of this colony. He maintained that, in the present imperfect condition of the harbour, those vessels would have to go on to Sydney to dock for fully one-half if not two-thirds of the duration of their contract. For his part he contended that the chances of an export trade in our coal would be far more established by having a large number of vessels visiting our port than by giving a monopoly to one company, as it was not the single contract that the company would be sure to form with one or two coal proprietors that would benefit the whole of the coal-owners; at the same time, other vessels would be too heavily handicapped by the company not having to pay port or light dues. If this agreement were ratified, it ought to be extended to all the ports of the colony which had at the present time attained a position, and which had prospects of increase in importance. But he found that the ports at which this service was to call were very much restricted. The ports mentioned were Thursday Island, Cooktown, Townsville, Bowen, and Keppel Bay. The Premier might reply that other ports could, with the discretion of the Postmaster-General, be included; but he thought that by clause 10 additional compensation could be demanded, and he should like to know from the hon. members who represented those districts, and from the hon. member for Mackay, why Flat Rock and Port Douglas were omitted from their list of ports. These were two rising ports in the colony, and they contributed pretty largely to the Customs revenue, and certainly their requirements in the matter of postal increase or immigration service were as much to be considered as any other ports, if they were to deal fairly with all parts of the colony; but to secure them an equal trade with the other ports of the colony would entail an additional subsidy.

Mr. AMHURST: Look at section 10.

Mr. DICKSON said he had referred to section 10, and would read it:—

"If at any time or times the Postmaster-General shall desire to extend the conveyance of mails to any other ports or places in Queensland aforesaid not specified in this agreement, or to discontinue the conveyance of mails to any port, he shall be at liberty so to do on giving three months' notice to the contractors, and on paying to them for such increased or extended services—"

Mr. AMHURST: "If any."

Mr. DICKSON said he would read further—

"if any, such further consideration as may be mutually agreed upon between the contractors and the Postmaster-General, or, failing such mutual agreement, such further considerations as shall be fixed and determined by arbitration, in the manner hereinafter provided."

He had not the advantage of being able to consider it with a legal mind, but he had no doubt that it would be adverted to by other hon. members, who would give their interpretation of the clause. He took it that if any additional services beyond those mentioned in the agreement were intended, the contractors would require additional remuneration. The whole question resolved itself, after all, into a nutshell, and it was this—can the colony afford it at the present time? It was a question of ways and means. He must express his great regret that the Premier had not placed before the House the exact financial position of the colony before submitting the present proposition. It seemed to him that, when they looked at the last annual returns of receipts and expenditure, they had no right to enlarge their expenditure on public works and services unless they could secure a corresponding re-

turn from it. Looking at the Post and Telegraph services, he found that last year the receipts from the Post Office were £47,000, whilst the cost of the service was £120,000. The Post and Telegraph services combined returned £82,000, and involved an expenditure of £181,000. In addition to that expenditure they had to provide interest on a loan expenditure of £429,000, which, at 4 per cent. on the capital sum, amounted to £17,200—so that the Post and Telegraph services fell short of the cost of maintenance and interest on capital by £116,000. If they increased that great expenditure by nearly £60,000, and included the deduction of harbour dues, they would load it with nearly £100,000 beyond what it was already loaded with. He considered that in the embarrassed state of the finances they were not justified in doing that; and he would ask, where was the great policy of retrenchment of which the present Government made such pretensions? This sum of £56,000 would provide interest at 4 per cent on a capital loan of £1,400,000, which might be much more profitably employed in branch railways. For his own part, he would be better pleased if the Premier brought down a Loan Estimate for those lines, which would be necessary to satisfy the claims of hon. members on the Government side of the House, because he did not see how they were otherwise to get the money. He should much prefer a bold policy of that kind to attempting to lead the country, in its present embarrassed condition, into an additional expenditure of £50,000 or £60,000, for which there would be no corresponding advantage whatever to the public taxpayer of this colony. He said distinctly that the advantages were altogether illusory. The Premier had receded even from the position of proving that these services were advantageous to the colony as a mail service and an immigration service. How they would be advantageous to the colony in another light he believed, before he sat down, he should be able to demonstrate. In the correspondence that had been published he had read a letter from the Colonial Secretary of Queensland to the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales, and there was one expression in that letter which he thoroughly endorsed, and which, if the Government had carried out, they would not now be asking the country to ratify such a contract as this. The hon. gentleman, in addressing the Colonial Secretary of New South Wales on 6th October, 1879, in speaking of the increased subsidy demanded by the Eastern and Australian Company, said he considered that their demand—

“Involves an expenditure greater than is justified either by the weight of mails to be carried or by the fiscal resources of the colony.”

In that he quite agreed, and he should have been glad if the hon. gentleman would on this debate abide by that expression—but, of course, he could not expect it. But he was certain of this: that when the hon. gentleman penned those words he was more in accord with the public feeling of the colony than he was now, as a member of a Government who were attempting to force upon the country such a contract as this. If the Premier could show that the contract he now proposed to ratify did not involve “an expenditure greater than is justified either by the weight of mails to be carried or by the fiscal resources of the colony,” he (Mr. Dickson) would be the first to give it his most cordial approbation; but neither as a mail service nor an immigration service had he justified the contract. Therefore, the Premier having not pretended to justify it as a mail service or an immigration service, it only remained for him to consider it as a subsidy to a

trading company, and in the light of the advantages which the hon. gentleman had contended the service would confer upon the colony. The Premier had depicted in very glowing terms the great advantages that would accrue to the colony from a large exportation of frozen meat. He (Mr. Dickson) did not for one moment depreciate a large export trade in frozen meat. He hoped to see a large export trade generally from the colony, not only of frozen meat, but of gold, minerals, and of course he need not mention wool, and that it would be continuously enlarged; but he thoroughly objected that the country should be saddled with a subsidy of nearly £60,000 for the exportation of frozen meat solely. Surely, there were hon. gentlemen in that House who would take the same independent view of it—that the people who were interested in the export of frozen meat should themselves initiate the enterprise and carry it out to a successful issue. He was convinced, at any rate, that the colony contained a large number of public-spirited men who were willing to associate themselves together for such an enterprise, totally irrespective of a subsidy of this kind. For his own part, he should like to see the necessity for the export of frozen meat diminished by having the consumption here enlarged—by having inducements held out by sound administration and wise legislation to induce people to make this country their home. Of course, he knew that at the present time we could not introduce such a large accession to our population as would, perhaps, restore stock to the price that would, in the interests of stockholders, be a counter attraction to their export of frozen meat, but at the same time the necessity for it would be greatly diminished; and he said the most statesman-like course would be to endeavour to attract population into Queensland, so that increased consumption of meat might ensue and the necessity for exportation be diminished. But admitting that the necessity for the exportation of frozen meat existed, he said it existed as a private necessity. It was not a necessity that the State had any right to subsidise. He could not divest his mind of the significance of clause 22 of the contract:—

“The contractors or their assigns shall not assign or underlet this agreement, or any part thereof, to any person or persons without the consent of the Postmaster-General, signified in writing under his hand; but the Postmaster-General shall not arbitrarily withhold his consent to an assignment of the whole contract to an effective company in which the contractors hold a substantial number of shares, and upon such an assignment the company shall be substituted for the contractors.”

He must say that, to his mind, there was a very grave significance in that, and the uneasy feeling it created was not allayed by the remarks of the Premier. In adverting to the clause, that hon. gentleman stated that in all probability the contract—which was ostensibly made with Messrs. Mackinnon, Lees, Andrew, Denny, Fraser, Gray, and Dawes—would be assigned over to another company giving itself, probably, a different title, and, at any rate, having entirely different interests. Now, he received, a mail or two ago, a document from London which might show what had been an incentive in regard to this matter. It was a prospectus issued in London for a proposed company to be called “The Colonial Fresh Meat Company, Limited.” It was incorporated under the Companies Act limiting the liability of shareholders; capital, £200,000; issue of 20,000 shares of £5 each. The directors of this enterprise were:—

“Edmund A. Pontifex, Esq., chairman (Pontifex and Wood), chairman of the Cape Copper Mining Company, Limited.”

They had, in a recent debate in that House, mention of a gentleman of the same name referred to. He was mentioned in the *Investor's Guardian*, which was quoted by his hon. friend as one of the proprietors or shareholders in that notorious Haslam Company. It might be an undesigned coincidence—it might not be the same gentleman; but it was not a common name. At any rate, Edmund A. Pontifex was chairman of this proposed "colonial fresh-meat company," and he was in very good company :—

"Marmaduke Bell, Esq. (of Jimbour, Queensland, and Fort St. George, Gloucestershire); Lord George G. Campbell (director of the New South Wales Mortgage, Loan, and Agency Company); James Duke Hall, Esq. (director of the United Discount Corporation); the Hon. Thomas McIlwraith (Premier of Queensland); Sir Robert R. Torrens, K.C.M.G. (chairman of the Bank of South Australia)."

The managers were Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co., and the Australian agents—Messrs. William Sloane and Co., Melbourne and Sydney. The prospectus said :—

"This company has been formed for the purpose of exporting fresh meat from the Australian colonies, on the principle of the recent successful importation into London so ably conducted by Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company.

"The result of the shipment—per steamer 'Strathleven,' by Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co.—has been to prove incontestably that meat of excellent quality, purchased in Australia at prices ranging from 1½d. to 2d. per pound, can be shipped to this country and landed in first-rate condition, and sold in the London market at 5½d. per pound, which rate would yield a large profit to the importer, and enable it to be sold to the consumer at prices very much below those at present ruling."

It then proceeded to say :—

"The business of the company in Australia will be transacted by Messrs W. Sloane and Co., of Melbourne and Sydney, under the supervision of a committee of colonial directors, of whom the Hon. T. McIlwraith, Premier of Queensland, will form one. Messrs. W. Sloane and Co. have had a long and extensive experience of all matters relating to the breeding and purchase of stock, as well as of commercial business generally.

"Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. have been appointed managers of the company, and have agreed to subscribe and take shares in the company of the nominal value of £10,000, and Messrs. William Sloane and Co. will subscribe and take a like amount, and these two firms agree to retain shares to the amount of £5,000 each in the company so long as they continue to hold the offices of managers and agents."

What induced him to introduce this prospectus was that it seemed to him that, according to this prospectus, if the company were formed there was a company at once ready to take over and give a valuable consideration for the contract entered into by Mackinnon and others. Here was a company endeavouring to be formed for the importation of meat into England from Australia; amongst the promoters of this company was a very extensive firm of shipowners, and it seemed a very natural consequence that the assignment of this contract for this £35,000 might be made to dovetail in with the other advantages which would accrue to a company possessing means of carrying with celerity and under a Government subsidy their meat from Australia to England. At any rate, it was singular that this document should have reached the colony just a month or two before the consideration of this proposal;

and he must say that, seeing that the Premier was represented as a manager of this company he must naturally feel very warm interest in this line of steamships being subsidised, not for the purpose he put so prominently forward, but that for which it would be chiefly used—the exportation of frozen meat from Queensland to Great Britain. However, he (Mr. Dickson) contended that at the present time they were not justified in binding the colony to a contract of this kind, and upon those terms. It meant in round numbers the expenditure of fully half-a-million of money, for which they had no corresponding advantage whatsoever; and even if it could be shown that it was to the interest of this colony that this line should be subsidised to this extent, he objected to the trade of the colony being fostered in such a manner as to make it a charge upon the general taxpayers, the majority of whom would not benefit by it one iota. Under these circumstances, he certainly felt it his duty to vote against the resolution, and he must express his regret that hon. gentlemen on the other side had been precluded—or at any rate that the Premier had made use of remarks which would preclude them from giving that independent consideration to the subject which he was sure they were prepared to bestow upon it. He was convinced that if a poll were taken of the business people of the colony, even along the whole seaboard, it would be found that there was a decided preponderance against this proposal on commercial principles alone.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No, no.

Mr. DICKSON said he was satisfied that if the commercial men of Brisbane were polled, it would be found that there was a decided preponderance against it. He had evidence in his possession to that effect. He did not wish to take up the time of the House, but he had letters from leading commercial men in Brisbane, and their London agents, speaking of it most strongly—condemning it in most unmeasured terms as being what they designated "a mad scheme." He had liberty to read a private letter from London to a firm in Brisbane, but he would withhold the name, though he was quite prepared to give it to the Speaker or the Premier. He did not care to give unnecessary publicity to the name of a business firm in this way, but he wished to show the opinion of a business firm having a house in London, and, he would add, a firm that had never taken any part in politics.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : Don't read the letter unless you give the name.

Mr. DICKSON said he would be quite prepared to give the name to any hon. member afterwards. The letter was as follows :—

"We enclose copy of an advertisement issued by Queensland Government Office re emigrants per steamer *via* Torres Straits. If this mail scheme is carried out the sickness and mortality amongst the emigrants will be awful. The idea of carrying emigrants, including women and children, packed as they must needs be, at the rate of £15 each, a voyage three-fourths of which is in the tropics and the greater portion within a few degrees of the Equator, is monstrous enough; but when you also consider that the vessel will have to wait for the mails at a port where cholera and small-pox are nearly always raging, and afterwards continue the voyage by a route in which the company who now carry the mails have lost several ships, it becomes still more insane; and our mails will not then be delivered in Brisbane so soon as if they went by the P. and O. Company *via* Melbourne, leaving the same day."

An HONOURABLE MEMBER : What is the date

Mr. DICKSON : The 12th of March

The PREMIER : Why, it was published in the *Times*. I saw it myself, so you may as well give us the name at once—it was Brabant and Co.

Mr. DICKSON said there was no necessity for disclosing the name. He maintained that at the present time they should be very careful about entering into any contract entailing the annual payment of such a large subsidy. Before the time that contract, if entered into, expired, there would be no need for any such thing as subsidising mail steamers. The Premier's speech itself convinced him that in a few years there would be such a large number of steamers afloat that they would have the mails carried far more frequently than now, and without being subsidised. Where was the necessity, then, for the colony spending this £60,000 annually for a mail service that the Premier himself said he could not justify, but which he had attempted only to justify on the ground that the steamers would facilitate the trade in frozen meat. He (Mr. Dickson) contended that would be accomplished without the colony paying any subsidy for it. Members on the Government side of the House would be constrained to vote for the Government resolution, not because they approved of it, but because they were ordered by the Premier to support it. It would, however, be an encumbrance and oppression to the taxpayers of the colony. He could not conclude without noticing that in the telegram to his colleagues in the colony the Premier had not put the matter in the clear light he had done in his speech. This telegram said—

“British-India offer four-weekly through first-class mail service London-Brisbane calling Naples minimum speed two twenty daily provided Government importing immigrants two hundred each ship at sixteen pounds subsidy fifty-five thousand seven years Brisbane terminus Cannot do better Reply sharp Cabinet deliberate I recommend subject Parliament If scheme approved you might press subsidy being reduced to fifty thousand without tying my hands.”

This telegram promised four-weekly first-class mail service, but the Premier in his remarks said they would not have anything of the kind. Then it said that the service was to be by the British-India Company, but it turned out they were merely agents, and had the right and power to retire from the agreement. He contended that under these circumstances the contract could not be justified, and it had been introduced in such a manner that hon. gentlemen who on ordinary occasions voted with the Government would, under the threat made, not be free to vote independently. He called on hon. gentlemen to pause before committing the country to a scheme which the hon. gentleman who introduced it had failed entirely to prove would be of any benefit whatever, but which must grievously oppress taxpayers of the colony.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he could not follow the hon. member who had just sat down through his speech, and it would be the less necessary he should do so as he did not think any of the majority of the members of the House would have changed their opinions by what he had said, or that he had turned the position taken up by his hon. colleague (the Premier). Judging from the proceedings in the House for three or four years past, the debate was taking the usual turn from the other side. Whenever anything was proposed likely to promote the prosperity of Brisbane it was opposed by hon. gentlemen opposite—it did not matter whether it was floating a loan, building a railway, a mail contract of which Brisbane was to be the terminus, or extending a trunk line west to concentrate

the trade of Brisbane—there was always a great deal of loud talk and plenty of promises by them to do something great, but these proved empty promises. He maintained that the prosperity of Brisbane was sapped in many directions by hon. members on the other side of the House. Apart from politics altogether, and without his being considered selfish in making the remark, he might be excused for saying he felt a deep interest in the prosperity of the city, and had done so for a long time. He should like to see it attain the proportions to which it would ultimately expand; but he had been sorry to see that during the last five or six years it had been retrograding. This was owing to the action of the same sort of people as those who wrote letters to the newspapers in Glasgow, and attempted to obstruct the Premier in floating the loan. They were the kind of people who travelled in the trains in New South Wales, and spoke in such a way as to make people distrust and suspect Queensland as a place for a man of means to go to and make an investment. He did not think the hon. gentleman, though he had vented a good deal of sound and fury in attacking the Premier's remarks, had scored a single point. His first complaint was, that the Premier had not given them an opportunity of considering the tables to which he had referred in the course of his speech; but these did not require much consideration. In round numbers, the traffic to the colony, according to the returns for 1879, amounted to 1,200,000 tons, but about 1,100,000 came through Sydney, and that which came from other colonies, foreign ports, and British ports made up the remaining 100,000 tons. Anyone who looked at these returns alone would think that Brisbane was an insignificant place with no harbour accommodation, and not storekeepers and merchants to carry on a large trade. Why was that? Because the bulk of the trade passed through the hands of merchants in Sydney. The consequence was a great strain upon them, and it was not unreasonable to suppose that there were also two profits or commissions to be deducted. The same conditions held good with regard to the outer traffic of the colony—the greater part of its wool, tin, copper, and other produce found its way to England *via* Sydney. If that state of things were to continue, Queensland, which had at present a Government and a Parliament of its own, would become nothing more than a name. All its commerce would be in the hands of Sydney traders, and it would be cut off from direct communication with the old country or any other part of the world. Freights to Queensland had been very uncertain and very high for a considerable time, and were much higher in proportion than those to any of the other colonies. Since the Orientline of steamers had commenced running to Melbourne and Sydney there had been quite a revolution in the way of bringing out goods. Those steamers made their passages with such regularity and carried such immense cargoes that merchants did not require to have such large quantities of goods on the water or in their stores, in anticipation of a demand, as they did when all the carrying was done by sailing vessels. Under the old system, firms must either have a large capital or be greatly indebted to the banks. Under the new system merchants found that half the capital was enough to carry on their business. Owing to the keenness of competition between the Orient Company and the P. and O. Company freights had been equalised, and a merchant who ordered £5,000 worth of goods to-day could count to a certainty, within a very few days, on the time when he would have them delivered in Melbourne or Sydney. It was quite different in Brisbane. He had often been six weeks or two months, or even ten weeks, waiting for a ship—

ment, and had then been disappointed. He mentioned these facts to show how Queensland would be benefited by this service, setting aside altogether the fact of its being a mail service. The trade of the colony amounted in the gross to 1,200,000 tons a year. If the freight paid on that tonnage could be reduced by only 2s. 6d. a ton, that alone would represent a saving of £150,000 a year, which would go into the pockets of producers and consumers instead of the pockets of the shipowners. The hon. gentleman had not touched upon that question, but had raised the usual cry that the subsidy was to be given to what was to be a frozen meat company. Assuming that that was the fact—and he had not the means of knowing whether it was a fact or not; he hoped it was—what was there more necessary in Queensland at present than to relieve the meat market and find an outlet for the surplus cattle of the country? It might, no doubt, be said that it was a subsidy for the squatters. It might be so in part, but he could assure the House that there was no class suffering so much at present from a superfluity of cattle and sheep, and the want of a market, as the selectors; and he could further assure the House that a selector's calf two years ago was worth more than the best bullock at present. Call it a subsidy, or a mail contract, or by whatever name they pleased, it could not but tend to relieve the present stagnation, and anything that would find an outlet for the surplus meat the colony was capable of producing should have his hearty support, no matter from which side of the House it came. The hon. gentleman had said something about the difficulty of landing immigrants and cargo, and had assured the House that steam tenders would have to be provided to ensure the speedy prosecution of that work. If the hon. gentleman had read the contract carefully he would have seen that the duty of landing immigrants and cargo fell solely upon the company, and was no part of the business of the Government. The remark could only have been made to mislead hon. members into believing that the colony, in addition to the subsidy, would have to undergo divers other expenses in connection with the service. The hon. gentleman did not think the four ports mentioned in the schedule enough for the steamers to call at, and enumerated other ports which he thought were deserving of notice. In his opinion, by calling at Cooktown, Bowen, Townsville, and Keppel Bay, the four principal northern ports, the requirements of the North would be amply met for the term of the contract, or until some new industry sprang up of which nothing was known at present. To add other ports would be surrounded by difficulties, and, as it was, the northern people would recognise the attention the Premier had bestowed upon them in England by including their four principal ports in the contract. Some hon. members seemed inclined to forget that there were other places besides Brisbane—places which were fast overtaking Brisbane, and which, if the policy enunciated by the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) should succeed, would very soon leave it in the shade. Brisbane was not Queensland, and if it wanted to prevent the cry for separation it ought to work hand-in-hand with the North, and allow it to participate in any benefits that accrued to Brisbane from a national scheme like the present. The hon. gentleman had said something about the accidents that might happen, and was anxious to know whether the Premier had secured the company an immunity from accidents, at the same time sketching out, in that agreeable way of which he was a master, what might happen. It was all very well to find fault and be gloomy, but he would ask the hon. gentleman if he himself was not liable

to an accident every time he got into a cab or walked across Queen street? It was a weak argument to bring forward that something might happen to those vessels, and that in consequence there would be a delay in transmitting the mails. A company of reputation and capital would no doubt make ample provision against accidents likely to overtake them in the execution of their contract. They were not strangers to tropical seas; the only part they were perhaps unacquainted with would be from Batavia to Brisbane. It was idle, therefore, to talk about immunity from accidents. He felt that if he were to talk for an hour he could hardly add to the substantial facts that had been related by the Premier to-night; and the Premier, with his knowledge of commercial matters, and his acquaintance with what was going on in the world after his recent visit to England, should be an excellent authority on the subject. The only real objection that had been urged was as to its not being an efficient mail service, and that time would be lost in the transmission of letters by that route, the result of which would be that merchants would send their letters by one of the quicker lines. His own opinion was, that this would be a quicker route than that by Suez. At any rate, it had been given out that the company would avail themselves of the P. and O. Company to Batavia, and as the speed up to that place would be ten and a-half or eleven knots an hour, it would devolve upon the company to make up afterwards for any time that might have been lost, so as to deliver their mails within the time specified. Unless the company could secure a fair amount of cargo a great pecuniary loss would accrue to them every month. It would therefore be their business to foster and develop a trade on the eastern coast of Australia, and they had shown their determination to do so by making Moreton Bay the terminus. Considering the way in which our shipping trade had dwindled away and been encroached upon, it was idle for the hon. member to say that presently steamers would come here as they were now coming to Melbourne and Sydney. To obtain such steamship services it was absolutely necessary to subsidise some company, as without a subsidy no company would be insane enough to undertake to run such a service at their own risk. He believed the company would be running a great risk, and that if after a trial they failed to secure the trade which they were evidently relying upon getting they would be glad to pay a considerable sum to get out of their contract. He did not, however, share the gloomy views expressed by the hon. member (Mr. Dickson). If he thought things were going to remain as they had been for some time past he should soon be looking out for pastures new: but his friend, the Hon. James Taylor, told him that during his forty years' experience in the colony he had noticed that these periods of depression came about every seven years. Better times, he felt, were in store, and he believed that in two or three years every member who to-night gave his vote in favour of this £55,000 a-year would look back to the occasion with pride. During the three years and a-half he had been in the House he had noticed that whenever any measure of real substantial benefit to the colony, and to the city of Brisbane in particular, was brought forward it was always opposed by the party now sitting on the Opposition benches, and this was only one more instance. Why did not the hon. members who were now so careful of the public funds show an equal anxiety when the graving-dock was commenced? The hon. member (Mr. Dickson), who now talked about introducing a number of people into the colony to eat the surplus meat, had time enough to introduce measures to develop his policy during

the several years when he was in office, supported by a large majority. He had the opportunity but he failed to avail himself of it, and his present suggestions were mere visionary schemes. He was now trying to make the people dissatisfied, ringing the alarm-bell, and sowing the seeds of distrust; but why did he not think of all that when the railway scheme was proposed? Why did he not think of the public funds when the Bundaberg railway and the Brisbane and Ipswich railway were sanctioned? Those railways would pay admirably at the prices at which railways were now being contracted for; and he maintained that railways built at the present ruling price would pay in the poorest part of the country, but the ones to which he alluded were so heavily saddled with debt by expense of construction that they could not pay. When the railway from Ipswich to Toowoomba was built the country was new at the business of railway-making, and it was to be expected that mistakes would be made. The line from Ipswich to Brisbane—twenty-four miles with eighteen stations on the road—cost £500,000, and it was that immense burden of debt which prevented it from paying.

Mr. GIFFITH: Who made it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: You, among other hon. members, under a mean trucking system.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the hon. member was one of the principal factors, and the work was carried out in a most unbusiness-like manner. Instead of taking a large contract, the then Government pandered to a lot of petty contractors, and within a month of the line being finished they did not know what the work would cost to £100,000. He was quite satisfied that the hon. member, possessed with the ideas of the Glasgow merchant who had tutored him, was quite capable of distrusting himself and everyone else; and he had no doubt if prosperous times returned, and the hon. member came into office, he would make the same mistakes as the graving-dock and the Brisbane railway over again. He (Mr. Perkins) had never given a vote in the House which he felt was more sure of resulting in the permanent benefit of the colony than the one he should give to-night in favour of this contract with the British-India Company.

The Hon. G. THORN said he regretted the Premier had made this a party question. He had intended to have treated the matter from an independent standpoint; but after hearing the threat by which the Premier had placed his followers *in terrorem*, he feared they would not treat the question on the merits, but would rally together and vote like dumb dogs. He hoped, however, that his prediction would not be verified. When this question was previously under discussion, he stated that he should strenuously oppose it; and he should do so. No one was more strongly in favour of a direct postal service than himself; but this was a most inopportune time to ask hon. members to agree to a subsidy of £60,000 a-year—for that was what it amounted to. There was already a large deficit; and if the present Government stopped in office much longer it would be larger still, because the mal-administration of the Government was driving people away from the colony, and no effort was being made to keep them. He should first refer to the proposed service, as a commercial service, that being the only ground upon which the Premier based his argument; and he could tell the Premier that in that respect it would be a failure. One reason was that it was not the proper route for an export service. The Premier evidently wanted it for a wool service, but did he know that the rates

of insurance by that route were higher than those by the P. and O. or the Orient line? It was only owing to the great skill displayed by the officers of the E. and A. Company that the difficulties of the extremely intricate navigation had been surmounted without many of the steamers coming to grief. He (Mr. Thorn) had been asked between nine and ten per cent. insurance for a few hundred pounds worth of goods which he wished to bring from Singapore, and he had refused on that account to bring them. The country would be saddled with a cost like that for purely trade purposes. The Colonial Secretary, in the course of negotiations, telegraphed to the Premier to say the Orient line was destroying our direct service, and as our chief export was wool it was evident that the service which was being injured was the wool service. He also denied that this was the proper route for taking frozen meat, because it was nearly all through the tropics. It was monstrous for the Premier to ask the House to ratify such a contract. If he (Mr. Thorn) had entered into such a contract he should have been only too glad if the House had rejected it. The hon. gentleman ought to look at it in the same way as the Ministry in another colony, where a Gold Export Duty Abolition Bill was passed several times by the Lower House, and each time thrown out by the Council, to the great satisfaction of the Ministry, who praised the Council openly for their action. In the same way, the Premier ought to be only too pleased if the House went against him and rejected the contract. Then there was the matter of time. The service was only a nine-knot one, and it would take sixty days to bring goods from England, whereas steamers were now carrying goods to Sydney in forty-three days and to Melbourne in thirty-nine days, and before long there would be direct steamers to Sydney which would do the voyage in thirty-six days. In order to compete with the Orient Company, the P. and O. Company were building ships which would steam on an average fifteen knots per hour, and when these boats came into the trade where would this new service be? Was it likely that anyone would send wool or meat by the route? It was absurd to have a nine-knot service in this nineteenth century, and the vessels that would be employed in it would, as regards speed, bear almost the same relationship that ships did to steamers. Then as a postal service it was not one bit better—indeed it would not be so good as the present Torres Straits service. The only objection that he had to the latter was that it was a disjointed service, but the new one would be even more so. It was to work with the P. and O. Company as a postal service, and that company would probably treat the British-India Company in the same way that it had treated the E. and A. Company. He would not say that the two companies would not work harmoniously together. The new company would not be opposing the P. and O. Company in the China trade, but the moment they competed with them in any place the British-India Company would be paid out in the same way as the company for the present Torres Straits service—its boats would be detained two or three days. To get letters from home under the new contract would require forty-eight days, whereas by the other routes it would be possible to receive correspondence in forty-two days. The Premier forgot that when the railway was completed between Melbourne and Sydney the mails would be sent overland, and a difference of thirty-six hours would be made in favour of the Orient Company. He did not see that there was any necessity for subsidising steamers to carry mails—there was no more reason for doing so than there was for subsidising steamers running between England and America,

Australia was now of sufficient importance to dispense with subsidies for the carrying of its mails. Victoria, it was true, had given £80,000 for a fortnightly service, but, in comparison with the one before the House, it was a cheaper and faster service; and if the Premier had tried the P. and O. Company, he would have probably been able to make a better arrangement with it. He (Mr. Thorn) was kept well posted in Home news, and he was informed that proposals had been made, both by the Orient Company and Mr. Law, for the conveyance of the colony's mails. He saw no mention of these proposals in the papers before him. Were they each for a cheaper and better service? He would repeat his belief that the Premier might have made a better arrangement, for when he (Mr. Thorn) was Postmaster-General he could have got the P. and O. Company to send a boat to the colony for an additional £13,000 a year. They ought not to adopt this mad scheme to carry mails, and to run a commercial service until they knew what the proposals were that, he believed, were made by the Orient Company and Mr. Law. He was also informed that when tenders for the through service were called the Premier's brother, Mr. Andrew McIlwraith, went among the shipping men of London and said there was no use tendering as the Government did not intend to act up to the advertisement—that the advertisement was merely a feeler and a blind. He hoped the Premier would inquire whether it was true, for it might explain why only one tender was received. He trusted that his information was incorrect, but it came from a good source. The service was only a commercial one, and there was this further objection to it, that the company's vessels would not be able to get up to any of the Queensland ports of call with the exception of Bowen. The Premier must have known that they would not get to Brisbane until several years of dredging had been done in the river. The service was not one which would make Brisbane the terminus. He suspected there was a loophole, and that the Premier would be checkmated in the same way that the Colonial Secretary had been by New South Wales over the present Torres Straits service; and he found that, according to the last part of the correspondence, vessels could, on the least pretext, go to New South Wales for repairs. They would want to go into dock every month to be examined or repaired, and the result would be that it would be no more a service from England to Queensland than the present one *via* Torres Straits. There would be some justification for the contract if Brisbane were really the terminus of the line; but the contract simply meant that they were getting another line for New South Wales at a cost of £55,000—an amount that this colony was not able to pay with its falling revenue and the probability of the deficit increasing. The letter of May 6, written by the Premier, repealed, in fact, the fifth clause of the contract under which Brisbane was made the terminus of the line, and it was provided that none of the steamers should proceed further south without the sanction of the Postmaster-General. No doubt the clever firm would not sign the contract until they had the fifth clause repealed. He was astonished that the Premier should try to blind members by the statement that this service would materially assist in developing the coal trade of the colony, for under the repeal clause the company's vessels would be enabled to go to Sydney at every trip: they would go to dock in Sydney, take in coals and provisions, then come back to Brisbane, stay thirty-six hours and steam away—just as the Torres Straits route steamers were now doing. He would be the first one to do so if he could get more trade from New South Wales, and they

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would be a lot of jackasses if they did not do so. What did the clause say? It said:—

“With reference to clause 5, I am willing to agree that no objection will be raised to your ships, when necessary, proceeding to any southern port for the purposes of docking and repairs, so long as Brisbane does not possess the necessary facilities.”

He hoped the Government were not throwing cold water on the dry-dock scheme. Under the most favourable circumstances, and even with the dredging powers of the “Gruper,” he considered it would be twelve years before Brisbane offered those facilities, and the contract would be at an end before that time. They would then be laughed at by the company, as the astute politicians of New South Wales laughed at the present Colonial Secretary when he had the simplicity to make an agreement with them respecting the Torres Straits service. The Colonial Secretary had been bamboozled by Mr. Parkes; and this company would laugh at the Government in the same way. He had shown how the service would fail with respect to commerce because of the high rates of insurance. It was also a slow service, taking sixty days; whereas there were vessels at the present time employed in a 10½-knot service doing the journey in forty-two days; and in another six months there would be vessels doing it in thirty-six days. It must fail as an immigration service, because the people would be within the tropics nearly all the time. He considered it a monstrous proposal that immigrants should come by that route, seeing that from the time they left the Mediterranean until within thirty-six hours' sail of Brisbane they would be within the tropics. Therefore, as an immigration service it was utterly useless. As a postal service it was disjointed and no better than the present service. The P. and O. steamers, the Orient, and the ‘Frisco steamers all cut the line almost at right angles, thus getting away from the heat of the equator. He hoped the House would not agree to the monstrous proposal of the Premier's—he could term it nothing else. It was not a service at all suited for Queensland, or for Brisbane. He would not offer the opposition he intended to offer if the service were a fast one. There were many questions he should like answered when they got into committee; but he hoped the proposal would be kicked out before that. Who was to pay for the service? The woolgrowers would have to pay for it, seeing it was intended for their benefit. But he did not think the company would carry much wool. He would not send wool by them if he were a wool-grower, because the rates of insurance would be four times as high as charged by the P. and O. Company or the Orient. He hoped hon. members would have sufficient wisdom not to agree to a proposal which would impose 5s. 6d. a-head further taxation on the whole colony; and they were not prepared to pay that money at the present time however good the service might be, and they could get along very well without it. There was one thing in which the Minister for Lands had gone astray in his speech. That hon. member ought to know by this time there was no finality at all in railway construction. What would cost £10,000 a-mile this year between Brisbane and Toowoomba, next year might cost £11,000. Many lines during his (Mr. Thorn's) *regime* were made at a cost of not more than they could be made by the present Minister for Works; and he did not give that hon. gentleman credit for making railways so much cheaper than they had been made before. There was no finality to railway construction—lines increased in price per mile every year with alterations, deviations, and pulling-up of culverts, and such matters. He should oppose the proposal of the Premier,

Mr. AMHURST said the hon. member for Northern Downs had made a most amusing speech, in his usual eloquent style. He had gone fully into the contract, and touched on all the salient points, but had forgotten the great question. He (Mr. Amhurst) wondered that with the amount of knowledge the hon. gentleman possessed—those telegrams, those letters, and those secret communications—that he had forgotten to tell them whether Messrs. MacKinnon, Lees, Andrew, Denny, Fraser, Gray, and Dawes, were cousins of the Premier. How for one moment he could have let that pass, with his wonderful acumen to ferret everything out, he could only understand on the supposition that he did not know who the Premier's relatives were, and invented them as it suited him. The hon. member said they ought not to make it a party question; but were they to sit there like dumb dogs? What was the use of rallying when it came to a division? The hon. member must have been thinking of himself. When it had come to a division on previous occasions they had seen his portly form outside the bar instead of inside. He also prophesied the line would be a commercial failure; but how did he prove it? He went into the rates of insurance, and spoke of 10 per cent. being charged from Singapore to here. He (Mr. Amhurst) had it on the best authority that insurance was about 10 per cent. extra from England to Brisbane beyond the ordinary insurance—not 10 per cent. on the ordinary amount, now reduced to 7 per cent. But the insurance from Singapore here was only at the rate of 1 per cent. The hon. gentleman had got into confusion. Someone had mentioned 10 per cent. to him, and he had in his usual careful style thought it was 10 per cent. on the value of the goods, instead of 10 per cent. extra for the risks of that line. That would show at once what a lot the hon. member knew about the matter. He had said a good deal about wool. He (Mr. Amhurst) thought his brains had gone wool-gathering, and that was the reason he had wool on the brain. The hon. gentleman had said he would not send wool by that route, but he would do so if he found it was cheaper, however much he might talk in the House. Then as to the heat of the tropics—there was no way of getting to England without going through the tropics. He dared say the hon. member's geography was good enough. The gales were just as heavy round the Cape as by the Suez route. Another impossibility was this: the hon. gentleman had stated he was sorry it was made a party question, and was therefore bound to be carried, and then towards the middle of his speech stated the Premier did not want to see it pass.

Mr. THORN: I did not say that.

Mr. AMHURST: I have your own words, written down.

Mr. THORN: I said the Premier ought to be only too glad for the House to reject it, seeing the badness of the times.

Mr. AMHURST said he thought the Premier would much rather see the hon. member rejected. And he had told them about the vessels in which he had travelled eighteen and nineteen knots an hour; but did not tell them the names of the vessels, or where he travelled at that rate. The hon. member made another mistake in not understanding what the Premier said. The Premier had distinctly told them that in calculating by the P. and O. line to Melbourne there would be, as compared with this line, a difference of two days. He (Mr. Amhurst) understood the Premier to say that he took into consideration in his calculations the fact of there being rail from Melbourne to Sydney. But the hon. member made out a difference of four

or five days; so that he could not have paid sufficient attention to the Premier's speech. In reference to the member for Enoggera, all he did was to impute bad motives to the actions of the Premier and of his colleagues. Since the House met there had been nothing but gross insinuations and imputations on the characters of all the leading men on that side. He could speak confidently for himself, and he believed all sitting on this side had full confidence in their leader, and he (the leader) had also their sympathy. The members of the Opposition had made a great mistake by throwing unfounded charges and calumnies at the Premier. The only way in which he could account for it was, they had dreamed of being at home themselves, or wished they had been there, and thought what they could have done if they had had only such a chance; or it might be they formed their judgment from the way they had conducted public business during the five years they had been in office. It was not a good thing for the country to have any more slander and unfounded charges cast at the Ministry. It only made their supporters rally round him and the Ministers more stronger than ever. If hon. members had only waited for the papers, and seen impartially what were the mistakes made, they on that side would have listened attentively and studied the questions raised. But when they saw nothing but invectives and unfounded charges thrown at the Premier's head, they did not believe a word that was said. The Opposition were always calling "wolf," and the consequence would be that if a real charge were made they should not believe them. The ex-Treasurer had told them a great deal about the clause in reference to immigration, and said that they did not wish to bring immigration, and that it was a one-sided contract. It was an experiment, and he had not the least doubt that before it was signed the whole question was pretty well studied, and in drawing up the agreement he thought they were not justified in pinning themselves for eight years on an experiment. They had heard a lot about the bad weather the immigrants would have to go through, and all that. The Government said they would not bind themselves, and the company said that, in all fairness, they must not be bound either. Good faith must be trusted to a great extent. Things might be altered afterwards by mutual consent. If after a trial it was found that the route was suitable for immigrants, there would be no difficulty in making arrangements. They had not acted recklessly but with caution, and instead of abuse they should have had full credit. Immigrants did not think so much of the climate as of the route they were to travel; many of them did not know what the ocean was like, and had never seen it. They could only grasp the number of days it would take to get to the unknown land, and many people would come when it was only 45 days instead of 70, 80, 90, or 100. It was just the thing to persuade immigration to flow to them, and a better class of immigrants who had a little money and would settle in the place and take up land. He hoped that the proposal would succeed, not only for the sake of the Premier who had taken so much pains, but for the welfare of the colony. He found he had made a slight mistake—it was 55 days for a through vessel; but that was very different from 70 days to 80 or 100 days by a sailing vessel, and did not alter his argument. He was rather amused at the member for Enoggera when he read that letter. It struck him that it was not a merchant's business to know all about different diseases, small-pox, cholera, &c. He wondered he did not give them the plague and a few more pleasant complaints. Perhaps he was not aware that the P. and O. boats sometimes came in with small-

pox on board, and were quarantined, and also vessels of other lines. He believed it was as healthy a route as any other, and they always had quarantine laws. It was as healthy in a steamboat as in a sailing vessel, and they should know for a certainty when the immigrants were going to arrive and could make arrangements to receive them. They never knew now, month after month, when a vessel was due. Under the present system there was no arrangement at all. Another thing the member for Enoggera laid great stress on was the exemption from light dues coming down the coast. Coming down the coast they would have to pay enormous light and harbour dues. A sailing vessel or a steamer coming direct would have to pay only one harbour and two light dues. The measure was one that affected the whole colony, and the welfare of every industry in every portion of the colony. What was the good of spending money on the dry-dock and deepening the river if they did not improve the trade. They talked of taking so many years—from seven to twelve—in dredging and getting fifteen feet at low-water. The dock itself was valueless without proper machinery for repairing vessels. He was much obliged to the member for Enoggera for looking after his district. He looked after it well when he was Treasurer. He went up and made all sorts of promises, and they thought he was the best Treasurer they ever had. But months elapsed and nothing came of it. What did they say of him now? The Treasurer had better go up and learn for himself—he did not like to say what it was. The measure would have his heartiest support, and he hoped, if they would use sensible and logical arguments, they would find time not lost by doing so, and it would be conducive to the measure being properly discussed. If they considered that it was a good thing they would support the Premier all the more heartily for the endeavours that had been made against him. They wanted fairplay, and they had not received it. On that side the opinion was in favour of the measure, and they would back the Premier up as well as they could; and if the members of the Opposition would favour them with some views that had sound argument in them they would be happy to entertain them.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that he would endeavour to use some logical arguments, as the hon. member had said that they would alter their opinions under those circumstances. If their arguments were like those of the hon. member who had just sat down they would be very weak indeed. He had listened very attentively from beginning to end, and the only sensible words used during the whole address were those in which he said that this was a serious matter and that the whole colony was interested in it. Those were true words. The colony as a whole was interested in it, and they would have to pay for this service in some way or another through taxation. The Premier, in introducing this matter to the House, said that they had only to look back to the last three years to see that the amount of shipping to Queensland had been gradually decreasing, whilst it had been increasing to Sydney. They all knew that that was true. But the hon. gentleman founded on that an argument that they should try to improve matters by starting an independent service. He (Mr. Macfarlane) was very much in favour of a mail service direct to Queensland, but not at the price now proposed to be paid for it. He thought if the motion was passed and the matter gone into, the colony would have to pay a great deal to much for the luxury of having a direct steam service. It had been said that the new service would only cost some £28,000 in excess of what the colony was paying at the present time.

Granted that it was so, was not that a very considerable sum for the colony to pay in its present condition? The country had been looking forward with anxiety and longing to the meeting of Parliament with the hope of seeing what means would be adopted for improving matters and assisting its prosperity; but they did not think that the establishment of this service would tend towards promoting that prosperity, as it would cause people who were already sufficiently burdened to be taxed further. It had been shown clearly that a route *via* Sydney would answer as well as the one now proposed, and, so far as the commercial community were concerned, he believed it would be even superior to the one now had, and certainly to the one proposed, as it would be shorter and would not cost one quarter of the money. They had been told by the Premier that the present annual return from sending letters was about £17,000, or a sum that would go a long way in subsidizing a company to take our letters *via* Sydney; and such being the case, he could not see how any sensible member of that House could feel it to be his duty to give his vote to subsidize the proposed company in the present depressed financial state of the colony. The Premier also said that he put very little stress on the service as a mail service alone. If that was the case what had the commercial community to gain from it?—and if, as he believed they were, against it, who was in favour of it? If it was not to favour them who was it to favour? They had been told by the Premier that it would favour the farmers and agriculturists by giving them a market for their stock, as in other countries stock and cattle were put on farmers' land for three months, at the end of which time they were fit to be sent away to some butchering establishment. He (Mr. Macfarlane) doubted, however, whether it would pay farmers in this country to fatten cattle on their lands for three or six months for the purpose of exporting meat to the mother-country. Then arose the question as to who was to be benefited by the proposed service, and to that the answer was—the pastoral tenants of the Crown; that was the only class. It would not benefit the agriculturist or the commercial community, but it would directly benefit the pastoral tenants, a class which already had sufficient privileges. They were getting lines made for their benefit out to the far west, to the north and to the south, and everywhere, but they wanted still more. They had paid little or nothing for their land, and yet they wanted more benefits, and were to have a steam service at the expense of the rest of the community. On those grounds, and on that of expense, he could not give his sanction to the proposed service in the present circumstances of the colony. They might say that as a colony they were retrograding—they were getting worse and worse day by day—they were getting deeper and deeper into the mire, and into difficulties they could see no way out of. At such a time it was not prudent to go into such a scheme as that now submitted to them, and he hoped the House would pause before they sanctioned the proposition. If the colony was in prosperous circumstances there might be some justification in bringing it forward, although even then he questioned if it would be the right thing, for, as had been been remarked by the hon. member for Northern Downs (Mr. Thorn), in this nineteenth century changes took place so suddenly that a man making a contract for two or three years was almost always sorry for it afterwards. If the House with their eyes open went into the proposed engagement in days when so many improvements in mail communication were constantly being made, he was afraid that in the course of a year or two they would be sorry when seeing the many advantages they

might have had. He would not detain the House longer, but should raise his voice against the proposal contained in the resolution.

Mr. BAYNES said he did not intend to reply to the inuendoes made against hon. members on his side of the House, but in justice to himself he would say that had the hon. member for Enoggera had the intelligence to have brought forward such a motion as the present he would have given it his most earnest support, as he intended to give it to the proposition before the House. He should do so with the conviction that he was doing what was right for the colony. He was surprised to find hon. members sitting on his side of the House silent without rebutting the evidence, or what he supposed would be termed evidence, brought forward by the hon. member for Northern Downs (Mr. Thorn) when he said that the proposed service would not be for the export of gold and other minerals, or frozen meat, but merely of wool. He (Mr. Baynes) maintained that it would be a valuable service for the export of all products, and that if it would not be worth much as a mail service it would be worth all the money as an advertisement of what the colony could produce. They ought not to shackle themselves to New South Wales, as they had been doing for years past, but should do all they could to sever themselves from the mother colony. They had now arrived at the age of twenty-one as a colony, and it was something like telling a son who had arrived of age that he should stick to the nursery, to tell them that they should always be tied to New South Wales. They had had enough of the nursery, and he would prove by figures that New South Wales had got quite enough out of them. He was not going to be an advocate of the proposed service for the mere export of wool, but he would show that it would be good for all other kinds of exports, and would cause our trade to grow to such an extent that in the course of eight years it would be more than trebled. It had been stated by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) that they should do all they could to strengthen their ties with New South Wales; but it was a great pity that hon. gentleman did not stop in New South Wales, as it would have been a great boon to Queensland had he never had anything to do with it. It would almost seem as if the hon. gentleman and others were in the pay of the New South Wales Government from the way in which they advocated its interests against those of Queensland. The exports from this colony to New South Wales had been somewhat enormous, independently of wool and tallow, as would be seen by some returns he had taken the trouble to collect from the "Statistical Register of 1878," since which time, he was sure, our exports to that colony had been increasing. In that year our exports to New South Wales alone, exclusive of wool, amounted to £105,069, which was filtered through Sydney. The quantity of wool sent, taking it all round at 9d. a pound, amounted to £207,045, making a total of £312,114, independent of minerals and timber. In 1878 they exported to Sydney alone 5,521,198 pounds of wool of which Sydney had the credit, and that was why this colony was not going ahead as she should be; whilst for the same period there was sent direct to England 16,146,924 pounds, or about two-thirds more only. In the same year 50,265 hides were sent to Sydney, and only 4,665 to England—in other words, twelve times the amount were sent to Sydney that were sent direct to England. Tallow—we sent to New South Wales, 12,866 cwt., while to England we sent only 2,115 cwt., New South Wales having six times the quantity sent to England. It was deplorable to think of these matters. Take skins—of kangaroo and sheep-skins we sent to New South Wales 2,467 pack-

ages, while to England we sent only 175. Cedar, we sent 3,704,000 feet to New South Wales, and how much to England?—not a single foot. New South Wales got the whole credit for that. He might tell hon. members that it was not many years since he went to the West India Docks as a matter of business to look at the cedar lying on the wharves, and he saw brands there that he knew perfectly well—brands of friends on the Mary River—and yet that cedar was packed there and announced to be sold by auction as New South Wales cedar! There was no less than £889,530 worth of gold sent to New South Wales in 1878, and not one pound's worth to England. Of tin—which was one of our chief products—we exported to New South Wales 47,150 cwt., and to England 3,964 cwt. In copper the quantities were about equal—that was the only item in which the colony showed fairly; we sent 5,968 cwt. to New South Wales against 5,521 cwt. to England. The figures he had quoted could be depended upon, being taken from the official statistics. The balance would be made up of antimony;—and then he came to other important products, such as sugar, molasses, rum, arrowroot, pearl-shell, and preserved meats. Of sugar alone we had exported to New South Wales 67,485 cwt., and not one cwt. to England. Molasses—we sent the whole export, 5,583 cwt. to New South Wales. Of rum we had sent 43,393 gallons to New South Wales, and to England only 111 gallons. Arrowroot—and he supposed we could produce the finest in the world—we sent 169,600 lbs. to New South Wales, and to other parts of the world 9,072 lbs. Of pearl-shell we sent to New South Wales 9,134 cwt., and to England 184 cwt. In regard to preserved meat we had sent half of our export through Sydney, and New South Wales got credit for that also, whatever it was worth. He maintained that with these facts before them they should look upon this as one of the grandest schemes that had ever been submitted to Parliament, and that they should treat it with the respect that was due to it. There should not be the factious opposition that had been brought against it. He did not care a rap whether it was a party question or not. He felt certain that it was for the benefit of the country, or he would not advocate it. He was sorry that there was not so much weight attached to it in the Ministerial Speech that there should have been; and he also regretted that the time of the House should have been taken up by the discovery of a mare's-nest, but he was happy to see that it was so easily kicked over. With regard to the mail service terminating here, he had no doubt that it would terminate here, because he was sure that the hon. Treasurer—notwithstanding what had been said on the other side—had been astute enough to make the contract so binding that the terminus would be here and not in Sydney, because if that were not the case we should be thwarted to a very great extent. He believed that the advantages the colony would reap from this one steamer alone would be very great, but he could foresee that, instead of one, twenty or more would become engaged in the trade that would be opened up. He was sorry to hear members, who ought not to have said it, disputing the value of what was likely to be one of our most important exports—namely, coal. He (Mr. Baynes) looked upon coal, as he had said before, as an export next in importance to wool, and maintained that they should endeavour by every means possible to encourage exports, for the exports of a country was its wealth. He seldom or ever passed through West Moreton without seeing as good coal as ever he had seen in the old country. It had been proved that our coal would make excellent gas, and was also good for steam purposes. It was no laughing matter, but

one that should be treated seriously by every man. He should consider that it would be an insult to the Speaker to say that he had not a penny interest, and was not likely to have a penny interest in coal. He should not think of advocating his interests if they were prejudicial to the country. He could foresee that, if we had steamers of 2,000 or 3,000 tons coming here, we should have no difficulty whatever in loading them rapidly, notwithstanding what might be said by the ex-Treasurer (Mr. Dickson). He was sorry to hear that hon. member go into such miserable details as the necessity of having tenders and lighters, and all the rest of it, in connection with a question of such vast importance to the colony as this. He regretted that that hon. gentleman had not travelled more. He would then have become acquainted with the busy scene there was around a large steamship, and how quickly we would be able to put 200 or 300 tons of coal into such a vessel. That, however, was a mere matter of detail which he hoped to see overcome. Look at the deplorable state of this magnificent river; it was sad to contemplate! Would any man have believed twenty years ago, that he would see the river in its present state? The hon. gentleman talked about the port being depleted of shipping, but what was it after all? It was a mere shadow of commerce. As he said before, the A.S.N. Co.'s wharf was the only real place of shipping business on the river, and they were the only firm who were reaping any benefit out of the Queensland trade. He was not speaking now as a Brisbane man, but for the benefit of the whole colony. He cared no more for Brisbane than he did for Maryborough or Gladstone. Something had been said about the number of ports in connection with this contract, but they could depend upon it that this company would stop at every port where there was trade, and he believed that before long they would be trading at every port along our magnificent coast. He hoped to see Gladstone getting its due.

Mr. PRICE: Don't forget Maryborough.

Mr. BAYNES said on a joking question he should be glad to get up and joke with any member of the House, but this was not a joking question. Whether it was made a party question or not, as he said before he did not care a rap. It was a question that concerned one side of the House as much as the other, and he trusted there would be no factious opposition to it, but that it would be treated with the proper business respect that it deserved.

Mr. PRICE complained that in the discussion that had taken place Maryborough had been left in the dark. The Premier had asked them to give £56,000 for the mail contract, but if he could only show them how it would be made up he (Mr. Price) would back him. They required extra capital and extra communication to develop the resources of the colony.

Mr. GROOM said he should not like, when an important debate of that kind was under discussion, to remain silent, but the main reason which induced him to speak was that he had never heard a proposition made, such as that introduced by the Premier, without the usual Financial Statement having previously been made. He would refer to an occasion on which the Premier had opposed a proposal on the same ground, and would remark that if that was proper when a small question involving an expenditure of £500 was before them, he did not see how they could vote a subsidy of £55,000 when the deficit was £24,000 and they had to pay £80,000 of interest, before the Treasurer made his annual statement. He took his stand on that point alone, and he held that it was unfair to the House and to the outside public to ask hon. members to assent to

such a proposition with a certainty that they would shortly be asked to saddle the colony with additional taxation. At present, in the country districts—and he spoke on behalf of country districts—the people were labouring under a very serious amount of taxation. They had not yet begun to feel the effects of the Divisional Boards Bill, as they would do shortly when they found the tax-collector coming round every two or three months. During the twenty-five years he had been in the colony he had never seen the agricultural interest in so depressed a condition. The Minister for Lands said he had been informed by Mr. Taylor that every seven years there was a depression of this kind in the colony. He had only known one (in 1866), and that affected all the colonies and nearly all the mercantile establishments in the world. But even then Queensland was twenty times better off than now. The farmers were getting £10 a ton for their oaten hay, and 6s. or 7s. a bushel for their maize; whereas, the prices now were £2 a ton for hay and 1s. 6d. a bushel for maize. He wished the hon. member (Mr. Baynes) had gone a little further with his statistics, and read out the list of runs published in the *Gazette* of whom Sydney men were registered as proprietors, and whom the mortgagees compelled to send their wool to Sydney. He knew a case in which one of those registered proprietors had to pay in the shape of interest, compound interest, and other charges, almost 25 per cent. He agreed with the hon. member in the last remarks which fell from him as to the necessity of making Queensland altogether independent of Sydney. He had watched those commercial vampires, if such he might call them, sucking the vitals of the colony for the last eighteen years. But would the mail service remedy the evil? He failed to see in what way it would do so. If the Government could reach some of those large proprietors who were drawing such immense incomes out of the country and paying nothing towards its support, they would be taking a step in the right direction; but to say that a mail service of this kind would do anything to restore a financial equilibrium was fallacious, and the hon. gentleman had not made good his position. He should vote against the proposition for the reason he had stated. They ought first to have heard the Treasurer's Financial Statement, and how he intended to make up the deficit and provide for the two-million loan just borrowed, before being asked to vote £55,000 for a company which after all might be unable to carry out the work set forth in the contract. Until that was done, the House would not be justified in passing anything but an emergency vote, as they had done at an earlier part of the sitting.

Mr. KATES moved the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER said that as he wished the matter to be properly discussed, he would put every facility in the way of hon. gentlemen doing so, but he should like to know from the leader of the Opposition how many more members on that side were likely to address the House. It was absolutely necessary to come to a decision before the 6th August, because, if not, the contract might be thrown over, and he was inclined to think that that might probably be done.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had not consulted with the whole of his friends, but he knew of seven or eight hon. members, including himself, who wished to speak on the motion, and it was a matter which he desired to see thoroughly discussed.

Question put and passed, the resumption of the debate to stand an Order of the Day for tomorrow, after the disposal of general business.

The House adjourned at a quarter past 10 o'clock.