

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 24 AUGUST 1880

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 24 August, 1880.

Petitions.—Formal Motions.—Rabbit Bill—third reading.—Motion for Adjournment.—Petition.—Mail Contract—resumption of committee.

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

PETITIONS.

Mr. MILES presented a petition from a number of Farmers residing on the Darling Downs, urging the necessity of increasing the duty on Imported Malt.

Petition read and received.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkin) presented a petition from Residents of Highfields, praying for a reconsideration of the route of the proposed Highfields Railway,

Petition read and received.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following Motions were agreed to :—

By the Hon. J. DOUGLAS—

That there be laid upon the table of the House, a Copy of all Agreements entered into between Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Co. and the Government, for the conveyance of Immigrants, between the 1st January, 1877, and the present time.

By Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL—

1. That there be laid on the table of the House, a Return of all Moneys paid to any Attorney-General, beyond the salary of his office, for legal services rendered by him in any action of the Crown against the subject, from the date of Separation to the present time.

2. A Return of all Moneys paid to any Counsel retained to assist any Attorney-General.

3. Said Return to specify the action in which any such moneys were paid, and the ultimate result of such action as finally determined, whether by judgment of the Privy Council or otherwise, and the total costs paid by the Government of the colony or that may be now due upon any such action, specifying in every case the action or cause on which any such moneys were paid or have become due.

RABBIT BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of Mr. STEVENS, the Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

Mr. MESTON said he rose for the purpose of moving the adjournment of the House, to refer to a subject of somewhat unusual character, which, though partaking of a personal nature, in reality more or less affected every member of the House. That subject was the liability of the best men in the community to be slandered by the worst, and the liability of all public men to be injured by criticisms which were purely the outcome of personal malice. He desired that hon. members should divest themselves of any belief that he was talking what might be called "shop," in the remarks he was about to make. The circumstance to which he wished to refer was the appearance in the daily *Telegraph* of a letter which, on account of its affecting his position as a member of the House, he felt in duty bound to refer to. The letter contained an accusation to the effect that the journal with which he had been connected had been purchased by certain members of the House; and the evident intention of the writer was to injure not only the paper but also himself as a public man. This kind of attack was not confined to himself particularly, but had similarly affected other members from time to time, and might occasionally do so again. On one occasion the present leader of the Opposition had been accused by a public journal of having been intriguing with the Premier—an accusation the truth of which the hon. member at once denied. He (Mr. Meston) was the more astonished at the appearance of the letter because he had been on friendly terms not only with the editor but also with the proprietors of the *Telegraph*; and since the publication the editor and the proprietors had expressed their regret that the letter should have appeared. The plain duty of the editor of the *Telegraph*, when he heard a rumour affecting another journal, was to send a reporter to the proprietor of the other journal asking whether the facts stated were true or not. He had ascertained who the writer of the letter was, and had also ascertained that the letter was the outcome of a systematic attempt to injure him. The writer at the same time sent a telegram to the *Gympie Times* to the effect that Mr. Mellefont, a late proprietor of the *Observer*, had disposed of the whole of his interest; that it was rumoured that the Ministerial party were indirectly the pur-

chasers, and that regret was generally expressed. The man who sent that telegram was in no way connected with the Press, but the communication appeared in the *Gympie Times* under the heading of "Our own Correspondent." In the first place, the editor had no right to receive a telegram from a man not connected with the Press; and, in the second place, he made a serious mistake in publishing it as from "Our own Correspondent." One of his (Mr. Meston's) partners at once telegraphed to Gympie to ascertain who the correspondent was, and in reply the proprietor of the *Gympie Times* immediately telegraphed to a gentleman in Brisbane to the following effect:—"Observer manager telegraphs for the name of correspondent. See him; our telegram signed J. C. Wylie, correspondent." It would be remembered that when the Criminals Expulsion Bill was before the House, the leader of the Opposition took exception to some part of the Bill on the ground that any innocent man might be at the mercy of a fellow-passenger by the same ship. He (Mr. Meston), in reply to that, pointed out that a stranger landing in the colony was in no greater danger from such accusations than was any man living in the ordinary circumstances of society: the liberty and character of every man were at the mercy of any unprincipled scoundrel who chose to calumniate him. This Wylie, who sent the telegram to the *Gympie Times* and wrote the anonymous letter to the *Telegraph*, was a man who came to the colony some years ago, and was engaged for a time on a survey of the railway from Ipswich to Fassifern. He was discharged for incompetency, but remained in the district doing nothing for some considerable time. Eventually, he was employed by Annear and Co., of Maryborough, from whose service he was discharged for drunkenness and incapacity, and for abstracting papers from their office which he announced for sale in the columns of the *Courier*—one of the most unprincipled and rascally acts that could be conceived, because it was deliberate treachery to his former employers whom he had systematically slandered ever since. He had given Wylie employment for a little while; but the man became such a nuisance at last that he had to turn him out of the office—on one occasion he had to eject him forcibly. On a previous occasion Mr. Mellefont, his late partner, had to turn him out; and latterly he (Mr. Meston) had to forbid him the office. Because he had done that, Wylie went to the *Telegraph*, wrote the letter to which he had referred, and got the editor to insert it. He believed that Wylie sent a similar telegram to the one which he had wired to the *Gympie Times* to the editor of the *Maryborough Chronicle*; but the editor of the *Chronicle* exercised a little more caution. In a paragraph he first referred to the telegram sent to the *Times*, then said it was evidently intended to be mischievous, and declined to insert it. He (Mr. Meston) also attributed its rejection to the circumstance that the editor of the *Chronicle* was probably thoroughly acquainted with Wylie, and knew him to be devoid of all moral, political, and social principle. He was a man known to be a systematic liar, a man of most intemperate habits, a man who was thoroughly unreliable, and who was as mean a specimen of the human race as it was possible to find. To show how hon. members were liable to be slandered he would refer to one notable instance, and he would remind the leader of the Opposition of it, as he was the victim. On the occasion that the hon. member introduced a deputation to the Colonial Secretary, asking the hon. gentleman to postpone the acceptance of tenders for trunk lines until after the meeting of Parliament, a pressman approached him in the most friendly manner after the deputation

was over, his purpose being apparently to get some information; and on the night of the same day the same pressman wrote a Brisbane letter to a provincial journal, in which he said plainly that the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had evidently been playing into the hands of the Government, and had sold his party for the second time. These slanders went for nothing amongst hon. members, for they knew each other. The merits of every hon. member and his capacity and ability were known to all his brother members. Every man found his proper place in the Assembly, and it would not be altered by outside slander; but with the public it might be different, for they had not the same opportunity of knowing the members of the House. No one could possibly value public opinion more than he did. At any rate, he had a high appreciation of the good opinion and esteem of all hon. members, but the good opinion of blackguards or fanatics of any class he did not desire. One of the oldest statesmen had said that only a man who was thoroughly unscrupulous could affect to hold in contempt the opinion of the world. This was no doubt true, but at the same time members of the House were not going to sacrifice their self-respect by pandering to any public man or pressman in order to win applause. They left their actions to be judged by honourable journalists, and he thanked God there were many such in the colony. The members of the Queensland Press, taking it as a whole, were as honourable as the Press of any part of the world, but there were men connected with it who were a disgrace to the profession, and so long as this was the case the Press must to a certain extent bear the odium. He looked forward to the time when not only every letter but every leading article in a newspaper should have the writer's name attached, and he was pleased to see that this was a subject which was being discussed in some of the leading journals at Home. If the writer's name were given the public would know exactly what value to place upon the production—whether it came from a man of recognised public character and principle, or was simply the production of a man who was anxious to gratify personal malice, and whose opinions would consequently be regarded as worthless. He had not the slightest fear of any outside slander, nor the slightest dread of any act of his being made public. Hon. members had simply to follow the straight path of duty, to do what they thought and conscientiously believed was the best for themselves, their constituents, and the country, and they could defy all slanders.

Mr. MILES said he believed he had been attacked in the same sort of way that the member for Rosewood had been, but he was not going to follow the example of the hon. member and denounce the writer of the paragraph in which he was attacked. He was told on good authority that the writer was the Postmaster-General. He wished to give the statement made in the paragraph a blank denial, and might add that he would take good care that he would not become the proprietor of another newspaper.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he must admit that the Press had treated him very kindly; they had never said an unkind word about him, and therefore he felt it his duty to defend the Press. He hoped they would like his doing so. There was no doubt that there were black sheep amongst the members of the Press, and that they would not have to search outside the gallery of the House to find one. There was an individual there who took a great deal of trouble to act as correspondent for many papers, and to write letters and articles attacking and misrepresenting members of the House; but because there

was such an individual—a man of no character or reputation, except a bad one—that was no reason why the Press should be condemned wholesale. The man was no doubt cheap and nasty, and his services were probably worth what was paid for them. Still he did not think it was right for hon. members, especially the member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), to get up and attack the Press. The Press had been very kind to that hon. member, and no member of the House had been dealt with so leniently by them. The hon. member had been mixed up with the Press for many years, and had been one of the most distinguished proprietors of the *Courier*. He had heard that the hon. member used to even inspire the leading articles of the *Courier*—he could not write them himself, so he went to the office and inspired them. He believed that even now the hon. member was the proprietor of two papers, and the mortgagee of a third. However, his (Mr. Morehead's) mission was to defend the Press. He had a very high opinion of the Press, especially of the "leading journal" of the colony; it never changed, but pursued one unalterable course of rectitude and justice. All knew that, except those who had written leading articles for it. He believed the member for Maryborough, with his kaleidoscopic views and opinions, wrote for it; he put himself up one day and knocked himself down the next, and then rubbed his hands with pleasure, and said, "See what a good boy I am. See how I have knocked them down," meaning himself. He wrote articles on the federation of Australia in a magazine, and then wrote articles in the *Courier* reviewing them. He (Mr. Morehead) called that a good all-round man—a man who was well adapted mentally to write for the leading journal. He believed there were other hon. members who had dabbled with the Press, and thought he had recognised the fine Roman hand of the member for Ipswich (Mr. Macfarlane) in the *Evangelical Standard*. When a question of fishing on Sundays cropped up, or when the member for North Brisbane (Mr. Palmer) made a quiet allusion to anything Evangelical—and hon. members knew that he always did so in a quiet way—the member for Ipswich immediately wrote an article to say that it was all hypocrisy and humbug, and that the hon. member did not believe in the Evangelical party. He (Mr. Morehead), however, had reason to believe that the member for North Brisbane was one of the staunchest believers in the party. So much for the amount of reliance that could be placed upon rumours. The member for Darling Downs had said that he did not care a straw for the Press. He could quite understand that a man who owned two papers and held a mortgage over a third should be indifferent. If the papers said anything against him he would put the screw on. He might be pretty independent as to what the Press said about him. Perhaps they were the only papers that he took in, because he got them for nothing. If he (Mr. Morehead) should ever have the honour of editing a newspaper, he should give the hon. member something that he would not like if he would only take the paper, but the hon. member must not bring actions for libel. However, he rose to speak on behalf of the Press. They were very fair in their criticism, and they never abused anybody—except in a Pickwickian sense; they meant nothing by it. The member for Rosewood had stated that he did not mind a bit the abuse that had been given to him, yet he got up and admitted that he felt it. He ought to have shown that he did not care for it, except to expose a man who was worthless and was a ruffian;—he was known to a good many members. The hon. member for Northern Downs could tell the House a little

about him. In exposing the man, and showing what kind of persons were sometimes connected with the Press, the member for Rosewood had done good service, and he would point out that even in the precincts of the gallery they had a pressman who came night after night and who was as big a scoundrel as could be found.

Mr. HENDREN said the House had heard a great deal about Mr. Wylie. He did not know much about him, but he maintained that the House was the wrong place for hon. members to denounce him. If the man had done wrong, let them proceed against him in court; but they should not use the floor of the House to undermine him and take away his character. The member for Rosewood had talked a good deal about the purity of the Press, but he forgot that not so many years ago he himself dragged into a lawsuit the journal which he was then conducting, and got the proprietors cast for damages.

Mr. MESTON: Not for slander.

Mr. HENDREN said it was for slander, and he could call for documents of the Supreme Court to prove the assertion. Why should the member for Rosewood come to the House and elevate himself with a long rigmarole speech? Let him talk politics, and leave Plato and Demosthenes alone. Members came to hear something for the good of the country, not to hear unfortunate people denounced who had no remedy at law because the members who attacked them sheltered themselves under their privileges. He stood up to take the part of any man who was slandered in the House. It was unfair and unmanly. With reference to what had been said by the member for Mitchell, it was not so long ago that the hon. member threatened all manner of vengeance against a certain portion of the Press, and told the House what he was going to do with a certain gentleman who went to the Sydney Exhibition as Commissioner for Queensland—that he was going to expose how many cabs that gentleman employed, and how many bundles of cigars he smoked, and all the rest; but the House had heard nothing about it since—there was something wrong in the atmosphere. They also knew that the hon. member for Mitchell had a little to do with the Press, just now. It was not fair that the name of any unfortunate private individual should be brought before the House in this way, and he (Mr. Hendren) denounced and set his face against the bringing forward of the matter to-day.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN agreed entirely with a good deal of what had been said by the last speaker. The man Wylie did not belong to any department in the State, but was a private individual outside trying to earn his living in the best way he could. He would go so far as to say that if there was to be anything said it should be said outside, and the hon. member for Rosewood should not drag his shop and his paper into the House. There was one statement made by the hon. member which he (Mr. O'Sullivan) knew to be untrue, and that was that the man was dismissed from the Fassifern survey through incompetence. Several surveys of the Fassifern line took place afterwards, and one survey found Wylie one inch and a-half or two inches and a-half out of the proper measurement. Was that incompetence? There were no two greater friends in the colony, some time ago, than the hon. member for Rosewood and Wylie.

Mr. MESTON: Never.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he knew that Wylie was a constant correspondent of the hon. member's, and wrote for the paper with which the

hon. member was connected, and, he believed, did all the office work for some time. With respect to libels, even the hands of the hon. member had not been altogether clean. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) remembered that the hon. member was once pulled for libelling. It was really not a nice thing to bring the characters of private individuals before the House. *Hansard* was circulated all over the colony, and what was the man to get a living by but his character? The man was not in the public service; and the House ought to set its face against allowing a man's name to be brought forward and his character discussed on account of personal private feelings. The hon. member said he was not actuated by private feeling in the matter; but how were they to know?—they had only the hon. member's word for it. Every member should set his face against allowing the name of any private individual to be brought before the House. If the man was the head of a department, or held a position by which he was receiving pay from the revenue of the colony, or had misconducted himself as a Civil servant, there would be a perfect right to bring the matter before the House; but the person in question was in no way connected with the State; and when the hon. member's common-sense and temper came back he would see that he had acted unfairly and unwisely. Under the privileges of Parliament an hon. member might say a man was a scoundrel and a black-guard, and, in fact, call him all the names he thought proper. All he (Mr. O'Sullivan) would further say about the matter was this: if the hon. member had used towards him the language he used with reference to that private individual, the moment the hon. member went outside the privileges of Parliament would not save him.

The Hon. J. M. THOMPSON said that the man Wylie was quite a youth, and it appeared to him that a youngster such as he, unless under very peculiar circumstances, had no right to be dragged before the House in the way he had been for public execration. The young man belonged to a class who were commonly known as no one's enemies but their own; and it was to be hoped that he would soon sow his wild oats and become a useful man. It appeared rather a pity that at the outset of his life—he did not defend him for a minute—his character should be aspersed. But the House should not have anything to do with blasting the character of private individuals. When a man spoke in the House he spoke for the country, and the hon. member for Rosewood had certainly taken an extreme course in making the statements he had made against the young man. And there was this to be said: the hon. member for Rosewood was safe—thoroughly, entirely safe—though everything he said might be liable to legal proceedings if said outside. Perhaps what the hon. member said was perfectly true, but that had nothing to do with the principle. He quite agreed with the hon. member who last spoke, as to the undesirability of dragging private character forward, unless connected with public transactions. He thoroughly agreed that the character of a public man might very pertinently be called in question in regard to public transactions, for they must take all things into consideration, and, in dealing with a man and his measures, must take into consideration his character. Therefore, it was quite right there should be a certain amount of latitude in discussing public character and the private characters of public men in the House; but they should certainly not drag the private characters of outside individuals before the House for the execration of the public, and so that the report might appear

in *Hansard*, where it would have the effect of a libel, but perfectly privileged.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) agreed with a great deal of what the hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Thompson) had said. No member had a right to drag the character of a private individual before the House in the manner the hon. member for Rosewood had done; and he thought the Speaker would be acting in the interests of fairplay, and carrying out the wishes of the majority of the House, if he ordered that what had been said should not appear in to-morrow's *Hansard*. To all intents and purposes, it would be publishing a malicious libel. The most amusing part of the matter to him (Mr. Palmer) was seeing how very thin-skinned editors were. It was delightful to see gentlemen whose almost exclusive privilege it was to abuse everybody, the moment their own toes were trod upon, turn round and resist. They were like the hangman in Barnaby Rudge, who enjoyed hanging others, but made a sorry exhibition when his own turn came. There were a good many cases of that sort in the world—of people who were careless as to how they slung ink against others, but who turned round much injured the moment they were themselves touched. He did not know the merits of the case before the House, and had never heard of the man Wylie before that he knew of; but he did think it was abusing the privileges of Parliament to bring a case of the sort before the House in the language used by the hon. member for Rosewood.

Mr. MESTON, in reply, said he was quite willing—in fact, he would rather—that the suggestion of the Colonial Secretary should be carried out, and that the part of the proceedings with reference to the man Wylie be omitted from *Hansard*.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. MESTON said he, at any rate, had not the slightest objection to having that part omitted. He had deliberated some considerable time before bringing the matter forward. It was an exceedingly difficult position—that dual position which a man occupied as outside journalist and member of the House; and it was a difficult matter to dissociate the two positions. He hesitated a long time before deciding to take the action he had taken, but the question was one seriously affecting him as a public man. The anonymous letter he had referred to went forth to the public and to his constituents containing a serious accusation—an accusation calculated to do him a serious injury. He had proved who the writer was, and that the whole affair was a deliberate, malignant attempt to do him an injury. It was certainly rather an unmanly thing to bring forward a private individual's character before the House; but, as the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) knew, he (Mr. Meston) was about the last man in the House who would knowingly do an unmanly action, if he thought it was such. Touching the person referred to, if he had any defence to make, the columns of the paper in which the anonymous letter appeared would be open to him. Anything he chose to write in his defence would be published. He was not conscious that he had ever knowingly done injury to any human being, or been guilty of an unmanly action. The present seemed, perhaps, to savour somewhat of that nature, but he had no intention that it should be so. He had no desire to do any injury to the individual in question, but he had satisfied himself beyond all possibility of doubt that he had made an unprincipled and malignant attempt to injure him as a public man and a member of the House. In that sense he had acted perfectly legitimately in doing as he had done.

It was the first time he had brought anything of the kind forward, and he was perfectly certain it would be the last.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that as some remarks had fallen from the Colonial Secretary with regard to the excision of certain remarks that had been made on the authority of the Speaker, he hoped the Speaker would not undertake that responsibility; because anything like a censorship of *Hansard* could not be but pernicious. Except with the express instructions of the House it was a duty which, he felt certain, the Speaker would not willingly undertake. He hoped, therefore, that on this occasion no attempt would be made to exercise anything like a constraint upon the reporters. If *Hansard* was justifiable at all, a great deal should be left to the discretion of the reporters, who had to do their duty faithfully. They had to report what was said in the House, and the faithful performance of their duty might well be left in their hands. Their duty was to transcribe for public purposes what was actually uttered there. He should not have taken part in the debate but for one or two remarks that had been made, on which he wished to say a few words. As politicians, the less notice they took of the action of the Press with regard to themselves the better. The Press had a very high function to perform—higher, even, than that of the House itself. The Press was the exponent of the conscience of the people; it was the mouthpiece of the different opinions that prevailed amongst the community. Of course, amongst men connected with the Press there were characters just as degraded as amongst any other class of men; but, taken as a whole, they were certainly entitled to rank with any other body of professional men, and they certainly did exercise a very high function. His own connection with the Press had been amusingly referred to by the hon. member (Mr. Morehead). He only wished his connection with the Press was much closer than was actually the case. He believed that he exercised a certain amount of influence even here, but he felt confident that he could exercise a very much wider influence in the Press; and he should be glad indeed if he could enjoy those privileges which the hon. member (Mr. Morehead) hoped might at some time fall to his share. He should be happy to see the hon. member exercise his influence in that channel; he would find that it was a most useful one. There was a time when he (Mr. Douglas) was more intimately connected with the Press than at present. Of late years his contributions to the Press had been very harmless indeed; but he had lately to some extent been instrumental in securing what he believed to be the rights of publicity, which were essential for the good government of the country. He was happy to hear the hon. member (Mr. Meston) say he hoped the time would come when the names of their writers would be attached to articles in the newspapers. He, too, hoped that that day would come soon. Though the advantages of anonymous contributions to papers were very great, still he thought the time would come when they would see the other principle adopted, and by that means personal responsibility would be secured on the part of public men in connection with what they wrote. Under the present system many articles were attributed to public men who had never had the slightest hand in them; and there were examples in this colony of articles written by public men which did not do any credit to the Press—spiteful and untruthful as they often were. For that reason he should rejoice if the usages of the Press were such as would justify writers in attaching their names to articles written by them.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he agreed with the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) that it was undesirable to establish any censorship over *Hansard*. The *Hansard* reporters were there to report what was said in the House, and every hon. member was responsible for the words he uttered. If there was any harm in a speaker's words the wrong would rebound upon him. He should rejoice to see some of the unprincipled writers in the Press shown up, and when newspaper men turned upon one another they were likely to get a little general justice done. The hon. member (Mr. Douglas) had exalted writers in the Press to a loftier position than that occupied by members of the House. In his opinion the Press had arrogated to itself that right. Instead of being the fourth estate, they were endeavouring to rank as the first, and dictated to hon. members what they were to do and say, and how they were to behave. He was a firm believer in the step of establishing *Hansard* at the expense of the country, so that hon. members might not have words put into their mouths which they never used; and now that the staff was formed, every word uttered by hon. members ought as nearly as possible to be reported. In the report of the debate the other night he found that the few remarks he made on the subject were wholly omitted from *Hansard*. That he did say something was quite evident from the reference made to it in the leading paper. Even on the score of economy, it was very undesirable to curtail the *Hansard* reports in any way, and he hoped the speeches of hon. members would continue to be as fully reported, if not more fully, as heretofore.

Mr. SCOTT said that, if anything was to be done in the way of excision, he hoped it would extend to the whole debate. It was a matter in which the outside public took no interest whatever, and the debate was not one calculated to raise the tone of the Chamber. It would be much better if the whole debate could be deleted from *Hansard*, and he was prepared to move a motion to that effect.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he should not have risen but for the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Hill) in reference to the reporting of debates. Some hon. members, if they saw *verbatim* reports of their speeches, would be ashamed of themselves and of the language they had permitted themselves to use. As had been suggested by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), the best thing they could do was to leave the matter in the hands of the reporters, who generally exercised great care in their reports; and it was very well that it was so. As to the particular matter under discussion, he was of opinion that it ought never to have been brought before the House, and that the hon. member (Mr. Meston) ought to have taken some other course.

Question of adjournment put and negatived.

PETITION.

Mr. DICKSON presented a petition from George Goold, commission agent, Brisbane, praying for redress of a grievance alleged to have been sustained by him in the matter of the share of certain fines, accruing from prosecutions by order of the distilleries department and detective police, not having being paid to him.

Petition read and received.

MAIL CONTRACT—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

The SPEAKER left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to further consider the proposed through Steam Service between London and Brisbane.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said he did not intend to make another speech upon this subject. The last time the matter was before the Committee he announced that he would postpone its consideration until the Financial Statement had been delivered. That Statement had since been made, and hon. members who wished it had had the advantage of any light which might by that Statement, and the discussion which followed, be thrown upon the matter now before the Committee. He believed he had removed the only practical objection formerly urged by hon. members in opposition to a continuance of the discussion on the subject. Now that the discussion was about to be resumed, he would only express a hope, while wishing for the fullest discussion of the amendment before the Committee, that they would come to a conclusion as soon as possible. There were other important matters on the business-paper needing prompt consideration—the Pacific Islands Labourers Bill, for instance, ought to be proceeded with without delay; the Local Works Loan Bill was another measure of considerable importance; the Water Storage and Distribution Bill, too, was a measure in which the city was very deeply interested. He thought, also, that the Railway and Tramway Extension Bill should be dealt with at once and before they proceeded with the consideration of the branch railways now in hand. The money borrowed for the construction of these railways was now in the hands of the Government, and they ought to be proceeded with. The United Municipalities Bill should also demand attention. He hoped that, with these important measures to be dealt with, hon. members would assist the Government to promote a settlement of the matter before the Committee.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he was sure the House would be glad to proceed to the important business referred to by the Premier. Everyone agreed that the measures enumerated by the hon. gentleman constituted important business, and, personally, he thought the sooner they reached that business the better. When the House was last in committee on this subject it was objected that, so far as was known, there might be a large deficiency upon last year's revenue, that there would probably be a deficiency upon the transactions of the present year, and that it would therefore be impolitic to incur such large additional expense as would be caused by the proposed contract, without imposing additional taxation. Hon. members on the Opposition side of the House also desired to know how the Treasurer proposed to raise the additional taxation which was thought to be necessary. The expenditure which it was at present proposed to incur under the mail contract was £55,000; but that amount would be increased to at least £60,000, and might be much more, while they were paying for the existing mail service only £20,000. According to the Treasurer's Financial Statement they would have a surplus, supposing that the whole of his Estimates were realised—and there was good reason to believe that that would not be the case—of not more than £30,000, without making any provision whatever for Supplementary Estimates. So that the actual estimated surplus would be quite inadequate to pay the cost of the proposed service; and instead, therefore, of their being in a better position to discuss the proposal now than they were before the Financial Statement was made, they were really in a worse position. Moreover, it was noticeable that in the Treasurer's Estimates of Expenditure for the year, he did not set down the amount proposed to be expended on account of the service the Committee were now considering. He observed that the amount placed upon the Estimates for mail service was only the amount which would be

required to pay the E. and A. Company up to the end of their contract. If, therefore, the sum to be paid under the proposed new contract were added to the estimated expenditure, the accounts would exhibit a paper deficit instead of a paper surplus. He could not understand how, under these circumstances, the Treasurer could ask hon. members who desired to maintain their reputation as a solvent colony—as a colony which paid its way as it went along—to enter into such a transaction. He anticipated—and he was sure that almost everyone indulged a like anticipation, as it was also believed to be the Treasurer's intention—that when the Financial Statement was made it would be found to contain some proposal for raising that additional revenue which we all knew to be necessary. He was much inclined to believe—indeed, he might say that he had not the slightest doubt—that the Treasurer intended to propose additional taxation; otherwise, the Treasurer's absence for several days, during which he was said to be busily engaged in the preparation of his Financial Statement, was unaccountable. The Statement which was eventually delivered might have been prepared in a few hours, and surely did not need that close attention which the Treasurer was reported to have devoted to the subject. Had the Treasurer proposed reasonable taxation, and thrown the burdens of the proposed additional expenditure on account of the mail contract upon the shoulders of those who alone could be expected to derive any considerable benefit from it, there might be less objection to the proposed contract. But everything which had transpired since the proposal was last discussed tended to increase the objections which were originally advanced. When the matter was last before the Committee the Treasurer did not state how he proposed to provide for the expenditure. He said in effect—“You vote the money, and we will find the means of raising it.” But since the hon. member's proposals for raising the money were not forthcoming, how could he expect the country to incur the expenditure?—an expenditure not only for the present year, but for some years to come. The Treasurer might as well have placed £100,000 upon the Estimates for some new building, at the same time showing on the face of the Estimates a large deficit. Had the hon. gentleman done that, what course, under ordinary circumstances, would have been pursued by any Legislative Assembly where the practice of discussing the Estimates in detail obtained? The course would have been to bring the Estimates of expenditure within the Estimates of revenue. He had not had an opportunity of consulting the whole of the members on the Opposition side of the House since the Financial Statement, for it was understood that the discussion upon the Statement, together with the consequent legislation, would be disposed of before the mail contract was again considered; but he thought, for his own part, that there was less reason for voting for the Premier's proposal, and proportionately stronger reason for opposing it in every way in which opposition could be shown, than when the subject was last before the Committee. Upon that occasion the Treasurer said he would undertake to give fair opportunity for discussing the Financial Statement, and the legislation consequent upon it, before the mail contract came on for consideration again. Under the circumstances, however, that undertaking was not binding, but he concluded from that statement—and he believed everyone else drew the same conclusion—that some financial legislation would follow; but as a matter of fact there would be none, for the proposed alterations in the tariff had been passed, and the Bill to give effect to them was merely

formal. But as it seemed that the discussion of the mail contract was now to be proceeded with, he would like to ask the Premier whether he had received any further information with respect to the service since the matter was last before the Committee—that was to say, whether he had had any further communication from the intended contractors, and, if so, what was the nature of it?

The PREMIER said he had had no further communications with England in reference to the contract since it was last under the consideration of the Committee. The hon. member for North Brisbane said it was understood that the legislation consequent upon the Financial Statement would be concluded before the mail contract was considered again. He did not think that the hon. member would find in *Hansard* any justification for that assertion. So far from making the statement attributed to him, he pointed out to several hon. members—and to the hon. member for the Logan particularly—that it was unnecessary to pass any legislation. All he desired was that the House should have an opportunity of considering the Financial Statement before the mail contract was proceeded with. What he said was this—

“He believed that, with fair assistance from the Opposition, he should be able to get that legislation carried through in a few days. He did not say that he would do so; but it was possible, for instance, that he might propose an alteration of the tariff; and supposing that he did he must immediately after the delivery of the Financial Statement put the necessary resolutions, and see some probability of their being carried, before he proceeded with any other important business. At the same time, he did not see why the consideration of even these matters might not be delayed in order to discuss the mail contract.”

Mr. GRIFFITH: There is no objection to that.

The PREMIER said that if the hon. member did not object to the course which had been pursued, it was of no use to refer to the matter and to state that an understanding had been departed from. The leader of the Opposition had availed himself of the occasion to repeat what he had said when the Financial Statement was under discussion. The hon. member's statement of which he now complained had also been made by several other members on the Opposition side of the House, and it was that the Treasurer had changed his mind, with reference to the subject of taxation, within the past three or four weeks. If hon. members paid a little more attention to his public utterances, and endeavoured less to ascertain privately what his actions were, they would not make such statements. He believed the supposition had arisen from the fact of his having repeatedly revised tariffs. He believed he had revised as many as half-a-dozen. But did it follow because hon. members ascertained from private sources that he was contemplating or engaged in a work of that character, that he was bound to bring forward a tariff revision? No hon. member was in a position to say that he had changed his mind, or that the Statement he delivered was not the Statement he contemplated at the opening of the session, or even last year. Doubtless the leader of the Opposition felt somewhat annoyed that he had not the sagacity to discover what the Treasurer's policy was. A great many others, he believed, had been taken in; but the hon. member's conclusion that the Treasurer had altered his mind was a process of reasoning he could not understand. The hon. member for the Northern Downs evidently held a different opinion, for he said that had he been in the Treasurer's place he would have made a similar Statement. But now that the Financial Statement had been delivered, what were the objections to the mail contract?

The whole of the objections were, in reality, objections to the Financial Statement, upon which the hon. member for North Brisbane moved an amendment to the effect that the Treasurer's provision was inadequate. The objections now raised to the mail contract touched the same point. The hon. member said the estimate of revenue in excess of the estimate of expenditure was only £30,000; but the hon. member knew very well that that amount would be increased by £40,000, which it was proposed to transfer from the Railway Reserves Fund, so that the Treasurer would start with a balance of at least £70,000. He had not to provide all at once for the whole of the £55,000 chargeable to the proposed contract. If the contract was ratified from the present time, he did not suppose, judging from the telegrams received from England, that the firm would be in a position to carry it out before November, in which case there would only be six months' expenditure, or £28,000, to be provided for. That was not a very alarming contingency for a Treasurer to contemplate. The whole argument, however, was against the Financial Statement rather than the proposed contract, and it was to this effect—that it was the Treasurer's duty, in a year of this description, to have proposed a revision of taxation which would have put him in possession of ampler funds. He did not think he was in a position to do so. A Treasurer was perfectly justified in years of extraordinary depression to look to sources of an extraordinary character for his revenue. That was his position now. He was sure that had he imposed 10 per cent. or 15 per cent. duties, and that had those duties been proportionately reproductive—a 10 per cent. duty yielding twice as much as a 5 per cent. duty—they would have been deluged with revenue they did not require, which, within the next four or five years, would lead them into extravagance. He was sure, on the other hand, that an increase in the *ad valorem* duties would not have the effect of adding to the revenue. On the contrary, the higher the duties the less would the revenue become. But he was not called upon at an extraordinary time like the present—when people were in the worst of positions to bear taxation—to reorganize the taxation in such a way that in more prosperous years they would find themselves in possession of a great deal too much revenue. They were now in the third bad season, and he hoped that there were better things in store; but until those better times came he would not be justified, as long as he could possibly make the revenue of the colony meet the expenditure, in going into ordinary channels of revenue to provide for extraordinary expenditure. Upon that principle, he considered that the extraordinary steps he had taken were justifiable. It was quite possible—it might be in the opinion of many probable, and in the opinion of some members of the Opposition a certainty—that they would require additional taxation next year. If that came about the House must be prepared to face it, but his proposition was that they were not forced to face additional taxation this year. He had answered the only objection the hon. gentleman had brought forward, and that was, as he had contended, an objection against the Financial Statement as a whole, which had been settled already by the amendment moved by the hon. gentleman himself, and lost by a division of twenty-seven to eighteen.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not think it necessary when he spoke to recapitulate all the arguments that had been urged against the mail contract; neither did he now think it necessary. What he had adverted to was, the additional light thrown upon the question since it was last before the Committee; and he desired to point out that

nothing which had taken place since had tended to show that the Committee would act more wisely now, in approving of the proposal, than on the previous occasion. On the contrary, everything went to show that it was even a more wild and reckless proposition than it previously appeared to be. The Treasurer seemed to think he could make the expenditure and revenue meet this year by borrowing money. They had had for the last two years a large deficiency, and even the Treasurer could not pretend it was likely that they would not have to face an additional taxation next year; and yet he asked them, blindly, to rush for several years to come into a contract, the only practical use of which, according to his own speech, would be to open up the frozen-meat trade. He (Mr. Griffith) contended that if this large subsidy was to be paid for the purpose of opening up that trade, they required some better means of paying the subsidy than had been proposed to the House.

Mr. KING said that if a division took place upon this question he intended to vote for the ratification of the contract, and he wished, therefore, to place on record his reasons for taking that course, because there was no doubt that considerable feeling had been excited out of doors against the contract; and from the various reports he had read of the proceedings which had taken place, he was convinced that this feeling had been excited by arguments altogether beside the question. The real merits of the mail contract had not been discussed at any of the meetings held to denounce it. He considered, therefore, in his particular position, he had a right to place on record the reasons which induced him to support the contract. For very many years it had been the object of the party with which he had always worked to facilitate, by every means in their power, the introduction of capital and population into the colony. He had always held that one of the first duties of the Government of this colony was to stimulate its welfare by encouraging the introduction of population, and, above all, capital, both of which were badly wanted, and would continue to be wanted for some time. It had been repeatedly pointed out that Australia, in this respect, was at great disadvantage as compared with America and other countries nearer to the land from which Australia derived her population and capital. It had been pointed out that if it was a mere question of expense, Englishmen more likely would prefer to settle in a country where they would be subject to the old laws and Sovereign, than transfer their allegiance, as they now did, to the United States. It had also been acknowledged that English capitalists would be more ready to trust their money to a community governed by English laws, and living under the English flag, than to invest their millions, as they did now, in foreign countries. But the great distance of England from the antipodes had militated against the latter receiving both population and capital. In the first place the immigrants were a long time on the voyage, which was difficult and dangerous; and in the second place, the English capitalist, however desirous he might be to invest his money in this colony, felt that he was a great distance from his money, and found a difficulty in ascertaining how his investments progressed; so that it was almost impossible for him to undergo the trouble of looking after them himself. For these reasons Queensland did not receive the amount of capital she was entitled to expect, considering her vast wealth, her connection with England, the great emigration that had taken place during the last twenty years, and the enormous investments that had been made of English capital abroad. In order to facilitate communication the colony

had spent large sums in telegraph construction, and last year he found that on the telegraphs of this colony, including the interest on the lines, there was a loss of £50,000, and this might be said to be the annual loss on telegraphic communication, the justification for which was, that by facilitating communication they encouraged business and fostered settlement in the colony, and, at the same time, gave confidence to those who were willing to invest their money there. It was only because the claims of Queensland were not properly recognised, when the Conference was held in Melbourne to consider the payment of a subsidy for a European cable with Australia, that Queensland was not paying her portion. The reflection, therefore, naturally arose, that if it was worth while to pay large sums for telegraphic communication with England, how much more would it be worth while to have a good steam communication? The direct communication with England, if established, would mean that the time occupied would be fifty-six days from London to Brisbane, and of course to the northern ports something less. He supposed that the average voyage by a sailing vessel would be something like ninety-six days; some ships had done it in less, and some took more time, but the average was something between ninety and one hundred days. They might, therefore, say that by the proposed steamers merchants would be able to get goods from England in forty days less time than was occupied by the long sea voyage; but as the northern ports would gain much more than Brisbane, it might be said that the journey between England and Queensland would be shortened by one-half if this mail contract were adopted. In other words, Queensland would be brought within one-half the distance from England that it was by the long sea voyage. Under these circumstances, he considered that there could be no question, unless the whole policy of past Governments had been a mistake, of the importance of introducing capital and population into Queensland by every means in their power. There was no doubt but that it would be highly advantageous to Queensland, from this point of view, to obtain such a service if it was offered on reasonable terms, and the colony could afford to pay for it. To his mind those were the only two questions which were to be decided, unless, indeed, the colony were to change its previous policy entirely. If they said they did not want this service, it meant the reversal of that policy, and that they did not want any more immigrants or capital. If they did want the service, the only questions that remained to be considered were those he had just mentioned. To prove what he had said about the fact that it had been the policy for many years past of the Governments of this colony to facilitate the introduction of population and capital, he might point out that a scheme very similar to this was suggested six years ago, and it only fell through because they could not obtain a proper contract. In the minutes of the "Votes and Proceedings" of 1874, vol. 2, page 597, he found the following words—"That the Agent-General be instructed to ascertain on what terms any of the large English or American steamship companies would contract to carry 1,000 emigrants monthly *via* Suez Canal and Torres Straits to Queensland." It was at that time part of the policy of the Government of the colony to have adopted such a service if it could have been procured on reasonable terms, but unfortunately Mr. Daintree, who was at the time Agent-General, found that a reasonable tender could not be obtained; steamers were not then as abundant as now, and consequently the whole thing fell through. Mr. Daintree only got one offer by a line of steamers

going round the Cape of Good Hope, and the price asked was very high. For 6,000 emigrants annually £19 a-head was asked, and, that being too much, of course nothing further was done. He (Mr. King) came now, therefore, to consider whether the terms offered were moderate, and first he would point out that the price they had to pay for this service was a good deal exaggerated. Under any circumstances the colony would have to pay £20,000 a-year for the convenience of having the mails carried *via* Melbourne. The adoption of the proposed mail service entailed on the colony, therefore, only the additional cost of £35,000, and for that there would be a direct steam communication with England. The company were to have permission to use the harbours and ports of Queensland without paying the regular dues, and it might be true that that would represent a sum of £3,000 in the course of a year. It should, however, be remembered that if the steamers did not come to the Queensland ports the harbour dues to that amount would not be paid, so that practically the colony did not lose the amount if the agreement was made. The question, then, whether the terms upon which the contract was offered were moderate or not could best be ascertained by referring to what they had been paying for similar services and the terms offered by other companies. The distance from Singapore to Brisbane was 4,000 odd miles, and from Singapore to London 8,300. Speaking in round numbers, therefore, from Brisbane to Singapore was one-third of the distance. The colony had been paying £20,000 for a service from Singapore to Brisbane, which service did not stop at Brisbane—a very material circumstance in considering the new contract—but went on to Sydney. At the same rate they would be paying £60,000 a-year to continue the service to London. In view of the expiration of the present contract, the E. and A. Company were invited to send in tenders for a mail service, and what were their prices? For a nine-knot service from Singapore to Brisbane with the right to go on to Sydney they asked £32,000, for a ten-knot service £40,000, and for a ten and a-half knot service £50,000 a-year. Taking the nine-knot service, which was the same as the proposed mail contract, and multiplying that by three to allow for the distance between Brisbane and England, the service from London to Brisbane, if charged at the same rate as that asked by the E. and A. Company, would be £96,000 a-year. He might say he had not heard a single assertion out of doors, from practical men who understood the subject, that the subsidy of £55,000 a-year asked for a direct steam service between Brisbane and London was not a very moderate one indeed, and he believed it was one they could only have obtained from a company already established, or connected with an established company, and which was prepared to expend some of its earnings from other services on the new undertaking. He did not believe that the colony could have got a new company, unconnected with any other service, to take such a contract as was now before them for anything like £55,000 a-year. He had heard it argued that as there was a provision in the proposed contract to the effect that a bonus of £50 per day was to be paid to the company in the event of the steamer arriving before contract time, the company would put on fast steamers so as to take advantage of that provision whereby they would earn many thousands a-year—he had heard people talking about their making £30,000 a-year extra. He thought he should be able to show that there was no reason in that argument. The difference in the time of arrival between an eleven-knot service and a nine-knot service between Brisbane and Singapore would be only three days in favour of the

faster service. There would be thirteen trips each way in the course of a year, and the company would receive bonuses on the inward and outward voyages. Suppose they ran eleven knots constantly—making no allowance for accidents—they would get a bonus of £150 for each trip, or £3,900 in the year. The question which naturally suggested itself, then, was—what would be the extra cost which would be entailed on the company by the increase of speed? The steamers of the E. and A. Company had on many occasions come to Brisbane in advance of the contract time, and the company endeavoured to get an increased subsidy from the Government to run a ten-knot service. On the refusal of the Government to increase the subsidy, instructions were given to the officers of the company that they were not to anticipate the contract time—it was a well-known fact that they received absolute orders not to exceed a speed of nine knots. Of course there was a reason for that, and the reason which struck him was that the extra cost for coal and working expenses of the higher-speed service was greater than the amount that they would receive as bonus—£50 per day. The tender sent in of the E. and A. Company—namely, for a nine-knot service, £32,000; a ten-knot service, £40,000; and a ten and a-half knot service, £50,000—were alternative tenders—the Government could have accepted any one of them. The increase from a nine to a ten knot service was £8,000, but from nine to a ten and a-half knot service the increase was £18,000, and no doubt the difference in the amounts was made because of the increased expenditure which the higher-speed service would involve. Thus, according to the calculations of the company, it would cost them £18,000 more to run a ten and a-half knot service than it would cost to run a nine-knot; whereas, if they ran eleven knots from Singapore to Brisbane, they would receive only £3,900 in bonuses. The same arguments would apply if the service were extended to London. From a comparison of the tenders which were sent in by the E. and A. Company he thought it absolutely certain that a bonus of £50 a-day would not be equal to the amount which the increased speed would cost the company. He took it that the extra expenditure which would be imposed on the colony by the adoption of the proposed contract would be £35,000 a year, and for that they would have direct steam communication with England. His opinion was that, for the advantages which would be derived by the colony, the payment of £55,000 a-year for the proposed service was very moderate indeed. The question then arose—whether they could afford it? Presently he should advance some argument to show that they could not afford to do without it. In his opinion the service was an important one, and it was likely to return so much, that it would be to the loss of the colony if they did without it. According to the Estimates-in-Chief this year's anticipated expenditure, exclusive of interest on the debts of the colony, was set down at £1,133,131; and if it were necessary to reduce the expenditure by £35,000, so as to bring it within the income, it would be much better to dispense with other services than the mail service, which would bring them in direct steam communication with England. As far as he was concerned, he was perfectly prepared to save £35,000 in other directions rather than that the proposed contract should not be completed. The time which would be occupied by the steamers under the new contract—the mails being transferred from the P. and O. Company's boats at Singapore—would be forty-six days twenty-one hours, or two days less than the time which was occupied during last year. That saving of time would be effected through the arrangements which had been made for the transmission of mails *via* Brindisi. As

there had been no serious complaint during the last twelve months respecting the forty-nine days' service *via* Torres Straits, he could see no prospect of any serious grievance arising under the new contract. It must also be remembered that Brisbane was the most southerly port of the colony, and that, although Brisbane would lose two or three days as compared with the service *via* Galle and Melbourne, the northern ports would gain that time. The northern ports commanded the largest area, and there was a considerable population which would be benefited by the proposed new service. He should now point out some of the commercial advantages which would be likely to arise by the adoption of the new line. He must confess that he was surprised—and more surprised than at anything—on hearing it argued that by the adoption of the proposed contract they would be creating a monopoly. At the present time there existed in connection with the coasting trade a monopoly of the most grinding nature. It had been said that probably the Orient Company might send their steamers here, and he believed the Sydney agents of the company had held that prospect out as a bait whereby to defeat the contract under consideration. It happened that an arrangement had been entered into between the Orient and the A. S. N. Companies, under which all goods for Brisbane sent by the Orient steamers were to be transhipped to Brisbane by the A. S. N. Company's steamers. As showing how importers here were handicapped through the colony not having an independent service, he would read an extract from a letter which he had received from Mr. N. Tooth, the Mayor of Maryborough. Mr. Tooth said—

“Per Orient line my firm imported two parcels of goods. First—Orient Company charged £14 17s.; A.S.N. Company charged £32 14s. to bring the goods from Sydney here. Second—Orient Company charged £69, and A.S.N. Company £157 to bring them on.”

Since he had received the letter containing that statement he had gained information which was still more startling. He happened to mention the statements contained in Mr. Tooth's letter to one of the agents of the A.S.N. Company in the North. The agent remarked that the person receiving the goods was entirely to blame, as if he had entered into a contract with the A.S.N. Company for three years he would have had his goods carried at half the price charged. The agent further explained that the importer in question usually sent his goods by the Melbourne Steamship Company's boats, and therefore he had to pay ordinary rates. The circumstances pointed, to his mind, to an attempt to re-establish a monopoly of the coasting trade of the colony by the A.S.N. Company. They all knew that the A.S.N. Company were determined, if possible, to run the Melbourne Steamship Company out of the trade. The latter company's vessels traded with only a few ports north of Brisbane, but they did a considerable deal of good in keeping down freights. No doubt, if the A.S.N. Company succeeded in running the Melbourne Steamship Company off the line they would raise the rates all round, and people would have to pay double what they paid at present. Long before the new contract was spoken of—before the session commenced—his attention was called to the serious effect which the unfair practices and unfair management of the A.S.N. Company were having on the coasting trade of the colony. It was represented to him that the directors of that company were not only carrying goods to northern ports from Sydney at lower rates than they charged for goods sent from Brisbane, but that Messrs. John Fraser and Company, of Sydney, who had considerable interest in the company, through their agent in Townsville

arranged with storekeepers and others dealing with them guaranteeing that goods purchased by them should be carried by the A.S.N. Company's boats, at special rates. When he heard these statements, it struck him that it was extremely desirable that the truth should be ascertained, because if it were true, the coasting trade was being subjected to influences which were not for the good of the colony. He spoke to several members of the House about the matter, and expressed a wish that a Parliamentary Committee should be appointed to inquire into the state of the coasting trade. He endeavoured to get the subject taken up by some hon. member having sufficient influence in the House to carry a motion of the kind. He spoke to the hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Thompson), but that hon. member did not see his way clear to take the matter up. There was another way in which the management of the A.S.N. Company affected the colony. Several hon. members, particularly upon the Opposition side of the House, had, during the present session, spoken largely about agricultural produce being imported which ought to be produced in the colony. A great deal of produce, such as flour, was no doubt consumed in the South, but a very large amount of other agricultural produce was imported at the northern ports from Sydney. He was assured by a produce dealer in Brisbane that, if he got a small order from the North for chaff or some other produce, it would probably be shut out for two or three weeks. Whilst the farmers' produce was unsaleable at the railway sale-yards here, they were cut off from those who ought to be their natural customers in the North, and Sydney produce went there instead of theirs. There was not the slightest doubt that the management of the A.S.N. Company was doing great injury to the farming industry in the South, and also injuring the consumers in the North. Under existing arrangements, if the Orient Company were to do the whole of the carriage from Sydney to England, and the A.S.N. Company were to monopolise the trade between Queensland and Sydney, it appeared to him that the trade of Queensland would be perfectly extinguished, as far as any profit to be derived by Queensland was concerned. It would be entirely in the hands of absentees. He had been informed since the matter had been before the House that instructions had been received by Brisbane merchants who had been in the habit of shipping wool direct to England, to ship a large quantity to Sydney for conveyance by the Orient line by agreement; the consequence of that would be that the quantity of wool shipped from Brisbane or any other port of Queensland this year would be small compared with the quantity shipped last year or the year before. He thought it was scarcely worth while to proceed to prove his argument that it would not be for the interest of the colony that its exports should be in the hands of absentees, for that was what it came to. They had a great number of absentees connected with the colony. A very large quantity of land was held as runs by absentee squatters; a large quantity of the best lands of the colony were held in fee-simple by absentee proprietors; considerable interest in our banks was held by absentee shareholders; and if the principle business of the colony was to be done by absentee merchants residing in Sydney, he failed to see how Queensland was to succeed in accumulating the capital which was required to carry on the improvements of the country. One argument he had heard against the proposed contract was, that the day of subsidies had gone by—that the Orient Company were trading to Sydney without a subsidy, and was likely to continue to do so. As far as they

knew, that was the only large steamship company running with regularity such a distance without receiving a subsidy; and he must confess that he was doubtful whether it would continue to do so very long. It might or it might not; they could not be certain until it was proved by experience. But if it was possible to have a line of steamships running without a subsidy, in the way that the Orient line was running, it could only be to a port like Sydney where there was a large trade concentrated, because it was essential that large vessels running without a subsidy should not be delayed in loading or unloading—that they should be able to unload and load quickly, and sail as soon as possible after arrival in port. If large steamers such as those of the Orient line had to lie in Moreton Bay or Keppel Bay in the same way as vessels now despatched from those ports had to be for weeks loading and unloading, it would be impossible to make it pay. It was only at a port where a very large trade was concentrated that such a thing could be possible. It might be possible in Sydney; and certainly it would be more possible there if the whole of the Queensland trade was concentrated there. But in a colony like Queensland, with small ports, where vessels could not come in and obtain quick despatch with full cargo, it was evident that they could never expect a line of steamers to be established which would carry on such a trade as the Orient Company did with Sydney without a subsidy; and if they said that because the Orient Company traded to Sydney without a subsidy they should give none to vessels trading to Queensland, it would be equivalent to saying they should never have a line of steamers running direct from Queensland to England, because he did not believe they could possibly get one without a subsidy. A great amount of feeling in opposition to this contract had been excited on the ground that it would be of especial assistance to the pastoral tenant, by enabling him to send home frozen meat.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. KING said that was an argument brought against it. He did not know that he was any more in favour of the pastoral interest than a great many other members of the House; but he did not believe in "cutting off his nose to spite his face." As long as the pastoral lessees were in possession of the land they held, he considered that it was better for the colony that they should make as much out of it as possible. The object of those who were opposed to them should not be to leave them in possession and prevent them from making anything out of their holdings; but to take the land from them and turn it to better account. What would be the result to other classes in the colony than squatters if the export of frozen meat should take place from Sydney and not from Queensland? He was supposing that there was a large export of frozen meat from Australia. Of course the frozen meat business had not yet been absolutely proved to be a success, but he had no doubt that the success of the shipment by the "Strathleven" had a great deal to do with the formation of the company which now offered to take this contract, because it held out expectations to the contractors that they would be able to get cargo at Queensland ports. If there had been no probability of their ships getting full cargo at those ports without delay, he did not believe that the contract would have been made for £55,000 a-year, because he was informed, and believed, that that amount was only about one-fourth of the cost of the service, and the contractors must, therefore, look to getting a large revenue from some other source. Now knowing, as he did, the quantity of produce they were able to ex-

port from Queensland at the present time, and the manner in which it came down to port, he was perfectly well aware that large steamers, such as would be required in the service, could not calculate upon getting full cargo without delay unless there was some such establishment as that for the export of frozen meat to fall back on. But, supposing that this frozen meat idea should turn out all right, if this contract were not made there would simply be an export trade from Sydney; Queensland cattle would be driven down to Sydney. They could be driven down there at, he supposed, about a-pound per head.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Ten shillings.

Mr. KING said that 10s. per head would be so much lost to Queensland; but, on the other hand, if they had the industry established in the colony all the work would be done in it. They would have a great many men employed slaughtering cattle, attending the different establishments where meat would have to be kept frozen, and in shipping and unshipping it. He would ask anybody which would be best for the working man of Queensland—to have all that work done in the colony, or to have it done outside? There was not a doubt on his mind that if they were able to export the large quantity of meat which had been talked about—something like 200,000 beasts a-year—it would employ a considerable population. At all events, it would be better for them that they should have a considerable or inconsiderable population employed in that way than that they should be employed in Sydney; and, therefore, he said it was highly desirable, if they were to have an export trade of frozen meat, that it should be carried from Queensland ports rather than New South Wales ports; and for that reason he was in favour of accepting the contract now before the House. He had mentioned that a good deal had been said out of doors about this contract being in the interest of the squatters, but although he must confess that should the export of frozen meat prove a success those who would in the first place derive most benefit from it would be those who held the greatest number of cattle, still he maintained that it was far more important that selectors and other small owners of cattle should get good prices for their stock than large owners. There were plenty of large owners in the colony who were not making anything like the profits they made when cattle were £6 and £7 a head, but yet their rents were so low that they could afford to live on prices which would starve out selectors; and, as a matter of fact, he knew a great many selectors in the coast districts who had taken up land during the last five or six years for cattle—small grazing farms, in fact—and they had been obliged to sell, and the property passed into the hands of large men. By keeping down the price of cattle at a low rate they played into the hands of men whose capital was so large that they could be satisfied with a small return, enabled them to increase their property and to make a large profit out of it at some future time when a rise in prices took place. The view taken by the Liberal party, when he was a member of it some years ago, was that stagnation was the very thing of all others that suited that section of the squatting party supposed to be in favour of land monopoly. As long as there was stagnation, as long as people did not come to the colony, and there was no money in circulation, the squatters would hold the land as long as they liked; if they chose to buy there was no one to compete with them. The only thing that saved Australia from being monopolised in that way was the discovery of gold, which brought thousands of men and a good deal of money into the colonies, and other classes were able to compete with the squatters for the purchase of land. He

therefore said that if the colony was to retrograde—and he regretted very much that it had the appearance of retrograding, for although they had had a favourable season during the last year, yet the prospects of the trade of the colony did not look as prosperous as they ought to—he said if anything in the world could facilitate the monopolisation of land in Queensland by the pastoral tenants of the Crown, it would be the creation of such a state of stagnation and retrogression as would prevent all other classes from competing with them, as would not attract population, but would probably lead to population leaving the colony, as they had been doing during last year, and he believed were doing at the present moment. On the other hand, he believed there was nothing which could be considered more hostile to a monopoly of the lands of the colony than such a policy of progress as would, by bringing in population, by creating business and circulating money, raise up a number of other interests competing with the pastoral interest for the purchase of land; and for that reason he supported the acceptance of this contract, involving as he believed it would, a great trade both foreign and coasting, their deliverance from a monopoly which was likely to press very hard upon them, and the bringing them into closer and more intimate relation with English capitalists. He believed it was calculated to do the very opposite of fostering a monopoly.

Mr. THOMPSON said he rose at great disadvantage after the able way in which the subject had been treated by the last speaker. He had, however, a few words to say on the subject. He had not concealed his hostility to the project, and he did not intend to do so on this occasion. Before going into the general question he wished to refer to the mention that had been made by the hon. the Speaker as to his having asked him (Mr. Thompson) to move for a committee of inquiry into their coasting trade. That statement was quite correct, but he (Mr. Thompson) did not feel at liberty to take the matter in hand. It was many many years since they first began grumbling about the A.S.N. Company. At first he could not see the force of the objection. He thought they were very much indebted to the A.S.N. Company for sending their ships here and giving them the advantage of the convenience thus afforded. That the company made money out of it was their business, but the colonists had no more reason to be obliged to them than to any other company that came here and helped to carry on the trade of the colony. On the other hand, they had no right to take a hostile attitude towards that company and say they should do things cheaper or in a certain way. The business of that company was guided by commercial principles, and they had no right to consider whether the company made money out of it or established a monopoly or not. They might as well object to a Queen-street merchant establishing a monopoly. If the enterprise of the company and their money enabled them to command a certain amount of trade, that was their business and not the business of the public; and he therefore said stress should be laid upon the argument about the monopoly of the A.S.N. Company. At the same time he might say that he had not the slightest fear of any monopoly being established by that company. Facts had proved that the Melbourne Shipping Company had been able to compete with them in their own field. He could never understand the objection there was to the A.S.N. Company. At one time the colony went so far as to build a steamer to oppose them, and at another they interfered with the class of labour which the company employed. It was not, however, public business or public

policy to interfere in matters of that sort. He conceived that if a service was proposed which would give greater facilities than were offered by that company it might be a very good thing indeed; but his objection was to such a question as that of a proposed new mail service being made on the present occasion a party question. The Government, he contended, had no right to take such a position as regarded the proposed service. On questions of public policy which had agitated the public mind outside, a party might be returned to advocate a certain policy, and might be expected to adhere to that policy and to put down their foot if any opposition was offered; but in the present instance the matter was made a party question before it received any opposition. The proposed contract was not admitted to be a good policy for the carriage of letters, as, if they looked upon it as a postal service, the only gratification there would be attached to it would be in saying that they had a postal service of their own, and that they had their letters carried at a greater cost than they could otherwise have them. If the new service was not good as a postal service what was it good for—was it good for an immigration service? It was well known what his opinions were with respect to that part of the question. He had always opposed the introduction of immigrants at the public expense, and he remembered that when he first enunciated the opinion that they had no right to introduce people to oppose the labour market, he was derided and could get no one to agree with him. He was, however, glad to find that the idea was gaining ground that if they had no right to protect local manufacturers they had no right to import immigrants to oppose the local labour market. He entirely denied the right of any Government to introduce at the public expense any labour to compete with labour already in the colony. He mentioned that merely to show one of the grounds on which he did not view the proposed service as one of public policy. What, he would ask, were the grounds on which it was put forward? They were, that they should have a direct mail service, an improved immigration service, and have their goods carried direct. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) said that if the service was not adopted the result would be that all their goods would be carried by absentee ship-owners; but what of that?

MR. KING: If the hon. member will allow me to explain: what I said was absentee merchants, not absentee shipowners.

MR. THOMPSON said he thought the hon. member's argument took a wider scope, and that he referred to absentee shipowners, and not only to merchants. But he could not see what objection there should be to having their business done by absentee merchants. It was said that the sole object the Government had in view was to have it done better than it was now; but he (Mr. Thompson) did not think that object would be attained by the proposed service, and that they might get it done much cheaper otherwise. He would now ask hon. members to look at the question from the light of the Financial Statement, and to formulate the policy of the Premier by that Statement. The policy of the Premier, as enunciated by that Statement, was one of rest and caution at the present time, and he (Mr. Thompson) quite agreed with that policy—it was one reason why he did not oppose the financial policy of the Government. He believed the present was not the time to put additional taxation on any class, and therefore he agreed with the policy embodied in the Financial Statement. But to carry out that policy in its entirety, the hon.

1880—2 H

member must not enter into any doubtful speculation which was likely to become a burden on the people: yet this proposed mail service was a speculation. It was admitted that it was not wanted as a postal line, whilst, as to its advantages as a business line, he considered that was a matter with which the country had nothing to do. It had been said that the frozen-meat enterprise would be promoted by it, and if he had been asked to give £50,000 to promote that industry, he should have said yes; but to bind themselves down to a contract for eight years for such a purpose was another thing altogether. Then, again, it had been stated that the proposed contractors were a syndicate—a lot of men who proposed by selling the contract to another company to make a profit out of it; and the Premier had told them that if that was the case it had nothing to do with them, but he (Mr. Thompson) considered that they had no right to go into a matter for the purpose of giving a company an opportunity of making money out of the colony. But he would look at the matter from another and not a pleasant point of view, and that was the present position of the Government. He would take it for granted that every member of the Government was totally blameless in the matter of Mr. Hemmant's petition, whether there was anything to be proved or not; but it was impossible for hon. members to conceal from themselves that the Government had acknowledged by their own action that there was a case for inquiry in allowing a committee to be appointed. As he had said before, it did not matter to him whether there was anything to be proved or not, but he contended that the very existence of that committee rendered it undesirable that the Government should go into matters of such an extraordinary nature as this proposed mail service. The theory of all constitutional government was that it represented the public outside, and it was therefore the duty of the Government, and they would always find it to their advantage, to see that their measures accorded with public opinion. In the present instance there could be no doubt whatever that public opinion was against this mail service.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: That is the opinion of Brisbane.

MR. THOMPSON said there could be no doubt whatever as to the correctness of what he had said. He was told that it was only the opinion of Brisbane: if so, it was the opinion of the commercial centre of the colony, and that was a strong argument in favour of what he had said; but he believed that public opinion generally was against the proposed contract. It had been laid down as an axiom by a great statesman that it was useless for any Government to attempt to carry on against public opinion, and he (Mr. Thompson) believed that was invariably the case. Supposing the question before them was of vital importance and essential to the well-being and good of the colony, then the Government might be right in saying that it must be carried now, as they had no time to appeal to the public; but they had not put it before the public on any such ground as that. They had admitted that the proposed service was not a very good postal service, and that it might not be a very good immigration service, but that they believed it would be a good business service; but what right, he would ask, had any Government to step outside their province and attempt to divert the course of trade by going into an entirely new line of business? Reverting, again, to the question of the position of the Government in reference to the extraordinary committee now sitting, it had sprung up to be a constitutional rule, in these colo-

nies especially, and he thought it must have arisen in the Imperial Parliament, that whilst a question of want of confidence in a Government was pending, no important business should be done. He did not pretend to say that any vote of want of confidence in the Government was pending, but they had themselves admitted that the inquiry now being made into charges against them should be made, and therefore he contended that they had no right to go into anything such as was proposed by this mail contract. He thoroughly admitted that the Government had a majority at their back, and that they had power to carry the contract through if there was not any stonewalling, and that they could get a vote of confidence in them passed to-morrow if they chose—in fact, the very circumstance of their having treated the question as a party question, and having so many followers at their back, showed that they had confidence in being able to carry it. He admitted all that. [The House adjourned for tea.] By sending their letters *via* San Francisco and Melbourne they could get them carried for a mere trifle—so much for the letters, or weight, as the case might be. His object was to show that they could get them carried for a trifle. They found from the Postmaster-General's report that for letters sent *via* San Francisco, last year, the colony paid £1,124 1s. 4d.; and for letters sent *via* Melbourne, £1,601 0s. 1d. He admitted, of course, that if the correspondence *via* Torres Straits ceased, the amount would be increased, but it was not a considerable item, and it would be a tremendous saving to the colony if they adopted those two routes. They now paid for the Torres Straits mail a considerable sum. It might be said, for the sake of argument, that the proposed contract should not be set down as an additional burden on the colony to the amount that it represents, but only the difference between it and the present Torres Straits service. But, as he had said before, and as the Premier had repeatedly told them, this was a period of "rest and caution." If they could save £20,000 a-year, more or less, why should they not do it? There would be so much towards the deficit. He had not intended speaking at such length when he rose, but interruptions and one thing and another had led him to make a more discursive speech than he intended. He should like more to have formulated what he had to say in the shape of short propositions. In the first place, he objected to this contract because it was in opposition to the present financial policy of the Government—that policy of "rest and caution." He objected to it because it was not necessary as a postal service, because they could get their letters carried in a much better way, and for a mere trifle. He did not approve of it as an immigration service, because they had no right to expend public money in bringing competitors for the labouring classes of the colony. He conceived that in the present position of the colony the Government had no right to depart from the ordinary duties of Government to try and direct the course of trade—to bring trade which should be essentially free into the channel which they desired. Again, he took exception to the position of the Government, not that he for a moment implied that there was anything wrong with any member of the Government, but that they had themselves consented to a committee of inquiry into certain matters which were agitating the public mind. It was quite useless to say that these matters were not agitating the public mind. There was no use shutting their eyes to that fact. He should like to shut his eyes to it, but it was quite useless, and they must view these things in the light of present circumstances. It was no use fancying there was no

thing. There was something, and, whether the public were justified in thinking so or not, there was a strong spirit abroad which would only be allayed when those inquiries were at an end. That he did not sympathise with them was nothing to the argument. For the purposes of the argument he thoroughly admitted that the Government as to ability, integrity, and in every way might be perfectly clear; still, the very fact that the matter was open to inquiry, and open with their consent, was a strong argument, by analogy, against their entering into anything new outside the ordinary functions of Government. He said, by analogy, because it had been admitted in the colonies that when anything like a vote of want of confidence was pending, or even talked about, there should be as little business done as possible. He admitted that the Government had an overwhelming majority, and that the rule, if it were a rule, that therefore nothing should be done unless they had the confidence of the country, should not apply. He thoroughly admitted that; but there was an analogy between their position and the position of a Government when a vote of want of confidence was pending; it was simply an analogy—he would carry it no further. He repeated that he did not apprehend his speech might have any great effect either on the Government or anybody else, but it was a matter for them to take into serious consideration whether, taking all those matters together, it would not be a wise thing, seeing that they could go on without that service, to let it go by for the present. Let them go on with the ordinary business, of which they had plenty to attend to, and let the matter of a mail service, which was not a postal service only, go, and see whether they could do without it entirely without detriment to the public service. The Government should be willing to let it go for a time—but that, unfortunately, they had made it almost impossible to do by making it a party question. He repeated, they had no right to make it a party question. In the first place, the subject should not be one for party warfare at all; in the second place, nothing should be made the subject of party warfare until it was fully known that there was to be a party opposition to it. The effect of making it a party question was to shut out all controversy. To bring forward a matter, and say that it was admittedly a party question, and then invite controversy, was an inconsistent thing, although he knew it was often done. As to his personal feelings on the matter, they were, probably, little to the House; but he did not disguise that it had cost him an effort to make that speech. It possibly came badly from him, as an independent member, to make what might be considered a rather severe speech; but somebody had to say what he said, and, therefore, if he thought it, it was quite right to say it. Disagreeable things must be done sometimes, and it was a disagreeable thing to suppose for one moment that one's friends might possibly come out of an inquiry with some damage. He said he did not believe in that for one moment, and he guarded himself again from its being supposed that he did.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he rose with considerable diffidence to answer the speech of the hon. member for Ipswich. He did so the more on this account, that for many years past the hon. member and himself had acted together in the House; but if it would in any way absolve the hon. member's conscience, he could assure him that he did not make a severe speech—on the contrary, it was the weakest speech he had ever heard from that hon. gentleman, and he thought that before he sat down he would be able to convince the Committee that it was anything but a severe speech—in fact, there

was nothing in it except a little by way of implication, which he (Mr. Palmer) disliked exceedingly, more especially as coming from an hon. gentleman who told them that he did not believe in those implications. The first part of the hon. gentleman's speech was devoted to a defence of the A.S.N. Company. As far as he (Mr. Palmer) could understand him, he informed them that they had a perfect right to establish a monopoly of trade upon the Queensland coast. He (Mr. Palmer) agreed with this, and said the company had a perfect right to do so if they could; but if the people of Queensland allowed them to do so when they had an opportunity of preventing them, they were greater fools than he took them to be. As a private trading company they had a perfect right to do the best for themselves; but if the people and Government of Queensland allowed the A.S.N. Company, through a short-sighted policy, to establish a monopoly, to establish a differential rate of freight—as he had been informed in one of the best speeches he had heard this session, or for a considerable time before, from the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. King—if they allowed them to do that, they must be very shortsighted indeed. It was not the establishment of a monopoly that was so objectionable, but the establishment of a differential rate of freights, by means of which merchants, shippers, and squatters in Queensland, dealing with particular houses in Sydney, who had great influence over the affairs of the A.S.N. Company, might be enabled to get their goods at lower freights than were charged to the customers of other houses. That argument at least was entirely in favour of the establishment of a direct mail service. If hon. members would look at the question in all its bearings, they would agree with him in thinking that a company of British shipowners who had to look for their profit solely to the freight returns of their ships, would be much more likely to establish a uniform rate of freight, bearing equally on all their customers, than a company backed up by a number of Sydney merchants, with whom the success of the A.S.N. Company was a secondary consideration to their own success in trade. The company who had no interest to look after beyond making their ships pay would be more likely to deal fairly, truly, and honestly by the colony than a company such as he was sorry to say the A.S.N. Company had degenerated into. The second objection taken by the hon. member was that the Government had no right to make this a party question; but he contended they had a perfect right to do so. Believing as they did that this contract tended to promote the material interests of the whole of the colony, and that if rejected a similar chance would not be likely to arise for some years, the Government had a right to make a party question of this if they had of any subject under the sun. What matter would the hon. member allow that the Government were entitled to make a party question of, if not of this? Surely the interests of Queensland were worthy of being made the subject of a party question, and if the Government felt they had a majority in the House at their backs they were entitled to make it a party question. To deny their right was absurd. The Parliament of the colony was not intended to be a mere municipal council, interesting itself in small questions of the day, and allowing one of the largest questions that had ever come before the House to be treated as a mere incidental matter which did not affect the interest of the colony as a whole. He had never been more astonished than he was by the tenour of the hon. member's speech. The hon. member for years belonged to a Ministry whose leading principle it was to do equal justice to the whole of the colony: and yet on this

occasion he treated an important matter as a question which merely concerned the interests of Brisbane and Ipswich. He never went a foot beyond that, treating the matter from entirely a Brisbane point of view. Having belonged to a party which had claimed to represent every part of the colony without distinction, it was really surprising to hear the hon. member now argue from such a point of view. The hon. member had also stated that the Premier in his speech did not treat the service as a mail service. That he (Mr. Palmer) denied. The Premier did not treat the service as being solely a mail service, and in that he was quite right. The hon. gentleman admitted, as far as he could remember, that in regard to mails the southern portions of the colony might perhaps be served quicker by the P. and O., Orient, or San Francisco services, as long as they lasted. But it was well known—and several hon. members who had spoken had laid great stress on the fact—that the Orient Company were running their steamers without subsidy. Admitting that they were doing so at the present time, it must be patent to everyone who gave any thought to the subject, that they were only running the service as an experiment, and that if they found the service did not pay they would either withdraw altogether or bring such pressure to bear upon the home Government and the Governments of the Australian colonies as would enable them to demand a mail subsidy. The whole course of their proceedings had indicated such an intention. They had refused to carry letters, although they knew that under the existing laws they were obliged to carry them, simply in order to bring prominently before the public the fact that they were carrying out without subsidy, for merely the sea postage—and presumably at a considerable loss to themselves—a mail service such as that for which other companies were being heavily subsidised. How long that would last no one could tell. The San Francisco service was at the present time heavily subsidised by the New South Wales Government—it could only be called temporary, and no one could foretell how long it would last. As far as could be judged from the benefits resulting from the service, it appeared to be kept up now simply through a spirit of rivalry between New South Wales and Victoria; and there was no guarantee that it would be continued after the present contract expired. The hon. member advanced what could only be regarded as a very unsound argument when he said that the Queensland mails could be carried *via* Melbourne, simply for the ordinary postage; because he entirely left out of consideration the fact that this colony would have to pay for bringing the letters by rail to Sydney, and for bringing them by A.S.N. Company's steamers to Brisbane. He also forgot to calculate the amount paid to the A.S.N. Company for carrying the mails up the coast—a very heavy item indeed. If the hon. member would take the trouble to add to the ocean postage the large amounts which the Governments of Victoria and New South Wales would be entitled to demand from the colony he would find that the total would be a considerably larger amount than he had calculated upon. It was not his intention, however, to go into figures upon the subject. He had never attempted to qualify himself for the position of a Treasurer or a Postmaster-General, but taking the amounts in the gross it was clear to him that a very large sum for the cost of carrying mails to the North would have to be added to the hon. member's estimate; and he presumed it would be admitted that the people of the northern parts of the colony had as much right to get their mails quickly and regularly as those of the southern parts. With regard to the hon. member's re-

marks about immigration—which were a good many years old—he would like to ask the opponents of immigration what the Australian colonies would have been without immigration? It would make one almost shudder to think of it. He maintained that a country without inhabitants might as well be a desolate island; and that had it not been for the system of immigration the colonies would probably now not have the tenth of their present population. He could hardly imagine that in this nineteenth century an inhabitant of such a colony as this could seriously object to immigration. The system might be abused and overdone—it had been very considerably overdone during the recollection of hon. members—but without a system of immigration, judiciously carried out, the colony was never likely to be of any account in the world. The distance from the mother-country was such that it was almost impossible for one of the most desirable classes of immigrants to pay their own passages, and therefore it was absolutely necessary to the existence and prosperity of the colony that a system of immigration judiciously conducted should be carried on. The hon. member next went on to ask: What did it matter to us whether Sydney merchants or London merchants supplied us with the goods we required? He (Mr. Palmer) considered it was a matter of very considerable moment. Goods direct from London merchants were obtained, or were supposed to be obtained, at first cost; but if obtained from Sydney merchants a certain percentage, more or less, must naturally be added to their English cost. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) showed very conclusively that under the present system Queensland merchants were likely to pay a very much increased subsidy, not only in advance on the first cost of the articles, but also in increased rates of freight. The figures quoted by that hon. member showed that the cost of bringing goods from Sydney to Maryborough had been double that of bringing them from London to Sydney. But even Maryborough was not the capital of the colony, and the ports north of that city deserved also to be considered. With such a service as that under consideration Queensland importers would get their goods at first cost, and at direct freight rates—a matter of very considerable importance to the merchants of Brisbane, as well as those of the rest of the colony. In nearly all the speeches made, and especially those from the Opposition side, the northern districts had been completely thrown overboard—not a word had been said on their behalf, and a great deal had been said against them. In looking over *Hansard* he had been very much amazed at some of the arguments used by hon. members, whose speeches he had not had an opportunity of hearing, about the trade of the north. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley was reported to have said that at no port north of Rockhampton had five tons of English goods been imported direct. It was hard to believe that so much ignorance could have been displayed. Merchants at Townsville had been importing whole cargoes of goods direct from England, and the facilities there for landing by steam-lighter were greater than at the port of Brisbane, the steam-lighter owned by Messrs. Clifton, Aplin, and Company being larger than any lighter belonging to Brisbane. That showed the utter ignorance which prevailed amongst a great many members as to the quantity of goods that were imported into the North, and as to the facilities there were for landing them. He had no doubt that the member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) would, as he said, endeavour to get a pass for members to visit the North. He believed money could not be better spent than to send members up north to see what the country was like, what its trade was,

what its imports were, and what facilities there were even now for landing cargo. There could be no doubt that a steam company like this would find its own facilities for landing cargo. It had been said—and he had to refer to the matter once before—that the Government would have to supply facilities for landing cargo. Nothing could be so absurd. It would be the business of the company to find their own facilities, and there could be no doubt that a company of merchants going into a speculation of the kind would supply the facilities; but even under the present state of things there were the means for landing cargo in some of the northern ports, and he had no doubt they would be considerably increased. Then the hon. gentleman went on to inform them of what he (Mr. Palmer) was not aware of, that the policy of the Government was “rest and be cautious.” He denied that their policy was that, or that they had ever shown it to be that. Their policy was economy in the public service as far as possible, but by the plans that they had laid before the House at different times they had shown pretty well that their policy was not one of “rest and sit down and do nothing.” He considered that one of the worst policies which could be adopted by any Government. Take the case of an individual in difficulties. If he went in for such a policy, and did not go in for some speculation, he would be grounded in the mud and stay there for the rest of his days—and it was the best place for him. He would repeat that the policy of the Government was not “rest and be cautious.” They believed that the subsidy paid for a service of this sort would be a mere bagatelle in comparison with the benefits which would be conferred, and they therefore felt quite justified in proposing to spend £55,000 per annum upon it. In speaking, however, about the service, hon. members opposite forgot the £20,000 that the colony had been spending for years for a mail service, bringing the cost to £35,000, or at the outside to £40,000, for the proposed service, which, he maintained, was, in comparison with the branch service from Singapore, superior in every possible way. The bringing of immigrants out by it was a matter of secondary consideration, which might either turn out very well or be found not to answer. Provision was made for that contingency. The Government were not bound to send immigrants by the company, and he must admit the company were not bound to bring them; but the probabilities were that in practice it would be found immeasurably superior to bring immigrants by a service which would perform the passage in 46 days, than by a route which would occupy 97 or 100 days, and that a great many more of the sort of people that they wanted would be found to volunteer for a passage of 46 days, because many people looked upon a passage of 97 or 100 days as worse than expatriation. The hon. gentleman was pleased to inform them that he thoroughly agreed with the financial policy of the Government. He was glad to hear him admit that, but the hon. gentleman also told them that if they added burdens they were bound to find extra taxation. The Government maintained that they were not adding extra taxation, and that the £40,000 would be a mere bagatelle in comparison with the benefits that would be conferred upon the whole community by carrying out the service. He could only say that he most thoroughly believed in the service. Then the hon. gentleman went on to frighten them as to what might happen if the syndicate—he did not know the meaning of the term, but it seemed to be fashionable to employ it when a number of gentlemen undertook to do certain things on certain terms—the hon. gentleman told them that when the company got the con-

tract they might sell it. That was a very dreadful idea: supposing that they did, what harm would happen to the colony? Whoever bought would have to carry out the contract; but if the company were ever so much inclined to sell they were not in the least likely to find buyers until they had thoroughly established the service and shown what it was. From his own knowledge, though, of a few of the gentlemen who had signed the contract, and from what he had heard, he was certain that the contractors had not gone into the scheme with any idea of selling, but that they meant to carry out and make it a success, as they did everything that they undertook. Another reason given by the hon. gentleman—which he confessed he could not reconcile with the expressions of his great confidence in the ability and integrity of the Ministry—was that, having granted a committee of inquiry as regarded the imputations made upon some of their acts, they were not in a position to go on with the contract. He had never heard anything so utterly absurd. If the Government felt they were guilty of any questionable acts, then they would not be justified in carrying on; but what had they done? Knowing that they were completely innocent of any of the crimes imputed to them, and afterwards denied by the leader of the Opposition—knowing that the more the matter was inquired into the more would their innocence be proved, were they not justified in treating any such base insinuations with contempt? He had never heard anything equal to the dictum laid down by the member for Ipswich, that because the inquiry was hanging over them they were not justified in going on with the contract.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he always expected the leader of the Opposition's "Hear, hear" when he hit him hard. The Government counted inquiry; but they would not give it in the way attempted to be dictated by the leader of the Opposition and his followers. They challenged inquiry, but the hon. gentleman had already contradicted himself, and had withdrawn his base insinuation.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I have withdrawn nothing.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman had withdrawn his base insinuation. The hon. gentleman said he had withdrawn nothing. A synopsis of his speeches on the subject would be very amusing. He should like to know what the hon. member really did mean? Then the hon. member for Ipswich went on to allude to public opinion. He had a great respect for public opinion, particularly when it agreed with his own; but he denied that the public opinion of a great majority of the colony was against the Ministry. It was not by "hole and corner" meetings that public opinion was expressed; and the "hole and corner" meetings which so much stirred up the fire of the hon. gentleman did not indicate public opinion. A large section of the community, even in the southern part of the colony, agreed with the action of the Government, and a much larger section would agree with it when the dust that the leader of the Opposition and his supporters had blown into their eyes had been wiped out and they could understand the bearings of the case. Next, they had been told by the hon. member for Ipswich that Brisbane was the centre of commerce for Queensland. He had very considerable doubts about that statement. He believed that Brisbane ought to be the centre of commerce, but he was quite sure that it was not at present, and he believed that the action of the hon. members who were opposing the contract would cause it to be still less. The centre of commerce for a great portion of the colony was Sydney, and it was use-

less hon. members shutting their eyes to the fact. And the objection taken by hon. members opposite would tend more and more to make Sydney and Melbourne the centre of commerce than to benefit Brisbane in any way. If they persisted in the action they were taking and balked the mail contract, he fully believed that they would leave Brisbane without any commerce, except commerce with the neighbouring colonies, through which the trade from Great Britain and America and other portions of the world would dribble. The hon. member next went on to tell them that it was no part of the duty of the Government to direct the course of trade. He believed, on the other hand, that it was particularly the duty of the Government to direct the course of trade, so far as they possibly could, without putting any vexatious imposition. It was especially the province of the Government when they found that the trade of the colony was being diverted to the neighbouring colony, and that the colony was fast losing its direct trade, to endeavour to bring that trade back to its proper course. In pressing the contract on the House and on the country, the Government were but barely doing their duty. They believed and felt that if the present opportunity were neglected, it might take years and years to bring the trade which was now rapidly being diverted to the neighbouring colonies back to its proper place. He was very much amused, indeed, at the conclusion of the speech of the hon. member, in which he told them that there was a vote of want of confidence hanging over the Government. He (Mr. Palmer) must confess that he did not know there was any such thing. The amendment of the hon. member for North Brisbane on the financial speech of the Premier, they were told plainly, was meant to be a vote of want of confidence; but he (Mr. Palmer) understood that was disposed of last week, and very satisfactorily disposed of. He (Mr. Palmer) was very well satisfied, at any rate; but how the hon. member for Ipswich could conjure up a vote of want of confidence out of the present position he (Mr. Palmer) could not imagine. At all events, the Government did not feel that there was a vote of want of confidence hanging over them, but if the hon. member thought there was any doubt on the subject he would invite him, in the name of the Government, to bring forward a direct vote of want of confidence. That would be the shortest way to dispose of the matter. Perhaps the hon. member for Maryborough would bring such a vote forward?

Mr. DOUGLAS: No.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was glad to hear it. The hon. gentleman was generally flying very high, and trying to do a great many impossible things, but the hon. gentleman had common-sense enough to know that a majority of twenty-seven to eighteen was rather a hopeless case upon which to bring forward a vote of want of confidence. It was not, at least, very kind of the hon. member for Ipswich to indulge in such a taunt.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had listened with a great deal of attention and pleasure to the argumentative speeches made by his hon. friend and colleague, the member for Maryborough (Mr. King), and to the speech of the hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Thompson); but he could not say that he agreed with either of them. He felt it his duty to refer to some of their arguments; at the same time, it would be infinitely better if they could follow up the consideration of the subject in the admirable temper which both of those gentlemen brought to the discussion of the question. He only wished the Colonial Secretary had followed in their wake. Instead of that,

the hon. gentleman chose to apply terms which were very undesirable to adopt in their proceedings, and certainly were not calculated to prompt good feeling between them. To jeer in the way he did at some interjections from the Opposition side of the House was quite unnecessary.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Why were interjections made?

MR. DOUGLAS said he would willingly forego all interjections if he felt that the discussion, on an occasion like the present, would be proceeded with in the same manner as at an earlier period of the day by the two hon. members, who threw a good deal of light on the subject, and who expressed their opinions in an independent way. He should, indeed, be glad if he saw in the House the growth of an independent party, of which two such gentlemen as his colleague and the hon. member for Ipswich could form a part, for he was sick and tired of the constant reiteration backward and forward from one side to the other. He would forego a great deal of the prominence which had necessarily been thrust on some members of the Opposition, if he could see the real growth of an independent opinion characterised by such ability as had been displayed to-night in the discussion on the question before them, by members who might be characterised as independent. He wished to say a few words in reference to some matters raised by his hon. friend and colleague (Mr. King), because he evidently approached the subject with a desire to argue it out fairly. He had taken a view of the matter different from that which he (Mr. Douglas) maintained; and therefore he owed it both to his colleague and to his constituents to say something, at any rate, in justification of a different course, for he could not come to the same conclusion the hon. gentleman had arrived at. In the first place, he referred to the necessity of keeping up communication with the United Kingdom by means of telegraphic communication and some form of steam postal contract; and in doing so referred to the present position of the telegraphic communication, pointing out that it was not a mere question of expense, and that in the present case it ought not to be a question of expense. He could not exactly follow the argument of the hon. gentleman with regard to telegraphic communication, or the grounds on which he thought the colony was justified in paying £55,000 for the benefits he described. With regard to the cable conference, Queensland did not drop out of the arrangement because the cable was not landed on the shores of Queensland;—the chief argument against the cable was that it did not secure duplicate communication, which was considered desirable; and competition, which was essential in order to secure a real reduction in rates. The hon. member (Mr. King) illustrated the subject, further, by stating that if they were to keep up immigration they must be prepared to pay such a price for it as was indicated by the difference between the price of the present contract and the contract proposed;—that was to say, if they wanted to keep up immigration, and have direct steam postal communication with England, they must be prepared to pay £35,000 more; or, as the Colonial Secretary said, £40,000 more; or, as some others said, £50,000; or £60,000 more than they were now paying. He (Mr. Douglas) did not exactly follow the hon. gentleman's argument, but he agreed that if the colony was to keep up immigration they must be prepared to pay for it. But at present they were getting immigrants by the long sea route; and he had already pointed out that the season when people left England was the very one in which they could not safely be brought through the Red Sea. That was admitted on all hands. Even the troops going

out to India on Her Majesty's service, and the French and Dutch troops, were sent through the Red Sea during what was considered the healthy season, so that there should not be any risk of life. There was much mortality in some instances among the Dutch and French in the Red Sea. It was clear, therefore, that during the emigration season from March to June or July, immigrants would be subject to very serious risk indeed if sent through the Red Sea. It would be therefore simply an experiment, from the point of view he took. If they were to have a combined mail, immigration, and freight service, it was not impossible there might be a different route from that which was proposed. Why not have an ocean service direct from England round the Cape, and going home by the Red Sea? That would serve all purposes, and bring immigrants in the way they were now brought, only the service would be very much shortened—instead of taking seventy, eighty, or ninety days, they would be brought certainly in forty-five days, and probably even in less. The Orient liners now made passages in from forty to thirty-five days, and he had not the slightest doubt that before many years even that time would be shortened. It was said the Orient Company contemplated building new ships which would accomplish the voyage in thirty days; and that seemed to him no distant probability. He believed one was now being built which, it was anticipated, would run the voyage in not much more than thirty days. If they could not induce the Orient Company to come to Queensland—and there was a good deal to be said against entering into an agreement with that Company, because they must inevitably go to Sydney or Melbourne—why should not the colony, if it was determined to spend money upon a direct line, try to induce a company owning ships of a similar character—though perhaps not quite so large—to bring out immigrants by the direct long sea route, arranging that if they would give a guarantee for a period of years of a certain number of ships, the colony would give a guarantee for a certain number of immigrants. If they made up their minds to bring out 2,000, 3,000, or 4,000 immigrants a year for the next five or six years shipowners would be very glad to bring them by the Cape and go home by the Red Sea. That arrangement might possibly work in with a postal service, though it was hardly likely to be accomplished so rapidly as at present by the Orient ships. As there was an objection to bringing immigrants in ships touching at Sydney, Melbourne, or Adelaide, let them come direct to Queensland; and if their object was to bring out immigrants, by all means bring them by the Cape and let the ships take freight and cargo back by the Red Sea. Both objects might be met in that way. All the arguments they had heard tended to show that the proposed route would be inferior to the one at present in use, and not a very satisfactory route for the northern ports—certainly not much better than the present. Letters would not go home much sooner than at the present time; and such being the case the contract required revision in many respects. But it did not follow that because the proposed line was objectionable he and others objected altogether to the proposal. He took it that the argument of the member for Ipswich would be in favour of some line, but that he did not wish to do away with the contract altogether; and if the arguments of his colleague (Mr. King) were good, they applied equally and even better to such a line as he (Mr. Douglas) had advocated, which would secure both immigrants and homeward trade. The present opposition to the contract could not be identified with that change of policy which the hon. member (Mr. King) had indicated—that

if they did not assent to the contract they would be going back on their past legislation, and would be saying that immigration should cease. His contention was, that he simply set aside the contract because he believed a very much better one might be made to suit our commerce, our immigration, and even possibly our mail service. The Colonial Secretary dwelt a good deal on the fact that the Government took credit to themselves that they were doing this for the benefit of the northern districts. He (Mr. Douglas) doubted very much whether that would be the case. A service might be established which would benefit them infinitely more. He did not quite approve of the way in which the hon. gentleman thrust upon them the northern portion of the territory, as if they knew nothing at all about it. To say the least of it, two-thirds of the people of the country had a right to be consulted. Nobody disputed the fact that there was a large territory in the north, but nobody, also, disputed the fact that a great majority of the people were settled in the south; and hon. members were here to consult for the welfare of the entire population. Territory was nothing in itself until it was populated, and the vast expanse of unoccupied land in the north was really valueless at the present time. It was simply in the potentialities of the future that it had a value to the colony. Then, again, a great deal of stress was laid on the fact that a certain gentleman, the Mayor of Maryborough, had imported certain goods from England *via* Sydney, the freight of which from Sydney to Maryborough cost him more than the freight from London to Sydney by the Orient Company. That was a sound argument against the alleged monopoly of the A.S.N. Company, but it said nothing about the future arrangements of this projected company, and was no justification of it. Those goods might have been imported as a source of emergency, out of the ordinary kind of trade, and might have had to pay more because the order was probably executed under pressure to meet some engagement. But he should like to know a good deal more about those prices before coming to a definite conclusion about them. If the A.S.N. Company was really monopolising trade along the coast—and there was reason to believe that it showed a desire to drive the trade of the whole of the coast to Sydney, and sometimes, also, to divert the trade from Brisbane—it was a very good argument for the establishment of a local company to do our coastal trade. He had supported a proposition of that kind, and if the facts were as stated by the hon. member there were very good grounds for supposing that a time might come for the establishment of such a company. Monopoly was bad, and the prices which had been quoted were bad, and if they entered into a large number of speculations they might seriously affect the trade of the colony. But that argument did not affect the proposed contract. The hon. member also referred to the agricultural produce which might go up to the north but for the difficulties placed in the way by the A.S.N. Company. Even if that fact were satisfactorily established, it did not follow that the projected company would take up agricultural produce to the northern settlements. It surely would not take potatoes, corn, and other produce, and deliver them at Bowen, Gladstone, Townsville, and Cooktown. The company would not lay itself out for that sort of business, and therefore it seemed that the argument was quite out of place. The hon. member also stated that, from the peculiar conditions of the trade of Sydney, only large vessels could pay their way, and that, therefore, they need not look to a connection with that trade on a satisfactory paying basis. But though they could hardly expect to raise such large ships as the Orient liners, surely they might anticipate being

able to secure a smaller class of vessels, perhaps of the same tonnage as those proposed under the contract. Why should not such vessels come here direct and return direct? He did not wish to impart any bitterness—of which there had been already too much—into the discussion, but there could be no doubt that the hon. member (Mr. Thompson) was perfectly right when he stated that although the Government had a majority there was a feeling of want of confidence in them abroad, in spite of their majority. As he had already stated, the majority were held together by very strong party and personal ties; but he believed the hon. member was perfectly justified in what he said by implication—as the Colonial Secretary remarked. The Colonial Secretary did not like the imputation, but that simply arose from the fact that the Government had placed themselves in a very objectionable position by their actions, which were generally considered, and which undoubtedly were, most unsatisfactory. The question arising out of the Hemmant petition was, no doubt, at the bottom of the whole feeling at the present time, throughout the community, with regard to the Government. The hon. member (Mr. Thompson) hinted at it. He (Mr. Douglas) did not hint at it, but would tell hon. gentlemen opposite that that was the chief reason why, not only members of the Opposition, but the vast majority of the people outside, were dissatisfied with the present position of the Government; and, on that ground, he believed that, if the Government appealed from the majority who now sat patiently behind them to the very large majority outside, they would find that they were in a vast minority—there could be no question about that. The Government might say that they did not intend to pander to popular opinion, and submit their case to the people for a verdict; but he could tell them most assuredly that if they did they would not return to their seats as a Government, for the verdict would be unquestionably against them. They might have made up their minds to hold their places, and rely on their numerical strength in the House, but that did not alter the facts of the case as set out by the hon. member (Mr. Thompson); and the want of confidence referred to was largely attributable to the facts that had transpired in connection with that inquiry. And here he would remark how exceedingly undesirable it was that that inquiry should be postponed from day to day. The whole thing, so far as the facts of the case were concerned, could be disposed of in a week. It would be better that the House should adjourn until the alleged facts in connection with the case were either proved or disproved, so that the Government might be fully acquitted or condemned. The accusations made unquestionably involved the honour of the Government—there were no two ways about that—and they had been to a great extent supported by evidence. Yet the inquiry was allowed to hang over from week to week, and hon. members met here to discuss matters, while all the time they knew that there was a sort of skeleton in the cupboard that was really the cause of all their trouble. A committee of that kind ought to sit from day to day, and exhaust all the evidence that could be obtained here, so that they might know what really were the facts of the case. Those were thoughts that perplexed not only hon. members on that side, but on the Government side as well. He had no doubt the Colonial Secretary himself was not very comfortable.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: If you had as little sin on your soul as the Colonial Secretary you would be a much happier man.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that, considering all those things, it was not to be wondered at that they must feel anxious about the position to which

they had allowed themselves to drift. He did not impute dishonesty to the Government, but he did say that in every place, and by most people, those were the thoughts that came uppermost. It was not the Financial Statement; it was not even the Polynesian question, or others which would have to be discussed shortly; but it was that inquiry, which involved more serious matters than any other affecting the present position of the Government. The hon. member (Mr. King) also referred to the frozen-meat trade, and assumed that if the contract was not accepted they would have no means of getting ships to carry away their frozen meat. He agreed with the hon. member that it was more desirable that that trade should be conducted direct from the ports of Queensland than indirectly through Sydney and Melbourne, whatever effect the exportation from those places might have on prices; and of course the price of stock here would be affected when it was shown that meat could be exported in any quantity from Sydney and Melbourne. He believed, quite apart from the contract, that if it were shown that it would pay to export meat, there would be no difficulty in getting ships to devote themselves to the trade, whether from Brisbane, Townsville, or Keppel Bay. If it were once demonstrated that money could be made out of the trade, a service might be established which would combine immigration with the export of frozen meat. There was no reason why even such a service as that should not be cheaper than the one proposed. It must not be inferred that he or members on that side of the House were opposed to a contract of that kind. Their objection to the contract was, supposing it were desirable to combine the mail service with immigration, that the matter could better be arranged in the manner he had described than in the manner proposed by the Premier. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) laid great stress upon the necessity for immigration. So did he; but he thought the hon. member would be placing a barrier in the way of immigration if he helped to establish a line *via* the Red Sea. Of late years their policy had indicated a separation from the North and a union with the South. Time was when people looked forward to the introduction of Chinese and Indian coolies; but at the present time even settlers in the north did not contemplate a Chinese colonisation of northern Queensland or the introduction of labour from British-India. Their aim was rather to introduce a class of immigrants which would attract people from the south. The recent course of events pointed to improved communication with the older countries by some other route than Torres Straits. In their early history, the development of the Torres Straits, Chinese, and Malay Settlements traffic was looked forward to as the means by which Queensland was to grow great. He believed they had given up that idea. He might be wrong; but, judging from the signs of the times, the northern colonists—and unquestionably the southern colonists—had not much desire to improve the commercial communications with the East. Their anxiety was to obtain improved communication with the older-established colonies in the South. It would unquestionably be proved that their best market lay in these colonies. It would undoubtedly be their interest to connect themselves even more closely with their sister colonies than with the mother-country. England was 15,000 miles away, and why should not their intercolonial relations be more intimate than they had been? He did not say a word against the continuance of the closest of ties with the mother-country, but it was infinitely more desirable from a commercial point of view, and from political considerations, that they should improve their relations with the sister colonies. It seemed to him that by adopting this contract

they would be going in the opposite direction. Instead of improving their relations with the older colonies they would be exploring new fields, and pioneering a purely experimental route for immigrants. It would only be safe to bring immigrants out *via* the Red Sea in the winter months, and those were the months in which people would not leave England. His experience convinced him that immigrants did not leave home between the months of November and March, and it was hopeless to endeavour to introduce immigrants through the Red Sea during the hot season. The Colonial Secretary said that when an individual got into difficulties he should speculate. That was a remarkable statement. He supposed the hon. member wished it to be inferred that the colony was in difficulties; that therefore it should speculate; and that the proposed mail contract was a suitable form of speculation. In the first place, he was not prepared to admit that they were in such serious difficulties; and then, again, the colony was not in the position of an individual—it was not entitled to incur the risks which an individual might think himself justified in incurring. It would be an exceedingly unfortunate thing, then, if the colony were to adopt the contract upon the ground urged by the Colonial Secretary; and he certainly thought he was right in drawing the conclusion he had drawn from the hon. gentleman's remark.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I certainly think you are not.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that with regard to the power of transfer which the contract conceded, the Colonial Secretary said they could not tell whether the line would pay. He presumed they would have to wait some time before that could be determined; and if there were any value attaching to the names of the gentlemen concerned, was it not desirable that the colony should retain its hold upon them? If they were all that they were said to be, was it not undesirable that they should substitute for them people of whom they knew nothing at all? Personally, he had no objection to come to a decision on this matter. He believed the Government had a majority; and that they could, therefore, if they chose, give effect to the contract. At the same time, he felt that he would be compelled to resist it by every means in his power. He was satisfied that they were paying an unnecessary sum for an indifferent service; but, upon the other hand, if they waited patiently till next year and gave due notice—which had not been given in the past—they would improve their ideas very much, and would probably obtain a service which would bring out the immigrants *via* the Cape, and make the homeward voyage through the Red Sea. When the Premier entered into the contract under consideration he appeared to be influenced by the foregone conclusion that they would not have anything to do with the Orient Company, because they were dealing with Sydney and Melbourne. He observed, in some papers upon the subject of mail communication recently laid upon the table, a lengthy telegram from Mr. Macalister. The telegram ran—

"Orient Line never tendered to this office but I believe Premier had an interview with Managers Law and Company tendered fifteenth March as follows: Firstly subsidy to be sixty thousand per annum Secondly Government to guarantee at least half the measurement capacity for emigrants eight months in the year Thirdly postal service to be for ten years and the immigration service four years. If proposal entertained to let them know early. Answer dated seventeenth March states that tender and conditions such as could not be entertained."

Upon the 26th July the Colonial Secretary sent the following telegram to the Agent-General:—

"Anderson Anderson tendered Immigration Postal Service Obtain copy and telegraph summary."

Upon the following day the Agent-General replied:—

"Obtained copy of Anderson's proposition dated sixteenth March which states referring to advertisement for tenders for Steamship Service between the United Kingdom and Queensland *via* Suez Singapore Torres Straits we open to treat with you with a view to supplying by steamers of the Orient Line the means of conveyance of mails and passengers requisite for the colony. The steamers of the Orient Line sail at regular intervals of a fortnight between England and Australia both ways and they leave as a rule with ample unoccupied space for third class passengers carried to Adelaide Melbourne and Sydney at fourteen guineas each and upwards. Think as Adelaide is first port of arrival and last of departure in Australia that Queensland mails would in the event of entering into arrangement naturally be transferred at that port to and from a branch steam service connecting the ports in Queensland. Such branch service could probably be best arranged for in Australia with a local company and it is not unlikely would be maintained almost if not quite on trade revenue alone. It occurs to us to say that possibly the Government of New South Wales might be prepared to join in such a service on condition of steamers touching at Sydney to receive and deliver mails. We do not in any case stipulate for a subsidy for service between Adelaide and this country but we would be content with postages at rates to be agreed on. The mail matter carried prepared to enter into a definite agreement on subject of accommodation for third class passengers by steamers of our line to and from your colony. And we would remind you that the routes followed by our steamers are such as permit passengers being carried both out and home in perfect health and comfort throughout the entire year. Letter in answer dated seventeenth March states that the Premier is in England but absent from London for a few days that he will call upon them during next week and talk with them on the subject of their letter. After this Premier did call and have conversation and according to Anderson's statement he was again to call and see them but never did so.

He did not question the *bona fides* of the transactions between the Premier and the gentlemen connected with the proposed service. The hon. gentleman probably had a decided opinion that he could deal better with them than with the Orient Company; but from the telegrams he had read it was evident that the Orient Company expected that the hon. gentleman would call, and that when he last called upon them transactions were not closed. These facts, and a great many more, led him to the conclusion that at a time when steam communication between England and Australia was clearly entering upon a new and entirely different phase, they would be unwise to commit themselves to this contract; that a better contract might be made; and that, in the meantime, the present means of communication, suitable as it was for the northern ports, might be kept open. He presumed that the company now engaged would carry on their service for a time; and he had no doubt that next year they would be in a position to secure a much better service. The results of the frozen-meat experiments would then be known; and if it were once shown—as he sincerely hoped would be the case—that frozen meat could be profitably exported from Sydney and Melbourne, they would have any amount of competitors for such a service.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had at one time hoped during the last hour that he might at some future time have the honour of being a Minister of the Crown, and if at that time he should wear such venerable snow as decorated the head of the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) he hoped it would be worn with honour. He maintained that that gentleman's speech was a disgrace to him in the position he occupied as a former leader of the House and Agent-General at home. He had dealt for a certain time with the question under discussion, as far, no doubt, as his lights went moderately, but when he reached a certain point, although he said he did not want to impart personalities, what did he do? He said that the Ministry were disgraced before the

Committee and before the country, by an inquiry now proceeding before a select committee of the House.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he rose to correct the hon. gentleman. He did not say that the Ministry were disgraced.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he declined to take the correction.

The CHAIRMAN said the hon. member must accept the correction.

Mr. MOREHEAD said if he must he would take the denial, but the facts remained the same. The hon. gentleman launched a tremendous attack on the Ministry, and said they were held in disesteem, if not something more, in consequence of evidence given before a select committee, evidence that was not yet completed. He would have thought that the hon. gentleman would have kept very quiet with reference to that evidence, for they knew how, in collusion with some member of that committee, he had obtained that evidence, and published a garbled summary of it, though he had been brought before the House, and was held to be in contempt for it, and how it was only through a Standing Order that he was not now in the position, if not of a convicted felon, of a man to be punished. He (Mr. Morehead) was not a blind supporter of the Government; no hon. member could say that of him. He was there to see that until men were found guilty they should be held to be innocent, and if they were found guilty he would be the first to pass sentence upon them. It was a disgrace, not only to the Committee but to the hon. gentleman, occupying the position he did, to make such a statement. He knew very well that the hon. member was exasperated and sore because he had seen younger men assume the leadership of the party—men who were mere boys in comparison with the hon. gentleman. No doubt that was a humiliation, but was it a reason why he should snarl and growl at the members on the Government side of the House? Why not attack the hon. member who led his own party? No doubt he would like to see the present leader of the Opposition anywhere but where he was. The hon. member (Mr. Douglas) had tried his hand at many things in his life, but he failed at them all. He (Mr. Morehead) denied that there was anything in the world that the hon. member had not failed in. There he was, an old and effete man thrown into the shade of the back benches. Certainly he had an ex-Premier on his right hand, whom he had once led, and he hoped he was proud of that companionship.

"But yesterday his word might have stood against the world; now lies he there, and none so poor to do him reverence."

The hon. member, simply because he had fallen from his high estate, had no business to attack hon. members on that side until he could prove his case, and, so far, he had not proved it except by evidence in a garbled state procured from a select committee. No doubt he was proud of that action, for it was one after his own heart. What he (Mr. Morehead) had to say of the hon. member for Ipswich would be more in sorrow than in anger. He was astonished to hear what that hon. member said, and he should have thought, knowing his kindness of heart, which they all acknowledged, and remembering that he had broke bread and partaken of the salt of many members of the present Ministry, that he would have been the last man to have thrown a stone at his old friends, and co-operated with their enemies against them. He would have done much better if he had remained silent; for himself he would rather have resigned his seat and gone altogether out of Parliament than have taken such a course. He (Mr.

Thompson) had better have remained silent and not attacked men whose colleague he had been. Even if his seat were in danger it would be better to lose it, than to lose the high respect in which he was held by hon. members of the House. A seat in that House was an honour justly coveted by all men, yet it might be held too dearly if a man lost his self-respect. With regard to the mail contract he (Mr. Morehead) wanted to point out, among other things, that in the year 1872 the question of the Torres Straits service first cropped up. A gentleman who was then a leading member of the party opposite, called Hemmant—a gentleman not unknown in the annals of Queensland politics, and one who was no doubt held in the highest esteem by the hon. member for Maryborough, then said—

"He had been glad to hear the hon. Premier speak as he had done in reference to the neighbouring colonies, as he was of opinion that this colony had suffered too much from its reliance upon them. He hoped that the present might be looked upon as a change of policy in that respect, and that as there had been political separation from New South Wales for ten years, it would very shortly be followed by commercial separation. If there was any one point which decided him in reference to the two routes, it would be the question of his fellow-colonists in the northern portion of Queensland. They could derive no advantage whatever from a Californian mail service, whilst by the Torres Straits route they would be able to enjoy the same advantages that were at present enjoyed by Brisbane—of replying to their letters by return mail. He sincerely hoped that New South Wales would decline to have anything to do with the route, and that this colony would *volens volens* have the route to itself, by which Brisbane would be the terminus."

That was the line of action that gentleman had taken, and they followed exactly the line of action. It was first dealt with as a commercial project; and now, perhaps, they would like to hear the same gentleman's views as to the emigration part of the question:—

"In regard to the Torres Straits line not being a good passenger route, all he could say was that any person who was at all a bad sailor would prefer to go by it, as it was nearly all smooth water. Altogether, he considered that the question of route was one on which there could be but one opinion, and that was in favour of the proposed resolutions before the House. Even if there was a direct line to Auckland, as was proposed by the Government, there would be none of the numerous advantages offered by the Torres Straits route."

He (Mr. Morehead) thought they could find some more striking opinions expressed by hon. members opposite; for instance, one by the hon. member for Darling Downs, who said—

"He did not like to oppose the proposed great undertaking, because he believed it was a step in the right direction, and if the Government would only accompany it by a proposition to extend the railway line westward, he would give it his support. He thought the expense of the Telegraph and Postal lines would be about £55,000, and that the members of the Opposition, who had been so often accused of reckless expenditure, would not have thought of rushing into such an expense as that. He believed much more benefit would be derived by opening up the interior of the country."

At that time he wanted a railway into the interior, and now that hon. member objected to the mail route. That was most extraordinary. He had no doubt that he could find other expressions by other hon. members at that time if he chose to look for them, but he had said enough to show that the very policy enunciated in those remarks was the one that was being adhered to now by hon. members on the Treasury benches. They contended for commercial separation from New South Wales, and if other hon. gentlemen were of opinion that they should be dependent on New South Wales, let them state their case and meet the matter fairly. That was the question at issue, whether the port of Sydney should take the bulk of the local commerce of Queensland and export it direct, or whether it should be exported from

Brisbane. That was a question for everyone to decide for himself. He did not care very much personally, and he should like to see Brisbane get a smart lesson—let the contract be refused, and Brisbane brought on its knees. There was an intolerable amount of arrogance about Brisbane, a self-sufficiency and a desire to rule the colony, that was insufferable, and the sooner it was put a stop to the better. The squatters would not be affected much, but if the wool went through Sydney the Brisbane merchants and tradesmen would be affected; and, really, he should like to see their fingers burnt and their toes trodden upon. He did not know why their nerves were all in their feet, but it was no use trying to get knowledge into their heads. The present opposition out of doors was got up by well-known agitators who knew nothing of what they were talking, but were guided by errors that had been promulgated and circulated in the public Press until they mixed up the £55,000 for one thing with the £60,000 of another, and at last declared the colony was robbed of £160,000. As he had said before, he would not mind if the contract were not entered into, because then the people of the southern portion of the colony would be brought to their bearings, but still he could not overlook the fact that if the contract were not concluded great injustice would be done to the northern portion of the colony. That portion of the colony had some rights: surely the whole colony was not centred in Brisbane or Maryborough? The hon. member for Maryborough said that it would be easy to bring out immigrants *via* the Cape of Good Hope; but there was one weak point in the hon. member's argument—the hon. member did not consider the chances of the immigrants landing at Adelaide, Melbourne, or Sydney. If the immigrants were brought by the other route they would be spread from north to south throughout the colony—wherever they were wanted there they would be landed. He heard it stated in town, yesterday, that if the Government would enter into a contract for four years at £100,000 the Brisbane people would approve of it. He had heard it said that the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) had said that he would support such a contract.

Mr. DICKSON: I did not mention any sum.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was, then, simply a feeling proposition. Did the hon. member admit that he would approve of a four-years' contract at a sum to be named?

Mr. DICKSON: Yes.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he hoped that the question would be discussed on its merits, and that there would not be imported into the debate any sidewinds, such as had been introduced into it by the hon. member for Maryborough. No doubt, that hon. member had a perfect right to discuss the question all round; but he had no right to go out of his way to attack the Ministry, and those supporting them, as he had done. He held himself to be as honourable a man as the hon. member for Maryborough. He held that he knew whether or not he believed those whom he was supporting to be honest. If he believed the members of the Ministry to be what the hon. member had described them as—or rather, what general opinion, on which the hon. member relied so much, described them as—he would not sit on their side of the House a moment longer. He did not believe that there was one of them—he did not care which one was selected—who could be said to be a rogue, a robber, or a scoundrel, any more than the hon. member for Maryborough or he (Mr. Morehead) was.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he rose to say a few words in reply to the hon. member for Mitchell. He felt strongly on the matter—he did not disguise that—but he had endeavoured not to im-

port personal feeling into the debate. He considered that the remarks of the hon. member for Mitchell on this and on other occasions were wholly unjustifiable. From the first time he had met the hon. member in the House, the hon. member had been in the habit of applying very insulting remarks to him. He had a private friendship with the hon. member, but he must say that he thought the hon. member was going too far when he referred to what he called his (Mr. Douglas's) antecedents, and spoke in a disrespectful way on the fact that he had grey hairs.

Mr. MOREHEAD : That is no disgrace.

Mr. DOUGLAS said it was not a dishonour ; it was rather an honour than otherwise. He could not understand why the hon. member should apply such bitter, cruel, and hard words to him when speaking of his career. He did not judge the hon. member by his career ; he dealt with facts as they arose. Whatever might be the opinion of the hon. member respecting his past or present position, he did not care. Who was to say whether he was a successful man or not ? Who was to compare his success with that of the hon. member ? He would compare his success with that of the hon. member at the head of the Government. In his public capacity he had never done anything of which he was ashamed. He had endeavoured to speak the truth as far as he could, and to take an honest independent view of circumstances as they arose. He had not willingly parted from the standard of honour in that respect. It was very hard, indeed, for a man of his years to be constantly disparaged as he was by the hon. member for Mitchell. What was it to the hon. member because he chose to sit on the back benches ? There was no other place to suit him at present, and he was quite satisfied with his position. He was quite content with the humblest spheres, in every way, so long as he was respected by those who knew him. The remarks of the hon. member for Mitchell were more than abusive ; they were wicked, cruel, and malevolent. He had no objection to the hon. member attacking him politically ; but he objected to personal attacks which were unworthy of a member of the House and unworthy of a gentleman.

Mr. THOMPSON said it would not be fair of him, as he did not represent any section of the House—the only party he represented there being himself, to make a second speech, but if he allowed the remarks of the hon. member for Mitchell to pass without comment it might be assumed that he assented to them. He failed to see how he had been unkind. The Ministry did not adopt that tone ; they simply said, "Do your best." He protested against the idea of his sitting there as a dumb dog, as had been suggested. Although he might desire to resign, there were circumstances connected with his constituency which would prevent him from doing so. He had not the slightest doubt that he should get a seat in the House again—but not for Ipswich. He did not intend to contest a large constituency again for many reasons. Whilst he was in the House he should do his duty, without any regard for kindness of heart or anything of that kind, because that had nothing to do with politics. He would not answer the remarks of the Colonial Secretary, though his arguments could be answered, as there was nothing to complain of in the hon. member's speech—it was more complimentary than otherwise. The hon. member, however, said his (Mr. Thompson's) was the weakest speech he ever heard.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : From you.

Mr. THOMPSON said that was more complimentary still. He did not object to such things ;

they were incidents in debate which one must put up with : but to suppose that he was going to remain silent was quite another thing.

Mr. FEEZ said he wished to express the great satisfaction which he had experienced in hearing the able speech of the hon. the Speaker. The hon. gentleman had argued the question from a broad point of view, and it was pleasing to notice the deep attention which hon. members opposite paid to the speech. He could see from the expressions of their faces that they were convinced by the force of the hon. gentleman's arguments. He was surprised to see the hon. member for Ipswich narrowing down his views on such a great question. The hon. member seemed to be of opinion that all things should be left as they were—that they should not introduce more people here, as they would interfere with the living of those already in the country. Population was essential to the prosperity of the colony, and how we could get people here without providing increased facilities he could not see. The expenditure which would be incurred for the new mail service would be nothing compared to the gain which would accrue to the colony. He could prove that the freights from Melbourne and Sydney to Brisbane and the northern ports were dearer than the freights from England by the Scottish line. The freight to Rockhampton and other northern ports by that line ranged from 35s. to 40s. per ton, whereas the ordinary freight from Melbourne to Rockhampton was 45s. per ton. With such facts before them, hon. members could easily see what advantage the colony would have by having a direct service. He denied that as a mail service the proposed service was of no use. A recent return showing the number of letters sent by the different routes indicated that the people were not so particular about their letters being a day or two earlier or later as the case might be ; because the greatest number of letters had been sent from Brisbane by the longest route. Even if the mails were delivered two or three days later at Brisbane, it must be remembered that the northern ports would derive immense advantages ; but if the service did not touch the northern ports, the whole colony, with the exception of Brisbane, would stand in just the same position as before. If these things were taken into consideration, he thought it would be seen that this contract gave enormous benefits. Some hon. gentlemen opposite objected to it on the grounds that the subsidy was too large, and that the time was too long ; but he would ask was it likely that a large company at home would enter into a contract for a subsidy of £55,000 a-year to bring vessels here for two or three years, and after they had laid out immense capital perhaps lose it all ? He looked upon the price as very small indeed, because it would cost the whole of the subsidy—nearly £60,000 for only three trips—one out, another back, and another out—and there would be twenty-three trips left, for which the company got nothing at all, and for which they must reimburse themselves by affording every possible facility for trade. They would have to find lighters and steamers and go to immense expense ; and was it likely that they would do that for a contract for two or three years ? He considered the terms of the contract most reasonable, and was certain that any hon. gentleman who looked it in the face, and who was not influenced by prejudice, must come to the conclusion that the contract would be of enormous benefit to the colony. He was satisfied that, as the hon. member for Mitchell had said, if they failed to carry this contract they would see much heartbreaking over it ; and that they would be looked upon as very foolish to let such a splendid chance slip by. They must make themselves independent in this matter. The debates in the House years ago showed that that was the idea

promulgated by hon. gentlemen who were considered liberal men and men of ability and foresight. For his own part, he was not only carrying out the wishes of his constituents, but his own unmistakable convictions, in supporting the contract, as he should do to the very end.

Mr. MACFARLANE said, listening to the hon. member for Mitchell, one would almost have thought that he (Mr. Morehead) was not a citizen of Brisbane or a merchant of Brisbane. That hon. member also said some things not very grateful to the ear of a sensitive person, and he (Mr. Macfarlane) hoped it would be a long time before they heard such language applied to a member of the House who had been in it so many years, and against whom no one had ever been able to point the finger of reproach. The Government to-night had received very strong support from the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King); that support, however, only related to a mail service. It appeared from the speeches of hon. members in various parts of the House, and especially on the Government side, that they were tied to this particular service, and that if they did not take it they could not get another. He looked upon the question as a commercial transaction, and held that the Government were bound, before entering into an agreement with any company, to find out what would be the best and most advantageous, route and all concerning it. He maintained that the route by the Orient line to Sydney, and thence by steamship to Brisbane, though not a direct steam service, was quite as much a direct service as the one now before the House. What difference would it be for a merchant in Brisbane to get goods by the Orient line *via* Sydney or by the other route direct to the Bay and have them then transhipped to Brisbane? There would be transhipment in either case; but he believed that by the Orient line there would be a saving of ten days, and ten days to a merchant was something. Therefore he said that the Orient service *via* Sydney would be a much superior service to the one proposed by the Government. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) said what they were concerned about was—was it a reasonable price, and was the colony able to pay that price? He (Mr. Macfarlane) did not think that was the point in dispute. He did not believe any member of the House was opposed to a direct mail service. He was not opposed to such a service, but he was opposed to a service for eight years at nine or nine and a-half knots an hour. It would be a great benefit if they could get a direct service at a reasonable price and for a reasonable time. If they could get that, he believed hon. members on the Opposition side of the House would support it; but to ask them to support a nine-knot service for eight years, seeing the great improvements that were being made in steam communication, was most unreasonable on the part of the Government. The hon. member for Maryborough referred, and the Premier had done so before, to the great amount of goods which came to Brisbane, not direct, but *via* Sydney; but he (Mr. Macfarlane) wished hon. members to remember that all the goods that came to Brisbane from Sydney did not come from Sydney merchants. They actually came direct from Great Britain, and were only transhipped at Sydney from the Orient and other steamers into the A.S.N. Company's or the Melbourne Steamship Company's steamers for Brisbane. That was almost direct steam communication, and Sydney merchants received very little benefit from it indeed—simply a small commission for forwarding the goods from Sydney to Brisbane. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King), in support of the direct line, mentioned as a fact that the Orient Company and the A. S. N. Company had entered into an agreement for the pur-

pose of forwarding goods from Sydney to Brisbane. Now, supposing this contract were ratified and came into effect, would the contractors be able to compete with a powerful company like the Orient? They might or might not be, but the fact that the Orient Company had determined to run in opposition to the line proposed by the Government struck him as being one of the strongest arguments against entering into this contract. He believed the Orient Company would carry goods cheaper, and that a very large quantity would be carried by them to Sydney and then by the A.S.N. Company to Brisbane; and the fact that that route would be quicker was one reason why it should be supported in preference to the line proposed by the Government. The hon. gentleman (Mr. King) also stated that the freight from Sydney to Maryborough on some goods that had been sent out by the Orient line, and transhipped in Sydney, was double the freight from London to Sydney. The hon. member had got that information second-hand, but he (Mr. Macfarlane) would give it first-hand. His firm imported goods from London by the Orient line, and on the average, as nearly as he could say without going into figures, the expense from Sydney to Brisbane was about one-fourth of the whole cost. The hon. member made it double, but perhaps the goods he spoke of were very heavy, unwieldy articles, requiring a good deal of work in transhipment. The hon. member (Mr. King) also referred to the fact that the A.S.N. Company carried goods from Sydney to the northern ports of the colony a great deal cheaper than from Brisbane to the North; but if the Government had any "sawee" in them at all, they would soon prevent that. Nothing was easier than to make them carry goods from Brisbane in preference to carrying them from Sydney, or to compel merchants in the north to buy heavy goods from Brisbane merchants instead of Sydney merchants, and at the same time benefit the farmers of the colony. How was this to be done? If the Government simply increased the duty on hay, potatoes, butter, and corn a little heavier than what it was, it would act in this way—that merchants up north could buy heavy goods, such as those he had mentioned, cheaper in Brisbane than in Sydney, and consequently they would be shipped from Brisbane instead of Sydney. He maintained that potatoes, and hay, and chaff, and other heavy goods were far too lightly taxed, and that if the taxes on those goods were doubled they would soon find the means of employing their own ships and bidding defiance to the A.S.N. Company, or any other company. He did not think there was anything more he need refer to at present, but looking at the matter from a business point of view he held that the Opposition had proved that they had equity on their side, and that the country was at their back in standing out against the ratification of this mail service.

Mr. FRASER said he had listened with a great deal of attention to the very able speech of the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King), but he could not agree with the reasons or the conclusions of that hon. gentleman. For instance, he (Mr. King) accused hon. members on the Opposition side of the House of objecting to this mail service because it would benefit the pastoral interest. Now, he (Mr. Fraser) believed he was justified in saying, on behalf of every member of the Opposition, that no such statement had been given utterance to since the commencement of the discussion on this question. The Opposition were quite willing to afford every facility and every help in order, if possible, to establish the much desired object of making the frozen-meat business a success; and

he (Mr. Fraser) quite concurred with the remarks of the hon. member for Ipswich, that if £30,000 or £100,000 were required from the colony in order to establish the fact whether it was a success or not, he was prepared, as one member, to support that vote. But that was a different thing to saddling the country with a contract of the kind they were now asked to sanction for a period, not of three or five, but of eight years. That was one point to which hon. members on his side of the Committee must decidedly object. The hon. member also drew attention to the fact that, whilst it was contended by the Opposition that the proposed contract would be a monopoly, the colony was at the present time suffering from the still greater monopoly enjoyed by the A.S.N. Company. He (Mr. Fraser) was not going to dispute that fact, but he would ask the hon. member how the acceptance of the proposed contract would in the slightest degree affect the monopoly which the A.S.N. Company held of our coasting trade. The hon. member brought before the Committee, in confirmation of his objection to the A.S.N. Company and the present arrangements, an instance furnished to him by one of his own constituents in which the charges between Sydney and Maryborough were twice as much as between London and Sydney. There was no doubt that that was a very undesirable state of things, and they should do all in their power to put a stop to it; but he (Mr. Fraser) could bring forward a case which would show a conclusion in favour of shipping goods by the Orient Company—namely, that a member of a firm who were large importers of heavy goods, principally iron, told him the other day that they had imported direct from London to Brisbane, by the Orient Company, 150 tons of goods which were landed in Brisbane at something considerably less than the freight now paid by the Government for steel rails. That fact showed of what very little value, unless they were in possession of all the facts connected with it, such an illustration as that presented to the Committee that evening by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King) really was. Another matter to which the hon. member referred was the frozen-meat trade, and he said that something like 200,000 head of cattle would be converted into frozen meat in the course of twelve months. On making inquiry, he (Mr. Fraser) found that it would be a fair calculation to allow three beasts to the ton, and on that calculation there would be something like 60,000 tons of frozen meat for shipment. Now, supposing they had thirteen vessels in the year departing from the coast, and supposing each of those vessels carried 2,000 tons—which they would not, as a vessel of 2,500 tons, and carrying coal, could not; but supposing, for the sake of argument, that each vessel took 2,000 tons of frozen meat—that would amount only to 26,000 tons, leaving 36,000 tons to be provided for by other companies that were not subsidised. It was well known that the Orient Company was about to largely increase their capital for the purpose of extending their operations; and it was a well-known fact that they were doing the service from London to Melbourne in four days less than the P. and O. Company were doing it; in fact, judging from a statement lately made by Mr. Fawcett in the House of Commons, the Imperial Government regretted having entered into a mail contract with the P. and O. Company. From the correspondence read by the hon. member, Mr. Douglas, that evening, it was evident that the Premier, when in London, did not do all he could to come to an arrangement with the Orient Company, and that, by paying a far less subsidy than it was proposed to give to this new service, the Orient Company might have been induced to send their ships to Moreton Bay. He himself

believed that so soon as the frozen meat was found to be a success that company would be prepared to come to Moreton Bay without any subsidy. He should be very glad to assist in any scheme that would tend to bring to these shores a large number of that class of immigrants without which they could not expect the colony to prosper. But what encouragement had the Government given to that sort of immigration? They had not heard that whilst the Premier was in England he had done anything to accomplish that much to be desired object, and it was to be regretted that such should have been the case. Hon. members had been told that if the contract was not agreed to the colony would become more and more dependent upon New South Wales every day, that it would in a short time become merely an appendage of Sydney, and that its mercantile connection was fast leaving it; and when the question of the contract was first introduced the Premier brought forward statistics to show that such was the case. He (Mr. Fraser) would, however, bring forward a few figures to show the contrary, and had he known that the debate would have come on that evening he would have been prepared with more. He found that in 1879, the decrease in imports from the United Kingdom, as compared with the previous year, was £365,273, whilst from New South Wales there was an increase of £84,342, but the total decrease on the shipments during 1879, as compared with the previous year, was £280,931. It might be supposed that New South Wales derived all that benefit, whereas all she gained was £80,000. Taking the year 1872, they imported from Sydney £1,424,829, whilst in 1878 they imported from New South Wales £1,530,053, or an increase in the imports from New South Wales during a period of six years amounting to £106,224. Taking the United Kingdom, in 1878 they imported £1,181,246; whilst in 1872 they imported direct from Great Britain £474,848, showing an increase of imports from Great Britain in six years of £706,401, as against an increase from New South Wales of £106,234. Surely, those figures did not show that the colony was becoming daily more dependent on New South Wales. They showed that should the resources of the colony be developed, as there was every reason to suppose they would, the colony would by its own strength become more and more independent of New South Wales, without any such help as they were taught to expect from the proposed service. What he had referred to was a natural independence, and they would never be independent if they had to depend year by year on the advantages derived from giving a subsidy such as that proposed. He would quote a few more figures in connection with this matter. In 1877 the imports from New South Wales were £1,950,084, and in 1878 £1,531,053, showing a decrease on the year's transactions of £449,031; whilst during the same year there was an increase in the imports from the United Kingdom of £16,869; so that there could be no occasion for forcing upon the colony a contract like that now proposed. Looking at their exports, in 1877 they exported to the United Kingdom £1,201,528, and in 1878 £922,326, showing a decrease for the year of £279,202, but in the exports from the colony of New South Wales there was, for the same period, a decrease of £913,784. In carrying out any arrangements like those contained in the contract before the Committee, they must discontinue all intercolonial commercial intercourse and trade; but that was most undesirable, as however desirable it might be that they should export direct to Great Britain, it must be remembered that for some of their produce New South Wales and Victoria might be their best customers, as they could get a higher

price from them for their sugars and other produce than in the London market. Why, then, should they desire to send such products to the London market, and why should they regret to find that their exports to the neighbouring colonies were on the increase? When the debate was last adjourned, it was proposed that the question should be decided upon its merits, and he had no objection to that course being taken. In the few remarks he had made, he had shown that a considerable proportion of the arguments used in favour of the contract would not bear investigation or justify the course that the House was now asked to pursue. Before sitting down he wished to observe that it was no use telling hon. members from the other side of the House that they were opposed to a direct mail or mercantile service with the United Kingdom. He was satisfied that all hon. members on the Opposition side of the House were very desirous of seeing such a service carried on, but they held that the Government were not justified at the present time, considering the circumstances of the colony, in hurrying the contract forward. Taking into consideration the improvements which were taking place in connection with steam services, it would be unwise on the part of Parliament to bind themselves for eight years to a service such as that proposed. There was a time when it was suggested that the Orient Company could not carry on successfully without a subsidy, and that if a subsidy could not be obtained their present enterprise would fail. Hon. members, however, had no right to suppose for one moment that the service of that company would be discontinued. It would be contrary to the spirit of the age, and to the progress and development of modern times, that with the improved appliances the company should not be able to successfully and profitably carry out the enterprise upon which they had entered. In the course of a few years subsidies would no doubt be done away with, or, at any rate, very materially reduced in amount. When the hon. the Premier, the other evening, was showing what large subsidies Great Britain was giving for her foreign services, he was using arguments that could have no force in this colony. Hon. members would see that if these subsidies were given in the exact ratio which the population, trade, and commerce of Great Britain bore to the population, trade, and commerce of Queensland, they would amount to millions. On the other hand, it had been shown that the Imperial Government were contracting their subsidised services, and yet hon. members were asked in the face of all that to bind themselves for eight years to a nine-knot service. He hardly thought there would be one hon. member in that House who would contend, for a moment, that a nine-knot service was not decidedly behind the age. Once bound to it the colony could not get itself free, but would probably have to give an increased subsidy year after year. Those were the grounds upon which he would not support this contract. With all his desire that the colony should be free from the influence of Sydney, so far as its commercial connection with the colony was concerned, and notwithstanding his desire to see a direct service with the United Kingdom initiated, he felt constrained, taking the broadest view of the question, in the interests of his constituents, and the colony at large, to object to the present contract. Considerable capital had been admittedly made out of the fact that anything coming from the Opposition side of the House was from a Brisbane point of view. They were charged with ignoring the interests of the North entirely. He denied that completely. There was not a

member on his side of the House who did not sincerely desire to see equal justice meted out to North and South. But was it reasonable that two-thirds, if not three-fourths, of the whole of the community should allow themselves to be overridden by one-third or one-fourth? It was not; and such accusations and charges from hon. members representing northern constituencies came with a very bad grace. They were continually having separation held up to them to frighten them whenever such questions as the present one were being discussed. But if such a course of procedure were adopted, or attempts made to do an injustice to the great majority of the population, in the interests of the smaller portion he ventured to say that the cry for commercial separation was much more likely to come from the South than from the North. We should not like to see it; but it would be forced upon them. It was a great pity that this question should be turned into a contention between different parts of the colony. It would be much better for the whole colony if they acted in harmony and concord, and the interests of all classes studied alike. He was sure they were all anxious to see the different interests of the colony working in harmony. As he had said before, dealing with the question upon its merits, and after having considered it in the most careful manner, he could not see that the scheme as laid before them was such as to command his support; and he would say again that this was not the time to lay such a scheme before them. The contract, as stated, was a very one-sided affair. It was a pity that the Government had not seen their way to come to arrangements with the Orient Company, because, according to the telegram laid before them, there was a basis upon which a satisfactory arrangement could have been come to. They should not bind themselves to a nine-knot service for eight years, which, by that time, would be decidedly behind the spirit of the age and what the circumstances of the colony would require.

Mr. DICKSON said he should like to have heard some answer from the Premier in reply to the telegram from the Agent-General, which had been published since the last discussion on the merits of the contract, and which had just been read by his hon. friend (Mr. Douglas). The Orient Company having made an overture of that character, it might have been supposed that the Premier would have endeavoured to obtain an improved offer before dealing with the contract which formed the subject of the present debate. It looked as though hon. members on the Ministerial side had been actuated during the debate more by a desire to see a through steam service established than by any considerations founded upon the actual merits of this particular service. He himself held that such a service, if one could be obtained adapted to the requirements of the colony at a reasonable price, would be very desirable; but on analysing this service its one-sided character became more and more apparent, and none of the objections brought forward by members on both sides of the House had been replied to. The Opposition had contended that this contract which the House was asked to ratify as an immigrant service contract was one to which that term could not be applied, there being no stipulations compelling the contractors to carry a single immigrant. On the other hand, the colony was bound hand and foot, whenever immigrants were brought out, to give the company the first refusal at £16 a-head. There was nothing mutual in the arrangement. Had the agreement been less one-sided, one of the objections so frequently reiterated against the contract would have been removed. He believed that it would be found desirable to bring out immigrants by a

shorter route than was adopted by ordinary vessels; but that was no reason, nor had the Premier adduced any reason, why the House should assent to such a one-sided clause. The House was equally in the dark with regard to the contracting parties. They had not ascertained to whom the contract was to be assigned. If to the British-India Company, the House would feel inspired with a certain amount of confidence that the conditions of the service would be efficiently and punctually carried out. But the House had no such assurance, nor had they any guarantee that after all the discussion that had taken place the contract, if agreed to, might not remain a dead letter. The contractors would not be bound to send a single vessel, because the penalty that could be inflicted in case of default could never, according to the terms of the contract, exceed the portion of the subsidy which would be due upon the performance of that trip. Such objections as those had not been raised for the purpose of prolonging a debate—they had arisen from deliberate consideration of the contract itself, and they would arise in the mind of any reasonable man. They ought, therefore, to be fairly met, and if possible answered, so that the country would see that the objections had been overruled through an additional amount of information. But now hon. members were in exactly the same position as they were when the contract was first laid on the table; and the only attempt to answer the objections urged had been that of the Colonial Secretary, when he said that Townsville possessed a steam-lighter which enabled the steamers coming to that port to discharge with great rapidity. That was probably a fact, but he contended that there were no Government vessels there at the present time by means of which the immigrants and cargo of an incoming steamer could be landed in reasonable time; and there were certainly no such means of transport at Cooktown, and the other ports at which the steamers of the new proposed line would call. The Opposition seemed to be regarded, at all events by the Premier, as having no knowledge of the subject, and as offering remarks which were so unworthy of attention as to need no reply. No reply had been made to the just strictures of hon. members on the Opposition side, and no evidence had been given of the *bona fides* of the Government in dealing with the matter. The feeling of dissatisfaction which at present existed would never be cleared away until the Government showed who were the people with whom they were dealing. Quotations from speeches on the Torres Straits mail service by Mr. Hemmant and other members on the Liberal side of the House had been launched at the heads of hon. members to-night. He ranked himself amongst those members who had approved of the Torres Straits service. He believed that in many respects such a service was suited to the geographical position of the colony; and if one with a speed equal to that of the competing lines to the southern colonies were submitted in such a manner that the charge would not be too heavy for the means of the colony, and the term limited to four or five years, with such other conditions as would allow of a fair comparison being instituted between it and the lines subsidised by the sister colonies, then he would withdraw his objection, in order that during the period over which the contract would extend the service might be practically tested. Although he considered that the commercial benefit expected to accrue had been over-estimated, he would be willing that a contract should be entered into as a tentative measure, in order to see whether it would restore that commercial prosperity which had lately been waning, but always provided that the colony was not asked to pay too much

for its whistle. He could only come to the conclusion that this contract had been entered into for the benefit of one class only—the pastoral interest; and that its chief merit was the encouragement which it would give to the establishment of a frozen-meat trade. The pastoral lessees, however, said that the service was not for their benefit, and no doubt there were hon. members on the Ministerial side of the House who were sufficiently independent to decline to assent to such a scheme merely for the purpose of assisting that industry. The service, in his opinion, had been introduced by the Government with a view to benefiting and encouraging that industry, and he contended, whilst ranking himself amongst those who desired to see a large frozen-meat trade initiated and carried out successfully, that if the service was only necessary for that purpose it should be paid for by the class who would be most benefited. The Premier, when making his Financial Statement, had a great opportunity of removing a good deal of the objection advanced against the contract. A very small tax on sheep and cattle would have raised the sum of £50,000, which he might fairly have devoted to the purpose of carrying out this mail contract. Possibly, many hon. members would then have not found so much to admire in it; but, at all events, they would have had the credit of sincerity in endeavouring to introduce a mail service with a view to benefiting themselves without inflicting extra taxation upon those who would not participate in the benefits arising from it. As a postal service he contended it was now utterly behind the age, and would be more so in the future. As a mercantile service it would not benefit any one part of the colony in the manner that had been argued. As an immigration service it was liable to the objection that it was entirely optional with the contractors to bring out immigrants. Then, in what light was it to be regarded? The only light in which it could be viewed was that it was a scheme to introduce and encourage the frozen-meat export trade. They had not yet seen that such a trade was even feasible. He hoped that it was, but one swallow did not make a summer. Before they subsidised to the extent of £55,000 per annum for a period of eight years a through service which was admittedly insufficient for three of their main requirements, and only inferentially sufficient as a safety-valve for the frozen-meat trade, they ought to be well assured that the particular object for which the line was to be subsidised was a success, and that their circumstances justified them in entering into the contract. He contended that their circumstances did not warrant them in doing so, and that if it was desirable to subsidise the service, it was incumbent upon the Premier to make special provision, by an assessment on the class who would be benefited by it, for the cost of maintaining a service which, regarded in any other view, was entirely unnecessary. He chiefly, however, contended that the Government had not removed the very valid objections which the Opposition had urged against the proposed service, and that the House was entitled to know who the parties were who would ultimately have to administer the contract. He was also of opinion, as he had said before, that in view of the largeness of the contract and of the importance attached to it by some communities, it was only reasonable to have the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers examined at the bar of the House, so that hon. members might know with some certainty when the contractors' steamers would be able to come up the Brisbane and Fitzroy Rivers. He hoped that before they went to a division the Premier would be induced to explain why the carrying of immigrants was made optional, and also be able

to say that he had fully ascertained who would be the parties who would carry out the contract during its currency.

Mr. ARCHER said he should fancy that hardly anything had been discussed more fully than the unfortunate mail contract. Still, he was not going to allow some statements made by the last speaker to pass uncontradicted. The last speaker and his colleague, the learned member for Enoggera, had both harped on the same string that the contract was simply a squatters' affair. The learned member for Enoggera had said that nobody could deny that. But he (Mr. Archer) did deny that it was in any case a squatters' question, and he would add that the squatters were prepared to carry on the freezing and shipping of meat at their own expense. If they were going to carry on an extensive frozen-meat trade, the twelve steamers which would leave every year would be a mere fleabite. There was one man at Rockhampton whose operations were sufficiently extensive, if he went in largely for shipping, to employ that number of vessels himself. The frozen-meat trade was not to be carried on in twelve vessels a year, but in vessels leaving weekly or perhaps daily, so that it was a perfect absurdity to suppose that the contract was a matter chiefly concerning the squatters. Supposing, however, that it did enrich them very much, what would the effect be upon the general community, and more especially the class which they were anxious to establish—the selectors. It would immediately double the value of stock in the colony. Not long ago a selector asked him to buy his young store cattle, and he declined. The man said—“It is very hard. I can't sell to anybody. Two years ago your brother bought all my young stores and gave me the largest cheque that I ever got.” He (Mr. Archer) replied that his brother could do so because he could sell his fats at the time, but at present he could not get rid of his fats, and, therefore, could not be a purchaser of store cattle. Did any man mean to tell him that what would double the value of cattle would not be a benefit to every part of the colony? But if the frozen-meat trade was to be confined to twelve vessels a-year, they had better put the notion out of the way than have anything to do with it. The learned member for Enoggera, in pumping from the bottom of his inner consciousness reasons to urge against the contract, had said that the northern ports were favourable to the service principally because it would be the means of bringing a lot of Chinamen from Singapore and Batavia. For a moment he was astonished by the argument, and thought to himself, What idea has the hon. member of those places?—does he think they are places where Chinamen grow, and from which they are exported? The colony had direct communication with China now, but their repressive legislation had been quite sufficient to stop Chinese immigration—in fact, the Chinese population in the colony was diminishing; and yet hon. members were asked to suppose that the service would supply the colony with an enormous amount of new Chinese. The idea was absurd, but not a bit more so than the argument of the senior member for Enoggera that twelve steamers a-year could be of material advantage to the frozen-meat trade. It had been also urged that by entering into the contract they would be forming a monopoly. Did anyone suppose that the steam trade to Sydney would have attained the dimensions that it had if New South Wales had not begun by subsidising steamers, and was it not a fact that the subsidy paid to the P. and O. Company had opened up a trade which had induced other companies to enter into competition with them? He was not going to make a long speech at that

late hour, but wished simply to say that the many figures adduced by the member for South Brisbane proved to him the very opposite idea that the hon. member had attempted to establish. If the hon. member had carried his inquiries further he would have found that the quantity of wool shipped from Queensland to Sydney had risen enormously during the last two years, and that, in fact, the direct shipping trade of Queensland with England was diminishing. If their merchants were to be the merchants of the colony they must do the trade by steamer, and until it was proved by themselves that steamers might come to their harbours, get loaded, and be quickly despatched, no independent company would send its steamers to trade with the colony. It was no use talking about the Orient Co. They did not want such a service as the company could give;—if the steamers were to call at Sydney and the other intermediate places before coming to Queensland, the service would be unfit for every purpose that they wished to secure. The mails would simply be brought to Brisbane, and every northern port would be left untouched. They wanted to establish a direct trade from every town in the colony, and to employ the merchants in Queensland as importers of the goods that they required. But so long as the vessels came to Brisbane and stopped there this would not be possible; and besides, he could not understand how any Brisbane man could urge such a proposition. At all events, they must see that any line of steamers subsidised must call at every port of the colony. It was a great misfortune that Brisbane was situated, as it were, on the borders of New South Wales, which made it necessary that Brisbane should not be the only place visited. A good deal had been said by the hon. member for Maryborough as to its being injudicious for a young country to use its own capital in establishing shipping when a wealthy country like England could do it. But in asking that the contract should be ratified they were asking English capital to establish the trade. Anyone who had been down the Red Sea, and followed the route through Torres Straits, would admit that the proposed route was certainly the route for Queensland. From Thursday Island down to Brisbane was a part of the world that in a few years would be visited by an amount of shipping that would astonish hon. members. Before that time came they must divert the trade from Sydney and establish it in the colony. With regard to the route through the Red Sea, the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) said that a good many troops died going through the Red Sea. He admitted that was the case with invalided troops returning from India, but did not think the hon. member could bring forward statistics to prove that deaths occurred in the crowded troopships going out.

Mr. DOUGLAS : The French and the Dutch have lost a good many.

Mr. ARCHER said the French and the Dutch crammed their vessels in such a way that their troops were bound to die; but he had not heard of English troops dying on their way out, though there were 100 English going through the Red Sea for every Dutchman or Frenchman. The deaths generally occurred among invalided troops and sick women and children, who had left India because they could no longer live there. He believed the route, properly managed, would be found better than any other existing route. Before sitting down, he would give a bit of advice to those who opposed the contract. He would advise them immediately to stop all harbour and river improvements, to vote that the dry dock be filled with water, and that a stop be put to everything that would tend to

make Brisbane a great commercial port. Why should they bother themselves with those things when they would not bring vessels to the colony? Everyone would agree that unless inducements were first held out ships would not come. Very likely, when the Orient line was fairly established and had made themselves actually necessary to the neighbouring colony, they, too, would be subsidised; and Queensland should not, any more than Sydney, expect to get trade without paying for it. They would be bound to Sydney, and less likely to free themselves from the bonds unless they made the proposed contract; for all they sent to Sydney for transshipment entailed a direct loss on the Queensland merchants. He hoped that the establishment of a direct trade with England would be the means of reviving the trade of Brisbane. If hon. members were really anxious to make Brisbane a port which might at some future day rival, or appear to rival, Sydney, they would certainly encourage the mail contract which made Brisbane the terminus.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that when the hon. member for Blackall rose they generally got some valuable information on the subject before the House, and they had now discovered that the proposed line would be perfectly valueless for the meat trade. He hoped the Government were thankful for the light the hon. member had thrown on the subject. What remaining excuse was there for voting the contract, seeing that it would not develop the frozen-meat trade? As a postal service it was not attempted to be defended, because it would only accelerate the mails of the ports of the colony north of Rockhampton, the postal communication of which was less than one-seventh that of the whole colony, according to the statistics laid on the table by the Government a week or two ago. It was not an immigration service; for there was nothing in the contract which bound the contractors to take immigrants. Then what was it? If it was not a postal service, not an immigration service, not a frozen-meat service, what remained? The hon. member for Blackall said that no direct trade of the kind would be of any use unless the steamers were to call at all the ports along the coast. If the ships were going to call at all the ports it would not be a mail service, and they must start on a new basis. Were they justified in trying the experiment of subsidising a merchant line of steamers? That was all that remained: and it was quite clear the thing must come to that. The more the matter was discussed the more fallacious were the arguments in its favour found to be. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Archer) was kind enough to intimate that the people of Brisbane did not know their own business. The solicitude of the members for Leichhardt and Blackall regarding the welfare of Brisbane was most gratifying; and if they could believe it was all sincere, what a lot of fools the people in the South must be to protest against the benefits the Government were trying to lavish on them! They must be the blindest of all men! How was it they were all such fools that they could not see the immense benefits that would accrue from subsidising the line of steamers! He was inclined to think they did not see what advantage would be derived from the proposed monopoly, and would probably prefer to be allowed to mind their own business in their own way. He should like to hear the answer to the question that was asked at an earlier period of the debate, viz., "Can 2,000-ton steamers get into the dry-dock?" If they could not, he failed to see the use of deepening the river and finishing the dry-dock if this contract was approved. The Government really owed the Committee a fresh departure. They ought to justify entering into a contract subsidising a line of

merchant steamers, and they ought to give any information in their power. The Premier seemed to be in the secrets of the promoters of the company, because he suggested that Queensland was going to be part of its name. They might infer from that that the company was to be called the "Queensland Company" or it might be "The Eastern and Queensland Frozen Meat Carrying Company," or the "Queensland and Great Britain Steam Navigation Company," or any other name. If the Premier knew that Queensland was to be part of the title he might tell the Committee the whole of its name; and, having told the name, he might tell where he got his information and how he knew so much about the company. If he would give that information it would assist hon. members to form an opinion as to who the new contractors were likely to be. It was no use now to say that the contract was to be carried out by the British-India Company or by the Netherlands Company, because they knew it was not. A new company was to be formed, and there was a stipulation binding the Government to transfer the contract to it. Hon. members opposite had no doubt been told it was not so, but if they looked at the contract they would find that it was so. It was true that the present contractors were bound to take a substantial share in the new company. He need not point out that five minutes afterwards they might assign their shares. He hoped the Premier would tell what he knew about the company, as he was very anxious to know who they were. They had heard a great deal lately that should make them scrutinize contracts very closely, and this was why the Committee and the country would be very glad to know who were the contractors. There were many other arguments used during the evening, but he would take his stand upon the fact that the service was now confessedly a merchant service. Before he sat down he would call attention to the statistics laid on the table the other day, relative to the number of letters carried from the different parts of the colony. During twelve months, ending 30th June last, the total number of foreign letters carried from the colony by mail steamers by all the lines was 142,354; that was exclusive of the letters from Thursday Island, which numbered about 200. Of that total the number carried from all ports north of Cape Palmerston was 19,228, or less than one-seventh of the whole. That was from ports north of Cape Palmerston. He had chosen that point, because it was clear that for all places south of Rockhampton any other line of steamers would be better as a mail route, and for Rockhampton itself any other line would be quite as good and a little better. For the first six months of this year the total number of foreign letters from the colony was 68,615, of which the total number from ports north of Cape Palmerston was 10,018, or just over one-seventh. That was the proportion of the correspondence of the colony to which that line would be of any use as a postal service. It was no doubt desirable, if practicable, to keep open the Torres Straits route, but he was certain that the people of the north, notwithstanding the continual efforts made to induce them to believe that there was an antagonism in this part of the colony against them, were not so unreasonable as to desire the colony at large to be taxed for a service which would be of comparatively little use to them, and of no use whatever to anybody else. There was no earthly reason why the South should be jealous of the North. The South was glad to have the northern parts of the colony attached to it; it derived a considerable revenue from them, and why there should be any jealousy on the part of the south he could not understand. It was not likely that Bowen or Townsville could ever compete

with Brisbane for the trade of the interior, and certainly Brisbane had no wish to interfere with the trade of those places. The attempt to set north against south was a fallacy which must soon be exposed, and when the people in the north found that they had been deluded they would not be too well pleased with those who had deluded them. He had omitted to mention that the number of letters from Rockhampton was somewhat less than that from the northern ports, being for last year 17,357 as against 19,228, and for the first six months of the present year 9,277 as against 10,018. As a postal route the line would be of no use to six-sevenths of the colony; and it was not an immigration service; and as a frozen-meat service it would be useless. What justification, then, was there for it? If they left the trade alone plenty of ships would come here suited to the harbours of the colony. The statistics given by the hon. member (Mr. Fraser) showed that our trade had been developing during several years past, and that the falling off last year was mainly in consequence of the general depression that prevailed all over the world. As the trade of the colony increased so would its direct shipping, and if they went on improving their harbour and rivers they would soon have plenty of ships to carry their produce home. When the frozen-meat trade was established, it would not be by means of a subsidised line of steamers, but by steamers that came here because it paid them to do so; and they would return to England by whichever route they found most practicable—and he questioned very much whether that would be *via* Torres Straits. But the question was, whether in the present circumstances of the colony they were justified in binding themselves to subsidise a line of steamers for a period of eight years; and the only argument addressed to that point was that unless they did so the colony would lose its direct trade with England. It would certainly require better arguments than those used hitherto to induce a colony which was certainly not well off to enter upon what the Colonial Secretary called a speculation. The hon. gentleman employed the analogy of a man who, when he was hard up, must enter into a speculation to retrieve himself. He (Mr. Griffith) had his own opinion about the morality of speculations of that kind, for it was speculating with other people's money, and, under the old insolvency laws, if a speculation of that kind did not succeed the speculator was punished for dishonesty. He did not like the idea of a country in difficulties speculating in that way. When they undertook expenditure they ought to be in a position to meet it, but in the present case no proposition had been made as to how the cost of the service was to be met. The objections to the contract seemed to increase every day the discussion lasted—the more it was considered the more rotten it seemed. Before going further they were entitled to be placed in possession of all the information the Government had on the subject.

The PREMIER said the ground taken up by the hon. member (Mr. Griffith) had been traversed over and over again. The hon. gentleman had repeatedly characterised it as a frozen-meat service, and had appealed against it to the people outside on the ground that the Government side were pressing it for their own interests. To-night the hon. gentleman had sneered at it as a frozen-meat service. But the hon. member (Mr. Archer) had given him a complete answer by showing that one butcher exported as much meat as all the twelve steamers could take away in a year. They could not, therefore, be pressing it for their own interests. There could not be a more conclusive argument. And then the hon. gentleman cut the ground from under his own feet by saying that it was not a frozen-meat

service, nor a postal service. As to its not being a postal service he (the Premier) had shown throughout that it was not only a postal service, but the most efficient that, under the circumstances, they could have. It was equal to the San Francisco route or the P. and O. route for Brisbane alone. By the terms of the contract the difference in time was only two days, and he had no doubt the service would be performed in exactly the same time. Not only would it be as speedy, but the frequent transshipments would be avoided, and the chances of contingencies would make it a more certain means of communication. Further north, as a mail service, it was better than any other route. The hon. gentleman then said it was not an immigration service, because the contractors were not bound to carry immigrants. It was impossible to tell, six months beforehand, whether the colony would want immigrants. The first thing the present Ministry did on coming into office was to stop immigration completely, simply because times had changed and they did not know what to do with the immigrants. The bargain made was, that if there were immigrants the company had to take them, and if the service did not suit as an immigration service the Government had the power to dispense with it altogether. He believed that as an immigration service it would be a success, and, if the route did not suit, the agreement in that particular could be broken off. As to the possibility of the company declining to take immigrants at £16 per head, he had no doubt they were prepared to take as many as the Government liked; and the fact that they were making arrangements for immigrants in the ships they proposed to build was sufficient to guarantee their good faith in that respect. Having, in this quiet way, wiped out the mail contract as a postal or immigration service, the hon. member said that nothing remained but the contention that the contract amounted to a subsidy of £55,000 a-year for a mercantile service. He would have no hesitation in defending even such a service as that, for it would pay the colony well to subsidise it even though we derived no advantage from it as a postal route. But he had put the matter clearly before the House. He assured the House that the postal matter, in its present bulk, would cost us £16,000 if sent by the P. and O. Company now. Taking the same ratio of increase in the next eight years as they had had in the past eight years, then the average cost of the whole would be £25,000, and, deducting that amount from £55,000, they were left £30,000. The question which remained was whether a mercantile service was worth that amount per annum. He held that it was, and innumerable arguments could be brought forward from that side of the House to prove that he was right. The hon. member seemed to regard it as a very light matter. He said, "Let trade increase here, and we shall get ships to come." If once trade left Brisbane, it would not return in a hurry. The hon. member also said he saw no sign of decadence in the shipping trade of Brisbane. Had the hon. member been blind for the past twelve months? Did he not see their empty wharves? Did he not perceive that their trade was going to Sydney? He knew perfectly well that it was. The statistics he quoted a few nights ago proved that the direct export trade to England was decreasing. The more direct exports decreased the more difficult it was to load ships. It followed that the longer ships waited to be filled the more would be charged for their freights; and that more trade would be diverted wherever quick despatch was offered. This diversion of trade from Brisbane had been going on for some time, and he ventured to predict that if it were allowed to continue there

would be in the course of the next two years as little home shipping from this port as there was from Rockhampton or Townsville. The proposed steam service would counteract this diversion, because those who wished their exports to reach England quickly would have all facilities for exportation by fast steamers, and would give instructions for their goods to be shipped from Brisbane to the home country direct. The fact of Brisbane being a central depôt for shipment to the home country would be a great advantage not only to steamers, but to sailing ships, because squatters would give general instructions for direct shipment. What would be the immediate effect? So far from the proposed service being a monopoly, one of his main reasons for proposing it was that it would stimulate due and healthy competition in direct trade between the Australian colonies and Great Britain. If once their trade were diverted to Sydney there would be no competition at all. What he said was proved by the fact that since trade had been diverted from different ports to Sydney steam freights had risen over 25 per cent. Increase of freight to Sydney ships meant so much out of the pockets of the exporters of this colony. The hon. member harped upon the old string, and desired to know who were the people with whom the contract had been made. There was not the slightest doubt that the contract was with the whole power and authority of the British-India Company. The hon. member knew that it would be impossible during the short time he spent in England to organise a company. The whole of his arrangements were carried on with the British-India Company—in the India office, with all the officials of the company and of the Netherlands-India Company. He took as signatories, not the whole, but as many as he considered necessary, of the influential men in the companies as security to the Queensland Government, that they would carry out the contract. He had the names of the chairmen of the two companies; every name in the list, in fact, represented either a chairman, a director, or a manager.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Gray, Dawes, and Company.

The PREMIER said they were the managers of the British-India Company in London. He had explained that to the House; but, like the hon. member for Enoggera, he thought it useless to reiterate what he had said over and over again. The only fresh argument he had heard was that used by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) in reference to the telegram of the Agent-General, explaining the nature of the negotiations with the Orient Company. The argument amounted to this—that the Premier promised to call again, but did not. The inference was, that if the Premier had called again he might have been able to enter into a satisfactory arrangement with the company. He had already given a thorough explanation of these negotiations, and hon. members could perceive that there was not the slightest hope of such arrangement, because the only basis upon which the company would negotiate was this—that they were to bring out immigrants, and that the terminus was to be Sydney, connected with Brisbane by a local line. They would not promise to put on a connecting line themselves, but promised meanwhile to work with the A.S.N. Company. He, of course, could not consent to those proposals. Why should he, when it would defeat the objects he had in view? He considered it of essential importance that they should have a direct line between Brisbane and the home country. The proposal of the company with regard to postal matter was this that they—and especially if this colony could make some arrangement with the

New South Wales Government—were willing to enter into an agreement to run the mails. He had already explained to the House, at some length, that there was little hope of an arrangement of that sort. He considered that there was small necessity for him to go into that matter, because they could at the present time pass their letters through the Orient line and derive the whole advantage of it at a lower rate than he could secure by contract. Moreover, the small subsidy they would give the company for postal matter would not be sufficient to induce them to bind themselves to regularity. Seeing that there was no likelihood of a satisfactory arrangement, he did not call and see the company again; but as far as the company was concerned the negotiation was at an end because they would not entertain the propositions he advanced. The proposals of the company were substantially embodied in the telegram which had been read by the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas), and hon. members would see that he would not have been justified in entering into a contract of that sort. Throughout the whole of his speech the hon. member for North Brisbane left it to be inferred that there was something beneath the surface which he would like to get at. The hon. member wanted to know who was going to make the profit out of the contract. He had already said that he thoroughly believed the contract to be entered into with the whole strength and influence of the two companies named. No doubt they would make the line a branch and call it by a different name. Everyone knew the steps he had taken to secure suitable offers. The idea of selling to anyone at a profit was an absurdity. He advertised in all the important papers in England, Scotland, and France, and the best offer he had was from Law and Company. Their tender was for 1,200-ton ships at £60,000 per annum, with conditions as to immigrants which it was impossible for him to guarantee. If he did not believe that the contract was as good as a contract with the British-India Company themselves—and he took three names to be as good as the names of the whole company—he would never have brought it before the House. The proposition of the hon. member for Maryborough was a most astonishing one. The hon. member advocated a service *via* the Cape of Good Hope—a long sea voyage—with Brisbane for the terminus, and the home route *via* Torres Straits. If the people to the north of Brisbane were not to derive any advantage from the proposed line, as far as importation was concerned, it was hard to see the advantage which would accrue to them under the hon. member's proposal. The whole proposition, too, was based upon a fallacy which the hon. member, with his knowledge of immigration, should have discovered. Before they could induce a company to put on steamers they must guarantee immigrants, and that was precisely what they could not do. They could not make an arrangement in this particular with either steam or sailing ships, because they did not know, from week to week, or month to month, what their wants would be. It was possible that they might be in such a prosperous condition a few years hence as to be able to guarantee a steady stream of immigration; but that was not the position of the colony when he was in London, and they were not in a much better position at the present time. He had now been over most of the main points that had been left open by the hon. member. Most of them had been referred to before, and had been answered by himself, and answered in addition to that by at least two other members of the Ministry; so that he could now safely say that there was not a single thing that had not been answered at length before. He had no in-

formation further to give, and he was quite sure that hon. members did not ask for it; for he had been in the House for the past five weeks prepared to give it, and no one had requested it.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he did not intend to say much on the present occasion. So much had been said, and such exhaustive arguments had been used, that he did not think he was called upon to say anything more than had been said. He rose, however, to call attention to a statement he made in a speech delivered by himself when the subject was before the House a few weeks ago, to the effect that he believed the Government had ignored the fact that the present was an age of progress, and that before the expiration of eight years such a high rate of speed might be attained by large ocean-going vessels that a service like that now proposed would be altogether inadequate and useless. He found in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of the 7th August a paragraph headed "Monarchs of the Sea," which described some large steamers in course of construction—one, the "City of Rome," by the Inman line, being constructed at Barrow-in-Furness, and another by the Cunard line, at Glasgow, both of which were expected to attain the great speed of 18½ knots. He had no doubt that those vessels were the forerunners of a fleet of similar vessels which would be afloat before much time had elapsed; at any rate, in all probability, long before the proposed contract could expire there would be steamers on the ocean running at a speed from 18 to 20 knots an hour. With such a prospect as that, was the colony going to bind itself hard and fast to a 9-knot service for eight years? It had been stated that they were anxious to develop the commercial interests of the colony, but he could not see how that would be promoted by entering into a contract for a through service that was to furnish such a speed. If the contract were a merely tentative provision for two or three years they might not object, but it would be prejudicial to the interests of the colony in all particulars if they were bound to a service with so slow a maximum rate of speed. The member for Blackall had misunderstood him when he referred to him (Mr. Rutledge) as using the argument that the line ought to be protested against because it would encourage the Chinese to come here in still greater numbers. His argument was that when the present E. and A. Company now performing the mail service dropped, as it would if the subsidy were discontinued, there would not be the same prospect of continuing the trade with China which was provided for under the contract. One of the provisions was that such facilities should be given, and he therefore maintained that one of the necessary results of entering into the contract would be to maintain and develop the trade with China, and would secure a continuous stream of Chinese to the shores of the colony. Members were pretty well agreed that the service would be promotive of the well-being of pastoral tenants, who would be primarily benefited—not, perhaps, by the quantity of meat that would be exported so much as by the fact that the experiment would be tried at the expense of the colony. His objection was that the contract would be used as a test as to whether the frozen-meat trade could be made a practicable one. The Premier in his opening speech had said that one of the beneficial results would be that the frozen-meat trade would be developed. According to the hon. member for Blackall, it now appeared that the trade would be in active operation before the service was in existence, and therefore that ground disappeared. The plea of facilities afforded as a postal service had disappeared also, and, as

he could not now see any ground that was tenable, nothing remained to be said in its favour. The opposition shown by many members was sincere, and indeed some objected to the scheme on the Government benches. He hoped that the contract would before now have been withdrawn altogether, and that even now the Government would see that it was their duty to withdraw it, and not press it on the Opposition, which on that matter was more united than he had ever known it since he had been in the House.

The HON. G. THORN said he was not going to take up much time. A great deal had been said by the hon. member for Blackall, and also by the member for the Mitchell, who had hit out all round that night about the contract. He should like to hear the views of many hon. members on the contract; otherwise he should be compelled to move the Chairman out of the chair. He was determined to oppose the contract and the granting of the £55,000 to the very death. The Premier had not condescended to answer the question asked by him several times, as to whether he prevented tenders from being called by stating at home that none would be accepted, and until it was answered he was not prepared to allow business to be done.

The PREMIER said he was quite prepared to go to a division now.

Mr. AMHURST said he should like to know whether the Opposition were stonewalling or not. If they had a little more patience they might come to a division now, for it was quite possible that the Opposition otherwise would to-morrow in the most barefaced way accuse them of preventing the division.

Mr. THORN pressed for an answer to his question—whether a member of a certain firm in London had, from information given by the Premier, promulgated in certain circles that it was not the intention to accept any of the tenders, as they were only called as a blind.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I wish to say again that I am not prepared to go to a division.

The PREMIER: If the hon. member wishes the business to be carried on he had better say how far he is prepared to carry on the discussion, and intimate when it is likely that he will be ready to go to a division.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I will give the hon. gentleman a definite answer to-morrow after I have had an opportunity of consulting my party.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that the hon. member has his party behind him now, and why not consult them at once? Surely he had all the raff about him at present.

Mr. PATERSON said that there were several hon. members who were surprised at the discussion arising on this evening. He should like to speak on the question, but he would not attempt to do so at such an advanced hour of the night. He was anxious to see the business going on, but in all fairness he would ask the Premier to consent to the postponement of the debate till to-morrow.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the Opposition represented that they did not want to stonewall, but they were doing it. They had not advanced a fresh argument to-night; they saw how decidedly the opinion of the majority was against them, and they ought to be content to record their opinion against it. The subject had been fairly and openly discussed, but if the leader of the Opposition would give the House an assurance that his party would be willing to go to a division to-morrow night, he (Mr. Hill) would recommend the Premier to

consent to an adjournment, because the chances were that a division would be taken early.

Mr. MOREHEAD thought it was absurd for the hon. member for Rockhampton to ask for an adjournment. He ought to have come earlier, so that he could have made his speech at a reasonable hour. The question had been debated in the House, and had been dealt with by the Press, until it was threadbare, and there ought to be no further delay in coming to a decision.

Mr. AMHURST said he thought the hon. member for Rockhampton was not doing his duty to his constituency in endeavouring to delay a determination of the question—in fact, he was a traitor to the North.

The PREMIER said that the hon. member for Rockhampton had no reason for saying that he had been taken by surprise, because, in answer to the leader of the Opposition, he (the Premier) said that he intended to go on with the mail service to-night. As to the leader of the Opposition, he would warn the hon. gentleman that he would get into difficulties by referring the question to caucus. As leader of the Opposition, the hon. gentleman ought to at once ascertain the minds of his followers. The hon. gentleman must know that his caucuses were ruled by the most violent spirits—by such men as the hon. members for the Northern Downs and the Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), who had no more judgment than a child. If the hon. member for Darling Downs had enough whisky in, the leader of the Opposition would find out what he said was true.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if it pleased the leader of the Opposition to go in for stonewalling he should say so openly. There were two ways of stonewalling, and if the Opposition resorted to such tactics he should advise the Premier to throw the whole responsibility on the Opposition. If the Premier would take his advice he would not ask for another shilling on account; he would not pay the salaries of the Civil servants until the question was settled; he would allow the business of the country to remain at a standstill. If stonewalling were resorted to, he sincerely hoped that the Premier would accept his advice. If stonewalling was meant let them have it, but let it not be all one side. Let supplies be stopped, and then the people would soon see who were obstructing the business of the country.

Mr. HENDREN argued that hon. members on that side of the House required further information on this question, which it was only reasonable they should receive, but they were no more advanced with respect to it than they were at first. The Colonial Secretary talked about stonewalling, but if that practice were carried out he (Mr. Hendren) was afraid that the onus would lie on the shoulders of the Government.

Mr. DICKSON pointed out that the discussion on this question this evening had taken several members by surprise, and urged upon the Premier the reasonableness of acceding to the request of the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was preposterous to state that hon. members were taken by surprise by this discussion coming on to-night. The Opposition were simply actuated by a desire for place and pay and power, and because they were not in office they determined that no business should be done. He (Mr. Morehead) sincerely trusted the Government would not give way one iota in the matter. They were there to discuss and settle the question, whether in the affirmative or negative. It had been worn thread-

bare, and he hoped some settlement would be arrived at to-night.

Mr. GRIFFITH said when he spoke in the earlier part of the evening he referred to the words the Premier had mentioned. He then said that he had not had an opportunity of consulting his party, and anything he said would be only his own opinion. He knew that the matter was coming on that afternoon, as the Premier had promised that he would put at the head of the paper the business to be taken first; and if he could have consulted his party he would have done so, but a great many of them could not arrive in Brisbane in time. He had given the Premier all the information he was able to give that evening.

The PREMIER said he did not believe very much in caucuses, and he thought the present was the first time that any question had been made the subject of so many caucus meetings. If, however, the hon. gentleman thought it was necessary to hold a caucus of his supporters he had better hold one now, and the Government and their supporters would retire for a time to supper. The hon. gentleman had previously given his own opinion regarding the points at issue, and had said that the proposition of the Government was a fair and reasonable one, and that he would consult his supporters in regard to it; consequently what had taken place that evening simply amounted to obstruction. He should like the hon. gentleman, after consulting his party, to say what he intended to do—whether he intended to obstruct the mail contract or not?

Mr. GRIFFITH: I shall be prepared to tell the hon. gentleman definitely to-morrow.

The PREMIER said he had only to warn the hon. gentleman that if he continued a course of obstruction he must be prepared to take upon himself all the responsibilities, and that he would assume large responsibilities if he answered the question in the affirmative, the Government having made up their mind that the course they had decided upon as being the best should be carried. It had been their desire all through to give the matter the fullest discussion, and he only hoped the hon. gentleman would come to the House to-morrow and say that the matter had been fairly argued out, so that the opposition to it would cease. That would enable the Government to go on with many important Bills on the paper which were necessary for the administration of the business of the colony. At the present time, it was most desirable that such action should be taken as would enable the Government to hand over to municipalities money now in the hands of the Government, and of which the municipalities were in need. All those things the hon. gentleman must take into account before he arrived at a decision. He was not in the habit of giving the other side advice; but, as they often took upon themselves to advise him what to do, he would again warn the hon. gentleman of the responsibility that would rest upon his decision, and warn him not to be guided by the hot-headed ones of his party.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was fully aware of the responsibilities referred to by the hon. gentleman, and he would take the opportunity he had mentioned of discussing the whole question with his supporters.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resumed; the Chairman reported no progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at seven minutes to 12 o'clock.