

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 11 OCTOBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 11 October, 1880.

Petition.—Railway Companies Preliminary Bill—second reading.—Supply.—Arrangement of Business.

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

PETITION.

Mr. McLEAN presented a petition from the Chairman of the Coomera Divisional Board, and moved that it be read.

Petition read.

The SPEAKER said he had looked through the petition, and found the following paragraph :—

"5. Your memorialists would most respectfully request that a specified sum per mile be granted to all Divisions in the settled districts not having railway carriage, to enable them to construct and maintain their main roads, and your memorialists, as in duty bound, shall ever pray."

This was asking for a money grant, and according to the Standing Orders the petition could not be received.

Mr. McLEAN said he fancied the reference was only to the United Municipalities Bill now before the House, and was rather a suggestion than an application for money.

The SPEAKER said if the hon. member could vouch for that the case would be different from what it appeared to be.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said the petition was clearly in opposition to the Standing Orders. It was a simple request for the House to put upon the Estimates a certain sum of money instead of raising it through the divisional boards. As a direct petition to the House for money it could not be received.

The SPEAKER : I certainly understand it in that way, and according to the Standing Orders the petition cannot be received.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member, if he chose, might discuss the subject of the petition.

RAILWAY COMPANIES PRELIMINARY BILL—SECOND READING.

On the Order of the Day for the resumption of the debate on the Premier's motion that the Bill be read a second time,

Mr. McLEAN said as he had moved the adjournment of the debate the other night, it was his right now to resume it. Some hon. members, in referring to the subject, had stated that this was an entirely new departure from any system hitherto in operation in the colony with reference to the construction of railways. No doubt that was a fact ; it was an entirely new departure, and therefore he thought that the present Bill should not be hurried through the House. Not only should every opportunity be afforded for the very fullest discussion, but he was also of opinion that the representatives of the people should bring the matter before their constituents. He did not say an appeal should be made to the country ; but, as this was an entirely

new departure, members should consult their constituents before pledging themselves in support of the measure, or in deliberate opposition of it. An opportunity would soon be afforded them. The business was advancing to a close, and in a few more weeks, no doubt, the session would be ended. Hon. members would then be able to go before their constituents and bring the matter under their consideration, and ask their approval or condemnation of the new system. The members of the House were the custodians of the public estate, which belonged to the people, and they were responsible to them for their action in the House ; and when they were asked to hand over to a private company some six or eight millions of acres of the public lands, it was a very important matter to have under their consideration. They were responsible to their constituencies and must look after their interests. This was a question that had never been submitted to the House before, and the representatives of the people had never been asked either to give it their sanction or condemnation ; therefore, he was justified in saying that they should submit the question to their constituents, in order that they might endorse the action of the House. If the Government were to be satisfied with the second reading of the Bill this session, and during the recess got an expression of opinion from the constituencies, the next session they could bring the matter on for final consideration. The hon. member for Mitchell, in speaking to this Bill a few nights ago, stated that there were only three questions necessary for the House to decide. They were as follows :—Construction of railways on the land-grant system, construction of railways on loans, or no construction at all. He (Mr. McLean) did not think that was the question at all, because it was a well-known fact that there were districts where railways must of necessity be constructed out of loan, and where it would be impossible for the Government to avail themselves of the principle of construction by land grants. He took it that in the district he had the honour to represent nearly every acre of land had been alienated long ago, therefore when the question of railway construction was decided upon it would have to be dealt with entirely apart from the system now under the consideration of the House. Therefore, this was not a question that was to be answered on any of those three bases—namely, construction by land grants, construction by loan, or no construction at all. No doubt railways would be constructed both on the land-grant and on the loan system, not only in his (Mr. McLean's) district, but also in the district of Bald Hills. Money had been voted for a railway to Sandgate, but if that line were extended to Bald Hills and further north there would be no land for any company to take over on condition of making a railway. Therefore they were not considering the question simply of construction by land grants, but whether the railway between Roma and the Gulf of Carpentaria should be constructed on the land-grant system, or whether the Government should go into the London money market, as hitherto, and raise a loan for the purpose. Ten years since Mr. Macalister first brought before the country the question of the construction of a railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. At that time he (Mr. McLean) was very much struck with the idea, and considered that Mr. Macalister took a most statesmanlike view of the question. He was not aware at that time, nor was the country aware, of any particulars in reference to the principle, which was in itself a sound one. He might say he was not opposed to the construction of this railway, but the House must take the subject into its very serious consideration before pledging themselves to

the Bill before them. He had several objections to the Bill, which he would state as briefly as possible. There was one thing he could not help admiring, and that was the child-like simplicity of the hon. the Minister for Works with reference to the question of the syndicate that was under the consideration of the House. Baron Erlanger, he stated, was a clever business man. That appeared to be the interpretation the Government put on the characters of those who had been proved in law courts to be not only clever business men but public swindlers, who swindled the public out of their money; and yet when their character was brought before the House they were characterised as nothing more than smart business men. But that was not the idea he (Mr. McLean) entertained. He liked to see smart business men and believed they were justified in being smart, but no man was justified in not only gulling the public but robbing them, as it was evident the public of Great Britain had been robbed by the man whose name had been before the House. He was not very well versed in the question of the construction of railways in America on the land-grant system, but thought now they were about to introduce the system into Queensland they were going to introduce it on far too liberal a principle. He had no objection to the construction of railways by land grants, but having once paid for the construction of a line by grants of land, the quantity of land they proposed to give by this Bill would amply repay the company for the construction of the railway, apart altogether from asking the Government to buy it back. His idea with reference to this question would simply be this—that it was necessary that encouragement should be given to companies to construct such railways as the present one, and they were giving them encouragement in giving them 8,000 acres of what was said to be the best land of the colony for every mile of railway they made; but in making these railways the company believed that it would pay, or surely they would never go into the construction of them. They went into the construction of these railways with the idea that the 8,000 acres per mile would pay them for the making of the line. If they gave them twenty-one years' running over the line and the line was handed back to the Government at the end of twenty-one years, the country would be in no way defrauded. They would have given ample compensation when they had handed over 8,000 acres per mile of the best lands of the colony, and at the end of twenty-one years' use of the line the Government was quite entitled to have the railway handed back to them free of any charge whatever. In his estimation, clause 17 raised the whole question of the land tenure of the pastoral lessees of the interior. He did not quite agree with that clause for various reasons. He could never agree to give the pastoral lessees alongside of the railway line an indefeasible lease of their runs for the term that they had to run; and, seeing that the railway was built right into the interior of the colony, and it passed through a very considerable number of pastoral holdings, it raised the whole question of the tenure of those leases. At the present time they held the land at a mere nominal rent because it was a long way from communication and they had no facilities whatever for bringing their wool, hides, tallow, or anything else to market; therefore the Government, on that ground, leased the land to the pastoral lessee at a mere nominal rent; but the thing was entirely altered as soon as they penetrated the interior with railway communication: instead of paying but a mere nominal rent the rents ought to be increased, so that the Government might receive something

like an adequate return for the land thus held under lease by the pastoral tenants. He did not think the House would agree with the 17th clause, and it was not reasonable that they should be asked to agree to it. The railway company were to receive alternate blocks along the railway, and these were to be given over to the pastoral lessees upon an indefeasible title for the term of their lease. This was where the one-sided bargain came in. The company were able to utilise their lands, but the Government did not receive an additional fraction for theirs, notwithstanding that the railway passed right through the centre of those leaseholds. The Government ought to be able to avail themselves of the land that was brought into communication by the railway construction just to the same extent as the company did. No doubt the company was entitled to some little preference, but it would be foolish to lock up these lands for a large number of years while the Government land that was handed over to the railway company in alternate blocks could be utilised by them and disposed of by them at once. But he did not think that the House would agree with the 17th clause. With reference to clause 22—that was, the question of the Government guarantee for twenty-one years, the Government guarantee would be about 2 per cent. on the cost of construction. That was just half what it would cost the Government to construct the railway themselves. If they went into the London money market, and raised a 4 per cent. loan, they could construct the railway on borrowed capital, and would simply have to pay the extra 2 per cent., and the line would be their own. But they were asked in the Bill to guarantee 2 per cent. to the company for twenty-one years on their debentures, together with 8,000 acres per mile; and when the Government thought it necessary to take possession of the railway they would have to pay for it at a more exorbitant rate than had been paid for any railway construction in the colony. If they were to provide a guarantee of 2 per cent. on the debentures of the company for twenty-one years they might just as well go into the money market and pay the extra 2 per cent. and construct the railways themselves. He objected to clause 32, because to a certain extent it pledged the Government to any company that might undertake the survey of the line from Roma to the Gulf. The clause provided that any company might come on the land and make the necessary surveys. That was a work that ought to be done by the Government. If the Government took in hand the survey, say, of the line from Roma to the Gulf, they would be bound to no one, and could make the best terms they could get, not with the syndicate they had heard so much about, but any company that could raise sufficient capital. The Government could say, "We have the land; we know the exact distance, and can tell almost to a few hundred pounds how much it will take—what will you construct it for?" That ought to be the position of the Government. But this clause to a certain extent bound the Government to any company that might survey a line between Roma and the Gulf. If hon. members looked at the clause they could come to no other conclusion. It enabled the company to enter upon the land; and if they did that, and went to the expense of making the necessary surveys, the Government were to a certain extent pledged to the company; and it would be only reasonable that they should then come to terms, get the company to construct the railway, and hand over the land. So that it would be better for the Government to spend the necessary money on surveys, prepare plans, and submit them to any com-

pany willing to undertake the construction of the line. The colony would in that way get better terms than under the 32nd clause of the Bill now before the House. He had seen it stated in the newspapers that this company might construct the first thirty miles, get all the land, and then refuse to construct the line any further; but there was an easy way of getting out of that difficulty. He would suggest that the company should start at the northern point—Point Parker. They wanted as soon as possible to have a good port in the North, and if the company undertook to commence at Point Parker there would be no fear of their throwing up the construction.

The PREMIER: They will start at both ends.

Mr. McLEAN said he mentioned this as one of the serious objections in the Bill: the company might make the line thirty miles from Roma, get all the land, and say they would not construct any more. There was nothing more natural, for they would be amply repaid by the lands they would get for the construction of those thirty miles. It would obviate the difficulty that had been urged by the Press if the contractors were bound to start at the Point Parker end only. A great deal had been said about the triumphs of railway construction in America, but the question had never been raised there of railway communication as against water communication. A map of the American railways showed that in a large number of instances the lines ran alongside splendid navigable rivers. When he (Mr. McLean) asked the Government to construct a railway to the district he had the honour to represent, he was met by the answer, "You have water communication, and do not need a railway." Would the Americans entertain the idea of performing a two days' journey by water, when they could do it in two hours by rail? No one who knew the Logan district could urge such an objection; for from its population, and the amount of land under cultivation, it could not be doubted for a moment that such a line would be a remunerative work. A steamer leaving Brisbane at 5 o'clock to-day would not reach the Albert opposite to where he resided until some time on Thursday; whereas, with railway communication to Beenleigh, it would take something like two hours at 12 miles an hour. He believed that even the present Government, when they were out of office, would see the justice of the claim he had urged, and would support the construction of the Logan railway; and even if they remained in office, he had no doubt but that in time they would see the necessity for it, in spite of there being water communication. Another question, which had not been touched upon by the Premier or the Minister for Works, was with regard to the 160 acres of land to be given to each labourer sent out to construct the railway. He did not see how the Government could make such a grant, for on account of the intermediate blocks being granted to the pastoral lessees on an indefeasible lease they would have no land there to give away.

The PREMIER: There is nothing about that in the Bill.

Mr. McLEAN said it was one of the articles mentioned in the correspondence, and it was impossible to separate the correspondence from the Bill, or the Bill from the correspondence. The correspondence was no doubt the cause of the Bill, as but for it the Bill would never have been heard of. How was that point to be met, seeing there would not be an acre of land near the line available for the purpose? He did not object to the principle, as he believed it to be a first-rate thing, but they ought to know where

the land was to be forthcoming. It would never do to entice labourers from England by such an offer, because when they came out they would find that they had been deluded—like many others who had come out from the old country, under the idea that they were going to get land for nothing. If there was any land available for the navvies, he trusted the Government would offer them the best portions rather than the worst. In the early days of the colony only the very worst lands about Brisbane were thrown open for settlement, and that was particularly the case between the Logan and Brisbane, where the land was so miserable that settlers could make nothing out of it. He hoped the homesteads to be given to the navvies would consist of the best land at the disposal of the Government. He spoke feelingly on that point, because in his own experience he had had to suffer from the opposite policy being pursued, and he hoped others would not be taken in as he had been with reference to poor land. He had no objection to the principle of the construction of railways by land grants, but he objected to the present Bill for the several reasons which he had endeavoured, as briefly as possible, to point out. The system would, no doubt, in time be adopted, and the Bill, if it went into committee, might be so modified as to become acceptable to the country. But in its present form he certainly could not vote for the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. NORTON said that before the Bill went to the vote he had a few words to say with regard to it, and would premise by saying that he intended to vote for its second reading. The hon. member (Mr. McLean) wandered quite away from the question before the House, in treating the Bill as a measure to prevent a railway being constructed from Brisbane to the Logan. That railway was a pet scheme of the hon. member's, and allowance might be made for him. He (Mr. Norton) had a similar scheme, but would abstain from introducing it on the present occasion, and he trusted other hon. members would do likewise. While announcing his intention to vote for the second reading of the Bill, he did not wish it to be understood that he approved of it in exactly its present form. He did not think the Bill had been treated fairly. Hon. members on the other side had devoted themselves rather to show what a shocking bad Bill it was, than to pointing out how it could be amended without altering its main principles. He (Mr. Norton) intended to treat the Bill, for the sake of convenience, as if it were a Bill to enable a company to construct a line from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria. It would have been desirable to have included clauses giving to the Government, or to any company which might at any future time construct branch lines to connect the main line, running powers over it. If the line were ever carried out it was evident that branches would be constructed connecting with it, and to enable trains from the branches to run over the line it was necessary that such powers should be given. He did not see his way to vote for the 17th clause. Hon. members had treated that clause as though wherever the survey passed through a run exactly one-half of it would be taken up by the contractors and the other half given over to the lessees of the run; but that was a most absurd way of viewing the question. The probability was that the grants made to the company would not extend on both sides to the borders of the run, and if indefeasible leases were granted it did not follow that they would apply to the intermediate blocks on the course of the line. He did not believe in the system of indefeasible leases. The leases of those runs were offered at a very small rental, with the view of inducing people to take up and occupy

the land. Years ago that country was occupied, but when times of depression came many of the pastoral tenants removed their stock and forfeited their runs. The rent was small and the lessees did not seem to have so great a claim on the country as that clause would give them. Without having given the clause all the consideration he might have done, he was not at present disposed to agree to it. He next came to the guarantee clauses of the Bill, which, however, were not an essential part of it, and the Bill would not necessarily be withdrawn if they were not passed. There were many members on the Government side who would think very seriously before they consented to those clauses being passed in their present form, inasmuch as the Government were not sufficiently protected. For his own part he would much rather see the clauses left out of the Bill altogether. The hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer) had pointed out to him that the introduction of a few words into the 31st clause would so amend it as to make it in accordance with the 35th clause. That hon. member suggested that after the word "shall," in the second line, the words "be embodied in a Bill" should be inserted, and also one or two consequential amendments which would make it consistent with the 35th clause, and a reference to the 34th clause would show that this was probably what was intended. The 32nd section gave to the Government power to make provision for the survey of land by any company who wished to construct a railway. It was obvious that that order should be given before the agreement was entered upon, for a company would like to have at least a feature survey before they entered into an agreement to construct the line. He had referred to those clauses, because a good deal had been said about them, and because he did not think they had been fairly handled. Their objects in discussing the Bill were, first, whether it was desirable that a railway from Roma to the Gulf should be carried out at all;—and from the remarks that had fallen from hon. members there seemed to be a unanimous opinion that such a line would be very beneficial to the country. The second question was, whether it would be an advantage to the country to give 8,000 acres of land per mile for the construction of that railway. Several hon. members had put a price on the land which seemed very arbitrary; and he did not know from what source they had derived their figures. The hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Rutledge), who did not appear to know very much about the subject, placed the value of 6s. 8d. on the land. In attempting to arrive at anything like the practical value of the land hon. members ought to take into consideration what the country was likely to get for it for years to come. Supposing there were 1,000 miles of railway to be constructed, for which they gave 8,000,000 acres, which was equal to 12,500 square miles. At the present time, the lessees were paying in some instances 5s. per square mile. Under the present Act they paid—for the first seven years, 5s.; for the second seven years, 10s.; and for the third period of seven years, 15s. The land lying between Roma and the Gulf of Carpentaria was at present occupied at a much lower rental than 10s. per square mile; but, for convenience sake, he would take that amount, which would make the return for 12,500 square miles £6,250 per annum. To get at the present value of the land it would be necessary to take the capitalised value of £6,250. Taking 5 per cent. interest as the basis, they would get £125,000—judging from the interest which was now being paid into the Treasury in the shape of rent and from the interest which would continue to be paid in for some years to come. If they divided the

£125,000 by eight million acres, they had as the present value of the land 3½d. per acre. The capitalised value of the land at the present time, therefore, was 3½d. per acre, while the annual rental per acre was three-quarters of a farthing. There was no sale for the land. Some small parcels might be sold, but the greater portion would remain unsold for years, unless a railroad were taken through the country. In course of time, when the leases were up, the rental might be raised, but it was not at all likely that the land would be let at anything like a high price; so that, after all, if they gave 8,000 acres for every mile of railway they would be gainers. The construction of the railway would put some value upon lands which were at present useless except for grazing purposes. If by the construction of a railway they placed a value of 5s. upon even a moderate quantity of this land they would be enormous gainers. They were asked to give eight millions of acres—really a small quantity, considering the area of the colony—in order to put a fixed value upon land. Then, again, they must consider the enormous traffic which the construction of this line would bring over the railways which were already constructed. The Bill provided that a charge of so much per ton should be made upon the railway material, and that charge would in the course of the year amount to something enormous; in fact, when the construction of the railway was in full swing, the present railway returns would be almost doubled. Apart from that they would have a large number of people upon the land. It would not pay the contractors to allow their land to lay idle or to let it to squatters at the rate of three-quarters of a farthing per acre. If the railway were to be a payable undertaking the contractors must turn the land to account and settle population upon it. But, independently of this settlement, the workmen who must be engaged upon the line would be no small number, and must materially increase the Customs' returns. Undoubtedly, it would be necessary to introduce a large population into the colony to enable the contractors to construct the line at the rate of 100 miles per annum. With regard to the gentlemen whose names were appended to the proposal made to the Premier, he thought the leader of the Opposition was perfectly right in acquainting the House with some of the financial matters with which one of them at least appeared to be connected. The financier to whom he referred might, in the opinion of some people, be a very sharp man, but, in his own opinion, he was a thorough rogue. They would derive no advantage from dealing with a man of that character. He disagreed with the leader of the Opposition, however, when he characterised the whole of the gentlemen whose names appeared as nominees of the Baron.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I did not say so.

Mr. NORTON had understood the hon. member to interject a remark to that effect when the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) was speaking. The hon. member's remark was a sweeping assertion, which he thought should not be passed unnoticed. Possibly some of the gentlemen may have been the nominees of Baron Erlanger, but it was going rather too far to say that the whole of them were so. But the Government were not bound by that proposal. The Bill empowered them to deal with any company which might be formed for the construction of a railway in any part of Queensland. Hon. members should therefore consider the Bill as a measure applicable to any part of the colony in which it might be found desirable to construct a railway, bearing in mind, also, that if it became law the Government might enter into an

engagement with any company to construct a line under its provisions.

Mr. BAYNES said he was glad that the hon. member for Port Curtis, in closing his speech, had cleared a misconception which might have arisen from the greater part of the hon. member's remarks—namely, that the provisions of the Bill were applicable only to the construction of a line from Roma to Point Parker. The second clause made it perfectly clear that the Bill was to apply to the colony at large. He regarded the Bill as a most useful and important measure; and he was sorry to have to call attention to the hurried manner in which the Premier appeared anxious to carry it. There were some very shady points about the Bill which would require considerable amendment in committee. He was grieved to hear the Premier say, the other evening, that had he been treated in a more honourable way by the leader of the Opposition certain information would have been given long ago. He did not know whether this information was given to the Premier's followers or not; but personally he did not believe in government by caucus, and therefore did not attend caucus meetings. He did not wish to see Parliament governed by either the leader of the Opposition or by the Premier. He, in common with other hon. members, had a position, and desired to see that position respected; and he hoped that the Premier, whatever might be his position at the present time, would not think of ignoring them. Other hon. members beside the leader of the Opposition required information upon certain subjects, and he regarded it as an insult to the whole House that information upon these subjects should have been withheld because the Premier was of opinion that he had not been treated as he should have been. There was no doubt but that the Premier, upon his own showing, got into very bad company when in London. He should at once have let the House know everything about Baron Erlanger, and have disclaimed any intention of having anything to do with him. It was not everyone who had time or opportunity to read up the financial affairs of South American Republics; and he regarded it as an insult to the House that the Premier should have submitted the names of such men for its approval. The Premier must have known the character of the man—in fact, he hinted that he did. The thanks of the House were due to the leader of the Opposition for explaining matters and exposing the real character of some members of the syndicate.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member for Port Curtis had accused hon. members on that side of the House of finding fault with the Bill without attempting to devise amendments. He did not believe it would be possible to satisfactorily amend the Bill as it then stood. It would be possible to propose a better Bill; but it would be a hard matter to amend the Bill then before them. He did not altogether disagree with the plan of making railways in exchange for land grants; but he certainly disapproved of the plan of constructing railways by land grants. There was a great deal of difference between the two plans. If they made railways in exchange for land grants the railways belonged to the State and the land to the contractors; but in constructing railways by land grants the State not only did not become possessed of the railway, but became dispossessed of its land. It was preposterous to give 8,000 acres per mile for the construction of a railway which, when constructed, would not be the property of the State. He believed that people generally had no conception of the quantity of land with which the State would part in the case of such an undertaking. Estimating

the length of the proposed line from Roma to Point Parker at 800 miles, they would be giving away an equivalent to a little farm for every inhabitant—the area, in fact, would be equal to thirty acres for every man, woman, and child in the colony. If it were not possible to amend the Bill, it was possible to point out a plan by which such a railway could be constructed at a less cost to the country—a plan which would answer all the purposes of railway construction by a syndicate of contractors. Last session a sum of money was passed for making 130 miles from Roma to some place towards the setting sun. He supposed that money was still available—about £390,000—and the plan he (Mr. Macfarlane) would suggest was something like the following:—He would take the money voted for that 130 miles of railway and let the Government themselves do what they proposed this syndicate should do. What these contractors were able to do the Government were able to do, and he proposed to do it in this way; and although some members might scout the idea of the amount of money being got for the land that he had estimated, still he was under the impression that he was quite right. The land along this 130 miles of railway should be surveyed in blocks of 16,000 acres—8,000 on each side of the line. Now, supposing the Government took 8,000 acres on each side of the line and put it up to auction at an upset price of £1 per acre with twenty years to pay it without interest, he maintained that they would be able to make the line themselves without employing any syndicate of contractors at all. It had been said that they would not get value for the land, but it should be remembered that land in the immediate vicinity brought 30s. an acre cash down; and supposing the land were sold at £1 per acre, with twenty years to pay it, it would bring in £104,000 per annum—that was, supposing the whole of the land was sold. Then the question was—was it possible to sell the whole of the land along the 130 miles of railway in blocks of 8,000 acres on each side at 20s. per acre? He maintained it was. If the Premier only threw the same energy and vigour into the plan he (Mr. Macfarlane) proposed, he would succeed in carrying it, just as well as making the railway by a syndicate. Supposing these blocks were put up at 20s. per acre at auction, and advertised in all the colonies and in England, he believed sufficient people would be got to buy up the whole of the land along the line for 130 miles. In the first instance, 130 miles of railway would be made;—the rent the Government would receive from that would be £104,000, which would make 35 miles of railway at £3,000 per mile—so that the whole of the line from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria, 800 miles, would be made out of selling the land along 130 miles of the line. If the Government made the 130 miles there would be 670 remaining to be made, and this at £3,000 per mile would amount to £2,010,000: while the rent the Government would receive from the land along the 130 miles of line in twenty years would amount to £2,080,000. So that they need only sell about 2,000,000 acres to make the whole railway; whereas under the Bill they proposed to give away 6,400,000. He thought if the Bill was passed that the country would be committed to the greatest blunder they had made from the time of separation. Great stress had been laid by the Minister for Works upon the 35th clause, but he (Mr. Macfarlane) did not attach much importance to that clause. But he paid great attention to the 3rd clause, which provided—

“In every such agreement shall be embodied the provisions and conditions prescribed in the following sections of this Act, subject to such modifications as the Governor in Council in any particular case deems it

expedient to authorise. Provided that no such modification shall be inconsistent with the provisions of this Act."

They might pass as many Acts as they liked, but if they passed this Bill with the 3rd clause in it they bound themselves to stand by the Bill in its main particulars. He maintained that the 21st clause, providing that they should give 8,000 acres for every mile of railway constructed, was the central clause of the Bill, and that could not be altered; or it might be altered, but no contractors would offer to construct the line for less if the Government offered 8,000 acres per mile. That clause in particular would not be altered, no matter how many Acts they passed; and he said to pass a Bill of that description, giving such a quantity of land for one mile of railway, was out of the question—

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: What is it worth?

Mr. MACFARLANE said he believed the land along the 130 miles of the line was worth 20s. per acre.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Go and look at it.

Mr. MACFARLANE said the hon. member knew very well that the land near Roma fetched 30s. an acre; and he (Mr. Macfarlane) was prepared to state, from information he received at the opening of the railway to Roma, that there were a number of Victorians anxious to take up land there, and that the land the railway would go through they would be very glad to pay £2 an acre for, on the other side of Roma.

Mr. MOREHEAD: On the other side of Jordan.

The PREMIER: Send them to the Land Office.

Mr. MACFARLANE said supposing the whole of the 8,000-acre blocks could not be sold, still the line would be progressing, and the land would become more valuable. The Government had money in hand to make the 130 miles of line, and they could continue the construction from the rents received; and as they proceeded they could sell more land at a good price: but he would not sell more than 100 or 150 miles, and the rest could be leased, and by the time the twenty-one years were up they would get a good price for it. It was absurd that the Government should give away all the land proposed by the Bill, and in return the line would not be their own; and he thought no sane man would be guilty of passing such a measure, which gave not only 8,000 acres for every mile of line, but the line itself. If for the 8,000 acres per mile the railway became the property of the country, even at the end of twelve or twenty-one years, it would be a very important alteration, and if such an amendment was inserted the country would get a fair bargain. But as it was the bargain was all one-sided—the whole of the good went to the contractors, and the whole of the loss to the country. If the Bill passed the second reading, he hoped it would be materially altered in committee.

Mr. GARRICK said no doubt most hon. members of the House agreed in the principle that it would be well if they could construct their railways by means of land grants. While the borrowing of money proceeded upon the principle which it now did—that was, so long as their credit was regulated by the amount of population they had—and seeing how comparatively small their population was, and how large the territory they possessed—he thought it would be a good bargain if they could succeed in constructing railways by means of land grants; but the difficulty was in hitting upon the way in which they could do this. And even accepting the principle upon which they now proceeded—that

was, the construction of their railways by means of borrowed money—he hoped, if nothing else was done, they would be able in a short time to proceed with further extensions. Now, if the country adopted certain principles, they might, instead of expediting railway construction, really impede it; because, when they came to move off on their old system, probably they might find themselves entangled in a lot of incomplete contracts for the construction of railways which they should be unable to get rid of. He would point out to hon. members that by this correspondence—supposing they proceeded upon that basis—they would not have the personal undertaking of any of the gentlemen who were named in that correspondence to carry out these contracts; for the correspondence itself pointed out plainly enough what was to be done. The way these things were managed was that the gentlemen who put their names to this sort of undertaking formed themselves into a joint-stock company with a limited liability, and there was really no guarantee that the contract would be carried out. He would refer hon. members to what was pointed out in the correspondence itself—

"We propose immediately to incorporate the syndicate itself under our Company Act, for the purposes of the surveying and launching the ultimate company for the construction of the line and raising of the capital."

Hon. members would observe that they had no personal undertaking on the part of the syndicate, which was to be incorporated into a company with limited liability, and that company would not undertake to construct the works, but simply to form a company for the purpose of surveying and launching the ultimate company for the construction of the line.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: What does it matter?

Mr. GARRICK said it mattered in this way, that it would be very necessary for them to accurately scrutinise any contract that might be submitted to them, for the danger was that the syndicate that accepted the concession might take all the profit out of the undertaking, and so starve it, as it were, that when the work was handed over to the contracting company they would find that the real value had been taken out of it by the syndicate and be unable to go on. An illustration of that was found in the case cited by the leader of the Opposition—the Sulpho-phosphate Company. That company was floated at a price for which it could have been worked—namely, £55,000; but the syndicate which accepted the concession made so much profit out of it that the amount chargeable to the working company was something like £120,000, and they were enabled to go on. That was what they had to guard against, and it was this that rendered it necessary that they should accurately scrutinise any contract that was submitted to them. This brought him to something said by the Minister for Works in reference to the Bill. Section 31 provided—

"Every agreement made subject to the provisions of this Act shall, as soon as practicable after the execution thereof, be laid upon the table of the Legislative Assembly; and unless sooner ratified or disapproved of by a resolution of such Assembly, such agreement shall be deemed to have been ratified, and shall be binding upon all the parties thereto."

That section said most positively, in the plainest language possible, that when a contract had been made by the Executive under the provisions of this Bill, and after that contract had been submitted to the House and ratified, the contract became binding on all the parties thereto. The Minister for Works said that was controlled by section 35, which provided—

"Nothing contained in this Act, or in any agreement or provisional order entered into or made under the

authority of this Act, shall be held to abridge the right of Parliament to abrogate, amend, alter, or vary any provision or condition of such agreement or order in such manner as seems fit and proper, or necessary for the protection of the public interests."

He (Mr. Garrick) maintained that that section was perfectly inconsistent with the provisions of section 31, and that was also inconsistent with what was said by the Premier when introducing the Bill for its second reading. The argument of the Minister for Works was that the Government asked no more in this Bill than they did under the statute of 1872. The statute of 1872 enabled persons to make proposals to the Executive for the construction of railways, and empowered the Executive to accept proposals, for which plans and sections were to be prepared and the authority of the House asked for the construction of the railway by a special Bill applicable to the purpose. Now all these provisions, from section 32 to the end of the Bill, were in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1872, but not in accordance with the provisions of this Bill. What did the Premier tell them?—

"But he believed the passing of the Bill would enable parties at home to know what kind of agreement would be accepted by the Legislature of the colony. If they made a preliminary arrangement with the Government, and the Legislature would not pass an Act in the terms of the agreement, they would have broken faith with the tenderers unless something occurred to debar them from sanctioning the agreement."

The terms of the Bill differed from the Act of 1872 in that, if the House refused to ratify it, in the Premier's own words they would be breaking faith with the tenderers. That was exactly what he (Mr. Garrick) contended—that if there was an agreement made under the provisions of this Bill and ratified it became binding upon all the parties, and it would be a breach of faith to alter any of the provisions of the Bill so as to be inconsistent with the provisions which would be authorised if it were passed into law. He had said that they had no guarantee that the contracts into which these persons would enter would be carried out. It was not enough to say that the contractors would get nothing until some work was done. The Bill provided that until thirty miles of railway were constructed, the contractors were not entitled to receive a land grant, or to receive a guarantee; but the country should be assured of more than that. They should be assured that this would not be merely a syndicate of contractors for speculation only, but that the contracts would be carried out by the persons who entered into them. In order to have an assurance of that they should provide that a certain part of the capital of the company should be paid up, and they were not justified in entering into any contract unless that were done so as to provide against persons entering into a contract who had no stability and no means of carrying it out. This was not only a Bill for the construction of railways, but it was also a land Bill. It was a Bill not for one railway alone, but for railways all over the country; but assuming that it was for the construction of one line only, then it provided that there should be given to the persons constructing the line grants of land to the extent of 8,000 acres for every mile of line constructed. 100 miles of line was to be constructed every year, and it was possible that 150 miles a year might be made—so that the railway from Roma to Point Parker would be carried out in eight or ten years, according to the promoters' own proposals. Under that scheme they would be handing over to this company for the construction of that line as much land as they had alienated during the last twenty years—ever since Queensland had been a colony. Practically they would be handing over

the administration of their lands from the Government to these contracting companies. It should not be lost sight of that if the principle embodied in the Bill were carried out to any great extent the colony would be completely deprived of any great land revenue for the purposes of ordinary expenditure. The Premier made a great point against the railway reserves scheme with his argument that that scheme would starve the general revenue, and the hon. gentleman enforced that argument upon the House in a very pungent way, for after some £450,000 had been raised by sales of land within those reserves, he justified the theory which he had from time to time asserted by sweeping away everything that stood at the Railway Reserves Account and placing it to the credit of Consolidated Revenue. If, then, the colony now practically handed over the administration of its land it would be placing itself in the same position with respect to Consolidated Revenue as the Premier had anticipated would result from the sales of land within the railway reserves. That result was more to be feared in this case, because it was proposed not only to grant in fee-simple to the contractors half the lands fronting the line, but also to lock up the other half and deprive the Government of the power of dealing with them also. If the principle of the Bill were carried out to its full extent—though he confidently believed it would prove a *fiasco*—the colony would find itself in the position of having handed over the administration of the whole of its lands to joint-stock companies. The Premier seemed to say that the proprietorship of the land was nothing. He (Mr. Garrick) fully recognised the principle that land was immovable property—that it could not run away; but he could not regard the question of proprietorship in the slightest way the Premier had adopted. The hon. gentleman seemed to think that a mere change of landlords or proprietary was nothing; but all history taught that change of proprietorship was a great thing. In adjoining colonies where large estates had been got together the question of the proprietary of the land was considered a very great matter, and the action of the Government in giving up the administration of the land had produced a much more important result than that predicated by the Premier. There might be no objection to the principle of giving land grants for the construction of railways, but it would be certainly necessary that any contracts made under that system should be from time to time submitted to the House; and if a change were made in the measure by which all contracts, notwithstanding the ratification of agreement under clause 31, could be submitted to the House, and if necessary amended, a great improvement would have been effected. As the Bill now stood, it appeared, the contention of the Minister for Works notwithstanding, that a contract when ratified would be binding upon the colony. With respect to the value of land, hon. members had been told that they should regard the value of the land between here and Point Parker at the price it would realise if put into the market at once; but that was certainly not a fair way of valuing it. The Bill provided that as soon as 30 miles of railway had been constructed the contractors became entitled to 8,000 acres for every mile so constructed. The value of the land ought, therefore, to be calculated as it would be at the time when the colony was called upon to grant it. When it was first proposed to make a railway from Dalby to Roma it was stated that the value of land about Roma was not very great; but when it was known that such a line was to be constructed, and before 40 or 50 miles was finished, land round about Roma was put into

the market and was sold, to the extent of £450,000, at an average of something slightly above 23s. per acre. In the same way, the value of land upon the proposed transcontinental railway should not be calculated at its present selling price about Point Parker or any intermediate point between here and there, but at what it was likely to be worth near the base of operations when 40, 50, or 100 miles of the line had been made. That was what the contractors would get, and he had no hesitation in saying that when 100 miles of the line had been constructed the land within the belt to be devoted to land grants would be worth more than 10s. an acre. The Premier had once stated that within forty or fifty years it might be worth £10 an acre, but he afterwards came down and said £5. At the latter price the land would yield a very handsome profit to any company making the line. Hon. members ought to consider, in making a calculation of this kind, what would be the value of the land to the contractor at the time when it was granted. The Minister for Works had never ceased to state—and the Premier had said the same thing on many occasions—that a line could be constructed in almost any part of that western land for from £2,500 to £3,000 per mile. Taking the cost at £3,000 it appeared that the estimated value of the 8,000 acres paid for constructing one mile was 7s. 6d. per acre, or 2s. 6d. per acre less than the pre-emptive price under the Crown tenants' leases. Regarding the value of the land, not according to the views of hon. members on the Ministerial side, but according to its worth when granted, and say 100 miles from the point of departure, 7s. 6d. per acre was not 1s. more than the contractors would be able to get for it. He would say nothing now about the necessity of compelling the contractors to work the line when made, that point having been sufficiently dwelt upon by other hon. members on the same side. He would point out, however, that the Government had not reserved running powers over any lines that might be constructed under the provisions of this Bill. Provision was made in the 4th subsection of section 21 for the resumption of certain areas for public roads or railways, the Government paying for improvements made on the land so resumed, and giving an equivalent area from the nearest available Crown land. As it was probable that Governments in future would not confine themselves to the construction of railways by means of land grants, but would combine the two systems of railway construction, it would be useful, if not absolutely necessary, to reserve running powers over the proposed transcontinental line, both for themselves and for other companies who might construct railways under the provisions of the Bill. Passing over the right given to the company of having their material carried over the Government lines at the rate of twopence per ton per mile, he noticed that the contractors were to be allowed to fix their rate of freights as high as fourpence per ton per mile. Seeing that the principles of the Bill were intended to have effect for a very long period that charge appeared to be too high, and would probably be prohibitive so far as agricultural produce was concerned. The Minister for Works, quoting from *The Fortnightly Review*, stated that on the lines from Chicago to Boston and Chicago to New York goods were carried 1,000 miles for 20s. per ton; at which rate 1 ton of goods would be carried from Roma to Brisbane for something like 6s. 6d. The actual price now charged between Roma and Brisbane was, he believed, something like £7 to £8 a-ton; at the rate proposed to be fixed by the Premier it would be £5 to £6 a-ton. There was a very great difference between that rate and the rate quoted by the Minister for Works as ruling on

the American railways; and it would seem to indicate that Ministers had not taken it into their calculation that any part of the land to be traversed by the railway might be land where agricultural produce would be raised. With regard to the right of pre-emption possessed by the Crown lessees, the 15th clause said that—Whenever, after an agreement under the provisions of the Act has been made for the construction of a railway through any lands held under pastoral lease, the lessee of such lands exercised his pre-emptive right so as to include any lands required for the railway, the lessee should not be entitled to compensation except at the rate of 10s. for every acre or part of an acre of the land. That, however, appeared to refer only to the mere track of two chains wide over which the railway would run. The Crown lessees had a right to pre-empt the one-sixth part of their leaseholds, and it was probable that they would exercise their right of pre-emption where a railway was about to be made. The syndicate had spoken of making every hundred miles of the line a distinct contract, and as the lessees would probably pre-empt to a considerable extent within the areas traversed by those sections of the line, the rights of the lessees would complicate the position of the Government in carrying out the terms of the agreement with the contractors. It would be better, therefore, that the provisions of this clause should be made applicable not only to the mere track of the line but also to the country within a radius of twenty-five miles from the line;—in other words, that the lands which the contractors would have a right to call upon the Government to give them in the event of their carrying out this contract;—in other words, that when the track under the provisional contract was made, there should be no more rights to those lessees within 12½ miles of such track. With respect to making the leases indefeasible, he thought himself that the lessees would receive sufficient advantage from the construction of the railway without making the remainder of their leases indefeasible. The hon. member for Burke (Mr. Sheaffe) had told them a few evenings ago—and he could be accepted as very good authority on such a point—the advantages that would arise from the saving in the cost of carriage to the Crown lessees of the country along the line. Referring to some remarks that had been made by the hon. member for Enoggera (Mr. Dickson), that hon. member said—

“The hon. member for Enoggera alluded to the probability of the rates for goods upon the proposed line being prohibitive. He believed the hon. member estimated that the probable cost would be £13 16s. 4d. per ton from Point Parker to Roma. Not more than six months ago he paid £20 per ton for not one-fourth of the distance. If that rate were not prohibitive for a distance of 240 miles, how could the hon. member's estimate of the probable effect of the rates upon the transcontinental line be correct?”

Hon. members would find by that statement of the hon. member for Burke that he paid £20 per ton for 240 miles, and that at that rate the carriage he would have to pay, in the ordinary way, would be something like £70 a-ton for the whole distance. So that according to the calculations made by the hon. member himself, the lessees along the proposed line of railway would gain an advantage from the construction of such a line, and all the lessees within a considerable area on either side of the line would receive the great advantage of cheaper carriage. He thought it would be bad policy of the Government to lock up all the lands during the term of the leases which would be from ten to fifteen years, and thus leave it entirely in the hands of the contractors to manipulate the land market with what had been given to them. He would now refer to a very

important part of the Bill—namely, that which applied to the question of guarantee; and here he might remark that he had been very glad to hear the Premier say that he did not consider that a vital part of the Bill—that he would submit it to the opinion of the committee, and would be quite willing to stand by the Bill even although the portion of it referring to the guarantee was cut out. He had, as he said, been glad to hear that statement made by the hon. gentleman, as that would have been a financial scheme which, in his (Mr. Garrick's) opinion, was objectionable. If the question of guarantee was allowed to remain it would be a most dangerous concession to make, and would simply have increased the profits of the syndicate at the expense of the colony. Hon. members could easily imagine, if the scheme proposed by the Bill was carried out to a large extent, the Government of the colony would be asked to endorse bills to a variety of companies, and they would have a lot of paper with their names endorsed on it floating about, which would be converted into a species of land-orders, and could be most easily used, if the pastoral lessees got an indefeasible right for the remainder of their leases of all that was not taken from them by the contractors for the construction of the railway, to enable them to have a good opportunity of getting the rest of the land from the contractors. If the guarantee clauses remained in the Bill the lessees would by means of purchasing these debentures, or in other words land-orders, be in a position to get the land given to the contractors, as it had been shown that whilst 7s. 6d. an acre would pay the contractors for the construction of the line, 10s. per acre was the pre-emptive price of the lessees' own leases. So that if the guarantee clauses remained the lessees might easily get back the other halves of their lands by buying the debentures from the contractors. He was glad, therefore, that the Premier was willing that the guarantee clauses should be expunged from the Bill, without his considering it destructive of the Bill itself. He would point out that by the printed correspondence the syndicate had no idea of limiting the guarantee to twenty-one years. Even if the House was compelled to accept the guarantee for twenty-one years it would be very much better than the proposition of the syndicate, which was equivalent to asking for a guarantee in perpetuity, as nothing was said about the time. They asked that they should receive £5 per cent. in perpetuity; and their proposition, as it appeared in their letter, was far more dangerous than the proposition contained in the Bill. He (Mr. Garrick) imagined there would be no difficulty in getting up a contract under such terms, and that after giving 8,000 acres of land for every mile of railway constructed a guarantee of 4 per cent. for twenty-one years as proposed in the Bill was unnecessary. As he had already said, he had no objection to the principle of constructing railways by land grants, but he had a strong objection to the principle as carried out by the Bill before the House. He trusted that after the second reading of the Bill hon. members would, in committee, find means for ensuring some stability on the part of the persons who entered into contracts with the Government, and that they would provide, as regarded all contracts that were to be made, that the Bill would be so amended that all the contradictions which at present appeared on the face of it would be wiped out, and that all contracts that were made by the Executive should be submitted to that House for its ratification. He also trusted that the provisions making the leases of the runs indefeasible would be altered, and that the Government would take running powers over the lines, both in the interest of themselves and of

companies, and would provide that such rates of freight should be charged as would ensure—if the land through which a line passed was productive—the carriage of the produce raised from it to a market on fair and equitable terms.

Mr. GRIMES said he had only very few remarks to offer on the Bill before the House. He was not at all surprised that hon. members should have associated it with the much talked of grand transcontinental railway scheme—indeed, on reading the Bill in conjunction with the correspondence that had been going on between the Premier and the agents of the railway syndicate, he did not see that they could come to any other conclusion than that the Bill was primarily introduced to enable the Government to make a contract with the gentlemen composing that syndicate. If it was the intention of the Government to make a contract with the syndicate, he did not think it would be to the interest of the colony to pass the Bill. He also considered that the colony was not ripe enough to enter into such a large scheme. He was not opposed to the principle of the Bill that it was desirable to encourage by the granting of land bonuses the construction of railways by private enterprise, but they ought to see that they received a *quid pro quo* for the land that they gave away. It seemed to be the impression of the Minister for Works that the land was almost valueless, but he (Mr. Grimes) would just like to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that however valueless the land might appear to the House, it was the means to which the colony would have to fall back to pay the interest of the large debt it had contracted. Obviously they could not give the land away and also have it to sell for the purpose of paying the interest upon the public debt. If they entered into the proposed scheme for the making of the transcontinental railway, they should be giving away large portions of the colony's landed estate, and the contractors who would get possession of it would throw it into the market, competing in that way with the Government, and undoubtedly interfering in a great measure with the revenue which the State would obtain from the sale of land. America had been referred to as a country where similar schemes had worked very successfully, and had been the means of settling a large population upon the lands of the interior, but he could not see that the present position of Queensland was at all analogous to the position of America when similar schemes proved successful there. In the first place there was not the amount of population in the colony, whereas at the time alluded to America had already a large population which was ready to enter upon the lands of the interior as soon as they had been opened up by railways. Moreover, there was no prospect of Queensland having a large population, it not being looked upon so favourably as a field for immigration as America. America was within a fortnight's sail of England, and immigrants who went out with the idea of settling upon the land would far sooner go there than come to Queensland. Again, if the colony had the people to settle the interior, there was no market for their produce. The only hope for the agriculturist in the interior would be the local market. He might be able to grow wheat and supply the neighbouring stations with flour, but that would be only a drop in the bucket in the amount of agriculture which they wished to see established in the interior, and which must be carried on if they expected to see the railway pay. He had no hope of seeing agriculture carried on there for years to come. No farmer would think of going there unless he had a few thousand pounds which he wished to throw away. If the Bill passed, and

a railway was constructed from Roma to Point Parker, the country would not be put to a better use than it was at present—namely, for sheep-farming. He could not see where, under such conditions, the traffic could possibly come from to make the line pay even its working expenses, and he was pretty sure that if they made arrangements with the proposed contractors, in accordance with the provisions of the Bill, the colony would certainly have to pay the 4 per cent. interest upon the guaranteed debentures. He would also point out that in America agriculture was looked upon as the foundation of the future prosperity of the country, whilst here it was regarded by legislators as merely of secondary importance—as not worthy of fostering care or support. Indeed, the condition of things was even worse, for the farmer in Queensland was handicapped and weighted with increased taxation instead of having facilities and encouragements given to him to prosper in the colony. They had evidence of the interest which was taken in agriculture in America, and the inducements which were held out to the best talent to turn its attention to the invention of different kinds of agricultural machinery. Specimens of American agricultural machinery had been brought out to the colony and had given abundant proof that the farming industry was not considered in the same light in the United States that it was in this colony—in fact, the whole of our legislation seemed to be to encourage the pastoral interest at the expense of agriculturists, and if this was known at home, as no doubt it would be, how could they induce a large number of agriculturists to come here—how could agriculturists be expected to emigrate to Queensland when they knew that they would have to prosecute their labours in the face of numberless difficulties? Again, it appeared to him that it was vain to expect that the lands of the interior would be used for years and years by agriculturists, the distance that it was from a market prohibiting the growth of any ordinary crop. At the present time wheat was grown in South Australia, and sold at about 4s. 3d. per bushel; and if they took the rate of freight which was set down as the minimum in the Bill, they should find that the whole value of wheat produced in the interior would be swallowed up by the cost of bringing it to market. All these were difficulties which would certainly be weighed by the intending immigrant to this colony to engage in farming. He had no hesitation in saying it would pay the farmer better to rent land within easy distance of a market and give a good rental rather than go out into the interior, even if the land was given to him for nothing. The clauses of the Bill had been dealt with by abler hands than his, and consequently he did not intend to go through them; but there was one subject which had not been touched upon. He found that in subsection 4 of clause 21 it was provided that if within ten years after the grant in fee-simple of any block it was deemed necessary to make a public road or railway through it, the Governor in Council might resume out of such block sufficient land for such road or railway without compensation to the contractors, except for the value of the improvements made thereon. It was very easily to be understood that there would be no settlement within ten years which would necessitate the opening of roads. It would be wise to make a permanent provision, somewhat similar to the one in deeds of grant, that whenever a road was required to be opened through the land granted as a bonus, the Government should have the power to resume a sufficient portion for the purpose. If this were not done, if due provision were not made for the opening of roads to the railway line, the back country

• would never be used for anything else than to depasture sheep and cattle.

Mr. STEVENS said a great deal of time had been taken up with the discussion of the Bill; still he should not like the debate to close without saying a few words. A great deal too much had been made of the correspondence with Baron Erlanger, more especially after the Premier's explanation. He took it that the correspondence was simply an indication that there were syndicates in Europe who were willing to construct railways in Queensland on the land-grant principle. He regarded the project in this way—the colony had the land, it had no money, and it wanted a railway to the Gulf of Carpentaria. He was convinced that it would be many years before the colony would be able to pay in cash for a railway of such extent, and that the railway would be of the greatest benefit to it. He should not now discuss the various clauses, for he believed there would be a good opportunity of doing so in committee. He firmly believed in the principle of the Bill, and was glad to see that a majority of the House also believed in it.

Mr. FRASER said that all that could well be said upon the Bill now before the House had already been said, and he did not pretend for one moment to suppose that he could add anything new to the various views already advanced; but he thought it was admitted on all hands that this was, without exception, the most important measure that had yet come before Parliament—at any rate, the most important measure that had come before it this session. That being the case, every hon. member had a right to claim the privilege of saying a few words upon it. It had been objected that this Bill was not in any respect to be associated with the correspondence that had been laid before the House. He ventured to say that anyone reading the one and then reading the other would very naturally come to the conclusion that one must be the father of the other, because, to say the least of it, there was a very strong family likeness. However, the hon. the Premier had disclaimed that there was necessarily any connection whatever between them. He was very glad to hear that this was the case. There might be a likeness without that connection. It was quite natural that in bringing a Bill of this kind before the House the hon. gentleman would frame it so as to meet the views of those who were likely to undertake such an enterprise, and possibly having come into contact only with the names mentioned in the correspondence he had acted upon their suggestion. This might be the case without any necessary connection between the two circumstances; but it did not necessarily follow because of that that they should accept the Bill just as it came before the House. He did not suppose for one moment that they had any occasion to go a-begging in this matter. They, at any rate, in this case held the thick end of the rope in their hands; and they could wait, and they would lose nothing by waiting, as the consideration they were prepared to give must necessarily from day to day increase in value. On the other hand, those who came to the colony desiring to avail themselves of the advantages to be derived from an agreement of this kind would find it of importance to them to seize the present opportunity. Capital was superabundant in England just now. He saw recently a calculation made by one of the most competent actuaries, who stated that during the last three or four years the average interest upon accumulated capital in England did not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That being the case, they could easily see how anxious those whose business it was to deal with that capital would be to embrace such an opportunity as was now presented to them, and no doubt they had laid their pro-

posal before the Premier in such a manner as to meet their views to a very large extent. He, in common with almost all the speakers who had preceded him, agreed with the Bill, for the reason that he thought it was far better that they should get those public works constructed through the capital they possessed than to go on as in the past, borrowing and burdening themselves with a yearly-increasing weight of interest which had become a very serious and pressing burden upon the community, and must necessarily do so seeing the slow rate at which population was increasing. Looking at it in that light he agreed with the principle of the Bill, and had always done so. It was not a new opinion formed by him on the matter. He had ever since he had been in the colony contended for that very thing. The only question was whether they could accomplish it in such a manner as to gain what they desired in the best way. There were two objects contemplated by the Bill: first, the one to which he had alluded—to ease off the increasing burden of interest; and secondly, that of settling a large population upon the waste lands of the colony. With respect to the first, the Bill certainly would not relieve the colony from its burden of interest, provided one of its provisions were carried into effect. It had been pointed out already that they were not only called upon to give in land full value for the construction of those lines, but also to guarantee interest upon £1,500 per mile, for, as was said in the correspondence, an indefinite period, but as proposed in the Bill for twenty-one years. As to the second object, the settlement of a large population on the lands of the colony, he was afraid, looking at the Bill and the correspondence, that there was very little to justify them in assuming that that would follow. Allusion had been made to America, and it had been pointed out how the extension of lines into the interior had led to the settlement of a large population and the creation of flourishing cities in the wilderness; and it had been pointed out that there was no analogy whatever between the two countries. If Queensland had received—as America had—week after week and month after month, a large tide of population, pushing their way to the interior, they might hope to realise something of the same kind: but they had not. Something like 1,700 people landed in Queensland during the last twelve months. Again, it was said that the contractors would constitute the very best and most successful immigration agents. That was what might be expected; but looking at the correspondence with the syndicate, in connection with the construction of these lines, he found that the 7th clause threw very grave doubts on this belief. The clause read thus:—

“The Government will make to each of the artisans and labourers imported for the construction and equipment of the line, a grant of 160 acres, subject to the payment by them of 2s. 6d. per acre, at the rate of 6d. per acre for five years, subject to the conditions of the land laws of the colony.”

Every artisan introduced by the contractors was to receive from the Government a homestead settlement. If the object of the contractors and those who got possession of the land was to settle on it an industrial population, what occasion was there to make such a proposal as this at all? If the Bill passed into law one of its objects ought to be to effect settlements on these lands. They had heard a great deal about their value, but he knew nothing about them except what he had heard. Statements respecting these lands had been made years ago by the hon. the Minister for Works and by the hon. the Premier, and it had been represented in glowing pictures that there was nothing to equal them in this colony, or in either of the other colonies. If that were the case, it must follow as a matter of

course they must be pre-eminently suited for the settlement of a large population; and if that were so he maintained that a provision ought to be introduced into the Bill to carry out that object. But on the contrary, according to the provisions of the Bill, if it passed in its present form, instead of forwarding that object it would most inevitably retard it. It had been already pointed out that it was proposed to give indefeasible leases during the remaining period of the lease. The land in that case could not be touched. The land being in alternate blocks, every other block would be in the hands of the syndicate, not necessarily the contractors; and if the land were such as it had been stated to be—and he had not heard it denied—he maintained, looking at what had been done in the past, that nothing was more likely than that the pastoral lessees would embrace the first opportunity of possessing themselves of the land which they would obtain at a rate which would pay the syndicate handsomely, and would be, at the same time, very much lower than they had ever secured any other lands for in the colony. That would effectually debar instead of forwarding settlement as desired. Let it be borne in mind that neither this colony nor any other country, let its natural resources be what they might, would ever become great and prosperous until they had a large industrial settled population among them. There was another difference between this country and America. It was proposed in this instance that they should have their line constructed by foreigners—by people out of the colony. Foreigners to them they assuredly were, inasmuch as their interests lay elsewhere, and their only object would be to draw from the colony as much wealth as they could. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind that in the case of the American railways the contractors were essentially Americans, whose very first object and interest was to promote the prosperity and greatness of their own country. He would not trespass on the time of the House to any extent, but there were one or two matters in the Bill that could not be passed by. He had alluded to the objectionable principle of giving a guarantee, and could not see in any way why they should be called upon to give a guarantee for interest for even half the value of construction. The next objectionable feature was the most unbusinesslike provision of paying for the construction of a line after giving full value for it. If the land was what it was represented to be, then, according to the rate at which they were getting their lines constructed—namely, £3,000 per mile—8,000 acres would be ample compensation for the construction of this line. Since, in that case, they were paying for the line, why should they be called upon to buy it back again, and pay twice over for it? That he had not yet heard satisfactorily explained; but if any attempt were made towards the construction of these lines, the fairest and most business-like manner would be to let them remain in the hands of the contractors for a given period after construction. Let the contractors make the best they could out of it, and work it to the best advantage for themselves, and at the end of twenty or twenty-one years return it to the hands of the Government. Another objectionable feature was that contracts should be taken for the construction of railways without the consent of the House. That was introducing the negative system of legislation, which he considered highly objectionable, and if this Bill passed its second reading and went into committee he hoped to see that clause eliminated. He should not go further into matters of detail as to the rates and so forth, nor would he enlarge upon the omissions of the Bill. Those had

been already ably and clearly pointed out, and, in conclusion, he could only say that with the principle of the Bill he fully agreed—namely, that they should have their lines constructed out of the lands of the colony. Here, by-the-bye, he might say that it seemed to him that this Bill was running quite counter to the principles that had been laid down by the Premier. The hon. gentleman had often insisted that they should borrow, construct their lines, and sell their lands. That might be a sound principle or not. He (Mr. Fraser) could not say that it was quite in accordance with the spirit of this Bill, but he was quite willing to accept the Bill, provided that it be so amended in committee as to avoid the objections made to it. Those objections were reasonable and fair, and such as would commend themselves to the intelligence and common-sense of the business men who were in the House.

Mr. KINGSFORD said he might not be possessed of the qualification mentioned by the hon. member who had just sat down; he might not be a common-sense man; he might not be a business man; but for all that the Bill commended itself to his attention. The hon. member, after speaking of the necessity for settlement of the land and so on, and comparing this country with America, said if Queensland could secure a stream of immigration such as America had secured there might be some ground for going into the scheme, and he clinched his argument by saying that the colony would lose nothing by waiting. If it was necessary to have a stream of immigration and to settle the land, and if property depended on a rapid increase of population, it appeared to be little short of madness, or at least stubborn opposition, to oppose a measure introduced for the very purpose of settling the land. They would lose nothing by waiting. What was the condition of the colony at the present time? They might wait until they went to ruin: they had, in all conscience, waited long enough. For some years nothing had been done but retrograde, and it was high time that something should be done to retrieve the prospects of the colony and bring about a state of prosperity. It would be far better for the Government to stumble at every mile and break their shins, if possible, so long as they progressed. It was astonishing to him that nearly all the opponents of every measure brought forward for the good of the colony were Brisbane men or members for metropolitan districts. If those hon. members had been where he had been travelling during the last two or three weeks, and had heard what he heard, they would have felt as he felt—great indignation that there should be ground for the taunt that Brisbane thought itself the whole colony. He could mention names well known in the commercial world—gentlemen, squatters, and storekeepers—who had renounced Brisbane altogether and were getting supplies beyond the borders. It was a taunt driven home almost every hour of the day—"What is Brisbane? Brisbane is the colony, and unless Brisbane gets all the plums she will not be satisfied. Brisbane will take care of herself while all the rest of the colony may starve." He would say this—and time would prove it—that unless something was done to bring about an improved state of things, Brisbane would go to the wall. And it would serve Brisbane right—if not Brisbane, at least the leaders and representatives of the people. He had listened with much attention and pleasure to the speech of the hon. member for East Moreton (Mr. Garrick). That speech contained many suggestions worthy the attention of the Government and the House, and when the Bill went into committee would no doubt receive due weight. The hon. member's speech was

divested of all that—he might call it—nastiness that had distinguished the speeches on the other side. It was delivered in a calm, temperate, business-like way; but he was rather surprised that the hon. member did not keep within bounds. This was a Bill to provide for and encourage the construction of railways by private enterprise, and the heading of the pages was, "Railway Companies Preliminary Bill." There was no necessity for going into details, and picking holes here there and everywhere, and finding fault with the measure generally. It was a preliminary measure—the commencement of an attempt to bring a return of prosperity to the colony. However mistaken the Government might be—and they were mistaken on a great many points—their intention was to see the colony go a-head; and it was far better to make a few mistakes than to sit down in supine indifference or obstruct the measure in every possible way.

Mr. FRASER said he wished to correct his hon. colleague. He (Mr. Fraser) did not oppose the Bill.

Mr. PERSSE said that as he took a deep interest in the welfare of the colony he deemed it his duty to say a few words on the Bill. It seemed to be the almost unanimous opinion of the House that a Bill was necessary having for its object the construction of railways by giving grants of land. It would have been far better had the leader of the Opposition and other speakers on that side of the House attempted to improve the Bill, instead of abusing both the Bill and the syndicate. They would all be sorry to see such a work entrusted to a syndicate composed of men who had not clean hands, and he did not suppose anyone would care to see Baron Erlanger trying his financial experiments on Queensland. The duty of the Opposition was to have pointed out the weak spots in the Bill, so that they might be strengthened in committee, instead of hounding it down as they had done. There were plenty of faults in the Bill, yet he believed it was for the welfare of the colony that railways should be constructed on the land-grant principle. Squatters had far more reason to complain against the Bill than the people in the metropolitan district—the members for which were the only ones who were opposed to the Bill. They seemed to think that Brisbane was the whole of Queensland, and that nothing that was not for the welfare of Brisbane would be a good thing for Queensland. The most narrow-minded people in the world were the people of Brisbane, and they were fitly represented by the late Queen-street Ministry. Instead of pushing on the Roma line to Tambo and Blackall, they allowed the Rockhampton line to go ahead. The leader of the Opposition in that respect had been one of the worst members ever returned for Brisbane. He allowed the Rockhampton people to steal a march upon him, and Brisbane had been left only a second-rate town. It would never be more than the nominal capital of the colony, and would never represent the interests of half the outside people. But to return to the Bill. There were a few amendments which he would suggest might be made in committee. Clause 4 ought to mention the number of years the contractors would work the line, and clause 13 should state how often trains should run. Clause 15 was manifestly unfair to lessees of runs, who were only to get 10s. compensation for pre-emptions; but land obtained under clause 16 was compensated by arbitration. The only thing would be to sell the land to a third party. Clause 18 needed looking after in the pastoral interests, for by it contractors were empowered to remove timber from any portion of a run through which the line might pass. Under the Act of 1869

timber could not be removed from within two miles of any head station. In outside districts it would go hard with lessees if contractors could go to a head station and take away timber, especially if it was very scarce. If that were allowed, compensation for it should be given in some shape or other. In connection with clause 21, he held that no land should be granted to the contractors until the line was completed. As to clause 27, he agreed with the hon. member (Mr. Fraser), that if Government gave the land for the construction of the railway, the railway ought to become the property of the Government after a certain number of years—say five or ten years—for the State should not pay both land and money. In connection with clause 32—providing for the survey of the line—he wished to know how the survey was to be effected—whether by wheel, theodolite, or chain? There was nothing mentioned about it, and they all knew that previous surveys in the colony had been worked in a most unsatisfactory way. A proper survey could not be made if it was worked by the wheel. He should also like to know whether it was intended to survey the six millions of acres at once, or how. Under the Act of 1869 the Government could not resume more than 2,560 acres from any run without giving six months' notice to the lessee, and only then if Parliament assented to the notices of resumption. If that were to be done without the assent of Parliament, would not Government be breaking faith with the pastoral lessees? There was no provision made for compensation to the lessees, and cases of great hardship might occur in the survey of the lands. As he had already said, he believed in the principle of the Bill, for among other things it would bring population into the country, and do away with the immigration depot at home. It would be a saving of £100,000 a-year to the colony, which they had hitherto been duped out of. If the contractors brought men out here they would stay, for they would be induced to take up homesteads and settle along the line. Then, again, there was this advantage—that all the land in the hands of the Government would be increased in value ten or even a hundredfold. Land which was of no value at all at the present time would become very valuable as soon as the line was constructed. He believed in the principle of the Bill, but it would require a great many amendments in committee. From the manner in which hon. members on the Opposition side of the House had spoken of the Bill, one would imagine that they were anxious to postpone the matter until next session. Indeed, one might also be prepared to find them stonewalling it as they had stonewalled the mail contract; but in the interests of Queensland that Bill should be laid before the British public, so that it might know upon what principle the colony was prepared to construct its railways. For his own part he would like to see tenders called. If the Government could get the line constructed at 5,000 instead of 8,000 acres per mile, so much the better; but as long as the lines could be made by means of reasonable land-grants, they would have his hearty support.

Question—That the Bill be read a second time—put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the committal of the Bill stand an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

Mr. GRIFFITH said a number of amendments had been suggested, and they would require consideration. He would like to know if the Government really intended to proceed with the Bill upon the following day?

The PREMIER said the passing of the Bill would be expedited if hon. members would

make the House acquainted with their proposed amendments as soon as possible. He had no intention of rushing the Bill, but he would like to get it through during the present session. The motion before the House was merely a formal one. He did not intend to proceed with the Bill upon the following day; but unless strong objections were raised, he proposed to take it on Monday next. He was not, however, particular to a day.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLY.

On the motion of the PREMIER, Committee of Supply was resumed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS moved that £3,761 be granted for pastoral occupation. The Committee would notice that there was a decrease of £100 upon last year's vote.

Mr. GRIFFITH wished to know whether the Minister for Lands had heard a complaint to the effect that a water reserve near Blackall or Aramac had been alienated and handed over to a pastoral lessee?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Will the hon. member indicate the exact place?

Mr. GRIFFITH: Douglas Ponds.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that if any such complaint had been made there was no ground for it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he had heard no complaint of the kind mentioned by the hon. member for North Brisbane. He lived in the district concerned, and if any injustice had been done he would most probably have heard of it from carriers and others, who required a permanent water reserve.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as member for the district—although it was not in the habit of making complaints—he would also have heard of the matter had an injustice been perpetrated. His first knowledge of this matter, however, was not derived from the remarks of the hon. member for North Brisbane, but from a letter written by one of that hon. member's vigilant supporters, the member for Darling Downs (Mr. Miles), who having discovered the Barcoo, the Thompson, and other western rivers, came down full of information which he placed in the hands of the hon. member for Toowoomba (Mr. Groom), whereupon a letter was compiled which contained statements about as truthful as the statements made by these two hon. gentlemen generally were. Immediately the statement was made that a certain proposed water reserve had been parted with the Minister for Lands drew his attention to the matter, and showed him exactly what had been done—the effect of which was that the water had been preserved for public use and had not been alienated to anyone.

Mr. GARRICK noticed that there were two commissioners at £450. Would the Minister for Lands say whether they were surveying commissioners?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Every commissioner is a surveying commissioner.

Mr. GARRICK asked how it was, then, that the Estimates only provided allowance in lieu of horses, etc., to one commissioner?

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is a transcript of last year's estimate.

Mr. GARRICK: I do not care what it is.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said one of the commissioners, Mr. Watson, was engaged in survey work in connection with the boundary between New South Wales and Queensland. The second was Mr. Desgrand. They were both surveying commissioners.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said the allowance should be made to Mr. Watson, as Mr. Desgrand did not require any; he had not so much field-work to do, and was not likely to have, as Mr. Commissioner Watson on the Gregory.

Mr. GARRICK asked the Minister for Lands if both these officers had allowances?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. GARRICK said there was only a sum on the Estimates for one—where did the other come from?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: From the survey of runs.

Mr. GARRICK thought both items ought to appear on the Estimates in the same way. Perhaps the Minister for Lands would say whether anything else was paid out of incidental expenses?

Mr. AMHURST said the hon. member reminded him of the lowest part of his profession—an Old Bailey lawyer. If he looked at the Estimates he would see that one commissioner got £200 in lieu of horse, forage, &c., and the other got an allowance according to work done. Why did the hon. member not say he intended to block business? He (Mr. Amhurst) objected to his profession being prostituted by a member doing Old Bailey style.

Mr. GARRICK said he understood both of these officers were on the permanent staff, and each received a permanent allowance. He did not think either was paid from the fund referred to by the Minister for Lands.

The PREMIER said the explanation of the Minister for Lands was correct. One officer was paid £200 a-year allowance directly for equipment, and the other was paid the same amount from the vote for the survey of land, because it was considered a temporary appointment. It had been the same for the last four years.

Mr. MOREHEAD pointed out that the Estimates for 1878-9—when hon. members opposite were in office—were framed precisely the same as those now before the House. The hon. member (Mr. Garrick) was simply going in for obstruction and nothing else.

Mr. GRIFFITH said from the way the Estimates were arranged, it caused some trouble to find out what salary some officers received. For instance, he would like to know what salary the recording clerk at Normanton—who was also clerk of petty sessions and police magistrate—received?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said whatever sum was put down in the estimates of the Lands Department was correct.

Mr. GRIFFITH said if he was not too late he would like to ask a question with regard to the previous vote. How did the Minister for Lands reconcile the fact that the provision for commission on sales of land by auction was no more this year than last year, when it was proposed that the sales should be doubled? Which was to be carried out—was the commission to be less, or was the quantity of land to be sold no more?

The PREMIER was understood to say that if they spent more in the survey of land than appeared on the Estimates, the amount would be placed on the Supplementary Estimates.

Mr. GARRICK objected to the Estimates-in-Chief being prepared so that there should be large additions on the Supplementary Estimates. He observed that there were several items showing that the Treasurer, in his statement of Ways and Means, had taken credit for very much larger sums than he ought to. The

receipts from sales of land last year amounted to about £75,000; the Treasurer, if he (Mr. Garrick) remembered rightly, took credit this year for £175,000, but he had not charged himself with the expense of realising the larger sum. On ordinary business principles he could not expect to carry out £175,000 of business for the same outlay as £100,000.

Mr. MOREHEAD rose to a point of order. The hon. member could not discuss any item that had been passed.

The CHAIRMAN said the hon. member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) asked permission to ask a question on the last item, and it was not objected to.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that was quite correct, but the question having been answered, no discussion could take place on an item that had been passed by the Committee.

Mr. GARRICK said he was not discussing any item that had been passed, but was referring to the answer given by the Premier with respect to a sum being placed on the Supplementary Estimates, and to the manner in which the Estimates had been prepared.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would like the Chairman's ruling on the point, because, if the hon. member's contention meant anything, it meant that the Premier, or any member of the Ministry, might be entrapped into answering a question, and thereby re-open a matter that had already been settled.

The CHAIRMAN was understood to say that the hon. member was not referring to any particular item.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he (Mr. Garrick) was referring to the last item passed by the Committee.

Mr. GARRICK said he was not referring to anything of the kind, and it was useless for the hon. member for Mitchell to try and stop discussion on these items. He (Mr. Garrick) was complaining of the way in which the Estimates had been prepared. He remembered when he was in office his Estimates were criticised in the same way, and it was pointed out that the Treasurer had taken credit for larger receipts than were justified. It was quite evident that the amount of business calculated upon in Committee of Ways and Means could not be done for the sum set down on these Estimates; and hon. members had a perfect right to comment upon such a matter.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the amount required for commission was infinitesimal in proportion to the amount of business done. £200 was put down on the Estimate, and probably only another £100 would be required if all the business calculated upon in Ways and Means was transacted, auctioneers being always anxious to have the appointment, although the commission was so small. It would be all the better for the colony if the additional sum was required.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the matter was not of very much importance, except as showing the way in which the Estimates had been prepared. It seemed that the expenditure had been settled first, and then the Ways and Means; and after that the latter had been revised, but not revised so that they would fit the Estimates of Expenditure. The whole appearance of the Estimates went to show that the figure "1" had been added to the sum to be realised by sales of land in order to make up £100,000 which had been taken out of the Estimates somewhere else.

Mr. DICKSON said the salary set down for the recording clerk of £250 with £100 extra as police magistrate and clerk of petty sessions—in all £350—did not agree with the estimates of the Colonial

Secretary, which said that the police magistrate at Normanton received £100, with £300 as recording clerk and land agent, or £400 in all. Hon. members might imagine that the questions now asked were carping questions, introduced for the purpose of delaying business rather than obtaining information; but he would point out these estimates did not give the same amount of information as had been given in previous years. The Estimates of 1878 stated explicitly that the salary of £100 was provided for police magistrate, £250 for recording clerk and land agent, and £50 for Customs services, in all £400. That information could not be traced in this estimate, and he now suggested that the words "also Customs officer £50" should be added to the foot-note.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked whether the Customs officer was the same person as the recording clerk?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he did not know what other officer that gentleman might hold. He did not interfere with other departments.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wanted to know what salary this gentleman received. The Estimates said—recording clerk £250, police magistrate £100, land agent £50. There was also a Customs agent £50, telegraph office blank pounds a year. The Estimates were defective in the absence of any information by which the whole salary of any particular officer could be traced. The Committee wished to know who the officer was and what he got?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the officer was Mr. MacGroarty, and he received £250 from the Lands Department.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he understood that gentleman was the successor to Mr. Wells. Was it the same gentleman who was paid under the Customs estimate?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I understand he is not.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, surely the Customs officer got more than £50 a-year?

The PREMIER said the Customs officer was also the telegraph station master.

Mr. GRIFFITH: How much does he get?

Mr. DICKSON asked whether the officer in question received an aggregate salary of £400 or only £350?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he had every reason to believe that the total salary received by this gentleman was £350 a-year, and that he did not officiate as Customs officer at Normanton.

Mr. PERSSE said he noticed that £200 was placed on the Estimates for rent of offices, and he was sorry that the amount was not larger, in order that accommodation on a more extensive scale and in a more central position might be obtained. The Pastoral Occupation Department, in particular, was a disgrace to the colony. Instead of a large room being set apart for the purpose where maps of the colony could be inspected, only a small poky room was provided not large enough to accommodate the outside public; and if information was required the officer in charge had often to consult the Under Secretary, and the Under Secretary had to consult the Minister for Lands. The public ought to have access to maps in which they could see the amount of land taken up.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: So they can.

Mr. PERSSE said the information could not be obtained in the way he desired it should. There ought to be maps showing plainly the amount of country forfeited, and every person

should be allowed to go and see them. He hoped the Minister for Lands would take that into consideration in framing his next estimates.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said a good deal of what the hon. member said was quite correct, but with regard to the officer in charge of the Pastoral Occupation Department—

Mr. PERSSE: I said nothing about the officer in charge: I spoke only of the room.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said it would be admitted that the premises were unsuitable, and he regretted that many old and experienced officers who did their work with great accuracy should be placed at such a disadvantage. He also regretted that the prospects of the country would not allow the Government to acknowledge the services of those officers by increasing their salaries. The incoming correspondence amounted to something like 26,000 to 27,000 letters a-year, all of which had to be replied to—the lessees of 10 acres requiring as much attention as the man of 10,000 or 20,000 acres; and he was happy to say at the present time there was little or nothing in arrears in the Department. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Fassifern, that persons were unable to get information, the proper course for them to have followed would have been to make complaints to that effect.

Mr. PERSSE said he regretted the hon. gentleman misunderstood him, as what he had complained of was that the office accommodation was too small for such an important department, and not that it was impossible to get information from the officers. He considered that any person who desired to obtain information should be able to see maps showing the runs that had been taken up—those that had been forfeited, and the country which had not been taken up.

After some remarks from the Minister for Lands and Mr. Griffith, which were inaudible owing to the heavy storm,

Mr. McLEAN was understood to say that he thought many hon. members would agree with him that the present Land Office was more like a rabbit warren than anything else. He agreed with the hon. member for Fassifern that there ought to be a large room in which there were maps exhibited, to enable any person to see for himself what land was taken up and what was available. There was no doubt that the present Land Office was the most unsuitable building there could be for the purpose, and he hoped the Government would take the matter into consideration. He believed the money would be well spent if the Government erected a block of buildings in which all the public departments could be concentrated.

Mr. DICKSON pointed out that on page 14, under the head of "police," there was a foot-note (j) explaining that the police magistrate and clerk of petty sessions at Normanton received £300 a-year as recording clerk and land agent at that place, whilst in the estimate now under consideration he was put down at £250 only.

Question put and passed.

On the question that the sum of £28,183 be voted for "Survey of Land,"

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had heard that a trigonometrical survey of some kind had been commenced, and he should like to hear from the hon. Minister for Lands what steps had been taken in the matter.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said a base line of about twenty chains had been laid down at the Gardens, and the object was to correct mistakes made in the earlier times of the colony in the survey of Brisbane and its suburbs. It

was not intended to continue the survey beyond Brisbane and the suburbs at present.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to know how the mistakes were to be corrected, as nearly all the land in Brisbane was brought under the Real Property Act, and the descriptions on the deeds would have to be altered. He would also ask why so short a base line as twenty chains was adopted. If that was all that had been done at present it was very little.

The PREMIER said that if they were making a trigonometrical survey of the whole colony it would be different, but they were making an isolated survey of Brisbane and its suburbs, in order to correct errors that had been made. The survey now being made was for the purpose of having a good map of Brisbane and the suburbs only. It was a very important thing, and the Government thoroughly approved of having it done.

Mr. GRIFFITH was understood to say that he had heard that one of the gate-posts of the Gardens was one of the ends of the base line, and a lamp-post the other. The usual course in making a trigonometrical survey was to define a point at each end as accurately as possible and to make the base line as long as possible, but by taking a post here and a lamp-post twenty chains apart there, nothing would be gained.

Mr. ARCHER said he would really like to know what the discussion was about, as, owing to the storm, he had not been able to hear a single word of what had been said?

The PREMIER said the hon. member for North Brisbane was right in saying that if they were going in for a trigonometrical survey they ought to have the most thorough accuracy in the base line, and make it as long as they possibly could; but the survey spoken of was simply for Brisbane and the suburbs, and neither the same accuracy in measuring the line nor the same base was required. The base laid down was long enough, and the mode of survey adopted was accurate enough for all practical purposes.

Mr. BEATTIE was understood to say that from all he could hear the survey would be much better left alone. He had heard that there were some gross mistakes in Queen street, and also in Wickham terrace. If the trigonometrical survey would have the effect of disturbing the existing titles it had certainly better be left alone.

The PREMIER said it would not have the effect of disturbing any titles.

Mr. GARRICK said the survey seemed to him to be a perfect waste of money. He could hardly see that it would serve any useful purpose. What would it cost?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the cost up to the present had been about £200, and the survey would be finished within three weeks. The object was not to disturb existing titles, but to make a correct map of Brisbane. It was desirable that investors in land in the metropolis should have a correct map to consult.

Mr. PERSSE asked under whose supervision the survey was being carried out?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Surveyor-General.

Mr. GRIFFITH was understood to say that if a trigonometrical survey was made at all it should be perfectly accurate; it would be better to make none than have one which was not perfectly accurate. He failed to see from the explanations which had been given how they were any nearer getting an accurate survey than they were before they started.

After some further discussion, which was not audible in the gallery owing to the storm,

The PREMIER was understood to say that the Surveyor-General in his report truly described the present system as radically bad; but no remark in the report suggested the remedy mentioned by the hon. member for North Brisbane, because if the surveys were corrected by the true meridian it would make confusion worse confounded. The Surveyor-General proposed to have a trigonometrical survey of the whole colony, and that was how they should have commenced. But a trigonometrical survey would have cost as much as the whole government of the colony, and the only reason why the survey had not been made was because of the expense. Though the present system was radically bad, it was the system in force in other colonies. They were bound to have inaccuracies, but they must put up with what they could afford. The remedy the hon. member proposed, that each surveyor should mark his own true meridian, or send his surveys to the office to be corrected by the information they had of the variation of the compass and to be reduced to the true meridian, would require an office twice as big and would make it twice as bad. At the present time surveys had been done with great credit to the Survey Department. There was a survey as far as the Herbert River—about 1,200 miles in a straight line. This had been checked by taking the true meridian, and it was found to be correct as nearly as possible; and was, he thought, very creditable to the department.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman misunderstood him. He (Mr. Griffith) did not suggest that each surveyor should correct his own survey to the true meridian. That was suggested in the Surveyor-General's report, and he agreed with the Premier that such a course would introduce confusion unless the surveyors were competent to make the necessary calculations. The suggestion as to the true meridian was also in the report. Let any inaccuracies in the surveyors' compass be ascertained, and the variation of the compass for the year, and the place, could also be ascertained. A record of the magnetic variation ought to be kept at several places in the colony. The correction would have to be made at some time or other, and, if not made when the grants were made, at perhaps a much greater expense. Every survey was already corrected in the Lands Department. If a table were kept there of the true magnetic variation at Toowoomba, say, nothing could be more easy than to check the surveys within the variation. At present it was, to a great extent, a system of guesswork, and must lead to confusion. If observations were made in different parts of the colony, and a record of them kept in the office, the surveys, when so corrected, would not be out a quarter of a degree at the outside. Such records were kept in the southern colonies, and there should be no difficulty in keeping them here. As to the remedy of a trigonometrical survey, that was impracticable; but it was not necessary to make a trigonometrical survey to know whether the side of a block was north, north by east, or north-north-east.

Mr. GARRICK asked what progress was being made with the survey of the southern boundary?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied that Mr. Watson and his assistants had discovered that some persons who were supposed to be living in New South Wales were actually living in Queensland. The survey was at present being carried on at the sole expense of New South Wales. The line would be checked by Mr. Watson, the commissioner.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he presumed Queensland would ultimately pay its portion of the expenses if they accepted the survey?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that matter had not been determined yet. The New South Wales Government were anxious to finish the work, and on the score of economy it was not considered desirable to ask for a further vote on account of the survey at present.

Mr. GARRICK said that seemed a rather undignified position to assume. Surely the colony was not so hard up as that?

The PREMIER said it was not a matter of considerable importance to the colony to spend money on the work. The New South Wales Government were anxious that the survey should be made, and this Government were anxious enough that they should do it, as they did not want to be put to the expense of it, and they agreed to check the surveys. The Government were perfectly satisfied with the arrangement, and everything was going on all right.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that, as a matter of comity with a neighbouring colony, they ought to express their willingness to pay their share of the survey. It was important, also, that somebody connected with the Queensland Government should accompany the survey party. They were all aware of the boundary difficulties that had occasionally arisen. The border-line between Victoria and South Australia was a constant source of ill-feeling between the two colonies, and might ultimately result in litigation, if not in a border warfare.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked whether the survey would be binding?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied that it would. It was intended to carry the survey as far as the South Australian border. At present the survey party had reached the mouth of the Paroo.

Mr. GRIFFITH called attention to the complaints frequently made by surveyors as to the insufficiency of fees, and quoted the passage in the Under Secretary's report referring to it. If those men were insufficiently paid it could not be expected that the work would be done properly; and if the facts were as stated it was the duty of the Minister for Lands to take the matter into consideration. There was no economy in giving a man a sum of money for his labour which was admittedly insufficient to enable him to do it properly.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said a move had already been made in that direction, and the fees had been increased.

Mr. GARRICK asked what remuneration had been paid to Mr. McIvor for the pamphlet which the Minister for Lands had had published?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied that £150 had been paid to Mr. McIvor, and that about 3,000 copies had been distributed.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS moved that £2,900 be granted for survey of roads.

Mr. ARCHER said many years had elapsed since he drew attention to the way in which roads were surveyed in the colony. No one who had travelled much about the colony would deny that under the existing system roads were surveyed in the very worst way possible. He did not say there had not been some necessity for it, for it was important to get the survey of the country done as cheaply as possible. The surveyors had to survey by right angles or cardinal points in order to make a living at the rate at which they were paid. The consequence

was that the roads were made in bad directions. But now that the divisional boards had to find money for the roads, it was a question for the people in each division to determine whether their roads ought not to be properly surveyed. There were dozens of cases in which, by a slight deviation from the straight line of survey, the surveyor could have made a good road round a hill instead of making a bad one over it. He rose to ask the Minister for Lands whether, in the interests of the whole colony, and to save the money which was now expended to rectify surveyors' mistakes, he was not prepared to see that roads were surveyed prior to selection? They allowed selectors to select where they chose, and sent out a surveyor to survey the land, and it was frequently found that a road passed right through the selection. But if the roads were marked out they would be a basis for the surveyor to start upon. He was satisfied that if roads were surveyed in advance of selection the country would be saved some thousands of pounds in the end of a few years. He was aware of a case in which, through a faulty survey of the main northern line to Rockhampton, the road was diverted through a swamp, and the Engineer of Roads for the Central District spent £600 in making a road *vid* the swamp, and then resumed the old one, buying back the land for five times the amount which had been paid for it.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Was that long ago?

Mr. ARCHER said it was some years ago. But that was only one case out of many. He had no doubt that if the divisional boards had the sale of the land as well as the making of the roads, they would see the necessity for making surveys before the land was sold. The plan he had suggested to the Minister for Lands would not only be an advantage to the general public, but would give the selector a better road for the conveyance of his produce to market. He noticed that there was a small sum upon the Estimates which might answer for the southern division; but he would like to hear whether or not the Minister for Lands was prepared to place a sum upon the Estimates sufficient to keep the surveys of roads in advance of selection in the whole of the districts of the colony?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he could endorse all that the hon. member had said with regard to the inconvenience, annoyance, and expense which had resulted from badly surveyed roads. Captain Whish, as soon as he had cleared up some arrears in the Works Department, would make up a staff expressly with an idea to keep the survey of roads in advance of selection and sale by auction. His attention was already directed to this matter; and he would not fail to see that the survey of roads was conducted in a more desirable way. There could be no doubt but that the payment of the surveyors by points and angles had led to the roads being taken over all kinds of impassable places; and it would be the duty of the Department to see that those roads were closed and that more desirable roads were opened. During his tenure of office he could assure the hon. member that he would do all that lay in his power in this direction.

Mr. McLEAN asked the Minister for Lands whether it was the intention of the Government to return to the system of road-ranging, which he believed was to a certain extent adopted by the late Government, and with considerable success? He had advocated this system ever since he had had a seat in the House, and he need hardly point out that it would in effect carry out the principle advocated by the hon. member for Blackall. He did not know whether it would be possible for Captain Whish to act as road ranger.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said it was not contemplated that the department would be a very expensive one. His intention was to employ only Captain Whish with one or two other men. Captain Whish's experience would be of great advantage; but, of course, if further assistance were proved to be necessary it could be provided.

Mr. ARCHER hoped the North was not going to be entirely ignored. They would certainly require surveys to be made up there if the system of surveying roads before selection was going to be carried out. He therefore hoped the Minister for Lands would provide for the northern and central divisions having something like a survey ahead of selection. If the present system was allowed to go on it would lead to expense compared with which the cost of the survey of these roads would be as nothing.

Mr. MOREHEAD said this was what was expected from the wretched Divisional Boards Bill. They would find that the expenditure on the Estimates-in-Chief would be increased year by year. They had already a survey staff for the southern division, and they would have to provide the same for the northern and central divisions; and in addition they were to be taxed under the Divisional Boards Act. He believed before two years were over the Act would be repealed. It would be the curse of the colony. It was at present utterly unworkable in the outside districts, and would continue to be until some very material alteration was made, or, what he would prefer, the utter abolition of it—in fact, they were to be taxed in all directions, and he preferred going back to the old system.

Mr. FRASER said there was a good deal of truth in what the hon. member for Mitchell said. The Divisional Boards Act was not working satisfactorily in the suburbs of large towns nor in the country, and the more experience they had of it the more unsatisfactory it was becoming. With regard to the other matter, he would press upon the Minister for Lands to revive the system of road rangers. They could have no better system for pioneering roads in the country than road rangers, who not only saved their salaries a hundred times over but gave general satisfaction. He (Mr. Fraser) had had instances brought under his notice repeatedly of the valuable scrubs in the Blackall ranges. At the present time several persons were waiting to select there, but were unable to do so in the absence of roads or any idea of the direction they were likely to take. The Minister for Lands could not do better than revive the system he had referred to.

Mr. FEEZ was pleased to see that hon. gentlemen saw the necessity for surveying roads before the selection of land. He would point out that there were a number of industrious young surveyors in the colony who could hardly earn a living at their profession, which required a considerable amount of hard training and the passing of a severe examination—in fact, he knew one of the ablest surveyors in the district, a married man with a family, who had not been able to earn, after paying expenses, £100 this year. They had a large staff of surveyors in the colony in anticipation of the wonderful things to be done in Queensland, but instead of their work increasing it had decreased; and he was glad to see that this matter was taken up so that the Minister for Lands might occupy some of these men, who might otherwise leave the colony or take to other branches of business, and perhaps they could not be obtained when required. He also approved of the question raised by the hon. member for Blackall (Mr. Archer), and pointed out that by making proper surveys in the first instance great expense might be saved.

Mr. MOREHEAD thought the hon. member who had just sat down must be joking when he said the Government should make surveys in order to employ young surveyors. Did he not think there were other learned professions that should be considered—were there not doctors unemployed? Why did he not ask the Government to introduce some virulent disease in order to employ these men? It would be just as reasonable as the proposition he made.

Mr. FEEZ said he did not say that surveys should be made in order to give employment to surveyors, but that they should be made because they were necessary works.

Mr. GARRICK was also aware that many persons were waiting to select land in the Blackall Scrub—which was a very rich scrub, situated not far from navigable water—as soon as roads were laid out through it. He did not see why the item for rangers should have been entirely struck out and Captain Whish retained alone at a salary of £400 with £250 for travelling allowances. The duties of Captain Whish had been, he believed, before selection to blaze the track of a road to be afterwards surveyed by the surveyors in the Lands Department. He could not, therefore, see the use of retaining Captain Whish alone. He also noticed that there was nothing at all on the Works estimates for roads, which showed apparently that the Government intended to throw the resumption of roads and the opening of new roads entirely into the hands of the divisional boards. The year before last, when the Estimates were brought forward in detail, sums varying from £1,000 to £500 were put down for opening and surveying roads in the different divisions; but those items had entirely disappeared. Roads would still have to be opened through valuable Crown lands, which would bring a large amount of revenue to the Government, but no provision whatever had been made for surveying such roads. Under the Land Acts of 1868 and 1876, the Crown was empowered to resume roads—one chain in width under the Act of 1868, and two chains under that of 1876—at any time within ten years of selection, on payment of twice the amount already paid by the selector to the Crown for the land, whether it was the complete purchase money or made up of instalments on account. But if the divisional boards had to undertake the work of resuming roads they would have to proceed under the Public Works Act, and instead of the special facilities for resumption which were furnished to the Government under the Lands Act, they would have only the machinery of the Public Works Act, which was much less expeditious to depend upon. The work hitherto done by Captain Whish and his staff had given general satisfaction, and it was desirable that that work should be continued, and that the general Government should continue to use the power conferred on them under the Land Acts.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he desired to know whether the opening and closing of roads was to be left entirely in the hands of the divisional boards. He knew that a great many applications would come from various divisional boards for the closing of useless roads; and also for the opening of new roads where they were required. In such cases would the boards or the Government pay for the surveys? With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Blackall, no doubt it would be a useful thing that surveys should be made before selection; but if the surveys were not carried out very rapidly that might retard settlement. It was a very good excuse to prevent a man from taking up a selection to say there was no road to it. In reference to the Blackall Range, he might state that the land had been nearly all taken up in the Gympie

land office. He could corroborate the statement that roads had often been made where they should not be made, and that persons who had tried to point out where the road should run had been told to mind their own business. Roads had been made round selections from all sorts of motives and reasons, and therefore he was satisfied that requests for alterations would come into the Minister for Lands in hundreds. In the division to which he belonged there were a score or two of roads that ought never to have been surveyed. He wished to know whether the course recommended by the hon. member for Blackall would have the effect of retarding settlement. Selectors sometimes suffered a grievous wrong in having a road run through their property from one corner to another after they had improved it, and he had known property so injured in that way that the selector had abandoned it and gone away. With regard to Captain Whish, he would say that if in the future that officer were going to survey roads in the way some of them had been surveyed in the past, he would sooner that a blackfellow should survey them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the Crown would not surrender any of its power of dealing with the opening and closing of roads. The work of opening roads had been transferred to the Works Department, and the staff in connection with the Lands Department had been disbanded. Most of the applications made to the Department for the closure of roads arose from the fact that the land had been surveyed for 1,600-acre blocks, and where one person had bought several blocks there was no necessity for the roads between them. It would be his duty to take care, without being always reminded of it, to see that no obstacles were thrown in the way of intending selectors. As to what had been said about Blackall Range, of which he had heard so much that evening, he might inform hon. member that Captain Whish had been there and had done all that was necessary, and intending selectors would not be able to say that they did not know what they were doing. For his part, he was very glad to hear that people were so anxious to take up land. All he could say was, that the same precautions would be taken in future that had been taken in the past to prevent any injustice being done, and he hoped, considering how many things there were to be considered in connection with the lands, that he had not been altogether unsuccessful in dealing with them.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said there was one question the hon. gentleman had not answered—namely, whether, in the event of a divisional board wishing to open a road, the survey would have to be done by the board, or whether the Government would do it?

Mr. GRIFFITH pointed out that there was no money on the Estimates for opening roads. Formerly there used to be a certain sum, but that had been left out, and consequently any roads that were opened must be done at the expense of the divisional boards. He did not think that professional surveyors need be employed for opening out new roads in advance of settlement for that purpose, but men who were accustomed to knock about in the bush—such men, for instance, as the rangers who had been employed by the late Government. The Minister for Lands told the Committee that the same precautions would be taken in future as were taken in the past, but hon. members had been complaining that evening that proper care had not been taken in surveying roads except for a short time when rangers were employed. One of the first acts of the present Government was to abolish the employment of rangers, and therefore he could not

understand the hon. gentleman's remark that the same precautions would be taken in the future as in the past.

Mr. LOW said that he did not know whether it would be an advantage to the country if the divisional boards had the right to open roads as pointed out.

Mr. GARRICK said there was no provision on the Estimates for opening roads. It was all very well for the hon. Minister for Lands to say that the same precautions would be taken in the future as in the past, but the best guarantee of his intention to carry out that promise would have been to put some money on the Estimates for the purpose. The year before last there was a sum of £4,000 voted for the purpose, and last year the Minister for Lands included it in a lump sum, but for this year there was no provision whatever. It was all very well to say that divisional boards could open and close roads, but they had no such power, and unless they had that power specially conferred upon them they would have to proceed in the same clumsy way as private individuals had. It seemed to him that if nothing more was done than appeared on the Estimates, hon. members would have to rely alone upon the good intentions of the Minister for Lands, of which at present they had very little evidence.

Mr. FRASER pointed out that whether the boards had the power or not they would not have the means of opening roads, as most of such roads would be through country that yielded very little revenue to the boards—in fact, the opening of one road might absorb the whole means of a board. He thought it would be entirely out of the question to throw such a burden on the boards.

Mr. McLEAN trusted the Minister for Lands would give an answer to the question of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan), as it was a matter which had been greatly considered by various divisional boards, and they were anxiously awaiting for some decision on the subject.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he would at once confess his inability to answer the question, which was one for the consideration of the Cabinet.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that under those circumstances the vote would be perfectly useless. There was £650 put down for an inspector, and £250 for a draftsman—in all, an outlay of £900 for the purpose of expending £2,000. What, he would ask, would those officers be doing?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said there was a sum of £2,000 down for road surveys, and if Captain Whish required assistance he would have it when it was necessary. The desire in framing the estimate had been to retrench. The Government intended to make the best use they could of Captain Whish.

Mr. GARRICK said the £2,000 had nothing whatever to do with Captain Whish. It was for the surveying of roads after they had been marked out. Captain Whish used to mark out the roads, but the survey was always under the Surveyor-General. He would point out that the Surveyor-General, in his report, stated that £3,000 was required for road surveys, whereas only £2,000 was put down.

Mr. DICKSON said he would ask whether the Inspector of Roads and Surveys had made any report about the re-organisation of road rangers? He had always understood that those officers had performed valuable services in marking and blazing roads, and that their services were really an economy to the State. He believed it would be admitted that professional surveyors were not the best men to lay out

roads. The rangers, he understood, studied the natural features of the country and made good tracks to afford facilities for country being opened up.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the inspector had made a recommendation which he (Mr. Perkins) would not adopt, for it would necessitate a vast expenditure. If it was an indication of the way that officer proceeded about his business it did not augur well for the future. The fact was he wanted to be head of a new department for which there was no necessity.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to hear what the recommendation was. He ventured to say that probably it was similar to that made by the member for Blackall, or that the inspector should be allowed to do what he did before. The officer could not do the work by himself; he was not to have anybody to help him, and yet the work was to be performed. He (Mr. Griffith) did not believe that the Minister for Lands had the slightest notion of what he was going to do. All that he knew, apparently, was that there were two votes, one of which had been transferred from another department to his department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the hon. gentleman knew anything of the working of the Roads Department, of which he had once been head as Minister for Works, he would know that although the £2,000 in question was put down to the Lands Department it had always been spent by that department on behalf of the Works Department. The hon. gentleman had said that the first thing the Government did was to dispense with the services of the road rangers, whose duty it was to make road surveys in advance of settlement. The fact was that one road ranger was dispensed with because he acted as an electioneering agent instead of doing his work. The other kept on until a short time ago. Before the road inspector was transferred to the Lands Department a better system could have been adopted than was in use. They were employing a staff consisting of a road inspector and road rangers, and the latter were supposed to know the features of country which they had never before seen. He maintained that the road inspector should have gone into the district, and for the purpose of marking roads have employed local bushmen who would know the country better. Out of the £2,000 the expense of such men would be defrayed by Captain Whish, and so the work would be performed.

Mr. McLEAN said he would point out that it had not yet been decided by the Government whether this officer would be required, for the Minister for Lands had told the Committee that the Government had not yet determined whether they or the divisional boards would open up the roads. If the divisional boards did the work the Government clearly would not have to do it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the answer that he really gave was that the Lands Department had surrendered none of its powers with regard to the opening of roads.

Mr. BAYNES thought it was the duty of the Minister for Lands to disentangle as much as possible any red-tapeism in regard to his office, and he should do all that he possibly could to assist the divisional boards. He trusted last year, after the speech of the hon. member for Mitchell, that the hon. gentleman would have freed himself from restraints placed on the office by former Ministers; but he was afraid that to a great extent the hon. member was still bound with red-tape. It was the duty of the hon. gentleman to give the divisional boards all the assistance in his power.

Mr. GRIMES said the necessity for the vote depended on whether the divisional boards or the Government would have the duty of opening roads. If the boards had to open them, they would have a better knowledge of the district than this officer; and the vote might very well be postponed till the Government decided the question as to who should open the roads.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the money would only be wanted if the Government were going to carry on the system. But they would not say what they were going to do. This road-survey estimate was money spent on roads resumed by the Works Department; it was required to survey new roads not surveyed by the surveyors when marking out selections.

Mr. LOW said he had opened 200 or 300 miles of road himself, but never got a shilling for doing so, and he had done it better than paid road parties.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked, if the work was now thrust on the divisional boards, why the Government asked for a vote at all?

The PREMIER said the matter was as plain as possible. Men would be employed in surveying roads in advance of settlement.

Mr. GRIFFITH said this was an explanation, and it might have been given before.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS moved that the sum of £2,900 be granted for bailiffs and rangers of Crown lands.

Mr. GRIFFITH suggested that the Committee should adjourn. He did not think any advantage was gained by sitting until members became weary, and it did not facilitate business. There were a few items in the vote about which there was something to be said, and he objected to working so late. He protested against proceeding with new business at half-past 10 o'clock.

After further discussion on the order of proceeding,

The MINISTER FOR LANDS urged that the item ought to be passed. A couple of hours had been spent over the last vote, and the Committee had already spent four evenings over the estimates of the Lands Department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they all knew that if the Opposition chose to say "no" they had the power of blocking business, but he would point out that, after all the discussion that had taken place during the evening, not a single item had been altered.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that up to last session it had been the rule not to take fresh contentious business after 10 o'clock, and it was far better to stick to the rule. Although no reductions had been made, yet many valuable suggestions had been thrown out in the course of the discussion.

Mr. BAYNES said he protested against the Minister for Works trying to burk discussion. It was highly desirable to air grievances and make suggestions during the discussion of the Estimates, but it did not follow that any alterations in the items should be made.

The PREMIER said the debate on the last half-dozen items had been so discursive that there was no possibility of any new idea being suggested on the motion now before the Committee. He did not wish to make the sitting longer than necessary, but the Minister for Lands had a right to expect, after so much time had been spent on the last item, that the Committee would discuss at least the item now moved.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL thought some consideration should be shown to members who did not reside in Brisbane.

Mr. GRIMES thought that consideration ought also to be shown to members of the Opposition who had occupied their seats throughout the sitting and attended to the business of the country, and have not copied the example of the hon. member for Gregory, who could spend the whole night in the smoking or refreshment-rooms and come into the Chamber whenever he thought proper.

Mr. AMHURST said it was evident the Opposition meant to obstruct, and they ought to say so at once.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was as tired of the session as anyone, and had been utterly unable to keep up with the Parliamentary work, on account of the late hours they kept. He wanted some information on the item. The duties of the bailiffs and rangers no doubt referred to the preservation of timber, and it would be interesting to know how those duties were performed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that last year, from motives of economy, the number of bailiffs and rangers was reduced from ten to seven, but it had been found necessary to restore the strength to the original number.

Mr. DOUGLAS thought that at the rate at which title-deeds had recently been issued there was little necessity for any bailiffs at all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said the hon. member would persist in mistaking what he said. If the law were rigidly enforced half the selectors would be driven out of the colony; and the conditions were therefore relaxed, with a view to settlement. He objected to the hon. member for Maryborough bringing up his dummy cases which he hung up in his office, and with which he was either unable or unwilling to deal. The bailiffs were employed in looking after the selectors and timber-getters—in seeing that the law was fulfilled. If the hon. gentleman thought it unnecessary to fulfil any of the conditions, well and good. As a matter of fact, the bailiffs had never been engaged in a more active performance of their duty than during the past twelve months.

Mr. DOUGLAS desired to know whether the bailiffs were connected with the administration of the Crown lands or with forest reserves? Of course they must have rangers in connection with the forest reserves. He had not referred to cases which were hung up; he referred to cases which had occurred under the law which the hon. gentleman was now administering.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Name the case, and I will give you information.

Mr. SIMPSON thought the hon. member for Maryborough, as an ex-Minister for Lands, showed extraordinary ignorance when he talked of bailiffs in connection with the issue of deeds. Bailiffs, as far as he knew, simply inspected improvements; and he supposed that the inspection of improvements would continue whether the deeds were issued or not.

Mr. GARRICK thought that the bailiffs had a great deal to do with the issue of the deeds, seeing that it was upon their report that the deeds were issued.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he might state for the information of the hon. member for Maryborough that the bailiffs also acted as rangers.

Mr. MILES thought that in view of recent events bailiffs might be dispensed with, and the Minister for Lands be left to hand over the deeds without any inquiry.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was prepared to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Darling Downs while the present Minister for Lands held office, but he should reject it if ever the hon. member came to hold the office himself.

Mr. MILES said he could see no use in employing bailiffs when their reports were ignored, and title-deeds were issued when it was known that the selector was resident out of the colony.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Chairman left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit to-morrow.

ARRANGEMENT OF BUSINESS.

The PREMIER, in moving that the House adjourn, said he proposed to arrange business for the following day somewhat in this order:—United Municipalities Bill, Supreme Court Act Amendment Bill, Licensing Boards Bill, Supply, and Pacific Island Labourers Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at ten minutes to 11 o'clock.