

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 1 November, 1880.

Motion for Adjournment.—Seat of Mr. Hendren. —Form of Procedure.—Gulland Railway Bill—second reading.—Supply.—Adjournment.

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

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The HON. G. THORN said he rose with the intention of moving the adjournment of the House, in order to call attention to the timetable which came into operation to-day on the Southern and Western line of railway. He had refrained from calling attention to this matter before because he thought the southern, and more especially the metropolitan, Press of the colony would take it up; but as they had not done so he thought it right to do so in the

interests of the public. Until to-day, they had had daily communication with Roma, but on and after to-day there was to be no daily communication, and it was a wonder to him that the public had not complained. How was it that neither the *Courier*, *Telegraph*, nor *Observer* had complained of this? What would be said if the proprietors of the central or northern journals could not get their papers up the line in one day? There would be indignation meetings all over the central districts, and the Government of the day would be denounced for framing a time-table inimical to their interests, but the poor deluded and benighted southern Queenslanders were not considered. Why was this? Because it was immaterial to the Government supporters whether they were right or wrong. Whatever the Government did their supporters endorsed their action, not because they liked the Government, but because they disliked the Opposition. How was it they had not taken action before now with regard to this table which affected all the southern part of the colony? He thought they were going back to the dark ages. In the Preliminary Railways Bill passed the other day provision was made for a train to run daily; yet on the most important line in the colony they were only to have a train to Roma thrice a-week. In the interests of the mercantile portion of the people of this city this time-table should be at once altered. If the Minister for Works would come to him he would make out a time-table for him, and he (Mr. Thorn) would guarantee that the Minister for Lands would make an excellent time-table by which they might gain £25,000 or £30,000 a-year more than was now received for passenger receipts. Since this Government had been in office they had lost fully that amount; and if this time-table was adopted they would lose £35,000 a-year. He hoped the Minister for Works would see that in the interests of the people it was necessary to alter or amend this time-table at once. He would say nothing with regard to goods. He did not see the hon. member, Mr. Davenport, in his place, but he promised to speak upon the time-table as far as goods were concerned. By this time-table it would take something like four days to carry goods between Roma and Brisbane. He hoped that having called attention to this matter the Minister for Works would see his way to amend this time-table and give the same privileges to the South as were enjoyed by the people of the northern and central districts. He moved the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said the hon. member for Northern Downs had raised a great storm about the trains being run three times a-week to Roma. Three trains a-week were quite sufficient. The truth was the hon. gentleman did not know what he was talking about. It would be absurd to run a train per day for an average of one passenger and a-half. The people of Roma were quite satisfied.

Mr. LOW said he would be very glad to know if there was an official statement showing that the Government had lost £25,000 a-year during the time that they had been in office. If there was such a statement he should like to see it.

The HON. J. DOUGLAS said he was somewhat astonished at the statement made by the Minister for Works with regard to the traffic on the Southern line. If it was a fact that there were only one or two passengers a-day he could not understand it at all. If that was to be the result of their railway making they had better stop. While it was the duty of the Minister for Works to manage as economically as possible, surely there must be passenger traffic enough on the line for one train a-day. It might be that

it was desirable to combine the goods and passenger traffic; but surely it was a surprising statement that there was not traffic at the present time for more than one train each way every alternate day. Even during the time the railway was under construction there was traffic enough for a daily train, and if now that it had reached the terminus there would not be more traffic it was a very serious outlook. It was not only the people of Roma who were to be consulted, but the traffic of the whole of the western districts. There was no doubt they had, at the present time, to encourage traffic and lead people to go there; not only had the convenience of the inhabitants of that district to be consulted, but this railway had been built in order to induce people to settle in the western districts; and if such poor accommodation was to be provided as that which had been described by the hon. member for Northern Downs, he was afraid that it was not a very bright look-out for the colony.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith) said there was a train every day to Roma, or three passenger and three goods trains a-week. The hon. gentleman surely did not want them to run more than were actually required for the traffic? The hon. member for Maryborough had misapprehended his colleague when he understood him to say there were only one and a-half passengers per day;—his hon. colleague meant through passengers from Brisbane to Roma.

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH said he wondered that the Government had not found this out long before. It seemed that when the line was open to Dulacca and to Yeulba there was enough traffic for a daily train. The moment that the line was completed the Minister for Works told them that there was not. Were they to understand that the traffic fell off in consequence of an extension of line? He should like to have a return showing what was the passenger traffic to Roma for each day that the line had been opened; and he should move for it if the hon. member for Northern Downs did not. He should also like to know how it was that from Roma, which was a much larger town than the town at the terminus of the Central line, there was so little traffic as not to justify a train a day, while on the Central line there was sufficient? The explanation of the Minister for Works was not at all satisfactory. It was no answer, when attention was called to a very important change in the management of the railway, to tell an hon. member who himself had had charge of the department that he knew nothing of what he was talking about. There were many hon. members who knew a good deal about the Works Department, and about the traffic on the Southern and Western Railway, and it required a better reason than that given by the Minister for Works why traffic was to be discouraged. If the lines were not to be placed on an equal footing good reasons should be given. He agreed with the hon. member for Maryborough that if the lines would not pay sufficiently to run a train a-day they had better stop extending railways. Why did not the Minister for Works give that information when they were considering the transcontinental scheme? The traffic was not sufficient for one passenger train a-day; nevertheless the hon. member proposed to go into gigantic extensions. Was that the reason why the line was not to be extended to Mitchell? The hon. member for Toowoomba (Mr. Davenport) had a motion on the paper on that subject, and he (Mr. Griffith) should like to know what the Government's intentions were about railway making. He took this opportunity of pointing out that he observed the Minister for Works had re-

course, in the railways still remaining to be considered this session, to the practice he (Mr. Macrossan) had so frequently abused whenever he had an opportunity, and found fault with the previous Government for permitting—namely, bunching them all together in one motion. That also was a change in the conduct of the Government which seemed to indicate some strange new light coming upon them. He thought the country would not be satisfied with the explanation of the Minister for Works.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, with the permission of the House, would explain what the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) said as to the previous practice in regard to railways. In putting the motion he had put on the paper, for the purpose of getting the House to approve of the plans and sections of the different lines on the table, he consulted the Clerk to ascertain if the form in which it was put would prevent any amendments, and the Clerk distinctly said "No." He put the motion in that form for the sake of brevity.

Mr. THORN said he was astonished at the reply of the Minister for Works. Were they to have no alteration? He would tell the Premier that he was altogether astray with regard to this railway. The goods train that left Brisbane this morning would take three or four days to reach Roma: it would get to Toowoomba the first day; the second day it would reach Chinchilla; the third day it would get to Roma, and the next day the people would get their goods. They were retrograding rather than progressing; and what was the reason? People out-of-doors said one reason was, that the Government were not anxious to make any further lines westward, on the Southern Railway, and they did not wish to extend the line further on the loan principle. Another object they had was to discourage traffic on the Southern line, and send it to the Central line. He did not say that explanation was correct, but was telling what was said out-of-doors. He wanted a direct answer from the Minister for Works whether he would alter the time-table. The hon. member was astray in stating that the traffic was one passenger and a-half per day between Dalby and Roma. There were far more than that. From Chinchilla and Miles to Dalby there were from twenty to thirty passengers every week—in one day he had seen that number. With the present time-table those passengers would not be able to travel, and traffic would be discouraged in the same way as between Brisbane and Ipswich and Ipswich and Toowoomba. In Ipswich they found vehicles plying, and there were 'buses between Brisbane and Ipswich and Goodna on account of the time-table now in operation. Only the other day there were two 'buses taking passengers to Goodna and back, and the other day in the streets of Ipswich he saw eight vehicles.

The PREMIER: Was it not at a picnic?

Mr. THORN said he wished to see the passenger traffic encouraged. The country was losing by the time-table the Minister for Works had put into operation. He did not say the Minister for Works had altered the time-table intentionally: it was a mistake. The hon. member did not take the matter into his own hands, but did not see things in the business light previous Ministers had done. If the Minister for Works would give it to the Minister for Lands, he would frame an excellent time-table in about half-an-hour, and there would soon be very much more passenger traffic than at the present time. In the South they had three trains a-week, and the northern people had a train daily. The people of the South should also have a train daily; and he was not satisfied with the answer of the Minister

for Works. He hoped the hon. member would reconsider his resolution and alter the time-table soon. He hoped they would not be left during the recess with three trains a-week between Brisbane and Roma. Saturday's goods train did not reach Roma on Monday, and the papers sent by the goods train would not reach Roma until the fourth morning. When the line was opened to Dulacca they had daily communication with the metropolis, and now they were to go back. He was astonished that the members for the southern parts of the colony did not take the matter up. What did the member for South Brisbane think about there being no daily communication with a part of the colony of vast importance, which he (Mr. Kingsford) discovered in his recent rambles? That hon. member said that the best part of the colony was to the south-west. This alteration in the running of the trains would still further keep off the traffic that rightly belonged to the southern line, and would send it to New South Wales. He hoped the hon. member for South Brisbane would, in the interests of the South Brisbane line, see to this matter. The hon. member would soon know what deep water meant; it meant not South Brisbane, but going down to the quarries; and the hon. member would find the people of South Brisbane sold. He (Mr. Thorn) hoped the hon. member would wake up before it was too late, and see that the interests of the southern parts of the colony were served in the same way as the interests of the Central division. He did not say they in the North should not have daily communication with the head of their line, but the people of the South should have daily communication in the same way. The Minister for Works had not told them that the traffic was less on the Southern than on the Central line. He could assure the Minister for Works that the passenger traffic was greater on the Southern line than on the Central line. He did not wish to discourage traffic on the Central line, but if the people on the Central line were entitled to a daily train the people on the Southern and Western line were also entitled to one. The passenger traffic on the Central line was about £200 a-week, and on the Southern and Western it was about £800 per week, but with proper administration it would come up to £1,600 a-week. £40,000 a-year in passenger traffic, he believed, was lost; but, taking it at the lowest calculation, £25,000 upon passenger traffic alone on the Southern line was lost. It seemed to him an extraordinary thing that ever since the present Government had come into office the passenger traffic had gone off, and even with the supposed increasing prosperity the passenger receipts were still falling off, and would continue to fall off, with this time-table. They would have coaches, omnibuses, and cabs plying in the same way that they were before there was a railway at all. He hoped that in the interests of the southern part of the colony the Government would see fit to alter this time-table.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he would call the attention of the House to a few figures which were published in last Saturday's *Courier*, showing the relative increase and decrease of the receipts upon the Southern and Central Railway lines. For the week ending October 30th, the decrease on the Southern and Western line was £181 2s. 5d. Upon the Central line the increase was £628 9s. 3d. He might also mention that for the quarter ending 30th September, 1880, the return for the Central line jumped from £11,000 to £24,000, and for the Southern and Western the increase was only from £38,000 to £41,000, showing only an increase of £3,000, while the Central line had more than doubled its returns. With regard to what the hon.

member for North Brisbane said about the returns diminishing the farther the Southern and Western line was extended, he could only say that the cessation of supplies and material for the workmen might have something to do with it; but it seemed to him that one train a day, under existing circumstances, as these figures proved, was quite sufficient to go to Roma. It must also be remembered it was a very much longer line to travel over than the Northern line, which was only 180 miles, whereas the Roma line was 317 miles long. The distance was very nearly double. To people trading at such a long distance, with produce coming down and supplies going up, it was a matter of perfect indifference whether the trains ran every day or every other day, so long as they were sufficient to take up what was wanted and bring down what was produced. As to the mails, all he could say was that if the people got their mails every other day within the twenty-four hours they were very lucky, and ought to be very well satisfied.

Mr. THORN said the explanation was that during last week the whole of the land between Jondaryan and Roma was under water, and traffic was interrupted because drays could not reach the stations with produce. That was the reason of the apparent falling-off of the receipts on the Southern and Western line. On the Northern line there was no rain. To make a fair comparison the receipts of the two lines for a whole year must be taken, not for one particular week.

Question put and negatived.

SEAT OF MR. HENDREN.

The SPEAKER said he had to inform the House that he had received a letter, dated October 20, 1880, from Mr. William Hendren, resigning his seat for Bundanba. He had also a *Government Gazette* containing a notice adjudicating Mr. Hendren an insolvent. It was for the House to decide how it would declare the seat vacant—by resignation or insolvency.

The PREMIER said he thought the Speaker should put all the information before the House, for until they had it the proper course to pursue would not be clearly apparent.

The SPEAKER said he had already mentioned that he had received a letter from Mr. Hendren, resigning his seat. He had also to inform the House that by a notice dated October 25, signed "George Crawford, Registrar," and published in the *Government Gazette* of October 30, it was declared that William Hendren, of Ipswich, auctioneer, was on October 25 adjudged insolvent.

The PREMIER said it would be remembered that when this matter was brought before the House last week by the leader of the Opposition the hon. gentleman intimated and reiterated that the Speaker had the original adjudication of insolvency, and argued that, it being higher proof than the mere intimation of the same fact in the *Government Gazette*, the House ought to take action. He (Mr. McIlwraith) remarked at that time that he did not believe the document was the original adjudication of insolvency—that the Speaker had sent for a copy and got it. The hon. gentleman, however, insisted that it was the original document, and was supported by the member for Moreton, and, their opinion being supposed to be much better, credit had to be given them for possessing technical information which other hon. members did not possess. He had visited the Supreme Court to-day, and had seen the original document, and had learnt that it had never left the office. What the Speaker got was only a copy, and not even an attested copy. The leader of the Opposition

now tried to get out of the dilemma by saying a duplicate original was produced; but that was downright nonsense, because anyone who chose to pay for them could get half-a-dozen similar copies. He would repeat that the original order on which the House could act never left the Supreme Court, and that what was produced was but a copy, and not even an attested copy. When the matter was brought up last week he conceived that there was considerable difficulty in connection with the point raised by his hon. friend the Attorney-General. Although it was quite clear by the Act that an insolvent vacated his seat by being declared insolvent, yet it was also quite clear by the Insolvency Act that twenty-one days were given him to appeal, and, as an appeal might go in his favour and the insolvency be annulled, the House would be acting hastily in depriving him of his seat before the twenty-one days had expired. Were it not that he thought there was information before him that would warrant him in assuming that the *quasi* insolvent did not intend to appeal, did not intend to take any steps to prevent his seat being vacated, he would have great hesitation in moving, before the twenty-one days had expired, that Mr. Hendren's seat should be declared vacant. He was anxious that the seat should be declared vacant in order that a new election might take place; but he would have deprecated very much the necessity of setting the bad precedent of declaring a seat vacant by reason of insolvency without allowing the actual time given by law for appealing against the order of adjudication. However, he was saved the necessity of doing so, because in Mr. Hendren's telegram and in his letter, the signature to which could be recognised, the House had ample proof that Mr. Hendren meant to resign. The only difficulty was in what form should the seat be declared vacant. He had no hesitation in saying that the best way of getting over the difficulty would be by declaring that the seat was vacant on account of the insolvency, the resignation appearing to have been written out the day after the adjudication. He would therefore move—

That the seat of William Hendren hath become and is now vacant by reason of the insolvency of the said William Hendren.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he agreed that the Premier had made the proper motion, not because the resignation was dated after the order adjudging Mr. Hendren insolvent, but because it was received by the Speaker after the insolvency. The date of receipt only was of consequence. The Legislative Assembly Act said that upon the receipt of the resignation by the Speaker the seat should become vacant: so that when the resignation was received Mr. Hendren was no longer a member of the House. With respect to the evidence of the adjudication of insolvency, he was told on inquiry at the Supreme Court that the practice was to make out several "duplicate originals." If hon. members opposite did not know what the term meant he was sorry, but if they would get a dictionary they would be able to find out. The term was well known. Did hon. members never hear of "duplicate releases?" The lecture on their stupidity was therefore only amusing to those who knew better. The Premier made one other point. He said he thought it was not desirable, under ordinary circumstances, to act within twenty-one days, unless there were good reasons—by which he understood him to mean affirmative reasons—for concluding that the member did not intend to dispute the insolvency. He went with the Premier so far as to say that the House should stay its hand if there was any reason to suppose that the member adjudged insolvent intended to appeal. It would be unwise to act precipitately under such circumstances;

but if the House had not good reason to believe that the insolvent intended to appeal, then it should act.

Question put and passed.

FORM OF PROCEDURE.

The motion standing in the name of the member for Rockhampton (Mr. Rea) having been called "not formal," the hon. member gave a fresh notice of motion for to-morrow.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was an innovation upon the forms of the House for a member, on his motion being declared "not formal," to give notice of it for another day. He had never seen that done before.

The SPEAKER said it was not unusual for a member to give fresh notice of a motion which was already on the paper for the purpose of getting a better place on the business paper for it, and there was nothing in their orders to prohibit it.

The PREMIER said the reason why a member was allowed to give fresh notice was to get his motion in a more advantageous position, but this was a perfectly different thing. The hon. member had given notice of his motion, and it was before the House at the present time—the first day that it could be brought forward.

GULLAND RAILWAY BILL—SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said this was a Bill to enable Mr. Gulland, the proprietor of a coal-mine, to make a branch line from his coal-pit to the Southern and Western Railway, and then another branch-line from the Southern and Western Railway to the Brisbane River at the junction of the Six-mile Creek with the river. It was intended for the coal barges, and Mr. Gulland estimated the traffic at twenty-five tons a-day at first, but anticipated that within twelve months after the two lines were completed the traffic would amount to 1,500 tons a-month. He believed that Mr. Gulland had even greater expectations, but the amount stated was the traffic which he believed would be certain to be realised. The line which he proposed to construct was about a mile long and went on to the Southern and Western Railway at seventeen miles forty chains. It ran for a mile and ten chains with that railway, and then the branch to the river, which would be about eight or ten chains in length, would begin. The Bill was framed in such a way that the Commissioner for Railways should do the work required by Mr. Gulland, in taking and resuming land for the purpose of making the lines. They did not run through Crown lands, but through private properties. He believed that Mr. Gulland had been able to make arrangements with several of the owners of these properties, but with the others he had not, and the Bill provided that the Commissioner for Railways should do all that was required, the same as under an ordinary railway case, Mr. Gulland paying all the expenses in connection with the resumption; if he failed to do so he would forfeit the sum of £200, which was to be recovered before any two justices. The plans, sections, and books of reference had been laid on the table that day, and must of course be approved by Parliament before Mr. Gulland proceeded with the construction of the lines. Clause 4 provided—

"Until the Southern and Western Railway shall be extended and provision shall be made by the Commissioner for the conveyance of coal waggons by such railway to water frontage, the said James Gulland shall and may, subject to such terms and regulations as the Governor in Council may from time to time prescribe, require the Commissioner to carry the coal and waggons

of the said James Gulland over such portion of the Southern and Western Railway as lies between the points of connection of the branch lines with the Southern and Western Railway."

That provision was inserted to prevent undue competition with the Southern and Western line. The Government had thought fit to encourage the making of these two lines because their construction would tend to the development of the coalfields in the Bundamba district. The two pits from which Mr. Gulland proposed to take coal were situated in the Bundamba district; and Mr. Gulland would be quite content to allow other proprietors of coal-mines to carry their coals along the line for a consideration. It must be evident to hon. members that it was to the interest of the country to encourage private enterprise of that kind. He moved that the Bill be read a second time.

The HON. J. M. THOMPSON said the Bill had been in his hands so short a time that he had not been able to look at it. In the absence of an hon. member representing Bundamba, however, he had been asked to watch the passing of the measure. On looking at the plans upon the table he saw that one of the lines proposed to be constructed led to the railway, while the other led from the railway to the water. There was no provision in the Bill providing for the use of the lines by the public. It was all very well for the Minister for Works to say that Mr. Gulland was willing to allow the use of the lines for a consideration, but when they were using public machinery to give a person a private advantage they did not intend to give him a monopoly. In the Burrum Railway Bill and in other private railway Bills provision was made for the accommodation of the public. As far as he could see, the omission of this provision in the Bill before the House must have been an oversight; or perhaps Mr. Gulland was under the impression that no one but himself would want to use the lines. He could assure hon. members, however, that if the Bill were passed with provision for the public use of the lines, the line from the railway to the water would be extensively used. He noticed that that line went through one person's land. It seemed to him to be an extreme hardship that that man's land should be taken from him without his having an opportunity of representing his view of the matter. He believed that the spot to which the line would go was admirably adapted for the exportation of coal, and it was well that the public should have the advantage of it. It was never intended that Part II. of the Railway Act should be used to confer a railway monopoly. The plan showed the terminus on the water's edge. He did not know what was intended to be done, unless there were a public reserve or something of that sort there. He hoped the motion for the approval of the plans would not come on on Wednesday, because the notice was too short considering the public interests involved. Some time ago he had occasion to look into the Colliery Acts of New South Wales, and he found that in all the private railways joining the Newcastle line the rights of the public were preserved. He would not oppose the second reading of the Bill; but he hoped that more information would be forthcoming before they went into committee, when he for one intended to look after the preservation of the public interests. One coal proprietor with land adjoining Mr. Gulland's property had already set him in motion in the absence of the hon. member for Bundamba, and said he desired advantages corresponding with those desired by Mr. Gulland. As in the case of all railway Bills in England, time and opportunity should be afforded to those persons interested in the

matter to be heard. The Bill was extremely short, and in its present shape appeared to be machinery for giving Mr. Gulland a piece of private property in a manner contrary to the spirit of the Railway Act.

The PREMIER said there could be no doubt but that that Bill contained machinery whereby a private individual could get hold of private property for the purpose of constructing a railway. Why should it not contain that machinery? No doubt there was something in the objection of the hon. member for Ipswich relative to the omission of provision for the use of the lines by the public. The omission probably arose from the fact that Mr. Gulland did not anticipate that the lines would be wanted by any other coal-owners. This, unquestionably, was an oversight. Mr. Gulland ought not to have a monopoly. As the hon. member for Ipswich had pointed out, the branch to the place of shipment would most probably be used by other proprietors. The progress of the Bill would be facilitated if the hon. member would draw up the clauses he would like to see inserted before the House went into committee on the measure. The Bill had necessarily been a short time before the House, because it was only lately that the proprietor of the mine had made up his mind, for special reasons, to obtain access to deep water from his pit. The Government would meet the objections of the hon. member for Ipswich, and see that the interests of the other coal-owners in the neighbourhood were preserved.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the measure seemed to be essentially a private Bill, which should be referred to a select committee before whom objections might be heard. The second part of the Railway Act of 1872 provided for the construction of public railways, but this was only a private line. It was, he thought, a matter upon which Mr. Speaker should rule whether the Bill could be entertained. Besides, in the case of Bills brought in under the Act of 1872 there were certain preliminaries to be observed. A variety of steps had to be taken, but the House was not in possession of any information on the subject. Until they saw the correspondence they could not tell whether the Act had been complied with or not.

Mr. GRIMES said the Bill had been brought forward very hurriedly. It also appeared to him that they were straining the provisions of the Railway Act of 1872 when they applied them to the construction of a strictly private line. If such a line could be constructed in the manner proposed by that Bill, it would be easy for anyone wishing to construct a short line of railway, and unable to come to terms with his neighbour as to the price of his land, to make him submit. It had occurred to him that a difficulty would arise if the Bill were passed in its present shape, from the fact that persons would be unable to mine or to tunnel to a severed allotment under land resumed for the purpose of constructing the railway. He thought that any other coal proprietors should have the right to run their coal upon the branch lines upon the same terms as Mr. Gulland would have to pay for running his waggons upon the Government lines. Mr. Gulland should not have a monopoly; and he would be glad to see an amendment introduced in committee which would give the public access to the line.

Mr. GARRICK said he would ask the Minister for Works to postpone the second reading of the Bill, so that they might have time for a further consideration of this matter. As the leader of the Opposition had pointed out, that was a Bill of which public notice should have been given, enabling the parties whose interests

were affected to be heard. One of the proposed railways went through land which belonged to one man. It seemed an extraordinary thing that the Government should give permission for the construction of the line without giving this man an opportunity of being heard. The ordinary requirements of the Standing Orders as to private Bills should have been complied with. Moreover, no provision was made for the commencement or completion of the line. The Bill simply said that the line should be constructed with all convenient speed, whereas it should provide for the commencement and completion of the line within a certain time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL presumed the hon. members for North Brisbane and Moreton contended that notices should be given and advertisements inserted as a matter of expediency or justice. There was certainly nothing in the law which enjoined such a course. The Bill had been properly introduced; and hon. members should bear in mind that the delay occupied in giving notices and inserting advertisements would have the effect of postponing the Bill and the important work it sanctioned until next session.

Mr. DOUGLAS thought there was no desire on the part of any member of the House to postpone so useful a work, but at the same time they were bound to take care that there was no undue invasion of private rights. It struck him that if the line from the railway to the river was likely to be useful to Mr. Gulland, it was also likely to be useful to other coal proprietors; and that being the case, it was a question whether the line should not be made by the Government themselves. It was quite clear that they must give persons whose rights were likely to be affected by the line an opportunity of being heard, and he had no doubt that they would be heard.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that, whilst approving of the construction of branch lines from the coal-mines, he thought the branch from the main line should be made by the Government. There were five or six coal proprietors in the locality who would, no doubt, all be anxious to have branch lines to water frontage, but as they could not all have such lines it would be far better to have a public line for general use. The line would cost very little, and every coal proprietor would have equal access to it. If the proposed line from Oxley were to be constructed to deep water, it appeared to him that it would answer all the purposes of the coal proprietors; but the introduction of this Bill might be taken as an indication that the Government did not intend to take that line to deep water. The people in the district had heard nothing about the line to be constructed by Mr. Gulland, and therefore it was only reasonable that there should be some delay.

Mr. THORN said that he had been waiting to hear an expression of opinion from members on the other side of the House;—he should, for instance, like to have heard the hon. member (Mr. Kingsford). As to the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Macfarlane), respecting the Oxley line going to deep water, it was his (Mr. Thorn's) opinion that the Government had no intention to take that line to deep water at South Brisbane. The line would eventually be carried to the quarries, and South Brisbane would be altogether ignored. The residents of South Brisbane would then be found execrating members just as they now praised them. He was a thorough believer in the Bill. He only wished that other coal proprietors would show the same enterprise as Mr. Gulland did. Another coal proprietor (Mr. Thomas), who was anxious to have a line, informed him that he had submitted plans to the Minister for Works something like a month ago,

and he (Mr. Thorn) should like to know from the Minister how it was that Mr. Thomas' application had not been taken up. He hoped that when the Bill was in committee it would be so amended as to make its provisions general in their application, so that all the coal proprietors would be able to bring their coal to deep water.

Mr. FRASER said he should not have had anything to say with respect to the Bill had it not been associated with the contemplated railway to South Brisbane. He approved of the Bill in the main, and thought that instead of its being an argument in favour of the view that the Government did not intend to take the Oxley line to deep water at South Brisbane, it could be construed into an indication that the Government intended to fulfil their promises respecting the South Brisbane line. As the line now proposed would only serve a temporary purpose, it would not be advisable for the Government to undertake its construction. Assuming that they intended to take a line to deep water at South Brisbane, it would not be well for them to incur the expense of taking a line to deep water higher up the river. As far as the surveys were completed at present, the proposed Oxley line could not be called a line to South Brisbane at all: as the survey now stood it would be just as easy to take the line to Shafston or Lytton as it would be to take it to South Brisbane. When he remembered that several hon. members who were supposed to have considerable influence with the Government held the opinion that the line should not terminate at South Brisbane, he must confess that he felt uncomfortable about it, and nothing less than an assurance to the contrary from the Government would satisfy the people resident in the important electorate of South Brisbane. If the line were carried to Shafston or Lytton a greater injustice would be done to South Brisbane than was originally perpetrated by bringing the line down on the north side of the river: the people of South Brisbane would derive no advantage at all from the line if the route were changed as suggested.

Question put and passed.

On the question—That the committal of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for to-morrow—

Mr. GRIFFITH said it would be satisfactory if the Minister for Works would cause the correspondence respecting the proposed line to be laid on the table of the House, so that hon. members might have an opportunity of judging whether the Bill was properly introduced under the provisions of the Railways Act of 1872.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill has been brought in under the Railways Act of 1872, and all the conditions have been complied with. If the hon. member had looked at the *Gazette* he would have seen that all the conditions have been complied with. The House will have all the correspondence before the Bill is considered in committee.

SUPPLY.

The PREMIER moved that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Mr. DOUGLAS said before the question was put he was anxious to obtain some information from the Minister for Works in reference to the construction of the Western Railway extension from Roma to Mitchell. That extension had been authorised by Parliament and the money voted for it. It was well known that tenders had been called for the work, and it was understood that tenders were received. Action, however, was suspended, he supposed for some good reason on the part of the Government. In reply

to a question, the Minister for Works the other day informed him that he would give him an answer as to the intentions of the Government after the Railway Companies Bill had been passed. For all practical purposes they might consider that that Bill had passed; at any rate, it had been passed by the Assembly, and he did not think it probable that any objection would be taken to the principle of it elsewhere. It did not appear to him that the construction of the western extension to Mitchell in any way depended—or, at any rate, not very much—on what might result from the passing of the Railway Companies Preliminary Bill. If any offers were received under the provisions of that Bill, action on them must necessarily be deferred for a length of time. Suppose an offer were made next session to connect the Western Railway with some point on the Gulf, the House would have to discuss the whole question; they would not have an opportunity of doing so till then. Then there would have to be surveys, which would lead to further delay, and altogether, it was probable that before any action could be taken with regard to a transcontinental line two or three years would have to elapse. He was anxious to know what the Government intended to do in the interval with respect to the western extension to Mitchell Downs, which it was anticipated would have been proceeded with ere now. The Railway Reserve originally extended to some fifty miles beyond Roma, and as Mitchell would be as good a point of departure as any, in a north-westerly or south-westerly direction, they should allow it to be definitely known which would be the terminus, Roma or Mitchell. There were no reasons why Parliament should recede from its decision respecting the extension to Mitchell, and he was desirous to have an assurance from the Minister for Works that he would proceed with the work as actively as it could be judicially done. There could be no doubt that, independent of any proposals which might be made to construct lines, it was desirable to extend the railways westward as far as possible; and such an assurance from the Minister as he had asked for would, he had no doubt, be satisfactory to the House and to the country.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (who was indistinctly heard) was understood to say that the Railway Companies Preliminary Bill had not yet been passed, as was suggested by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas). If it had, he anticipated that it would be but a very short time before the Government would be in possession of offers from gentlemen willing to construct railways—that was, if they were to receive any offers at all. Until something definite was understood in that way it would be unwise for the Government to proceed with the work mentioned by the hon. member. There were doubts as to whether the route already agreed upon was the best to adopt, having in view further extensions. If after, say, three or four months the Government had received no offers, then it would be for them to take the matter into their serious consideration; until that time had expired they would scarcely be justified in doing so.

Mr. THORN said he was somewhat astonished at the reply of the Minister for Works. He could tell the hon. gentleman that if the south-western line was not extended the traffic from a country capable, he was informed, of sustaining as many sheep as the Riverina would be diverted to New South Wales. Were the Government going to ignore that great territory? A gentleman who had been resident in the Warrego constituency for something like twenty years had informed him that if the line went on to Mitchell Downs nearly all the Warrego traffic would come

to Moreton Bay in addition to a large amount of traffic from New South Wales. The Government of the latter colony were now pushing on their line from Dubbo to Bourke, and if the Queensland line were not also pushed forward all the country south-west of Charleville would soon be supplied from New South Wales. He was surprised that he did not get some assistance from the southern members, who were blindly following the Government. The proposed trans-continental line would be no earthly advantage to the western and south-western Warrego country; and as the House had voted money for the extension of the Southern and Western line he contended that the House was justified in asking the Government at once to call for tenders for the extension of the line to Mitchell, so as to accommodate the western traffic and make the present line pay better. To test the opinion of the House, he moved as an amendment—

That the Parliamentary sanction for the extension of the Western Railway from Roma to Mitchell be acted upon.

The PREMIER said he did not know whether it was the intention of the hon. member to prevent the House from going on with Supply, but the motion if assented to could have no other effect. The House had already given instructions for the extension of the line, and the Ministry had given good reasons why for a time the construction should be delayed. No additional force would be given by the motion of the hon. member to the instructions received by the Government, and the only effect could be to stop Supply for one day. He would remind the House that about this time last year a proposition of the Government to go on making railways was stonewalled, on the ground that they were going too fast. Now the Government were not allowed to get on with business because they were not going fast enough. The hon. member knew perfectly well that everything could not be done at once. Railway construction to a considerable extent was now being carried on, and good reasons, which would commend themselves to every hon. member of the House, had been given by the Minister for Works for not proceeding at once with the Western Railway extension.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he did not know that the hon. member for Northern Downs had done anything which could be considered as stonewalling.

The PREMIER said he did not say that the hon. member was stonewalling.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. member had never taken any action last session which could be considered stonewalling in connection with certain lines like this. It must be remembered that last session the House authorised the simultaneous construction of three trunk lines. Tenders had been called and contracts very properly accepted for two of those lines, but now it appeared that progress on the Southern and Western line was to be stopped because offers yet unknown might be made for the construction of a trans-continental line. The hon. member (Mr. Thorn), he believed, had no desire or intention to obstruct Government business in any way, but he desired some discussion on perhaps the most important question that had been raised up to the present time. Many days had been given up to the elaboration of the Railway Companies Preliminary Bill, but it did not appear that that Bill would give the Government much more power than they possessed at the present time. It was anticipated that there would be some results, but what those results would be to a very great extent depended upon the Government themselves. The House was therefore justified in ascertaining what the views of the

Government were. Would they recommend a company to undertake the construction of a line from Roma, or from Mitchell, or from some point further west? That was a very material question, as whatever proposals a company might make must be based upon the information the company would gain from this colony. He doubted very much whether the Government were in a position to furnish the information which would necessarily be required. The House had the very crudest possible idea of what direction such a line should take. It was not very long ago since he (Mr. Douglas) had some correspondence on the subject with the colony of South Australia. Shortly before he left office a proposal was made by the South Australian Government with a view of securing some railway communication with this and the neighbouring colonies. The correspondence was especially important, as Mr. Stanley had given some valuable advice in connection with it, which he (Mr. Douglas) regretted to say had not been acted upon as it might have been. In a report dated August 24, 1878, Mr. Stanley referred to the absence of sufficient data upon which a proposal for the construction of these trunk lines could be based. If the information possessed by the Government was then insufficient it must be so still, as it had not been added to. Mr. Stanley said—

“At a time when important extensions of our railway lines are contemplated it certainly appears highly desirable that some comprehensive scheme for a general railway system, applicable not merely to Queensland itself, but with due regard to the probable future requirements of intercolonial traffic, should be considered, so that in deciding upon these extensions the ultimate completion of such a system might be kept in view.

“The lines sketched upon the map as trunk lines are, of course, intended merely to illustrate generally the probable route that may be followed, and will, no doubt, hereafter require considerable modification—not only on account of the natural features of the country to be traversed, but also when the convenience of settlement and other circumstances bearing upon the question come to be taken into due consideration. They may serve, however, to indicate the groundwork of what may eventually prove a convenient and practical system of intercolonial railways.

“With this end in view, I would suggest the advisability of initiating some plan of exploration surveys, with the object of furnishing the Government with definite and reliable information as to the physical characteristics of the country which these probable lines would traverse, as a guide in determining the particular route to be followed by any projected line. Such surveys might be effected to a great extent by means of barometrical observations, as the fixing of certain points by latitude and longitude: and whilst the cost would be trifling as compared with ordinary trial surveys, the information obtained would, I believe, prove of very great value in any further consideration of the subject now mooted.”

No further data had since then been obtained and the House could not accept any proposal that might be made by any company that could be formed until they knew whether it would be wise for them to do so. At present they were quite ignorant of even the leading features of the country, and yet they were asked to commit themselves for all time to the acceptance of offers that might be based on very partial information. The report from which he had just quoted was followed by a report from Mr. George C. Watson, Commissioner of Crown Lands for the Gregory South and Warrego districts, than whom no gentleman was better acquainted with this country. He (Mr. Douglas) had applied to Mr. Watson, knowing that the information to be obtained from him would be valuable even if it did not rise to the standard of actual engineering and professional information. Mr. Watson had traversed that country—

Mr. O'SULLIVAN : He has committed many a job.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he was very sorry to hear the hon. member speak in that way of a very worthy and hard-working officer. Mr. Watson said—

"For a transcontinental line, to pass through Queensland east of longitude 141, it would prove an expensive piece of construction for Queensland, and, whilst depriving South Australia of its benefit through three parallels of latitude, would not yield any compensating benefits to Queensland."

And further on, Mr. Watson spoke thus of the country through which a line such as he would recommend would pass :—

"From the knowledge I have within the past five years gained of the Warrego and Gregory South districts, and my experience of the capabilities of the grasses therein (of which I believe the same may be said of the whole of the Gregory North), I am convinced that the most favourable accounts that have ever been given cannot misrepresent the capabilities of the country for the raising of every description of stock. The Mulga country is very valuable, the trees (the leaves of which afford good cattle-food), naturally forming good pasture land, stock thereby obtaining good shade and shelter, while the grasses common to mulga lands are of the best kinds known in the district."

That applied to the country due west of Charleville—the country which would be most easily reached by the extension from Roma to Mitchell. He should be very glad to see the motion of the hon. member affirmed, as it was clearly to the interests of the country that the line should be proceeded with as far as Mitchell, independent of any offers that might be made hereafter. If the transcontinental line were to start from Roma there would not be the same facility in carrying out the first portion of the line on a system of land grants as there would be if it started from a more westerly point. He was sorry to say that he had never been able to visit that country personally, but from information he had gathered he was of opinion that it would be better to start from a more westerly point, in order to secure the northern and western traffic and to secure connection with the other colonies. The hon. member (Mr. Thorn) had drawn attention to a very important matter deserving of serious attention on the part of the Government; he (Mr. Douglas) should support the motion, and he hoped it would be affirmed.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN was understood to say it appeared to him that the discussion anticipated the motion standing in the name of Mr. Davenport on the notice-paper. Perhaps Mitchell might not be the proper point. His own idea was that a line leaving Mitchell on the right hand and going straight on to Cunnamulla would be most useful to the southern part of the colony. On the other hand, a line to the right of Mitchell Downs would be the most convenient for connection with the line from Rockhampton. The only way to secure a reasonable part of the western traffic, however, would be to take the direct route from Roma. He had no doubt the hon. member for Toowoomba would give good reasons for the resolution of which he had given notice, when he brought it forward on Thursday.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was no chance of its coming on on Thursday.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it would have been better if the hon. member for Northern Downs had given notice of his intention to move the motion before the House went into Committee of Supply. It was not advisable to intercept the House going into Committee of Supply by a motion of surprise. No doubt the question raised was one of considerable importance, but it could not be adequately discussed on a motion of which no notice had been given. If that was to be allowed any hon. member might

raise any important question, and have it discussed in a *quasi* way without any notice whatever. He did not believe the hon. member meant anything by his motion beyond bringing his name before the public as an advocate of railway extension westward. If he was in earnest he had behaved very badly indeed to the House by not having given notice to hon. members that he intended to bring it forward. Such a motion was not paralleled in the records of the House. The motion for going into Supply was usually availed of to seek redress of grievances, and if the hon. member simply sought the redress of a grievance he of course had a right to have it discussed; but if the hon. member was in earnest he ought to have given notice of a motion that in his opinion the Southern and Western Railway should be extended to Mitchell. The matter could then be discussed fully and fairly. He hoped the hon. member would withdraw the motion, so that they might get on with some business.

Mr. REA said the Government had refused point-blank to give answers to several important questions. The hon. member (Mr. Fraser) asked the very simple question whether it was intended to make a deep-water terminus at the railway at South Brisbane, and the Government had not one syllable to say in reply. When he (Mr. Rea) asked the other night a question as to the route of the proposed line to the Gulf of Carpentaria, his question was *pooh-poohed*. Notwithstanding this, the Minister for Works had that evening stated that in three or four months they would probably have a tender for that line. He would ask any hon. member, how could any tenderers—unless it was already arranged—send their emissary on a tour through the continent, and arrange all the terms of a tender in so short a time as three or four months? Only the friends of the Ministry knew where that line was to run. Motions for going into Supply were the only occasions the Opposition had to ask questions of that kind, and it was their business to see that the questions were answered before any more money was voted. The main question of the Gulf railway had been referred to by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas), and the necessity of a preliminary survey had been adequately set forth in the report quoted. He hoped the hon. member (Mr. Thorn) would insist upon having clear and distinct answers. There was not another Assembly in the colonies that would have tolerated so patiently as the Opposition had done the way in which they had been snubbed by the Government whenever they wished to make inquiries about unpleasant subjects; and he had noticed on Friday, when the squabbling was going on, that it was the Ministry who led the way and were instrumental in postponing legislation.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put and passed.

The House then went into Committee of Supply.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £1,340 be granted to the Department of the Secretary for Public Works. Hon. members would notice a considerable alteration in the estimate, owing to the roads having been taken over by the divisional boards. The items—chief clerk £500, and five clerks of the staff £990—had been omitted on that account.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he could not understand the estimate in its present shape. As far as he could discover, there was an Under Secretary and an accountant, and they had the assistance of two messengers; and the Under Secretary seemed to have nothing to do but to look after the messengers. The greater part of the money, too,

was disbursed for works superintended by the Colonial Architect. What did the Under Secretary do? There were no men in the office: they were all officers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the messengers were not employed solely for the use of the Works Department. They were attached to the Railway Department, and to the Mines Department, which was under the same roof as the Works Department. The Under Secretary had plenty of work to do. All the roads had not yet been taken over, and there was a large amount of correspondence going on between the Works Office and the divisional boards. Besides that, there was all the money that had been expended, and was yet to be expended, out of loan on buildings; and there was a sum of £20,000 on loan which was being expended—and would not all be expended, he hoped, for the next year—chiefly in the northern parts of the colony, on roads to new goldfields. There would not be so much work to do in the office next year; but at present, and for the next six months, there would be enough to keep the officers constantly employed in answering letters and looking after accounts.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that those hon. members who supported the Divisional Boards Bill had sown the wind and would reap the whirlwind. He had prophesied that in the first speech he made on the subject, and his words were coming true. Touching the Under Secretary for Works, at £700 a-year, it seemed to him that he had very little to do beyond superintending the expenditure of the Colonial Architect, who, by the way, had resigned. As far as he was concerned, and with regard to buildings which would beautify the city, he was glad the Colonial Architect had resigned. He did not propose that the Under Secretary for Public Works should be dispensed with, but he ought to be made to do a little more work; and he might possibly attend to the Mines Department as well. Either one or the other Under Secretary—he did not care which—ought to go. In the present state of the finances of the colony, they could not afford two 700-pounders with next to nothing to do. A chief clerk at £500, and five clerks drawing altogether £990, had been dispensed with. Had anything been done for those officers elsewhere? The Divisional Boards Act had done an immense injustice to the officers in the Works Department, and he should like to know whether any employment had been found elsewhere for the men whose services had been dispensed with. The Divisional Boards Act would be found to be a great mistake, although they might not open their eyes to the fact for two or three years, during which low estimates would be sent in. But afterwards the Estimates would show a large increase on account of works neglected, and properly neglected, by the divisional boards. The present state of affairs could not last: the colony was too young for such an experiment. There was not a week passed that he did not receive complaints with respect to the working of the Divisional Boards Act—complaints that roads were and must be neglected, because the boards had exhausted all the funds they had and could not levy any more. The result would be that after two or three years there would be such a number of bad roads and neglected works throughout the colony that a tide would rise that would sweep any Ministry from power that attempted to defend such a course of action. Hon. members might laugh and say he was playing the part of Cassandra, but they would find that his prophecies would come true. The attempt at reform was honestly made, but it would end in disaster and grave harm to the State. It was all very well to say the divisional boards

would relieve them of a certain amount of work, but they had heard from the Minister for Works that a number of clerks were now occupied in answering complaints in connection with those boards. The Divisional Boards Act was not in anything like proper working order. Even in the districts about Brisbane it was not; and if it was not working satisfactorily in large centres of population, how was it working in the outside districts? Very badly indeed; in fact, it could not be worse. He thought the Government made a mistake in cutting down their Estimates as they had done. It should have been done gradually, not by one violent stroke; and he thought they should have some further explanation from the Minister for Works as to why this estimate had been, to his (Mr. Morehead's) mind, so unduly reduced. He did not believe the department would be worked for £1,940 during the next twelve months, and, not believing that, he should like to hear the opinions of other hon. members on the subject. Of course, it was not in their power to increase the estimate: but it was in their power to bind the Minister to it, and to make him pay the penalty if he did not. He (Mr. Morehead) believed a saving might be made by the amalgamation of the offices of Under Secretary for Works and Under Secretary for Mines; let the best officer have the billet, and let the other be dealt with as tenderly as the State chose to deal with him. He did not say whether Mr. Deighton or Mr. Lukin was the better man, but it was evident that at present the supervision of the department was overweighted. Let them get rid of some of these very highly-paid officers who appeared to have very little to do.

Mr. THORN fully endorsed all that had been said by the hon. member for Mitchell with regard to the Divisional Boards Act, and he was only sorry that hon. member did not give his support when that Act was passing to throw it overboard. It was working unsatisfactorily everywhere. All the money that had been given to the boards by the Government out of loan was going to pay salaries; none of it was spent on roads, but the whole of it was going into the pockets of valuers, assessors, and clerks. There was an apparent saving now in expenditure, because the boards were paid out of loan money; but as soon as the loan was exhausted they would have to be paid out of revenue, and the cost would be far in excess of what was required under the old *régime*. He would also like to know how the North was to be provided for? If a new goldfield up north were discovered, where was the money to come from to make a road there? Were they to raise another loan, and the Treasurer to issue Treasury bills in the meantime? With regard to the vote before the Committee, he had yet to learn from the Minister for Works whether there were any other officers in his department besides those mentioned, because he had heard that there were other officers who were paid heavy salaries out of contingencies. He hoped it was not true, because it was a course of procedure to be deprecated. He would also like to know what was to become of the officers who were cast adrift? He believed the Government would have to come down handsomely to pay them for loss of office; and probably, when the next Government came into office, or perhaps before that, the Divisional Boards Act would have become a dead-letter, and after having received large compensation these officers would have to be re-appointed to carry on the same work. He should like to hear an expression of opinion from other hon. members with regard to this Act—whether even now it would not be wise to repeal it. He hoped the Government would come down and acknowledge that they had made a mistake in forcing that measure through the

House when they knew that there was a majority of the people outside in strong opposition to it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had a list of the number of letters and telegrams received in the department, which he would read, to show the amount of work that had still to be done in the office. The number received in 1879 was 6,952; and in 1880, up to the 30th September, 4,063. The number sent during 1879 was 3,722, and up to the 30th September, 1880, 2,860. In answer to the hon. member for Mitchell, who asked what had become of the officers whose services had been dispensed with, he had to state that Mr. W. S. Taylor, chief clerk, whose services were dispensed with on the 30th June, had been found no employment. W. H. Haseler, whose services were dispensed with at the same time, now kept a stationer's shop in South Brisbane, and had therefore provided for himself. T. W. Fraser had been appointed clerk in the Police Office; W. A. Brown was now employed in the Colonial Secretary's Office; and W. J. Sheehan was temporarily employed in the Works Office; Mark Pullen left the department of his own accord. These were all the officers.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked the Minister for Works whether he was prepared to accept the suggestion of working the two departments—Works and Mines—under one Under Secretary? Since so many of the subordinate officers had been dispensed with, he (Mr. Hill) did not see the necessity for two Under Secretaries. He should like to see some of the highly-paid officers who had little work to do have their services dispensed with. It seemed easy to get rid of clerks who received £200 or £300 a-year, but in the meantime they kept on two heads, each receiving £700 a-year. They were told last year that the Under Secretary for Mines had nothing to do, but that they were going to pass a Goldfields Act, which would give him something to do. He (Mr. Hill) was not aware that that Act had been passed; and, whatever the merits of the Divisional Boards Act might be, its effect had been to relieve the Under Secretary for Works of a great part of his duties, and therefore he thought the two offices could very well be worked by one Under Secretary.

Mr. THORN said the Minister for Works had not answered his question, whether he had any other officers in the department who were paid out of contingencies?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had answered the hon. member by stating that Mr. Sheehan was employed temporarily in the Works Department.

Mr. THORN said Mr. Sheehan was an excellent officer; he was one of his (Mr. Thorn's) appointments, and he was only sorry a gentleman of his learning and experience should be kept in a subordinate position. He hoped before long he would be put in a proper position.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, in answer to the hon. member for Gregory, he had to state that the head of the department was kept on because he had the whole work of the department on his hands. He (the Minister for Works) could not dispense with the head of the department and put an inferior officer in his place who did not understand the duties. As to the suggestion of amalgamating the two departments, he could only say that if the House said they were to be amalgamated he would do his best to work them in that way. He was entirely in the hands of the House in that respect.

Mr. DOUGLAS hoped the hon. member for Mitchell would intimate what ought to be done. It was quite refreshing to hear the hon. member take a different view of matters to what he had

hitherto. Considering the attention he had paid to the morals of the Ministry during the last two years, and the way in which they conducted business, it was quite refreshing to know that he had now come to view their actions in a very different light indeed—in fact, he looked upon the hon. member for Mitchell as quite the coming man. The hon. member had complained of the Divisional Boards Bill, and it was only to be regretted that he did not throw the weight of his influence against the passing of that Bill. It was a matter of importance that whatever view the hon. member took he had a very important and influential following; but it appeared he had set up a false issue, and he was going to turn into the wilderness, and he (Mr. Douglas) expected the next thing they would see would be the hon. gentleman robed in sackcloth and ashes, doing penance for the acts of the last two years in supporting the Ministry. He supposed they were bound in future, as the hon. gentleman had assumed that character, to look upon him as the Cassandra of the Assembly. He did not know where the Ajax was to come from to tackle him, but he was afraid he would find rather a rough customer in the hon. gentleman. To do the hon. gentleman credit, he had very great capacity.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he should like to hear the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) finish his speech. The hon. member had compared himself to Ajax; but why he did so he (Mr. Morehead) had not the least idea. He believed that Ajax defied the lightning on one occasion; but if the hon. member had not pluck enough to defy the Minister for Works on this question, then all he could say was that Ajax had fallen from his high estate.

Mr. DOUGLAS said he had not compared himself with Ajax. His slight reference to Ajax was in connection with the character the hon. member had assumed—namely, that of Cassandra.

Mr. THORN said he understood that the object of the Government was, that an amalgamation of the two offices should take place. Seeing, however, that "Minister for Works" was a misnomer now, would it not be possible to get rid of him? There was no more work for him to do owing to the passing of the Divisional Boards Act. If the Government wished to keep him in the House as a debater, they should pay him out of their own salaries. He believed in going to the fountain-head when making any retrenchment, and rather than get rid of one of the Under Secretaries, should say that the Minister for Works might be dispensed with.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would point out to the hon. member that he would also have to abolish the schedule, for the Estimates said that the Secretary for Public Works was provided for in the schedule.

Mr. ARCHER said the member for Northern Downs forgot that there would be no place for him in the next Ministry if the office of Secretary for Public Works was abolished.

Mr. THORN was understood to say that the Minister for Works had no voice in the management of his department. If he gave it his study he would do all he could to please the people, but he left it to any of his subordinates to frame the railway time-table. Unquestionably there had been a precedent in New South Wales for his suggestion. The other day the Hon. Jack Robertson—

Mr. MOREHEAD: Who is Jack Robertson?

Mr. THORN said he was Minister for Education—he meant Sir John Robertson. Sir John, when he accepted office in Sir Henry Parkes' Administration, took it without salary.

Mr. MOREHEAD said Sir John Robertson not only accepted office with his own salary, but with a little more knocked off the salaries of the other members of the Cabinet, in order to bring his salary up to the Premier's.

Mr. THORN said that he thought Sir John Robertson had no salary from the State until the Education Act was passed, when he accepted the office of Minister for Education. Previously to that he was paid from the salaries of the other Ministers. This was supposed to be an age of economy. Let the Government therefore discard the Minister for Works. Ministers should have begun by cutting down their own salaries. In Victoria, when the revenue did not meet the expenditure, Ministers proposed to reduce their salaries; and he maintained that this was a fitting time for Ministers here to abolish the office of Minister for Works and pay its present holder out of their own allowances rather than cut down the two Under Secretaries.

Mr. KELLETT said that, to try the feeling of the Committee, he should move as an amendment that the vote be reduced by £700, the amount of the item "Under Secretary for Works." It was very evident that there was very little to do, through all the work of the office having been done away with. The chief clerk could do all that there was to do, but he had been knocked off, although he was an officer of long standing, and the Committee had not been told that it was proposed to give him employment in another department. He was quite as much entitled as other men to have a place made for him. He (Mr. Kellett) had not the slightest doubt that one clerk—the chief clerk—could do the little work that there was to do in the office, and that the Under Secretary, clerk, and accountant, could have been done without.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, before the amendment was put, he would suggest that the hon. member should make the reduction £350, so as to make provision for the six months which had nearly elapsed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the member for Stanley was mistaken in thinking that the chief clerk could have done all the work in the Works Office, hitherto or now. It was utterly impossible. There was sufficient work for the Under Secretary, accountant, and an assistant clerk. As to making provision for Mr. Taylor, the chief clerk, it was not very easy to find employment for a man receiving a salary of £500. Mr. Taylor would no doubt be provided for when a vacancy occurred, but a vacancy could not be made for him.

Mr. MOREHEAD said they wanted the department worked with one Under Secretary, and he thought it had been clearly proved that it could be done. They did not want to do injustice if it could be avoided. He took it that what was meant by the amendment was that the junior member who was employed as Under Secretary should go to the wall. He did not know who it was and had never inquired. He would like to hear an expression of opinion from the Minister for Works as to whether he was not right when he said that the two departments could be worked by one Under Secretary.

Mr. KELLETT said he had no desire to point at individuals, but he agreed with the hon. member for Mitchell that the two departments could be worked by one Under Secretary.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was willing to admit that the two departments could be worked by one head. He stated last year, when the salary of the Under Secretary was under consideration, that the Under Secretary

for Mines had not much work to do. But the work in the Mines Department required a good deal of special knowledge, and he was therefore disinclined to make a change in that department. As he also knew that there was work in the Works Department which would require the attention of the Under Secretary up to the end of the financial year, he had made no change in that department. At the same time, he was willing to admit that the two departments could be amalgamated and worked for the public service as well as they had hitherto been worked.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that if that were the case the Government should take the responsibility of omitting one of the items. They knew more about the facts than the Committee knew.

Mr. HAMILTON said there was no necessity to abolish the Mines Department because it was considered desirable to dispense with one of these Under Secretaries. Why not dispense with one officer, and still keep on the Mines Department as a department? There were three officers in the department, and if it were considered that the work of the department could be carried on at less expense, let the services of the head clerk be dispensed with and carry on the department with the two remaining clerks. That would be better than to abolish the Mines Department, because, as the Minister for Works had pointed out, a certain amount of technical knowledge was required among its officers.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member failed to grasp the point before the Committee; what they sought was, economy in the way of an Under Secretary. The point had no reference to the clerks. The Minister for Works had admitted that the two departments could be carried on by one Under Secretary instead of two, and upon that statement he and other members of the Committee were anxious to save £700.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that if he understood the matter aright they were discussing the salary of the Under Secretary for Public Works. It would be time to discuss the salary of the Under Secretary for Mines when they came to that department. Why not deal with each question upon its merits?

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member for Enoggera was not so old a bird as he thought he was. If they passed £700 for the Under Secretary of Works, good reasons would be given why they should pass the other £700 by-and-bye. He would suggest that both salaries might be held in abeyance until the Minister for Works had decided which officer he would retain. The Committee would be placed in a very invidious position in deciding which officer should be retained. If the vote were thrown out they might do an injustice to a worthy Civil servant; or if it were passed they might presently reject another vote, and in that way do an injustice to another equally worthy Civil servant. He would suggest that the item be postponed and that the Minister for Works should come down to the Committee with a vote of £700 for an Under Secretary of Works and Mines. He would not be induced to allow the vote to pass by the sophisms of the hon. member for Enoggera.

Mr. BEATTIE said he did not understand the Minister for Works exactly as the hon. member for Mitchell appeared to understand him. He had understood the Minister for Works to say that there would be sufficient work in the Works Department to warrant the retention of the Under Secretary up to the end of the financial year. If there were this work in the office, and the Under Secretary's salary were not voted, who would attend to his duties? If there were to be any alteration at all it might very well be left until next year. He believed, with other

hon. members, that the divisional boards would not be a success; and, if that were so, the Government would be placed in a very awkward position if they had not an officer in the Works Department to carry on the business properly.

Mr. RUTLEDGE thought it was paying the Department of Mines a poor compliment to say that an Under Secretary who had quite enough to do in the Works Department could efficiently supervise the affairs of the Mines Department in addition to his other duties. He was of opinion that the mining interest was a great and growing one; and seeing that the business which had heretofore been done in the Works Department necessitating an Under Secretary was coming to a termination, he did not think matters should be so arranged as that the officer whose work was slipping out of his hands, so to speak, should be so dealt with that he would come in and displace another officer who was in the position of head of a very important department. It was not for an officer skilled in the management of the work of the department with which he was connected to give way—the Government must find some other position in the service for an old servant like the Under Secretary for Works, whose work had disappeared by reason of the legislation of last session, without displacing an officer thoroughly conversant with the work of his department.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had never heard a more glaring and unjustifiable attack upon an officer of the Civil service than the attack just made by the hon. member for Enoggera upon the Under Secretary for Works. The hon. member said he ought to be provided for elsewhere. Did the hon. member know anything of the work of the department? Surely the Under Secretary for Works had not told the hon. member to make such an *ad misericordiam* appeal to the Committee? All he asked was that the Minister for Works should come down with an amended estimate. It was for the Minister for Works to elect, subject to the approval of the Committee, which officer he would retain. He did not think the hon. member for Enoggera would be thanked by the Under Secretary for Works.

Mr. RUTLEDGE: I did not say a word against him.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member had in effect said that the officer should be got rid of. Were the public to be robbed and taxed because the hon. member for Enoggera and others thought that two should batten on the State when one officer could do the work perfectly well? Were they to be taxed to the extent of £1,400 for work which could be done for £700? If he were in order, he would move that the item be amended by the insertion of the words "Under Secretary for Works and Mines." They could then vote £700 for that officer, leaving it to the Minister for Works to determine whether the salary should be received by the Under Secretary for Works or by the Under Secretary for Mines. The two offices must be combined, unless they were going on with a reckless and profitless expenditure at a time when they could least afford it.

Mr. THORN said the whole difficulty could be overcome by the adoption of his suggestion, that the office of Minister for Works be abolished. There was nothing for the Minister to do, but if the Government wished to continue the office let them make up the Minister's salary out of their own pockets. It was said that the Government intended to abandon the United Municipalities Bill. He should like to know whether that was so, because if so he had no doubt that the Government would carry out the

promise they made last session that they would take in hand the main roads of the colony, in which case the services of the Under Secretary for Works would be required. If the Government did not do that they would have obtained the Divisional Boards Act by fraud, as they would not have had the support of a majority of the House on that measure if it had not been for a statement of the Government to the effect that they would take charge of the main roads. He should be the last to vote a salary for an officer who was not required, but in the cases under discussion he thought the officers were necessary, and he should support the vote.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that, to carry out the ideas of the Minister for Works, he would propose to reduce the amount of £1,340 by £350, with the intention subsequently to propose a reduction of £350 in the amount of the vote for the Under Secretary for Mines. The effect of the amendment would be that for the Under Secretaryship of Works and Mines for the year 1880-81—save and except what had already been paid to the two officers—there would be voted a sum of £700.

Mr. BAYNES said he could not point out where the Government promised that they would maintain the main roads of the colony, but he knew that all through the debate on the Divisional Boards Bill there was a general inference to that effect. The district which he represented was now suffering through the Government not having carried out their implied promise. The bridge crossing the Mary River at Miva had been washed away, and there was no amount on the Estimates for its restoration. The road leading up to the bridge was the main artery of the Wide Bay and Burnett district. The settlers, wool-growers, and others in the Kilkivan district must necessarily cross the Mary at that particular spot, and to keep faith with the House the Government ought to at once erect a new bridge and make the road passable for the settlers. It was affirmed by the House not long since that settlers should spend so much money on their selections, and with such an affirmation on record it was the duty of the Government to make main roads through the lands which the settlers had taken up. He trusted that the Government would see that it was their policy to keep faith with their supporters, and not allow it to be said by the constituencies that their supporters had been deluded by the statements which were made last session with respect to the main roads. He assisted the Government to pass the Divisional Boards Bill. He believed in the principle of it, and he hoped that the Government would do nothing to disturb the harmonious working of the measure. Whilst prepared to vote for retrenchment, he could not, until the divisional boards were in fair working order, vote for any alteration affecting the Under Secretary for Works.

Mr. THOMPSON said he had always thought it an extraordinary anomaly that the Mines Department should have charge of goldfields only. The Lands Department managed affairs relating to tin, copper, and coal mining. Perhaps it would be well to put all matters relating to mining of every description under the charge of the Mines Department, whereby they might prevent an apparent injustice to an officer who had been talked about that night.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he was not going to express any opinion about the officer in question. He wished to point out, in reply to the hon. member (Mr. Thompson), that everything done by the Mines Department must be made known to the Lands Department, otherwise great troubles and complications would

arise. If there was anything to do in the Mines Department, of which he had grave doubts, the work might be transferred to the Lands Department, because that department was responsible for the preparation of plans showing every inch of land alienated—no matter in what way it was taken up. For these reasons he thought the hon. member (Mr. Thompson) would see that his suggestion would not be a good one to adopt. The desire for economy seemed to be shared in by all hon. members, and he thought that one or other of the officers in question ought to be told off.

Mr. THOMPSON said he recognised the objection raised by the Minister for Lands to the suggestion which he had made. The difficulty was this—that it was necessary that the Lands Department should be made aware of what was done by the Mines Department. The best way to cure that would be to make the Mines Department a sub-department under the Lands Department instead of under the Works Department. He thought the time had arrived when more attention should be paid to the production of coal and other minerals. He could see no difficulty whatever in having a department under the Lands Department for the management of all mining affairs. That would mean a change of the responsible head but not a change of the actual head.

Mr. THORN said he understood that the Engineer of Roads, Southern District, and other officers whose salaries had formerly appeared under the heading of Roads and Bridges, were still employed, and he should like to know from what vote they were paid.

Mr. MOREHEAD rose to a point of order. Only the first item was under discussion, and the hon. member could not refer to any other.

Mr. THORN said as no amounts were down on the Estimates under the heading of Roads and Bridges, he did not see what further opportunity he should have of referring to the subject.

The CHAIRMAN said the hon. member was decidedly out of order.

Mr. GRIFFITH said part of the duty of the Under Secretary appeared to be the management of the Roads and Bridges Department, and if the subject were not now open for discussion the Committee might not be able to refer to the alteration.

The PREMIER said the point of order was clear. The hon. member for Northern Downs proposed to discuss an item on the Estimates not yet reached, and the Chairman had ruled him out of order.

Mr. GARRICK said the point was that there was nothing at all on the Estimates for roads and bridges. He did not believe the Ministry would be able to carry out their intention of handing over the whole of those works to the divisional boards. No doubt it was desirable that the retrenchment policy of the Government should be carried out as far as possible, but he was inclined to think that the estimated diminution of work would not be realised. He did not know whether the Minister for Works intended again to submit the Mines Bill which he introduced last session, but at any rate the mines were rapidly increasing, and a Bill of this kind was admittedly wanted. If that were passed it was probable that the work of the Mines Department would be very much increased, while the work of the Lands Department was likely to be maintained. The Minister for Works had not definitely stated that he did not want all this money, but he said that one of the Under Secretaries might be able to do the whole of the work.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He said one could do the work.

Mr. GARRICK said he understood the hon. gentleman to say that if the House voted only the salary of one Under Secretary, he would endeavour to have the work of both departments done by one.

Mr. LOW: The Minister for Works said distinctly that one Under Secretary could manage the whole of the work.

Mr. BAYNES said there was an erroneous impression that the Minister for Works stated that one Under Secretary could do the work of both the Works and the Mines Departments, but he did not understand the hon. gentleman to say that. Had he heard the hon. gentleman make that statement he should not have opposed the reduction. He regarded the Government as a Government of retrenchment, and considered it to be his duty to do all he could to support them.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he understood the Minister for Works to say that one Under Secretary was quite capable of performing the duties of both departments, but previous to that the hon. gentleman said that if the Committee decided that one was able to do the work that would settle the matter. Seeing that the Minister for Works had stated that the work could be done by one Under Secretary, the Committee would be to blame if they did not support the hon. member for Mitchell in his motion to reduce the amount by £350.

Mr. KELLETT said he was quite prepared to withdraw his amendment, and leave the responsibility of the reduction of the vote with the Minister for Works. As the hon. gentleman had stated that the work could be done by one man, he could not justify himself in keeping two. He begged to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment of the hon. member for Stanley, by permission, withdrawn.

Mr. DICKSON said before this matter was dealt with, the Committee had a right to expect some more information. He gathered from the statements of the hon. gentleman that during the rest of the financial year the duties connected with the Under Secretary of Works would be very onerous, and that it would not be advisable this year to amalgamate the two offices. He (Mr. Dickson) should be better able to form a conclusion, if aware of what the views of the Government were with regard to the main roads of the colony. The hon. member for Northern Downs had very pertinently asked whether the Government intended to press their United Municipalities Bill. It was unquestionably the feeling of the country that—at least until further legislation on the subject took place—the Government were bound to see that the main roads of the colony were kept in passable condition. He contended that the Divisional Boards Act was passed under a feeling that the Government intended to make additional provision for the maintenance of main roads, although there might not have been any distinct promise. Up to the present time no provision in connection with the Works Department seemed to have been made, and there appeared to be an uncertainty whether the Government intended to proceed with the United Municipalities Bill in its present form. Before deciding whether the two departments were to be amalgamated the Committee should have some information as to the intentions of the Government. If the maintenance of roads was to be thrown on the divisional boards there would be some reason for the hon. member for Mitchell's amendment; if not, it would be premature to reduce the salaries of these officers.

Mr. STEVENS said before the Committee divided it would simplify matters very much and clear up doubt if the Minister for Works would say plainly whether he thought there was work for these two officers or not?

Mr. BEATTIE asked from what fund the extra clerk, Sheehan, was paid? The amount was not down in the estimate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that as Sheehan would only be employed till the end of the year, there was no necessity for the item to be placed on the estimate.

Mr. BEATTIE said he had been informed that Sheehan was one of the junior clerks in the department, and that he was kept on while clerks who had been in the department many years were kicked out at a month or two's notice.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member had been misinformed. He did not know how long Sheehan had been in the Government service, but he was now only employed temporarily. Two of the other clerks had got other employment under the Government—one had started in business for himself, and the junior had left the department of his own accord. As far as the working of the two departments were concerned, the Government were quite prepared to take the full responsibility of amalgamating them if necessary. As he had pointed out last year, there was very little work for the Under Secretary for Mines to do—as most Ministers who had had charge of the department would admit. The present head of the Mines Department understood his work well; but as there was not much to do, and as the works in the Works Department was gradually lessening every month, he was quite prepared to take the responsibility of working the two departments in the most economical manner possible in the interests of the public service; and if amalgamation was necessary he was prepared to decide which officer should be retained and which should not, and would take the full responsibility of seeing that the work of both departments was carried on satisfactorily.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Government ought to reply to the question of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) as to what they intended to do with the United Municipalities Bill. Its position on the notice paper seemed to indicate that the Government did not wish it to be passed. The main roads must be maintained in some way—if not by the divisional boards, by the Works Department—and that should be known before the Committee decided that the proposed reduction should or should not be made. He did not want the usual answer given to questions of that kind, but a definite answer as to whether they did or did not intend the Bill to become law this session.

The PREMIER said that, although the hon. gentleman did not want the "usual answer," he had taken care to let the Committee understand that the Government had done everything they could to keep the United Municipalities Bill back and put it very low down on the notice paper. The position of any item after the third or fourth was left to the Clerk of the House, and the Ministry did not interfere with it. The United Municipalities Bill had had due attention given to it up to the present time, and the Ministry were very anxious for it to pass.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that, after all, the hon. gentleman had given the "usual answer," and it meant that owing to the late period of the session it was not likely that the Bill would pass. A Bill involving the administration of an important department ought to precede the estimates of that department. They were

asked to make arrangements for the administration of a department when they did not know what work the office would have to do. If the main roads were to be retained the staff would have to be taken on again.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said that, in his opinion, the only main roads in the colony were the railroads. It was time the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) woke up to a sense of his position, and refrained from wasting the time of the Committee with trifling technical objections; still, if it afforded the hon. gentleman any entertainment, they would do their best to stand it.

Mr. BAYNES protested against the definition of main roads given by the Minister for Lands. He had told his constituents that it would be premature to take a railway into that district, although it had far greater claims for a railway than other districts which had been more fortunate. The Wide Bay and Burnett district had a right to have its main roads considered, especially as it had foregone the privilege of harassing the Government for a railway. He had often said, and still believed, that the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) politically robbed the country, and there never was a greater piece of injustice done than the making the Maryborough and Gympie and Bundaberg and Mount Perry railways. He did not see why those lines should be the only main roads for that district. His district had a right to have bridges replaced that were washed down before the Divisional Boards Act came into operation; and if the Government wished to see that Act work harmoniously they would place a sum of £1,200 or £1,500 on the Supplementary Estimates for that purpose.

Mr. PRICE said he was sorry to hear the Minister for Lands say that he recognised railroads as the only main roads in the colony. He trusted the Minister for Works would assist him when his motion came on for placing £600 on the Supplementary Estimates for the reconstruction of the Miva bridge.

Mr. FRASER said that on so important a question such a speech as that which they had had from the Minister for Lands was trifling with the Committee. If only railroads were to be considered as main roads, it would be a sorry look-out for the colony. If the Minister for Works threw the responsibilities for the maintenance of all the roads of the colony upon the divisional boards he would find himself very much mistaken. It was a notorious fact that however well intentioned that Bill might have been it was not working satisfactorily, and was turning out every day an utter failure. He was satisfied that just in proportion as they went back from centres of population they would find the Act in a very short time quite impracticable—that more than the resources of the districts would be absorbed in official salaries; so that he was strongly of opinion that before long a large amount of the work of which the Works Department was now relieved would go back to it again, and the Government and the House would be called upon to recast the Act and put it into a more practicable and simple form than it was at present. As to the possibility of carrying on the two departments under one head, the Minister said he saw no difficulty in the way; and, if he (Mr. Fraser) remembered rightly, it was not long since the two departments were under one head, and he saw no reason why they should not be again. He was quite satisfied that the Under Secretary of the Works Department could not be dispensed with.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN could not agree with the hon. member who had just sat down that the Divisional Boards Act was a failure. He knew a

great many people had tried to make it a failure, but they had not succeeded. If the proposition of the hon. member for Burnett (Mr. Baynes) was carried out—to place a sum of £1,500 on the Estimates to make the Miva road into the Burnett, it would soon become a failure, because every other division would demand the same thing, and they would have the same scramble for money that they had in years past, when on one occasion as much as £40,000 was passed. They had not that scramble under this Bill; and he could not see what benefit the failure of these boards would be to the country, because if the taxes were not paid directly they must be paid indirectly; and it was just as broad as it was long. With regard to the Miva bridge, he would point out that there were plans and sections before the House for a branch railway towards the Burnett by way of Esk, and he thought the Government were going a long way in making these main roads, for surely these branch railways would become main roads when they were established. One thing he would like to see in connection with the divisional boards was, that the road inspectors who formerly belonged to those divisions should be still kept on. In the Ipswich district, before the Act was passed, they had a road inspector who managed the whole of West Moreton, and his salary and travelling expenses amounted to very little—about £400 or £500 a-year. Instead of that, every division had now to find its own overseer, which became very expensive. There were too many officers, and the divisions were too small, as he had pointed out would be the case; and he thought it would be a great advantage if the road overseers were employed at their former salaries to superintend the work. He thought the Government should have officers to look over the expenditure of the money, because they paid two-thirds of it and had a right to see that it was properly expended. It was not true, as stated by the hon. member for Northern Downs, that there was no money expended except in salaries. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) knew there had been a great deal of money spent in improvements, and that a great deal of work had been done in those divisions. As to the United Municipalities Bill, he did not understand whether the leader of the Opposition wished to see it passed; but he (Mr. O'Sullivan) was opposed to it, because it would take the responsibility off the shoulders of a great many of the boards and place it in the hands of three men who were responsible to no one; and whenever that Bill came on he should vote against it. He believed that the business of the Works Department would increase, and that they might allow the salary of the Under Secretary to pass this year. He did not believe the Divisional Boards Act would go to pieces, but that the more experience the people had of it the better they would like it, and that the next Ministry would not be game to repeal it.

Mr. BAYNES said he hoped the Divisional Boards Bill would not die out. He upheld the principle of it, but he thought it behoved the Government to nurse it, for it required nursing. He was rather surprised at an old resident like the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) displaying so little geographical knowledge when he spoke of a railway from Esk into the Burnett superseding the requirements of the Miva Bridge on the main road from Maryborough to the Burnett. The two roads were in entirely different parts of the district. All he asked the Government to do was to place a sum of money on the Estimates to put the Miva Bridge, one of the main arteries of the Maryborough district, into proper order. He did not ask them to make the Miva road; but this bridge was swept away before the Divisional Boards Act came into

operation, and therefore he maintained he was justified, in the interests of his constituents, in asking that a sum should be placed on the Supplementary Estimates for that purpose.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member had put words into his mouth that he had never used. He did not say the railway from Esk into the Burnett would supersede the Miva road. They were in different places altogether, and he knew the geography of the Burnett and Miva Bridge as well as the hon. member, and perhaps a little better.

Mr. THORN said the hon. member for Burnett had made a speech to his constituents that he (Mr. Thorn) was satisfied he did not believe in. It was a clap-trap speech to his constituents against the Government, and yet he believed in the Government thoroughly, and in the Divisional Boards Act. The Government had not yet answered his (Mr. Thorn's) question as to whether they intended to push the United Municipalities Bill through. He thought that Bill should be taken before they proceeded further with the Estimates. He agreed with the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley (Mr. O'Sullivan) with regard to the employment of inspectors under the Divisional Boards Act. Before the Act was passed, one officer superintended the whole of the West Moreton district at a cost of about £400 a-year. That district was now split up into nine divisions, and he knew two boards that paid £500 a-year for clerks—Esk £250, and Tarampa £250.

Mr. KELLETT: No.

Mr. THORN said there was an officer there who got £250 a-year, but what he did he (Mr. Thorn) did not know. At any rate, these two boards cost more than was formerly paid for the supervision of the whole district; and he thought the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) was a good one. The Government would then see that the money was more wisely spent than it was at present. He maintained that very little money was spent on roads, and that the Act would become a dead-letter, as it had in some parts of Victoria. The colony was not populous enough for the Divisional Boards Act. Even in the populous districts the roads were not made, the rates being chiefly absorbed in salaries and expenses of management. He hoped the Government would stand to the United Municipalities Bill and force it through the House. It should be taken before they proceeded further with the Estimates.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that the "blather-skiting" which they had just heard was all for *Hansard*. He could not understand why the hon. member should stand up so long, roaring away and making much sound and fury, without saying anything worthy of consideration. He had talked about the bad state of the roads, but he knew very well that before the Divisional Boards Act was passed there was a thousand times greater outcry about the bad roads than there was now.

Mr. DICKSON said that, whatever the condition of the main roads might be, the question who was to take charge of them remained unanswered. That question ought to be settled before the reduction of salary of a most important officer was made. It would have been better for the Government to have boldly faced the question, and carried out what was promised, or, at least, generally understood—namely, that they would take charge of the main roads until further legislation had been passed. The United Municipalities Bill had not yet been passed, and he must say that he thought it undesirable that it should pass, because he be-

lieved that the divisional boards had enough to do to attend to local matters without having added to their cares the main roads. It would be better for the Government to have carried on the main roads for a time—until the Divisional Boards Act had been a success. He did not believe that the system was such a great success as had been alleged. He should like to hear the opinion of the hon. member for Burke upon the subject. The hon. member represented a large outside district where the system must work at a great disadvantage; in fact, he (Mr. Dickson) believed it would be utterly impracticable there. The system might answer very well in the populous districts, and he should have been glad to have seen it confined to them, but it was premature to press it on the more sparsely settled districts. They had not yet seen it in its most objectionable form, that was when the rates came to be collected. Then the people would cry out, and it would be seen that a large portion of the money raised from rates would not be so economically expended as if the Government had constituted themselves the disbursers. If the Government intended to take charge of the main roads, they would require a larger staff in the Works Department than they had now; and, viewing the matter in that light, he would oppose the amendment. In the interest of the country, the Government should not place further burdens upon the divisional boards. If retrenchment could be made in these two departments, the Minister should indicate it, and not allow the Committee to grope in the dark and thereby possibly inflict injustice upon a very meritorious officer. His objection to the divisional boards system had been chiefly that it displayed a faulty system of assessment; that it was most oppressive; that it was a system which imposed directly a heavier tax on improvements than any other which could have been adopted; and it was because of that he must lend his support, if not to a repeal of the Act, to an amendment of the tax which persons who made improvements were called upon most unjustly to bear.

Mr. MILES was understood to say that he was surprised at the expression of opinion which had fallen from the member for Northern Downs. He had understood him to say that the divisional boards system was a failure. If it did prove a failure it would be through such councillors as the hon. member. The hon. member was a member of one of the boards, but he believed he had not attended since the rate was struck. Anyone who had been in the Works Office for six months would be convinced that it would be absolutely necessary to do something to stop the claims continually coming in for expenditure on roads, not because the roads wanted it, but in order to have money spent in the district. He believed the Divisional Boards Act would cure that. The hon. member (Mr. Dickson) wanted to know how the Act would operate in the district of the member for Burke. Well, he would tell him that it would operate mildly. No roads were wanted there. He was a member of one of the divisional boards, and anything that was necessary would be done; but it was absurd to talk about making roads through the bush—the moment the soil was broken the road would be spoilt. With regard to the suggestion that the road inspectors should be retained, he would simply say that the most of them were the biggest frauds. If anybody looked at a certain road beyond Dalby he would find that a corduroy track was formed on top of the ridge, but the flat at the foot was left untouched, and travellers had to battle through it as best they could. Thank God that they had got rid of such men as the most of these inspectors were! He had never given any strenuous opposition to the Divisional Boards Bill, neither had he ever

said much in favour of it, but if it was to be made a success the divisional boards must have the management of all kinds of roads; otherwise every road would be claimed to be a main one. The hon. member for the Northern Downs told them that the divisional boards were a failure; but the hon. member himself tried to make them a failure. When a tax of 9d. was proposed the hon. member moved that it be reduced to 6d. The hon. member evidently wished to damage the Act. The hon. member ought to know that there was a cry for expenditure in the Public Works Department from one week's end to another. Expenditure was asked in all directions, not so much because it was required as because there was money to be spent. He felt satisfied that unless the boards endeavoured to carry out the Act fairly it would fail.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could not help congratulating the hon. member for the Darling Downs upon having placed the difficulties which encircled the Government in a clearer light before the Committee than they could have been placed by members of the Government themselves. They saw things which the hon. member himself saw when he was in the Works Department. It would be impossible to work the divisional boards if the Government took the main roads. As the hon. member for Darling Downs said, every road would be a main road, and until every road had been made a main road members of that House would be at the beck and call of their constituents. The hon. member was not only right in saying that every road would be a main road, but if the hon. member had gone still further and said that people would not help themselves in the slightest degree, he would have told his own experience, and his (Mr. Macrossan's) experience before the divisional boards came into existence. A most trifling thing occurred in a district. A man lived alongside a road; a tree fell across the road; and the man would no more think of trying to remove that obstacle than he would think of flying to the moon. There was actually a case in which a man rode a day going backwards and forwards to tell the department that a small tree had fallen across the road. Half-an-hour's work with an axe would have cleared the road. The first request made to him in the Works Department was to clear out a dam: a petition was sent to him by one of the members of the Downs district asking him to do this work. The petition contained the names of thirty farmers—solid men, who were in possession of property—who used this dam for water supply. He ascertained that the dam had been made by the Government. It became silted up through floods and would not contain any water. The individuals who petitioned him were obliged to go six miles to cart water at a cost, as they averred, of 10s. a-week each. It would have only taken £10 to clear the dam, and yet they would not find the money themselves. Instead of doing that they said, "Oh! we will get it done through our member." That was the first request which was made to him, and he was happy to say that he had sufficient strength of mind to resist it. He was glad to see the hon. member for Darling Downs on the side of the Government in this matter. If every member of the House would view the question as that hon. member did, and would take the pains to work the divisional boards system as he did, it would be a remarkable success. But if hon. members rose, like the hon. member for the Northern Downs, and denounced the system and everything pertaining to it, such a course would naturally not tend to facilitate its operation. He thanked the hon. member for Darling Downs, on behalf of the Ministry, for placing the position of affairs before the House and the country.

Mr. REA said the Government had promised last session, over and over again, that they would look after the main roads, and that the working farmers should not be oppressed. Only recently in Victoria he had heard a large outcry against the system, which was the precedent for the system which they had adopted in this colony. This had taken place, notwithstanding the fact that Victoria was so thickly settled. That circumstance made the plan appear still more impossible in this colony, where, owing to the comparatively sparse population, the *pro rata* rates would be higher. In the Dandenong and Gippsland districts in Victoria some of the roads were impassable, and the cry was that the Government must take over the roads. If the Government thought they would get rid of the Government contribution in a few years they were very much mistaken. For a number of years there would have to be a large amount contributed from the general revenue to assist our colonists. They were not in the position of Victoria, where one crop of farmers had made money, sold out, and gone: they were taxing the people who had felled the trees and cleared the wilderness. The real difficulty, as far as this main-road question was concerned, was that it would make a little more trouble in the Government offices. He was confident that if the Minister for Works went into some of the country districts and saw the struggles some men had to make to get a living, he would say that it was in many instances excusable on the part of a man who should refuse to do such work as road clearing at his own cost, for which he received little thanks from the Government or anyone else. Unless the Government took over the main roads, the public would come to the conclusion that the Government had passed the Divisional Boards Bill upon fraudulent pretences and the colonists had been entrapped.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he intended to vote against the reduction of the item, because he thought it the duty of the Government to take the responsibility upon themselves. If the Government found that they could do with less money, it was for them to tell the Committee what they proposed to do. In the absence of that information he would vote for the item as it stood.

The PREMIER said he was also going to vote for the item as it stood, and for a similar reason to that assigned by the hon. member for North Brisbane—because he believed it to be the duty of the Government to take upon themselves the responsibility of any reduction they might propose. The Government had intimated that in the departments of Public Works and Mines there would be a considerable reduction, but that reduction would be a work of time. The matter had been under the notice of the Minister for Works, and he had intimated that he thought he saw where a reduction could be made. At the proper time that reduction would be placed before the House. The Government did not want the Committee to take the responsibility off their shoulders in this matter. He desired to point out to the hon. member who had moved this amendment that he was in reality preventing an economy from being practised. The reduction of the salary by £350 meant that the Under Secretary would be employed for six months only. There had been no discussion as to whether some other reduction ought not to be made in the department; but the Committee were only to decide whether or not the Under Secretary's salary should be kept at £700. The position of affairs would be this—the Government would be bound to defend their own estimate, and would accordingly vote for it; and the other side would be sure to vote for the estimate as it stood, if

only to throw difficulties in the way of the Minister for Works. The result would be that the item would be carried; and the conclusion forced upon the Government would be that they must keep both officers. If the Government were not to be trusted to work out a reform in a department, he did not know what they were to be trusted with. The Government asked, pending their ability to make other arrangements, that the Estimates should be passed as they were.

Mr. BEATTIE said he had not understood the Minister for Works to make use of an expression conveying the meaning attributed to him by some hon. members. What he understood the hon. gentleman to say was, that it was necessary that certain officers should be kept in the Works Department till the close of the financial year.

Mr. RUTLEDGE could not understand what the Premier meant when he said that some members would vote for the item as it stood in order to put the Minister for Works in a difficulty. Why did the Government come down with an estimate of £700, unless they were satisfied that there was work to be done requiring the expenditure of that sum of money? The Committee had a right to believe that the Government, in proposing this expenditure, were actuated by sincere motives and an anxiety to promote the interests of the public service. The Government ought to be the best judges of the sum which was necessary for the efficient working of a department. He would support the vote unless he heard better reasons for a reduction than he had yet heard.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he could not allow the observation of the Premier, that the Opposition would vote with the Government so as to embarrass them, to pass unnoticed. What sort of Estimates could they be when the Opposition would embarrass the Government by voting for them as they stood?

The PREMIER said he was merely expressing his opinion of the Opposition.

Mr. FRASER said he protested against the statement of the Premier. He was not aware that there was any understanding amongst the Opposition as to how they were to vote. He should vote against the amendment, as he wished the responsibility to be thrown on the proper shoulders.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he moved the amendment in the interest of retrenchment. The Minister for Works had told them that he could do the work of the two departments with one Under Secretary, and he intended by his amendment to test the opinion of the Committee as to whether such a reduction was desirable. That was his sole intention, and on that issue must a vote be taken. The Premier had said that the Government would exercise due economy, and employ but one officer if one only was necessary; but in the face of the statement of the Minister for Works, he (Mr. Morehead) maintained that £700 only should be left in the hands of the Government to be made use of. He would not say which officer of the two should remain in the employ of the Government. He wanted to have a division on the subject, to see if hon. members would really go in for economy. If the amendment were not carried, he should do everything which the forms of the House allowed to prevent the passing of the £700 for the Under Secretary for Mines. He proposed the amendment to simplify matters and to help the Government, and he should not withdraw it.

Question—That the amount be reduced by £350—put.

The Committee divided :—

AYES, 14.

Messrs. Norton, Weld-Blundell, Low, Sheaffe, Cooper, Macfarlane, Hamilton, Meston, Archer, Price, Amhurst, Morehead, Kellett, and Hill.

NOES, 20.

Messrs. Rutledge, Grimes, Garriek, Dickson, Griffith, Thorn, McIlwraith, Rea, Beor, Macrossan, Thompson, Peattie Kingsford, H. W. Palmer, Baynes, O'Sullivan, Fraser, Stevens, Douglas, and Palmer.

Question, consequently, resolved in the negative.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was not satisfied. He considered that certain members of the House had hardly been fairly treated by the Government. The Government themselves admitted that £700 was quite sufficient for the dual offices, and if they would tell him that they were willing to allow the excision of the item of the Under Secretary for Mines he should not oppose the votes any further. If they would not give him such an assurance he should move the reduction of the amount by £349, and keep on dividing the Committee so long as he remained in the House during the night. The Government would be false to their trust and to the statement they had made that only one officer was necessary if they did not accept his proposition. The Minister for Works told them half-a-dozen times that only one officer was necessary, and did the hon. gentleman think he was going to trick men who had supported him and his Government through thick and thin? They were not to be fooled by the hon. member or by any other member of the Ministry. If the hon. member would not say that he was prepared to accept £700 for the two offices, he (Mr. Morehead) should go on moving the reduction of the item as long as the rules of the House would allow him. He admitted that he was speaking angrily; he felt angry, as he thought he had been badly treated by the Minister in charge of the Estimates. He knew as well as he did that the Chairman was in the chair, that if this £700 was passed the next £700 would be supported by the same number of members, or perhaps a larger number, and therefore the statement of the Minister would have gone to the winds. It would perhaps please the Minister, or any other Minister, to be able to keep two men in office whilst it was admitted that one could do the work. He had spoken angrily.

Mr. GRIFFITH: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member need not interrupt him, because he would not make him more angry than he was. He would repeat that if they passed this £700 the Government were bound to withdraw the item, "Under Secretary for Mines." It was all very well for an honourable member to murmur—"absurd, monstrous."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not murmur anything of the sort.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was not addressing the hon. member. The hon. member must have a conscience, which he (Mr. Morehead) doubted before. If the Government expected members on their side of the House, or a considerable section of them, to vote the £700 which was down for the Under Secretary for Mines, they were much mistaken. They were not going to be deluded by the soft accents of the Minister for Works, let him woo ever so wisely; they all knew the *fortiter in re* of the Minister for Works—in fact, that was his strong point. In order to save himself, he (Mr. Morehead) should move that the item be reduced by the sum of £349.

The PREMIER said if the hon. member for Mitchell had been in his place he would have

heard him foretell exactly what had taken place—the hon. member having placed a wrong issue before the Committee. As he (Mr. McIlwraith) had foreseen, the Ministry voted as they were bound to do for their own Estimates, and they received the support of their own followers and of a considerable number of members from the other side. The hon. member had only to consider the reasons given by the hon. members on the Opposition side for recording their votes to see that the result of his motion to reduce the vote by £350 could not decide whether one Under Secretary should be employed or two. The hon. member for Enoggera said distinctly that he voted against the motion without reference to the view of the hon. member, but because he considered that until the Divisional Boards Act was a success the £700 would be required. That had nothing to do with the issue; and it would be seen, on going through the reasons given by other hon. members who voted against the motion, that their action had nothing to do with the issue attempted to be decided by the hon. member. The Committee had plainly intimated that they agreed with what the Minister for Works had stated—that there should be a reform in that department, and a reduction;—but they left the hon. gentleman to decide whether the Under Secretary for Works or the Under Secretary for Mines should be dispensed with. That, at least, might be left for the Ministry to decide.

Mr. MOREHEAD said if the Committee voted two £700 the Government would be bound to employ two men, and he was trying to prevent the State being burdened with two officials when one would be sufficient. What he wanted to understand from the Government was this—were they prepared to abandon the £700 for the Under Secretary for Mines? The Premier said that the hon. member for Enoggera voted against the motion because money would be required for work supposed to be carried out under the operations of the Divisional Boards Act. That was an admission that the Act had been a failure, and that a considerable annual expenditure would have to be incurred because the Act passed mainly by the Ministerial side of the House had not been brought into force. The contention was that the Government, having stated that the work could be done by one Under Secretary at £700, had asked the Committee to vote two £700, and members of the Opposition had assisted them to carry their point so far. If the Ministry would now state that they were satisfied with the £700 which had been already voted he should be content.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he felt happy at being credited with the possession of sweet accents capable of wooing. He thought his qualities were of a more stormy character. The present position was this: The majority who had voted for the item comprised the Ministry, who were bound to support their own Estimates, and a number of hon. members who had thrown upon the Government the responsibility of working the department in the most economical manner, and dispensing with one officer, no matter which they cared to dispense with. That position he was quite willing to accept. He was quite willing to take the responsibility of amalgamating the two offices, but he must take his own time; he must work the reform; he could not settle the matter at once. Already four months of the year had passed by, and nearly £700 had already gone. The hon. member forgot that more than £700 would be required even if the amalgamation took place to-morrow, and he maintained that he could not, however willing he might be, take steps to amalgamate the two offices to-morrow. He would undertake

the responsibility of amalgamating the two offices if the hon. gentleman would throw the responsibility upon him. He knew he should be able to work the two departments, and he was not afraid of the duty of selecting the officer to be dispensed with.

Mr. MOREHEAD said if the Minister for Works said that if the Committee voted the two salaries he would pledge his word to make the alteration by a reasonable time—he presumed not later than the end of the year—he would withdraw his opposition, though it seemed like a hollow mockery to vote a salary which was to be withdrawn at the end of the year. He had been aware all through the discussion that a certain amount of debt had been incurred, and he mentioned that provision could be made for that on the Supplementary Estimates. If the hon. gentleman stated that he would amalgamate the two offices before the 31st December, he was quite willing to withdraw opposition.

Mr. ARCHER said, after the statement made by the Minister for Works, it was objectionable to seek to bind him down to a certain date. The Minister for Works having given a pledge, all hon. members who had the slightest confidence in the Minister must accept that promise.

Mr. DOUGLAS said a very edifying drama had been acted out. At the commencement of the sitting the hon. member (Mr. Morehead) denounced the Divisional Boards Act and said the Government were going to reap the whirlwind. Then the hon. member prophesied all sorts of things that would not be believed, and said he intended to occupy the position of Cassandra. Then things got a little warmer, and the hon. gentleman confronted the head of the Government and the Colonial Secretary, and intimated that the Committee would have to sit all night if his terms were not complied with. Fortunately the hon. gentleman's terms were complied with. This only indicated what he had noticed before—namely, the immense influence the hon. gentleman possessed with the Government. He could secure his end—if not one way then another. The spectacle was a very edifying and amusing one, and he hoped the hon. member would stick to his rôle of Cassandra, and remain to prophesy evil things knowing they would never be believed. He presumed the Committee was now a happy family again, and could proceed with business. He had voted for the Government proposal on the principle stated by the Premier—that the Government having asked for a certain amount, the responsibility of spending it or not rested upon them.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman (Mr. Douglas) had stated that he made use of statements that would not be believed.

Mr. DOUGLAS: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Yes.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Oh, yes: in your assumed character.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman had in his time assumed many characters. At one time he assumed the character of an honest man, and it did not fit him at all; and since then he had changed the rôle and come out in his true character. He would like to know what right the hon. gentleman had to say that he made statements which were not to be believed. He (Mr. Morehead) was not in the habit of getting up and making lies in this House—and that was the bald statement of the hon. gentleman. That hon. gentleman had a happy knack of wrapping up disgraceful charges against members in most elaborate and thoroughly

worked-up phrases. There was no doubt that the hon. gentleman was also in the habit of telling untruths to this House in the same way. He (Mr. Morehead) was not aware that he had ever told untruths or made statements which were not to be believed. If he had he regretted it, but the hon. gentleman had no right to take up the rôle—as he called it—of denouncing him as he had done twice to-night. He (Mr. Morehead) could point out many errors on the part of the hon. gentleman, and he would recommend the hon. gentleman, unless he got a very good opening, to leave him alone. As far as what he had said to-night in regard to the Divisional Boards Act and this vote was concerned, he was quite willing to defend the course he had taken. He was perfectly certain that the course he had adopted was the correct one, and that hon. members opposite, if they had been in earnest, would have supported him. It suited them, however, to vote for the Government.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. gentleman was in a very serious mood. He had no intention that what he had said should have been taken up by the hon. member as it had been. The hon. gentleman assumed the character of Cassandra, and Cassandra, as they all knew, was not believed. In the prophetic sense in which the hon. member spoke, he was not believed. The hon. member accepted the position—a very harmless and very interesting one. Cassandra was a character which many hon. members had a faint admiration for, as a lady who should have been believed and was not. If the hon. gentleman put such thoughts into the heads of hon. members, he must pardon them for following up the analogy. The character was, however, hardly appropriate to the hon. member: he was of a more masculine character than Cassandra was, and therefore when he drew the analogy he (Mr. Douglas) did not regard it as a very correct one. He hoped the hon. member would accept his (Mr. Douglas's) assurance that he did not intend to say anything unpleasant, but rather to give a more pleasant turn to the debate.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was very glad to hear that he had put some thoughts into the head of the hon. member.

Mr. THORN said the state of things arrived at this evening was deplorable. Either the Government must have pre-arranged with the hon. member to sacrifice one of these Under Secretaries or else they must have thrown one over in order to please him. With regard to Mr. Deighton, the Under Secretary for Works, he (Mr. Thorn) had been for some time at the head of that department, and knew that it would take the whole of that officer's time to work the department properly, more especially as the Divisional Boards Act would be a dead-letter before very long. As to the Mines Department, he could speak of Mr. Lukin as one of the most excellent officers in the service. Mr. Lukin had saved the colony an immense amount of money during the time he had occupied his present post, and his equal could not be procured at the present time in the colony. If the Government dispensed with the services of either of those officers they would make a great mistake. It would be far better to dispense with the Minister for Works, and if the Government wanted him in the House as a debater they might pay his salary out of their own pockets, as the New South Wales Government paid the salary of Sir John Robertson until the post of Minister for Education was found for him. The hon. member for Mitchell contradicted that statement when he made it before, but he had since made inquiries and found it was perfectly correct. There was nothing for the Minister for Works to do,

and his services could be dispensed with far better than those of either of the two officers named.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said the Premier's interpretation of the vote he gave a little while ago was one that he did not accept on his own account. He did not give his vote in favour of retaining the salary of £700 for the Under Secretary, because he wished to throw upon the Government the responsibility of deciding which of the two officers should go.

The PREMIER said he was not referring to the hon. member, but to his colleague (Mr. Dickson).

Mr. RUTLEDGE said his reason for supporting the resolution was that the Minister for Works at the commencement defended the item, and quoted statistics showing the amount of work going on in the department. Afterwards, on pressure being brought to bear, the hon. gentleman stated that the two departments could be managed by one Under Secretary. Comparing the two statements there were discrepancies which he could not reconcile, and he did not feel justified in giving a vote which would throw upon the Minister the necessity of dismissing one of the two officers. Unless the Mining Department was more contemptible and insignificant than he took it to be, he did not see how it could be worked efficiently in conjunction with the Works Department.

Mr. MOREHEAD, by leave of the Committee, withdrew his amendment.

Original question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £3,060 be granted for Buildings Branch and Contingencies (subdivision).

Mr. GRIFFITH said it had been stated that the Colonial Architect had resigned his appointment. What arrangements did the Government propose to make?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that the resignation of the Colonial Architect did not take effect until the end of the present financial year.

Mr. THORN said that he understood that the Engineer of Roads, Southern Division, had been kept on, as well as some of the road inspectors. From what fund were they paid? It was unfair if officers should be kept on in one part of the country and not in others.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that Mr. Byerley, the Engineer of Roads, Southern Division, had charge of the Fitzroy Bridge, and was paid out of the Fitzroy Bridge vote. The Road Inspector of Toowoomba was winding up the different works in the Darling Downs and Western District, of which he had charge, and his salary and allowances came from the funds voted for those works. The District Road Inspector, Maryborough, after winding up the works in the district, had just finished; his salary and allowances were paid in the same way. There was also an officer in charge of the Mackenzie Bridge, at Gayndah. The foremen of works in East and West Moreton, after being kept on for some time to wind up the different works, had been dispensed with.

Mr. BEATTIE said there was an item on the Loan Estimates of £1,500 for a post and telegraph office for Fortitude Valley. Was it the intention of the Minister for Works, either this year or next, to expend that sum in accordance with the vote?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that the sum, being on the Loan Estimates, could not lapse. He had had no intimation from the Post Office Department whether they wished the

building to be erected or not. As soon as they intimated to him that the building was required, he should go on with the work.

Mr. MILES asked what progress had been made with the Fitzroy Bridge, and how much its construction would cost over and above the Estimate?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could not tell with accuracy from memory. The work was going on very satisfactorily, and would be opened in a very short time. The increased cost would be about £9,000, against which would be a very large amount of plant, reducing it to between £4,000 and £5,000. He had omitted to mention before, that Mr. Byerley, besides superintending the work at the Fitzroy Bridge, had taken up the work of Mr. Jardine—Mr. Jardine having been transferred to the Harbours and Rivers Department—which was not quite finished at the end of the financial year; so that he had actually to superintend the roads of the Central District as well as the Fitzroy Bridge.

Mr. REA said he gathered from the remarks of the Minister for Works that when the Fitzroy Bridge was completed Mr. Byerley's services would be dispensed with?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, certainly; there would be no more work for Mr. Byerley when that bridge was completed.

Mr. KELLETT said he would take that opportunity of asking the Minister for Works about a sum of £700 that was voted for a bridge over Cressbrook Creek, but the work had never been carried out although there had been some correspondence on the subject. It was a work that was very much needed, and that no divisional board could possibly carry out. He would like to know if it was likely to be proceeded with?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said as far as he could ascertain no such bridge was really required. That was the information he had received, and he was entitled to act upon that until he got further information.

Mr. KELLETT said he would like to know where the hon. gentleman got his information from? He (Mr. Kellett) knew the district, and could say the bridge was very much required. The creek was subject to very high floods, so much so that it was dangerous to life; and if the information had been given by an officer of the department he must be a very bad officer, and he (Mr. Kellett) hoped he was one of those who had got the sack. The statement was entirely false.

Mr. DICKSON pointed out that in a previous session £800 was passed for a bridge at Zillman's Waterholes, on the Sandgate road, but it had been allowed to lapse. The Minister for Works could not, in this case, allege that the work was not required, because the present bridge was in a very dangerous condition, and there was a large amount of traffic passing over it. Had the projected railway to Sandgate gone along the road, and a railway bridge over Zillman's Waterholes been made available for general traffic, he (Mr. Dickson) would not have occasion to call attention to the matter; but as the railway would go at a distance from the road, and would not take any of the road-traffic, he called attention to the work as one which the newly-formed Nundah division could not possibly undertake. He hoped to hear that the Minister for Works had taken the matter into consideration, and was of opinion that it was injudicious to lapse money for such an important work.

Mr. THORN said he admired the simplicity of the hon. member (Mr. Kellett) with regard to the Government. There were plenty of works

in all parts of the colony unfinished, but if the hon. member remained much longer in the House he would find that the officers in the northern divisions would be kept on and paid out of contingencies or some other vote, but in the southern division they would be dispensed with.

Mr. KELLETT said the hon. member had better leave his (Mr. Kellett's) simplicity alone. Perhaps he (Mr. Kellett) was not half so simple as he looked, as the hon. member had found out on former occasions. The Minister for Works had told them just now that the bridge over Cressbrook Creek, on one of the great main roads of the colony going to the Burnett and the Dawson, and, he might say, the whole North, was not necessary, and the money had lapsed. If votes like this were allowed to lapse and they were to have no money for main roads, it was impossible to carry out the Divisional Boards Act. He was one of those who had tried to carry it out in its integrity, and in the Tarampa district it had worked very well; he was certain that they could do as much work for 5s. as was done for £1 before. But it must be remembered that they had a distinct promise from the Government, when the Divisional Boards Act was passed, that the main roads of the colony would be taken in hand by the Central Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS : No.

Mr. KELLETT said the Minister for Lands said "No," but he (Mr. Kellett) would quote the statement. When the Divisional Boards Act was going through the Premier said, in answer to Mr. Griffith—

"It was the intention of the Government to accept only the main roads, the traffic of which was through traffic. That burden should not be thrown on the shoulders of the divisional board." [*Hansard*, p. 1563].

Now would the Minister for Lands say, "No"! Further on the Premier said—

"He would not be prepared to lay such a schedule on the table. Hon. members must see that if they passed the Bill they must leave the Government the power of proclaiming what were main roads."

They were now told by the Minister for Works that they should leave it to his honour and integrity to do certain things. They did leave it to the honour and integrity of the Government before, firmly believing that the main roads would be taken in hand by them; and what did they find? That it was not done, and that money that was passed for bridges was allowed to lapse, and the whole thing was to be thrown on the shoulders of the divisional boards. He was satisfied that if it was the Divisional Boards Act would never be carried out, and he would be sorry to see it, because he believed it was one of the best measures that had ever been passed if properly worked. But to commence it, and for some time, there should be a fixed amount given to the boards for the maintenance of the main roads passing through the division. He did not believe in the Government having any officers, except perhaps one to travel round the district periodically and find out if certain works proposed by the boards on main roads were required. The United Municipalities Bill he was satisfied would not work, because the chairman of three or four boards would never be got to agree to the proportion each should pay from the general fund to make the main roads, and he hoped it would not pass. At the same time, he thought in all justice the Premier should see his way to place an amount on the Estimates for the main roads, as already promised by him.

Mr. BAYNES thanked the hon. member for the quotation he had read from *Hansard*, which showed clearly that he (Mr. Baynes) was quite right in his view that the Government promised

to take over and maintain the main roads on that occasion. He did his best in supporting the Government in passing that Bill, and he maintained that it was the duty of the Government to do all they possibly could to nurse that measure. It was a new system of local government that could not be created at once. It required the Government to nurse it, and to assist in developing it; and there was nothing inconsistent in what the hon. member for Stanley asked with regard to a bridge over one of the main creeks of the colony. He did not think there was anything in the hon. gentleman's speech to call forth the remarks of the Minister for Lands; and he regretted that a member of the Government should injure perhaps one of the best measures that had ever been passed by that Parliament. He hoped the Government would see the policy of doing all they could to further this Divisional Boards Act, and to defend and support their backers.

Mr. THORN said with regard to the remarks of the last speaker, as long as he gave the Government blind support it was not likely they would do anything for him. He (Mr. Thorn) was glad of the quotation that had been read from *Hansard*. He recollected distinctly the promise made last session when the Divisional Boards Bill was going through, that the Government would proclaim and take over the main roads. If it had not been for that promise he believed the measure would never have passed.

The PREMIER said if the hon. member had attended to his duties a little better during the session he would find that it did not lie with the hon. member for Stanley to find out that he (the Premier) made a promise he did not keep, because in moving the second reading of the United Municipalities Bill the very first thing he did was to quote from *Hansard* the words the hon. member for Stanley had just quoted.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he understood the Minister for Works to say, in answer to a question, that the £1,500 voted for a telegraph-office for Fortitude Valley would not lapse. The same thing, he believed, also applied to the Cressbrook Creek Bridge, a more necessary work. He would call attention to the necessity of a telegraph station at Fernvale. Although it was not paying, it must be borne in mind that it was in the vicinity of a dangerous river, which had to be crossed two or three times, and that it would be dangerous to be without communication. In case of a flood it was not possible to cross for a week sometimes, and there were no means of sending any kind of message should either a doctor or policeman be wanted.

Mr. MILES said he did not give any assistance to the Government in passing the Divisional Boards Bill; but since it had become law, he was willing to do all he could to make it a success, and thought it would be a pity not to give it a fair chance. During the last session that the last Government held office private members came down night after night with motions for votes of money, and they succeeded, after the Colonial Treasurer had made his Statement of Ways and Means, in carrying votes for £40,000. The then member for Mackay actually came down with a motion for £3,000 to put the streets of Mackay in repair; but by a bit of manoeuvring he (Mr. Miles) succeeded in defeating it. If anything was wanting to convince him that it was necessary to deprive private members of the excuse of coming down and pillaging the Treasury, the experience of that session had supplied it. The system, and he believed that the Act would Divisional Boards Act had done away with that eventually prove beneficial to the country. Our whole system had been a nursery in which the

people were taught to look to the Government for everything. If the Government could see their way to relieving the boards of the care of the main roads they might do so, but it seemed to him a difficult question to settle. How were main roads to be defined?

Mr. THORN said he wondered at the extraordinary statement made by the hon. member. He ought to know that the Divisional Boards Act was simply a temporary measure on the part of the Government. They had made provision for their favourite spots out of loan. The inhabitants of those localities would not be allowed to tax themselves, for enough money had been given them to carry on, and carry on extravagantly, during the time the present Government would remain in office. He would also point out, in answer to the hon. member, that the divisional boards system would only prevent members coming down with claims for roads, but it did not preclude them from making applications for votes for buildings. The House would have lots of applications for buildings at the heel of the session, and there would be just as much log-rolling as ever. When he was in the Works Department he administered it properly, never exceeding his vote, and treating all alike—friends and foes.

Mr. ARCHER said he had been twitted by the member for Northern Downs for not speaking. He would give him the reason, which was that he had got so tired listening to the hon. member's repetitions and the rubbish that he talked that he did not care to get up and delay the House with a speech, much as he liked sometimes to take part in the discussions. The hon. member had talked about the largeness of the provision made last year by the Government for roads and bridges in the Northern and Central districts. If he would look at the Estimates he would see that the amount voted for the Central division was £8,600, whilst a little district like East and West Moreton received £20,000, or nearly three times as much. Darling Downs got £13,500, or nearly double as much as the Central district. Wide Bay and Burnett also got more, receiving £9,700. There was nothing so brilliant in the hon. member's remarks that he need repeat them; but not only did he repeat himself over and over, but he was continually making mistakes. He was glad to hear the hon. member (Mr. Miles) say that if the divisional boards had done nothing but abolish the continual applications and pressure which were put upon the Minister for Works, the Act would still be a valuable one. In the district that he represented they were working the Act and raising money to keep the roads in first-rate order. They had rated themselves to the tune of £1,600, and when they had received the Government subsidy they would have more than half as much to spend in the Gogango district as they had before in the whole Central districts.

Mr. BAYNES said the member for Northern Downs was constantly reminding them that he had once been a Minister, but such a fact ought to be buried in oblivion. He (Mr. Baynes) was a pretty patient man, but was getting tired of the constant reminders that the hon. member gave them that he had once been in office. More was the pity! He could quite understand the members for Darling Downs and Northern Downs speaking somewhat against the member for Stanley when he advocated a very necessary piece of work in a much neglected portion of his electorate. When the member for Northern Downs was in office he took very good care that the Government money was spent in his particular district; and the same charge might be made against the member for Darling Downs, who was now supporting the

Government from the Opposition side. Certainly his constituents could not charge him with neglect in spending Government money in his district. He trusted that that hon. member would have some consideration for districts which had not been represented equally with his own.

Mr. THORN said he looked upon the hon. member for Blackall as the most partial, one-sided man in the House. The hon. member could only see as far as the banks of the Fitzroy. He (Mr. Thorn), on the other hand, looked upon all parts of the colony as of equal importance and treated all alike. The hon. member had made a comparison regarding the expenditure on roads and bridges in the southern and central districts. The population in the southern district was four times that of the central; and yet on the hon. members own showing, while the southern district got £20,000, the central received £12,000, or two-thirds as much.

Mr. ARCHER said he did not say the southern district. He said the East and West Moreton districts had received £20,000, and the Darling Downs £13,500.

Mr. THORN (continuing) said the hon. member forgot that East and West Moreton had a population of 80,000. He would like to see justice done to the central district as well as to other parts of the colony. He was not in the habit of repeating himself, although he might sometimes state facts which the hon. member for Blackall did not care to hear.

Mr. ARCHER said he had only risen to show that in the thinly-populated district of Blackall the people had raised £1,600, which, with the Government grant in aid, would give them more to spend upon the roads than they had under the former system. If the people in these thinly-populated districts were prepared to maintain the roads, surely the thickly-peopled districts in the South should not complain.

Mr. RUTLEDGE thought it was hardly fair that hon. members who came there night after night to endeavour to do the work of the country should be obliged to listen to a lot of aimless discussion. He would not say a word to assist the Government in unnecessarily hastening on matters brought forward for the consideration of Parliament; but the hon. member for the Northern Downs was not there every night, and he hoped he would allow the Committee to proceed with the Estimates. It was useless to take up time in discussing Estimates simply because they were Estimates. He for one was heartily tired of the session and wished it was over.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £3,000 be granted for the maintenance of bridges.

Mr. THORN was under the impression that the bridges were to be handed over to the divisional boards.

In reply to Mr. DOUGLAS,

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was aware that the Maryborough Bridge required painting or tarring.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £8,570 be granted for buildings and general votes.

Mr. DOUGLAS wished to know what the Government intended to do in reference to the Allora post-office?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had seen no reason to alter the opinion he had expressed in reference to the Allora post-office when the matter was last under discussion.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked whether the Minister for Works thought the expenditure of £320 upon additions to the dynamite magazine at Eagle Farm was justifiable?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that an extension of the building was very much required.

Mr. MOREHEAD thought they might expend £2,000 far more usefully than in connection with the telegraphic operating room at Rockhampton. If the expenditure were necessary, let it be taken out of loan. He believed there was plenty of room at Rockhampton for all the telegraphic work which went through the office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the information he had was that this expenditure was really required. There was not sufficient room for the officers, and the Colonial Architect assured him that the money placed upon the Estimates would be required for the building.

Mr. KELLETT believed there was more room in the post and telegraph offices at Rockhampton than in the offices of any other place of similar size in the colony. The money seemed to be a sop to the members of Rockhampton. The whole of the Government expenditure was tending northwards. The capital would soon have to be shifted to the North.

Mr. REA said there was not more room in the Rockhampton telegraph office than in the offices of some of the small country towns. He wondered how the officers managed to exist in such a den—a second blackhole of Calcutta.

Mr. THORN said he had no doubt the Government had placed the money upon the Estimates to secure the votes of the hon. members for Rockhampton. He believed, however, that there was a large amount of telegraphic work both in the Rockhampton and Townsville offices. The building at Townsville was quite inadequate to the requirements of the place.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he regarded this vote of £2,000 as a great waste of public funds. If hon. members saw the small miserable rooms in many of the important western townships they would say that the £2,000 would be better spent in enlargement in that direction than in improving the Rockhampton office. To test the feeling of the Committee, he would move that the item be reduced by £2,000.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that the amount of business done at Rockhampton was larger than it was in any other town out of Brisbane, and he knew that there was insufficient accommodation there. He had no doubt that the demand was a reasonable one, and that the amount asked for would only supply accommodation which was absolutely necessary.

Mr. REA said that this evening he had heard hon. members talking about this traffic on the Central Railway being in excess of that of the main line. Surely, if there was such an increasing traffic there would be increased business at the post and telegraph office at Rockhampton! The building at present used as a telegraph office was not built for that purpose—originally it formed part of the post office.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL thought the proposal to spend £2,000 on an operating room at Rockhampton a most extravagant one. The amount would be sufficient to build a complete office equal to the requirements of the place. Although the present telegraph office might not be up to the requirements of the town, a slight increase of accommodation would meet the exigencies of the case. One-half, or even one-fourth, of the amount asked would be sufficient.

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Mr. STEVENS thought that the Minister for Works ought to find some fuller reasons for the estimate asked for.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said if the work were to be done at all, the amount set down would be required. The present operating room was too small altogether, and it was proposed to erect a separate room, the space between which and the post office would be utilised for post-office purposes.

Mr. MILES said he had been through the post and telegraph office at Rockhampton, and his opinion was that it was utterly impossible to be carried out efficiently with the accommodation provided.

Mr. KELLETT said the reason why he complained of the vote was, whilst necessary offices in the southern districts were being closed on the score of economy, the Government proposed to squander £2,000 in the erection of one room at Rockhampton.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS produced a plan, and explained how the building was to be erected and the accommodation which it was to provide.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was rather singular that the only item of any moment on the Estimates should be the building in question. In the present depressed state of the building trade a very fine building could be erected for £2,000. He could not understand why Rockhampton should be fostered to such an extent by the present Government.

Question—That the item objected to be omitted—put.

The Committee divided :—

AYES, 8.

Messrs. Morehead, Kellett, Hamilton, Stevens, Hill, Norton, Well-Blundell, and Low.

NOES, 20.

Messrs. King, Griffith, Dickson, Rea, McIlwraith, Rutledge, Paterson, Perkins, Palmer, Price, Douglas, Miles, Swanwick, Beor, Archer, H. W. Palmer, Fraser, Grimes, Macrossan, and Kingsford.

Question, consequently, resolved in the negative.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he should move that the amount be reduced by £1,000, so as to leave £1,000 for the telegraph office at Rockhampton. He did not see the use of putting up such extravagantly expensive buildings for telegraph clerks and Civil servants, seeing that other people in those districts were obliged to put up with very inferior accommodation. Instead of displaying a proper spirit of economy, members of the Committee all seemed to agree that the items were not large enough. It was in his opinion a system of wholesale bribery and corruption: hon. members said that each item should be a little more, so that they might make friends with the constituency interested in case their own constituency should fail them.

The CHAIRMAN said the motion could not be put, as the omission of the vote had been proposed and negatived.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he very much regretted, if the ruling of the Chairman was correct, that the motion could not be put. No doubt the sum of £2,000 was not required for this purpose, the building at Rockhampton being perfectly sufficient; but if the sum were expended over a number of telegraph offices in the interior it would be more usefully employed. He had no doubt the Minister for Works got his information about this want at Rockhampton from the Postmaster-General, who had twice wooed the sweet voices of the electors, and possibly intended to do so again—hence those tears! He agreed with the

hon. member for Gregory that this vote, if carried, would be a standing proof of the gross extravagance of this Committee. Hon. members were sent there to conserve the money of the taxpayers, but instead of exercising a prudent economy they recklessly wasted money. He would not discuss the other items.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported progress.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER moved the adjournment of the House.

Mr. GRIFFITH: What business do the Government intend to proceed with to-morrow?

The PREMIER: Supply.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he presumed it would be no use attempting to influence the Government in the conduct of business, but he must point out that the Opposition were as anxious as the Government to close the business of the session, and that while so much important business remained on the paper it was probable that Supply would proceed but slowly.

The PREMIER said nothing had been done with Supply for the last ten days, and he thought it was time that some progress was made. Two pages had been got through to-night, and at that rate it would require five weeks to finish the Estimates.

Mr. GRIFFITH: If other matters were dealt with the Estimates could be finished in two days.

Question put and passed; and the House adjourned at seven minutes to 11 o'clock.