

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER 1880**

---

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.**

*Friday, 5 November, 1880.*

Case of Mr. Wildash.—Question.—Formal Motions.—  
Brisbane Valley Railway—second reading.—Motion  
without Notice.—Pacific Island Labourers Bill—  
Council's Amendments.

The SPEAKER took the chair at half-past  
10 o'clock a.m.

**CASE OF MR. WILDASH.**

Mr. MESTON brought up the Report of the  
Select Committee upon the case of Mr. Wildash,  
and moved that it be printed.

Question put and passed.

**QUESTION.**

The HON. S. W. GRIFFITH asked the  
Premier—

When do the Government intend to fill up the vacancy  
on the Supreme Court Bench by making a permanent  
appointment?

The PREMIER replied—

The vacancy will be filled up immediately.

**FORMAL MOTIONS.**

Mr. NORTON moved, without previous notice,  
that the following message be transmitted to the  
Legislative Council, viz. :—

The Legislative Assembly having appointed a Select  
Committee to inquire into and report upon the Bris-  
bane Racecourse Bill, and that Committee being desirous

to examine the Hon. C. S. Mein, Member of the Legislative Council, in reference thereto, request that the Legislative Council will give leave to their said member to attend and be examined on such day and days as shall be arranged between him and the said Committee.

Question put and passed.

#### BRISBANE VALLEY RAILWAY— SECOND READING.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan) said as this was the last branch railway he should bring forward, he wanted to make some explanation with regard to the Highfields line. When he laid the plans on the table he promised the House that he would do his best to have another survey and plans made before the end of the session. He now found that it was impossible for him to do so. The day after he withdrew the plans he gave instructions to the Chief Engineer to have a new survey made, and to make all possible speed. But unfortunately the surveyor who was appointed to do the work fell ill with fever, and, he being the only man available, he (Mr. Macrossan) was unable to redeem the promise which he made about six weeks ago. This was the line called the Mount Esk line. It was one that had been contemplated for a considerable time, some four or five years ago the late Mr. Pettigrew having brought forward a motion affirming the desirability of a line to Mount Esk, and the House agreeing to the motion. On that motion a survey was made from Walloon to Mount Esk, and after the House authorised the construction of this line last year he ordered another survey to be made starting from the Rosewood Gate. Since then a third survey had been made, which was the one now on the table. The line started at a distance of 2½ miles from Ipswich, on the old Ipswich and Toowoomba railway at Ironpot Creek, followed the creek up for a considerable distance, and then crossed over and joined the Walloon survey, which was made at the instance of Mr. Pettigrew, and ran on to Ferny Lawn, a distance of from 10½ to 13 miles from Ipswich. It accommodated a considerable amount of settlement, and went through a quantity of land which could be made available for settlement. There was also a considerable amount of settlement about Ferny Lawn. He was sorry to say he could not utilise any of the public roads for this line, they being utterly impracticable for railway making; and he was afraid, also, from what he had learned from the Chief Engineer, that he should not be able to utilise any of the roads beyond Ferny Lawn to Mount Esk. That was a point with which he should make himself personally acquainted before he brought forward another set of plans for the next section. The ruling gradient on this line to the Pine Mountain was 1 in 50, and beyond that he intended to have in 1 in 30, so as to reduce the cost and make it more of a surface line than it would otherwise be. As there was a great deal of contouring to be done, it would reduce the cost by adopting the 1 in 30 gradient.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Where is the money to come from?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the money was voted last year, when the sum of £105,000 was put on the Loan Estimates. There was money not only for this section but for a section beyond; in fact, for the line almost up to Mount Esk.

Mr. GRIFFITH: What will be the cost?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Under £4,000 a-mile for this section. I now beg to move—

1. That the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the Brisbane River Valley Line of Railway, as laid on the table of the House on the 1st instant, be approved of.

2. And that the said Plans and Book of Reference be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the policy of the Government in respect to these railways was perfectly inexplicable to him. Last year they were asked for a vote to make a line of railway, estimated at 42 miles in length, at £2,500 a-mile. Then they heard nothing further about it until very near the end of this session, when the plans for only ten miles were laid upon the table, and before any member had time to look at the plans the Government came forward and asked them to approve of them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Five days' notice.

Mr. GRIFFITH said they were laid on the table on Monday, and on Friday they were asked to approve of them. Probably the Minister for Works might call that five days' notice, but he did not. The hon. gentleman had given very little information about what surveys had been made. What was the use of making a section of ten miles? and was it desirable to let a contract for so short a distance? The hon. gentleman might have given the House some information on the subject, and why it was only proposed to make ten miles now. Then another point with respect to this line was that it was to cost under £4,000 a-mile, which he understood to mean nearly £4,000 a-mile; but the amount originally mentioned was only £2,500 a-mile, and it was not so very long ago since the Minister for Works told the House that no more railways would be made unless they could be made for the amount voted. He did not understand so sudden a change in the railway policy of the Government. The Minister for Works had been telling them a great deal about it being absolutely necessary to make the lines along the roads, but this did not go near the roads. The Government seemed to have entirely receded from what they had said. The amount would be largely exceeded, and the roads were not used. He did not understand it; he was perplexed, but he did say that the House was entitled to an explanation. The House ought to have some information more than that the Government proposed to make ten miles of the line. He observed last year the Minister for Works said on these branch lines the rails used would be 30-lb. rails.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No such thing.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the hon. member had got into such a habit of contradicting that he had to be very particular in what he said. He found that on the 26th of August, 1879, the Minister for Works said—

"These branch lines would of course be made on a different system to the one hitherto followed. The rails in the first place would be much lighter; 30-lb. rails to the yard would be used instead of 4½-lb. as at present, and that would make a considerable difference in the cost per mile. The other ironwork for the permanent-way would be equally cheap and lighter in proportion to the rails, and the expensive stations that they had been in the habit of building would be dispensed with to a great extent."

The Minister for Works always contradicted whatever he (Mr. Griffith) said, but he generally took the trouble to make himself acquainted with the facts before he spoke, and the contradictions of the Minister for Works had little weight. The House was entitled to know what had produced this great change in the Government. Were they at last beginning to recognise that they must purchase the support of the country? It was well known that they had lost pretty well all the support they began with. Whatever was the reason of this extraordinary change, it ought to be explained by the Government. They had laid these things down as cardinal features in their policy, but now they

had gone back on them and had given no explanation. The explanation given might satisfy a majority of the House, but it would not satisfy a majority of the country. It did not tend to keep up the dignity of the Government or the country to have the Government conducting themselves in this way. The House was entitled to some information beyond the fact that it was proposed to make ten miles of railway *via* Pine Mountain. They all of them knew that there were numerous rival routes for this line; he did not know how many different surveys were made. The Minister for Works told them nothing about that. He said the route as laid on the table was the best; he (Mr. Griffith) confessed he did not know, but where there were rival routes the Minister for Works should give them some information concerning them. It appeared to him as if it were arranged that this should be put through on Friday morning so as to give little trouble. He supposed it had all been arranged with the members for the district. It was most extraordinary that the House should be asked to approve of this motion without information about traffic or anything else. The House would have been in possession of just as much information as they had now if the Minister for Works had not opened his lips. They had not heard a single word about traffic or anything else in connection with this line, but that ten miles of it should be made. The House ought to be treated with more courtesy. He did not consider it was courtesy to ask the House to agree to the resolutions without being told what their nature was. He (Mr. Griffith) approved of making a railway to Mount Esk by all means, but hoped it would be a line to Mount Esk, and not one that would stop half way. He noticed the Minister for Works had said it would cost under £4,000 a-mile, and he understood from that that it would cost nearly £4,000 a-mile, for he was quite sure that if the Minister for Works could have given a lower figure he would have done so. By this line, instead of getting to Mount Esk they would only get ten miles of the way. The Minister for Works had said there was a great deal of contouring to be done, and if so the distance would be increased. What were strictly speaking branch lines ought and could be constructed for £2,500 a-mile. That ought to be the case with regard to this line, but it would not be, unless the Minister for Works had changed since the last time he spoke upon this subject, when he said there would be used rails of the ordinary character, engines of the ordinary weight, and other works of the same character. This line ought to be in the strictest sense a branch line and a cheap line, and made upon the principle which the Minister for Works last year believed in, or said he did—a line in which they did not want speed so much as certainty of communication, of light material, and with a speed of about ten or twelve miles an hour. This, however, did not appear to be what was to be done, and it seemed to him that the Government had not taken either the time or the trouble to make this a proper line, but that they felt bound to do something with respect to it before the end of the session. Last year some of the gentlemen who generally supported the Government expressed their indignation at the manner in which they had been ill-treated and, as they expressed it, sold by the Government, and he supposed the Government were afraid that this session would end in the same way if they did not do something. It seemed a very idle sort of way to keep a promise. The question to which he understood the Minister for Works and the Government were giving their serious attention was, how could branch lines be made cheaper than the other lines.

He failed to discover, however, that the Minister for Works had answered it here; the mode of construction was the same, the character of the line and the weight of the rails were the same, and the gradients were very heavy; so that he did not see where the change came in. It seemed as if they were rushing on, spending money in the most reckless manner. Of course he did not intend to oppose the motion, but felt bound to complain of the manner in which the House were asked to proceed with business, which the Railway Act intended should be differently proceeded with, after full notice and full explanation by the Minister for Works. He was satisfied that if the Government were going to propose their lines in this way it would be necessary to adopt Standing Orders to the same effect as had been adopted in another place, so that plans should lie on the table for a certain time, and after that be referred to the consideration of a select committee, so that the House might be in possession of full information before approval. It had not been usual in this House to require that that should be done, because it had been the practice of the Minister in moving a line to give the House all the information he was in possession of, to enable them to form proper conclusions; but this practice had been entirely departed from by the Minister for Works, and it would therefore be necessary to adopt some other means. Surely they were not going to sit there and vote money blindly because the Government thought it desirable that it should be expended! He should like to know most particularly how far this line was likely to be made for the money voted, and if it could not be made for that money, how the Government proposed to get more: he should like to know what the estimated traffic upon it would be, the relative merits of this route as compared with the others, and at what rate the trains were proposed to be run. That information ought to be given before the motion passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said there was no doubt whatever that the policy of the Government was utterly inexplicable to the hon. member for North Brisbane. After the various prophecies thundered forth by that and almost every other member on the Opposition side of the House last year, that the Government had not the slightest intention of introducing branch railways this session, he did not wonder at the policy of the Government being inexplicable to him. The Government had kept every promise they had ever made, and that was more than could be said for any preceding Government within the last four or five years. Every promise made had been kept to the letter, and he did not wonder that the hon. gentleman could not understand that policy, for it was a policy never followed by the other side of the House. The prophecies they had from almost every member on that side were to the effect that the Government never had the slightest intention of bringing these lines forward, but were only putting them down for fooling hon. members. It was true that one hon. member who usually went with the Government did make a very violent speech at the end of the session, feeling or thinking that he had been sold; but he (Mr. Palmer) did not think that hon. member considered himself sold now. It was impossible for the Government to lay any plans for branch lines on the table last session, but this session they had redeemed every promise they had made on the subject: he would trouble hon. members of the House to remember that. The first objection taken by the hon. member in regard to this line was that the cost of the first section would be more than the average of £2,500 a-mile. But the Secretary for Works, in introducing the plans and sections, mentioned that the first section would be a great deal more

costly than the other in consequence of the country it had to pass through; but there was every reason to believe that the section further on would be under the average, and he took it the average for the whole line would not very much, if at all, exceed the amount voted for it. As far as he understood—he had not been in the Esk country himself, but was told that this line was likely to open up a fine country as any in Queensland for agricultural settlement, and it was a matter of importance that where they could get agricultural settlement they should open it up. That was a policy of the Government which the hon. the leader of the Opposition and a great many on his side of the House did not understand either, because it had always been their cue to describe the Government as a pure squatting Ministry, and were proportionately vexed when they found that their vituperation—as the hon. member for Enoggera would say—was wrong. It seemed strange for a gentleman in the position of the hon. member for North Brisbane to find fault with the Government for exceeding the estimate for the first ten miles of this section, when it was only two nights ago that they had him raving in the contrary direction because the Government did not spend more than double what was voted for another line. He should like to know where the consistency was there?

Mr. GRIFFITH: That is not a branch line at all; it is a suburban line.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was nothing more or less than a branch line, and the hon. member knew it well. That was the consistency of the hon. gentleman. He raved, and absolutely voted against the line from Brisbane to Sandgate, and tried all he could to throw it out, and voted directly against the interests of Brisbane which he professed so much to protect, and all because the Government would not agree to spend considerably more than double the sum voted by the House; and now he turned round with his usual consistency and blamed the Government because on the first section of a line of 42 miles the average amount was likely to be exceeded. Where was the consistency of the hon. member? Then they were treated to another of the hon. gentleman's stock arguments—that although this line might be acceptable to the majority of the House it would not be acceptable to the majority of the country.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I said nothing of the kind.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member did say exactly something of the kind; those were exactly the words he used—he took them down. The hon. member said they might be acceptable to the majority of the House but not to the majority of the country.

Mr. GRIFFITH: I said the conduct of the Government might be acceptable to the majority of the House.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that was one of the hon. member's stock arguments which was not worth the breath expended upon it. The majority of this House were the majority of the country to all intents and purposes; and the hon. member, if he knew anything at all about constitutional law—which he (Mr. Palmer) sometimes very much doubted—knew that as well as he did. But yet, for trumpery purposes of pressing some ridiculous argument, this was brought up over and over again. The Minister for Works was blamed for not bringing forward plans earlier in the session, but the hon. member must know that with the staff at the disposal of the Minister for Works, and the number of plans and sections laid on the table this session, the only wonder was that he

had been able to bring them forward at all. When it suited the hon. member he failed to remember that his action, and that of his friends, stopped all work in the House, or all inclination for work, for more than six weeks of the session; that was conveniently forgotten now.

Mr. GRIFFITH: What has that to do with the plans?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it had everything to do with the plans, because the whole action of the Government had been paralysed by the ridiculous action of the hon. member and the party who supported him—to very little purpose, as was proved to them, he hoped. He hoped it would be a good lesson to them for the future, that blocking the business of the country in that way did not tend to promote the purposes they had in view. He saw the hon. member for Enoggera was writing down some very long words and knew that he was anxious to deliver them at once, so that he (Mr. Palmer) would not detain the House longer, and would only express a hope that the hon. member would be more consistent than his leader, and not blame the Government for spending more on the most difficult section, when the average would not exceed much, if any at all, the total amount voted for the line.

The Hon. J. DOUGLAS said he did not rise to take exception to the acceptance of the plans and sections proposed; but the large amount which that section of the line was calculated to cost was only what might have been expected, considering the grounds on which the loan estimate of last year was based. He took very strong exception at the time to the form in which that estimate was framed—to what he believed to be the defective basis on which it rested. He would not again trouble the House with the grounds on which he arrived at that conclusion. The Premier had more than once expressed an opinion that railways in this colony could not be made under an average cost of £5,000 a-mile; and he (Mr. Douglas) agreed with him, and should be happy to find that that amount would not be exceeded. His contention had always been that the calculations on which the loan estimate was based were dishonest. He did not intend to impute dishonesty to the Minister for Works, but the calculations were liable to deceive the House. He said at the time that the estimate was certain to be exceeded, basing his opinion on the experience of railway construction in all parts of the world. He believed that at the present time railways were being made in Australia and New Zealand cheaper than in any other part of the world, excepting perhaps a few of the rudimentary lines in America, on which a large expenditure would subsequently have to be incurred. In these colonies railways were constructed on an economical principle as possible, and yet no railway hitherto constructed had cost less than from £5,000 to £6,000 per mile. On that ground he took strong exception at the time to the loan estimate. The Minister for Works argued very strongly against his contention, and in his speech on that occasion said—

“They proposed to raise sufficient money to construct, and they deny us the power of raising sufficient to pay the interest on construction. He also accuses the Government of being politically dishonest, and of framing estimates grossly and politically dishonest, and the accusation is based on the fact that we propose to construct railways at £3,000 per mile. If we are politically dishonest in making that proposition, what can he say to his leader and late colleague having proposed to construct them for £2,000 per mile? Surely if he can construct them for £2,000 per mile we must be able to construct them for £1,000 per mile more. I can see no political dishonesty, because we are prepared, in spite of all the quotations read by the hon. member, to carry out our estimates to construct lines at £3,000 per mile.

The hon. gentleman has quoted a great number of figures about railways constructed in different parts of a neighbouring colony, and he has proved that railways there have cost various sums from £4,592 per mile upwards. No doubt the quotations are correct, but they are too old. If he had quoted the latest contracts let in Victoria he would have found that a railway was to be made, with rolling-stock added, for a sum under £3,000 per mile."

That statement was not borne out, for, according to the latest return published in Victoria, it was stated that the lowest class of line had cost something over £5,000 a-mile. It was not surprising, therefore, to him to be told that the line now proposed would cost £4,000 a-mile, and it only showed how little reliance was to be placed on the hon. gentleman's estimate, which, it would be remembered, was an average of £2,500 a-mile for all branch railways. Against the railway itself he had nothing to say, but he trusted that discretion would be used as to the time and mode of carrying it out. They had already a good many railways on hand. He (Mr. Douglas) had been accused of unduly pressing railway construction, and he had certainly framed a policy which resulted in a large extension of railway enterprise; but he felt that he must now hide his head under a bushel, for the railway enterprise of the present Government went quite beyond anything that he had ever participated in. He only hoped, in the interests of the country, that they would be careful in not unduly pressing forward the construction of all the lines to which the country, he was aware, was committed on a false estimate. It was very evident that the loan of three millions to which they were committed last session would in reality involve the borrowing of something like another three millions before the works authorised were executed; and they must make up their minds to what they had gone in for. He did not say the works could not be carried out; but it was a big job, and unless it was carried out judiciously the colony would be landed in a terrible muddle.

Mr. DICKSON said he was glad to see that the Government had suddenly awoke to the necessity of constructing branch railways. It was gratifying to find that while the session opened with a speech from the Throne, in which all mention of branch railways was carefully omitted, it was being closed with not one or two, but with something like a round dozen of branch railways. Very likely even the present proposal would not be the last, and possibly during the next seven or ten days they might be asked to sanction the line from Bowen to Houghton Gap, and one or two others, so as to make the scheme comprehensive, and wind up the session in a manner which would conciliate the public and exercise a pleasing influence on any elections that might possibly occur during the recess. Very often the construction of branch railways received an impetus before an election, and were afterwards forgotten. The Killarney line had not been pushed on with the vigour promised at the time of the election for the Darling Downs; and now that an election was pending for Bundanba, it might be desirable to conciliate the electors of West Moreton with the promise of a branch railway. He was not opposed to branch railways, but would like to see them introduced in such a manner as would be best for the interests of the country. From what he had learned, he believed the proposed line would in time be of considerable benefit to settlers and others in that district. Whether it would be a paying line at a cost of £4000 a-mile was a question which the Minister for Works did not approach. The Premier, speaking of the Sandgate line the other night, stated plainly his belief that it would not pay. He (Mr. Dickson) ventured to say that it would pay far better

than the one now under consideration. It behoved the Government, therefore, to construct the line on the most economical basis; the total average cost of the forty-two miles ought certainly not to exceed £3,000 a-mile. To construct a first-class line in a rural district, costing £4,000 a-mile, would certainly not fulfil the anticipations of the country with regard to the action of the Government. The Railways and Tramways Bill was allowed to pass so easily by the Opposition side of the House in order that it might facilitate the construction of those branch railways along the roads of the colony at a smaller cost than had hitherto been the case. It seemed singular that railways could not be constructed in Queensland under £4,000 a-mile, whereas the line from Deniliquin to Moama—which was as good a line as any in this colony—cost, including rolling-stock and stations, under £2,000 a-mile. The country there was no doubt very easy for railway construction, but there was a vast difference between an expenditure of £2,000 and £4,000 or £5,000 a-mile, which seemed to be the minimum that they could now expect their railways to cost. It was a misfortune that the Minister for Works had not solved the problem of cheap railways, as it was his publicly expressed intention to do; for it would have been gratifying if the hon. gentleman could have shown that branch railways could be constructed at a cost of not more than £3,000 a-mile. If that could be done it would go a long way in justifying them in proceeding with those branch lines; but if the cost mounted up to £5,000 or £6,000, it would become a question where the interest on cost of construction was to come from. Had the plans been laid on the table at an earlier period of the session they might have been fully considered; but they were now asked to sanction them without being able, by investigation, to give an impartial judgment of the line on its merits. The statements of the Government which they were asked to accept were remarkably meagre; indeed, he had never heard a line submitted for approval accompanied by such meagre details as those with which the Minister for Works had that morning favoured them. The section of the line for which sanction was asked was ten miles in length, and yet the Minister had not told them where the terminus of that section was to be.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Fernvale North.

Mr. DICKSON said that that and many other details ought to have been given to show the reason for the increased cost of that section; and there should also have been an assurance given that the remaining portion of the line could in his opinion be constructed for something less than £2,500 per mile. Passenger traffic on rural lines would be very small, and the goods traffic, which would be mainly agricultural produce, would not be of a very remunerative character. Indeed, before many sessions were over there would be an agitation for a reduction in the freight on agricultural produce, which would make the returns still lower; and the carriage of agricultural produce was the only justification for a line like the one proposed. He intended to vote for the line. He regretted that the House had not had more time to consider it, and he regretted further that the Minister for Works had not shown his determination to insist on the line being carried out at a cost not exceeding, at any rate, £3,000 a-mile. That would have given the public confidence in branch railway construction, for if it could be carried out on that system it would be a lasting benefit to the colony.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN was understood to say that the hon. member did not like to see branch

lines. He dared not go against them, but before supporting them he tried to disparage them as much as he could. The hon. member had arrived at the conclusion beforehand that the Minister for Works had not solved the problem of cheap railways. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) wondered what conclusion the hon. member would come to if he found that the Fassifern line, for which tenders were to be called very shortly, would be done for less than £2,000 per mile. Was it a fair thing to say that because the first ten miles of the line before the House would come up to the estimate the rest would cost the same, particularly as those ten miles went over what was on an average the roughest part of the route? Although he was one of the members for the district, he was not anxious, neither did he believe the inhabitants were anxious, that the first section should reach much further at present, because it was very doubtful whether the survey for the remainder had taken the right direction. His own impression was that the line should cross the Brisbane River somewhere in the neighbourhood of Wivenhoe, and be carried in the direction of Northbrook towards the Deep Creek. It would be bad policy to rush on all the branch railways at one time. They required the work to extend over a time; but if they called for tenders for all the lines the result would be that there would be too much employment for a few months and then there would be none. It would be like a feast followed by a famine. It would be much better to go on with the lines slowly. His constituency was well satisfied with this section for the present. It would give them a line of more than thirteen miles, because it would be possible to use two miles of the old line. As to the other surveys that had been made, he considered the Government had pitched on the right route so far. Of course, they could not say whether the line would pay. He might, however, state that an offer would be made for the line such as had never been made for any of the other branch railways. A gentleman, who was a resident of the district, was prepared to offer the Government 4 per cent., and, perhaps, 5 per cent. on the capital expended for the privilege of working the line the moment it was completed. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) was authorised to say that 4 per cent. on the capital laid out could be obtained by handing over the line to a private company, and he considered that fact spoke as much for the line as any that had come before them. He was sorry that he had not by him an estimate which was given to him by a resident of the district who was able to show conclusively that there could not be a better paying branch railway. There was a vast amount of beautiful country where it was to be taken. He was told that potatoes could be grown there, and that the growers had to sell them at 2s. a bag at a time that potatoes were bringing £8 a ton in Ipswich—on account of the bad roads it would not pay to bring the produce to market. In conclusion, he would say that he believed all the branch lines, with the exception of the Sandgate one, would be done within the estimate of what the hon. member for Enoggera would call cheap railways—that was to say, at an average of £3,000 per mile.

Mr. MESTON said there was no doubt that there was justification for a line to the Upper Brisbane and to Mount Esk; but it was sincerely to be regretted that the line should take the route adopted by the Minister for Works. The main object of a line to Mount Esk was to open up the country on the Brisbane River, and he therefore entirely disagreed with the hon. member for Stanley that a railway for the first ten miles would be sufficient. The line that had been chosen as far as the Pine Mountain would have comparatively little traffic, for none could

be expected between Ipswich and the mountain. There was no settlement. At the Pine Mountain there were only fifty settlers, and from there to Fernvale there was no settlement; at Fernvale itself there was but little, and beyond that again there was none. There was undoubtedly magnificent country on the Upper Brisbane, and it ought to be tapped by railway communication. Two other surveys had been made. One started from Walloon, but the surveyor had dexterously contrived to steer through the worst part of the country and where there was no settlement or cultivation. The other survey was made from Rosewood Gate, and passing through the centre of Rosewood, where there was dense settlement, it went to Tarampa, where there was also extensive settlement; and from there it was continued to Whyba. This line was estimated to cost more than the Pine Mountain line. His own opinion was that the best line was one starting from Walloon and going through Rosewood, where there was a settlement of 600 or 700 farmers for the first ten miles. However, he was exceedingly glad that a commencement was to be made with the Mount Esk line, but sincerely regretted that it should start from the point that had been chosen. It should either start from Walloon or Rosewood Gate and pass through Rosewood Scrub. There need be no apprehension about compensation, because all the farmers along the Walloon route were prepared to accept £5 per acre, and consequently the amount that would have to be paid for compensation would be small. He agreed with the hon. member for Stanley that there was no particular reason for hurrying on the construction of the line, but he did not agree with him that the first ten miles would be sufficient; if started it ought to be taken to Mount Esk as quickly as possible.

Mr. KELLETT said he would make a few remarks in reply to the last speaker. He happened to know the locality as well as anybody, and he was perfectly satisfied that the route decided upon was the best. There were many reasons in favour of it. In the first place, if the line were started from Rosewood it would take double the distance to get to the point—Pine Mountain—to which the line before the House was surveyed, and the consequence would be that no one would use it, for double the carriage would have to be paid. In the next place, the other route kept entirely away from the Brisbane River—the very part to which a railway was supposed to be necessary—and would not touch the river until Wivenhoe was reached, which was twenty miles from Ipswich. If the line started from Walloon it would for some distance go through very miserable country, upon which there was no settlement, and the most of the land of which would certainly be dear at 5s. per acre. The Rosewood Scrub had got a railway close to it, and there were facilities for getting the produce away. Moreover, the line now proposed *via* Pine Mountain would come very close to the Rosewood Scrub, on the other or only side which required any railway accommodation. He might also add that he agreed that it would be unwise to push on the branch railways too hurriedly. He held that it would be advisable to start one or two at a time, and that a small section of the Mount Esk line should be first passed as proposed. They would then see that it would be very judicious to push on with the remaining portion, for he was satisfied that the reason there was not more cultivation on the Brisbane was because of the carriage, which precluded competition with the country alongside the Ipswich and Toowoomba railway. It would be found that so soon as the railway was taken up to the valley of the Brisbane there

would be as much produce carried by it as by any line of the same extent in the colony. Anybody who knew the valley of the Brisbane knew that there was not a branch line which would be of more benefit to agricultural settlers in the colony, and he was satisfied that a line to there would pay as well as any branch railway that would be brought forward. He was satisfied that care had been taken to find out which was the most suitable and useful route, and that the majority of the settlers believed that the route chosen for the section before the House was the best one for the district. He thought it would be advisable to have another survey made beyond the present terminal point, in order to see if the line could not be brought through the valley on the other side of the Brisbane, and he had no doubt that it would be done before the House could approve of any extension.

Mr. REA said that the Government had charged the leader of the Opposition with obstructing the branch railways; but they might more justly make such an accusation against their own supporters, the two members for Stanley, who were both agreed that it would be a mistake on the part of the Government to go on with the railway under consideration, except bit by bit. The arguments that were used from either side ought to be fairly treated, and there should be no imputations that either side wished to see these branch lines obstructed. It was to the members of the Stanley that the House was indebted for any information that had been supplied regarding the line, for the official information was not worth twopence, inasmuch as it was a contradiction of that given previously. The Government had given no satisfactory explanation how it was that, with a prolonged recess until July, they had not produced the plans and sections at an earlier period of the session. The practice of laying plans on the table was a sham as at present carried out. At present they gave no information whatever, and such a mere pretence might be done away with, or else a resolution should be passed declaring that all plans and sections should be placed on the table of the House at an early period of the session. He was surprised that the Colonial Secretary should have had the audacity to say that the Government represented the voice of the country when the hon. gentleman knew there was not a member of the Ministry who dared to meet his constituents. The House had heard so much this session about using the common roads of the colony for railways that hon. members began to think the power which the Government had obtained was going to be exercised in that way, but now it appeared that that also was a sham. Neither the Sandgate railway nor this one were to be made along the road, and from what hon. members had heard it appeared as though the latter would cost about double the amount of the estimate of the Minister for Works.

Mr. MACFARLANE said before the plans were approved he should like to say a word or two about the proposed route. The hon. member for Rosewood had suggested two other routes; but, as the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) had observed, the adoption of either would increase the cost of carriage of produce from Mount Esk and other places. Seeing that the people of Rosewood had access to a market by railway and the people of Brisbane River had not, the present plan appeared to be better than that proposed by the hon. member for Rosewood. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member (Mr. Rea), he might state that this line could not be taken along the road for the first eight or ten miles on account of the mountainous nature of the country. No doubt when the proposed terminus had been reached it would be necessary

to make a little deviation in order to accommodate the settlement that would take place. He was very glad to see that a commencement had been made, and he had great pleasure in supporting the motion.

Mr. MILES said it was clear to him that this line was the result of the violent attack made upon the Government by the hon. member (Mr. Kellett) at the close of last session; but, notwithstanding the assertion of the Colonial Secretary, he did not believe the Government had any intention of making the line. They knew that the plans would have to pass another Chamber, where they would be submitted to a select committee, and they hoped that, on account of the approaching close of the session, the scheme would be shelved there. The Government would then be able to say that they had kept faith with the hon. member. He believed that when the Premier first made up his mind to undertake these branch railways the hon. gentleman stated that the Darling Downs would be a good locality for the experiment. At that time an election was going on there, and he presumed that was the reason. It was a strange thing, however, that the Darling Downs, after having been referred to as the most proper place, should be the last to be tried.

Mr. DAVENPORT said this was one of those log-rolling schemes to which he had a great objection. The more he considered this line the more he disliked it. Hon. members last night had favoured the House with a tirade with the view of obtaining a reduction of rates for agricultural produce. No doubt the agitation in favour of protecting the farmer in that way would get stronger from year to year, and the chance of making small branch railways pay for even the grease on their wheels would become less and less. He should certainly vote against it.

Question put and passed.

#### MOTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

Mr. MESTON, with the permission of the House, asked that the name of Mr. Cooper might be placed on the committee appointed to inquire into the working of the Queensland Museum, in place of that of Mr. Bailey.

Question put and passed.

#### PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS BILL— COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House went into Committee to consider the amendments made by the Legislative Council in this Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said a considerable number of amendments had been made in the Bill by the Legislative Council. A good many of them were of only minor importance, but one or two of them were not so. The first was in the definition clause, the words "arrowroot, imphee, millet, maize, indigo" having been added to the list of articles the production of which was comprised in the term "tropical or semi-tropical agriculture." The definition of "Immigration Agent" as "The Immigration Agent at Brisbane, or the Assistant Immigration Agent at any other port," had been added. He had no objection to this alteration, nor to the amendment made in the 4th clause by the addition of the words "but shall not apply to any Pacific Island labourers now or hereafter employed solely in pearl or bêche-de-mer fisheries on the Queensland coast." It would be almost impossible to apply the provisions of this Act to men employed in the pearl fisheries, and therefore it would be necessary to trust the magistrates and the officers of the "Pearl" and in some degree the officers of the Imperial Navy,



in matters connected with the employ of labourers in those fisheries. He was sorry to say that very careful attention on the part of both the colonial officers and the officers of Her Majesty's ships was necessary, as a great number of our own islanders were continually being kidnapped by the pearl-shell fishers and taken away north. That information had been recently given to him on very good ground from Sub-inspector Johnson. The next three were verbal amendments, to which he had no objection. In clause 12, subdivision 4, relating to the age of labourers, the Upper House in their wisdom had struck out the word "eighteen" and substituted "sixteen." Although he had put the word "eighteen" in, he did not think the matter was of much consequence, as it was impossible to discriminate between islanders of sixteen and of eighteen. He confessed himself utterly unable to do anything of the sort. A provision that if any islanders who were not fit for the work were brought out by any ship they should be sent back at the expense of the shipper would be sufficient protection for the islanders in this respect. The amendment in clause 15 was merely verbal. An amendment made in clause 21 was of some little importance, but not much. It provided that the wages paid to the labourers at the end of each six months of the term of their engagement should be placed in the Government Savings Bank to the credit of such labourers by the inspector or police magistrate to whom the wages were paid. His own impression was that the amendment was a good one, because the islanders, being of a somewhat improvident nature and having a tendency to spend their money in public-houses, they would, if their wages were paid to them every six months, probably have nothing but their last six months' wages to take home with them when the term of their engagement expired. The most serious alteration made in the Bill by the Upper House was the striking out of clauses 24 and 25 and the substitution of a new clause 24 which was nearly synonymous with an amendment moved by the hon. member (Mr. Douglas) in this House and negatived. The clause provided that "no islander or labourer shall be permitted by any employer to be engaged in field-work for more than eight hours in any one day." He regarded that as a very objectionable provision to be inserted in the Bill, and he saw no necessity for it. Our own countrymen were not protected in that way, and he saw no reason why the Legislature should be called upon to interfere with the hours of labour to that extent. It had been said that the insertion of the clause would not have much effect, because an islander, after he had done eight hours' field-work, might be sent into the mill to finish up the day; but against that it might be urged that the mill was not always at work, and that it was questionable whether any magistrate would convict any man for breach of agreement who having worked for eight hours in the field refused to do more. The next few amendments were only verbal. The amendment made in clause 40 was rather important. The matter was not particularly brought under the notice of this House, but it had appeared to the majority in the Upper House that the insertion of a provision that any ship in which an islander was brought to the colony in contravention of the Act might be forfeited would tend very materially to injure the commerce of the colony. Steamers trading from the other colonies might introduce labourers without any intention of contravening the Act, or islanders might be conveyed on board a vessel without the knowledge of the captain. In such cases it would be rather an Algerine method of settling the business to forfeit the ship to Her

Majesty. He was quite aware that a similar provision existed in the present Act, but no attempt had ever been made to put it in force. The Upper House had altered the clause by inserting the words "in default of immediate payment," referring to the penalty of £20 which might be inflicted in each case. He had no objection to the amendment. The rest of the amendments to the end of the Bill consisted principally of the substitution of the word "labourer" for "islander."

Mr. GRIFFITH: There is rather an important amendment in schedule G. Why should the term of service of an islander be fixed in the schedule?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was the custom of the islanders to be engaged for three years. They thoroughly understood that the term of their service was thirty-nine moons, and they could keep as correct an account of the time as any banking account in Brisbane was kept. They knew exactly to a day when their time was up. Very strong pressure had been brought to bear on him to increase the period to five years, but he had absolutely refused to do so. The Bill had been very materially amended by the amendments of the Upper House, but, on the whole, it was a better Bill than the Act in force. He felt quite certain that, if the Bill was not agreed to with very few amendments on the Council's amendments, they would get no Bill through this session. He moved—

That the Legislative Council's amendments in this Bill, with the exception of new clause 24, be agreed to.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Take the amendments *seriatim*.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked whether he had not a right to demand that the amendments should be put *seriatim*?

The CHAIRMAN said the Standing Order which referred to Bills returned from the Council said—

"When a Bill shall be returned from the Legislative Council with amendments, such amendments shall be considered in Committee of the whole House, and agreed to, or agreed to with amendments, or disagreed to, or the further consideration thereof put off for three or six months, or the Bill be ordered to be laid aside."

He was not aware of any rule which rendered it necessary that the amendments should be taken *seriatim*.

Mr. KING thought that there would be great complications if the amendments were not taken *seriatim*.

Mr. GRIFFITH said, as far as he knew, there was no written rule requiring that the clauses of a Bill should be taken *seriatim*, but it was always done. No time would be saved by dealing with the amendments in the way proposed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said there was no analogy between the clauses of a Bill and the amendments of the Upper House. He had known the course he proposed to be pursued over and over again.

Mr. GRIFFITH: By unanimous consent.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY could not see what was to be gained by taking the amendments *seriatim*, unless hon. members wished to throw the Bill out.

Mr. GRIFFITH: You want to prevent its going through.

Mr. DOUGLAS: Take it easy.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he should like to know what the hon. member for Maryborough was braying about. The hon. member had no business to interrupt him when

he was speaking. He would take things just as easy as he chose, and he would recommend the hon. member to keep his advice to himself, as it was not likely to be taken in any possible way. It was ridiculous to ask that he should take the amendments *seriatim*, seeing that nineteen out of twenty-five of them were merely verbal.

Mr. MILES said there were several very important alterations in the Bill. The Bill was described as "a Bill to make provision for regulating and controlling the introduction and treatment of labourers from the Pacific Islands;" but as amended by the Council it had better be described as "a Bill to encourage the employment of Pacific Islanders all over the country." He noticed that the Colonial Secretary always came to the House in a bad temper on Friday mornings. If the hon. member would be offensive they would be severe in return. What had the hon. member for Maryborough said to warrant such a castigation as he had received from the Colonial Secretary? The hon. gentleman acted in a way to prevent business being proceeded with.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that the hon. member for Darling Downs must have looked in a glass that morning, and found that he was as bad-tempered and sulky-looking as usual. Whom had he abused or insulted? If an hon. member would not keep his tongue within his teeth, but would interrupt him when he was speaking, he (Mr. Palmer) would certainly give it him back. The hon. member for Darling Downs had looked in a glass and fancied that everyone else looked as ugly and bad-tempered as himself.

Mr. DOUGLAS said that it was through the Colonial Secretary's hectoring style that all the evils of unpleasantness arose.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the evil arose from the hon. member's impertinent interruptions.

Mr. KING said he thought the Colonial Secretary could not understand the bearings of some of the amendments made by the Council. He remembered that a Bill to protect native game was nearly being passed in the way now proposed when it contained a provision which would allow any man who kept a tame cockatoo to go and shoot game out of season. There was an amendment made in the Pacific Islanders Bill which might have the same effect. Clause 4 of the Bill, as amended, read—

"The provisions of this Act shall, so far as the same are applicable, be applied to all Pacific Island labourers introduced into this colony before the passing of this Act, and to their employers, but shall not apply to any Pacific Island labourers now or hereafter employed solely in pearl or béche-de-mer fisheries on the Queensland coast."

The effect of that would be that islanders who had been engaged in the fisheries could be introduced into the colony otherwise than under the provisions of the Act, and could enter into any employment they chose.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that there were really very few amendments in the Bill which were of a formal nature; the majority of them would have to be discussed, and the easiest way to dispose of them would be to take them *seriatim*.

Mr. MACFARLANE was sure that this Bill would go through faster if the amendments were taken *seriatim*, and he hoped that that course would be adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if hon. members would point out any clauses which they wished to have discussed he would endeavour to meet them; but he might as well recommit the Bill, and have the whole discussion over again, as

allow these amendments to be put *seriatim*. If hon. members did not like this motion let them move amendments on it.

Mr. GRIFFITH contended that unless there was unanimous consent the amendments must be put *seriatim*. It was the invariable practice, when objection was taken to the amendments being lumped, for them to be taken *seriatim*. He was anxious to get on with the Bill, and he was sure no one on his side of the House wished to shelve it. He hoped the Colonial Secretary would not do anything to prevent the Bill going through.

The PREMIER said that the hon. member might have moved an amendment himself, and the time wasted in this discussion would have been saved. Since he had been a member of the House, the invariable practice had been to submit a general motion, and if any hon. member objected to any particular amendment it was quite competent for him to move that it be not agreed with.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that the Government seemed determined to obstruct the Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Give us an instance where amendments made by the Council have been taken *seriatim*.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that during the time he had been in Parliament he had never known a general motion to be insisted on when any hon. member desired that the amendments should be taken *seriatim*. That was done with regard to the amendments in the Land Act of 1874, the Education Act of 1875, and the Licensing Bill, and every other Bill for the last nine years. He agreed with the Premier that time had been wasted, but it was not his fault, as he did not anticipate that there would have been the least objection to the adoption of the course he suggested.

The PREMIER: Move an amendment now.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he would move an amendment if the hon. member liked. But suppose he moved, "That the amendments in clause 2 be disagreed with," would not the Chairman put it in the form, "That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question"? If that were done the effect might be that one vote might determine the whole Bill.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he knew what would please the hon. member, and that was that the Government should do their business in his way. He did not think the hon. member would be gratified. If an amendment were proposed on any clause he would not ask that it be put in the form, "That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of this question." He was quite willing to take the opinion of the Committee on the amendments. What more did the hon. member want?

Mr. GRIFFITH said he would move that the amendment of the Legislative Council in clause 2, inserting the words "arrowroot, imphee, millet, maize, indigo," in the definition of "tropical or semi-tropical agriculture," be disagreed with. The amendment meant that the employment of Polynesian labourers might be general—that people might employ them in almost any way they chose. Maize was not a tropical product; it grew in the southern parts of Europe. Millet, again, was not a tropical product. Imphee was not grown as a separate crop to an extent which would warrant the employment of Polynesians in its growth. It was certainly unnecessary to employ islanders for the growth of arrowroot. Persons who employed islanders to grow arrowroot would do so in order to evade the Act. Indigo was not grown to any appreciable extent in the colony; and when it

was grown the law could be amended to permit of the employment of islanders to grow it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said this amendment was like the chip in porridge—it would do neither good nor harm. Even if the amendment were struck out, any Minister would still have the option of deciding what were tropical and semi-tropical products. He was quite prepared to go to a division, but he did not care whether the amendment was carried or not. As to maize not being a tropical product, all he could say was that it came from Central India. Of course they knew it could be grown in a temperate climate, but so also could sugar and rice.

Mr. KING said that as far as indigo was concerned, if any persons desired to grow it it could be declared a semi-tropical product, and the law would then permit of the employment of islanders in its culture. But there were other products mentioned in the amendment of the Legislative Council which were not tropical products. True, the Minister might declare that maize was a tropical product, but if he did the chances were that the next Minister would cancel the regulation. If the amendment were agreed to, however, the words would have to stand until the Act was repealed, which might not be a very easy matter seeing the stand which had been taken in another place in reference to the employment of Polynesian labour. Imphee was simply cultivated as a fodder plant, and it was difficult to imagine that the employment of islanders was in any way necessary in the case of a plant which could be grown so easily. If they were to allow the amendment to pass they might as well remove all restrictions whatever in the employment of Polynesian labour. He hoped hon. members would stand by the principles of the Bill as it left that Chamber. He thought this was a question upon which the people's representatives had a right to decide. He did not think that, because some gentlemen might care to employ Polynesians for their private convenience, their wish should be allowed to override such an important question of policy—for the question involved was whether the colony should be occupied by a white population, or whether the white population should be kept out and inferior races should be allowed to do the labour of the colony.

Mr. KELLETT said that, while he disagreed with the employment of Polynesian labour in the colony, he must dissent from the contention of the hon. member for North Brisbane, that maize was not a tropical product. When the Bill was passing through committee in that House, he assured hon. members that maize was a tropical product. He found that the "Encyclopædia Britannica" bore him out in that assertion, and said that maize, or Indian corn, was a native of tropical America.

Mr. KING: Where do potatoes come from?

Mr. KELLETT said that if the term tropical or semi-tropical agriculture was held to have such a wide meaning it would be better to omit the words altogether, and state precisely upon what species of cultivation the islanders were to be employed. He would now allude to a very objectionable practice which he had recently noticed in that House. The hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. King), their Speaker, had upon several occasions actually gone into the lobby touting for votes upon many questions. It was most objectionable that the Speaker of that House should occupy the position of Opposition whip. He had never heard of such a course being pursued in the Parliament of any other colony. The hon. gentleman had a position of long standing in that House and he was very

plausible; and he knew that he had got at some young members of the House during that session in the lobby, who had been persuaded to vote in a direction the very opposite to that in which they would otherwise have voted had they considered the matter. They had told him so. He was surprised to see the Speaker of that House, to whom they were supposed to look up, acting in such an undignified manner as to accept the position of Opposition whip. He did not know whether the hon. gentleman was a paid whip or not, but he had acted in the capacity of whip many times during that session. He thought, too, that it was a most unusual thing for the Speaker to participate to such an extent in the debates in committee. He did not wish to see the Speaker gagged, but he certainly thought that he should not go touting round for votes as he had done continually. The hon. member was the first Speaker of a Queensland Parliament who had done such a thing, and he hoped he would be the last.

Mr. MACFARLANE thought the Speaker knew his position quite as well as the hon. member for Stanley. He thought the hon. gentleman had a perfect right to do as he chose in committee. Anyone who had watched the Speaker that session would say that he had supported the measures of the Ministry far more than he had supported the Opposition. The fact that the Speaker was in that particular matter supporting the Opposition was a proof of his impartiality. As far as the amendment under consideration was concerned, he thought that if it were allowed to pass almost anyone in the colony would be allowed to employ Polynesians.

Mr. MESTON said he would prefer to see the Bill lost rather than see the amendment inserted. The amendment should be rejected instantaneously without discussion.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he did not see why one class in the colony should have an advantage over another in the employment of Pacific islanders. It was well known that the planters employed the islanders for domestic purposes. The islanders did the washing and nursed the baby. The consequence was that servant girls could get no employment. He had had letters from the north in which he was told that servant girls who had landed at some of the northern ports had been obliged to come to Brisbane to get employment. What would become of the girls if they got no employment in Brisbane? They would most probably go upon the streets. He thought the narrow majority by which his amendment upon this Bill had been rejected would not justify them in passing the measure. If the question were put to the colony tomorrow whether the islanders should be employed, ninety-nine persons out of every hundred would vote against their employment.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he hoped hon. members would bear in mind that in voting for the retention of those words they would be voting against the Bill, because if Polynesians might be imported by every man who grew maize there would practically be no restriction upon their employment. The Colonial Secretary, from the action he had taken in recess and from his motion upon that amendment, evidently desired that Polynesians should be employed for any purpose.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was still of opinion that the Bill before them was an improvement upon the Act. He accepted the Bill as passed in that House in all good faith as the expressed wish of the majority, but he never said that he agreed with the policy of the Bill. He believed that all men were born free and

equal in terms of the declaration of American independence, and he declared that the squatter and farmer was as good and had as great rights as any sugar-planter ever born. As he had before asserted, the Bill was the policy of the Government. He had been overborne by his colleagues and had given way to them, but he was quite willing to accept the Bill as it left that Chamber. He was, however, perfectly certain that if it was sent back to the Legislative Council with a message saying that their amendments were disagreed with, it would be thrown out. As to the insertion of the words "arrowroot, imphee, millet, maize, indigo," he did not care one rap about it, as it had nothing to do with the principle of the Bill.

Mr. DOUGLAS said the hon. gentleman had made a mistake in bringing in the Bill if he did not believe in it, and he would make a further mistake if he attempted to administer a Bill he did not believe in. That was always a false position for any Minister to be placed in. He did not think it was the hon. gentleman's duty to say what the Upper House would do, and he did not suppose the hon. gentleman knew what they would do. Then again, the hon. gentleman said that he was not responsible for the Bill; but, if he was not, the House was responsible, and therefore hon. members were entitled to discuss it on its merits. It involved, as his hon. friend the member for North Brisbane (Mr. Griffith) had said, a high question of policy which affected the colony more than any other question at the present time, and under those circumstances they were entitled to apply to it their best judgment. If they admitted the amendment—especially under the administration of the hon. gentleman opposite—they would admit of Polynesians being scattered all over the colony. They might argue about the actual definition of the word "maize" in the dictionaries, but it was well known that maize grew, if anything, better in temperate climates—in New South Wales, for instance—than it did in Queensland. The object of the Bill was to limit this kind of labour to tropical agriculture, and the action he took when in office was to confine the islanders to the coast lands, and to the sugar cultivation on those lands. If, however, this amendment was accepted, the islanders would soon be all over the country, more especially under the administration of the hon. gentleman, because, if the Bill became law, all it would be necessary for an applicant for this labour to say would be that he was going to grow maize, and the law would be evaded in the same way as it was when men took up large blocks of land under the pretence that they were going to cultivate it. He hoped the Committee would deal honestly with the Bill, and return it to the other Chamber with the belief that they would deal with it on their own responsibility. He believed they would accept any fair amendments made in it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he firmly believed that hon. members opposite intended to talk the Bill out. He had told them over and over again that he did not care a rap about these clauses whether they were kept in or not, and he had asked hon. members to strike them out; but they would not do it. As to the hon. gentleman's opinion about his (Mr. Palmer's) administration of the Bill, he cared no more about it than the fifth wheel of a coach. If the Bill was made law he should be able to administer it or any other Bill, and he did not care one rap for the opinion of the hon. gentleman opposite.

Mr. REA thought it was very desirable that it should be known who were the gentlemen in favour of having these islanders distributed over

the country. The hon. Colonial Secretary said he cared nothing about the Bill, but he knew that was the object of it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he had been disappointed with the speech of the hon. leader of the Opposition, as he expected to have heard him oppose the Bill altogether. It was well known that if the Bill passed, planters and others would be able to use the islanders as domestic servants, and it was clear that hon. members opposite were really in favour of black labour if confined to a certain part of the colony. But what sort of legislation was it to say that whilst a man living on one side of a creek was at liberty to employ these islanders, the man on the other side should not employ them? What was this colony intended for if it was not to relieve the mother-country of its surplus population? It was never intended to be a place for the employment of black labour, and why then did not the hon. leader of the Opposition face the question boldly at once, and propose that these people should have three years, at the end of which they should be sent out of the colony?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was quite evident that the other side wanted to talk the Bill out; and he would move that the Chairman leave the chair and report no progress.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Take a division first.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said it was very evident that the object of hon. members opposite was to talk the Bill out. They were in office for more than three years, and all that time they were tiddle-winking with this question; they never had the courage to deal with it; and now when a Bill was before them they wanted to talk it out.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was plenty of time to take a division.

The PREMIER said it was useless to waste time in doing so.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Government were now attempting to lay the onus upon the Opposition. He believed they never intended to pass the Bill, but the Opposition would make them pass it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You never will; you can't.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked, if the Government were in earnest, why they did not take a division?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman could not make them pass any Bill unless they liked, even although the hon. gentleman and his colleagues assumed the position of dictators. The Government meant to pass the Bill in spite of the tactics of the Opposition, who evidently thought it was too good a measure for the present Ministry to pass, and were thus trying to talk it out.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said from all he could gather now, and on all other occasions when the question of black labour was before the House, he had arrived at the conclusion that the Opposition were the greatest supporters of that labour.

Mr. MILES said the Colonial Secretary had told them that he did not believe in these clauses. All the Opposition wanted was to prevent the islanders being scattered over the colony.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported no progress, and obtained leave to sit again on Monday.

The PREMIER stated that the first business taken on Monday would be Supply, and then the United Municipalities Bill.

Mr. GRIFFITH: Does the House sit on Tuesday?

The PREMIER: No; we propose to sit all day Friday instead.

The House adjourned at fifty-three minutes past 12 o'clock.