

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 10 November, 1880.

Suspension of Standing Order.—Railways—Select Committee's Report.—Maryborough and Gympie Railway.—Clermont Railway.—Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway.—Marsupial Destruction Bill.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN took the chair at 4 o'clock.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the Standing Order of 2nd October, 1879, relative to Resolutions calling for the construction of Railways, and the approval of Plans, Sections, and Books of Reference thereof, be suspended for the remainder of the current session. He wished to explain that he did not intend the motion to refer to any business on the paper to-day. Motions Nos. 2, 3, 4, and 5 had all arisen by acting in conformity with the Standing Orders. The railways to which the motion would apply would be, in the first instance, the South Brisbane and the Sandgate lines, both of which had been referred to a select

committee, but not technically in compliance with the Standing Order of 2nd October. He might state that for the last week or ten days that committee had had the plans under consideration, but they were not referred to the committee in the precise terms of the Standing Order now proposed to be suspended. He thought however that, under the circumstances, the House would not insist upon a rigid adherence to the Standing Order in that particular, and that the report which would be brought up would be accepted as a sufficient compliance with the terms of the Order. As, therefore, the Standing Order would have been virtually complied with as regarded the two lines he had named, both having been referred to a select committee, the application for its suspension would be only technical. He would repeat that the suspension of the Standing Order would not apply to any business on the paper for to-day. It was simply to apply to the plans and sections which were to come before the House and to be considered during the present session, and if it were not suspended the plans could not possibly be considered at all. It would be a misfortune if, through non-compliance with the Standing Order, which was not intended to meet trifling cases like the railways not dealt with, those railways were allowed to fall through by the session terminating before they could be reported upon by a select committee in the usual way.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he could not think that the Postmaster-General had made out a strong case, or, indeed, any case for the suspension of the Standing Order of 2nd October. The Order was agreed to last session after very considerable discussion, and after hon. members had felt that very scant information had been afforded the House in reference to railways which it was contemplated to construct. It was felt from the necessity of things that it was only fair the House should have the opportunity of investigating the claims of the different districts in which it was proposed to construct the lines, and that the only means of getting information was by a committee sitting and taking evidence, and satisfying themselves, in the first place, as to the policy of the proposed construction and the probable cost. Now, any hon. member who had carefully read the reports of the committees which had sat on the different railways this session must have arrived at the conclusion that the committees did valuable work; and, when they saw the large number of lines to which the country was to be committed this session, the House could not too carefully investigate the claims of the districts, and ascertain whether it was desirable to construct the railways, and whether the proposed plans were such as were economical and satisfactory to the country. There was a considerable conflict of testimony with regard to some of the lines before the House, and he felt satisfied that when hon. members had the reports of the committees now sitting they would be satisfied that the committees were salutary, that the House had been working far too much in the dark with regard to these lines, and that the more light could be thrown upon the subject the more satisfactory it would be. He could not think that the Racecourse and the Burrum lines, and Mr. Gulland's line, which were yet to be considered, were trifling matters. They each involved a principle, and they knew that in regard to one—the Racecourse line—a large number of alternative lines had been suggested. Hon. members did not sit as a recording body, otherwise their usefulness would be at an end. They sat here to revise the work done by the Assembly, and they could not shut their eyes to the fact that the construction of the branch railways had been brought about by what

might be called a system of log-rolling, and that there had been unquestionably a very sudden conversion of the Government. During last session, although the attention of the Government had been directed to the desirability of constructing some of these railways, they resolutely set their face against carrying on any of them, and now suddenly, at the latter end of the present session, the consideration of a large number of them was suddenly thrown upon hon. members. It would be unwise of the House to suspend a Standing Order of the value the one of the 2nd October had proved to be, simply to enable the Government to carry out a sudden determination which was inconsistent with their previous resolution. Under the circumstances he felt disinclined to give his assent to the motion, although at the same time he did not wish to embarrass the Government. He did not see that it was the fault of the Council that the discussion of the subject had been delayed in any way; and if the evidence had shown, as he thought it did inconceivably, that these select committees had done good service, it would be unwise to do away with them. He did not know whether it had occurred to the Postmaster-General, but, at any rate, the hon. gentleman had not suggested that it would be possible to present to the House full information upon the subjects regarding which the select committees got information; and unless that were at least done he would be inclined to give his vote against the motion.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Mein were so exactly in accordance with his views that it would be almost going over the same ground for him to state his views. He must say that he very strongly objected to the railways being hurried through the House in the way they had been in the past: the plans were brought up, laid upon the table, and members received no information except what they could get in a fugitive way. Even a perusal of the evidence, such as it might be, which was brought out by the discussions in the other Chamber, left hon. members in the dark as regarded the salient points—whether the cost was reasonable, whether the locality was judiciously selected, and whether, if the railways were constructed, they would be a source of profit in any way to the colony. The frequency with which that occurred was the cause of the introduction of the Standing Order which they now proposed to rescind with a view of forcing through the House—for that was what it amounted to—the railways now proposed to be constructed. Had there been some course of circumstances which really placed the Government in the position that they could not bring forward the plans at an earlier period of the session, and had sufficient reason been shown for hurrying them through, he might be inclined to yield the point; but he candidly confessed that he had heard nothing, nor did he know any reason why the Council should not adhere to such a useful and salutary Standing Order. They had not the means of getting information without the appointment of these committees. The House must be dependent upon evidence. They might have a tolerably fair idea about some of the railways, but they had no right to vote away large sums of money upon railways regarding which half of the members of the House knew as much as about the construction of a railway in New Zealand. The whole aim and object of the Standing Order was to prevent the public funds being misdirected by the construction of railways in a manner or locality highly undesirable, and thus materially increase the burdens of the taxpayers. He acknowledged himself a supporter of the Government whenever he could conscientiously support them, for he

believed that they did the best for the country; but it was against his conscientious convictions to allow these railways to be hurried through, and therefore he would vote against the motion.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that when he tabled his motion he certainly did not expect serious opposition to its passing. Although they would suspend the Standing Order which required that the plans should be referred to a select committee, the power of the House would not be taken away; the House would have full liberty of discussing the plans to any extent, and he did not wish to pass them without consideration. In the other House, which was responsible for the expenditure on all railways constructed in the colony, the plans and sections had been dealt with without reference to a select committee, and he thought that when he suggested that two or three small lines, the expenditure upon which would be comparatively small, and one of which would be constructed by private enterprise—when he suggested that they should not be referred to a select committee, he was not making an unreasonable proposition. With regard to the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Mein, he denied that there had been a sudden conversion of the Government on the subject of branch railways: he could prove that in July, 1878, before the Government came into power, the then leader of the Opposition, who was now the Premier, in giving a list of the works on which the proposed £3,000,000 loan should be expended, put in £350,000 for branch railways. Last year the Legislature authorised the borrowing of the money for these branch railways, thus carrying out most distinctly the policy the Premier had enunciated when in Opposition; but these railways could not be carried on until the plans and sections were completed. Every hon. member knew that the contention had been as to the direction of the lines, and that if they waited ten years more they would have a minority insisting on alternate surveys and dissatisfied with any route that the majority would adopt. These branch lines had been surveyed over and over, and reported upon by engineers and surveyors and all sorts of people. If they waited until the House were agreed, or until there was almost unanimity as to the direction the lines should take, he was afraid they would never be constructed. He wished to remind hon. members that if the South Brisbane and Sandgate lines were not sanctioned this year the responsibility would rest on the Council. The plans had been before the House for nearly three weeks, and, although they had not been able to refer them to a select committee in the strict terms of the Standing Order, they had been referred to a committee, who had them under consideration and had taken evidence upon them. Unless the House would consent to the suspension of the Standing Order, it was extremely improbable that they should be able to adopt the plans for these lines this session. He should give notice to-day, for example, to refer them to a select committee, and if the motion could not come on to-morrow he did not suppose the committee would do any work this week, and would not be able to report until next week. He was afraid they would not be able to do much work next week, for the House would probably be up. He thought that during to-day, to-morrow, and Friday, and probably one or two days next week, they would get through all the business that they might expect to transact this session. He must also remind hon. members that there were a large number of members in the other House who were not able to go away to their homes by railway at the end of one week and return at the beginning of the next. They

had to stay in the city during the whole of the session, and they were naturally anxious to get away. He was sure that he did not at all misrepresent the feelings of the other Chamber when he said that, with a few exceptions, they were anxious to bring the session to an end. It would be no fault of the Government if they were not able to get the two lines to which he had referred approved this session. He did intend to refer the Racecourse and Burrum lines to a committee if there had been time, but there was not. He would again point out that the Council was not primarily responsible for the expenditure on these lines. Last year the representatives of the people provided for them, with one exception, by loan, and this year they had approved of the plans and sections. He thought it would be extremely unfortunate if, by the Council insisting upon a technicality, anything occurred to prevent the adoption of the plans this session. He hoped hon. members would pass the motion with the distinct understanding that it would not apply to any business on the paper to-day, and would only have a technical application to the South Brisbane and Sandgate railways, the plans of which were under the consideration of a committee, but had not been sent down regularly.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR said he did not wish to worry the Postmaster-General in the last days of the session—especially as, if what they heard out-of-doors were correct, he would not be there another session—but he was opposed to these branch lines. He considered the Sandgate line a perfect swindle. Why should a line be made for a few people who desired sea air and bathing? He hoped the House would take such action as would have the effect of postponing the consideration of this matter until next year. Let them consider what returns they would receive from the construction of some of these lines. It was not usual in commercial matters for men to speculate £100,000 without the prospect of some return; but the Government, in the construction of railways, did not care for returns so long as they obtained popularity. The Postmaster-General said that if the Sandgate and South Brisbane lines were not carried out this year the responsibility would fall upon the Council. Let the responsibility fall upon the Council. He for one would be quite able to stand the fall.

The Hon. G. SANDEMAN said he regretted that circumstances should have occurred to induce the Postmaster-General to move the suspension of the Standing Order passed last year. He agreed with a great deal of what had been said by the Hon. Mr. Mein and the Hon. Mr. Gregory, and with part of what had been said by the Hon. Mr. Taylor. The Standing Order in question had proved very beneficial, and he would be sorry to see its usefulness affected by any action of that House.

The Hon. W. D. BOX thought that was a question upon which hon. members should not give a silent vote. The Standing Order in question had been adopted in a full House, and after ample discussion, and, to his mind, it should not be interfered with. He did not desire to see railways passed in bunches again; the Government must have known of the existence of the Standing Order, and they should have introduced their railway business at a period of the session which would have permitted of their satisfying its requirements.

The Hon. F. J. IVORY said that, with regard to the plans and sections of the South Brisbane and Sandgate lines, hon. members seemed to have forgotten that they were laid upon the table of the House as long ago as the 20th October. They were now dealing with a state of things

entirely different from that which existed when the Standing Order in question was passed. At that time the Government only prepared one plan, which did not come before that Council until a resolution approving of a certain railway was sent up from the Assembly. This session, however, they had improved appliances for the multiplication of plans, and the Government had laid plans on the tables of the two Houses simultaneously. The plans and sections of the South Brisbane and Sandgate lines, for instance, were laid upon the table of that House fully three weeks ago. A select committee, however, had been appointed before the lapse of the necessary time, and it was to validate the appointment of this committee that the suspension of the Standing Order was proposed. If the Order were not suspended, the work performed by the committee within the past three weeks would be of no effect. Seeing that the plans had been upon the table so long and that the committee had taken evidence, he thought it would be well to suspend the Standing Order.

Question put, and the House divided :—

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The Hons. C. H. Buzacott, F. J. Ivory, W. Graham, J. Swan, J. C. Heussler, W. Aplin, J. S. Turner, W. P. Lambert, and J. Cowlishaw.

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The Hons. G. Sandeman, W. D. Box, F. T. Gregory, J. Taylor, W. Pettigrew, and C. S. Mein.

Question, consequently, resolved in the affirmative.

RAILWAYS—SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

THE POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the Report of the Select Committee on the Maryborough and Gympie, Clermont, Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railways, be now adopted.

Hon. members would have received the report several days ago, and would have perceived that the committee had had a number of sittings and had taken a considerable quantity of evidence. The committee had four questions remitted to them for consideration. The first was a deviation from the Commissioner's Hill, Gympie, to Caledonian Hill. There was nothing in this deviation which could excite discussion. It seemed to be admitted on all hands to be desirable. The next question was the carrying out of a wharf branch at Maryborough, which would connect the railway with navigable water. Its estimated cost was £4,471, exclusive of compensation for resumed land, the quantity of which would be small. There were only one or two allotments intersected by the railway, and he supposed that £200 or £300 would cover the entire cost of resumption. The next question was the Clermont line. It would be seen that the matter had been a long time under consideration. It was originally intended to start the line from Blackwater, a point on the Central Railway 118 miles west of Rockhampton, but for engineering reasons it was ultimately decided that the line should commence from Emerald, 165 miles from Rockhampton, instead of at Anakie, which was 183 miles from Rockhampton. The first-named route would reach Clermont in 58 miles, and the latter in 53½ miles. The whole of the country which would be traversed by the route selected was fertile and well adapted for settlement, and a large portion of it was equal to the land on the Darling Downs. The total cost of the line would be £190,000, or a little in excess of £3,000 per mile. Besides encouraging agricultural settlement, the line would encourage the development of the mineral resources of the Peak Downs. As hon. members were aware, some hundreds of thou-

sands of tons of copper ore had been sent down from the Peak Downs mines. Operations were at present being carried on on a small scale. There was an enormous quantity of ore yet to be obtained, but the mines could not be profitably worked until there was a reduction in the rate of carriage. It was believed that this line would restore the mine to its former productiveness, and would, from the receipts accruing from stores sent down for those employed upon the mine, in addition to the traffic caused by agricultural settlement, be one of the most remunerative lines in the colony. At present the Legislature had only provided £50,000, which would carry the railway into the centre of the rich country. He might add that under the Railway Reserves Act the whole of the area connected with the railway was included in a reserve which had been resumed from pastoral lease. Half of the land would be available for settlement by auction or selection. The next question remitted to the committee was the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line, and this was another instance in which railway carriage would encourage the development of mineral resources. It would be observed that the committee did not form a very sanguine estimate of the amount of traffic which was likely to pass over this railway. Hon. members, however, would remember that this was the fourth time that this line had been before Parliament. In 1877, £100,000 was voted; in 1878, another £100,000, and in 1879, £180,000, for the completion of the line. It was obvious that to begin such a line as this and to end it nowhere would be folly; and, whatever might be the opinion of the House as to the policy of beginning the line, there could be no doubt as to the desirability of completing it now that it had been carried so far. The extension to which the plans before the House referred was 21 miles 51 chains in length, and the estimated cost was £126,079, or £5,824 per mile. It would be observed from the evidence of the Commissioner for Railways that the Government intended to work the line as economically as possible. There was to be scarcely anything spent upon stations; it was intended that the guard should do the whole of the station-master's work until the traffic became sufficient to warrant the usual appliances being provided. The whole of the sum required had been provided by Parliament. Mr. Bennett, the resident engineer, was examined with regard to the resources of the country, and said he was quite certain that the construction of the line would lead to a large amount of traffic, not only in copper ore, but in material required to work the mines and supply those who were engaged as miners. It was true that Mr. Gregory had formed an unfavourable opinion of the line; but, although he did not dispute that Mr. Gregory was a high authority, it must be remembered that there were one or two instances in which his forecasts had not been realised. He thought hon. members would admit that a gentleman who had been resident in the district, and had been engaged in working the mines for a period of six or seven years, ought to have a good idea of the extent and value of those mines. He moved that the report of the committee be adopted.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said that although he gave a tacit consent to the report he did not commit himself to these railways, and intended to oppose them.

Question put and passed.

MARYBOROUGH AND GYMPIE RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

1. That this House approves of the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the proposed Deviation from 69

miles 70 chains to Caledonian Hill, Maryborough and Gympie Railway, and of the proposed Wharf Branch, Maryborough, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on 23rd September last.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

After the remarks he had already made upon the adoption of the report of the committee, it was unnecessary for him to make any remark upon this motion. The committee were almost unanimous as to the desirableness of this line.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said that he was not going to oppose that motion, because he knew that it would be perfectly useless, and if there were any defensible railway scheme among those placed before them that was the one. Before hon. members gave their adhesion to these railway schemes he would warn them, as he had warned them last year, that they were giving their consent to this Government outviuing a previous Government in railway construction. The members of the present Government had condemned a previous Government for log-rolling at the expense of the whole of the country in their railway construction, but these hon. gentlemen were out-Heroding Herod in the construction of railways themselves. He wished to put before hon. members the figures which were supplied to him last year by the Auditor-General. The railways at that time in existence were being worked at a loss of £378 9s. 10d. per mile per annum. They were now entering upon further schemes which, if he understood them correctly, would bring the total length of their railways in the aggregate up to 1,000 miles. He had no hesitation in saying that when the whole of that length of railway was completed they would be losing money at the rate of £500 per mile per annum for every mile they had constructed, while three-fourths of the population would be deriving no advantage whatever from the railways. The annual loss would be half-a-million of money. A few years ago, when the lines were paying more, their annual loss was at the rate of £500 a-mile; they managed to reduce that loss, however, to £378 9s. 10d. in September last, but ever since that moment the most expensive line—the Southern and Western line—had been showing a decrease instead of an increase in its revenue. Every week they saw reports which, if compared with the receipts of the corresponding week of last year, showed a falling off.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: No.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said he had stated a fact. They must consider that the whole increase of revenue did not amount to more than £20,000, with an addition of about 100 miles of railway. As far as he was concerned, the country should know what they were doing in this matter. Hon. members were about to vote for branch lines which, upon the evidence of the promoters themselves, could not possibly pay for a long time to come. Even one of the very reports intimated the same thing—that there would be no probability of such-and-such a line being reproductive; and yet, in the face of all that, they were now committing the country to this lavish expenditure on railways. He hoped his prophecy would prove incorrect, but he was certain that within the next five years there would be a loss on these railways equal to half-a-million of money per annum, and they would always remain unpaying so long as nothing but agricultural and pastoral produce was carried upon them. He supposed it was no use giving this warning, but he thought hon. members must see that what he said was correct. He might be told that they should look at the indirect advantages, but he doubted that there was any advantage. He maintained that their railway system had absolutely ruined property,

and for whose benefit was it? Principally to benefit squatters by getting down their pastoral produce.

Question put and passed.

CLERMONT RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL, in moving—

1. That this House approves of the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the Clermont Railway, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 23rd September last.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form—

said he should like to remark, with regard to the observations of the Hon. Mr. Walsh, that, instead of the weekly returns of railway receipts this year, as compared with last year, showing a decrease, there was a considerable increase. The weekly statement published in the *Gazette* of last Saturday showed that on the Southern and Western line the increase was £11,525; on the Central line it had been £16,689—in the latter case, an increase of over 40 per cent. He might also explain that the extension of the Central line had actually added very little to the traffic on it, because the main roads had not been completed to the end of the extension. At present a very large amount of traffic went by way of Springsure, and did not travel on the railway for the last section or two, so that, on the whole, the increase there was particularly satisfactory; and on the Southern and Western Railway, he had no doubt that when this year's harvest came to be gathered in the farmers would have more produce to send to the railway; that they would have more money to spend in purchasing supplies and in effecting improvements; and that after this year, at any rate, on the Southern and Western line, the receipts would be very much larger than they had been hitherto. It must not be forgotten that the receipts did not represent, by any means, the whole of the advantages that the country derived from the railways. Take, for instance, the country about Roma: he would ask if the Government would ever have been able to sell that land if it had not been for the railway? The running of railways into the interior gave an actual realisable cash value to land which without the railway would have no value at all. That had been proved by experience; they found proof of it in the increasing amount the Government were constantly deriving from sales of Crown lands. That was what the present Government meant by their policy—that the running of railways into the interior enabled them to sell portions of that land by making it accessible, and, therefore, it was not proposed to impose any additional burden on the taxpayer. That that policy was founded upon sound basis had been shown by past experience. Before railways had been constructed at all, they were taxed just as heavily as they were at present. He admitted that the interest on the cost of construction was large compared with the receipts; but he thought that money which had been judiciously expended on railway construction gave both directly and indirectly a satisfactory return. He had already said that the line which he now asked the House to consent to went through very rich agricultural land, and would also assist in the development of a very large mineral district, which had already exported many thousands of tons of produce, and it would undoubtedly continue to be a very profitable source of industry for a long time to come. He was sure—having lived in the district a long while and knowing a good deal of its resources—that mining was only in its infancy there, and that with the extension of railways on a cheap plan it would become a highly prosperous one.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said he for one should oppose this railway. He had travelled over that

part of the country as well as the Postmaster-General, and, instead of there being a vast amount of splendid land there, there was a vast amount of very bad land. There was some very excellent land, but a great deal that was rascally bad. What was the use of a line of railway going through that country, he should like to know? Why, if they put 5,000 farmers there, gave them the land for nothing, found tools for them, fenced it in, and even gave them oxen to work it, what would they grow on it? He supposed they would grow maize, and what would they do with that? Maize was already down to 1s. 6d. or 1s. 9d. per bushel, and hay to 20s. or 30s. a ton, and how could they get a living out of it at that price? He maintained that forcing the people on the land now was a perfect crime. In America they were compelled to export their produce, and if it were not for the fact of exporting maize, wheat, and other similar produce to England the farmers there could not live. There were only two articles that could be grown here that were at all likely to be remunerative—one was wool and the other sugar. These articles were consumed by all the world, but to say that they could not grow maize and flour in this colony and export it was a perfect farce; and no man with a grain of common sense would ever go out on that land, even with all the advantages he (Mr. Taylor) had pointed out, and settle on it as an agriculturist—he would be far better off as a labourer. And yet they were told this line would open up magnificent country which would be largely settled upon. He would ask where was the settlement to come from? He said it was a perfect fallacy to go on with railways in the way they were doing, and why the present Government should make these railways he could not understand, unless it was by a system of log-rolling. There was no doubt that when the six railways were brought in some years ago, and six members were appointed to the House to pass them through, it was one of the most infamous schemes ever adopted. Were those railways likely to pay for the grease on the wheels, or the wages of the engine-driver or fireman? And yet they were asked now to go in for other railways which were equally unprofitable, and he should never consent to make a lot of useless branch railways to please any Government. He would like to know how many passengers these railways would carry. He supposed, the engine-driver and the stoker. It was very easy to ascertain what the passenger traffic on the line would be by going to Cobb and Company's office, and before going further he should like to know what the traffic on Cobb and Company's had been on this line. He supposed the line was to be constructed simply to please the member for Clermont. He could not account for it in any other way; and as for the line paying or being of any possible benefit to the country, he denied, and should oppose it as far as he possibly could. The hon. gentleman said the Central line did not pay because the traffic went by Springsure. Why, then, make this line? Springsure was many miles away, and yet, rather than use the railway, the traffic was taken to that place. That was a very lame argument indeed. Then they were told about the enormous crops that the land along the Southern and Western Railway was to bring forth this year—that it would send the funds up at once, and so on. Did the hon. gentlemen think they were children, to talk like that, or men who did not know anything at all about the matter? Produce was now at such a low rate that he had known a farmer on the Downs send down a quantity which was sold here, and between railway freight, commission, and other charges, he was actually brought into debt;

and now they were told that the country was to be overwhelmed with produce from that part of the country. He maintained that no man had a right to go on the land unless it was to grow wool or sugar, which were consumed all over the world, as with all other produce the colonial market was completely overdone. He hoped the leader of the Government in that House would withdraw these railways altogether. He did not suppose it was any use asking him to do so, because that hon. gentleman was very persevering and almost stubborn; and he (Mr. Taylor) should oppose it as far as his vote was concerned.

The HON. W. F. LAMBERT said, with respect to the returns from the Central line, as had been explained by the Postmaster-General, although the line had shown a considerable increase this year over last—about 40 per cent.—the whole line had not been availed of, because the roads to the end of the extension had not been completed, and therefore the Government did not get the benefit of every mile of railway that had been made. He knew for a fact that there had been something like fifty miles of railway opened that had not been availed of up to the present moment for the reasons he had stated, but that difficulty would be removed as soon as the extension would get to country where no one would be tempted to send his produce by any other means; so that before long he was confident that the returns from the Central Railway would be highly satisfactory and astonish a good many hon. members.

The HON. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said the remarks of the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Lambert were quite correct with reference to the railway returns from the Central Railway. Anyone who looked at these returns for the year would see that the proceeds were increasing so rapidly that it was certain that, if there was any railway in the colony that could be remunerative, it was the Central line, which was now, according to a late return, yielding about 4 per cent. on the amount invested. Hon. members would recollect that the first portion of the line was built at a time when railway construction was very expensive, and it cost about £15,000 per mile. The percentage he had referred to was on the whole of the line, and embraced about thirty miles, which had been completed and not opened until within the last month, so that it was highly satisfactory. If the first portion of the line—which cost a good deal to keep it in repair—had been constructed at the same rate as the latter portion was being constructed by the present engineer, the whole line would now be paying over 7 per cent., which was a very handsome return for the money invested; but, apart from the direct receipts, an enormous extent of country had been opened up which was of immense benefit to the whole colony. Some hon. members would be aware that, in portions of the district between Rockhampton and the Dawson, drays had been stuck up for four and five months, whereas now the whole of the bad country had been got over, and the result had been to utilise country something like 300 or 400 miles due west which would never have been occupied but for the construction of this railway. The branch line now under discussion would, he felt assured, be a great advantage to the district and still further increase the returns, because it would take a good deal of traffic which now went by way of St. Lawrence; in fact, it would act as a feeder to the whole Central line and increase the rates so as to make it still more remunerative than it was at present.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said he should certainly vote against this line. The arguments that had been adduced in no way convinced him that it would be a paying line. There had been no facts brought forward to show that these rail-

ways would pay; and he told hon. members that so long as the traffic was confined to the carriage of pastoral and agricultural produce it was impossible for them to pay. By a return that had been laid upon the table of the House this session it was shown that the aggregate quantity of wool that came down the Southern and Western line—which certainly brought down half the wool produced in the colony—was something like 30,000 bales, and the whole revenue derived from that source was certainly under £30,000. All over the world it was population and minerals that made railways pay; and he said to go on extending railways, with their enormous debt, with the heavy loss already incurred, and likely to be incurred, appeared like the proceedings of most reckless legislators or of madmen. With regard to the observations of the Postmaster-General as to the receipts from the railways, what he (Mr. Walsh) said was that the increase was very small for some weeks, and that it was becoming smaller and less by comparison than last year. The non-increase of the revenue on the Southern and Western line was a subject of common remark, and the last *Government Gazette* disclosed the lamentable fact that the week's revenue, as compared with that of the corresponding period last year, was £563 14s. 6d. short. When the hon. gentleman chose to quote the whole increase of the year, £11,525, why did he not, in fairness, also state what was the whole increase in the working of the line during the same period. He (Mr. Walsh) found, on reference to the Estimates, that the Minister for Works asked for £133,633 for the current year, while for last year he only asked for £118,089, there being an increase in round numbers of £15,000, and even that was illusory to some extent, because already Parliament was asked on the Supplementary Estimates for 1878-9 for nearly £10,000 for working expenses, and no doubt there would be further Supplementary Estimates. There was nothing in the increase of revenue, or the satisfactory working of the lines, to justify them in making any further lines; while, on the other hand, there was a great deal to justify them in stopping them altogether and taking them up. Touching Mr. Ballard's evidence, he wished to point out that this 1 in 30 gradient was regularly pooh-poohed even on this railway by that gentleman. At question 327 he was asked by the Chairman—

"I certainly have a piece of 1 in 30 in it, but it does no harm whatever, because it is a very short bit and there is a long piece of level coming up to it. I have no hesitation in saying that it will not interfere with the traffic of the line in the least; that it is quite as good as 1 in 50."

Then, again, he was asked—

"By the Chairman: Can you conceive of any line on which the difference between a 1 in 50 gradient and 1 in 30 would only mean a difference in cost of £300 per mile? Yes, easily; for instance, on the Clermont line, if you were to say to me, 'Mr. Ballard, we have a great objection to 1 in 30 on the line,' I would say, 'All right, I will knock it into 1 in 50,' and it would not cost more than ten shillings a-mile, because there is only a little bit of that grade."

So that they were going to sanction an alteration in grade from 1 in 50 to 1 in 30 when Mr. Ballard said the difference would not be more than 10s. per mile. He said it would be worthy of them to refuse to sanction this line, or at any rate to take the engineer at his word, and send the plans back to the other Chamber and state that that House approved of Mr. Ballard altering the line to 1 in 50 at a cost of 10s. a-mile.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it could easily be seen from Mr. Ballard's evidence that what he meant was that, being flat country nearly all the way, there would be very little saving in 1 in 30 gradients. They would not expect an engineer to throw up hills for the sake of making 1 in 30 gradients.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN agreed with the Hons. Mr. Walsh and Mr. Taylor that they should carefully consider what they were about when voting for these railways; and also in thinking that the time was far distant when they could hope, by extending railways into the interior, to make those railways pay. A great deal had been said about agricultural land in the far west, but they had no population there; and even if they had population who grew farming produce, they would be precluded, by reason of the distance from markets, from selling it at a rate that would be at all remunerative. They had no demand at present, owing to the sparsity of population, to enable farmers to settle down to any great extent for the purpose of producing articles to be consumed amongst themselves. If they settled down they must depend upon export, and they had yet to ascertain that this country would grow produce of that character which would readily find a market elsewhere on profitable terms. However, with regard to this line, he thought Parliament was perfectly justified in agreeing to its construction, because he had always held that it was desirable for the purpose of developing the internal resources of the country that they should have, at certain intervals along the seaboard, main lines of thoroughfare connecting the western interior with the coast, so as to provide certain and ready means of access. It had always been the policy of the party with which he had been identified to recognise the desirability of constructing a railway from Rockhampton to the north-west interior of the colony by way of Clermont. He had opposed consistently the extension of the Central Railway due west for several reasons, the chief of which was that it would undoubtedly come into competition with the railway which had been constructed to Roma, and which would ultimately go past Tambo and Blackall, and, he hoped, in the not too remote future, the Gulf of Carpentaria. In addition to that, the construction of the Central line to the point contemplated by the present Government involved going through a very barren tract of country for between 80 and 100 miles, which could not be occupied either by pastoralists or agriculturists. However, he should be unwilling to deprive the inhabitants towards the north-west of the line of the advantages they would attain by having ready access to the seaboard. The Hon. Mr. Taylor and the Hon. Mr. Walsh appeared to forget that the Clermont district had proved itself one of the wealthiest mineral districts in Australia. True, the Peak Downs mine was not now being very profitably worked, but that had arisen from unforeseen and very disastrous circumstances. The mine had been worked at immense cost owing to the high price of fuel and the large expense of conveying the produce to the coast, and it had also been affected by a temporary fall in the price of copper. If, however, this line was constructed, there would be certain and speedy means of conveying the produce from the mines to the sea-coast. He had taken great interest, as nearly all hon. members had, in the development of the mineral resources of the colony, and he felt with the Hon. Mr. Taylor a great deal of their future prosperity would depend upon the development of this industry, in conjunction with their great national industry—the pastoral industry. He had been assured repeatedly, by persons of experience who were competent to pass an opinion on the subject, that if proper facilities were given for the conveyance of fuel and produce, undoubtedly mines would be found in that district to equal in value and stability the Peak Downs mines. The district has been proved to possess valuable minerals. The lines also went through good agricultural land which, if not at present capable

of being occupied, might in the future, in conjunction with the other two industries he had indicated, be profitably if not remuneratively utilised. He would also point out that, although they were stretching their wings rather too wide in the matter of railway construction, and without due consideration, it was unreasonable to expect, in any case, remunerative returns at the outset. All lines must, at the outset, be experimental, and where there was reasonable probability, at no very distant date, of the proposed railway—he should not say making handsome returns, but of paying its way and not involving the country in anything like a substantial annual loss—they were perfectly justified in undertaking it in order to develop the resources of the colony. On these grounds, he should give his assent to the proposition now before the House.

Question put, and the House divided :—

CONTENTS, 13.

The Hons. C. S. Mein, C. H. Buzacott, W. F. Lambert, C. S. D. Melbourne, F. J. Ivory, F. T. Gregory, J. Swan, J. Cowlishaw, J. F. McDougall, W. Aplin, J. S. Turner, J. C. Heussler, and W. Graham.

NON-CONTENTS, 3.

The Hons. W. H. Walsh, J. Taylor, and W. Pettigrew.

Resolved in the affirmative.

BUNDABERG AND MOUNT PERRY RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he did not know that he need add much to what he had already said respecting the motions which stood in his name. The strongest argument in favour of the Bundaberg and Mount Perry line was that already its construction had been sanctioned in three different sessions, votes on account having been passed in 1877 and 1878, and the balance necessary to complete the line in 1879. There was no doubt that the Mount Perry mines had suffered much more from the want of easy access to the coast than would appear from the comparatively short distance which had to be travelled from Mount Perry to Bundaberg. The road was bad, and the traffic was small—no doubt because the ore was not sufficiently rich to be made payable except with a lower rate of carriage. It would be observed by the report that there were from 700 to 800 people still deriving their subsistence from the neighbourhood of Mount Perry, and this number would be largely increased were the traffic facilities of such a nature as to admit of the mines being worked remuneratively. Considerable evidence had been taken as to whether the 1 in 30 grade might have been adopted on this line as well as on one or two others; but the report and the opinion of Mr. Stanley, the Chief Engineer, were so strongly against it that the Government did not feel justified in compelling him to adopt a steeper gradient on a line which had been authorised under a previous Government and by a previous Parliament. They thought it better to try the experiment on a line which they themselves initiated, such as the Fassifern branch line, where the traffic was small. There was no doubt that the Burnett district was a comparatively wealthy one; and between the mineral traffic, the agricultural traffic, and the settlement which would naturally follow, the prosperity of the district would be largely promoted by the construction of this line; so that, if even there should be no large direct returns, the enhancement would be to a certain extent compensation for the outlay. He begged to move—

1. That this House approves of the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the Second Section of the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly, on 23rd September last.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH said he could not understand what the object of the Postmaster-General was in digressing to the subject of the 1 in 30 grade, and he began to think that the Government were going to adopt it on this line. He wanted to know if that grade was, for economical reasons, such a precious one to adopt, why it was not adopted on this Bundaberg and Mount Perry line. It had been adopted in the Fassifern line to secure a possible saving of £130 or £140 per mile; but on such a line as this, where it could effect a saving of £1,000 per mile, it was not to be used. Where the evidence admittedly showed that the traffic was of such a nature that a slow rate of speed was all that was required, where the Minister for Works himself proved the fact, they found the Government determined to carry on this most useless of all lines upon the expensive style of a 1-in-50 gradient. On turning to the evidence of the Minister for Works it would be seen that the Postmaster-General, who generally put leading questions to the witnesses he examined, asked—

"Then, would there be no economy in adopting the 1-in-30 grade there?"

And the reply was—

"I believe there would be great economy in the 1-in-30 grade on the second section, of which the plans are now before the Council. For this reason: The second section is a mass of ranges necessitating 13,000 cubic yards of earthworks per mile, being about four times the amount of earthworks on the Fassifern line. And, as the saving comes in in the earthworks, the difference in grade between 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 would amount to probably £1,000 per mile; but I would not like to express a positive opinion about that;—that is, allowing for everything else in proportion to the 1-in-30 gradient. The estimated cost of that section is £5,825 per mile."

That was the opinion of the Minister of the department—that by adopting a grade of 1 in 30 a saving of £1,000 per mile would be effected. Then, again, the Postmaster-General, as if he were determined that he would not allow his colleague any loophole of escape for adhering to the 1 in 50 grade, he put this question:—

"Besides the saving in the first cost, you believe the line on the 1-in-30 gradient would be equal to all requirements?"

The answer was—

"I feel quite sure it would be."

Then, he (Mr. Walsh) would ask, why was it not done? The reason given was, that the plans could not be adopted this session if the Government had not the power to deviate a sufficient distance to make a 1-in-30 gradient on the same general route; and the Minister for Works added—

"I am sure that, if I had authority, I would go on with it without any delay whatever, because I could do it by sections."

It would be better to give the Minister for Works this authority, so that the 1-in-30 grade might be adopted. There was another part of the evidence where it was distinctly stated that the only justification for the line was that the traffic would not require to be carried on at anything like a quick pace. In reply to a question as to what description of traffic was expected, the Minister for Works said—

"Mineral traffic downwards, and, I suppose, supplies upwards for the miners, neither of which requires a great amount of speed."

So that it was evident the line could be built in the cheapest possible way, and by adopting a grade of 1-in-30. He would ask what was the meaning of all the fuss about the Fassifern line, when it was shown that the 1-in-30 grade, which was the very essence of the Minister for Works' justification for making these railways, could be handsomely adopted upon this Mount Perry

line, and a saving of £1,000 per mile accrue? The Minister for Works was also asked—

"Would the delay consequent upon the alteration of the grade clause the works to be suspended on that line? Yes; the men would have to be disbanded, unless a short section of four or five miles was approved of. That could be arranged for probably in a few weeks."

"And you think that could be arranged for sufficiently soon to be dealt with this session;—the section of five miles? Yes."

"You are aware, Mr. Macrossan, that all railway plans that are brought before the Legislative Council require to be laid on the table for a week before they can be taken into consideration, and that then they are to be referred to a select committee? Yes; I had forgotten that."

He would ask what about the position of the railway plans after the decision of that evening to abrogate the most valuable Standing Order on their books? Another reason had been given for making the line, and it was the worst one that could be put forward. They had been told in the public prints—those very false guides—and they had also been told in that Chamber, that the great object of the Government expending further money on railways was that they might prevent railway artisans leaving the colony. It was an absurd argument to use; nothing could be more fallacious: the chances were that three-fourths of the men, if they were let alone, would become settlers, would cease to be fattening upon the lavish expenditure which was going on, and become settlers and selectors. Again, it was a positive disadvantage to keep up a supply of men for the contractors. The duty of getting men devolved upon the contractors themselves. The chances were that, if they did not close the contract with Overend and Company, one-half the men now employed would settle upon the land in the district, and when Overend and Company got another contract they would have to import another quantity of labour, thus acting as immigration agents. It was useless calling upon the Government to be consistent, but the least hon. members could do after having assisted the Government in that temporary piece of economy that they manifested over the Fassifern line—the least hon. members could do when the consideration of this, the absurdest, the most ridiculous, and the biggest swindle of all the lines, came on, was to show their consistency. They might now say, "Do not let the Fassifern line be the only one," and insist upon the Mount Perry one being carried on that economical system. He need not say that he should call for a division, for he was determined, so long as he was in Parliament, to leave a record of the share he had taken in passing upon the future people of the country this enormous railway outlay.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said there was no doubt that the Minister for Works was a strong advocate for the 1-in-30 gradient, and that he put his individual opinion before the committee. It would be seen, on turning to the evidence of the Engineer-in-Chief, question 136, that Mr. Stanley was asked—

"Would the alteration of the gradient to 1 in 30 effect an important saving in construction?"

And his reply was—

"It would effect some saving in the item of earthworks, but not, I think, a very important one."

Then he was asked—

"You therefore would not recommend it—for economical reasons, I mean?"

Mr. Stanley replied—

"I hardly think that the character of the country through which the line passes is sufficiently difficult to warrant the introduction of an exceptional gradient such as 1 in 30."

The Mount Perry line had been carried out, so far, on a gradient of 1 in 50, and it would

have been a serious responsibility to alter the gradient of the second section in opposition to the advice of the engineer. On the Clermont line the Government were adopting a 1-in-30 gradient on the advice of the engineer, who, however, said that it was of such small extent that it did not make any material difference. In an important work the Government were bound, on engineering questions, to take the advice of the engineers. He did not know whether the Fassfern line would be carried out by Mr. Stanley, but it was quite certain that the Mount Perry one, having been undertaken by him, and he having reported that the 1-in-30 gradient would not effect an important saving, the Government would have assumed a serious responsibility had they altered the gradient. He (Mr. Buzacott) was an advocate of the 1-in-30 gradient, but on a line like this, which had been commenced and partly completed by former Governments, it would be highly undesirable that he should thrust his opinions as an element to such an extent as to cause an alteration in the gradient. He hoped, under the circumstances, the House would see fit to adopt the plans. If they were not adopted a number of men would be discharged. He disagreed with the Hon. Mr. Walsh, that when they were carrying on railway construction it was advisable to have interruptions which might make the men take to other occupations or leave the colony. When the colony was committed to railway construction the best thing they could do was to work up a corps of really effective men and keep them employed without interruption until the work was completed. He attributed much of the reduction which had been shown in the construction of railways of late years to the circumstance that they had a staff worked up to a great point of efficiency, and that they also had the labourers. It would be very injurious to allow these men to leave the Bundaberg district because the House failed to adopt the plans now before it.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said he hoped that under the circumstances the House would not approve of the plans of this railway. It was one of the most worthless lines ever placed before any Parliament. It appeared that the Government had two Engineers-in-Chief—one in the North and the second in the South. The one in the North advocated a gradient of 1 in 30, and the one in the South advocated a gradient of 1 in 50. Which opinion were they to take? It would be almost advisable to appoint another Engineer-in-Chief to decide between the two. He could not see why, in this instance, the cheaper line should not be adopted, seeing that, upon the admission of the Government, it would be required only for the carriage of minerals. He did not see why they wanted to carry minerals at from fourteen to twenty miles per hour. As to their having gangs of men at hand upon proper terms with their overseers and superintendents, that argument was simply tiddle-winking. The Postmaster-General must think they had no brains. He had had a good deal of experience in the employment of men, but when they had finished their work he did not keep them idle or employ them upon useless work until he found a profitable job for them. This argument of the Postmaster-General would have no weight with him, and he trusted it would have no weight with the House. If there were only himself and the Hon. Mr. Walsh to vote against the motion, he should feel as proud in voting against it as though they had a majority.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said the remarks of the Postmaster-General as to the difference in gradient seemed to have been misunderstood. It was true that Mr. Ballard, the Engineer of the

Northern railways, to a certain extent differed from Mr. Stanley, the Engineer of the Southern lines; but the evidence of Mr. Ballard had not been taken as to the alteration in price which would result from an alteration in gradient on this line, while the evidence of Mr. Stanley was conclusive that if an alteration in gradient were made another route would be followed, resulting in an expense not materially less than that which would be incurred by following the gradient of 1 in 50. The Hon. Mr. Taylor evidently came to the House with a preconceived idea, and was not prepared to gather any information by intelligent inquiry. How did this railway stand? If this were a proposition to construct a railway between Bundaberg and Mount Perry, he would hesitate in giving his vote for the line. He admitted, with some regret, that without having given the question adequate consideration, and for other reasons, he assisted in the initiation of the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. But the credit of the country was now committed to the construction of the line; they had gone more than half-way over the ground; the distance which had already been traversed would render the line of no practical use for the purpose for which it was intended; and the question was whether, to gratify an idea which had sprung up in the minds of some people—that ultimately the line would not pay—they should stop half-way and admit that they had been unwise in embarking in the undertaking? In other words, should they throw away thousands of pounds which they had already expended in the construction of the railway and not attempt to develop the vast mineral resources of this district? Out of one mine 285,000 tons of 20 per cent. copper ore had been raised since 1873; and the evidence of Mr. Bennett—who was a very competent man, and who had been in the district for many years—was to the effect that if this line were constructed the mineral resources of the district would be fully developed, especially if the Burrum coal-mines were worked. Then, returning to the question of gradient, the evidence was decisive, both on the part of Mr. Ballard and Mr. Stanley, that if they adopted the 1-in-30 gradient they lessened the haulage power. It would be admitted that the main object in constructing that line was to draw minerals; and they would require, not a light line of railway such as would be required for passenger traffic, but a line which would possess powerful haulage power. The evidence of Mr. Bennett was uncontradicted. It was true that Mr. Gregory, having had his attention directed to a particular portion of this mineral district, was of opinion that the ore in that particular portion was not of sufficient value to pay for working it; but experience had proved that other mines which had been developed had paid. Out of the Mount Perry mine alone some 18,000 tons of copper had been taken since 1873. That line had been initiated as a tentative measure to develop one of the richest mineral districts in the colony; and they would be acting in a most absurd and farcical manner if, having constructed half the line, they refused to construct the balance because they believed the district was not so wealthy as they imagined it to be some years ago.

The HON. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said the Hon. Mr. Taylor had declared his intention of voting against the motion, even if he were only supported by the Hon. Mr. Walsh: the hon. gentleman should have his support also. If he had had the honour of a seat in that Chamber when this line was first brought before them he would have voted against it. One of the ablest men in the colony, Mr. Gregory, in speaking about this railway before the select com-

mittee, said, in answer to a question as to whether the construction of the line would assist in the development of the mineral resources of the district, that it would only assist in their development to a very small extent. Mr. Gregory's opinion was not only valuable from his experience as Surveyor-General, but from the position he now held as Geological Surveyor. It was argued that having already spent a certain amount upon this line they ought to finish its construction, but if a man entered into a speculation which did not pay he did not carry it on, but abandoned it at once; so in this matter it would be much better for the colony to abandon the railway than to complete it. There was not one paragraph in the evidence taken by the select committee which showed that the line would pay.

The HON. C. S. MEIN: There is no evidence that the Clermont Railway will pay.

The HON. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said they had the evidence of two hon. members of that House—that of the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Lambert—both of whom spoke from experience—that the line would pay. The minority in this case would have the satisfaction of knowing that they had done their best to prevent a waste of public money, and that their effort to prevent that waste was placed on record. The report of the committee touching this line said—

“Although the evidence of Mr. Bennett would lead to the conclusion that the traffic upon this railway will be large, your committee cannot express the opinion that the line is likely, for some years to come, to be remunerative. The Commissioner states, however, that it is intended to work the traffic of this line on a more economical system than has yet been adopted in the colony.”

Where was this economical system? They certainly were not adopting it by constructing a line at a gradient of 1 in 50. He had every confidence that the Postmaster-General would not have signed the report unless he believed it to be correct, but there was no evidence to support it.

The HON. F. J. IVORY said he could not give a silent vote on this question. With regard to the argument of the Hon. Mr. Melbourne that this line would not pay, if they were to wait until they were convinced that a line would pay before they voted for its construction they would have scarcely any railways in the colony. Hon. members generally voted for railways upon the understanding that they would develop traffic, and nearly all the railways which had been before them that day were tentative measures. He could not say that he was very sanguine with regard to this particular line, although he believed there would be more traffic than was anticipated by many hon. members. If this line were constructed, traffic from the Burnett and heads of the Auburn would be concentrated at Mount Perry. If the country had not been committed to the railway, however, he certainly should have voted against it; but, as they had built the walls of the house, they would be very foolish not to roof it in. With regard to the 1-in-30 gradient, he should have been very glad if the remainder of that line could have been constructed upon that principle, more especially as the Minister for Works had said that it would effect a saving of £1,000 a-mile. Judging from other parts of the evidence it would also effect considerable saving in the mileage itself. If there were any means by which the approval of these plans could be delayed and other plans upon the gradient of 1 in 30 substituted, he would like to see that course adopted. At the present moment, however, he confessed he could not see how that could be done. Two Parliaments had agreed to the railway, money had been borrowed and ap-

propriated for its construction, and he did not see how they were to abandon the work. He confessed he scarcely knew what course to take in the matter, but he had stated what were his exact views upon the subject.

The HON. W. GRAHAM said the Hon. Mr. Ivory had remarked that it was impossible for him to give a silent vote. He thought it would have been better if the hon. gentleman had given a silent vote, for he had certainly damned the line with faint praise. The Hon. Mr. Mein left it to be inferred that Mr. Gregory in some measure approved of this line, but if hon. members would read several answers to questions which were put to Mr. Gregory they must come to a different conclusion. He would instance the following portion of Mr. Gregory's examination:—

“Do you not think that £4 or £5 per ton on copper would be a serious impost? It would not be on metallic copper, although it would be on copper ore, but the ore is not of a quality that would be carried to Bundaberg even free.

“Can you not conceive the carriage of £4 or £5 per ton making all the difference in working the mine? Yes; a single pound per ton might make a difference between a very large profit and a very heavy loss, but I am afraid that the mines at Mount Perry are all outside the amount of £1, or outside the question of £4 or £5. The cost of carriage could hardly be sufficiently reduced to meet the cost of working the mine, unless it was for the convenience of bringing coal up to the mine—that is the only thing for which the railway would be useful for the district.”

He had heard no other argument in favour of that line than that, having chucked away a certain amount of money, they should chuck away some £70,000 more. If people conducted their private business in such a way they would most inevitably come to ruin. There had no doubt been a disgraceful waste of money. The question of gradient would not influence him in the matter at all: he should vote straight against the line.

The HON. J. C. HEUSSLER said that, hon. members having quoted all the evidence they could against the line, he would like to bring forward a little evidence in its favour. He was the more anxious to do that because he was convinced of the rich mineral resources of Mount Perry district, and was satisfied that, if the line were made, English capital would at no distant date be embarked in its development. Some hon. members in that Chamber, embarked in pastoral pursuits, who had spoken against the line had spoken against their own interests, because if a large number of miners were collected in the Mount Perry district they must necessarily consume a quantity of beef and mutton. There could be no doubt that the pastoral and mining interests should be concurrent—that was the case in every new country in any part of the world. What had made South America what she was to-day but the combination of mining and pastoral interests? The two interests were logically connected. The evidence of Mr. Bennett was of considerable value. He had been fighting against great disadvantages in the development of the mineral resources of Mount Perry for the last ten years, but his confidence in the place was unabated, because he had refused offers of a good salary elsewhere. Mr. Bennett had striven to keep the mining population together. He had not proceeded upon vague ideas, but was guided by actual results. In his evidence, Mr. Bennett said he had been told by a respectable merchant that another mine would be worked as soon as that railway was extended. They must not lose sight of these facts; if they did they would be casting a slur upon Mr. Bennett. If they did not believe his evidence why did they examine him? Great stress had been laid upon the

evidence of Mr. Gregory, and no doubt it had been honestly and fairly given; but Mr. Gregory could not look into the bowels of the earth and tell them exactly what amount of copper was to be found there. Mr. Gregory, like other gentlemen, based his ideas upon the geological formation of the country, and experience had told them over and over again that in the formation of ideas upon this basis gentlemen were very frequently mistaken. They knew there was copper in the district; that a number of mines had proved the fact; and that others would be started if this railway were made. The Hon. Mr. Ivory, in talking about the traffic which would come from the Burnett and heads of the Auburn, had forgotten that a copper mine existed at Rawbelle. Another fact which did not appear to have come out in the evidence was that there were antimony mines at St. John's Creek which contained payable ore. They were not worked, however, to any extent, for the same reason that the copper mines of Mount Perry had not been fully worked—namely, that there was a difficulty in conveying the ore to the coast. He had no hesitation in saying that if the railway were taken to Mount Perry these antimony mines, which were not situated more than fifty miles distant from that place, would be worked. They would be the means of bringing, probably, no less than thirty thousand tons of ore to the railway. Under these circumstances he hoped his squatting friends would pause before they condemned this railway so unsparingly.

The Hon. W. F. LAMBERT said they had occupied considerable time in the discussion of the question, but he must say that he was now of the same opinion that he was when the discussion commenced; and although they had made a small portion of the line, he thought it better to let it remain there. If their mines were found to be so valuable, he saw no reason why they should not be worked profitably when more than one-half the distance to port was covered by a railway. He should be prepared to support the line if returns were furnished to show that there would be any traffic whatever upon it; but at present he should vote against the motion.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY confessed to having been one of those who was as strenuously opposed to this line as any member of the House, and he felt that he should be hardly justified in sitting quietly and not stating what appeared to him to be the few reasons that might be advanced in favour of this line being carried out. He was anxious to give it credit for everything that could be said in its favour. One point was, that a large expenditure had already been incurred in making a survey and carrying out the line as it went, and he should be very sorry to see that money quite thrown away. If it were a matter of private enterprise, and he were the director of a company that had made the line, he should say, "let the thing go; let the first loss be the last loss;" but when they came to consider it as a national undertaking they must look a little beyond the Mount Perry Mines, which had been the chief argument used in favour of the construction of the railway. It had been said that minerals could be brought down to the extent of £20,000 per annum, and if they took 10 per cent. of that as railway freight it would give a return of £2,000 per annum. That would be the return from an expenditure of about £200,000 on a line 66 miles in extent. The evidence was all contained under one heading—the probability, and only the probability, of any return being received from the mines. There was no agriculture, very little pastoral occupation, and the only persons living in the vicinity were people who were hanging on the hope of

something being made out of the line. He had seen a good deal of the working of mines in Queensland and elsewhere, and the result had always been to show that a railway never made a mine, the mines always made the railway. At question 62, Mr. Herbert, Commissioner for Railways, was asked—

"Is there any settlement upon it—agricultural or mining? Not a large settlement along it."

Again, at question 65, he was asked—

"By the Chairman: Is not the Bundaberg line likely to attract some inland traffic from the Burnett? I should think it would. We have been told—I do not know upon what grounds—that a mineral traffic will be developed when the line is formed;—that the owners of the mine are awaiting the building of the line."

There was something to be got out of the building of the line, and if they could get the Government to consent to a sufficiently low tariff, they would send down a few thousand tons of low-class ores: but was the colony at large to pay for trying to make a company which had not hitherto paid to be worked at all a success? Why not construct the line upon the principle of grants to companies, or, at any rate, by land grants? Why hamper the colony with additional taxation to assist no one but the owners of a few very inferior mines in that locality? There was, however, another point in its favour—that ultimately, if railways would pay in that district, this was the one which must drain the whole western district of the Burnett, and so far it would ultimately result in an advantage. It might also do away with the necessity of attempting to carry the line from Maryborough further inland. The Maryborough and Gympie line was decidedly a southern line, and the inhabitants there must be satisfied never to see a line carried westward from that district. No doubt, at no distant period, political pressure would be brought to extend the line west from Gympie; but if there was to be any line at all, this was the natural and best of the western portion of the district; and if they were going to expend money on a railway there, they might as well spend it on one line as on the other. He should not vote against the line, simply because he candidly confessed that having thoroughly opposed it originally, and that as those who had done so had been outweighed by the action of the Government, it had become not a question for the country to decide upon, but a question of the Government against the country. They had the money to spend, and they must spend it. He had said his say against it. He felt as strongly as any member of the House that it was a waste of money, and he threw the onus of the construction of the line on the Government of the day; and he felt perfectly sure if he was in the House in three years' time he would be able to prove that the whole thing was a fiasco and a fraud upon the revenue.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said as further discussion had taken place since his reply, he must ask the indulgence of the House to make a few further remarks. The whole argument for the carrying of the plans was that if the House threw them out it would stultify itself. That House had three times passed Loan Bills embodying sums of money for carrying on the line; it had adopted plans and sections for carrying out the first section; and it would be most inconsistent if they now—when the plans for the completion of the line and carrying out the object originally designed by Parliament—rejected them. £200,000 had been spent on the line, and the only hope of its ever being remunerative was to finish it by expending the £180,000 provided last year. The hon. Mr. Gregory had said that if it were a private undertaking he would not go further, but would let

the first loss be the last loss ; but he would point out that the Government did not undertake works of this character for the purpose of making money out of them. Their object was to provide internal communication. To give an illustration—they spent £120,000 a-year for education for which they got no direct return, but the necessity of educating the people was so palpable that they did not hesitate to spend the money necessary to do so ; and in the same way they should not hesitate to go considerably beyond the financial question to carry out internal communication. He felt, however, that it was hopeless to convince members who had already made up their minds on the subject.

Question put, and the House divided :—

CONTENTS, 9.

The Hons. C. H. Buzacott, F. T. Gregory, F. H. Hart, J. F. McDougall, J. C. Heussler, J. S. Turner, W. Aplin, C. S. Mein, and F. J. Ivory.

NON-CONTENTS, 8.

The Hons. W. H. Walsh, W. Pettigrew, L. Hope, W. F. Lambert, W. Graham, J. Taylor, J. Cowlshaw, and C. S. D. Melbourne.

Resolved in the affirmative.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION BILL.

Resumption of adjourned debate on second reading.

The Hon. J. F. McDOUGALL said he intended to support this measure. The Act now about to expire had, he considered, worked very well, but this Bill was a vast improvement upon it, inasmuch as it provided for many things that were absent from that Act. Some time ago he moved for a return in order to ascertain how the Act had been administered, but it had only been laid upon the table to-day, and he had not been able to obtain from it all the information he desired. However, he had gathered from it that the great fault of the Act was in the administration of it : that, in consequence of large numbers of persons who should have contributed to the fund either not having been served with notice or omitting to pay when so served, calls necessarily had to be made to meet the requirements of the district. He found from this return that in the West Moreton district alone about £3,000 had been raised, which was about £4 per head amongst 700 contributors to the fund. This Bill provided for the Government stepping in where boards failed in their duty, and that was a great improvement upon the late Act. The appointment of the boards was also vastly improved. Another very necessary provision was the penalty for obtaining scalps and selling them beyond the district in which they were obtained. It was within his knowledge that marsupial collectors were in the habit of going to a district, killing the animals, and taking the scalps into another, wherever the highest price could be obtained, which was very objectionable, and he was glad to see a penalty imposed. He entirely concurred in the measure, and the only alteration he should like to see was that the price for wallabies should be 4d.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said that on a previous occasion he had spoken to the question of adjournment, but now he intended to speak to the Bill.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL rose to a point of order. The hon. gentleman had spoken upon the second reading, and also upon the motion for adjournment.

The PRESIDING CHAIRMAN : I think the hon. member has already spoken.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said that, in order to give the Hon. Mr. Melbourne an opportunity of speaking, he would move that the debate be adjourned.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said that, in speaking to the Bill, he would ask hon. members to refer to the petition from the Marsupial District of Rockhampton which had been printed. It showed that, with the exception of one station, everyone in the northern part of the district was opposed to the Bill. One of the gentlemen who signed it paid over £600 a-year as rent, and others paid £512, £225, £180, £150, and £122 respectively. The signatures represented the whole of the squatters, with one exception, of the Rockhampton Marsupial District. The petitioners said that they objected to the Bill because it did not impose a general tax. The Brands Act imposed a general tax, the Divisional Boards Act and the Sheep Assessment Act also imposed a general tax ; the only tax which was not general was the marsupial, which was confined to certain districts defined by proclamation. The Bill did not, like the Municipalities Act, give persons power to apply for incorporation and the right to tax themselves. It did not, like the Divisional Boards Act, enable taxpayers to say what amount of taxes should be imposed, but it empowered the Minister to proclaim the Act in such districts as he might think fit. When the Marsupial Bill was first originated, Mr. Gordon, the Chief Inspector of Stock, in the report he issued in January 1877, said that during a recent tour in the North he found the opinions divided as to the immediate cause of the enormous increase of marsupials, and added that some attributed it to the destruction of native dogs, and others to steps having been taken to arrest the increase of marsupials. Mr. Gordon went on to suggest that a Bill should be introduced, and that a portion of the expenses under it should be recouped by the sale of skins. Then, in a subsequent report, the same gentleman quoted the opinion of a squatter who was well known throughout the colony—Mr. McConnell of Cressbrook, whose recommendation was, that a Bill most likely to meet the views of the stock-owners generally was one applicable to the whole of the colony, and that to all persons who had erected wallaby-proof fences a rebate should be allowed in proportion to the actual cost of such fences. Then, in a further official letter, Mr. Gordon quoted the opinion of Mr. Rawdon Greene, who was well known in the Central district, and who said that the best suggestion that he could offer was to endeavour to carry out the work of destruction in the main scrubs. To effect that object he advocated the alienation of scrub land by indefeasible leases, with the right of pre-emption at present value by certain yearly instalments. The Marsupial Bill introduced at that time was different to the one that was eventually passed, and when it became law it was only proclaimed in certain districts—West Moreton, Wide Bay, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Warwick, Goondiwindi, Maranoa, Dawson, Springsure, and Clermont. It was not proclaimed in one of the western districts, and in any single district north of Rockhampton, with the exception of St. Lawrence, which was subsequently formed out of the Rockhampton district. A proclamation was next issued reducing the size of the Rockhampton district ; and now they found, as the present Marsupial Act would expire at the end of this year, that a Bill was introduced dealing with the subject imposing a tax of the nature that he had pointed out, and giving the Ministry of the day the power of taxing any particular district. It was in consequence of the introduction of that Bill that the petition to which he had alluded, and which was signed by the most influential graziers in the Rockhampton district, was sent down. With the exception of Messrs. Archer, Mr. P. F. Macdonald, and Messrs. Paterson and Jones, the petition contained the names of all the large

stockowners in the Rockhampton district, and they were all opposed to the Bill. He would draw the attention of hon. members to the debates which took place in the other Chamber. Mr. Norton, the member for Port Curtis, whose district adjoined Rockhampton on the south, and Mr. Archer, member for Blackall, both opposed the Bill, and Mr. Norton kindly supplied him with particulars showing that one assessment only had been levied in the Port Curtis district and that a second was being made. No assessment had been made in the St. Lawrence district. Mr. Norton suffered in the same way as the petitioners, for there were no marsupials within one hundred miles of him, and he was compelled to pay for the destruction of marsupials on Crown lands. The Bill did not come to the Council unanimously, it was opposed by men in the other House who had seen the working of the present Act. It had been opposed by Mr. Norton and Mr. Archer, and he believed that if Mr. Stevenson, the member for Normanby, had been down it would have been opposed by him, also, at the request of his constituents. He had endeavoured to point out to hon. gentlemen that it was unfair to tax a man against his consent—that it was opposed to the principle of the Local Government and Divisional Boards Act that a tax should be imposed without the consent of the people. The Bill had not been treated as a Government measure in the Assembly, for the Colonial Secretary appeared to have accepted Mr. Norton's amendments altering and reducing the amount of the rates. He (Mr. Melbourne) was quite disinterested in the matter. He was opposing the Bill at the request of an influential number of stockowners who had signed the petition. Turning now to the Bill itself, which dealt with the destruction of marsupials in a way that was contrary to the opinion of Mr. Gordon, it would be seen that in section two they were asked to repeal the Native Dogs Act passed in 1852. In the debates in *Hansard* he had not been able to find that even one reason had been assigned for the repeal of that Act. Some of the graziers said that native dogs were useful in destroying marsupials, but others denied the statement. The next thing they found was that power was given to the Colonial Secretary to define districts, and that was one of the provisions the petitioners complained of. If the whole colony were to be divided into districts, and the districts were allowed to say whether they should tax themselves, the objection would disappear, but the Bill contemplated that the Colonial Secretary should mark out districts, and, as he would probably act upon information that he received from other persons, he might be the cause of committing an injustice such as was perpetrated in the Rockhampton district. The interpretation of the word run was the most extraordinary he had ever heard. The Bill said that it should mean—

"Any land whether held in fee-simple or under conditional purchase, lease, license, or otherwise."

In this respect the Bill differed materially from the present Act. If they turned to the eleventh clause they would see that it was declared that in no case should the assessment on any "run" be less than 5s. per annum, and the consequence would be that the owner of a piece of land in a marsupial district would be held to be the owner of a "run," no matter how small his holding might be, and would be subject to this tax of 5s. It might be said that that difficulty was got over by the 17th clause, which enabled the Governor in Council to declare any portion of a district within a radius of five miles from any town or village to be exempt from the operations of the Act. He

would point out, however, that the Glenmore Scrub on the Yaamba road, and within three miles of Rockhampton, was one of the worst places for marsupials; any quantity of wallabies could be shot there. If the distance of five miles was proclaimed, such a bad spot would be exempted from the operations of the Act. The 5th clause provided for the election of the board, and was similar to the clause in the present Act; but the 6th did away with one of the great causes of complaint against the present Act. In the Rockhampton marsupial district, for example, where there were few sheep and where three cattle directors were elected, the complaint was that they were overridden by the sheep directors appointed by the Government. The petitioners complained that they had no voice in the election of the persons who taxed them, the constitution of the district being such that they only had a voice in the election of cattle directors. This objection was got over by the 6th clause providing that any owner of not less than 500 head of cattle or 2,500 sheep, in any district, should be qualified to be elected a member of the board, and that any owner of not less than 100 head of cattle or 500 sheep might vote at the election of members. The 9th clause and section C might be more favourably dealt with when the measure got into committee. The schedule had evidently been taken from the old statute, and the effect of the proposed law upon it had not been studied as it ought to have been. Schedule A, which contained the certificate of destruction required by the 20th clause, would also need looking after. In the 24th section it was provided that the fines and penalties for any breach of the Act might be recovered before two or more justices on the information of the secretary or any member of the board, or by any inspector of sheep or brands. What had the Inspector of Brands to do with the Bill? He was not referred to in the measure in any other part. The clause would have to be amended in that respect, and it ought also to provide that breaches of the Act should be punishable in the nearest court of petty sessions. The eleventh clause compelled a board to levy a minimum assessment of two shillings on every hundred head of sheep, and in the event of a failure by the board to do so, the next clause empowered the Colonial Secretary to levy an assessment at the minimum rate. He considered these provisions objectionable. If the Act was to be applied to certain districts, why should not the representatives of the stockowners in the district have the right to say whether they should be taxed or not, and what the amount of taxation should be? The 14th clause declared how payment of the assessment was to be enforced, but did not say that it should be before the nearest court of petty sessions. Schedule A would require very careful examination in connection with the 21st clause. It seemed to him that it would be impossible to carry out the 20th clause, the second portion of which read—

"And all such scalps shall forthwith be destroyed by fire in the presence of the persons granting such certificate, who shall thereafter forward to the board a certificate that they have been so destroyed."

With regard to the issue of the certificate it was provided—

"When the scalps of any marsupials, killed within the district, are delivered to the secretary of the board thereof, or to any person duly authorised by the board to receive them, a certificate in the form of schedule A hereto, signed by such secretary or person so authorised, and also by the chairman or some member of the board, shall be granted to the person delivering such scalps, and such certificate shall entitle the holder thereof to a bonus on each scalp so delivered at the rate appearing in schedule B hereto."

A member might be fifty miles distant. Why should not the scalps be destroyed by the clerk

of petty sessions as was done at the present time at Rockhampton? The 24th clause was also objectionable, and might be so amended as to prevent persons travelling unnecessary distances in case of prosecutions. Why was the 15th section of the Act, which provided that persons who had effected improvements should be exempt from the operation of the Act, eliminated? At some places upon the Peak Downs a large amount of money had been expended upon marsupial fencing. If the Bill passed in its present shape these persons would not be entitled to sixpenny worth of consideration, and would come under the operation of the Act. It had been said, "Oh! if these persons fence the nuisance off, they throw it on to the runs of other persons." If a man protected himself surely he complied with the object of that Bill, because in protecting himself he reclaimed a certain area of country which was at the present time useless. He was so strongly convinced of the injustice of the Act and of that Bill that he was strongly inclined to move that the Bill be read a second time that day six months. But if the House thought the Bill should be read a second time he would endeavour, to the extent of his poor abilities, to improve the measure in committee. He had no doubt some hon. members would agree with him in saying that those who were to be taxed should have the right to say whether the taxation was necessary or not. He wished it to be understood that he did not impute partiality to the present Government in the proclamation of districts. The districts were, he believed, proclaimed by the previous Government, and had only been maintained by the present Government because they were thought to be fair and just. The petition which had been presented to the House, however, showed how very unfair these districts were, and that some alteration in the existing arrangements was urgently required. He had no personal interest in the matter. It did not matter to him whether the Bill were passed or not; but as the member of a district the views of which had been represented in the manner he had described in the petition before hon. members, he had felt it his duty to make these lengthy remarks.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that, speaking to the motion for adjournment, he would make one or two remarks upon the long and exhaustive speech with which the Hon. Mr. Melbourne had favoured them. He hoped the hon. member would not deem it an undue liberty if he reminded him that upon the second reading of a Bill it was not usual to indulge in such a lengthy analysis of details. With regard to the petition which had been presented, he did not think anyone would deny that the signatures were those of influential persons. But the petitioners did not know what the Bill was when they petitioned, and the measure had been so altered in its passage through another place that most of its objectionable features had been removed. Those which remained could easily be removed in committee of that House. He could not understand why there should be any strong objection to the Bill in its present form. He admitted that there were imperfections in matters of detail. The Hon. Mr. Melbourne said that neither the Local Government Act nor the Divisional Boards Act compelled the local authorities to levy taxes, or enabled the Colonial Secretary or the Government for the time being to step in and levy a tax if the local authorities failed to levy it. The hon. member was under a mistake. The Divisional Boards Act required the board to levy a tax of sixpence in the £ within four months of its constitution, while the Local Government Act required the local authorities to levy a tax of 4d. in the £. Both Acts required

that the Colonial Treasurer or the Minister should step in and levy and collect a rate; if under certain circumstances the board did not do so no hardship could be experienced. The Colonial Secretary would levy the minimum tax; but if the money were not required it would not be spent, and would be to the credit of the board in case of emergency. The Colonial Secretary was not compelled to step in. If he were sure there were no marsupials in a district he would not put the law in motion or tax the people. But suppose in the case of two districts, one adjoining the other, one district determined to kill off the marsupials while the other refused to do so—that would operate very unfairly upon the people who were spending their money in exterminating the marsupials. As to the description of a run, there was no doubt room for improvement. If the Hon. Mr. Melbourne would suggest an improvement he would be happy to consider it. In the matter of districts the Colonial Secretary had not the power which the Hon. Mr. Melbourne supposed, and he did not intend to give that power. He would, however, introduce a clause stating that the Governor in Council might constitute any part of the colony a marsupial district for the purposes of the Act. Where a marsupial district was not refused it would not be constituted. Even if a district were constituted the tax would not be enforced unless the district contains marsupials. With reference to the clause repealing the Native Dogs Act, he was informed that it was introduced into the Bill because it was originally intended to make native dogs come under the head of marsupials. The Assembly, however, decided to eliminate all reference to native dogs; but the clause repealing the existing Act was allowed to go, because the Act had proved inoperative. He had a number of amendments to move which would improve the details of the Bill. The measure would not press with hardship upon any stockowner. All that it required was intelligent administration.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH said his first intention was to vote against the Bill; but on further consideration he thought it would be better to take the Bill into Committee, where it might be made a better measure than it then appeared to be. He must, however, take exception to the ruling laid down by the Postmaster-General with reference to the speech of the Hon. Mr. Melbourne, to the effect that the hon. gentleman had taken an unusual course in referring to the clauses of the Bill on the motion for its second reading. That was a singular objection to take, for the Postmaster-General had himself alluded to the clauses in detail. The hon. gentleman appeared to have commenced his speech with the intention of alluding to every clause, but fearing that he might weary the House he had desisted. Under these circumstances he should not find fault with the Hon. Mr. Melbourne and say that he had violated the practice of Parliament. There was no practice of Parliament which supported the dictum of the Postmaster-General. The hon. gentleman should not endeavour to enforce doctrines which appeared to flash across his mind under a momentary sense of pain or trouble. There were several things in the Bill which he did not like. It was oppressive and would require several alterations to make it less oppressive. There were whole districts of marsupials which that Bill placed at the mercy of the Colonial Secretary. That Minister could gazette these places as districts, and if any one of the districts so gazetted showed their repugnance to the movement by refusing to elect a board to work the Act, the Colonial Secretary could not only nominate gentlemen to perform the duties of the board, but could nominate men who had no qualifica-

tions for the post other than the fact that they were stockowners. They need not be resident in the districts. While residents of the districts were fettered in their selection the Colonial Secretary was entirely unfettered. The 7th clause read—

"When no board, or an insufficient number of members to constitute a board has been elected for any district, the Governor in Council may appoint fit and proper persons to be members of the board of such district, whether possessed of the aforesaid qualification or not; and the board shall be deemed to be duly constituted on a notification of their appointment being published in the *Gazette*."

This was one of those pieces of officialism which seemed to be gradually extending under the domination of the present Government. He would draw attention to one or two other clauses. If hon. members would look at the interpretation clause they would see a curious definition of the word "scalp," which was said to be a portion of the skin of the head of any marsupial to which both ears were attached. That evidently meant that any portion of the skin of the head would be sufficient to prove the marsupial had been destroyed, so long as the skin was taken from the head of an animal to which ears were attached. That was one instance of slovenliness in draughting the measure. In the 5th clause, which provided for the election of cattle-owners, he should endeavour to do as he had done in other measures, and strike out the words, "Colonial Secretary," with a view of inserting the words, "Governor in Council." The 6th clause said—

"6. Any owner of not less than five hundred head of cattle or two thousand five hundred sheep in any district shall be qualified to be elected a member of the board of such district; and any owner of not less than one hundred head of cattle or five hundred sheep may vote at the election of members of the board of such district."

He could not see why there should be any qualification at all, and he would endeavour to amend the clause, so that it might read, "Any resident of a district liable to be assessed under the Act should be qualified," &c. Another important clause was that which provided that no district should be brought under the operation of the Act unless the largest portion of the owners of stock in that district petitioned for it. Even when the Government had received such a petition at least three months' notice should be given to the rest of the inhabitants that such a petition had been received, so that the persons who objected might prove in what way they were imposed upon. It was a most arbitrary thing to allow a Colonial Secretary, at the instigation of any person, to go into his office and order his Under Secretary to issue a proclamation that such and such a district should be brought under the operation of the Act. He knew individuals who, under that Bill, would be taxed to the extent of £50 or £60 per annum. These very persons, if they wished to get up a kangaroo hunt upon their runs, could not do so—it would take them several days to find such an animal. The only way to make the Bill tolerable was to give opportunity to each district, and, as far as possible, to every resident in that district, to determine whether it should be brought under the operation of the Bill, and, if so, to what extent.

Motion for adjournment, by leave, withdrawn.

The Hon. W. PETTIGREW thought considerable hardship would result from the provision of the 11th clause relative to the minimum assessment. Other cases of hardship would arise under clause 18, which appeared to him to be the most unjust of the whole Act. It provided that contributions were to be supplemented from the Consolidated Revenue. In what manner was he, as a timber dealer, interested in the destruction of marsupials? People resident in towns who

derived no benefit whatever from the Act would have to contribute to the destruction of marsupials under this clause.

Question put and passed, and the committal of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

The House adjourned at thirteen minutes to 10 o'clock, until to-morrow.