

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 1880**

---

Electronic reproduction of original hardcopy

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.**

*Monday, 15 November, 1880.*

Brisbane Racecourse Bill—third reading.—New Member.  
—Gulland Branch Railway.—United Municipalities  
Bill—committee.—Supply.

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

**BRISBANE RACECOURSE BILL—THIRD  
READING.**

On the motion of Mr. NORTON, the Bill was  
read a third time, passed, and ordered to be  
transmitted to the Legislative Council with  
message in the usual form.

**NEW MEMBER.**

The SPEAKER having announced the return  
of the writ declaring James Foote, Esquire, duly  
elected to serve in the Legislative Assembly as  
member for the electoral district of Bundamba,  
the hon. gentleman was introduced, and, having  
taken the prescribed oath and signed the roll of  
the House, took his seat.

# GULLAND BRANCH RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Mr. Macrossan), in moving—

That the proposed branch line starting, on the Plan laid on the table of the House on the 1st November, at a point on the Southern and Western Railway marked 18 miles 31 chains 0½ links, and terminating at a point marked on the plan of the proposed branch, 1 mile 12 chains 49 links, portion 265, be approved of, with the sections and book of reference belonging thereto; and that the said plan, sections, and book of reference be transmitted to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form—

explained that the line referred to was the one which Mr. Gulland proposed to construct from his coalpits to the Southern and Western line; the other branch line in connection with the Southern and Western line had been abandoned. As hon. members were well posted up on the subject of this line, it would not be necessary for him to say more.

Mr. DICKSON said he rose, not to take objection to the plans, but to express his regret that the Minister for Works had not seen his way to improve the Bill in the manner suggested by the leader of the Opposition when the Bill was in committee. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) then said:—

“He hoped the Minister for Works would recommit the Bill, in order to give the committee an opportunity of striking out the clauses which had been put in. He was not unreasonable in asking that the Bill should be made sensible. The Bill sent down from the Upper House this afternoon should be a warning to the Government; it did not look well when Bills were sent away in such a slipshod state. Hon. members on the Ministerial side might take his (Mr. Griffith's) word that when they had read the Bill over calmly, dismissing, if possible, from their minds the idea that it had been amended from the Opposition side of the House, they would see that some alteration was necessary. He did not speak in the interest of one side of the House more than another, but he asked that for the sake of the credit of the House the Bill should be made reasonable. The Bill now contained clauses giving certain privileges which had only been inserted in reference to future duties, the provisions relating to which had all been omitted. He hoped the Minister for Works would take steps to make the Bill self-consistent before it left the House.

And the Minister for Works, in reply, said that

“When the House went into committee he informed the committee that it was the intention of the Government to make the line open to the public. The clauses which the hon. gentleman wished to be omitted could not be omitted, because they gave the public the right to use the railway. He saw no reason now for recommitting the Bill, but if after he had read it again he saw anything which required alteration he should recommit it. At the present time he saw none.”

He (Mr. Dickson) regretted that the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) was not present, as he would no doubt have liked to say something on the subject. When the Bill was introduced into committee the intention was that it should be a public measure, and that everyone of the coal proprietors in the district should have an opportunity of using the proposed line; but the clause which had been inserted to make the Bill a public one now stood alone without the machinery necessary to enable the public to use the line. At this stage he would express a hope that the Minister for Works would see his way to make the required provision.

Question put and passed.

## UNITED MUNICIPALITIES BILL.— COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee to consider the Bill.

The PREMIER (Mr. McIlwraith), in moving that the preamble be postponed, said that on the second reading of the Bill the leader of the Opposition advanced against the Bill two objec-

tions which he (Mr. McIlwraith) regarded as tangible. The first was that there was no limit to the amount of additional taxation which the measure might involve. To remedy that he had added to clause 15 a proviso limiting the amount of additional revenue to be raised to 6d. in the pound. The other objection was against the proposed system of rating in the component municipalities, by which the rating would be heavier in certain of the municipalities in proportion to the amount of benefit received. A very proper objection had been taken to that provision because it would operate unequally. There was some force in that, and, therefore, he had prepared an amendment which secured that the additional rating should be in proportion to the value of the property in each case, notwithstanding the way in which it was assessed, whether under the Divisional Boards Act or the Municipalities Act. He would move that the preamble should be postponed.

Mr. DICKSON said he regretted to see that it was the intention of the Government to press on this measure at the present time. He believed that it would be wiser to let the divisional boards get into working order before proposing increased taxation in connection with main roads, which, doubtless, was the chief cause of the introduction of the Bill. It would be a great deal better if the Government were for a time to carry out what was the understood intention, if it was not expressed in absolute terms, that they would make provision for the main roads. The divisional boards had several difficulties to contend with. They had to encourage the people to provide rates which were levied on a system not altogether acceptable, and until they got the machinery of the Divisional Boards Act into working order it would be placing them at a great disadvantage to impose additional duties upon them. The Government might fairly have carried out their promise for one or two years by boldly stating what they considered main roads and making provision for them, and in due time the divisional boards if they continued to exist ought to take charge of all roads. One of the first things in connection with the divisional boards system which would have to be attended to would be the placing of the mode of assessment on a more satisfactory basis, for at the present time it had decidedly the appearance of, and in its incidence was a heavier tax on improvements than on the actual value of property. He would repeat that it would be unwise to press on this matter at the present time. He was sure, from what he had learnt from members of the different divisional boards in the district, that the Bill was not looked on with favour, and that it would be far better to leave the matter stand over for a session or two than to impose duties upon the boards which they did not see their way fairly to carry out, and which would place them at a great disadvantage.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Mr. Palmer) said the hon. member had not favoured the Committee with anything new upon the subject, and he was afraid that he (Mr. Palmer) had nothing particularly new to tell them. Since the divisional boards were initiated nothing had occurred to alter the opinion which he had expressed last May on the subject of main roads in a letter to the Chairman of the Clifton Divisional Board. As it was the custom now to trouble the House with a great deal of what had been said before, he would read that letter, and thus put the matter before the Committee in the plainest possible form.

“May 18.

“SIR.—In acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 4th instant, embodying a resolution passed by your board on the previous day—that the Government be re-

quested to relieve the board of the control and maintenance of that portion of the Cambooya and Goondiwindi road which passes through the Clifton division—I have the honour to inform you that I am unable to recommend the Executive to give effect to this resolution, as the subject is one in which is involved a very large and important question of public money.

"The Act under which the different boards have been constituted no doubt gives the Governor in Council power to except by proclamation from the jurisdiction of any board any roads in their division; but it does not in any way compel the Governor to do so. Since the passing of the Act very considerable difficulty has arisen in connection with this provision of the statute, which the Government hope to remove by a Bill which it is intended to introduce during the ensuing session, and which, I trust, will place the matter on a proper basis; but in the meantime I take this opportunity of pointing out to you and to the boards generally that the maintenance of main roads (the definition of which I confess myself unable to arrive at), after all, resolves itself into a much more simple question than it appears to be at the first blush, and may thus be briefly summarised: To maintain a road as a main road at the public expense, and to expend upon it, say, £100 per mile in its construction, or in general repairs, as the case may be, would involve a very large outlay (certainly more than one-third the amount to be expended per mile) for permanent staff, &c.; whereas, if the work be performed as contemplated by the Act, the board will be called upon to contribute £33 6s. 8d. only out of every £100 expended, the balance, £66 13s. 4d., being defrayed from the general revenue. I maintain that this is a far better arrangement for the boards, and an incomparably better one for the colony generally, than the expenditure by the Government of a large amount to be frittered away on staff and appliances which could only be utilised to a limited extent.

"It strikes me that it is very often forgotten by the ratepayers in the divisions that they are also taxpayers to the general revenue. They should, however, look at this matter in their dual capacity.

"Of one thing I am quite certain, that neither this nor any other Government can settle the question of what should and what should not be main roads without rendering the Act perfectly nugatory, and making what was bad before infinitely worse by involving a double expenditure for a divisional and a general staff.—I have the honour to be, sir, your most obedient servant,

"(Signed) A. H. PALMER.

"Charles Clarke, Esq., East Talgai."

Nothing that had occurred since had altered the opinion expressed in that letter, and he maintained that no matter what promise was implied, if one was implied by the Government, it was utterly impossible for any Government to define what were main roads. He would give the Committee one sample of what were considered main roads in the populous districts. He might say that from the outside districts no complaints had come on the subject of main roads. The districts from which the greatest complaints were received were those situated around the centres of population. He received the following letter from the Burrum Divisional Board on November 6, and part of it was of consequence, as it supported his statement that it was impossible for any Government to define what were main roads. The secretary or clerk to the board wrote—

"I am now instructed to again bring the above-mentioned resolution under your notice, and also to draw your attention to some enclosed statistical information now in possession of this board, and a perusal of which will at once convince the most sceptical that with the present entire revenue arising from all sources in this division it would be utterly impossible to even maintain the main roads in a state of trafficable repair, much less will they be able to contemplate the commencement of new works.

"I shall now enumerate the various main roads running through the division and give the length of each."

He hoped hon. members would pay attention to what followed, and see what Government was expected to do in only one district—

"1st. From the municipal boundary to the Ban Ban Range within a distance of eighteen miles from Gayndah, a total length of sixty-five miles.

"2nd. Port Curtis Road from its junction with the Gayndah Road to Walba on the Burnett River, a total length of about forty miles.

"3rd. The Boombygan, or Nanango Road, from its junction with the Gayndah Road, to the boundary of the Burrum or Tiaro Division, a total length of 16 miles.

"4th. From the municipal boundary towards and to within 16 miles of the town of Bundaberg, a total length of 40 miles.

"This makes a total length of 161 miles. On two lines of these roads the traffic is what may fairly be termed through traffic—from places outside the boundaries of the division to places also outside the division.

"The entire revenue of the division will be—rates collected, £500, at a 1s. rate; endowment, £1,000, total £1,500; deduct 20 per cent. for expenses, £300; balance left for works, £1,200. Allowing the entire revenue to be spent on the 161 miles for main road, it would only amount to about £7 9s. a mile.

"From a report furnished to this board by one of its officers who has completed a careful inspection of the principal lines of main roads, it is evident that a sum of at least £2,000 will be required to keep these roads in fair repair, to say nothing of what is required for undertaking new works.

"Then there is another road I have not enumerated, the road to Hervey's Bay, at the township Pialba, a distance of 16 miles; on this road there is a considerable amount of traffic. There is also a large amount of settlement around Hervey's Bay, and the settlers will very naturally and justly demur if they find their rates are being expended on the main roads.

"The size of the Burrum Division is somewhere about that of the island of Cyprus, and the various settlements being scattered at different points far from one another, renders the maintenance of these roads, running as they do from end to end of the division through very sparsely populated districts, next to impossible.

"Some divisions, without having any main roads, are also intersected by railroads, yet these divisions stand in precisely as favourable a position as to Government endowments as their less fortunate neighbours.

"This board would therefore draw your attention to the fact, that unless it is better endowed for some years to come with a large Government subsidy, local self-government, at least in the Burrum Division, will be a lamentable failure.

"The members of this board being gentlemen all largely interested as property holders in the various subdivisions of the division, have entered upon their duties with the determination to give the Divisional Boards Act every encouragement and fair play, and are prepared to carry out its provisions at a cost of no small inconvenience to themselves personally; but in their opinion the action of the Government in refusing to contribute to the maintenance of the main roads—and this board, in conjunction with other boards, were led to understand from the utterances of the hon. the Premier in Parliament last session that the Government would continue the maintenance of the main roads—has now placed the members of this board in a very invidious, if not false, position.

"I have the honour, &c.,

"J. MOORE LA BARTHE,  
"Divisional Boards Clerk.

"The Hon. the Colonial Secretary, Brisbane."

This letter just went to show that if the Government were to carry out what the divisional boards were pleased to call main roads they might as well do away with the Divisional Boards Act; in fact, it would be better to do so. He should like to know under what system of responsible Government £10,000 could be expected to be spent in this one district in one year, supposing the Divisional Boards Act had never passed? It appeared to him that the boards were going to work too much in the style of new brooms. They wanted to spend too much money. The idea of undertaking the formation in one year of 161 miles of what the board called main roads! It was perfectly absurd. It was the work of years. A great many of the boards, and the Burrum board in particular, entirely forgot that they received a subsidy of £2 for every £1 that they raised. The letter said "in the opinion of the board the action of the Government in refusing to contribute to the maintenance of main roads." The thing was an absurdity. The Government did contribute in the proportion of £2 for every £1 that was received. His colleague, the Minister for Works,

had just reminded him that in this very division they had more money than they had ever had before in the same district. He thought the letter was a fair sample of what the ideas of many of the boards were. They seemed to expect to go to work and make macadamised roads in a style that had never been done before. That could not be done. The boards quite forgot, as he had had to repeat, that for every pound contributed by the district by direct taxation the general revenue contributed two, and he would state once more that though the matter might be put off as long as possible, it was impossible for any Government to define what were main roads—it could not be done. The divisional boards were working very well in a great many districts, but they must remember that Rome was not built in a day. They must get on quietly and gradually, and he believed that with the Government endowment the work would be done cheaper and more efficiently than before; but he must also say that in a great many districts money had been unnecessarily spent on officers, and in some districts in buildings, which could have been done without.

Mr. DICKSON said there was no doubt that the assessment, which had already been levied under the Divisional Boards Act, had had a very injurious effect upon the value of country property; and he took it that, if the Bill before the Committee passed, that effect would be increased. It seemed to him that the machinery was such that there was no limitation to the amount of taxation which could be imposed.

The PREMIER: I just told you that I had a clause to provide for that.

Mr. DICKSON said that before going into the question he would put it to members of the Committee whether it would not be wiser to give an increased endowment to the divisional boards, and throw up the responsibility of main roads, than give them the power of levying rates to an injurious extent upon the owners of property? He had knowledge of the fact that since the divisional boards had come into operation the rates levied by them had had a very injurious effect upon the value of country properties, and if the system were increased a serious injury would be done to a class of people who had invested in real estates. He should prefer to see an increased endowment given for a year or two to the divisional boards, so that they might take charge of the main roads, than give them any powers to increase taxation; and he believed it would be only fair to the boards to do so, because undoubtedly they were led to believe that some help would be given by the State towards the maintenance of main roads. If they received an increased endowment for two years, they might afterwards be able to take the whole charge of main roads. He deprecated giving the boards any further powers of taxation than were conferred upon them by the Divisional Boards Act.

The PREMIER said he had no intention of going into the principle of the Divisional Boards Act, which had been already sufficiently discussed; and the objections of the hon. member were raised against that Act itself, and not against the Bill now before the Committee, which had been brought in to get over a difficulty which had been found in the working of the Act. No doubt last year the Government promised that they would exempt main roads, and the Government intended to act in perfect good faith towards the country in proclaiming every road which they considered was a main road; but in nearly every division where there was much population, demands had been sent in that all the roads should be considered main roads. Take, for instance, the road from Brisbane to

Nerang, which went through four or five divisions. Every one of these divisions claimed that because the road did not terminate there they ought to be exempted from paying anything towards its maintenance, and that it should be proclaimed a main road; in fact, all the roads which the Government had before been in the habit of constructing and repairing had been claimed to be regarded as main roads. He had examined the various claims thoroughly, and had come to the conclusion that there was no more reason why the Government should be at the expense of making and repairing those roads than any of the by-roads which the Government had not up to the present time interfered with. The Government had found it perfectly impossible that any road should be excepted, because there was no road of such a character that the whole of the people of the colony might be said to be interested in it. The principle underlying the Divisional Boards Act was that the localities themselves should contribute one-third towards making and maintaining roads, and in that way local government was secured. Some districts, however, were so small that the roads went right through them and had no terminal traffic there. That could easily be got over by the different boards agreeing among themselves the amount to be spent on each portion of such road. If that could not be done the Government had considered a scheme by which the responsibility of a fair and equitable proportion might be incurred by each division doing the work that actually belonged to themselves. For instance, with regard to the Nerang road, this Bill made provision that the chairmen of the five divisions through which it ran should apportion among themselves the amount that should be spent upon that road. By that means the principle of local government would be further secured, inasmuch as the localities paid for their own roads, and not the general revenue. The hon. gentleman (Mr. Dickson) suggested that the Government should increase the endowments of the divisions on account of main roads. That would require a special Act, and would be a confession of failure which he was not prepared to admit. He believed that local government had taken root in the colony, and that the advantages of it would be seen before long, in spite of the outcries against it. If its success depended on increasing the present subsidy, local government had better be given up altogether. The present endowment was, he thought, as large as Parliament would ever sanction: if it was made on a larger scale he did not see the use of local government, for the people would not take sufficient interest in the spending of the money. The difficulty might perhaps be remedied to a certain extent by making the divisions larger, but that was a matter of administration to which his hon. colleague would give his attention if the Bill passed. He was anxious to get the Bill through. It was an important piece of legislation, and he should like to see it become law; but if they were going to spend time in discussing the principles of the Divisional Boards Act, he would rather withdraw it altogether. If passed, it would make that Act work more smoothly, and the Committee would be making a mistake if they did not pass it through very much as it was.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the Premier said an increase of the endowment of divisional boards would be a confession of the failure of the Act. Was not the bringing forward of the present Bill equally a confession of failure? He admitted that the matter was a very difficult one, but he did not admit that the Divisional Boards Act was a failure. That Act would be better

amended in some other way. It had increased the burdens of the people by an additional expense, and that was not what they wanted. Would the proposed Bill take the maintenance of main roads out of the hands of the Government? He did not think it would, and believed it would only aggravate the feeling that existed against the system. He denied that those feelings would last, and believed that the system would work well. But the divisions were too small, the number of servants was too great; and the Government, which provided two-thirds of the money, did not provide an inspector to look after its proper expenditure. At present every board had to employ its own inspector, or else the work must be superintended by the members of the board, which they could not afford to do. In Ipswich there was a Government overseer, who lived in a Government house, and who had been idle since the divisional boards were formed; and yet the divisional boards of West Moreton were actually paying inspectors out of the amount raised by taxation. Before the Act passed that inspector superintended the whole of West Moreton. If that inspector were appointed to do the work of the boards it would save a great deal of outlay to those small divisions which could not afford to pay for an inspector. The expenses of the boards were very heavy. They had to pay £60 to £80 for a clerk; in some cases the chairman was paid, and in all cases books had to be bought and postage and stationery paid for; and along with that they had to pay an inspector to see that the little contracts were carried out. Why should not that inspector, who was now idle, be allowed to inspect the whole of West Moreton? The divisional boards, as a whole, would be glad to allow the amount of that officer's salary to be deducted from the endowment. As it was there was no one responsible, and chairmen were in the habit of spending small sums of £5 or £10 without calling for tenders; and some chairmen—who were only human—if a road were required to their own house, would take care of that first. With an inspector such things could not be done. Although the present Bill would not get over the difficulty but increase it, it would be at the same time impossible for any Government to take over the main roads. The work of maintaining them ought to be done by the divisional boards, and he quite approved of the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) of increasing the endowment for four or five years, and also appointing a Government inspector to see that their own money was properly expended. That would do away with a great deal of the outcry raised against the divisional boards, and in the course of a few years they would become popular. The cheapest and easiest way of removing the difficulty would be to adopt the suggestion of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson), it being perfectly understood that the Government would have nothing to do with the main roads. It was necessary that the Act should be retained, otherwise the House would present the same scramble as it did before. Up to that time the main quality required of a member of Parliament was his ability to get as large a sum of money as possible for his district. Only last Saturday an old woman came to him in the streets of Ipswich, and asked him to get her son a place in the railway. On his replying that he had no power to do so, she said, "What the devil do we want you for, then?" As to the inspectors, two of them could do the whole of East and West Moreton, each of which should form one divisional board. He should certainly have to understand the Bill a little better before he could support it in committee. With reference to the proposed amendment in line 44, that

if the boards did not agree the whole matter should be referred to the Colonial Secretary as arbitrator, it simply meant that the whole powers of the divisional boards were to be handed over to the Government.

Mr. FOOTE said he hoped the Government would not press the Bill at the present time. He had seen a good deal of the working of the Divisional Boards Act in East and West Moreton, and believed there was a great deal of dissatisfaction in connection with it. That had arisen chiefly, he believed, from the fact that during the last two years scarcely anything had been done by Parliament in those divisions in view of the Act being passed, and possibly, also, in consequence of the financial difficulties of the colony. It was quite clear that the Act in its present shape would not work successfully. He agreed with the hon. member for Stanley as to the advisability of making the divisions larger: probably if there were only two divisional boards in East and West Moreton the Act would work much better as far as that part of the colony was concerned. The electors of the district which he represented were opposed to the Act *in toto*: they would prefer to revert to the old system rather than to have the new system helped on. He believed that a land tax would be preferable to the present system of assessment. It would be better for the Government to withdraw the Bill and introduce, next session, a more matured measure and one which would be more likely to meet the requirements of the people. He noticed a Bill on the paper which was much more needed than the one under discussion—that was the Mines Regulation Bill. The coal-miners in his district were suffering greatly from the want of such a measure, and the Government would be acting wisely if they endeavoured to pass that Bill.

Mr. DICKSON said the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) had fairly answered the objection that an increase of the endowment to the boards would be equivalent to an acknowledgment that the Divisional Boards Act had been a failure. It seemed to him to be very unfair and very arbitrary that because the Government had failed to discover what were main roads the ratepayers of the colony should be called upon to make provision for those roads after the Government had promised that they would take charge of them. He was quite free to admit that the promise was inadvisedly given. Difficulties which were not anticipated had cropped up, and the honourable way out of those difficulties was for the Government to increase the endowments of the boards for two or three years, and throw on the boards the responsibility of maintaining the main roads. By that means they would avoid conflicting interests which otherwise they would have to face, the worst of which would be that there would be unequal rating in different divisions through which a main road might pass. He had desired the chairmen of the divisional boards to give advice as to how the Act could be made beneficial without being oppressive to the ratepayers, and their unanimous opinion was that if the boards were to keep the main roads in order they should have an increased endowment. So far from such an increase indicating the failure of the Act, it would increase the stability and the resources of the boards to carry out their duties. There was no doubt that if boards were to be entrusted with the care of branch roads they ought also to have charge of main roads.

Mr. KELLETT said he did not think the Bill would help the Government or the boards out of the difficulties spoken of. The Premier himself acknowledged that they could be got over nearly as well without the Bill as with it.

The PREMIER: I did not say that.

Mr. KELLETT thought the boards would never be got to agree as to the proportion of money which each would have to contribute towards the maintenance of main roads. The hon. member for Bundamba was mistaken in saying that for two or three years hardly any money had been expended on the roads in West Moreton. That statement was not correct, as in the Stanley division alone £5,000 had been expended; but that was not as much as was required. They should not revert to the old system, and to increase the local assessment would press too heavily on the ratepayers, and the only way left was for the Government to increase the endowment by another £1, and to continue the endowment at the increased rate for, say, three years, by which time the whole system would have got into working order. The Bill before the Committee would give the boards nothing, and that was not fair, seeing that there was an acknowledged difficulty with regard to main roads. He did not believe in the Government having charge of main roads—the whole system would be a perfect farce if responsibility was divided in such a way. He was satisfied that the Act would operate more beneficially if only one-fourth of the present boards were in existence. Two boards would do for East and West Moreton, and the railway line would make a good dividing line. The Government should withdraw the Bill and during the recess give the whole matter further consideration. He did not think they would be able to define what were main roads.

The PREMIER said the difficulty did not arise in regard to the defining of main roads, but from the boards putting in claims for each road in their divisions to be considered a main road. A great deal had been said about the promise that the Government would take charge of the main roads: it was never intended that every road in the colony should be maintained at the Government expense, as the boards would wish. On account of the demands of the boards in regard to main roads it had been perfectly impossible for the Government to proclaim main roads. The result of their experience was that it was a perfectly equal and fair thing that the main roads in the divisions should be maintained by the boards just the same as by-roads. There was not the slightest reason why roads which had population along them should be made by the Government whilst by-roads leading to out-of-the-way farms should be made, to a certain extent, by the taxation of the district. He should not have the slightest objection to subsidising the boards to a greater extent, so long as he saw that by doing so he would be contributing towards the founding of local government, nor did he believe the House would have any hesitation in doing so. If the divisions had been much larger he did not think that there would have been the same demands made on the Government for main roads. Last year he defined a main road to be a road on which there was through traffic, and he had in his mind a road running through a division the termini of the traffic on which was outside the division. At the time he thought it would not be fair to demand that the division should be called upon to keep that road in order, seeing that it had so little interest in it. But since he had looked into the matter he found that owing to the construction of railways there were very few roads of that kind. In no instance had a board claimed a road as a main road in which he did not find that there was just as much reason why the board should maintain it as there was why they should maintain an ordinary by-road. He had no doubt that the Act would work better, and

he believed that the Bill, if passed, would materially tend towards an improvement; but he foresaw that it would take some considerable time to get it through. Next session they would be able to approach the subject after having had more experience. In view of that, and seeing that they were diverting into a discussion to prevent the Bill passing, and as he was anxious to bring the session to a close, he would move that the Chairman do now leave the chair.

The Hon. S. W. GRIFFITH said he thought the Government had come to a wise conclusion. He was thinking about making the same motion himself, and he was quite satisfied that if he had it would have been carried. The details of the Bill were entirely wrong, and he hoped that next session the Government would bring in a Bill which would be more matured.

Mr. REA said that people who were looking forward to some interpretation of the Act would be disappointed, seeing that the Colonial Secretary and the Premier had flatly contradicted each other on a material point within twenty minutes. The Colonial Secretary declared that it was impossible to define what main roads were, whilst the Premier said it was perfectly easy to define what they were. It would be just as well that people should know who was right and who was wrong, as otherwise they would be in a fog if a similar Bill were introduced next session. As to overseers being appointed by the Government, he was quite sure no division would agree to that, as it would simply mean that there would be a pet Government overseer to see how they had expended money which they had raised themselves.

Question—That the Chairman leave the chair—put and passed.

#### SUPPLY.

The House went into Committee of Supply.

The PREMIER was understood to say that since the Estimates had been framed the Superintendent of Telegraphs, Mr. Cracknell, had left the service, and his place would be taken by the assistant superintendent at a salary of £600 a-year. There had been a reduction in the salaries of telegraph masters where the amount of work done in the offices was not large. A saving had also been effected in the reduction of operators' salaries in cases where it had been found that station-masters could do the work. Provision was only made for the Torres Straits mail service for four months of the year. The total estimate of £174,475 showed a reduction of between £5,000 and £6,000, the amount voted last year being £179,730. The whole of the salary of the Superintendent of Telegraphs would not be wanted. He moved that the item be reduced by £474.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he must again take objection to the foot-notes. It would be much better if foot-notes were abolished altogether, so that the Committee might know exactly what salary they were voting. He desired to know if the assistant superintendent of telegraphs—who he presumed would in future be styled the superintendent—would receive any of the extras provided by the foot-notes?

The PREMIER said the salary of the Superintendent would be £600, without any allowances.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he also hoped the time would come when they would be able to dispense with foot-notes.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN also objected to the system. They never knew what salary they were voting.

The PREMIER said he was having a statement prepared which would show exactly what

allowance was received, whether in money, house rent, or otherwise, by every officer in the Government service. The reason the statement was not circulated this year was that it involved so much printing. It would be ready, however, when next year's Estimates were produced. The salaries of a great many officers were increased by contingencies, and when the estimate was brought forward there was generally the excuse that the money had been voted in several previous years.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said it would be generally admitted that the department presided over by the Postmaster-General had been admirably worked during the past year. It was because there was no large fault in connection with the administration of the department that he mentioned one or two minor matters. He had noticed that it was the practice to convey Her Majesty's mails from the Post Office to the railway station upon a horse. It occasionally happened that the bags fell off and lay in the streets. He thought that was not a judicious method of conveying Her Majesty's mails. The bags were small and they might get astray. He was also sorry to see that a number of objectionable-looking telegraph posts had been erected in Elizabeth street. In Sydney, where the number of wires carried by each post was largely in excess of the number they were likely to have in Brisbane for some years to come, they had neat-looking iron posts. He did not see why they should not have adopted a more modern style of post in Brisbane than those which had been just stripped of their bark and roughly painted.

Amendment—That the item Superintendent of Electric Telegraphs be reduced by £474—put and passed.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked what was the reason for the great reduction in the number of operators in the Telegraph Department—from 143 to 95?

The PREMIER said there had been no reduction in the number of operators. The reason why there were 143 put down last year and 95 this was, that a large amount of that vote had been transferred to the item "clerical assistance, country post offices and stations, and other stations," which was increased from £647 to £3,600.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that did not account for the difference. Telegraph operators could not be called "clerical assistants," and they knew that the clerks in country post offices were very few.

Mr. BEATTIE thought the item of £3,600, for clerical assistance, country post offices, most objectionable. It was simply placing that amount in the hands of the Under Secretary or Minister to be administered just as he thought proper. It would be far better to put it down as contingencies; they would then know what it meant.

The PREMIER explained that the reason why the change had taken place was on account of the transfer of the duties of some of the telegraph operators to railway station-masters. It was not considered advisable to put them down as operators alone, as they only got an additional amount from the Telegraph Department for acting as operators, and it was put down as clerical assistance. He had a list of the whole of the alterations and reductions that had been made, and he thought the estimate, as it stood now, gave as much information as it did before.

Mr. GRIFFITH said if railway station-masters got an allowance for doing telegraph work it should appear as "allowance to station-masters."

The PREMIER said the reason why it did not appear more fully was that it was an amalgamation of the two items as they appeared on the Estimates last year.

Mr. BEATTIE said in the estimates for the Southern and Western Railway there was an increase in the number of station-masters from 33 to 36, and an increase in the amount from £5,000 to £5,500, but there was nothing to show that they were paid anything extra for extra work.

The PREMIER admitted that the information should have been given more clearly, but it was one of those cases in which an oversight was very likely to take place.

Mr. GRIFFITH pointed out that there was only an increase of three in the number of officers in the Railway Department, and asked what had become of the operators who were employed last year and not now?

Mr. BEATTIE also asked where had these forty-five men gone to? They were not in the Railway Department, unless they had been put there since the Estimates were printed.

The PREMIER said that the forty-five men referred to were still in the Government service. There had been none of them discharged.

In answer to Mr. GRIFFITH, the PREMIER said the electric telegraph stations that had been closed were Fassifern, Yaambla, Fernvale, Five-mile Camp, and Condamine.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he observed that in contingencies there was attached to the two items "Conveyance of mails *via* Melbourne and Galle and San Francisco, eight months, £8,000," and "between Brisbane and Melbourne, eight months, £3,334," the following foot-note—"Subject to alteration in the event of the new mail service being authorised by Parliament." He would like to know what the Government proposed to do in regard to this matter, and whether they would want all the money or any of it.

The PREMIER said with regard to the items "mail service *via* Torres Straits, four months, £6,667," they wanted all that; "conveyance of mails *via* Melbourne and Galle, four months, £400," they wanted all that; of the next item "*via* Melbourne and Galle and San Francisco, eight months, £8,000," they did not know how much they would want; it would go towards paying for the conveyance of mails from the time the present Straits service stopped until the new service commenced. The next item "conveyance of mails between Brisbane and Melbourne, eight months, £3,334," stood in the same position. These two items were to provide for the mail service from the time of the stopping of the Torres Straits service.

Mr. GRIFFITH said they knew all that, but what he wanted to know was what was the alteration that, according to the foot-note, was going to be made? There was nothing in the Supplementary Estimates referring to the matter.

The PREMIER said there would be a supplementary estimate from the time that the new mail service commenced until the end of the financial year.

Mr. MESTON rose to direct the attention of the Postmaster-General to the advisability of employing female operators in the Telegraphic Department. The sphere of employment for women was very limited, and so far as they had been employed in telegraph offices he believed they had generally proved themselves suitable to the position. They were now very largely employed in that way in America, and also in



England; and he thought they might be very wisely and advantageously employed in the department here.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was all humbug to bring forward such a matter at that time. If the hon. member was very anxious about the employment of females in any branch of the Government service, why did he not bring forward a resolution on the subject at the beginning of the session? Where was the use of asking such a question now?

Mr. MESTON said it was a question for the Minister in charge of that department, not a private member.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY explained that females were employed and found very useful in suburban districts; but they could not be sent to outside stations.

Question — That £174,001 be granted for the Postmaster-General's Department — put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the sum of £400 be granted for defraying miscellaneous services in connection with the Department of the Postmaster-General.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the sum of £4,470 be granted for services and contingencies in connection with the Department of the Auditor-General.

Question put and passed.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the sum of £1,880 be granted for salaries and contingencies under the head of "Polynesian Immigration."

Mr. DICKSON said that this estimate had been founded under the old Act; he would ask how it would come out now that a new Act had been passed?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that there would no doubt have to be another estimate under the new Bill, but as the fees under it would be much larger he apprehended they would cover the expenditure.

Mr. GRIFFITH thought a great mistake had been made in removing the inspector from Maryborough, as the report of the doctors showed that there was a greater mortality amongst the kanakas in the Maryborough district than elsewhere, and it had not been shown, on the other hand, that the services of an inspector were not required. There was no doubt that the police magistrate would do the work as well as he could, but he could not have the requisite amount of time to devote to those duties for which an inspector was required; and as inspector he could not sit on the bench and adjudicate on cases in which complaints had been lodged by himself; the result would be that it would be left to other magistrates, some of whom might be sugar-planters. There was no doubt that the police magistrate was the proper person to be on the bench in cases between employers and the labourers, because, no matter how desirous planters might be to perform their duties as magistrates impartially, there was always a feeling of dissatisfaction; in fact, that there was dissatisfaction was beyond denial, as the Press in various parts of the colony had complained of it and had stated that injustice had been done. Although he could not say that any complaints to that effect had been proved, still there had been sufficient evidence to show that complaints were fairly made. He thought it was most desirable that the Polynesian labourers should be represented by an inspector, and should also have an independent magistrate on the bench in all cases in which they were concerned.

It appeared to him, therefore, that so far from the abolition of the office of inspector being justifiable it was a most unfortunate thing.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that no doubt the hon. gentleman thought it was a most unfortunate thing that an inspector at £400 a-year, who had had a very easy time of it, should be abolished, and that the police magistrate at Maryborough should be called upon to perform the same duties for an additional £100 a-year; but he had no doubt whatever that the report of the doctors who at his request went to Maryborough to report on the state of the islanders in that district would show that the police magistrate there had done his duty far better than the inspector had done his duty. As to sugar-planters sitting on the bench to try any case in which their brother sugar-planters were concerned, that argument had no weight with him, as his long experience had told him that in all cases in which squatters sat on a bench to decide cases in which a brother squatter was concerned, they invariably not only showed no partiality but leaned to the other side, and he presumed that planters would do the same. He had every reason to believe that the police magistrate at Maryborough would be the best inspector of Polynesians the Government could have.

Mr. DICKSON said he noticed that there was an omission of forage allowance for the inspector. Last year the inspector had a salary of £400 a-year, and also £40 forage allowance. No doubt £400 for an inspector was an adequate salary, but he (Mr. Dickson) very much doubted whether the police magistrate at Maryborough would be able to give sufficient time to his duties as inspector without causing some inconvenience to persons who had occasion to go to court. However, he gave the Government credit for trying to economise, and he hoped that they would see that the officer looked after the kanakas. He could not help thinking, at the same time, that if the police magistrate was to perform the duties of inspector he should have some allowance for forage, as otherwise he might be a loser by his appointment.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had no doubt that the speech of the hon. gentleman might induce the police magistrate to send in an immediate application for an allowance for forage, but that would be the only effect of the hon. gentleman's speech; he would not get it.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said they had been told by the Colonial Secretary that, as squatters did not show any partiality when sitting on the bench, therefore sugar-planters would not do so. No doubt the hon. gentleman's experience of squatters was extensive, but he had not had the same experience of sugar-planters. One fact was worth a good deal of theory. The hon. gentleman said that, like squatters, sugar-planters would if anything err on the side of impartiality and go against their brother planters; but surely the hon. member for North Brisbane, who raised the question, must know what he was talking about, for no man in the colony had more experience than that hon. member had had, and although he might not personally have been much among the kanakas, he was constantly engaged in cases in which people employing them were concerned. He (Mr. Rutledge) himself remembered one case where three or four sugar-planters sat on the bench to adjudicate in a case where a planter was charged with keeping back money from an islander. In that case they went with their brother planter, and the verdict went against the islander. It did not follow that, because the police magistrate had discovered some cases of ill-treatment of islanders

which the inspector did not discover, it was desirable to abolish the office of inspector, as it might happen that the inspector, who was paid £400 a-year, was not fit for his duties. He certainly thought that a man specially appointed to see that the law was properly carried out was much more likely to do it than a police magistrate; as in a place like Maryborough, for instance, where court business was on the increase, the police magistrate could not give up his court duties to go about the country constantly to inspect the condition and treatment of kanakas. It did not follow that because the present Police Magistrate of Maryborough was an active man who was able to attend to both duties, that the Government would be always able to get such a man, and, therefore, he considered that in an important sugar-growing district like Maryborough it would be more advisable to have an officer whose whole time would be devoted to the duties of inspection.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN asked if the police magistrate of the district was appointed as inspector at other places besides Maryborough?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, at Mackay.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN thought that, under those circumstances, the police magistrates were pretty well paid. The hon. Colonial Secretary talked about the impartiality of sugar-planters when sitting on the bench, but the hon. gentleman knew very well that not long ago complaints were laid before him of a case at Mackay where a police constable had his collar-bone broken by the drunken skipper of one of these slavers, and when the case came before the magistrates, instead of getting any justice from them, they recommended that the constable should be removed somewhere else. He had always considered it was a bad rule to keep police magistrates too long at any one place. He had never been long in any little town in the colony before he discovered that there was an upper crust—that there were two distinct classes, and that the police magistrate invariably attached himself to one of them. Now the moment he did so he should be removed. Twelve or fourteen years was too long to keep a police magistrate in any one place, and those magistrates who had been on the coast for a certain number of years should be sent into the interior to relieve the men with £300 a-year who were scarcely able to make both ends meet. In the case he had referred to at Mackay—and the papers connected with it had, he believed, been laid on the table—a slave-ship came into Mackay with a cargo of kanakas. When the crew belonging to these ships came on shore they were in the habit of getting drunk and causing a disturbance. On this particular occasion one man was very violent, and it took two policemen to take him in charge, and as they were doing so the mate of the ship came up and asked them to let him go, but they said they could not. The captain then came up, and a row ensued, in the course of which the captain broke the collar-bone of one of the constables. The case was brought before the bench, and the bench recommended that the constable should be removed. That was the kind of justice he received, and slave-owners and captains of slave-ships were encouraged to go on with this sort of thing. Surely after that—after a man was not only removed for doing his duty, but most likely had to pay a heavy doctor's bill—no constable who succeeded him would be foolish enough to interfere with those drunken slave captains. He found that the Police Magistrate in this case expressed his opinion that the constable had no right to interfere with

the man, and that the hon. member for North Brisbane decided that there was no case to go before the Supreme Court. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) believed that the police had been most unfairly used. He had told the hon. member for North Brisbane a few days ago that he was not satisfied with his conduct, as he had expected that the hon. gentleman would have brought forward some resolution for doing away with kanakas altogether. In some parts of the North great complaints had arisen in consequence of magistrates, who were themselves employers of black labour, adjudicating in cases where black labour was concerned; and he understood that eighteen magistrates in Mackay had resigned their commissions because one magistrate had been appointed who was not an employer of kanaka labour. That was stated in the papers, but he believed the resignation had not yet been received. If, however, those magistrates did resign, he hoped their resignation would be accepted. From correspondence he had received, he had reason to believe that the people of the North were very discontented; and he thought it would be a good plan to remove the police magistrates frequently from one place to another. With regard to the statement of the Colonial Secretary that magistrates generally gave decisions against their own class, it would appear that the hon. gentleman had forgotten the Condamine warrants. At one time it was the practice among employers of labour to sign blank warrants when they went from home for the overseer to fill up with the names of any person with whom he might happen to have a row; and his neighbours on either side used to do the same. The thing was worked in exactly the same way as the landlord and tenant laws. All that was done away with through the encounter that took place between Mr. Gore and another on the Darling Downs. If the employment of black labour were to be continued white labour would never get fair-play until some change was made in the administration of justice.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he knew nothing about the Condamine warrants. He had received no complaints from Mackay or any of the northern ports; nor any resignations whatever.

Mr. GRIFFITH said it was, in his opinion, very undesirable that the police magistrates should be inspectors of Polynesians also, because in the event of disputes arising the cases must be decided by the bench, and, if the police magistrate was also the Polynesian inspector, confidence in the administration of justice would be disturbed. He did not desire, as the hon. member (Mr. O'Sullivan) did, to exclude kanakas altogether, but he wished to remove all reasonable grounds for objection. The dissatisfaction caused by the present arrangements would be likely to continue so long as police magistrates were allowed to act also as Polynesian inspectors. He had nothing to say against the police magistrate at Maryborough, but he considered that the two offices were incompatible. With regard to Mackay, he knew that complaints were rife there, and that it was said that the police magistrate, who was also Polynesian inspector, was too friendly with the planters, and that there was not that impartiality that ought to exist. There would probably never be any satisfaction in the public mind until the inspectors were independent persons, who could appear before the bench as the representatives of the Polynesians, and who would not be debarred from taking part in any proceedings that might be required.

Question put and passed.

The sum of £2,775 was voted in connection with the office of Chief Inspector of Sheep.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that a sum not exceeding £3,145 should be granted for the Department of Brands. There was an increase of £25 for one of the inspectors, and a reduction in the item of "Government Printing Office, type, &c." A good deal of expenditure at first was for the type showing the different brands. That had decreased, and £500 was now supposed to be quite enough.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he rose, not to move any amendment upon the proposal of the Government, but to call attention to a fact which he thought would lead either the present or any succeeding Government to do what he considered an act of justice to a gentleman who deserved every consideration at the hands of the Government. He would point out to the Committee that Mr. Landsborough, a name which could not be unknown to any member of the Committee, was in the position of Inspector of Brands at a salary of £250 per annum. He held that it was almost a disgrace to the colony that a man who had done so much for it should be in such a position. Mr. Landsborough had done as much for the development of the interior as any man in the colony, and there was no doubt that, through reverses which were not exceptional to him, he had been placed in such a position that he had to accept a Government office. The circumstances of his case must be well known to every member, although he (Mr. Morehead) would fain hope that to some it was not known. He would fain hope that it was not generally known that a man who would be known as "Landsborough the Explorer" as long as the history of Queensland existed, was paid £250 a-year by the colony. Mr. Landsborough was a man who shrank from notoriety. He (Mr. Morehead) had hoped that some members of a Government would have taken up his case and done something for him, but nothing had been done. Mr. Landsborough was a man with a large family—not that he (Mr. Morehead) meant to say that fact was an excuse to him to make an appeal. He made no appeal *ad misericordiam*; but he made a demand that Mr. Landsborough's services should be recognised. He maintained that the whole of the north-western country was discovered by Mr. Landsborough, and that thousands of pounds were coming into the Treasury through his discoveries. Had Mr. Landsborough been an agitator, demanded compensation for his discoveries, and got people to take up his case, he would probably have received thousands; but he had done nothing of the sort, and, therefore, he was getting a beggarly salary of £250—not from the country, but from a special fund. He would maintain, further, that if those who contributed to this special fund were asked to contribute towards giving him a higher salary they would do so willingly, for they knew that the benefits they were deriving from the Crown lands in their occupation were owing to Mr. Landsborough. It was well known, he would repeat, that Mr. Landsborough had done more to develop the interior of Queensland than any other explorer, and that he never took the life of an aboriginal. The Thompson country, and the country to the northward and westward, were wholly and solely settled on his reports, and now he had come down to be an inspector of brands at £250 a-year. They ought to be thoroughly ashamed of themselves that this man should, because he made no attempt to agitate for his position being bettered, be allowed to subsist in this position. He only asked for an expression of opinion from the Committee as to whether this state of things should continue. They ought to give Mr. Landsborough some better position—some higher salary. That opinion was not brought to bear from any pressure from without. For years he

(Mr. Morehead) had been striving quietly to have Mr. Landsborough's position bettered, simply for the reason that his services had not received fitting recognition from the State. He would ask members to express their opinions, and if they did so they would no doubt induce the Government to do something more for Mr. Landsborough than appeared on the Estimates before the House.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he was much surprised to hear that a gentleman like Mr. Landsborough, whose fame as an explorer was widely known, should be vegetating upon a miserable allowance of £250 per annum. He dared say that if Mr. Landsborough had bungled affairs and lost his life a grateful country would probably have expended a few thousand pounds in raising a monument to his memory; but because he had successfully conducted his expeditions, had done a great deal towards developing the resources of the interior, and had returned, he was rewarded by being placed in a position where he enjoyed the paltry income of £250 a-year. He agreed with the member for Mitchell that it was a disgrace that Mr. Landsborough did not fill some better office. There ought to be some better position found for a gentleman who had done so much in the service of his country, who had risked his life and undergone hardships which might have the effect of shortening his life. He was glad to find that some effort was being made to bring Mr. Landsborough's claims before Parliament. Personally he had no idea that he filled such a poor position. Men came here fortune-hunting, and by means of influence got pitchforked into places for which they were not capable but for which they received more than £250 a-year; but here was a man who had borne the heat and burden of the day and had helped to make the colony, and he was allowed to remain unrecognised in obscurity. He did hope that what had been said would have the effect of causing the Government to do something more worthy of the colony than giving Mr. Landsborough a paltry £250 a-year.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that £250 might be a sufficient salary for an inspector of brands, but he quite concurred with the member for Mitchell that £250 was not sufficient recognition of the services that Mr. Landsborough had rendered to the colony. He was not surprised to hear that the hon. member for Enoggera was unaware of the position held by Mr. Landsborough, and he was inclined to think that many members of the Committee and of the general public outside were not aware of it. It was a very humble position, and it was really creditable to the member for Mitchell that he had taken the opportunity of bringing the matter before the Committee and the country. He concurred with the hon. member's views, that if the early settlers and the men who were now occupying the valuable Thompson country were asked their opinion, they would say all honour to the man who contributed to the early settlement of that country. Why should not Mr. Landsborough have a little more than honour? He had not many years to live; he was a man who was well into the middle part of life, and it was very hard indeed if they could not provide for his latter days. It would not be creditable to the House and country if Mr. Landsborough was allowed to go on in the position that he filled. He had a big district and knocked about for something like thirteen and fourteen hours a-day. He was therefore getting the miserable pittance of 1s. per hour, or the pay of a day labourer. If the settlement of the northern and western country—upon the richness of which they had passed such high encomiums—had been hastened but five years by Mr. Landsborough's

discoveries, he deserved a pension of £250 a-year outside of his position in the Brands Department. They all knew that Mr. Landsborough was an unostentatious individual—a humble man. If he were of the order of active wire-pulling men, possibly he might have a higher position. However, he trusted that what had been said that day in support of Mr. Landsborough's efforts being recognised would result in his receiving an office more suited to his abilities and better paid than the one he now held. No one would deny that he had contributed in some degree to the development of the colony, and however humble he might be he should not be allowed to pass away from them without being shown that the efforts he made in that direction were appreciated.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he could not add anything to the able speeches that had been made in favour of Mr. Landsborough, beyond saying that he cordially agreed with them. He had only lately found out that Landsborough, the great explorer, was the Landsborough in the Brands Department; and as an old colonist he felt annoyed and insulted at the position he held. The man should be in a very different position; but it was only another instance of men who deserve most getting least. When he saw him at Ipswich he could not help thinking of the old proverb that "Dunghills rise when castles fall," although the only way that Mr. Landsborough had fallen was in his being neglected by an ungrateful country. He hoped the Government would take the matter into serious consideration, and put Mr. Landsborough into some position where his eminent services to the colony would be better rewarded.

Mr. FRASER said that one of his earliest colonial recollections was of a public ovation being given, under the auspices of the Governor of the colony, to an explorer; and that explorer was Landsborough. It was not until lately that he became aware that Mr. Landsborough was the gentleman who was receiving the munificent salary of £250 a-year; but he was in very good company, for it was often the best and greatest benefactors to a country who during their lifetime received no recognition whatever, and after their death had their achievements celebrated by monuments.

Mr. MACFARLANE said this was another illustration of the fact that the most deserving were not always the best paid. He had only learned within the last few months that Landsborough, the great explorer, was employed at a small salary under the Chief Inspector of Brands. But perhaps the Government were scarcely to blame in the matter. It might be the best position they could offer him at the time. Still, he was deserving of something better, and his services to the colony ought to be rewarded during his lifetime. He trusted the Government would do something for so valuable a public servant.

Mr. ARCHER said that as one of Mr. Landsborough's oldest friends in the colony he could confirm what had been stated by the hon. member for Mitchell, that he was not one of those who bothered his friends in order to try to get something out of the Government. Mr. Landsborough had many influential friends, and had he been a man of another kidney he would undoubtedly have been in a better position than he was in now. Nothing stronger could be said in his favour than that which had been said by the hon. member for Mitchell, and which he himself could confirm from personal knowledge extending over a great many years. It was unworthy of the colony to allow Mr. Landsborough to remain in his present position.

The PREMIER said he was glad to hear the way in which Mr. Landsborough had been spoken of to-night; it was the expression of the colony that his services should be recognised in some other way. Unfortunately, his services had been recognised by the colony but in the wrong way, and a way which had contributed very much to his disadvantage. The colony really wanted to remunerate him for his services, but did it in an awkward manner. There was no man living for whom he had a higher respect, as a man who had done a great deal for the colony. Whenever he wanted information about the country, he could get it better and fuller from Landsborough, who had not been there for eighteen years, than from those who had been there within two or three years—he had done his work so thoroughly. Although they could not consider the matter in connection with the present vote, it was of value to the Government to know that it was the desire of the House, as representing the colony, that his services should be recognised in some other way. Landsborough, who was one of our greatest explorers, went about his work modestly, and he should be glad to see him remunerated better than he was at the present time.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was glad to hear what the Premier had said, and he hoped the discussion would bear fruit before the Estimates came on next year, and that some other position would be found for Mr. Landsborough where his abilities might be employed for the advantage of the State on a better scale of remuneration than he was at present receiving. With respect to the item under discussion, he wished to know why the foot-note stating that the salaries of eight inspectors are paid half from the Sheep Fund and half from the Brands Fund was inaccurate; and why, although there was one inspector less, the amount for salaries was more? He had had a document sent to him purporting to be an extract from a newspaper, stating that lately the Inspector of Brands for North Kennedy, at £50 a-year, had been removed, and another gentleman, an inspector of police, appointed in his place at double the salary, and who was altogether relieved from doing the work.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he objected to being called upon to answer paragraphs in newspapers, and he would not do so. If the hon. member had any question to ask, and asked it without referring to a newspaper, he would answer it at once; but he declined to be made responsible for newspaper paragraphs.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he asked the question himself. He was informed that Mr. Gordon, the Inspector of Brands for North Kennedy, who received a salary of £50 a-year, was removed from office, or invited to resign, because he did not inspect sufficiently, and since then the inspector of police at Townsville had been appointed at double the salary, but did not do the work. Was that true?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that Mr. Gordon was formerly Sub-collector of Customs at Townsville, but latterly he had been Inspector of Brands and Sheep. As Inspector of Sheep he did the work very well, because he had nothing to do. As Inspector of Brands he never did any work at all; he never visited a station—in fact, he did absolutely nothing. It came under his (Mr. Palmer's) notice when he was up north that one-half of the stock known to be held in a district were not returned at all. Mr. Gordon, being physically unable to do the work, was requested to resign. Sub-inspector Armstrong, of Townsville, was then appointed, and he did the work thoroughly. The salary of the Sub-inspector had been reduced considerably when the police salaries were reduced last year.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that Sub-Inspector Armstrong was the officer in charge of escorts as well. He should like to know the total income of that officer. That was one of those things they never could find out with respect to some officers.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not answer the question without notice, as the name of Sub-Inspector Armstrong did not appear on the list sent down by the Police Department.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that a great deal of time would be saved if another column showing the total amount received by officers was added to the Estimates.

In reply to Mr. DICKSON,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that there was only one inspector of brands (Mr. Brook) who received salary from the Sheep Fund.

Mr. DICKSON said the foot-note to the Estimates—"Salaries of eight inspectors are paid half from the Sheep Fund and half from the Brands Fund"—would have to be altered, as, according to the Colonial Secretary's statement, there were only six inspectors receiving salary from the Sheep Fund.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was trying an arithmetical puzzle which he did not understand. The statement was clear enough. Eight inspectors of sheep got an additional amount from the Brands Fund equal to what they got from the Sheep Fund.

Mr. DICKSON said all he wished was that the Estimates should be correct. Last year there were eight sheep inspectors drawing the same amounts from the Brands Fund, but owing to recent departmental changes there were only six this year.

Mr. REA said if there was a puzzle it was caused through the Government not giving information which the House was entitled to. There was no clear statement—such as was furnished in the estimates of the Railway Department—showing how the money was to be spent. When hon. members could not find out what the total salary of an officer was it was presumption on the part of the Premier to talk of members on that side trying puzzles.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there were several increases which the Colonial Secretary had not explained. Nine inspectors of brands received more than was voted for ten last year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had already read the list furnished by the office, and beyond that he was not responsible.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Minister was responsible for the increases of salaries of officers.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, £4,690 was voted for Government Savings Bank.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that under the heading "Salaries paid from the Loan Fund" there be voted for Agent-General £1,925. He said that through recent changes in the office there was a reduction in the Executive Engineer's salary of £200. There were slight increases in the salaries of three clerks, and three youngsters had been brought into the office—two at £91 and one at £80.

Mr. DICKSON thought that as the salary of the Agent-General had been postponed it would be undesirable to proceed with this estimate until the former estimate had been disposed of.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: When estimates have been first postponed, it has been 1880—4 x

the custom to finish the whole of the Estimates before going back to them.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he would like to know what the extra clerks were for? He understood that the work of the office had been largely diminished. There was an increase of £181 upon the salaries of these clerks, and an increase of £262 for three other clerks. Was Mr. Campbell in this list?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the additional clerks were dispensed with when immigration was suspended; when immigration was resumed their services would be required again. The clerks in the office were Mr. Dickens, at £600; Mr. Clay at £300; Mr. Woodward at £300; Mr. Woolner at £350; Mr. Owen at £175; Mr. Thorn at £156—he did not know whether this gentleman was any relation to the Hon. George Thorn; Mr. Austen and another at £91; Mr. Benson at £80; and Mr. Gillenski, the German clerk, at £2 per week.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the hon. gentleman had mentioned the names of more clerks than appeared upon the Estimates. These clerks, with the clerks elsewhere provided for, constituted quite a big establishment. Some justification ought to be shown for this expenditure. He believed the colonists of Queensland were not aware of any great amount of work which was being transacted in the office to warrant this large expenditure. It was not creditable that this item should pass without a sifting explanation of the circumstances of the office. The operations in the matter of immigration were *nil* compared to what they were, and yet there was a large increase. The salary of the Executive Engineer had been reduced from £800 to £600, and yet there was a gross increase upon the estimate of between £200 and £300.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said they had been told that Mr. Hamilton had been dismissed because he did not do his work, and Mr. Macalister, notwithstanding his age and infirm health, was obliged to do both his own and Mr. Hamilton's work. Now they had sent home a secretary who was said to be the correct thing, and who would do a great deal of the work which formerly devolved upon Mr. Macalister. With two such efficient men as Mr. Macalister and Mr. Dickens—and concurrently with getting rid of a man who did not do his work—why should there be these extra men?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already said that the clerks were dispensed with when immigration was suspended, and are taken on again when immigration is resumed.

Mr. BEATTIE noticed that there was a saving of £200 upon the salary of the Executive Engineer. This officer, he believed, was Mr. Dick, formerly of Rockhampton. Was this officer compelled to devote the whole of his time to the Government, or was he allowed to do work outside of the Government office?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: He has to devote the whole of his time to the service of the Government.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had wondered why an Executive Engineer who received £2,000 when he did not give the whole of his time to the services of the Government, was willing to give up a lucrative position for a salary of £800 and abandon all private practice. Some people were of opinion that no executive engineer had a right to hold shares in a company which had dealings with the Government.

The PREMIER said that when Mr. Ashwell received £2,000 a year on commission he had to supply an office and clerks; he had not even a

room in the Government office. Under the new arrangement the clerks were supplied, and the Executive Engineer received £800 a-year. If the hon. gentleman moved for a return he would find that the staff system cost a great deal more than the commission system.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had never heard that the Premier objected to the new system. He appeared to have appointed another officer on the same plan. The hon. gentleman did not say anything as to an executive engineer being allowed to hold shares in a company which had dealings with the Government.

The PREMIER said that no instructions had been or would be given against such a thing. The Executive Engineer had a right to do what he pleased in the matter. The charge brought against Mr. Hamilton was that he believed Mr. Ashwell was a partner to a considerable extent in a firm which had a contract from the Government, and, having that belief, refrained from giving the information to the Government. He believed that a Civil servant could hold as many shares as he pleased and invest his money as he liked. The House would take his word when he said he had always opposed the change which had been made. He had always said that they would require to pay more for an executive engineer with a staff than if he were paid by commission. He had always spoken against the system, believing it to be wrong. It would be unfair when one Ministry came into office to upset all the arrangements of another Ministry without giving them a fair chance.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he did not see that there was any upsetting of the arrangements of another Ministry in the question. He was surprised to find the Premier openly justifying the position that an officer of the Government was entitled to hold shares in a company which had dealings with the Government. He did not know how such a man could be expected to see that the Government had fair play when the interests of his company were concerned. The position to his mind was untenable. He was aware that the Premier before had expressed his approval of such a thing being done, but he certainly was surprised to hear him justify the course in that House. The Premier seemed to be of opinion that Mr. Hamilton ought to have been dismissed for not declaring to the Agent-General that Mr. Ashwell had shares in the Haslam Company; but when the fact was now declared it was not objected to.

The PREMIER said he had never held two opinions on the matter. It was an absurd position to take up that an officer holding a situation under the Government worth £1,000 a-year should be debarred from taking shares in a company. What was the interest the man could possibly hold that would tempt him from the path of virtue? Take for instance the Commissioner for Railways. Supposing he was a shareholder in a limited liability company and his shares brought him in £5 or £10 a-year, and that company contracted with the Government of Queensland to supply railway stock, should they turn round and say that he should at once have disclosed the whole fact to the Government because he had found himself brought into an equivocal position with the Government? There might be cases in which his interest was of such a nature that it should be disclosed, but to say that a man should do so because he held shares in a limited liability company was going too far. He held that any Civil servant might put as much money as he liked into limited liability companies, and unless his position was so strong with that company that it actually affected his life or his interest to a very con-

siderable extent, he had no business to disclose his private affairs to the Government—unless it was so strong as to be a source of temptation. In regard to Mr. Hamilton, he accused Mr. Ashwell of being a shareholder and managing partner in a firm with which the Government had a contract—not merely a shareholder in a limited liability company—and that was information he should certainly have disclosed, and which he ought to have been dismissed for withholding. The fact of being a shareholder in a limited liability company did not militate against his position in the slightest degree.

Mr. REA said the question was where the temptation began and where it ended: was it £800 or £8,000?

The PREMIER said it depended upon the individual. With some individuals £5 would be about the price.

Mr. REA said he was glad the Premier had given something like an estimate. Perhaps nothing less than £60,000 would be his price.

Mr. GRIFFITH said at question 2121 of the evidence given before the select committee on Mr. Hemmant's petition, the Premier was asked by himself—

"I understood you to say that if you had known that Mr. Hamilton had been aware earlier of Mr. Ashwell's connection with the Haslam Co. you would have dismissed him, there and then? I would."

"But why? I would have thought it was his duty, as Secretary of the Agent-General, to have communicated to the Agent-General the fact that Mr. Ashwell was a shareholder—or rather a partner and director, as he put it—in the Haslam Co., before their tender was allowed to be accepted—for not having disclosed that information, I would have dismissed him. I see, now, that he did not know that Mr. Ashwell was a shareholder, then."

"Where did you get that information from?—I can't find it? In his evidence. He stated to the Committee that he and Mr. Ashwell were scheduling the freight tenders, and that he upbraided Mr. Ashwell with trying to take advantage of the Agent-General's weak health, especially; which came bad enough from him, considering that he was a partner in the Haslam Company. This was in February; so that he knew perfectly well of the fact, before the London inquiry, to upbraid Mr. Ashwell with it; whereas on the 5th April he swore to me that he did not know of the connection before about ten days before. He implies that he mentioned it in an indefinite form before. He had sufficient information of Mr. Ashwell's connection with the Haslam Company, it appears now, to upbraid him with it in the commencement of February. [p. 12, 27, 28.]

"Then, you think that the fact of Mr. Ashwell's connection with that company was one that ought to have been brought to your notice before the tender was accepted? Yes. If Mr. Ashwell's connection with the company was anything like what Mr. Hamilton represented—that is, a director and partner."

"You said you had a conversation with Mr. Ashwell in January, in which he said he would not stop with Mr. Hamilton in the office, because he spread slander about his being connected with companies that got contracts? Yes."

"Did Mr. Ashwell say what companies these were? I think he did mention—I remember him mentioning John Brown and Co."

"Do you remember if he mentioned the Haslam Company? No; I do not think the Haslam Company, so far as my memory serves me, was mentioned before the contract was let. I do not remember him mentioning the Haslam Company; but it is very likely he did."

"Did Mr. Ashwell, on this occasion, admit or deny that he had shares in companies that had contracts? He told me that he had."

He did not quite see how it was reconcilable that Mr. Hamilton ought to have been dismissed for not having disclosed a thing which the Premier now justified.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Nothing of the sort.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the only satisfactory position that could be taken up was, that the persons whom they made their servants to see that they got fair play should not be interested

in seeing that they did not get fairplay. It was impossible to say where to draw the line where temptation began. Would £50, or £100, or £125 be sufficient, or where were they to draw the line? The Government had got so into the habit of contemplating these things as fair and legitimate that they now actually came forward and justified Civil servants occupying that ambiguous position. Really, he did not expect to hear it openly justified in Parliament, and he was surprised.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I'm very sorry.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he had given the Colonial Secretary credit, and so did many other people in the colony, for a greater love of fairplay, and a greater love of honesty than to justify such things. It was impossible to justify them. It seemed to him that it was impossible for any man to serve two masters. It was no use trying to minimise the thing and say it was only a little interest—that it only brought in £20 or £100 a-year. No worse argument than that could be used. They were entitled to insist that their servants should be their servants and nobody else's servants. It was quite impossible for any man whose interests were that the colony should be badly served to give satisfaction to the colony in looking after its interests.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had sat quietly for some time past, and wondered whether the hon. member who led the Opposition would go so far as he had gone now, and he found he had done so. Look at the hon. member's career during the past session! Look at its commencement and look at its close! How did he commence this session? By charging the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government with dishonesty—not political dishonesty, but actual robbery of the State—pecuniary robbery of the State. That was his commencement, what was his end? By getting up now and quibbling about what? About men who were appointed under his own Agent-General—who were under the control of his own Agent-General, appointed by his own Government. That was the finish of the hon. gentleman's charge against the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. If untrue, a more disgraceful charge was never made as regarded the leader of the Opposition; if true, a more disgraceful charge was never made against the head of the Government. What was the result? The result had been that no matter to whom the blame was to be attached it was not to be attached to the Premier. It was attached to the Premier by the leader of the Opposition, and upon him the blame now resolved itself. He (Mr. Morehead) considered the hon. gentleman's conduct had been disgraceful; and if he (Mr. Griffith) had done his duty he would have apologised to the House, and more particularly to the leader of the Government, for the charges he brought against him. The very Press of the colony, which in the first place defended him upon a vague charge, turned round and said that every day proved that the Premier was not guilty; and the evidence that had been brought before the House showed that not one tittle or shadow of charge could be brought against the Premier of this colony. Blame was attachable, somewhere—that no one denied; but it was perfectly clear that no blame could be attached to the Premier. Then where stood the hon. member, the leader of the Opposition? He stood branded as a man who brought the grossest, gravest charge against the leader of a great party in that House—great party he said advisedly, for any party was a great party that commanded a majority in that House—the hon. member had failed in bringing home that charge, and not only failed but failed most egregiously

and ignominiously; and now, native-dog like as he was, he snapped when he was driven into a corner. He (Mr. Griffith) lost no opportunity of attempting to bring similar charges against the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, always trying to base them upon the baseless charge he had failed to prove. And now he had told them, what? That those men who had been placed in this position by his own Government were not the men who should occupy that position. The hon. member should be the last man in the world to bring a charge against Mr. Macalister. He (Mr. Morehead) was not there to defend Mr. Macalister; he (Mr. Morehead) always held him in the most utter contempt, as a man who never could be trusted, and should never have been trusted, but who was trusted by the hon. member and other hon. members opposite—never by that side of the House. At least he was not sure that the Colonial Secretary did not trust him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Me!

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was not quite sure that the Colonial Secretary had not the highest opinion of him.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: *Non mi recordo.*

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman had served so many masters and mastered so many servants that one was not quite able to know where to locate him. The last member of that House to abuse him (Mr. Macalister) was the leader of the Opposition. He (Mr. Morehead) did not say Mr. Macalister suckled the hon. member for North Brisbane; at anyrate, he assisted to rear him. He thought it probable that the hon. member for North Brisbane had been reared by two cows, and he had heard it said that a calf that was reared by two cows was the biggest calf of all. Of course he did not believe it, but he had heard so. The hon. member for North Brisbane had had many masters, and he had betrayed them all. Now, he was his own master—the leader, at anyrate, of a considerable party in the State—and he (Mr. Morehead) would warn that party that he (Mr. Griffith) might possibly betray them; that he would reverse the engines. It was quite on the cards. A man who had been a bad servant was likely to be a bad master. He said the hon. member's attack on the Premier to-night, and his allusion to a matter that had been so far settled, had been indecent and quite unworthy of the leader of the Opposition, but probably not unworthy of the hon. member for North Brisbane.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the speech of the hon. member for Mitchell had been of a piece with all the tactics of the Government throughout this session. Their only defence was abuse. He did not think the hon. member for Mitchell would have descended to be made the tool to give utterance to all this low irrelevant abuse, because he had hitherto in that House maintained some sort of a respectable position. That hon. member had been good enough to refer to his (Mr. Griffith's) position and his conduct throughout this session. He (Mr. Griffith) might tell the hon. member the position he (Mr. Griffith) occupied at the present time. He possessed the confidence and respect of an immense majority of this colony.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS Opposite: Oh, oh!

Mr. GRIFFITH said he possessed the respect and confidence of the people of the colony for his conduct in this matter, in which he had had to perform an extremely disagreeable duty. He should not condescend to do what the hon. member for the Mitchell had attempted to



do—namely, to prejudice a case which was only part heard. He said on the last occasion on which this matter was referred to, that he would not express an opinion on it whilst it was under investigation; but for the hon. member to say in the present state of the case that the charge had broken down was to prejudice the matter. The House had determined that the matter was still to be investigated.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL : Against whom ?

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was not the accused person; all he had to do was to see that the truth was discovered—which might no doubt be a difficult duty—by all means in his power. He had no interest in concealing anything, but his duty was to see that the truth was discovered, and he intended—and hon. members opposite knew that there was some perseverance in his nature—to persevere until it was discovered. If he found on investigation that there was nothing to warrant him in what he had said or done then he should be the first to apologise, but up to the present time there was nothing to lead him to that conclusion; at present the matter was in part proved and in part remained where it was at the commencement of the present session. He thought it was unfortunate that the Government should have attempted that night to defend themselves in this way after the few remarks he had made. He had merely taken the position that no member of the Civil service should hold shares in a company whose interests might conflict with the performance of his duties to the Government by which he was employed, and the Premier took the opposite position. He had then quoted from the Premier's own words to show that a little time ago he (the Premier) was of the same opinion as he himself was. He held to that opinion still—that it was quite incompatible with the position of a Civil servant. He was not going to sit down and be attacked without answering, but he declined to go into the merits of the question for the reasons he had stated.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman had, not for the first time during the last week, said that he did not wish to prejudge the case; but what he (the Premier) complained of was this—that the action of the Opposition had been all along plain evidence that they had prejudged the case. A more detestably base and malignant thing he had never seen in the course of his political career, than when the member for Maryborough (Mr. Douglas) deliberately misconstrued the judge's decision in the Supreme Court, and was backed up by the leader of the Opposition and his legal knowledge, in saying that the court had decided that he (the Premier) was a contractor; yet all the colony knew very well that the Supreme Court never decided that he was a contractor, and the leader of the Opposition knew it when he backed up the member for Maryborough. He did not, however, intend to go into that case; but it was well known that the Press of the colony had been whipped up for the last four or five months on this one subject, to induce the public to believe that the Premier was a thief. Such was the malignity of hon. gentlemen of the Opposition; and he would say this, that if politics were to be conducted in that way by the hon. gentleman, by God he would lead an unhappy life, for it would make politics impossible in this colony. He did not wish to speak any more on this subject. He knew that the House would give him credit when he said that he had given every possible facility for inquiry on the subject. All he had wished and prayed for was that the fullest investigation should be made, and he only wished that he had the means of bringing to trial for perjury those men who were at the bottom of the

foul charges which had been made against him; but from that he was debarred. He would now refer to what he had said about Mr. Ashwell. What he had said was this, and all that he had said expressed his opinions thoroughly. When he went home Mr. Ashwell informed him that he was a shareholder in some joint-stock limited companies—one was John Brown and Company, and another was Charles Cammell and Company—and asked him whether he (the Premier) considered that holding shares in those companies was anything against the position he held under the Queensland Government. The question he naturally put to Mr. Ashwell was as to what number of shares he held and the nature of them, in order to see whether their value might possibly be a temptation to swerve him in the execution of his duties to the Queensland Government. Mr. Ashwell showed him that he had only a few hundred pounds invested, bringing dividends of perhaps £30 a-year, and that in the case of a Government contract he would receive the magnificent sum of 6d. per year as his share of the proceeds. This was not likely to be sufficient in his (the Premier's) opinion to lead to the supposition that the Government were likely to suffer. He contended that a Civil servant had a perfect right to hold shares in a limited liability company, unless it was to that extent that it might tempt him to swerve from his duties to the Government. The case of Mr. Hamilton was quite different. When Mr. Hamilton was in London he stated in his evidence that Mr. Ashwell was a director in a company interested in a contract with the Government. He (the Premier) thought that was a serious thing if true, and he told Mr. Hamilton that he ought to have mentioned it to him before, so that he could have dismissed Mr. Ashwell. He asked him if he was aware of it, and he then said he did not know of it. That was at the end of March; but when Mr. Hamilton came to this colony he gave the details of a quarrel he had had with Mr. Macalister, which he wished to make as bad as possible against that gentleman, among which he stated that he upbraided Mr. Ashwell that he was a director in a certain company which had a Government contract. He stated in London in March that he knew nothing about Ashwell having shares in this company, and yet when he was examined before the committee in this colony he said that he upbraided Ashwell, knowing that he was a director and partner in this particular company. What he (the Premier) said was that if he knew Mr. Hamilton was aware of the fact when he first asked him he would have dismissed him for not advising him of it.

Mr. WELD-BLUNDELL said the hon. member for North Brisbane, in accusing members of the Committee of attacking him, spoke as if he was treated with hardship when it was pointed out that he had behaved exceedingly badly in connection with the steel-rails contract; but he (Mr. Blundell) considered the hon. gentleman had been treated exceedingly leniently by the Government side of the Committee. What was the position taken up by the hon. gentleman at the commencement of the session, but this, that the Premier had taken part in a tammany ring, and that not in all the Australian colonies, and not even in America, had an instance been known of a Minister of the Crown taking part in such a ring. The charge the hon. gentleman made against the Premier was of taking a part in robbing the State of something like £60,000, and he was called upon by the House to prove that fact, and the matter was referred to a select committee, of which the hon. gentleman was a member, and as the leading lawyer of the colony he had full power to elucidate from every witness every tittle



of evidence against the Premier. Yet the hon. gentleman was unable to bring out one single thing; he was not able to prove that the Premier had been guilty of doing anything that any man of the strictest probity would not have done. Hon. members therefore thought that at the end of the session the hon. gentleman would have come forward and stated that he had been unable to prove the charges he had made in the House, and have expressed his regret for having made them. The charge made against the Premier was of such a character as to lead everyone who did not know that hon. gentleman to suppose that he had undoubtedly stolen a portion of the £60,000 which the colony lost in the purchase of rails, and the effect of the charge was to lead men not acquainted with the details to believe that such was the case. Having been unable to prove any of his charges, the least thing the leader of the Opposition could have done was to express his regret that he had unintentionally and too easily accused the Premier of taking part in a swindle. Statements had been circulated all over the colony of so slanderous and libellous a character that had they not been made in that House the hon. gentleman would have been compelled to answer for them in a court of law and would have had to pay heavy damages. Therefore, the least the hon. gentleman could have done was to express his regret, but he had not done so when the opportunity was afforded to him a few days ago when the report of the committee was adopted. Not only did the hon. gentleman not express his regret, but he occupied three hours in addressing the House and telling them that Hamilton's evidence was reliable. One hour's speech from the Minister for Works, however, was quite sufficient to disprove that. He contended that the Government side of the House had shown undue leniency to the hon. gentleman, and therefore it was utter folly for him now to say that he had been slandered and ill-used. When the hon. gentleman made the accusations against the Premier, it was naturally supposed that he would be able to bring forward some proof, but as he had not been able to do so the feeling of the country was that he had made slanderous accusations against the Premier which he could not prove. Therefore, the hon. gentleman should be thankful to hon. members on the Government side of the House for having treated him so leniently.

Mr. GRIFFITH said the Premier had accused him with considerable warmth, accompanied by profanity of a kind not heard before in the Parliament of this colony, with having been actuated by personal malignity in his conduct during this session, and had asserted that politics had become impossible in consequence of this. Even hon. members on the Ministerial side would not, he believed, in their calm moments say that he had been actuated by anything like malignity.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he felt sure that the hon. gentleman did not believe anything of the kind, and he thought he should not be unparliamentary in contradicting the hon. gentleman on this occasion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am certain of it.

Mr. GRIFFITH said that nothing had taken place during the present session to render politics impossible or even difficult for honest men. Definitions of honesty might differ; such definitions of honesty as had been heard from the Ministerial side during the present session were enough to surprise anyone. He was, however, using the word in its ordinary sense, and he could state that nothing had taken place during the session to make politics in the least degree embarrassing

to honest men. He declined, notwithstanding the frequent attempts that were made, to be entrapped into any further expression of opinion with regard to matters the inquiry into which was to be further prosecuted in England. The hon. member for Clermont had been put up also to make the attempt, and the hon. member said that he (Mr. Griffith) was to blame for not apologising to the Premier for the charges that he had made against him at the beginning of the session, seeing that they had not been proved. But he (Mr. Griffith) would ask why they had not been either proved or disproved? It was because the Government by a party majority at the commencement of the session refused to refer those matters to a tribunal which could have either proved or disproved them, and because they chose to refer them to a select committee which everyone knew from the beginning could not investigate the matter fully. That was the reason, and now the hon. member (Mr. Weld-Blundell) invited him to treat the thing as at an end and finally disposed of, in opposition to the resolution which the House arrived at last week. Of course the suggestion was absurd; he could do nothing of the kind. So long as he was satisfied that there was going to be a *bona fide* investigation into the matter he should say nothing; but as soon as he was satisfied that there would be none he should not have any hesitation in giving his conclusions on the matter. At present he held his judgment in suspense. Hon. members opposite took a different course because they treated the matter as already disposed of. They appeared to be in the confidence of the Government, and as they said that he (Mr. Griffith) was beaten it would appear as though there was to be no further inquiry. If it did not mean that it meant nothing at all. Until further particulars were ascertained, it was impossible to say whether his statements could be proved or not, and at present there was not sufficient evidence to deal with so grave a matter. He had not invited this discussion, which had not arisen upon anything he had said. He had only in a moderate manner compared a statement made by the Premier in this House with a statement made before the select committee, without in any way referring to the matter which remained for investigation. With regard to the accusation made by the Premier that he (Mr. Griffith) had assisted the hon. member for Maryborough to misrepresent a decision of the Supreme Court, he must state that he did nothing of the kind. The Premier said that he had represented to the House that he (the Premier) was a Government contractor. He did not think he had expressed any opinion on the subject, but he had no hesitation now in saying that it appeared to him plainly that the hon. gentleman was a Government contractor. His opinion to that effect was embodied in the protest of a portion of the select committee; and he observed by papers laid on the table of the House this afternoon, that by a contract entered into a fortnight after the opening of the session the Premier and the Colonial Secretary again became Government contractors. If the Premier challenged his opinion on that subject, he would tell it to him, as that matter was not a subject for further investigation.

The PREMIER said that the further charge, that a fortnight after the session commenced he and the Colonial Secretary became Government contractors again, only showed the utter contempt in which he held the hon. member's opinion that he (Mr. McIlwraith) was a contractor at all. Had he wished technically to avoid such a contention he had nothing to do but to telegraph home to have the clause in the contract stating that the contract was entered into on behalf of the owner omitted. He had,

however, refused to take advantage of his position to do anything of the sort, and that was the only hook upon which any such charges against him could be hung.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Mr. Perkins) said he was very unwilling to take part in this discussion, especially when he had such a formidable opponent as the hon. member (Mr. Griffith). He was, however, pretty well acquainted with the matter, and he knew that when the session commenced the hon. gentleman came into the House with the expressed object of turning out the present Ministry. The hon. gentleman had said that in ten or twelve weeks he would make them fugitives, so that they would be seeking some place to hide their heads after he had stated his charge, three-fourths of which was made up in Brisbane. The hon. gentleman was now disappointed because he had had the inquiry he had craved for so much; he had conducted it in his own way; and after asking every question he thought proper, including many which would not be allowed in any court of law, he had to take shelter under a protest signed by himself and two other members of the committee. What did the hon. gentleman expect would result from the inquiry? Was it not in keeping with everything the hon. member had tried to invent and start? What was the character and the pedigree and the history of those matters? And now the hon. gentleman was trying to get these statements of his about the Premier and Colonial Secretary into *Hansard*. He (Mr. Perkins) knew the pedigrees of a great many of those wirepullers who appeared at the hon. gentleman's public meetings; he had not stated them yet; but he might do so, and it would then be seen that Baron Erlanger was a fool to them. Who had brought about all this disturbance? Who appointed Mr. Hamilton?—who was Mr. Macalister's colleague?—who did Mr. Macalister bring forward into political life?—and who sent Mr. Hamilton home? What was the verdict of the country at the time that Mr. Hamilton was sent home? The one verdict was that he was a rogue and a vagabond; that he had robbed already, and would rob at home. Here it had been proved conclusively from his own mouth that he was a liar—that he took commissions and *backsheesh* in all directions. He denied that in London, and would not answer questions, and said the Premier would not give him an opportunity of answering questions. He equivocated here, and proved himself a man ready to tell any untruth to bolster up the story he came out with; but afterwards, when he saw so many convincing proofs around, he, in a coy way, admitted that he had undertaken commissions just for friendship's sake. But Mr. Muir, when he came forward, showed in a clear straightforward way that Mr. Hamilton had been executing commissions with six or eight firms at home. This was the liar who had furnished the foundation of all the charges. It was this man who admitted that he had supplied Mr. Hemmant with all the materials for the charges contained in his petition. Was that the sort of man to have his character defended from time to time? Did the hon. gentleman (Mr. Griffith) wish that the good opinion of him, which up to the present time had been held by hon. members, should fade away and perish, and did he desire to begin a new life by recognising himself as a part and parcel with these men who got up meetings to talk in his favour? He (Mr. Perkins) had his doubts about the matter. The hon. gentleman appeared to hold aloof from them, but there might be some telephone or other means of indirect communication. The sooner the hon. gentleman looked to the rising sun, studied which way the wind blew, and considered his position, before the Government came to identify

him as one of these creatures and crawlers, the sooner he would better himself. That was a piece of advice to the hon. gentleman, and he did not charge £1 3s. 6d. for it. He knew that the hon. gentleman was on the wrong tack, and the hon. gentleman knew it, but he had gone too far to retreat. The hon. gentleman knew that he had made a false and groundless charge, but he felt that in his position he would lose prestige if he did not go on. Therefore the hon. gentleman was obliged to defend Mr. Hamilton and other public characters whom he was the main instrument in sending home to swindle the public. That was his character for the hon. member at the present time. He had heard the character given to Mr. Hamilton when he was first sent forward as a pilot-fish—a spy, and a detective—to look out the land for someone to follow. It all came out as the public had predicted, and in that respect he agreed with the hon. gentleman when he talked about the public. The public knew what was going to happen. Let the hon. gentleman take that now and rub the plaster in.

Mr. GARRICK said the speech just delivered was about the most low and degrading speech he had ever heard in the House. He would challenge anyone to find in the records of *Hansard* a lower piece of speaking. He did not know what the House was coming to when a Minister delivered such a speech. Ministers should be the custodians of the honour of the House, instead of making such statements as those which hon. members had just heard. This House had hitherto been considered the premier House of the colony, and had been regarded with pride by members of it; but soon hon. members would feel that they had to apologise for being in it. Ministers were not taking care of the honour of the House as they should do; the honour of the House was being neglected and lowered by such a speech as that which had just been delivered. Who outside the House cared for what was said by the hon. members for Mitchell and Clermont and Gregory? Who did not know what they were? Who did not know why they sat on the other side? The hon. member for Mitchell, as a member of the committee, should have been silent about the report. They should all withhold their judgment upon the subject. He had endeavoured to do so until he heard all the evidence, and he did not wish to approach the subject or have his mind biased. With reference to the committee, if anyone would take up the report and notice the divisions which took place he would find that there were twenty-two divisions, that each time three members sat on each side, and that seventeen times the chairman voted with the two Ministers. All he had to say was that when he saw this, and compared it with what hon. members opposite had said, he came to the conclusion that it was not the sort of tribunal which should investigate the matter; and, as the leader of the Opposition had said, it would have been better if, at the beginning, the Government had assented to an investigation by an independent tribunal outside of the House. At any rate, he believed that any number of politicians selected on the commission would not have the confidence of the House or the country.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member had asked who he (Mr. Morehead) was, and who the hon. members for Clermont and Gregory were? They had not got to deal with that hon. member's position outside the House. Outside he might be a very master of his profession or the worst lawyer, the biggest rogue, or the greatest scoundrel. What they had to discuss was what members were inside the House. The hon. member might have intended to say something insulting but he failed of his mark, and either inside or outside the House any of the hon. members

to whom he had alluded would bear comparison with him. He wished, however, to deal with the hon. member in his official capacity. The hon. member had been decorated with silk lately—he did not think that the hon. member had earned the distinction—it had probably been given to him as a job, and he did not think that he would be an honour to it. He had been gazetted as a Queen's Counsel; he was worthy of the tremendous honour, conferred no doubt by Her Majesty, after due consideration with the Privy Council. The hon. member had said that he (Mr. Morehead) had done more than he should in commenting upon the report brought up by what was commonly known as the Steel Rails Committee. It appeared to him that the argument was rather absurd, and the hon. member himself must think so. They had been favoured with a speech of about three and a half hours from the leader of the Opposition, who, he believed, was a member of the committee; they had also been favoured with a speech of nearly two hours from the Minister for Works, and with a speech from the hon. member for Blackall, both of whom were members of the committee. Why, then, should he or any other member of the committee be prevented from giving his opinion? Why was he to be told by the member for Moreton that he had no right to express an opinion upon the subject because he was a member of the committee? Their report had been adopted, yet it was to be a closed book, and he was told that he must be silent because he was a member of the committee. The hon. and learned member must be getting into his dotage. He (Mr. Morehead) would also object, as a member of the House, to being addressed or bullied in the way that the hon. member attempted. If the hon. member would advance arguments against the arguments brought forward by the Government side he would give them due weight, but when the hon. member simply got up in his place and went in for a tirade of abuse not only against him (Mr. Morehead), but others who chose to differ from him, it was time to consider whether his remarks were worth considering at all. He held they were not. The hon. gentleman had told them that the select committee had brought up an informal report, and so forth, and he indulged in a tirade of abuse against the men appointed by the House. He believed the select committee did their duty, at anyrate, according to their lights. The hon. member also told them that the committee had been guilty almost of shameful procedure, and that in every division there were three on each side. The House knew perfectly well how the committee was constituted, and how they did their duty. He believed they did it as honestly and fairly as any committee ever appointed by the House. He had no desire but to search and find out the truth. Believing as he always did in the honour of the Premier he did not care the toss of a penny how the result came out. He sat in the committee as an independent member, appointed by the House, and he attempted to find out the truth. What sympathy could he have with dishonesty? He had not lived nearly forty years with dishonest men, and therefore he would ask what sympathy could he have in being connected in Parliament with dishonest men. What good would it do him? If he wanted to gain credit would it not have been better for him to have gone with the popular cry and try to pick holes in these men—would it not have been easier for him to have lent his opposition to them when that disgraceful rumour was promulgated by the leader of the Opposition, than to stand up for the cause of truth and justice? He had attended carefully and fully to the whole question, and an

honest and more truthful report could not have been brought up by the committee. The protest only traversed it as a lawyer would traverse it. The protest did not dare, even by imputation, to cast a slur upon the Premier, although the institution of the committee was based upon the charge against the Premier: if it was not based upon the charge that the Premier had been guilty of fraud it was worth nothing. It did not matter to him whether John Smith or McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company made £60,000. Unless it was proved that the Premier was connected with it the charge fell short, and so far there was not the slightest connection established, and he believed there was none. He had got what probably the leader of the Opposition had got—namely, a conscience, and with that he had to reconcile his actions; and his conscience being satisfied that he had done what was right in this matter, and done what the House appointed him to do, he cared little what the hon. member's myrmidons around him or his friends the *Evangelical Standard* at his back said about him.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was glad to hear that the member for Mitchell had a conscience. He could not exactly make out what the object of the discussion was. He had studiously avoided saying a word in reference to the question which had been revived that evening, because he thought that the evidence was not sufficient to enable him to sit in judgment. He would therefore have preferred not to have heard the matter revived. There was evidently some object in hon. members opposite reviving the matter. What was it? An attempt was evidently made to draw out the leader of the Opposition to make some further statement. He (Mr. Macfarlane) thought the hon. member had used great discretion in not being drawn. The hon. member for Mitchell had complained of being bullied by the member for Moreton. What could hon. members expect, if they would use such language as they had indulged in, except to be spoken to in a way which would cause them to feel. He observed that every justice was given by the Opposition side to speakers from the other side—they were not interrupted; but one Minister and three or four private members had continued to molest speakers on the Opposition side. The leader of the Opposition had been blamed by a Minister of the Crown for getting up public meetings. Surely, a Minister ought to be above making such assertions. That hon. member was too well known for anything the Minister could say to injure him. The question raised by the hon. member for North Brisbane was as to whether certain servants in the Agent-General's Office should be allowed to retain shares in companies dealing directly with the Government; and it had not yet been answered. He believed that if the company was not directly concerned with the Government they had nothing to do with how many shares a public servant held in any society; but if the company had direct dealings with the Government, however small they might be, he should be compelled either to dispose of his shares or resign his position. The hon. member for Mitchell, he was sure, was much too shrewd a man to keep anyone in his employ whose interests were not the same as his own.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he had listened with much pain and regret to the acrimonious discussion that had taken place—a discussion acrimonious on one side and intended to promote acrimony on the other. When the hon. member for Mitchell first rose, he could not understand what his object was. Nothing had been said by

the hon. member for North Brisbane to call forth the irrational, intemperate address which endeavoured to pour contempt on the career of that hon. gentleman. Before much speaking had been done he had come to the conclusion that the whole thing was a preconcerted arrangement with a view of stirring up ill-feeling and embittering the closing hours of the session with a view of in some way damaging the hon. member for North Brisbane in the estimation of the country. He had hoped hon. members would have learnt how futile such a course was. The circumstances connected with the return of the hon. member for Bundamba ought to be a sufficient demonstration, if such were needed, that the country was not to be won over by any such furious denunciations of the leader of the Opposition—in fact, hon. members who had indulged in them were much more likely to damage the Premier than the leader of the Opposition. It seemed as if the Premier really needed to have his character whitewashed, and to have the plaster laid on with a trowel. When such violent attempts were made to make the Premier appear a very paragon of all the excellencies, the only thing that could suggest itself to the minds of persons outside was, that there was some need for repairs, and for the polish and veneer that was attempted to be applied. To excite an acrimonious discussion at that late period of the session was very ill-advised, and the effect of it had been to block all further discussion of the Estimates to-night. It ought to have been discovered that the hon. member for North Brisbane treated all such attacks as had been made on him to-night “as the idle wind, which he regarded not.” They could not hurt him, and it was bad policy to make them without proving to the colony that such attacks were well-grounded; and they always made adherents to a cause by persecuting and making a martyr of its champion. The effect of the debate to-night would be to wake up feelings out-of-doors which would otherwise have slumbered, and which ought to have slumbered until the whole facts were known of the unhappy transactions which had occupied so much of the attention of Parliament during the session. He wished to enter his protest against an attempt to interfere with the even tenour of Parliamentary business by the introduction of a debate of that sort, for which they were not prepared, and which would not have the effect on the country it was intended to have. He (Mr. Rutledge) would be unworthy of being associated with the hon. member for North Brisbane, or numbered amongst his supporters, if he were to sit by and hear him abused and his motives called in question without resenting it. He did resent it. As an associate of that hon. gentleman in the House, and as one of those who were proud to call him leader, he resented both the tone and the language which had been applied to him to-night. He entirely agreed with the hon. gentleman's observations with regard to public servants holding shares in companies having transactions directly with the Government; and last year he had given expression to similar views on the subject of the Civil Service Co-operative Store, which competed with the traders of Brisbane.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Co-operative Company does not do business with the Government.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said that if the principle applied to Civil servants doing business with the general public, it applied much more to the principle of Civil servants having shares in companies doing business with the Government. The observations on that question ought to have been considered on their actual merits, and without any reference to the question of Mr.

Ashwell and the steel rails—a question the very reference to which palled on his taste.

The PREMIER: What keeps you on your legs then?

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he kept on his feet for the purpose of protesting against the time of Parliament being taken up by such a discussion as they had just heard—a discussion obviously intended to damage his hon. friend and leader in the public estimation.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the speech of the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) was about the most evident attempt at whitewashing he had ever heard. What manliness was there in slobbering a man to his face and fawning upon him like a dog? The hon. member for North Brisbane began the debate to-night, and followed it up until he provoked retaliation from the Ministerial side. When he looked over the report of the select committee the first thing that struck him was the divisions, and he at once came to the conclusion that they ended exactly where they began. He believed they would finish so, and that whatever decision was come to both sides of the House would not be satisfied. There was an immense lot of filth and dirt thrown at the opening of the session, which it would take an immense lot of time to clear up. The hon. member for North Brisbane was very persevering, and if he had made an erroneous charge he would follow it up to the bitter end. At the same time, he believed him to be a very good man; but let him be ever so good he would not treat him in the lickspittle fashion of the hon. member for Enoggera. There was nothing so disgusting as lavishing praise on a man to his face. If the hon. gentleman were outside the House, and anyone attacked him in his absence, he would be the first to defend him. But with regard to the hon. member (Mr. Rutledge) he was a junior counsel, and possibly it would get him another brief.

Mr. REA said that after the severe attack which had been made on the leader of the Opposition any man who had confidence in him was bound to rise and comment on what had been said. He congratulated himself on being away during the early part of the session if the Ministerial statements during that time were anything like what he had heard recently. Hon. members must be sick and tired of the new phase of Ministerial attempts at addressing the House. They had heard the Premier that night ejaculate “by God!”—and the other night the Minister for Works suggested that the leader of the Opposition should go outside with him to settle disputes.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: The proper way to do it.

Mr. REA would ask whether they ever heard of such statements being made in the House of Commons. It would not do for the leader of the Opposition to attempt such a risk as that or the result might be something which the whole country and the party would regret. As to the remarks which had been made about public meetings, he held that the public were not to be led by either side of the House, and if the Government imagined they had the confidence of the people they were mistaken, for if they spent even the £60,000 in public meetings and got a vote of confidence he would resign his seat. It was monstrous to talk about hon. members on this side delaying business. It was the duty of members of the Opposition to criticise the Estimates, and the leader of the Opposition would not have been doing his duty had he not made the inquiries which he did respecting the Agent-General's office. The hon. member for Mitchell, who was one of the followers of the Ministry, had

asked what interest they had in common with the Government. Was it not demonstrated last session that they had an interest in common in thousands of square miles of South Australian territory? Had they not an interest in the mail contract? What would they have heard of the contract if it were not for Thursday Island? None of the Eastern Ports would have been considered at all but for Thursday Island. Added to these and other things there was the big railway affair, the route of which the Government had never attempted to indicate. The Opposition would not be doing their duty, in his opinion, if they did not stop the passing of Estimates until the Government declared what line of country that railway was to go through. The leader of the Opposition had been bullied and blackguarded because he asked for information which he had a right to get. He (Mr. Rea) could not designate the conduct of the Government, but he had no doubt that the public would do so. The Government were quite mistaken if they thought the public were to be misled by their statements with regard to the evidence taken by the Steel Rails Committee. The public had already arrived at a conclusion respecting it; they had judged the tendency of the evidence and given a verdict accordingly. He hoped they would hear nothing more calling in question the right of the Opposition to check the Estimates.

Mr. PRICE said he was gratified to hear there was to be an inquiry into the steel-rail business conducted by gentlemen who had no interest in politics. He should not be found sitting on the Government cross-benches if he had not considered that the Premier had been wrongly charged by the Opposition with the wrongful dispensation of money which he had never seen. He (Mr. Price) was thoroughly independent in the matter—he had not been bought or sold: on that and on all other matters he had given his vote in the way which he thought would be for the benefit of the colony at large. The colony was no doubt indebted to the leader of the Opposition for what he had done, but as things had turned out the hon. member was put in a corner; on principle, he felt bound to follow the matter up, and was, he (Mr. Price) believed, now doing what he did not believe in. The hon. member, Mr. Rea, who had been in the early part of the session galivanting in Victoria, came back at the end of the session and did all he could to obstruct business. He (Mr. Price) trusted that the session would close at the end of the week—he should certainly not stop any longer. Reverting to the steel-rail inquiry, he must say that so far as the investigation had gone nothing dishonest as far as the Premier was concerned had been proved. If the impartial investigation which was to take place proved anything dishonest against the Premier they would have to chuck him up and send him back to the country. He (Mr. Price) had been challenged to go back to his electorate. He would not be ashamed to appear before his constituents at any moment, as he would do so with the feeling that throughout the long session he had acted according to his conscience and his principles.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that £3,752 be voted for harbour and river improvements.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he thought that would be the proper time to draw attention to matters relating to the barges which were being made at Maryborough. From papers which were laid on the table some time ago, but not printed, he found that on the 3rd November, 1879, tenders were called, and the lowest tenderers were Smith, Forester, and Company at £5,648, or £5,168 delivered at Brisbane, in eighteen

months. Another tender was a joint one from Messrs. Tooth and Company of Maryborough, and McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company, the amount being £5,849, the barges to be delivered in eight, nine, and ten months respectively. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Company's tender was accepted, because the time asked by the other tenderers was too long. There were very severe penalties for failure to deliver the barges within the specified time. As the tender was accepted on the 5th November, twelve months had elapsed, and therefore the first barge ought to have been delivered four months ago, the second three months ago, and third two months ago. As far as he understood, none of the barges had been delivered up to the present time, and it was quite obvious that they could not have been delivered in the specified time unless they were made in the colony. The barges, instead of being made in the colony, were made in England and put together here. The return from which he had quoted was laid on the table on October 13, and there was no report accompanying it, although the time for the delivery of the first barge had long expired when notice was first taken of the matter.

The PREMIER said he believed the return was produced upon the motion of the hon. member for Fortitude Valley. The engineer in charge was present, however, and if the hon. member for North Brisbane asked any questions he would endeavour to procure him the information he required.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was surprised when the return was produced that it was unaccompanied by a report. He asked for the papers in consequence of rumours he had heard outside. He observed that the return made by the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers gave the whole of the tenders in detail, and very strongly commented upon the necessity for accepting one tender, because the time occupied in the construction of the barge was of so much importance. Messrs. Smith and Forester were the lowest tenderers by £200. Messrs. Tooth, of Maryborough, were the next lowest. They offered to construct the barges in eight, nine, and ten months, and in the event of their not delivering the barges according to contract they were liable to a penalty of £5 a-day. He found that the first barge was not finished—that was to say, it had not been delivered at Rockhampton within the specified time. The penalty would amount to about £300 to £650 at the present time, and the price for the construction of the barge was only £1,600 or £1,700. If the full penalty were inflicted it would probably absorb half the contract price. He thought the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers, when the papers were asked for, might have given the Treasurer the information which was required. There ought to be a report as to why the contract was not completed within the specified time, and whether it was the intention of the engineer to inflict the penalties for the non-execution of the contract. He would at once say that he had not paid particular heed to the reports he had heard. If one paid attention to all the reports one heard one's brain would be muddled. He would state, however, for the information of the Committee and the Treasurer, that there was a rumour outside that the barges were partly constructed in Glasgow and bought by the firm that contracted to build them. Certain alterations were made in the bottoms to adapt the barges to the specifications; and they were taken to pieces and sent out by the "Lusitania." This was the ironwork referred to by the hon. member for Maryborough in speaking of the intercolonial freight charges. The ironwork was sent up by the A.S.N. boats, and delivered at

Maryborough. It had been rumoured that the ironwork in connection with these barges had been condemned by the inspector appointed by the Government, and he was very anxious to know whether there was any truth in the statement. He had made inquiries of several people from Maryborough, and had been told by some that the statement was true. Some, on the other hand, said it was untrue. They ought to have a report from the local inspector—in fact, he should send a monthly statement to the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers as to how the work was proceeding, more especially as the contractors were already four months over their contract time. He had understood the Premier to say on a former occasion that it was his intention to carry out the strict letter of the contract in the matter of penalties. If that were done, it meant ruin to the contractors; they were already four months over their time, and goodness knew how long they would be before the third barge was delivered. The whole of the works on the Fitzroy had been stopped in consequence of the non-execution of this contract; and there could be no doubt but that a great injustice had been done to the lowest tenderers who would have been able to carry out the work. He thought that, for the credit of the colony in the matter of contracts, there ought to be an inquiry into this matter. If the statements of various parties out of the House were made without foundation they ought to be contradicted by the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers.

Mr. KING said Mr. Tooth was in Brisbane a few weeks ago and gave him some information, of which he asked him to make use in the event of this question coming up again. A report had been circulated to the effect that these barges were constructed at home; that they were built there before the contract was let, and bought second-hand by the contractors. Mr. Tooth assured him that that was not the case. It was said on a former occasion that the material was sent out in such a short time that it could not have been constructed in the interval between the acceptance of this contract and its arrival here. When Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, and Messrs. Tooth made up their minds to tender conjointly for the barges, the specifications were sent home to Messrs. McIlwraith, McEacharn, in England, with instructions upon receipt of a telegram to place an order in the market for the supply of the material. A telegram indicating the acceptance of the tender was sent home and the order was at once placed upon the market. Mr. Tooth informed him that the whole of the material sent out was manufactured especially for the firm, and that the barges were never put together before they were sent out.

Mr. BEATTIE said he never said anything about that branch of the subject. The material, however, came out punched and ready for putting together. It was of no use to tell him, therefore, that the barges were not put together at home.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was glad to find the hon. member for Maryborough, who was so strongly in favour of protecting their native industries, getting up and defending the construction of work at home which, upon its arrival in the colony, only had to be put together.

Mr. KING: I only gave an explanation of the facts.

The PREMIER said that if the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had asked for a report when he asked for the papers, he would very likely have produced one. The hon. member, however, simply asked for a copy of all papers. He now complained that there was not a special

report. With regard to the construction of the material in Glasgow, the Engineer of Harbours and Jetties informed him that he had a certificate that the material was made by Messrs. F. Green and Company of London.

Mr. RUTLEDGE said he sincerely hoped that the penalties attaching to the non-fulfilment of this contract would be exacted. It was only due to the manufacturers of this colony who tendered to deliver the barges within a certain time that no unfair advantage should be given to those who imported the material from abroad. This was one of those cases in which native industries might be fostered without any disadvantage to the State. A great deal had been said as to their getting material for the public service cheaper by importing it from abroad, but if this was an illustration of the superiority of free-trade, the arguments advanced against fostering their native industries in this particular were not worth much. If the conditions with regard to the penalty were waived it would be giving an undue advantage to the contractor who imported his material. He hoped the Premier would show thorough impartiality in this case by exacting the last penny.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he observed that in the conditions of the contract the mode of manufacture was specified. The sternpost, for instance, was to be of the best hammered scrap-iron. The castings were to be of a mixture of iron, approved by the engineer or inspecting officer. There was also a provision that the engineer or inspecting officer should at all times have access to the workshops and yards where the barges were being prepared and executed, and so on. There was the most careful provision in the specifications for actual inspection by the representative of the Government, while the barges were being made. Now it appeared from what the Premier said that these barges had been built in England, so that in reality they were getting second-hand barges. If there was any doubt on the mind of anyone as to the meaning of the specification it was clear that the intending contractors knew very well what it meant, because the firm of Fulton and Company, of Melbourne, said that they did not think it worth while to name a price for barges to be made in Victoria and put together in the colony. But, notwithstanding that, the contract was let in the way he had stated, and the general belief was that they were paying for second-hand barges, and there was no doubt that they were paying a higher price than they could have got the work done for in the colony. He also observed another curious thing—that after the tenders were sent in, and before they were accepted, there came a telegram from Mr. McEacharn requesting permission to alter the price if an extension of time were granted. That was all they knew about the matter.

The PREMIER said he did not think the hon. member understood very well the subject he was speaking about. The other day he (the Premier) explained that when it came to his knowledge he prevented the Government at home from interfering and sending down an inspector. When the party who undertook the contract applied to have the material supplied from home inspected as it came out he (the Premier) declined to do so, because if their inspector approved of the work as it left the yards they could not very well refuse it when it came here. If the work came out here and it did not stand the test, or was not in every respect equal to the specification, they could condemn it, and that was a much severer test than having it inspected at home. The other matter referred to he did not know anything about, as he was out of the colony when the contract was let.

Mr. BEATTIE said with reference to these papers he had had inserted the word "reports," because he naturally expected that the constructing inspector at Maryborough, who was watching over the interests of the Government, would send in reports of their proceedings to the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers; but to his great astonishment he found that although the work had been going on for about twelve months not a single report had ever been sent in. He certainly thought they ought to have the opinion of the inspector of dredge plant in Maryborough, with reference to the material used by the contractors of these barges, to show whether it was good and sufficient for the purpose; because, as he said before, it was continually dinned into his ears that it was faulty in character and had been condemned, and therefore ought never to have gone into the barges. He thought, in justice to the contractor, some inquiry should be made; although they must have known that they could never send home to England and get the barges put together there and sent out—although they came by the Orient line—and complete their contract according to specifications in eight months. The lowest tenderer guaranteed to complete the work in twelve months, and in that case the material would have come out in its raw state, and the whole thing would have been constructed under the eyes of the Government themselves. He did not believe in the work that was done at home. The country had suffered on two or three occasions from the system of sending orders home; and while he was on the matter he might refer to the pilot-boat that was ordered by the late Government. She was a small vessel of about 60 tons, she was to be constructed for the Government, and it was a very large price to give for a small vessel like her size, £3,000. When she arrived here the construction of this vessel was certainly not of a satisfactory character. After she was placed upon the station it was found that she was so weak that when it was necessary to let go the anchor it could not be lifted, as the whole superstructure moved backwards and forwards. They had to take off her decks, and it was found that she was held together with two-inch bolts, and filled in with what were commonly called in shipping construction, "devils"—small copper bolts about an inch and a-half, and not a bolt through the whole vessel. He intended to ask for a return of the amount of money that had been spent on her in repairs. A more disgraceful job was never perpetrated; and if it was known in England that a vessel was sent out to the Queensland Government of such faulty character as that he was perfectly satisfied that the parties would have got seven years; and they deserved it. His only wonder was how she ever came out. She must have had very fair weather and have been very carefully handled. He thought the Government should inquire into the matter respecting those barges, as the common rumour outside was that they were old barges built in England or Scotland, and were simply taken to pieces and brought out here after some alterations had been made in the bottoms to make them agree with the specifications.

The PREMIER said he had already explained that the barges were built by F. Green and Co., of London; and as to their having been condemned, he could only say that they had been inspected by the Government inspector and approved and passed by him.

Mr. GRIFFITH asked if the name of the inspector was Picking?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he was informed the other day in a letter signed by a respectable man,

whose name he was not at liberty to mention, that this man was the contractor's representative as well as the inspector for the Government—that, in point of fact, he superintended the construction for the contractors and the Government at the same time. He hoped there would be an inquiry as to whether such was the case or not.

The PREMIER said the inspector had the full confidence of the head of the department. He did not think the hon. member should refer to private information of that sort unless he was prepared to give the name of his informant. It was a direct charge made against this man—that he was in the pay of the contractors as well as the Government, and he (the Premier) believed it was a lie. This man had the full confidence of the Government engineer, and he (the Premier) believed the man who made the statement was a liar—he did not care who he was.

Mr. GRIFFITH said there was nobody else but this man in charge of the construction of these barges. That was the information given to him. He was not at liberty to give the name of his informant—he was sorry he was not.

The PREMIER said the information the hon. member gave to the Committee was a distinct charge against the Government inspector of being in the pay of the contractors as well.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he believed what he said was that he was in charge of the work for the contractors. He merely stated the information as he got it. He only wanted inquiry, which he hoped would be made.

Mr. BEATTIE said he believed this inspector was a very honest man. He was a good tradesman, and perfectly competent to superintend the work. Of course he did not know anything about what the leader of the Opposition had mentioned; but all he had to complain of was that they had had no reports. He would have been able to contradict the reports that had been circulated if he could have obtained an official report from Picking, but there was none.

Mr. FRASER wished to know when these barges were to be completed, and what was the cause of the delay in completing them. He thought, at any rate, some very sound reasons should be given for not enforcing the penalties for non-completion within the specified time. That was only justice to every firm which had tendered for the work, especially to that firm which had sent in a lower tender, and which would ere now have been able to turn out one of the boats at least. If they went on in that sort of way, and contractors were not kept up to the spirit of their agreement and the fines and penalties enforced, they would find that no respectable firms would tender for Government work.

Mr. REA said that his eyes were every day getting more and more open to the jobs of the Government. He considered that the Committee should refuse to go on with the Estimates until they were told whether the fines were to be enforced. The Premier told them that he had not made up his mind on that point, and therefore it might be next year before hon. members got any information.

Mr. DICKSON said the position was not by any means clear so far as he could gather from the debate that had taken place. He understood that the barges were built at home and brought out here in pieces and reconstructed, and that there was old material being used. On that point some information should be given. He should also like to know the cause of this extraordinary delay.



Mr. RUTLEDGE said it was perfectly immaterial whether or not the engineer at home had the confidence of the engineer here, as they had been told that the engineer who constructed the "Groper" had the confidence of the authorities in England, and hon. members knew what a failure she was. It was time this sort of thing was done away with, as it would cause a cloud of suspicion and generate bad feeling. There was no excuse for deviating one iota from the strict terms of the contract, and in the case of non-completion the fines and penalties should be rigidly enforced. He did not see why Smith, Forester, and Company's tender should not have been accepted for these barges, even if the Government had to wait a few months longer. The knowledge that the Government would insist on payment of the fines was the only security that could be given to respectable firms tendering, and there were also other reasons why the penalties incurred should be strictly enforced.

The PREMIER said the hon. member might make his mind perfectly easy on this point, that he intended to enforce the fines. With regard to the statement of the hon. member (Mr. Dickson), he might state that the barges were not made of second-hand material, and he had been informed by the Engineer of Harbours and Rivers that it was next to impossible that the material should be second-hand, as there was not, to his knowledge, another barge of the same pattern in the world, they having been built from his own specification.

Mr. GRIFFITH wished to know when the barges were likely to be ready?

The PREMIER said that two were ready, and the other pretty well on.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he wished to know something about the "Clara." He had been told that she had gone to the devil.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: You ought to be able to give that information.

Mr. GRIFFITH said he should like to know who it was that had passed her?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could give some information, and the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) ought to be able to give more. This vessel was ordered from home on the recommendation of Captain Heath. She was built by White, of Cowes, and was called, when first sent out, the "Governor Cairns." Since then her name had been changed from that of a male to that of a female, which, perhaps, accounted for her not being known to the leader of the Opposition. He never knew the vessel was in such a bad state until it had been pointed out to him by the hon. member (Mr. Beattie) this evening, but there was no doubt that the work had been frightfully scamped. The vessel was ordered when the hon. member (Mr. Dickson) was Treasurer.

Mr. DICKSON: No, before that.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said, at any rate, she was ordered by the great radical Ministry that liked to call themselves the Liberal Ministry, and the contract was accepted by Mr. Macalister.

Mr. BEATTIE said he might as well give all the information he was possessed of. The individual who contracted for the vessel failed, and she was completed by Mr. Andrew McIlwraith. Whether that gentleman contracted with somebody else or not he did not know. How the vessel got out here without very careful supervision, seeing the manner in which she was constructed, had always been a puzzle to him.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £22,991 be granted for salaries and contingencies in connection with railways.

Mr. GRIFFITH hoped the Government would not push on the vote that evening as it was the last on the Estimates with the exception of the Agent-General's and the Supplementary Estimates, which were almost a formal matter. Hon. members would require some information about these railways, and it was only reasonable at half-past 10 o'clock to ask for an adjournment, especially as there was every probability that, owing to delays in the Upper House, there would be ample time for the consideration of that estimate.

The PREMIER said that his reason for going on with the estimate was that the Opposition, backed up by some hon. members on the Government side of the House, had wasted a great deal of time in discussing the Estimates, but as the leader of the Opposition had stated that the Supplementary Estimates were a merely formal matter, and with the understanding that they would not be treated as the Estimates-in-Chief had been, he would move that the Chairman report progress.

Question put and passed; the House resumed; the Chairman reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at thirty-two minutes past 10 o'clock.