

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Council

WEDNESDAY, 17 NOVEMBER 1880

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, 17 November, 1880.

Sandgate and Racecourse Railways.—Motion for Adjournment.—Railway Companies Preliminary Bill—committee.—Brisbane River Valley Railway.—Brisbane Racecourse Bill—second reading.—Gulland Railway Bill—committee.—Marsupials Destruction Bill—committee.

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

SANDGATE AND RACECOURSE RAILWAYS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

1. That this House approves of the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the following Railways, viz:—Brisbane to Sandgate; Branch Line from Sandgate Line to Racecourse, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on 4th November.

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

At this late period of the session, after all the discussion that they had had on the subject, and as he had reason to believe that any discussion which might take place would not alter the vote of the House, he would not make any remarks further than to say that the Government had adopted what they believed were the best of the lines that had been surveyed. The most complete surveys had been made of various routes, and what had been found to be most economical in point of construction, and what was believed to be the most useful line, and the most beneficial to the public, had been adopted.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said the Postmaster-General had stated nothing in favour of the line. He believed that this was a most unjustifiable attempt on the part of the Government to please a few people and waste the people's money for the sake of allowing a few persons to go pleasureing. He also believed that there was great contention amongst those who advocated a railway to Sandgate as to which route it should take; and

he really thought that, in addition to the evidence given to hon. members, the Postmaster-General might have favoured them with some information upon the subject. If they adopted this railway on the information that had been supplied, they should be doing so without warranty. He protested against this line on the ground that it was an unjustifiable expenditure, and that it would not develop any trade or open up any country. There were but few farmers to serve, and there was the pleasure-going part of the population to gratify, and that seemed to him to be all that could be said in favour of the line. He had endeavoured on previous occasions to show the danger there was of recklessly piling up the public debt by these railways. He had prophesied that they should have to pay out of the general revenue, a sum of not less than half-a-million for the loss in working their railway lines; and, in confirmation of that statement, he had met with an article respecting those vaunted Victorian lines which had been stated over and over again in the House to have such excellent paying qualities. Before making any comparison between the Victorian railways and the Queensland ones, the difference must be noted between the trade and population, and the necessities for railway communication of the two colonies. The small colony of Victoria, compared with Queensland, was densely crowded; there was a large population at each end of the line, and an immense traffic to carry out; while here their lines had not so much paying properties, nor was there any probability of their having them. He found in the *Melbourne Age*, of November 9, a leading article on the subject of the railway report which Mr. Patterson had just presented to the Parliament of Victoria. The article stated that the report exhibited several features which were deserving of the most attentive reflections, and went on to say:—

"We have sunk a sum of £15,343,240 in the construction of railways radiating throughout the colony, and we are about to increase this large amount by the expenditure of £2,000,000 more. Exclusive of the interest upon the money paid for the Hobson's Bay Railway, we have to pay £750,000 annually for the capital invested in our country lines. This sum is not made up by the profit derived from them, and, indeed, in this respect, we are rather falling behind of late. The gross revenue for the last three years has been—

1877—787 miles opened	£1,135,798
1878—967 " "	1,216,675
1879—1,108 " "	1,222,107

Thus, while in 1878 the revenue rose £80,000, in 1879 it only rose £5,000, a very serious difference in its rate of progression."

This was significant, and ought to be a lesson to this colony. It was exactly what he had foretold would be the result on our railways: that while they were piling up the cost and increasing the annual interest, sufficient revenue would not be obtained to meet that interest. Much of the revenue for the last two or three years which had been credited to the railway had been obtained from the contractors for the carriage of railway material, and hence, as soon as the sections were finished the railway revenue must inevitably fall off. Again, he would point out to hon. members that much of the revenue which two, three, or ten years ago would never be taken into account, was now added to the returns. The various departments were debited with and had to pay into the railway revenue the charges made against them. This had only been done during the last two years, and hence the apparent swelling of the revenue for a time, and an increase which was really fictitious. However, the only way, apparently, by which they could keep up their railway revenue was by railway making—by spending enormous sums in contracts, part of which sums came back for the carriage of the material for

the contractors. He was glad that he had seen the article in the *Age*, because it bore out his vaticinations that an increase in their length of railways did not produce an increase of revenue. When they got weekly statements of the railway receipts in order to compare them with the corresponding week of the previous year, it would be just as well if they had in the same paper the amount of the cost of the railway for the week in comparison with the same period of the previous year; that would be a valuable *precis* of information, and might have some effect in curbing the desire of the people to see railways made. Hitherto the burdens which had been cast upon the people had been relieved by the expenditure from loans, but the time of borrowing must cease. The time must come when they could borrow no more money, and then they should find themselves suddenly pulled up, and should awaken to the fact that about one-half—if not that much, certainly one-third of the general revenue of the colony, including the proceeds of land sales, would be required to make up the annual loss on the working of their railways and the interest. He could not vote for the railway before the House. It would not open up any industry—it would not benefit one hundred persons interested in rural occupations. Although the cost did not seem enormous compared with that of other railways, he had not the least doubt that when all was told, when the resump-tions were paid for and stations not now contemplated were provided, the cost would be twice as much as was stated. There was no necessity for the railway. Nothing had been shown to justify such an extraordinary piece of expenditure. There was no great demand for the line by the citizens of Brisbane; anyway, they had not evinced it—they were showing a sullen indifference. There was great dissatisfaction as to the route determined on by the Government; and taking into consideration the sullen demeanour of the people respecting the necessity of the line, and the disgust of a large number of people respecting the proposed route; taking also into consideration the state of the finances at this moment—that the people were really living upon borrowed money, and that the apparent state of the colony was being bolstered up by the large expenditure of loan money which was going on or was promised—it would be wise for hon. members to follow the excellent course that was recognised yesterday, and tell the Government plainly that they had enough railways for this session, and would not agree to the construction of this one.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR said he should oppose the line as much as he possibly could. He did not see that it was likely to favour trade in any possible way. It might be convenient for a few people who wished to visit Sandgate, but he could not see how it would pay working expenses—to say nothing of interest on the cost of construction. He did not know anything about the question of route, but he was satisfied that the line was one which should not be made and which would be totally useless. In ten or twenty years it would be time enough to talk about making a railway to Sandgate. He was sorry that he was not in the House yesterday, for he held that the South Brisbane line, which had been rejected, would pay better than any that had been brought forward this session. He would watch with some curiosity how members who voted against that railway would vote upon this motion. The colony was not in a position to pay for this Sandgate railway, and, moreover, it was a farce to expect that the line would be a paying one. Would any number of gentlemen be likely to combine for the purpose of making it? If they did, they would be thought

worthy subjects for Woogaroo. It was absurd that the Government should, in these depressed times, bring forward such a line to please a few people.

The Hon. W. D. BOX said that, to his mind, the Sandgate was the only line which the Government had asked the House to sanction, which afforded any reasonable prospect of returning interest on the cost. He believed it would not only pay working expenses, but interest on the money expended, and therefore contended that it was a wise thing for the Government to introduce the motion. The route was a matter about which he was not able to form an opinion; but from the evidence before the House it appeared that the Government had undoubtedly chosen the cheapest line, and the one which least interfered with vested interests. It seemed also to him that they had chosen the most direct route. He further contended that it was not only for the advantage of Brisbane, but of the whole of the southern portion of the colony, to be able readily to get to the seaside and enjoy the benefit of sea-air, in the summer months especially. At present one could not do so on account of the time and expense. He also maintained, in reply to the argument that no agricultural settlement would be benefited, that the whole of what was known as the North and South Pine would be served by this railway, and that there would be a great deal of suburban settlement along it. The cost did not seem to be exorbitant. He trusted that the engineer would be able to fulfil the promise made to the select committee, and that the House would sanction the line.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said the Hon. Mr. Taylor had spoken of the South Brisbane line as a line which would pay. If the hon. gentleman really thought so, why didn't he put in an appearance on the previous day and vote for the line? For his own part, he had taken considerable pains to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of the line, and he thought that the disadvantages counterbalanced the advantages. He gave his vote accordingly. He admitted that, as far as the line before the House was concerned, he had not given it so much attention as he had devoted to some of the other lines which had been brought forward this session. He viewed the line as one upon which a large section of the House would have an opportunity of saying something, inasmuch as their residences were either in or near Brisbane. No opposition, however, had been raised except upon the score of expenditure. Of course they should be careful not to allow any wasteful and useless expenditure; but he had a general idea that the line was likely to pay. He candidly confessed that he was not a warm advocate of the line, because he could not believe that it would be a great success; but, so far as he could see, the balance of evidence seemed to be in its favour, and upon that ground he supported the motion.

The Hon. W. GRAHAM said he thoroughly agreed that it would be desirable to have a railway to Sandgate. It would be a great boon to the citizens of Brisbane and visitors from the country. He objected to the line before the House, because he regarded it as the most undesirable of the whole of the lines which had been suggested. The Government in this matter had gone entirely against the advice of their own engineer, and had carried the line across country from which it would derive no traffic. The line ran between two omnibus lines, and he did not believe that it would take any suburban traffic at all. It was not a line which, like the Toowong line, ran through land which would probably be sold. The line ran through a public park which would not be alienated. The terminus, in the

first place, would be in a most ridiculous situation, and would take people at least a mile from the business part of the town. He did not know whether the proposed branch to the Racecourse was intended for ordinary traffic, or simply for use upon race days, but in either case the line would not be of much advantage. The only recommendation which the line proposed by the Government had was that of economy, and even with this recommendation more money would be absorbed, he believed, than was available. The first branch line which, in his opinion, they should construct would be a passenger line from the present railway station into town. He would vote against the motion.

The HON. W. PETTIGREW said he noticed that the first part of the line was from the Brisbane terminus to the Bowen Hills. Two routes had been suggested, one *via* Victoria Park and the second *via* Fortitude Valley. As far as length was concerned there was only a difference of $1\frac{1}{2}$ chains in favour of the former route, but the comparative cost was estimated to be, for the Victoria Park route, £15,158, and for the Fortitude Valley route £25,290—or £10,132 in favour of the Victoria Park route. It must be remembered that there were no people living at Victoria Park, while the Valley was full of people. He had always thought that railways were made for the accommodation of the people, and why this line should not be made where population existed he could not comprehend. He would ask hon. members to notice a portion of Mr. Stanley's reply to question 89—

"Have you recommended the line which you now say presents the greatest advantages?—Will you give to the Committee a general description of the line which you have told us you consider offers the greatest advantages? Yes; in doing so, I had best adhere to the same subdivisions as I named in describing the surveys. As regards the engineering features, the first section, from the Terminus to Bowen Hills, there is very little choice between the two. The lines are practically of the same length; and as regards the gradients and curves they are very much on the same footing. In my last report to the Minister, I expressed an opinion in favour of the line *via* Fortitude Valley: because it appeared to me that it was the one that was most likely to meet the requirements of the largest traffic."

The Hon. Mr. Taylor had told them that he would have voted for the South Brisbane line had he been present on the previous day. He would remind the hon. member, however, that the Hon. Mr. Gregory had proved to demonstration that the cost of the line, including 12 or 13 chains for wharfage accommodation, would be close upon £60,000, whereas a line to the Queen's Wharf where there is 15 chains frontage could be made for £18,000. If the Hon. Mr. Taylor had been present he would, as an honest man, have voted with the Hon. Mr. Gregory against the proposal of the Government. He could not speak about the other sections of the line under consideration. There was an idea abroad, however, that they should be constantly borrowing money in order to give employment. For his own part he considered that the time had come when they should stop the construction of these useless lines, which would never pay their working expenses. There were plenty of other remunerative works upon which the Government could employ surplus labour. The Postmaster-General had said nothing as to the paying capabilities of this line. He would like to hear something upon that branch of the subject before he recorded his vote. He did not say that this line was not required, but he was decidedly against the Victoria Park route as compared with Fortitude Valley route.

The Hon. J. SWAN said that a great deal had been said about the scarcity of population upon the route which had been selected for this

line. He knew this line from end to end. The first station, as he understood, would be near the Exhibition Grounds, where at different periods of the year thousands of people assembled. That station would also serve O'Connell Town, a rising suburb. The line would go thence towards the Albion, where another township was growing up, and where it would also serve the township of Lutwyche. From that spot the line went to German Station, where there were numerous settlers. No one would deny that there was considerable population at Nudgee; and with regard to the population of Sandgate, all he could say was that it was larger than the population of Brisbane when he arrived here first. He could not understand those who said that this line would not be a paying line. From his knowledge of the various localities he believed it would be one of the best paying lines going.

The Hon. J. F. McDOUGALL said he gave a silent vote upon the South Brisbane railway on the previous day, because he believed almost everything which could be said was said about the line. He would only say a few words with reference to the proposition of the Government in reference to the Sandgate line. The Hon. Mr. Pettigrew contended that railways should be so made as to afford the greatest amount of accommodation to the greatest number. He admitted that contention, but in making railways they were not dealing with the present only. They had to look forward to an extension of population. In the case of this particular railway, he maintained that there would be an enormous increase of population in the direction in which it was proposed the line should go; and when they considered the difference of £10,000 between the Victoria Park and the Fortitude Valley routes that was a very serious item if the railway were expected to pay. If any of the trunk lines were likely to pay the Sandgate line would. He would ask hon. members to refer again to the examination of Mr. Stanley by the select committee, at the point at which the Hon. Mr. Pettigrew ceased to quote. Mr. Stanley, in continuation of the answer from which the Hon. Mr. Pettigrew had quoted, said—

"At the same time, I may state that there is a very considerable difference in cost in favour of the one *via* Victoria Park, which has been adopted for the Parliamentary plans. The second section, between Bowen Hills and German Station, I have always consistently advocated; I have consistently advocated the line by the Albion as the most direct and the least costly, presenting the most favourable engineering features. From German Station to Sandgate, I have expressed an opinion in favour of the line *via* Nudgee, and, I believe, after examining the country, it will be the most likely to accommodate the largest settlement. As regards the engineering features of the two lines there is not a great deal of difference, though *via* Nudgee is rather the least expensive."

That was very strong language in favour of the line—as strong language, in fact, as a man could be expected to use. Whether the line paid or not, however, he believed it was a necessity. Some hon. members might think it was a luxury; but he thought that, upon sanitary grounds, it was necessary that the inhabitants of a large city should have facilities for getting a little fresh air. The line, after all, was not a very gigantic undertaking compared with the advantages it would confer. He might mention that he was not in the least degree interested in any of these lines of railway. He intended to support the motion.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said he had experienced considerable difficulty in arriving at a conclusion upon this subject satisfactory to his own mind. He believed that a railway to Sandgate, if properly constructed, would not be unprofitable. Experience both in this colony

and in the southern colonies had shown that the tendency of the population was to go to the sea-side for purposes of residence. That had been the case in this colony wherever opportunities of easy suburban traffic had been offered. They had no outlet to the sea from the Southern and Western Railway, and it was a self-evident fact that, if proper facilities were afforded in an easy and certain way, a large suburban population would spring up at Sandgate which would make a railway constructed at moderate expense not unremunerative to the State. They had not to go further than Brisbane for evidence. Toowong, before communication was established between Ipswich and Brisbane, was the bush;—it was now a thriving township and brought in a large amount of revenue to the railway fund. There were unquestionably sites upon the route between Brisbane and Sandgate which were far more suitable for building purposes, as far as residences were concerned, than Toowong itself. He had no doubt that a railway constructed upon economical principles, connecting Sandgate with Brisbane, would not be worked at a loss to the State. He had a great difficulty in arriving at a determination with regard to the relative value of the routes which had been suggested. The inclination of his mind was certainly averse to the line which had been adopted by the Government. He believed there were not sufficient facilities for the passenger traffic of Brisbane at the present time. The terminal station was considerably out of the centre of the town, and for passenger and light goods traffic there would have to be an extension of the railway made into the heart of the city. That want was felt more and more every day; and, as there was a large quantity of Government land available for the extension, he looked forward to the work being carried out in the direction of the Primary School at an early date. That would be a step in the right direction. There was a large population between the Acclimatisation Society's ground and the city, and if the railway were extended in that direction a large traffic would spring up—they would have a repetition of the kind of traffic between Emerald Hill, Richmond, and Prahran and Melbourne. If such a railway were economically managed it would pay a handsome return to the Government. It would be a wise step to take a railway in the direction of the Acclimatisation Society's ground. The society had become a national institution and was doing a national work. Many thousands of people annually attended its exhibitions. This number would unquestionably be increased; and, looking at the work of the Acclimatisation Society from a purely educational point of view, the Government had rightly taken into consideration the desirability of offering facilities to the public to reach the grounds by rail. Whatever route was adopted, however, that object could be gained. Both the Fortitude Valley and the Victoria Park routes passed through the grounds. It could not be denied that German Station was an excellent place for residences; he believed the place would, at no distant date, become a thriving township. It had demands which ought fairly to be gratified. Several schemes had been put forward for connecting Brisbane with the place. They had no reason to doubt the statement of Mr. Stanley that the route adopted was a good one from an engineering as well as from an economical point of view; but he did not think it was the best to meet the requirements of the public. The inclination of his mind was to agree with the opinion which the Minister for Works had expressed to a deputation some time ago, that the proper route was by the river bank towards the Hamilton. In that way they would meet the requirements of the growing population

along the Hamilton Reach, avoid the necessity of a loop line to the Racecourse, and make a rapid stride in the direction of extending the Southern and Western Railway to deep water at or near the Powder Magazine. It appeared that the only objection to that route was on the score of extra expense. But that argument simply applied to the outset. There would be an expenditure of a few thousand pounds more, but it would be made up fully by the saving in working expenditure. He was sure they would find greater facilities for the settlement of the population there than would be found in the neighbourhood of the Albion. Between Breakfast Creek and German Station there were better sites than could be found between the Albion and German Station. The fiat of the Ministry had gone forth, however, that if that line were not constructed none would be granted. Under these circumstances he doubted whether it would be wise on the part of that House to directly refuse to sanction the proposition. At the same time, he believed that a majority of the Government were not sincere in their proposal to construct this line. It had been forced on them by the wish of a large number of their supporters and against their own desire; and he feared that if there were an expression of opinion adverse to the proposition on the part of that House, the prospect of a line being constructed would be very remote indeed. He did not feel inclined, therefore, to set up his own opinion against the decided wish of a large number of people that a line in this direction should be at once made. He would like to see the line begun, but there was a point at which they could stop without jeopardising the ultimate success of the line, and that point was German Station. Several surveys had been made beyond that point, and it had been stated by Mr. Stanley that the country through which it was now proposed the railway should pass was as good as others from an engineering point of view, and was likely to afford great facilities for the settlement of population. He differed from Mr. Stanley upon the latter point. Anyone familiar with the district must know that the bulk of the population lay on the left and not on the right side of the Sandgate road. In connection with the Fassifern line they had affirmed the desirability of an innovation in the mode of constructing lines over which the traffic would not be great. They had asserted the desirability, even at the expense of an increased grade, of availing themselves as much as possible of the provisions of the Tramways Act, and running these lines along the roads. Although there was evidence on the part of the Engineer-in-Chief on this subject, he had not ventured to assert that it would be impracticable to run a line along the Sandgate road with gradients here and there of 1-in-30. Hon. gentlemen who had been down there knew that there were in reality only two hills, and those not of very great extent, intervening between German Station and Sandgate. Either of these hills could be easily ascended with gradients of 1-in-30; and if the line of railway traversed over the road there would be no cost for resumption, and the farming population on the other side of the road would have the full benefit of the railway. They would not be constructing a railway, as far as agricultural population was concerned, for the benefit of a few settlers in the neighbourhood of Nudgee; but would be supplying the requirements of a large number of settlers in the district of Bald Hills, and between Bald Hills and Kedron Brook, who practically would derive no beneficial results from the construction of the line now proposed. They would simply have to go to Sandgate with produce if they had any, or to Brisbane by the most roundabout way. As the attention of the en-

gineer had been directed to the feasibility of adopting this principle, which seemed to have forced itself upon the Minister for Works at a recent date, they would not be acting unwisely if they stopped the present construction of the line at German Station, leaving it an open question for the future which route the railway should take beyond that point to Sandgate. The report pointed out that the anticipated cost of construction of the present line was £14,000 in excess of the amount voted by Parliament, so that before the line could be completed it would be necessary to come down to Parliament for a further vote for the purpose of construction; and by adopting the plan suggested no delay would practically ensue, and they would have the possibility—which he regarded as a most extreme probability—that the construction of the railway would be effected within the original cost estimated by the Government. He therefore proposed that after the word “Sandgate” the following words be inserted—

“So far as a point thereon at German Station six miles from the terminal station at Brisbane.”

He had said nothing about the loop-line to the Racecourse, which he saw was included in this resolution, and which he thought would have been contained in a separate resolution. He might be considered to have some personal interest in this matter. He had been for some years past rather closely identified with the Queensland Turf Club, and unquestionably it had been for some time the desire of that body to have an easy mode of communication by railway or tramway between the metropolis and their ground. He had no doubt that, if there were a direct line between Brisbane and the Racecourse, it would pay handsomely. In Victoria, Flemington was simply a cattle market without any population until the Victorian Race Club was established with vigour. The demand of the public for passenger facilities was so great that the Government speedily constructed a line between Melbourne and that place and no further; and the result was that that portion of the railway was about the only portion of the Government railways that was paying a handsome return to the country. The number of people who travelled over it every year was enormous; and if they had anything like corresponding facilities here with regard to passengers travelling between Brisbane and the Racecourse, it would not only pay interest on the outlay but a great deal more. He calculated that the interest on the actual cost of constructing this line would be more than repaid by one meeting in the year. He believed the race club had in contemplation, in pursuance of the powers conferred upon them by Act of Parliament, in the event of the facilities proposed by this resolution being afforded them, to make provision for constructing a ground suitable for all kinds of sports. To the discredit of Brisbane it had been urged against it that there was not sufficient energy amongst the people to establish a proper recreation ground for outdoor, healthy amusements. The only place was a piece of ground which was circumscribed in extent and open to all sorts of intruders, which prevented its being utilised to any appreciable extent by any class of sportsmen. He should have much pleasure, therefore, in assenting to the line to the Racecourse, but under the circumstances his vote might be looked upon with suspicion. In regard to the rest of the line he had no personal interest whatever; his only object was to do as much good as possible to the public.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the amendment just moved would be found foreshadowed in the report of the committee. In inquiring into the merits of the various routes proposed, evidence was taken which led a ma-

jority of the committee to believe that from German Station towards Sandgate a more desirable line might be found than that which had been surveyed, and a clause was inserted in the report embodying the proposition now made by the Hon. Mr. Mein. It seemed rather remarkable to him that some hon. members, who were so ready to take the engineer's recommendation when it suited themselves, were equally ready to discard it when opposed to their ideas. The engineer's recommendation had been a great deal talked of with regard to the route from Brisbane to Bowen Hills. He (the Postmaster-General) thought there was a serious objection to the line to Bowen Hills by way of Fortitude Valley in addition to that of expense. He might here remark that the difference in the expense was not £10,000, as appeared in the evidence of Mr. Stanley. The difference in expense was, while £15,000 was required for one line, £44,000 was needed for the other; because in the line recommended by the engineer the estimated expense for land would be over £17,000, whereas by the route the House was asked to adopt there would be no expense of that kind, as the line would run almost entirely through Crown lands. He thought, seeing that the difference in the cost of this short piece of line was so enormous, the Government would have undertaken a very serious responsibility had they recommended Parliament to adopt the more expensive line. Another reason was that the line between the terminal station and Bowen Hills, by way of Fortitude Valley, would have to cross no less than fourteen streets, which meant not only expense necessary to protect people from accident, but also that the trains would have to be run very slowly. They could not run at a rate of twenty or twenty-five miles an hour on that line; whereas, on the line proposed by the Government, they could run from twenty-five to thirty miles an hour if it were necessary. It would also be very easy to carry that line from the terminal station to the Normal School Reserve; it would go through Crown land, and be an inexpensive line to construct. He thought that these reasons were sufficient to justify the action of the Government in adopting this line. The Normal School Reserve was in a most central position and would afford great convenience to the public, and also have the effect of increasing in considerable degree the traffic on the line; so that he thought altogether there was not much in the argument of the engineer that the line by way of Fortitude Valley was the best one to adopt. As to the line between Bowen Hills and German Station, there again the Government had not only taken the more economical line but the one recommended by the engineer. He thought it would have shown a want of proper perception of their responsibilities if the Government had gone in defiance of their engineer and adopted the most expensive line. The portion of the line from German Station to Sandgate was admittedly the least important, and, if the House chose to adopt the amendment submitted by the Hon. Mr. Mein, he thought probably it would not affect the question materially. At the same time, he must point out that the line under consideration had been first recommended by the engineer, then adopted by the Government, and then it had been deliberately approved by a considerable majority of the other House.

The HON. C. S. MEIN: No; not more than two or three.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL thought on these grounds the propriety of introducing such an amendment here was one that might be questioned. However, he did not intend to offer any strong opposition to it; but, of course, if the Hon. Mr. Mein called for

a division he should be bound to stand by his motion in the form in which he had submitted it. With regard to the Racecourse line, he was not so sanguine as the Hon. Mr. Mein. No doubt there was a great demand made by the public of Brisbane that the Racecourse, being the only recreation-ground they had in the neighbourhood of the city, should be made approachable by railway; but he must confess that, individually, he did not desire the House to adopt it. However, that was his individual opinion only, and, in submitting the resolution, it must be understood that he was merely adopting what had been determined upon by the Government as well as by the Legislative Assembly. When he first moved the motion he did not anticipate much discussion upon it, because he believed that every member of the House had made up his mind, and anything he (the Postmaster-General) might say would be superfluous. However, as there had been some discussion, he thought it his duty to make these observations to show that he did not submit the resolution as a matter of form, careless whether it was adopted by the House or not. The whole of the line the Government had brought forward had been submitted to Parliament with a full sense of the responsibilities they incurred, and with a sincere desire to get them authorised and to carry them out. He did not think anyone could reasonably accuse the Government of insincerity in this matter, seeing that they were only carrying out the policy they foreshadowed when in opposition, and were keeping faith with the country in regard to these branch lines.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said he intended to vote against the amendment, and he hoped the Postmaster-General would be consistent, and strike out that portion of the motion which referred to a railway to the Racecourse. He did not see how anyone could expect that, in a place like Brisbane, with a population of only 30,000, an extension to the Racecourse, to be used only on race days, would pay. That line would also cost £6,283 over and above the cost of the line from Brisbane to Sandgate. He should vote for the resolution as it stood; but if he could induce the Postmaster-General and other hon. members to have the two lines taken *separatim* he should do so, in order to take first the line from Brisbane to Sandgate, and then the line to the Racecourse, so that hon. gentlemen might be in a position to express their opinions upon each. It had been stated that it was intended to construct a cheap line, and yet they found that £52,000—which was the most moderate calculation—had already been exceeded by over £14,000. In considering these railways they should remember that they had to be carried out at the expense of the whole of the colony. The object of this line was to make the sea-side easily accessible to Brisbane—to make a bathing-place for the citizens of Brisbane—and it would not benefit any place north of Moreton Bay. They should therefore adopt the most economical line; and as the line through the Valley would entail heavy additional expense, in consequence of the number of streets to be crossed and the increased cost of maintenance, he should vote for the motion, and, if the two lines were put separate, he should vote for the first and against the second.

The Hon. J. C. HEUSSLER said there was no finality to railway-making, and he thought they might as well either accept the Hon. Mr. Mein's amendment or the Government proposal. It had been said that they need not make a railway for pleasure-seekers, but he did not see why they should not. The British people had a very good saying, that Jack would be a dull boy if he did not have some little pleasure. The Romans also used to introduce a great deal of

pleasure amongst the people in order to keep them in good humour. He thought the Government were deserving of credit for endeavouring to put the people in good humour, as they very often put them out of good humour. With regard to the portion of the railway to Bowen Hills, he thought it must be evident to all hon. members that at no far distant time they must have a different place for Government House, and he would point out that there was a most excellent site in Victoria Park for that purpose. He would further point out that this railway would be a great convenience to volunteers attending the rifle butts in Victoria Park, and that its proximity to the hospital would be a great convenience, as those persons who required to be taken there could be taken there at once. Then there was the Exhibition and the Acclimatisation Society's grounds. The Exhibition brought thousands of people together, and it could not be said that it was simply a local affair. It was a national thing for, at any rate, the whole of the Southern district. With regard to taking the line to the river bank at the Hamilton, he decidedly thought it would be a most expensive and useless route to take it. The hills in the neighbourhood of the Hamilton ran down close to the river, and he did not see where there would be room for the railway beside the ordinary public road. With regard to bringing the line to the Racecourse, he would point out that it was not alone those who attended racing sports who would find it a convenience, but the ground for athletic sports and cricket was there also, and it would be equally a boon to young men and others desiring to take part in those sports. Another aspect of the question was that the House had thrown out the railway for the transport of coal to deep water, and the railway to the Racecourse could be made a little instalment towards the conveyance of coal to deep water, being in the direction of the Powder Magazine, where it had been suggested that their deep-water harbour should be. He thought, therefore, that not only for pleasure-seekers but also for the good of the country this line should not be overlooked. He should vote for the railway to Sandgate, but in the first instance he should vote for the amendment to carry the line as far as German Station, and leave the other portion to be decided upon in the future.

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put, and the House divided :—

CONTENTS, 7.

The Hons. C. S. Mein, J. Cowlishaw, J. C. Heussler, G. Edmondstone, F. T. Gregory, W. Graham, and W. Pettigrew.

NON-CONTENTS, 11.

The Hons. C. H. Buzacott, F. J. Ivory, F. H. Hart, C. S. D. Melbourne, J. Swan, W. D. Box, J. F. McDougall, J. C. Foote, J. Mullen, W. Aplin, and J. S. Turner.

Resolved in the negative.

Original motion put, and the House divided :—

CONTENTS, 13.

The Hons. C. H. Buzacott, F. T. Gregory, J. C. Heussler, J. F. McDougall, J. Swan, W. Aplin, J. C. Foote, W. D. Box, F. H. Hart, J. Mullen, F. J. Ivory, J. S. Turner, and G. Edmondstone.

NON-CONTENTS, 4.

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

Resolved in the affirmative.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, Notices of Motion 2 and 3 were postponed.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

The Hon. W. H. WALSH said he had been told that the Postmaster-General had postponed

the ordinary business on the paper. He would ask what was the necessity for it? There was an earnest desire on the part of hon. members to get through the business, but this hanky-panky way of doing it, this diverting of the business from the straight into the crooked line, was enough to raise an opposition. The business ought to be allowed to go on in the order that it stood on the paper.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he thought the hon. gentleman was out of order. There was no motion before the House. He objected to the hon. member making a statement to which he should be unable to reply unless the adjournment of the House was moved.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said he would conclude with a motion. It appeared to him that the way in which the Government conducted business was to divert it from the order in which it stood on the paper, and when an hon. member objected the Postmaster-General got up and said that there was no motion before the House; that was a tyrannical way of doing business. If it would accelerate the business, and the Postmaster-General was anxious that he should conclude with a motion, he would move the adjournment of the House.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. gentleman had scarcely shown the consideration he ought to the representative of the Government in the Council in bringing the accusation that he had. He (Mr. Buzacott) had endeavoured, as much as possible, to consult the wishes and convenience of hon. members at all times. He had been requested to dispose, if possible, of the Railway Companies Preliminary Bill at an early hour. It was an important measure, and it was desirable that the message from the Assembly, which was received late last night, should be dealt with at once. His only desire in postponing the motions Nos. 2 and 3 was to get this message dealt with as soon as possible out of courtesy to the other House, and to facilitate business. He was doing nothing irregular.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said the Hon. Mr. Walsh was perfectly right. He did not wish to find fault with the Postmaster-General, but he could not see why they should postpone any Order of the Day, for they could get through all of them that evening. Had the business been taken as it stood on the paper, they should not have wasted the last twenty-five minutes. The reason why some members objected to come three times a-week was because so much time was wasted.

The HON. J. F. McDUGALL said the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Taylor were practical, as they generally were, and very much to the point; at the same time, he did not think the Postmaster-General could have anticipated that any objection would have been taken to the course he proposed. The reasons he had given for wishing this matter to be proceeded with were quite satisfactory.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said that of course he did not wish to detain the House or obstruct business, but he objected to the ordinary rule being disturbed when there was no earthly reason for it. It was incumbent upon the Chamber to insist upon the business paper being carried out as far as possible. He knew several members who intended to take part in the debate respecting one particular railway, but it might so happen—he did not say that it did in this instance—that the Government might know that certain members who could only devote a certain portion of their time to attendance in the House meant to oppose the Government scheme, and, therefore, they postponed going on with that measure until they knew these members could not attend.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he must state that he sympathised with the Postmaster-General to a great extent. Very often he had felt the inconvenience himself from the rules that they had. It would be much better if they could lay down a rule for their guidance similar to the one the Assembly had. Their Standing Orders did not give the Government the power of arranging business in the order in which they might desire to bring it on, and therefore it was necessary to twist the business paper about when they wished to get one particular matter on before the order in which it stood on the paper. It would be advisable, in the future, to distinguish between the days on which Government business and private business ought to take precedence, and enable the Government to frame the business paper beforehand in the order in which they wished to carry it out. He hoped members would allow the Railway Companies Preliminary Bill to come on without delay, as it was very desirable that the Assembly should have an opportunity of considering the decision of the Council that evening.

Motion for adjournment, by leave, withdrawn.

RAILWAY COMPANIES PRELIMINARY BILL—COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee to consider the message of the Legislative Assembly relative to the amendments made by the Council.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the message from the Assembly showed that that Chamber had agreed to all the Council's amendments but two, and with regard to those two he thought he might well ask hon. members to review their decision. The first was respecting clause 15, which was inserted with a view to prevent the trouble which would undoubtedly arise hereafter from proposals being made by capitalists for making railways by means of Asiatics, and for introducing people from Asia and the eastern settlements, to which the people of this colony had great objection, and which would be in opposition to the policy of the legislation passed last year. It was felt, however, that the European was scarcely fit to go and make railways in the low country liable to inundation on the shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and that the Asiatic was far better able to undertake that work, and that no injury would be sustained by his being brought there so long as the limits of his employment were specifically defined. The clause provided that no Asiatics or Africans should be employed in the construction of the railway at any place distant more than 200 miles from the shores of the Gulf. When the clause was under discussion before it was argued that the low country extended more than 200 miles to the south of the Gulf; but from inquiries he had made, he found that it did not extend so far, and that the uplands began within 200 miles, and were so elevated and healthy that Europeans could work there. He did not take up the ground that they should let Asiatics into the low country because their lives were not so valuable as that of other people. As humane people, they ought to have regard for the lives of all persons who came into the colony; but he did say that the climate of the Gulf district was less injurious to the Asiatic than to the European constitution. And there was no doubt that any capitalist proposing to make a railway in the Gulf country, by the aid of European labour alone, would do so at a tremendous disadvantage at the present time. To attempt to bring out navvies from say, England, with a view of beginning a railway at some port of the Gulf, was a project very few capital-

ists in the mother country would venture upon. They knew well that this low country was far too near the Equator to be suitable to the European constitution, and they would find very great difficulty indeed in bringing European labour there. They would have no difficulty whatever in introducing Asiatics; and, with the provision in the Aliens Act requiring the payment of a deposit of £10 for every Asiatic introduced, there would be an ample safeguard against Asiatics being brought in too large numbers so long as it was distinctly stipulated that they should only be employed in the construction of that portion of the railway within 200 miles of the Gulf. The Government laid great stress upon that clause. They thought it was very important, in order to avoid future trouble, that it should be placed in the Bill. He requested the serious attention of hon. members, therefore, to the proposition that the clause should be allowed to remain in the measure. He believed several hon. members of that House voted against the clause, not because they wanted Asiatics to be introduced, but because they did not wish any restrictions to be placed upon their employment. That was the idea of the majority of hon. members who wished the clause expunged. He thought those hon. members might accept the clause as a compromise, because it only allowed the employment of Chinese to a certain extent. He begged to move that the Council do not insist upon its amendment.

The HON. W. H. WALSH said the Postmaster-General, in arguing that the poll-tax of £10 would be a sufficient check upon the introduction of Chinese labour, must have overlooked the fact that there was a clause in the Bill which exempted locomotives introduced by the contractors from taxation. He presumed that no one would say that a Chinaman was not a locomotive. He intended to stand by the amendment which the Council had made. The question involved was far beyond that of raising a tax or bowing to ephemeral and romantic ideas as to who should be employed upon the construction of railways. It was a question affecting the character of that Parliament as law-makers, and affecting the future of the colony as to the most eligible way in which they could permeate their wilderness by the construction of railways.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said he was under the impression that the 15th clause was eliminated from the Bill in this House out of consideration for the lives of European subjects. It was well known that in tropical countries the expenditure of life on a great many railways had been something enormous. A reference to the progress of railway construction in India would show that even among Asiatics the rate of mortality had been fearful. In the case of the celebrated Panama line, he believed it was said that a Chinaman was buried for every sleeper laid for hundreds of miles. With these facts staring them in the face he thought they should give every facility to the Chinese race, if they were willing so to do, to come in and construct such of their railways as would pass through tropical country. On the other hand, he saw no great harm, after they had expressed their views upon the subject, in allowing the Legislative Assembly to restore the clause. After all, the question was resolved into one of expense. It would be for Parliament, at some future time, to decide whether they would construct the railways for a fixed sum, with a certain per centage added, in consideration of any restriction in the employment of labour. He therefore supported the motion of the Postmaster-General.

The HON. F. J. IVORY said he felt inclined to dissent from the motion. He regarded

the Bill as an advertisement to contractors all over the world; and he thought people would think very little of the colony if they were to legislate in such an exceptional way as they would be doing if they retained that clause. It seemed extraordinary to preclude natives of India, natives of Hongkong, and natives of certain parts of Africa, who were British subjects, from being employed upon the construction of their railways. As the desire of the Committee, however, seemed to be that the clause should be retained, he would offer no further objection.

The HON. W. APLIN said he knew something of the Gulf country, and outside of a distance of 50 or 60 miles from the shores of the Gulf he did not think the lives of Europeans would be jeopardised by their being employed upon railway construction. There was no doubt, however, that anyone constructing the railway would be in a position to construct it at greater advantage to the country if he were allowed to employ any labour he thought proper. If they wished to see the Bill carried, and to see a line of railway started from Roma to the Gulf of Carpentaria, he thought they would do well to withdraw their opposition to the amendment of the Legislative Assembly.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the next amendment to which the Legislative Assembly objected was in clause 24, and consisted of the insertion of the words "having charge thereof for the time being." In the discussion in the Lower House he noticed that the Premier moved that the amendment be agreed to, but the leader of the Opposition pointed out that the clause, as amended, was inconsistent, inasmuch as the first part referred to any parties committing an offence, and the second part provided that certain parties only should be liable. There was no doubt a great deal of force in the objection—in fact, he had noticed it himself shortly after the amendment was made. He moved that the Council do not insist upon the amendment.

Question put and passed.

Bill reported; report adopted, and the Bill ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly with a message to the effect that the Council did not insist upon its amendments.

BRISBANE RIVER VALLEY RAILWAY.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

1. That this House approves of the Plans, Sections, and Book of Reference of the Brisbane River Valley Branch Railway, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on 5th November.

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

This railway was commonly known as the Mount Esk Railway. Although these plans and sections had been very recently placed before Parliament, the Legislative Assembly authorised their being undertaken some four or five years ago, upon the motion of Mr. Pettigrew, the then member for the district. Every effort had been made during the recess to have the plans prepared, not only for the small section then before them, but for the whole railway as originally proposed. A pressure of work and illness in the department, however, rendered it impossible to produce more than that small section of ten miles. Alternative routes had been proposed, and, as usual in the case of branch lines, there had been great difficulty in determining the route to adopt. The Minister for Works had been over the district, and had come to the conclusion—he believed with the concurrence of a great majority of the inhabitants of the district—to adopt the line then submitted for the approval of the House. He

found the following in the statement of the Minister for Works in the House of Assembly:—

"The line started at a distance of 2½ miles from Ipswich, on the old Ipswich and Toowoomba railway at Ironpot Creek, followed the creek up for a considerable distance, and then crossed over and joined the Walloon Survey, which was made at the instance of Mr. Pettigrew, and ran on to Ferny Lawn, a distance of from 10½ to 13 miles from Ipswich. It accommodated a considerable amount of settlement, and went through a quantity of land which could be made available for settlement. There was also a considerable amount of settlement about Ferny Lawn."

It was found in this case that the road could not be advantageously turned to account. The line passed through private property, but, as the land was all country land, there would not be any considerable expense on account of resumption. The ruling gradient of the line as far as Pine Mountain was 1 in 50, but beyond that point it was intended to effect a saving of expense, and increase the gradient to 1 in 30. Provision for the construction of the line was made in the Loan Act of last year, in which £105,000 was voted. It was estimated that that amount would carry the line almost up to Mount Esk. The line would be more expensive than others which had been submitted. The first section would cost £4,000 per mile; but it was hoped that by means of the 1-in-30 gradient on other portions of the line the cost would be reduced to £2,500 per mile. Although that line had not excited so much discussion as some others, there could be no doubt but that if it were constructed it would have an important effect in furthering the settlement of the neighbourhood. He was not aware whether that House intended to offer any opposition to the line, but he found that the plans were generally approved when they were submitted in the Lower House. He thought the primary responsibility in matters of this sort should rest with the House of Representatives.

The Hon. W. D. BOX asked the Postmaster-General what was the length of the line from the present railway to Mount Esk?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was at present unable to state the length of the line because it had not yet been surveyed, but the length to which these plans referred was about ten miles.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said he thought they ought now to begin to realise the disadvantages that were following on their having dispensed with the Standing Order requiring the reference of all railways to a select committee for investigation. With every desire to give the residents of the Rosewood district equal facilities to those which were afforded to other agricultural districts for the conveyance of their produce to market by means of railway communication, he could not, himself, see any justification before the House for the construction of this line. No information whatever had been afforded to hon. gentlemen—they had a very dim idea as to the country over which the proposed line would go, and they had no information as to the relative merits of the different portions of the district whose wants it was supposed to supply. It had taken the Government five years to come down to the House with a definite proposal, and even now the Postmaster-General had to apologise, on the ground that he could offer no definite scheme for the settlement of the whole of this line; but the Government were contented with the construction of only a very fragmentary portion of the work. He held in his hand a statement emanating from a very large portion of the farmers in this district, which stated that the proposed route would not accommodate by any means the bulk of the

population—that it traversed a very ridgy, barren portion of the country, and altogether ignored a very large agricultural population in the vicinity of the Rosewood Scrub, and between that and Fernvale Timber Reserve. This district had been very largely opened up within the last few years. He knew from his own observation that it was an exceedingly rich one; in fact, it was as rich for agricultural purposes as any country that could be found anywhere. A large amount of population had settled there, and the improvements that had been made within the last few years were, considering the population, marvellous. He understood that this proposed railway altogether disregarded these people, and would be of no possible advantage to them. If hon. gentlemen would look at the map they would see that it passed through a mountainous district, and that a large number of watercourses had to be crossed. It did not go by a direct route for the Southern and Western Railway to Mount Esk, but went by a circuitous route altogether; he did not know with what object, but it was possibly to prevent engineering difficulties. These branch railways were ostensibly made for the benefit of agricultural districts, and assuming that they were justified in the construction of them for that purpose, they could not be too careful to select the route which gave the greatest advantages to most agriculturists. Unfortunately, he was not in a position to lay the petition he referred to on the table of the House, inasmuch as it was informal; but he had been assured upon good authority that it was a genuine production—in fact, it bore internal evidence of that, and it appeared that the persons who signed it were but a fractional portion of the adult inhabitants of the district. The signatures amounted to over 100, and they set forth that the railway commenced at 2½ miles from Ipswich, and went thence *via* Pine Mountain; that there was no settlement along this route for ten miles after leaving Ipswich, nor was there likely to be, as the line passed through poor, sandy, barren country. They urged that a new survey should be made, commencing at or near Walloon Railway Station *via* Owen's plains, the Village of Marburgh, Glamorgan Vale, and thence to Fernvale Timber Reserve. The whole of this country, they stated, was thickly settled by a large industrial population of agriculturists, and that it presented no engineering difficulties, whilst every acre was available for cultivation, and there were saw-mills and coal-mines in full operation in the district. He (Mr. Mein) did not profess to speak with authority on this matter, because his observations were only casual; but he felt confident that the district indicated contained a large area of exceedingly valuable agricultural land, and it appeared that, according to the proposed route, that district would be entirely ignored and derive no benefit whatever from its construction. Under these circumstances, and in the absence of any definite information on the subject, he considered they would be acting unwisely if they precipitately passed the motion before the House, and, therefore, unless more light could be thrown upon it he should certainly vote against it.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said he intended, if he could get the support of a sufficient number of members, to endeavour to the utmost of his power to throw out this resolution. They had no information whatever on the subject. He had endeavoured to get a sketch plan of the projected line, but the only plan he could obtain was that which was laid upon the table of the House a few days ago. Under this circumstance he thought hon. gentlemen would see the force of the remarks of the Hon. Mr. Mein

as to the great value of the Standing Order requiring all railways to be referred to a select committee. On all other railways they had taken evidence and obtained information to guide them; but, in the present instance, they were asked to rush through this resolution, in ignorance of where the railway was to start from, where it was to go to, what was the extent of it, what the cost of it would be, and against, in his opinion, the intention of the Legislature in passing the Bill by which the sum of £105,000 was placed to the credit of the colony to enable the line to be constructed. They were told by the Postmaster-General that the first portion of this line would cost £4,500 per mile, but they had no information to show what extent of it would cost that amount. They were also told by that hon. gentleman that the £105,000 would almost carry the line to Mount Esk; but "almost" was a word of such generic description that the line might stop anywhere within half the distance of its ultimate destination—in fact, "almost" depended upon the individual idea of the person who used such a term in speaking of a railway of this description. He would point out that when they were asked to spend £26,000 for another railway they took evidence and obtained every information upon the subject, although the country through which that railway passed was well known to almost every member of the House; and yet they were asked to spend £105,000 blindfolded. He was satisfied that, with the exception of one or two gentlemen residing near Ipswich, not a member of the House could say where the line was going to and what it would cost. They were told when the Loan Bill was introduced that these lines would be constructed at between £2,000 and £3,000 per mile, the same as on the Central line, but now they were informed that the first portion would cost £4,500 per mile, and it was not known what the remainder would cost. It must be remembered that it was not the Ipswich line or the portion of the country there which this railway would pass that was to pay for it. The whole of the colony was to be taxed for it, and he would ask hon. gentlemen, as private business men, would they consent to spend so much money, with the information they had been given about this line? It might be said that the other Chamber had passed this resolution, but they had an equal right, under their constitution, to consider these matters; and he maintained that when they saw the country being rushed into lavish and wasteful expenditure by a system of log-rolling, it was their duty to endeavour to prevent it. One would think, to hear the discussion about these railways, that Brisbane and its neighbourhood was the whole colony. In the case of every railway it was said that it would benefit thousands of people; but, considering that the population of the colony was only about 200,000, and that many thousands of people were located in the Northern towns and districts, he could not understand where all the people who were to be benefited by these railways came from. He sincerely trusted that hon. gentlemen would pause before they assented to a wasteful expenditure of Government money by a transaction of this kind, and if he could get sufficient support he would take advantage of all the forms of the House to throw out the resolution.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said he thought this was rather a useless discussion. There were a number of hon. gentlemen present who had every desire to aid the Government in carrying these measures, and, in the present instance, he was sure that if they could see their way to support the resolution they would do so. It had, however, been shown that the information sup-

plied to the House was very meagre; and in order to give the Government time to look into the matter, and that it might be brought into the House in such an intelligible form as to enable members to form a fair and just opinion of its merits, he moved that the approval of the plans in question be considered that day six months.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said perhaps the simpler course would be for him to withdraw the resolution.

The Hon. F. T. GREGORY said if the hon. gentleman intended to withdraw the resolution he (Mr. Gregory) would, with the consent of the House, withdraw his amendment.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said, in asking leave to withdraw the resolution, he did so because he thought it was perfectly hopeless to attempt to carry it, and he did not wish to take up the time of the House in discussing a motion which he knew was a foregone conclusion in the minds of hon. members. He regretted having to adopt this course, because no doubt it would disappoint a large number of persons who were looking forward to the construction of this line; but, at the same time, he must admit that there was some force in the objection that full information had not been given respecting the line. He would, however, point out that it would be impossible to commence all these railways at once, so that practically there would be very little delay; and no doubt in six or eight months, when Parliament re-assembled, the Government would be prepared to submit not only the plans before the House, but plans for the whole railway, which was to be 42 miles in length. He thought the Government had shown their sincerity in laying the plans on the table and endeavouring to push them through. He begged to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BRISBANE RACECOURSE BILL— SECOND READING.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said the object of this Bill was to enable the trustees of the Brisbane Racecourse to raise, by way of mortgage, sufficient money to pay off liabilities that had been incurred in erecting permanent improvements on the ground. The land was originally granted by the Crown for racing purposes and the prosecution of other amusements; and in those days power was conferred upon the trustees to mortgage, with the permission of the Governor in Council, for the purpose of raising money; and in order to carry out improvements and make the ground useful for the purpose for which it was intended the trustees borrowed £1,000. Whilst that was in force an Act was passed prohibiting all trustees from borrowing money on mortgage. In 1875 an Act was passed by which the land originally granted was subdivided into two portions—one the Racecourse proper, and the other into pieces of ground surrounding the Racecourse. Permission was given to sell or mortgage certain pieces of land outside the Racecourse proper, one moiety of the money to be applied in paying for improvements, and the second in discharging the existing mortgages. A few portions of the ground had been sold and the money applied in that direction; but it had been considered desirable, especially as there was a prospect of better access being provided at no distant date, and of the land becoming more valuable in consequence, to make no further sales. Very extensive improvements, of a highly valuable and attractive character, had been erected. To provide the funds money had been borrowed on the personal security of the members of the committee, and to avoid the necessity of what would

practically be sacrificing the outside portions of the land, it had been deemed desirable to come to Parliament for authority to borrow money on the security of the ground, solely for the purpose of providing for those improvements and others that might be necessary hereafter. He had already alluded to the fact that there was no ground suitable for the recreation of the people of Brisbane. As the Act of 1875 conferred upon the trustees of the Racecourse the power to improve the course for other purposes besides racing, it was contemplated, if sanction was given, to further improve the ground and make certain portions available for a sports ground and for other purposes of recreation. He anticipated that there would be no objection to the measure. By striking out portion of clause 4 of the principal Act, as was provided by the Bill, they would practically enable the trustees of the course to borrow money for the making of improvements on the ground, the sanction of the Governor in Council being previously obtained in all cases. Something like £4,000 had recently been expended on improvements, and it was to pay off that amount and make provision for further improvements that the powers contained in the Bill were sought. He begged to move the second reading.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the Hon. C. S. MEIN, the House went into Committee to consider the Bill.

The Bill was passed without amendment, read a third time, and ordered to be returned to the Assembly with the usual message.

GULLAND RAILWAY BILL— COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee to consider this Bill. The Bill was passed without amendment, reported, and the third reading made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION BILL— COMMITTEE.

The House went into Committee to further consider this Bill.

The ACTING CHAIRMAN said that the question was that Mr. Ivory's amendment in the new clause 4 be inserted.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that before the amendment was put he should like to make a few remarks. If no action was taken this session the law now in force for the destruction of marsupials would immediately expire. Whatever might be the feeling of certain members, it could not be doubted that in the opinion of a large majority of persons a Bill was necessary to protect them from marsupials. Before the present Marsupial Act came into operation he could say, from his own knowledge, that large areas in the Central districts particularly, were becoming absolutely worthless, and there was no doubt that, unless vigorous measures for the destruction of the marsupials were continued, they would again overrun the country in such large numbers as would do immense injury. It was intended that the whole of the colony should come under the Bill, but it was not intended that the whole colony should contribute annually according to the scale in clause 11—namely, 2s. on every twenty head of cattle and horses, and 2s. on every hundred sheep pastured within the district. According to clause 16 it was intended that when the Act had been once proclaimed in any district and the marsupial board did not expend the money that was first levied, the Governor in Council might, by proclamation, declare the owners in such district to be exempt from the payment of any assessment for such period

as might be deemed necessary. Once a fund was raised in the district, as would be the case immediately after it was proclaimed, no further sum would be required unless it was found necessary to expend the money in the destruction of marsupials. It was contended that it should be left optional with the people of each district to get the Act brought into operation; but that was a notoriously unfair method of proceeding. There might be two contiguous districts, both overrun with marsupials: in one district the people had the Act in force, in the other the people refused to take action, and the consequence would be that the people in one district would have to pay for the destruction of all the marsupials in their own district, as well as in that of their neighbours. That would be obviously unjust. Clause 16 amply protected those who were settled in portions of the colony which were not infested by the pest. Of course, it might be argued that the clause might be more mandatory than it was. It might declare that, when the first levy had been made, no further levy should take place unless the money was actually required; but hon. members must know that the Colonial Secretary, in administering the Act, would be guided by circumstances, and would not administer it in an arbitrary or injudicious way. It would be much better to have a clause with some elasticity in it. As far as he could understand the intention of the Government in bringing in that Bill it would be as well that it should be withdrawn, so as to make it optional with the majority of stockowners in any given district whether they would accept it not. He did not think that the first assessment of 2s. would involve the payment of an amount which justified hon. members in rejecting such an important Bill. Since the measure had been before the House he had been informed, on undoubted authority, that the majority of stockowners were in favour of its being brought into operation. Of course, if the Committee chose to insert a clause limiting the operation of the Bill to twelve months, as was done sometimes in the case of English Acts of Parliament, well and good; but he hoped they would not, at the end of the session, insert amendments in the Bill which would have the effect of suspending the operation of a very useful law.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said the Postmaster-General had alleged that the Colonial Secretary would not work the proposed new clause arbitrarily; but in the petition which had been presented to the House from graziers in the Rockhampton district, it appeared that a large body of people were taxed who ought not to have been taxed, and that some very arbitrary divisions which had been proclaimed by the late Government had been perpetuated. He wondered how the Brands Act or the Sheep Assessment Act would operate supposing the colony were divided into districts? He maintained that in this case, as well as in others, there should be a general fund. Not one western squatter had been taxed under the Act. The tax which had been imposed had been a distinctly protective tax as far as the outside squatters were concerned. He would ask hon. members to take notice of the fact that the representatives of Port Curtis and Blackall, in the Lower Chamber, were both opposed to the Bill. The Hon. Mr. Ivory was also aware of the hardships which had been endured by various individuals through the operation of this Act in the Burnett district. If hon. members looked at the rents which were paid in the Central districts they would see that they amounted to £520, £320, and £220 very frequently. This was about nine or ten times the amount generally paid for the outside squattages. He intended to support the amendment of the

Hon. Mr. Ivory. He could not imagine what necessity there was in levying the tax all over the colony, as he understood the Postmaster-General to say would be done. The Hon. Mr. Taylor talked of travelling 2,000 miles in the western country and seeing only two marsupials. He had no doubt that if a tax were ever required in the district in which Mr. Taylor resided, that the squatters would meet and ask to be brought under the Bill. The plague of marsupials in Queensland was not, as far as he could make out, upon leased property: it was upon Crown land. The squatters upon the coast were almost unanimous in the opinion that the Act had operated most injuriously.

The Hon. C. S. MEIN said the Hon. Mr. Melbourne was to be congratulated upon the consistency and vigour with which he had advocated the demands of the petitioners to whom reference had been made since the Bill had been before them. In consequence of the repeated reference which had been made to the petition he had read it through for the first time that evening, and a more selfish document, emanating from a body of respectable gentlemen, he had never read. If it amounted to anything at all it amounted to saying this: "We admit that this plague will do a great injury to the community, but as we have been injured in the past, we hope you will not introduce a tax to keep down this plague, because it is a tax which might, to a slight extent, touch our pockets." Neither reason nor argument were to be found in this lengthy document. It said that there were few or no marsupials on the petitioners' runs; that the marsupial tax was not a general one; that the petitioners were taxed for the destruction of marsupials in other portions of the colony; that the constitution of the boards was unsatisfactory; and that the sheep directors overpowered the elected cattle directors. What was the conclusion of the document? It was not that in any future amendment of the law these things should be taken into consideration, but the conclusion was—

"Your petitioners therefore pray that you will be graciously pleased not to accord your favourable consideration to any measure that may be introduced during the present session of Parliament having for its object the continued destruction of marsupials."

They were not to have any measure for the destruction of marsupials at all. These gentlemen rather liked marsupials. The only grievance they seemed to suffer from was that the marsupials had not yet visited them. He had endeavoured to follow the argument of the Hon. Mr. Melbourne, which appeared to be directed in the main against the present law which expired at the end of the session. The hon. member had made no reference whatever to the provisions of this amending Bill, which was by no means a slavish copy of the existing Act. The original Act was a tentative measure. They were working to some extent in the dark. They had a crying plague to contend with, and they did what they considered was best in accordance with the lights which they then possessed. The plague was one which attacked several classes of the community, and it was recognised that these persons did a great deal of good to the general community; and in order that the burden of taxation might not fall entirely upon them, they were only required to pay one moiety, the remainder being contributed by the State. He was prepared to admit that these persons had paid more into the fund than they had received in consideration for it. He had indirectly contributed to the marsupial taxes throughout the colony, and he had received no direct benefit from his contribution. He did not grumble at paying his share, because he considered that the industries affected required their

utmost consideration. They had been paying for keeping down animals which, if they had not been destroyed, would probably have come in and damaged a vast quantity of property. Every pastoralist, in the interest of the class to which he belonged, should contribute to a certain extent to this fund; but if any evidence were required to satisfy the Committee of the undesirableness of adopting the amendment of the Hon. Mr. Ivory, it was to be found in the petition before the House. Would those men, actuated by the selfish motives which appeared in every line of the petition before them, ask that the district in which they resided should come under the provisions of the statute? Not for a moment. Those unfortunate persons who happened to be in districts infested by marsupials would be outnumbered by these selfish gentlemen, and would have no redress whatever. It would only be when they were *in extremis* that the gentlemen indicated in every line of that petition would come and ask to be taxed. He thought the proposition of the Government had reason and justice on its side. The Government should be allowed to map out the districts, and in the first instance the assessment should be general, but the responsibility should be thrown upon the Government of declaring when further assessments should be made. Under these circumstances he should give his assent to the original clause of the Postmaster-General, feeling that what little injury might in the first instance be dealt out to a few individuals, would be more than compensated by the general good which would result to the whole community, and particularly to the pastoral tenants throughout the length and breadth of the land.

The Hon. J. TAYLOR said that if hon. members did not know the independent character of the Hon. Mr. Melbourne they would imagine that he had been fed heavily for the eloquent speeches he had made on behalf of the Rockhampton graziers. On examining the signatures to the petition to which reference had been made, he found that there were no less than five from the Toorilla Station: there were a number of other signatures, with which he was unacquainted. He maintained that the petitioners had no weight whatever, and yet for the sake of those few men they were to throw out a Bill which had worked so well during the last three years. He (Mr. Taylor) was personally disinterested in the passing of the Bill. He found that under it he should have to pay about £300 a-year although he had no marsupials at all—because in his outside country there were none, and inside he had gone to considerable expense to fence them out. But still he was in favour of the Bill because he was certain it would benefit the country, and if it were not passed he was certain there would be a great outcry for it before very long.

The Hon. F. J. IVORY said his objection to the Bill was that it was not general. Were it general, and pastoralists were taxed in the same way as the sheep tax or brands assessment, he could understand it. Everyone connected with pastoral pursuits would then be taxed in equal proportion for the destruction of these pests, but as the Bill stood it was localised to a very large extent, and would operate unjustly. If it were fair and equitable he had not the slightest objection to it.

The Hon. C. S. D. MELBOURNE pointed out that one of the great objections of the petitioners was that the tax was not general. Why should the Government, or the Minister who had to administer the Bill, be entitled to proclaim a district in which there were no marsupials, a marsupial district? He maintained that they should proclaim the whole colony.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he could see some force in the argument of the hon. Mr. Ivory, but, at the same time, he thought that hon. members would admit that it would be unfair to stockowners in portions of the colony where there were no marsupials, and probably never would be, to be as heavily taxed for the destruction of these animals as men who were in marsupial country. If hon. members persisted in endeavouring to make the Bill strictly equitable to every stockowner they would have no legislation at all. He held that the Bill now before the House attained a great public object with the least possible hardship and injustice to individuals. They had discussed the measure to a considerable extent; it was now a late hour, and very near the end of the session, and he hoped the Committee would go to a division upon it; and if on division the Committee were against the Bill he should withdraw it.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said he would be sorry to see the Bill withdrawn, but several members were so strongly opposed to it that he thought that would be the wisest course for the Postmaster-General to pursue. Let them throw the squatters on their own resources and in twelve months' time there would be a great outcry for this Bill. He could see nothing unfair in the Bill, because the effect would be that in a district where there were marsupials the stockowners would have to go on paying until they got rid of them, and in districts where there were no marsupials they would only pay the tax for one year.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he would be unable to accept the suggestion of the Hon. Mr. Taylor until after a division. He would point out that the clause did not necessarily require that every part of the colony should be proclaimed. If it were shown that any large area of the colony was not infested by marsupials it would not be proclaimed a marsupial district. There must be a discretionary power somewhere, and he thought the clause provided for that in the best possible form.

After some further discussion,

Question—That the words proposed to be inserted be so inserted—put, and the Committee divided.

There not being a quorum of members present,

The Chairman left the chair, and reported the fact to the Presiding Chairman.

The House having been counted, a quorum was found to be present and the Committee resumed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he supposed after the retirement of the minority of members of the Committee, it was perfectly useless for him to attempt to proceed with the Bill. He therefore begged to move—and it was with extreme regret he felt compelled to adopt such a course—That the Chairman leave the chair and make no report.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he was sorry to hear the Postmaster-General announce that in consequence of the selfish action—avowedly selfish action of a few members of the House, at that period of the night—it was his intention to abandon the Bill. He had a better opinion of that House than to believe that there could not be found in it a quorum of men who would not allow their interests in a matter of public policy to influence them in their decision. If gentlemen who felt that their pockets were concerned by the passage of a measure of this description would not assist legislation on the subject, he felt confident that they could find a quorum of members who were prepared to undertake the responsibilities of legislation. He could understand that gentlemen who were pecuniarily

affected should desire the vote to go in a certain way. That was perfectly natural; but he thought that, when they had used every legitimate effort to amend the law in the direction of making it not inequitable to themselves, they should consider that their duty to the country necessitated that they should not impede legislation for their own private advantage. Let them do everything in a legitimate way to protect their own interests, but when they had done that, and when there was a decided expression of opinion on the part of the representatives of the people that the legislation was necessary for the benefit of the country, they should sacrifice their private interests. He regretted that the Postmaster-General had determined to abandon the Bill, for he believed that were it brought on at an early hour to-morrow there would be a sufficient number of disinterested members present to pass it. Three years ago every pastoralist in the colony was crying out for a Marsupial Destruction Bill.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said that every pastoralist who was not actuated by selfish motives, as the hon. members were who were opposing this Bill, desired the measure. Deputation after deputation came urging that legislation should be passed, and the legislation that was passed had been extremely beneficial in its effects; and he was quite confident that if the plague which had infested the north-western and the southern part of the country had not been arrested by the action of the legislature in passing the present Marsupial Act, those persons who were not materially affected by the invasion of marsupials would have appealed to the Legislature before this.

The HON. F. J. IVORY: No.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he knew as much about the matter as the Hon. Mr. Ivory, who could not see beyond the circle of his run. He had admitted that he had a strong personal interest in his opposition to the measure.

The HON. F. J. IVORY said he had never admitted anything of the kind. He said he would benefit by the Act, and that he was in a position to do so. He threw back the hon. gentleman's accusation with scorn, and said it was false.

The HON. C. S. MEIN said he should be sorry to improperly accuse the hon. member, and if he had done so he would withdraw the expression. But there was no doubt that no secret had been made of the fact that a large number of members of the House were opposed to the clause and had been advocating the Hon. Mr. Ivory's amendment on personal grounds, that it would press unfairly on them and their friends. If they had no protection against marsupials for some years to come, they should have large portions of the territory overrun by the pest, and on that ground he regretted that the Postmaster-General should abandon this most salutary measure.

The HON. W. F. LAMBERT said he was not going to get excited over the question, and he regretted very much to hear the Hon. Mr. Mein's remarks and the tone in which he had delivered them. It would not add to their legislation or benefit the House if this sort of thing were allowed—if the hon. gentleman were allowed to accuse hon. members who were opposed to the Bill of being actuated by selfish motives. He (Mr. Lambert) had no selfish motives to serve. He had nothing to gain. However, he thought he knew a little more about the marsupial plague than the hon. gentleman, who went on as if he knew everything and no one else knew anything. He believed it was the wish of the country that every stockholder should destroy the marsupials on his own run. They did not want

any assistance from the State, and in making the statement he was speaking for every well-thinking stock-owner. He did not know whether the hon. gentleman was speaking to some constituency, but he certainly could not understand the tone and warmth of his speech. He believed that he was expressing the feelings of the stock-holders of the interior when he said that they did not want the Marsupial Act. They would protect themselves against the marsupial pest, and it was better that they should do so.

The HON. W. APLIN said he had not been actuated by selfish motives, as had been suggested by the Hon. Mr. Mein. The course that he had taken, he felt it his duty to take as the representative of the extreme northern part of the colony. He should have been glad to have seen Mr. Ivory's amendment carried, that a district might be brought under the provisions of the Act at the request of a majority of the stock-owners. The stock-owners of the North did not, however, require a measure of this sort; they could themselves destroy the few marsupials that there were on their runs.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said the Bill had no doubt caused a great deal of excitement. It was well known that the Hon. Mr. Mein was not in the best of health, and he had made a most extraordinary and slashing speech against the Hon. Mr. Melbourne and those who supported that hon. member. He thought the Hon. Mr. Mein was justified in saying that the signers of the petition against the Bill and the members who supported it were extremely selfish. The Postmaster-General would catch it smartly from his brother Ministers for withdrawing the Bill.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I have not withdrawn it.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said that the hon. gentleman had better withdraw it. He never saw the House in such a temper, nor had he ever seen his friend, the Hon. Mr. Mein, in a temper before. As he had said, it was a cowardly action of hon. members to walk outside when the division was called on.

The HON. W. H. WALSH rose to a point of order. He would ask whether the Hon. Mr. Taylor was justified in applying even to himself the word "cowardly."

The CHAIRMAN: I think the debate is beginning to be irregular.

The HON. J. TAYLOR: Well, I withdraw the word cowardly; I say it was disgraceful.

The HON. W. F. LAMBERT said he objected to the word "disgraceful," and would ask for the Chairman's ruling as to whether it was Parliamentary.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he desired to say a few words on the point of order. He hardly thought the Hon. Mr. Taylor was out of order in saying that a thing was politically disgraceful, but it must be obvious that it was undesirable to apply such language to the speeches and actions of hon. members. He hoped hon. members would now allow the discussion to close. The House had a reputation to maintain, and the last half-hour's debate had not been worthy of its reputation. It would be better to allow the motion to be put and the debate to close quietly.

The HON. J. TAYLOR said he was not going to be put down quietly by the Postmaster-General. If it was said that the word "disgraceful" was unparliamentary, he would ask what was the language which was used in another place? Very strong words were used there, and he supposed hon. members were privileged to use the same words here. He should be happy to see the debate close, but he wanted to see the Postmaster-General, after the feeling expressed

against the Bill, withdraw the measure and let the House have no more indecorous discussion about it.

The HON. J. C. FOOTE said he approved of the Bill and thought it a good one, and it was his intention to support it until he saw parties most interested in the question divided in opinion. When he saw that he determined not to vote with either party.

The HON. C. S. D. MELBOURNE said he had not the slightest interest in the matter. The statement that the Marsupial Act was required was an error. He had been requested by 200 or 300 pastoralists to oppose this Bill, their statement being that they did not want it, and that they could themselves keep down the marsupials on their runs.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY thought the debate had been fairly exhausted, and that it was about time to bring it to a close. He had studiously refrained from entering upon the discussion, which had been raised in the interest of large pastoral holders, he not being directly interested in it; but before it closed, he should like to state that if the Bill was withdrawn now he feared that all the good done during the last three years in the destruction of marsupials would be entirely lost before a fresh measure could be introduced in the ensuing session and brought into operation. From that point of view he sincerely regretted the throwing out of the measure, but otherwise there was such a want of unanimity amongst the pastoral lessees that he was not surprised at the Postmaster-General withdrawing it.

The HON. J. F. McDOUGALL said that the opposition to the measure had been fatal from the outset. He was a believer in the Bill himself, holding that it was a necessity for a large portion of the colony; but under all the circumstances the Postmaster-General was wise in taking the course he had decided upon.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he believed the form in which he moved the Chairman out of the chair was rather irregular. By leave of the Committee, he therefore begged to move that the Chairman leave the chair, report no progress, and ask leave to sit again to-morrow. He did not think that the Bill should be withdrawn or abandoned while the House was in the heated state it then was. He frankly told the Committee that if on meeting to-morrow, the feeling of members was such that he could see there was no chance of passing the Bill, he should move that the measure be discharged from the paper.

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

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes to 11 o'clock.