

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 8 DECEMBER 1884

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 8 December, 1884.

Formal Motion.—Supply—resumption of committee.

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

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to :—

By Mr. MELLOR (in the absence of Mr. J. Campbell)—

That there be laid on the table of the House, copies of all reports and estimates of cost, if any, by Mr. Surveyor Phillips, on the proposed railway between Ipswich and Warwick.

SUPPLY—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson), the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, further to consider Supply.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles), in moving that £11,260 be voted for Railways and Contingencies, General Establishment, said he would point out to hon. members that there was an increase in the total amount of £2,230 over what was voted last year. There was a sum of £800 down for the Acting Commissioner for Railways, £350 for an assistant accountant, and £300 for an assistant station auditor. There were also increases to some of the clerks; one who had been receiving £300 was to receive an extra £25, bringing his salary up to £325. The next was receiving £280 at present, and it was proposed to raise his salary to £300. To another, who was receiving £200, it was proposed to give £50 extra; another, who was receiving £150, was to have an increase of £50. The next clerk was receiving £150 at present, and it was proposed to increase that sum to £175; the next got £130, and it was proposed to give him £150; and the other clerks got small increases. There was also an increase of £250 in travelling expenses, postages, and incidentals; the allowance to telegraph operators was increased by £50; and the item of advertising was increased by £400. Hon. members would of course remember that the work of the department was increasing. In the correspondence alone the number of letters received and despatched was something over and above 5,000 last year. He might mention that all who went into the department began at very low salaries. The highest salary in the correspondence branch was £300, and it was proposed to give that officer an increase of £25; he held a very responsible position and was justly entitled to the increase. All the others had very low salaries, and he hoped, therefore, no objection would be made to the increases.

Mr. NORTON said he understood the hon. member to say that all the clerks were set down for increases.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes.

Mr. NORTON : The hon. member also said that the salaries were very low, and therefore the officers were entitled to receive increases. But that depended partly on the time they had occupied their positions, and partly on the increases they had had before. However, just now he would like to know from the hon. gentleman when he expected Mr. Herbert would be in a position to resume his position ?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that Mr. Herbert recently applied for an extension of his leave for three months, and it was granted. He wanted the extension on full pay ; but he had the option of staying away three months longer without pay. He (the Minister for Works) was not prepared to say whether Mr. Herbert would resume his position in the Railway Department or not. The Government had not considered the matter yet ; but if he did not resume duty there he would be provided for in some other department.

Mr. NORTON said he thought the Committee were entitled to know whether Mr. Herbert would resume his position or not. Surely the Government had had time to consider the matter ! It was twelve months since Mr. Herbert got twelve months' leave of absence without asking for it, and if the Government had not yet had time to consider what they proposed to do, then they ought to begin to do so. The other night the hon. member spoke of the Government as an economical Government ; but in the present Estimates there was a commissioner for railways at £1,000 a year, and an acting commissioner—an entirely new appointment—at £800. If the Government intended to get another commissioner, the Committee had a right to know. They ought certainly now to be in a position to know pretty well what they were going to do. It was no use shirking the matter. If they were going to get rid of Mr. Herbert why did they not say so ? Did they intend to appoint the Acting Commissioner in his place or get a new commissioner from somewhere else ? The Committee had a right to get from the Government the fullest information that they could give.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would point out to the hon. member that the very fact that the Government had reappointed Mr. Thallon as Traffic Manager ought to enable him to draw his own conclusion that Mr. Herbert would not go back to the Railway Department.

Mr. NORTON : I do not want to draw conclusions at all ; I want to hear from you.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Why did not the hon. member draw his own conclusion ? What was the use of bringing Mr. Thallon back if Mr. Herbert was to resume his position, when it was he who drove Mr. Thallon away ? Mr. Herbert was a good and faithful servant of the Government, and they were prepared to recognise that. He would be provided for in another position.

Mr. NORTON : Why did you not say so at once ?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not know whether the hon. gentleman was quite correct in the statement he had just made—that it was Mr. Herbert who drove Mr. Thallon away. In the first place the Committee were not aware that Mr. Thallon had been reappointed, unless they took their information from the Press. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) denied—and he thought that his knowledge of the subject was as great, if not greater, than that of the hon. gentleman—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : You are the man who ought to know all about it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he denied that Mr. Thallon was driven away by Mr. Herbert. He believed it was Mr. Herbert's subordinates who caused Mr. Thallon to resign. Mr. Thallon was under the impression that Mr. Herbert did not look upon him very favourably ; but he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had always tried to disabuse him of that idea, and told him it was a false one. Even since Mr. Thallon left the service he had spoken to him on the subject. It was Mr. Thallon's subordinates who were the cause of his resignation, and they were still in the same position to exercise the same influence that they did then. The hon. gentleman therefore need not think that the Committee could draw any conclusion from Mr. Thallon's return.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was perfectly aware that the hon. gentleman knew a great deal more about it than he did ; but some change was absolutely necessary, and the Government considered that Mr. Thallon should have a fair chance. He would have the whole management of the Traffic Department, but the Commissioner for Railways would be the medium of communication between him and the Minister for Works. If he could not perform his work satisfactorily under those conditions, the Government would have to find someone else. He (the Minister for Works) knew nothing at all about the man himself, but he believed he was very well qualified for the position, not only because of his testimonials, but because of the excellent recommendations that he had received privately. He believed Mr. Thallon would give satisfaction, provided hon. members would not thrust men on the Traffic Department incompetent to do the work.

Mr. NORTON said he thought that the last expression was the most extraordinary he had ever heard from a Minister. How were members to thrust men on the Traffic Department incompetent to do the work ? Was the Minister to be a puppet in the hands of hon. members, and find places for anyone they chose to nominate ? When a Minister made a statement of that kind it was time to inquire whether after all it was the Traffic Manager who was responsible for the mismanagement of the department or the Minister himself. How was the Traffic Manager to be held responsible if men were appointed on the nomination of members of Parliament ? He hoped the Minister meant nothing more than to have a dig at his predecessors in making a statement of that kind. With regard to Mr. Herbert, there was no reason whatever why he should be removed from his office. When Mr. Thallon was Traffic Manager before, he was directly under the Commissioner, but now they were to understand from the Minister for Works that he was not to be under the Commissioner at all ; the Commissioner was merely to be the officer through whom he would communicate with the Minister. It was quite intelligible that the Government should wish the Traffic Manager to occupy that position ; but even those who spoke most unfavourably of Mr. Herbert had never condemned any action of his except his interference with the traffic ; and under the new arrangement it would be impossible for any interference to come from him. The Minister had certainly not made it clear why Mr. Herbert should be shunted on Mr. Thallon being taken back. He was glad that the Minister for Works admitted Mr. Herbert's claim to receive from the Government that consideration which every man deserved who had devoted his best energies to the service of the country. Whether he had failed or succeeded was, of course, a matter of opinion, but certainly it seemed to him (Mr. Norton) that no sufficient

cause whatever had been assigned for the removal of the Commissioner, if the only complaint against him was in connection with the mismanagement of the Traffic Department.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Port Curtis was as crooked as a ram's horn. He always tried to put a wrong construction on what was said.

Mr. NORTON: I do not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member did so and wrote to the *Courier*, and ventilated it. During the tenure of the last Government the Railway Department was flooded with incompetent men. It was not so now.

Mr. NORTON: Of course not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that no single member of the House had ever applied to him to appoint anyone, but the hon. member for Port Curtis, in his crooked way, endeavoured to put a wrong construction altogether on what he had said. His opinion of Mr. Herbert was just as high as the hon. member's, perhaps more so; but Mr. Herbert was a man who must play first fiddle or he would not play at all. Hon. members who knew anything of business must see that, if the Traffic Manager was to conduct the department properly, he must have the right to nominate when vacancies occurred, and also, if necessary, to dismiss.

Mr. NORTON: Who? The Traffic Manager?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Always subject to the approval of the Minister.

Mr. NORTON: Very well.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, what fault have you to find with it?

Mr. NORTON: I am not finding fault with it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that no one would dispute that if the Traffic Manager was to be held responsible for the safe working of the traffic, he must have the management of the traffic. The hon. member for Port Curtis did not dispute that, and the Minister for Works should not allow his temper to get the better of him. What the hon. member pointed out was that if the Commissioner for Railways was simply to be the vehicle of communication between the Traffic Manager and the Minister, there was no reason to remove Mr. Herbert or anyone else. That was what he tried to point out, and it seemed the Minister for Works could not or would not understand that. Now, the hon. gentleman had just said that Mr. Herbert would play first fiddle or not play at all; that he would be everything or nothing. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) thought it was due to Mr. Herbert that something should be said about his appointment as traffic manager. There was a time in the management of the railways, and he dared say hon. members would remember it, when Mr. Herbert was simply commissioner, and there was a traffic manager named Mr. Lowe. Now, he did not know why Mr. Lowe fell into disrepute, but it seemed that he did. He did with a large number of people inside the House and a larger number outside, and with the Government for the time being. The Government then in existence determined to get rid of him, but they could not by any possible means get rid of him unless on the plea of economy, because there was nothing to be found wrong in the management of the traffic under that gentleman. He remembered sitting in the House one whole evening listening to a discussion on the merits and demerits of Mr. Lowe, in which he did not take part, because he did not know anything about it;

but it was continually said on both sides that, as regarded Mr. Lowe's safe management, no fault could be found with him. The man had simply a bad temper, he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) believed. The Minister for Works at that time, who was determined to get rid of Mr. Lowe, thought his way of doing so would be to combine the traffic management with the commissionership, and in that way the Government could take credit for saving the salary of a traffic manager. The Minister for Works asked Mr. Herbert if he was willing to take the traffic managership on his shoulders along with his commissionership, and he said he would do so. Mr. Herbert, he might say, was not in accord with Mr. Lowe, and he said he would satisfy the Minister by taking over the traffic management; but he did not wish to take it for long. The Minister who made that arrangement was the same man who now wished to displace Mr. Herbert. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) asked the Committee to consider the statement that the hon. gentleman had just made, that Mr. Herbert would be everything or nothing.

Whatever Mr. Herbert's faults were, the extra work was put upon him by the hon. gentleman now in office, who tried now to drive him from his appointment; and he asked the Committee if that was fair to Mr. Herbert's reputation? Was it fair for the Minister to make the statements he had made? The hon. gentleman knew that he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had stated the facts, that Mr. Herbert held the traffic managership through no desire of his own, and much longer than he desired. Mr. Herbert had asked him once or twice to be allowed to give it up; but on the score of economy he declined to relieve him of the office of the traffic managership, until he thought there was an actual necessity, through the increase of the traffic, to appoint a man to the charge of it alone. Then, when the necessity arose, he sent for a traffic manager to England, and he was bound to confess that, as far as he knew, Mr. Thallon was a competent man. He was selected out of a great many candidates by the Agent-General; but still he knew this much: that Mr. Thallon had yet to earn his reputation as a traffic manager. He had never been one; but he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) hoped he would give thorough satisfaction. It did not require a vast amount of ability to manage the Southern and Western Railways, because the supervision required was only on the line running from Brisbane, and did not even include the management of the Wide Bay and Burnett lines. In justice to Mr. Herbert, and in fair play to Mr. Thallon, he must say that it was not fair of the hon. gentleman to bring them in such direct contact, because, as far as he knew, they never were so very antagonistic to one another. He knew that Mr. Herbert was a man of distant disposition, and he thought that that led to the coolness of feeling that existed between him and Mr. Thallon. Mr. Thallon was certainly not received with open arms by the Commissioner, but Mr. Herbert was thoroughly determined to give him fair play. He knew himself that the feeling in the department was entirely against Mr. Thallon, and against the Ministry, because they dared go over the heads of other officers and get a traffic manager from England. In reality it was Mr. Thallon's subordinates who thwarted him, and he all the time imagined that it was the Commissioner who stood in his way.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member who last spoke and the member for Port Curtis had both been Ministers for Works and they ought to know all the secrets.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: That has nothing to do with it so long as you will tell us the truth.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said if Mr. Thallon was not competent as a traffic manager why did the hon. gentleman recommend him compensation?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I did not say he was not competent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought the hon. gentleman was just as crooked as the hon. member for Port Curtis. Mr. Thallon was either competent or not competent, and if he was not competent why should the country have been saddled with a large amount of compensation? That was the very thing that induced him to re-employ Mr. Thallon, because he knew that if he had not been competent the Government of the day would not have granted him compensation for breaking his contract.

Mr. NORTON: He did not break it; he resigned.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government were now determined to give Mr. Thallon a thorough trial, and he had every hope that he would give every satisfaction.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not say anything that could be construed into meaning that Mr. Thallon was not competent as a traffic manager, and if he had he should willingly withdraw the statement. He had said that Mr. Thallon had to earn a reputation. He had none yet, because he was never a traffic manager before. The first place in which he ever managed traffic was in Queensland—did the hon. gentleman know that? And he never had a fair opportunity in Queensland of showing what was in him. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had given Mr. Thallon all the compensation that he possibly could. He gave him half-a-year's salary and travelling expenses as agreed upon, because he looked upon him as being a victim to that ill-feeling that existed in the office through his being brought out from England and put over the heads of those who thought they were competent to fill the post of traffic manager. Mr. Thallon was never in real antagonism with the Commissioner, but with his own subordinates, and he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) looked upon him as a victim. In a moment of irritation, suffering under a little cross he had received, and the *vis inertiae* of the whole department, he gave in his resignation. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) was sorry he did so, and believed Mr. Thallon was sorry half-an-hour afterwards. It was impossible for him when Minister for Works to find out the real difficulty that existed. He tried to put his finger on the men who were the real cause of Mr. Thallon's resignation, and if he had succeeded in doing so, Mr. Thallon would still have been in the service of the Government as traffic manager. As he could not do so, he simply accepted Mr. Thallon's resignation. He knew that Mr. Thallon could never get on with the men under him and around him, who were opposed to him as they were; in fact, Mr. Thallon was a stranger, and they treated him as such. He was positive that Mr. Herbert was simply acting from a mistaken point of view through the machinations of the men who had been under him for years. Certainly Mr. Herbert did not act as warmly towards Mr. Thallon as he might have done, but that was owing to the man's nature, and not from any disposition to thwart Mr. Thallon. As the Government determined that Mr. Herbert should not return as Commissioner, the question as to who was to be his successor was one of such importance that the Committee ought to have some information about it.

Mr. BEATTIE said he had listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member for

Townsville with reference to the working of the railways in the past. Some years ago, when an agitation was got up in the public mind against the then Traffic Manager, Mr. Lowe, a commission, of which he had the honour to be a member, was appointed to inquire into the working of the Southern and Western Railway. His own conclusion, after a most exhaustive inquiry into the subject, was that Mr. Lowe was a man eminently competent to fill the position of traffic manager; and had his position been as strictly defined as the Minister for Works intended to define the position of Mr. Thallon, there would have been no clashing between him and the then Commissioner. Mr. Lowe had the reputation with some people of being a great martinet, but the evidence clearly showed that he was a capital disciplinarian, and unless a man was a good disciplinarian he could never be a good traffic manager. Hence a cry was raised against him by a lot of useless men who could not do their duty. No efficient officer ever spoke disparagingly of Mr. Lowe, and it was a great loss to the country when he went away. He remembered well that when Mr. Herbert was asked to take the traffic managership he was doubtful whether he should accept it or not, and he believed he declined on one or two occasions to accept the responsibility. His own opinion of Mr. Herbert was that he was a first-rate commissioner, but it was pretty well known that his subordinates were not loyal to him. Had they been loyal, nothing would have been heard of those complaints that were being continually published in the newspapers about the manner in which the working of the railway was conducted. Subsequently, on Mr. Thallon's appointment, every hon. member approved of the action of the Government in sending home for a man of sufficient experience to conduct the traffic on the Southern and Western line. Some hon. members might remember that, when that appointment was first made known, he (Mr. Beattie) said that if full authority was not given to Mr. Thallon—if he was allowed to be interfered with by subordinates, as the previous Traffic Manager was—he prognosticated that he would not stay three months in the office. He quite believed, with the hon. member for Townsville, that the trouble with Mr. Thallon was not caused by Mr. Herbert but by the men under him. He had no hesitation in saying that many offences were committed under the regulations of the Railway Department, that Mr. Herbert, as Traffic Manager, knew no more about than he (Mr. Beattie) did. Cases had been reported to him of men who had been suspended for drunkenness, and were reinstated without Mr. Herbert knowing anything about it. At the time he heard it, he could scarcely believe it to be true, but there was a great deal in it nevertheless. When Mr. Thallon came out the same system was in existence, and anyone reading the evidence taken before the commission, to which he had referred, would see that Mr. Thallon suffered under the same thing as Mr. Lowe. It was clear from that evidence that some of the subordinates of the department were not loyal to them, and he did not think that greater experience had made them more loyal now. He was very sorry to hear the Minister for Works say he intended to dispense with the services of Mr. Herbert. Now that the Government had decided to adopt the principle which ought to have been adopted years ago—namely, to disconnect the Traffic Manager from the Commissioner, with the exception of sending his official correspondence through him—there seemed to be no need to take that extreme step. With Mr. Herbert and Mr. Thallon the department would have a commissioner of great experience, and a traffic manager who came out with good testimonials; and in

a very short time confidence in the management of the railways would be restored. With reference to Mr. Herbert's successor, information on that point would be interesting both to himself and to the public. The appointment was, of course, left with the Minister, but some information might be fairly given to hon. members as to who was to be Mr. Herbert's successor.

Mr. NORTON said he hoped the Minister for Works did not understand from his speech that he wished to say one word against Mr. Thallon. He knew nothing of that gentleman except what little he gathered from meeting him on two or three occasions after he had ceased to be Traffic Manager. What his abilities were as Traffic Manager he knew not, and could not pretend to say. What he did say was, that if Mr. Thallon's appointment was made under the conditions stated by the Minister for Works—that he should have sole control of the traffic and be entirely independent of the Commissioner—he saw no reason why Mr. Herbert should be removed. Excepting that Mr. Thallon would have to send his official correspondence through the Commissioner, they would be kept quite apart. Under an arrangement of that kind it would be quite impossible for Mr. Herbert to try to "boss" the whole concern. As regarded Mr. Thallon, he would like to say one word. He had only seen him two or three times, and whether he would be able to carry out the work he (Mr. Norton) did not know. But he did know that whatever was done when he was here before led to the conclusion that Mr. Thallon had never occupied the position of traffic manager before he came to Queensland. And in saying that he was borne out by the statement of the hon. member for Townsville. It appeared to him that in making the appointment the Government had done so for the very extraordinary reason that Mr. Macrossan had given Mr. Thallon half-a-year's salary when he formerly resigned. That did not appear to him to be a sufficient reason, and if there was no other to be found in the papers connected with the office, then he (Mr. Norton) thought he ought not to be reinstated. He did not blame the Minister one bit. He did not say one word against him for the reinstatement. It was a matter of opinion whether Mr. Thallon ought, after having resigned the position that he once held, to be reinstated. He did not wish to say one word against the Minister for Works in deciding to make the reappointment. He thought the Minister for Works had done very wisely in making the arrangement announced to the Committee of keeping the Traffic Manager independent of the Commissioner. But he (Mr. Norton) had heard no reason for sending Mr. Herbert out of that office, and giving him another appointment. He was sorry the Minister for Works was riled at anything he had said. He did not intend to rile him. At the same time there was no use in saying that either Mr. Macrossan or himself was as crooked as a ram's horn. If the Minister for Works wanted an excuse to butt at something he could butt at him, but he did not see what good that would lead to. It did not place him (the Minister for Works) in a better position in any way. Of course he could make an allowance for the Minister for Works in the circumstances. He certainly objected to Mr. Herbert's removal, and he did not see what good was to come of it. He did not believe there was any man in the colony who could fill the office better than Mr. Herbert could, or who could, even if he became thoroughly acquainted with the duties, so soon supply the Minister for Works with all the information he wanted. Mr. Herbert was thoroughly up in matters connected with railway work. He (Mr. Norton) had always heard it said that when Mr.

Herbert held office previously in the Lands and Works Office he was just as good as an under secretary. On that account he (Mr. Norton) felt rather disappointed on hearing that the Government had decided to displace him; and he agreed with the hon. member for Fortitude Valley in saying that if the Government had made up their mind the Committee were entitled to hear something as to who was to be appointed in his place.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no desire to say a single word against Mr. Herbert. He believed there was no more efficient officer in the service of the Government than Mr. Herbert. In fact, he had been inclined to think that he was too much so. It had led to disputes between those who were doing business with the Railway Department; in connection with goods delayed, or goods damaged, it was almost impossible to come to a settlement. The Railway Department were always right, and the traders were always wrong. He knew that Mr. Herbert was under the impression that he was protecting the interests of the Government. He did not accuse him of doing wrong; all he said was that the Government thoroughly recognised Mr. Herbert as a zealous officer, and when he came back he would be provided for. Mr. Herbert, however, had not a pre-emptive right to the Railway Department. The hon. member for Townsville had said that Mr. Thallon was not a traffic manager. He (the Minister for Works) understood that the late Government had sent home instructions to the Agent-General to send out a traffic manager. He also understood that out of a good many applicants Mr. Thallon's was considered the best. He did not know Mr. Thallon and did not know anything about him.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Have you seen the papers?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was an extraordinary thing that the Agent-General was instructed to send out a traffic manager, that there were so many applicants, and that Mr. Thallon was selected—being considered the best,—and that now the hon. member for Townsville said that Mr. Thallon was not a traffic manager at all.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: He never was.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is a most extraordinary thing, then, that he was selected out of so many applicants for the position of traffic manager.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was surprised that the hon. Minister for Works did not know all about it. He could not have read the papers, and he seemed to him (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) to know nothing at all about it, so far as the papers were concerned. Surely he (the Minister for Works) could not be under the impression that Mr. Thallon was a traffic manager at home! Was it possible for him to imagine that they could get a traffic manager, who at home received from £1,500 to £3,000, or £5,000 a year—

Mr. BEATTIE: And £8,000 a year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Who received larger salaries than Ministers of the Crown in England, to come to Queensland for £800 a year? The Minister for Works could not be so ignorant as that. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) was speaking from information he had found in the papers. Mr. Thallon never had had charge of traffic, and never professed that he had. But he was a good railway officer, and amongst all the applicants he was considered to be the best. The applicants were all men who

could be recommended by their superiors to become traffic managers, but they never had held that position, or else they would not have been applicants for a like position in Queensland. Of course he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) could understand the motive of the Government very well in coming to the conclusion not to reinstate Mr. Herbert as Commissioner for Railways, and he respected the motive, although he thought it was a mistaken one. He thought Mr. Herbert, if a good servant at any time, would be far more so when he came back; for, as he understood, Mr. Herbert had been trying to master the working of all the railway systems of the different countries he was visiting. And he confessed that Mr. Herbert was a zealous officer, and, knowing his duties as Railway Commissioner, had claims for reinstatement. He thought himself that Mr. Herbert had been a very zealous officer; sometimes he conceived that he was too zealous and looked after the interests of the Government too well. Had he been like many officers he would not have got into so much hot water, for he would have looked at the interests of the Government as of secondary importance—which he never did. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) thought the Committee would like to know from the Minister for Works who was to be Mr. Herbert's successor. Was the Acting Commissioner for Railways to be appointed Commissioner? He supposed the Government had made up their minds to that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; they have not made up their minds.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Government had had twelve months to think of what they were going to do with Mr. Herbert, and who was to be his successor. It was due to the Acting Commissioner that he should know. He had been acting Commissioner for twelve months, and surely the Government had had sufficient experience of him to know whether he was worthy of being permanently appointed or not. He was very much inclined to doubt the word of the Minister for Works that the Government had not made up their minds as to who was to be appointed Commissioner. He believed that they had made up their minds, but that they had not the courage to say so.

Mr. BEATTIE said that was one of the points he had forgotten to mention when speaking before—the statement of the Minister for Works that he looked upon Mr. Thallon as a traffic manager from England. It struck him at the time that the Minister had not read the papers, because the traffic manager of the very department Mr. Thallon came from received, he believed, £9,000 a year.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Surely not!

Mr. BEATTIE: If the hon. member would make inquiry he would find that Mr. McLaren was one of three men in Great Britain who received enormous salaries—£8,000 or £9,000 a year. A short time ago, an officer from the same railway department—who was not traffic manager there, but one of the assistant traffic directors or inspectors, the same as Mr. Thallon was until he came to Queensland—accepted the office of traffic manager in one of the colonies—the Cape, he believed—at a salary of £1,000 a year. Then, again, did they not see a gentleman who had not been a traffic manager at home, but who was connected with the management of the traffic, selected to take charge of the Victorian railways at £3,000 a year? No doubt the appointment of Mr. Thallon as traffic manager here was an advance for him. He came here with a good character from the Agent-General, and from his references it was evident that he was thoroughly conversant with the system of conducting the traffic of a very

large railway; and the colony was very glad to get a man of such experience, because he might teach them a wrinkle or two, and show how their railways might be conducted in a way that would be advantageous. But he (Mr. Beattie) said again that if an officer placed in that position had not the necessary power, and if the officers under him were not loyal to him, he could not be successful. He believed that the appointment would prove a satisfactory one; but for anyone to think for one moment that a traffic manager of one of the great English and Scotch lines would come out here at any salary they could give him was simply absurd.

Mr. NORTON said if the Minister for Works could not tell them who the new Commissioner was to be, perhaps he would refer to the Acting Commissioner for information on the subject? He believed the hon. gentleman could tell them if he liked, and he might as well let them have the information at once. If he would not tell them that, perhaps he would tell them whether they were to have an acting commissioner, for whom there was a salary of £800 put down, as well as a commissioner.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. KELLETT said that, whether the Government had made up their minds on the subject of the commissioner or not, he thought it very advisable that they should not make the appointment at present; and the argument brought forward by the hon. member for Townsville bore him out in that when he stated that it was the under men of the department who drove Mr. Thallon away, and not Mr. Herbert. Most of those men were still here.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: They are all here.

Mr. KELLETT said that as Mr. Thallon was coming back it would be advisable to wait and see how things would work—whether the Acting Commissioner and others would meet Mr. Thallon fairly, and give him assistance to carry out his work. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Townsville that there were a great many cliques in the Railway Department, and had been for years; and it would take a very good man to get rid of them. He knew that there were such cliques in Brisbane, Ipswich, and elsewhere, and that they were very powerful. If a man whom they did not like was appointed to a place, they never ceased until they hunted him out. The thing had been going on for years, and would continue until some man—either the present Acting Commissioner or the new Commissioner—found out those cliques and put his foot down upon them. It was his business and not the business of the Minister to find them out. He defied any Minister to do so; but the Commissioner, who was the head of the department, ought, from his long experience in connection with it, to be able to find out the men, and let the Minister know who they were; and then let him dismiss them—clear them out at once. He was perfectly satisfied that the department required a big clearing out. There was no good getting rid of Mr. Herbert unless they got rid of a good many others. The thing was to find them and weed them out. It would certainly be for the public benefit. He therefore thought it advisable not to appoint a commissioner at present. The Acting Commissioner was doing his best at present, and let them see how long he would continue to do so. New brooms generally swept clean, and newly appointed officers were very courteous, but after a time they sometimes got as bumptious as their predecessors. It would therefore be advisable to see how Mr. Thallon got on. He did not think he got fair play before, and he

should like to see him get a chance of it now. He had never met him when he was here before; but he hoped to meet him before long, and he was satisfied that he was likely to improve upon what they had had lately.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister whether it was necessary to have an assistant accountant, for whom £350 was put down. He thought, from the change that was made in the department not very long ago, that such an officer would not be necessary.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the appointment was necessary in consequence of the increase in the work. The chief accountant was not able to keep pace with the work, and it was necessary to give him some assistance. It was the same with the station auditor. It was very necessary that the accounts should be audited to see that everything was correct, and it was utterly impossible for one station auditor to travel over the whole of the lines and audit the accounts. The hon. member ought to be aware that there had been considerable extensions of lines opened, which necessitated a great deal more work.

Mr. NORTON said he was quite aware that there had been considerable extensions of lines, but he did not know that an assistant accountant was necessary. He thought that, from the arrangement made twelve or eighteen months ago, such an officer would not be necessary at present, as the staff would be able to carry out the work. Of course, if the Minister said the appointment was necessary the Committee must accept it. With regard to the clerks in the department, he saw that there were about a dozen who had increases put down this year. Could the Minister tell the Committee whether any of those clerks got increases last year or the year before?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said none of them got increases last year. The hon. member ought to know that clerks in the Railway Department entered the service at very low salaries—some as low as £30 a year—and they got gradual increases of about £20 a year. He was positive that none of the clerks mentioned got increases last year. They might have got increases the year before, for anything he knew. Surely those young men growing up were entitled to a small increase such as that set down.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he could bear out what the hon. gentleman had said as to the clerks going into the Railway Department at a very small salary. He thought they deserved regular increases, because he believed there was no department in which the clerks did their work more thoroughly or where they had more work to do than in the Railway Department. He would like to ask the hon. gentleman if all were to get an increase, or only a few of them? The hon. gentleman had told them that nine were to have an increase, but there were fourteen clerks set down. The hon. gentleman had not treated all alike, but had made a selection. Whether they were selected according to merit or not the hon. gentleman could best say.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not go and ask who had got an increase and who had not. He considered it his duty, when an increase was proposed, to ascertain that the person was thoroughly worthy of it. Surely the hon. member did not suppose that he was going through all the employes of the department to see whether they had got increases! He presumed that the head of the department was competent to recommend an increase. He was not sure whether that had been the practice of the hon. member. There were some thousands of clerks in the Railway Department.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Thousands!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Over the whole country, taking all the employes—porters, firemen, engine-drivers, together—they formed a very large number, and he was not going to go over the whole of them, and ask why so-and-so had not received increases. The recommendations were submitted to him, and he satisfied himself that the officers mentioned were entitled to the increases recommended.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman could get the information by asking the Acting Commissioner why certain increases were recommended, and why the five clerks he had referred to were not recommended for increases. He knew he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had always done it. Whenever an increase was recommended to him he always asked the reason for it. He was sorry to say that during the time he was in office he had but little chance of giving increases. It had always been a hard push on the side of economy. The hon. gentleman, however, was in office when there was a full Treasury, and it was his duty to inquire why nine of the clerks received increases, while five did not. It would not be hard work for the hon. member to find out. The hon. member should ask the reason from the Commissioner, and let the Committee have the information. The hon. member had been long enough in the House to know that the Committee were usually very inquisitive upon these points, and he himself when a simple member of the Committee used to be more inquisitive than any other member of it. He should not get up in a passion and say he was not expected to do this and that. The hon. gentleman was expected to do his duty, and it was his duty to know the reason for the increases recommended.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had already informed the hon. member that he made inquiries as to the gentlemen whose salaries he was recommended to increase. He could assure the Committee that the country would never get such a man as Minister for Works as the hon. member for Townsville.

Mr. ARCHER: Hear, hear! Not while you are in the office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he endeavoured to do his best, but he could never hope to come up to the standard of the hon. member for Townsville, who thought he was not only capable of being a Minister for Works but of being an engineer. They knew that from the arrangements he had made in connection with the Brisbane Valley line, the curves on which had since to be altered, because in going round them the buffers were actually interlocked. The hon. gentleman might ask him why he did not instruct the engineer to build railways at this cost and that cost, but he did not profess to do it. The hon. gentleman seemed to think he should go over the whole of the employes in the department and see why they did not get increases of salary. He declined to do it, and he had not the time to do it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said they would discuss the Engineer's Department and the Brisbane Valley Railway when the next vote came on, and he could give the hon. gentleman his assurance that he would get plenty of it.

Mr. ARCHER said that, as the Minister for Works was such a powerful man, he ought to be more mild, and not be so hard on his predecessors. It was the most absurd thing he had witnessed in that Committee, the hon. member getting in a passion because he was asked a question, and trying to be sarcastic in talking about

the power of the hon. member for Townsville. The hon. member would do better by answering the question than by pitching into his predecessors to avoid answering the question put to him.

Mr. PALMER said they had had some extraordinary revelations that evening. It was a most unheard-of circumstance that a clique of subordinates should so work things as to carry them in their own way and upset the Commissioner for Railways, the Minister for Works, and the Acting Commissioner for Railways. He had never heard before of a department of which such things could be said as to the way in which it was carried on. What guarantee had they that, when Mr. Thallon returned to his office, he would not be treated in exactly the same way again? It was disgraceful to hear such things said of the working of a department. He wanted to ask the Minister for Works about an item in the vote—"Compensation for injuries, £195." Did that apply to compensation inside or outside the department? It seemed strange that the same sum should be required for each year.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had been a good deal surprised at that item himself, and he had made inquiries on the subject. It appeared that a man engaged in the Railway Department had received an injury, and the Government gave him compensation to the amount of £195. He thought the amount ought not to appear there again. He thought he could find some light employment for the man in the department; but he found it much better to be getting £195 for compensation for injuries received than to accept the employment. He was further told the man was in good circumstances.

Mr. ARCHER: Does it mean £195 a year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not understand why it appeared on the Estimates again. He was satisfied the man was competent to do light work, though, of course, the salary would be much less. It might be so arranged that what he would get could be taken from the £195 set down.

Mr. ARCHER asked whether the Minister for Works could tell hon. members how the sum of £195 was arrived at. Was the amount fixed by a Minister, or was it an award by a commission appointed to inquire into the matter? What was the reason of the award, and what was the exact sum awarded?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that the man who was receiving that sum had been an engine-driver on one of the lines, and had met with an accident about ten years ago.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not quite.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The man was employed on full pay as an engine-driver, and the sum of £195, which he was paid, was computed at the rate of his monthly salary.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was during the period of the existence of the Government of which the present Premier and the present Minister for Works were members that the accident referred to happened. An engine was coming from Dalby to Toowoomba, during a very heavy storm, when some earthworks gave way, and the rails having nothing to support them could not bear the engine. That was how the accident arose; but it did not occur ten years ago. It was before his (Hon. Mr. Macrossan's) time in office, and perhaps a little before the hon. gentleman's time; but it was during the period the present party were in office. When the matter came before him (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) he got the same answer as the Minister for Works. The amount had

been voted on the Estimates from year to year. He could not place it in Schedule B among the retiring allowances, and had therefore left it on the Estimates as the hon. gentleman had done; but there was no doubt it should be put somewhere else. If, however, the man had thoroughly recovered it was a question whether the vote should appear at all.

Mr. KELLETT said he remembered the time when the accident occurred. The driver was seriously injured, and would be a perfect cripple till he went to his grave. For some years it cost him what he received as compensation for doctors. He was, however, a careful saving man, and was now able to live on a farm he had got. He would never get over the injuries to the spine he had received; he was only just able to potter about, get into his dog-cart, and drive from his own place to the station.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to know from the Minister for Works who was the assistant accountant, and who was the assistant station auditor, as he noticed that those were two new appointments?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the appointments had not been made yet. He never made appointments till the salary was voted.

Mr. ARCHER: Oh, don't you?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. ARCHER: Do you mean to say that if a man is wanted you do not appoint him? You are not fit for your place if you do not.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped, if the appointments had not been made, that they would be given to some officers in the department who were deserving of promotion. He believed there were men in the department thoroughly competent for both positions. He thought they had nearly got through the vote before the Committee, but before it was put to the vote he would like to know what the Government were doing in the way of adopting proper and safe brakes for the railways. He had seen something in the newspapers to the effect that the Government had been experimenting with some brakes, and he would like to know how far those experiments had gone, and whether the Government had decided on using one brake all over the line, and if so what brake it was? It was a matter of importance with regard to the safety of the travelling public, and was just as much deserving of consideration as the appointment of a traffic manager.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said men were now employed in the railway workshops fitting up one of the Westinghouse brakes. He understood from the Locomotive Superintendent that there had been some improvements made in the brake recently, and those were now on the way out, and as soon as they arrived the work would be completed. From a report made to him it appeared that—

"The Australian agents of the Westinghouse Company have reported to the Locomotive Engineer that some of the parts sent out in 1877 have been very much improved upon since that time, and suggest that everything used should be of modern design. The company's engineer is now on his way from Melbourne with the improved parts."

The Vacuum Brake Company had offered to fit up one of their brakes free of cost, and the Government would have one of the engines now being made in England fitted up with that brake. The Acting Commissioner for Railways informed him that—

"The Vacuum Brake Company have also wired for the carriage appliances. Drawings of the brake-rigging suitable for our carriages are now being prepared by the Locomotive Engineer, and it is anticipated that a complete train will be ready for work early in April next."

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought they should have something to say on that very important subject. He believed there were several members present who understood it pretty well. From all that he could learn of the Westinghouse brake, which had received a great name and which had been puffed up in the newspapers of several countries, especially of England, he did not think it was equal to the vacuum brake. If experiments were impartially carried out they would prove which brake was the best. He had in his hand a late number of the *Railway Engineer*, containing information from the Board of Trade returns on continuous brakes; and he found that the different brakes were there put down according to the faults they committed in the number of miles run, the number of times they refused to act, the number of times they acted when they were not wanted to act, the number of times they broke down, and so on. The Westinghouse brake was very complicated; hence it was more likely to get out of order than the vacuum brake, of which there were two kinds—the automatic vacuum and the simple vacuum brake; and the simple one was put down as being the better of the two. According to the Board of Trade returns for the half-year ending 30th June, 1884, the Westinghouse brake committed one fault in 39,059 miles; the automatic vacuum brake; one in 141,252 miles—that was 39 against 141; Clark and Webb's brake one fault in 190,000 miles; and the simple vacuum, which he believed was the simplest of all, one fault in 165,000 miles. According to that return the vacuum was actually four times better than the Westinghouse brake; and that had been proved, not only during the past half-year, but also during successive years previously. Whatever predilection or prepossession there might be in the Railway Department in favour of the Westinghouse brake, the Minister for Works should see that a fair trial was given to both brakes. There was scarcely a man who had not his preference or bias in the matter. Locomotive engineers, civil engineers, and other professional men had always some bias in such matters; and engineers in England were biased in favour of the Westinghouse, and always recommended it even in the face of what was proved by the Board of Trade returns. Sometimes, however, it was not a matter of bias, but of profit. There was an article in the number of the *Railway Engineer* to which he referred, written by the chairman of the Vacuum Brake Company, Limited—Mr. Martin—in answer to a letter written to the *Courier* by an engine-driver and reprinted by the *Times*. The letter was written in praise of the Westinghouse brake, the writer saying how he put his hand on the lever and had no trouble at all; and the article was written in answer to the letter, stating that in America the Westinghouse Company, to protect itself against the competition of the Vacuum Company, bought up the whole of the vacuum brake patents there. He would give the Minister for Works the article he referred to if it was not already in the Works Office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Instructions have already been given to get a vacuum brake.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was very glad to hear it, and he hoped it would get a fair and impartial trial, because it was a matter of extreme importance to the colony. It made a great difference whether a brake would stop a loaded train within a certain number of yards or a certain number of yards less—it meant a collision or no collision very often; and sometimes the very moment it was wanted was the moment a brake would not operate. If it should prove that the vacuum was better and simpler—

more easily understood by drivers, and not more costly to work than others—that was the brake that should be used.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he noticed there was a large number of engineers in the department. There was the Chief Engineer, an engineer for existing lines, a resident engineer, an assistant engineer, a locomotive superintendent and a locomotive engineer; and it struck him that there were too many engineers. He wanted to know what were the duties of the Locomotive Engineer and whether his time was fully occupied?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the duty of the Locomotive Engineer was to design and inspect all the rolling-stock on the various lines of railway throughout the colony, and to prepare indents. There was a great deal of work for him to do, and he had in his office four draftsmen and a clerk.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he did not see any provision for draftsmen on the Estimates. He was under the impression that the carriages made by the department were made from the patterns used in completing former orders, and he did not see why draftsmen were required. Nor did he see any necessity for a locomotive engineer to inspect the rolling-stock, seeing that there was a locomotive superintendent as well as a locomotive foreman. Therefore he considered that the answer given by the Minister for Works was not very satisfactory. He thought one draftsman would be enough, and that the Locomotive Engineer might be done away with. He never could see what that officer was required for; indeed he thought the office was made for him, either by the hon. member for Townsville or by his successor.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Ipswich travelled a good deal by rail, and he must have seen the improvement of late in the passenger carriages. They were better ventilated, more comfortable, and more elegant than the carriages used some years ago. That sort of work was under the management of the Locomotive Engineer.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was very glad to hear the remarks of the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the automatic vacuum brake. He considered that it was a very important question, and was much surprised at what was said by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane. It would be the duty of the Locomotive Engineer to test that brake, and say whether it was as effective as shown in that report; and he felt confident that that report, as read by the hon. member for Townsville, would be fully borne out. No one ought to know the duties of all persons in the Railway Department from the Engineer down to the simplest workmen, better than the hon. members for Ipswich, who made it their business to look carefully after those concerns. The Locomotive Engineer had to look after the locomotives and rolling-stock, but had nothing whatever to do with the construction of the line. The Chief Engineer had to look after the construction of various lines they had built, and the lines they intended to build. No one knew that better than the hon. member for Ipswich, and he hoped, with the hon. member for Townsville, that those gentlemen who were in Queensland the other day would have a fair opportunity of testing the automatic vacuum brake. He had read in the New South Wales Press the most favourable reports of that brake, and believed that it would be found far superior to either the Westinghouse or the Woods brake, which had been much in use in Victoria, where they had been, as the hon. gentleman said, buoyed up by outside influence, and influence which should not exist. The proprietors of the vacuum brake had offered to

fit up an engine at their own expense, which was to run on their line for twelve months. He felt sure that the gentleman in charge of the Locomotive Department, Mr. Horniblow, would give that brake a fair and impartial test. The hon. member for Ipswich must pretend an ignorance of the duties of Mr. Horniblow, as every hon. gentleman knew that nothing took place in that department but what was well known to residents in that town.

Mr. MACFARLANE said there must be two very simple members in the Committee. The hon. gentleman seemed to think that they should have a locomotive engineer for the purpose of inspecting the new brake. In that case they would have to pay very dearly for their whistle.

Mr. ANNEAR : That would be only one part of his duties.

Mr. MACFARLANE said : What did the country do before that appointment was made ? It had not been in existence quite a year. It was quite true, as the hon. Minister for Works had said, that the carriages now made were a little more ornamental than they used to be ; but they were only repetitions of one another.

Mr. NORTON : No ; they are not.

Mr. MACFARLANE said there was no more difference between them than the superintendent would be quite able to make, without employing four draftsmen and an engineer. They did not require that staff to do all the ornamental work they had had lately. He had always gone in for putting down expense ; and though they might have ornamental carriages, he did not see why they should have an ornamental engineer.

Mr. NORTON said he thought the hon. member for Ipswich had found a mare's nest, and was trying to hatch an egg out of it. The Locomotive Engineer had almost too much to do. The hon. gentleman had referred to the appointment having been made by the present Minister ; but the appointment had not been made by him. Before the offices were separated, the amount of work under Mr. Horniblow's charge had very much increased—not only in Brisbane, but it was necessary to send someone occasionally to inspect the work, and examine the officers who were in charge of similar works on other lines. Mr. Horniblow had been sent on that duty twice, and had had to go over all the lines and inspect the work, which took him away from his department for a considerable time. It was from his reports that the Government had to make themselves satisfied that all the work was efficiently done by the officers in charge ; and there was so much additional work that it was almost incumbent upon the Government to appoint a fresh officer, and they thought it desirable that the fresh appointment should be given to Mr. Horniblow. He did not believe that they could have found a better man than Mr. Horniblow for that purpose, as he did his work thoroughly and well, and all the reports he sent in were, as far as they could judge, reliable. All the engineers in connection with the department spoke very highly of Mr. Horniblow, and he thought that at present that gentleman had too much work to do, as it was advisable that he should go up on all the different lines to inspect them. There was one matter which he would refer to. He would ask the hon. Minister for Works how the staff and ticket regulations had acted—whether there had been any difficulties connected with them, and whether they were being carried out properly ?

Mr. BEATTIE said he thought they had better settle the other question first. He had listened to the remarks made by the late Minister for Works (Mr. Norton) on the subject, and there was no doubt that Mr. Horniblow

was a most admirable officer ; but that was not the question. The question was—what necessity was there for the appointment of a locomotive engineer ? The hon. Minister for Works had answered the question by saying that there was plenty of work for him to do ; but he would point out this : that the locomotive superintendents in the Southern division, in the Northern division, and in the Central division were responsible for every engine that came out of the works, for running powers. It was not the Locomotive Engineer who was responsible. The fact of the Locomotive Engineer going up once a year to inspect did not take away the responsibility from those officers. The hon. gentleman said that Mr. Horniblow made out all the indents for the Railway Department, for stores and so forth ; but he had been trying to find out what the five draftsmen were for.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : They are paid from the Loan Fund.

Mr. BEATTIE : Then, unless they referred to the Loan votes, they could not find them. He believed that Mr. Horniblow's time was taken up in making out indents, and it was rather too much to allow a person of his experience simply to do that. If Mr. Horniblow took the responsibility of all that was done by the locomotive superintendent, and purchased all the rolling-stock on all the lines, both on the Northern, Central, and Southern Railways, then he (Mr. Beattie) could understand the importance of his position ; but if the locomotive superintendent was responsible for all that, he did not know what the responsibility of the Locomotive Engineer was.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. member must have misunderstood what he (Mr. Norton) said about the responsibility of the Locomotive Engineer. If things were as they existed when he was in office, the other engineers retained their responsibility ; but someone was required to see that they did their work properly. When the hon. member for Townsville was in office, he sent Mr. Horniblow to inspect all the Northern and Central lines. It was important that someone should do that, because it did not do to trust entirely to those who held positions up there. Mr. Horniblow was sent up again after the hon. member for Townsville left office ; and as there were continually a large number of matters that required attention, the appointment was made permanent. Mr. Horniblow had plenty of work—in fact, rather too much. It was very desirable that he should inspect all the lines. As to the changes in the carriages, if there were any complaints at all they were that so many changes were made, and that they required a large staff of draftsmen to be continually preparing plans. Whenever a change was made new plans were required, so that there was more work of that kind than if carriages of the same type were always used.

Mr. SALKELD said there was one matter he should like to call attention to, because at present there was a good deal of uncertainty in the mind of the travelling public. Some time ago it was reported that there was a very narrow escape from a serious accident near Nudgee ; he heard it frequently, but at the time he did not pay much attention to it, because many reports got abroad that were not true ; nothing was said about the escape until it was mentioned in one of the newspapers, and then the hon. member for Port Curtis put a question to the Minister for Works on the subject. The affair took place on the Tuesday, and the question was put on the Friday following, and the Minister for Works then said he knew nothing about it. Since then the officer in charge of the station had been removed. Now, if that sort of thing was to go

on it would destroy the confidence of the travelling public in the safety of the railways. He believed that it was intended to hush the matter up, and that it would have been hushed up had not attention been called to it in the House. He thought it was deplorable that such a thing should ever be contemplated. During the inquiry into the accident at Darra, it came out that there had been a great number of narrow escapes; but he did not think a complete list of them was obtained, although the hon. member for Carnarvon did what he could to elicit all the evidence possible. He (Mr. Salkeld) had frequently heard that a large number of narrow escapes had been hushed up, and he began to believe it now. They were hushed up so that the public should not get alarmed. He did not blame the subordinate officials, but he blamed the principal officers. The train that travelled past Nudgee contained, he believed, the Acting Commissioner for Railways; and the paragraph in the newspaper stated that he was the first to perceive that something was wrong. Yet no steps were taken—nothing was done to inquire into the matter until attention was called to it in that House. He hoped the Minister for Works would seriously think over the matter. If occurrences of that kind were passed over by the heads of the department, it could not be expected that the subordinates would object to the way in which things were hushed up.

Mr. KELLETT said he hoped the Minister for Works would not allow all accidents and narrow escapes to be made public. If he did, very few people would travel on the railway at all; they would be so alarmed that they would be afraid to do so. It was far better to keep such matters quiet. It was only the other day he heard it suggested that they should get Cobb and Company to put on one of their old coaches between Brisbane and Ipswich. What they lost in speed they would at all events make up in safety. As the coachman said, "If you get thrown out of a coach there you are; but if out of a railway train—where are you?" Only that morning he had heard of an accident on the line between Brisbane and Ipswich; and last night he understood there was nearly a dangerous one on the Sandgate line. He hoped all such occurrences would be kept quiet if they wanted the public to travel on the railways.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that surely the hon. member was not going to hold the Traffic Department responsible for all accidents! The accident that took place on the Racecourse line yesterday was owing to a tree having been blown down, and some of the branches damaging the carriages. Surely the hon. member was not going to hold the Traffic Department responsible for that. Only the other day he himself saw something similar at Yeerongpilly, near Oxley. There had been no attempt to hush up the Sandgate accident; the Acting Commissioner instructed the Traffic Manager next morning to inquire into the matter. He would like the hon. member for Stanley to find out any case in which an accident had been hushed up.

Mr. SALKELD said he was quite sure that the public would feel far more secure if every case of dereliction of duty was taken up promptly, and blazed abroad in all the newspapers, than if they thought a single case was kept quiet. Of course, the Traffic Department was not responsible for the tree which had fallen down, but perhaps some other department was. The Engineer's Department ought to be responsible; because, in making a railway, any tree that by any possibility could be blown down across the line should be removed.

Mr. KELLETT said the Minister for Works seemed to be angry at his remarks; but the hon.

member would probably have to listen to a good many remarks before his Estimates were through, and he would have to take it quietly. He did not say for one moment that when cases came to the ears of the Minister he hushed them up; but he was sure there were a great number the Minister never heard of at all.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not think the Minister for Works was likely to hush up anything that came to his ears; but there were a great many things, as the hon. member for Stanley said, that never came to the ears of any Minister for Works, no matter who he was. If he wished to get all the information he possibly could, there were people in the department who wished that he should not get the information. He rather doubted the statement of the hon. member for Ipswich (Mr. Salkeld) that the more the public knew about the danger the more secure they would feel. If the public had known ten years ago what sort of bridges they were running over on the Western line, and on some parts of the Main Range, he thought they would not have felt very secure. He knew when he saw one or two of them he was horrified; he could put in his hand and take out wood in large lumps as big as his fist.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You ought to have dismissed the officer in charge.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought the best thing to do was to make the bridges secure and say nothing about it. It was not the fault of the engineer; the fault lay in the construction. Timber had been put in that should not have been put in.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he was not going to express any opinion about the dismissal of the late station-master at Nudgee; but it had been represented to him that the daughters of that station-master were a little while ago dismissed from their employment in the Telegraph Department, and what with one thing and another their home was likely to be completely broken up. They were deprived of all their means of living. It was stated that they were dismissed because the department had decided to dispense with female operators in the Telegraph Department. He would like to ask whoever was responsible for that department, whether such was the case, and whether the resolution had been carried out in its entirety?

The PREMIER said he did not know the names of any people removed from the Telegraph Department, but he understood from his colleague the Postmaster-General that some female operators had recently been discharged because it was found that they did not perform their duties satisfactorily, and could not be trusted with the work.

Mr. MIDGLEY said that reason should have been given to the parties. There was no need for the Government or any department to say what was not true to the lowest employé in the service. So far as he could learn no complaint whatever had been made of their being incompetent to perform their duties.

The PREMIER said he would add to what he had said, that it was considered that a railway station was not a convenient place to have female operators, if they were employed anywhere.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped the Government had not made up their mind to dismiss female operators. In his opinion the system of employing females should be greatly extended, for he thought that as a rule they made far better and more reliable operators than the males. It would be a good thing if the Government would set the example of employing females more, and let the strapping young

fellows who were doing what he called females' work go into the bush to bring the wilderness under cultivation and make it smile like the rose. In America more than three-fourths of the public school teachers were females; a great many were employed in the Post Office, in the Telegraph Department, and as general clerks, and they were found to answer very well indeed. When he was Minister for Works he should have introduced them into the Railway Department, but owing to the shape of the building it could not well be done, as it would be necessary to separate the males from the females a little. He wished to know from the Minister for Works what the station-master at Nudgee had been guilty of?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was discovered on inquiry that he had given a ticket to pass on a train after another train had taken the staff. He might mention that they were two excursion trains. The railway workpeople had a day once a year for a picnic, and it appeared that on that occasion they selected Sandgate. There were two trains, and the first took the staff. The second one followed, and the station-master gave a ticket; but as he could not have unlocked the box without the staff, it must have been either left open or the ticket-book must have been kept out. When a ticket was given the station-master must show the staff; and the guard, remembering that he had not seen the staff, put the brake on and stopped the train. Of course a mistake was made, but the system had not come thoroughly into operation. It was, however, considered by the department advisable that the station-master should be relieved; but it was his (the Minister for Works') intention to find him some other employment.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was glad to hear that, because he thought it would be rather hard to dismiss an employé for forgetting the regulations of the staff-and-ticket system immediately after it had been put into operation. It was not everyone who could keep those things in his head. He did not object to the Minister being severe and strict, but, notwithstanding, he thought that the new system having been put in operation so lately, some allowance should be made in the particular case mentioned. He was travelling once on the Sandgate line, and saw one of the station-masters doing something which led him to believe that he did not understand the system of signalling. That was the first place the man had held on the railway—he not having even been a porter before. Well, when he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) got back he reported the occurrence to the Commissioner, who sent an officer to inspect and examine all the station-masters along that line, and the result was that that man was not the only one who did not understand signalling. Then he ordered all the station-masters on the Southern and Western line to be examined, and several of them did not understand signalling. Well, he could not exactly dismiss those men, but they were cautioned and told that they would have to learn their duties more perfectly. He thought the Minister had done well in making up his mind to find some other employment for that unfortunate man. Of course the station-master should not have been able to obtain the ticket if the staff was gone. The ticket-book should have been in the box, and he had probably forgotten to put it there.

Mr. NORTON asked if there were two ticket-boxes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was one ticket-box on each station, and, as a matter of course, as long as the staff was away the box could not be opened.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had heard a great deal about the staff-and-ticket system, and unless it was enforced in its entirety it was of little use. The men must be watched who carried it out. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley quoted an instance of where a gentleman from Scotland was engaged to go to the Cape as traffic manager, and although he was a strict disciplinarian and imagined that the system was carried out in its entirety, it was not. Station-masters there used to abuse the system, and run trains without tickets almost when they liked, and that was unknown to the traffic manager. It was of no use the Minister giving instructions to the Commissioner, and the Commissioner to his subordinates. Someone should be appointed to travel with the trains and watch the station-masters.

Mr. WHITE said he would ask the hon. member for Townsville if it was true that Mr. Thallon, when Traffic Manager, had informed the Commissioner that the station-master at Nudgee was incompetent to fill his position?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am not aware of it.

Mr. WHITE said it was currently reported that it was so.

Mr. NORTON said, in regard to the staff-and-ticket system, he saw by the new regulations which had been issued that the station-masters had to hand the staff to the engine-driver, and, in the event of a ticket being issued, the staff must be at the station. He had seen, on looking over some papers lately, that in Victoria, at the time of the Little River collision, there was a regulation in force to the effect that before a train could leave any staff-station with a ticket the station-master had to show the staff to the engine-driver and guard. There were some exceptions to that rule. The telegraph system was in force as well, and, in addition to that, a power was given to the Commissioner which was given in the regulations lately issued here—to order a train to go on without a staff. Mr. Herbert, who went down to Victoria by request to see the working of the railways, had told him that although the system was in force the Commissioner had power to suspend it in order to run a train without the staff and ticket, and they had in consequence become somewhat lax in their operations. The accident at Little River was caused by the imperfect working of the telegraph system. If that system was worked at all in connection with the staff-and-ticket system, it could only be done without danger under what was called the "regular block" system. That was not carried out in Victoria, and was not likely to be carried out here; but if the staff-and-ticket system was worked properly on every train he did not see how there could be any accident. He mentioned that because he knew a great many people had been urging the necessity of connecting all railway stations by telegraph lines. It was desirable that that should be done; but if any hitch occurred in the working of the staff-and-ticket system it would be a source of great danger. Anybody who had ever thought on the subject would see that without going much into the matter. With regard to giving special instructions to the Commissioner or the Traffic Manager to suspend the staff regulations, that should be most sparingly done, and only in very exceptional cases. If laxity were permitted, the thing would grow, and the value of the system would be destroyed. He had heard of another case besides that at Nudgee, where a complication had resulted from the system being misunderstood. Had the Minister for Works heard anything about it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that he had not heard of any hitch except the one at Nudgee. He presumed that after the system had been in operation a short time the officials would get accustomed to it.

Mr. NORTON said the case to which he referred was one in which four trains were blocked at Indooroopilly, waiting for the staff, which could not be found.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he believed that had happened on one occasion. The practice on Saturday nights was for the engines to return to Ipswich, where the drivers resided. One night at Indooroopilly, very late, the staff was missing, and the trains were delayed there until it was found.

Mr. SCOTT said he understood the Minister for Works to say that so long as a station-master had a staff he could keep sending on train after train by tickets. Was there no limit to the number of trains that could be sent on?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There need be no limit, for there is no danger.

Mr. SCOTT said it was possible that one train might overtake another that had broken down. Some time ago an engine broke down, and the guard ran a long way back to stop the train in which he (Mr. Scott) happened to be travelling. Had the guard not done so there would have been an accident.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: They are bound to go back to give warning.

Mr. FOXTON said he knew something of the case mentioned by the hon. member for Port Curtis, having been a passenger by one of the trains. It was not the case referred to by the Minister for Works, and it happened shortly after the new arrangements were made consequent on the inquiry into the Darra accident. The station-master at Toowong, in despatching the up train from Brisbane at half-past 4 in the afternoon, by some accident sent on the ticket instead of the staff. The staff should have gone on and been brought back by return train immediately afterwards. Not having the staff, the station-master at Indooroopilly could not despatch two trains which had arrived there. Then the half-past 5 train from town arrived at Toowong, where it had to remain for an hour, as well as the others at Indooroopilly, awaiting instructions from the head office as to which train was to move on first, notwithstanding the fact that the station-master at Toowong still held the staff. A great deal of inconvenience to the public might be avoided if, when such a thing as that occurred, the station-master had power to remedy the evil at once, which could be done by the telegraph, and the block system. The station-masters at each end of that staff section were the only two men who knew that anything had gone wrong, and they had the means of remedying it at once. All that was necessary to be done was for the station-master at Toowong to telegraph to the station-master at Indooroopilly, "Have sent on ticket by mistake; block line; will send staff on by following train." On the message being repeated the line would be blocked. If that had been done in the case he referred to the mistake could have been rectified in ten minutes.

Mr. ARCHER said he could by no means agree with the suggestion of the hon. member. If station-masters were allowed to act in the way proposed, without consulting the head office, it might lead to accidents which would be far worse than keeping a number of people waiting an hour or two at a roadside station. It would be far better that passengers should be detained a short time than that a collision should take place. It

was very annoying to wait, no doubt, but it would be better to put up with that than run the risk of what might be a serious calamity.

Mr. FOXTON said that if the course he suggested was followed no collision could possibly occur. It was simply to enable the station-master to do that which he knew the traffic manager would order to be done. Only one order could be given, "Send on the train with the staff," and if the station-master was allowed to do that there could be no danger, and all delay was avoided.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. member for Townsville had spoken about an officer of the Railway Department having been sent round to examine signalmen on the various lines to ascertain whether or not they were competent, and the result was that some of the men were found to have very little knowledge of their duties. That was enough to make people very suspicious of the knowledge which men appointed by the Railway Department might have of what was required from them. An examination was afterwards made of the whole of the servants engaged on the railway line. He had forgotten whether the hon. member for Townsville was Minister for Works when the examination was made, but he knew that when he (Mr. Norton) was Minister, the papers relating to the examination of signalmen were laid before him by Mr. Herbert, and in some instances so much incapacity was shown that it struck him that it was possible that others who had received appointments on the different lines might not have much more knowledge of their duties than some of the signalmen. The result was that an examination was made of all the men employed on the different lines. An officer was sent round with instructions to see that the station-masters and persons in charge of stations examined all the men under them in his presence, the object being not only to see that the men understood their duties, but also that the station-master himself understood enough of what was required of him to be able to conduct the examination of the men. The result was not altogether satisfactory. It was such as to cause some little apprehension, because it was evident that when men not fully informed as to their duties were sent away from Brisbane they were very apt to forget some of them; and if that were the case when they had the ordinary everyday working of the department before their eyes, it was clear that should an emergency arise they would not know what course to take. He had, therefore, left instructions in the office that the examinations referred to were to be held not less than once a year; and it seemed to him an important thing that they should be held occasionally, at any rate, in order to prevent men from falling out of a knowledge of the work they had to perform. Of course a number of men were always being sent out to occupy new stations; that caused a drain upon the department, and in many cases of smaller stations men had to be appointed who had not as much knowledge as they ought to have; at any rate they had not sufficient knowledge to fit them to hold the position of station-master at places where there was much traffic. He should like to know from the Minister for Works whether those examinations, or other examinations answering the same purpose, were being conducted at the present time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he quite agreed with the hon. member that it was very desirable that periodical examinations of signalmen and station-masters should be held. He might inform him that within the last six or eight months travelling inspectors had been sent round, whose duty it was to examine signalmen and station-masters as to their duties, to see to

the state of the line—that the points were in order, that the waiting-rooms were kept clean, that the rolling-stock was kept moving—in fact, to inspect the whole of the lines; and they sent in a report to the Commissioner monthly or oftener. With regard to rolling-stock, a great many complaints had been made about the delay of goods, and it had often occurred that goods waggons were shunted at Grandchester, Chinchilla, and other places, and left there for some days. It was part of the duty of those inspectors to see that that did not happen—that the rolling-stock was kept moving.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the officers mentioned were, no doubt, extremely useful, especially as the traffic was increasing so much; but he would like to know whether they were competent to examine station-masters as to their duties, as well as signalmen. He knew one man who had been sent out by Mr. Herbert to examine signalmen, and, although he had no fault to find with him, he did not know whether he was competent to examine station-masters as to the performance of their duties, which was a different matter entirely. A man must be better than a station-master to be able to examine him. He knew that one of the officers was a good man, but he did not know the other, and he should like to know whether the Minister for Works was satisfied as to their ability to examine station-masters. It was a matter of serious importance. In the early days, when their traffic was very limited, things were allowed to go on in a haphazard style; but now, when they had sixty and seventy trains a day at the Brisbane station, it was very large traffic, and therefore they required a different system—better officers, or at least officers who knew a great deal more than they did formerly, and who attended carefully to their duties. It would be satisfactory to the Committee to know if the Minister had confidence in the ability of those inspectors as to their power of examination, so as to secure the safety of the working of the traffic through the station-masters.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said their duties were to inspect the whole working of the department along the line, and to see that everything was in proper order at the stations. Their duties were general—to see that the station-masters did their duty, and that refreshment rooms, water-closets, and so on, were kept clean and in order.

Mr. BEATTIE said he presumed that the men who were appointed to the position of traffic inspectors were higher than station-masters, and received higher salaries; that they were taken from amongst the most experienced station-masters in the department. If not—if they were men not accustomed to that class of work—he was afraid they would not give satisfaction. If their duties were, as the Minister for Works stated, to see that the stations were kept clean and all that sort of thing, of course anybody could do that; but if they were to interfere with old experienced station-masters, and suggest improvements as to the working of the traffic, they ought to have had more experience than station-masters.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he believed one of the traffic inspectors was a man who had had charge of the goods shed for a considerable time.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had given satisfaction in that position, and was removed from that to a special appointment made for him by Mr. Herbert. That was to keep a tally of all the rolling-stock.

He did not know what title was given to him, but he had to keep a tally of all the stock that went out and to see that it came in at the proper time, and was not allowed to lie at outside stations unused. Where he could have got his experience to examine station-masters he did not know, but he could not have acquired it in the goods shed. That was the man who was sent to examine the signalmen. He believed he was a very good man, but he wanted to know from the Minister for Works if he had confidence in that man's ability to examine station-masters, who were in many cases superior men.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not know that his duty was to examine station-masters. He did not know that those inspectors were competent to examine station-masters, but they had to inspect the stations, and see that everything was correct. Those men had been a long time in the Railway Department, and though he would not say that they were better men than others, yet they were efficient and reliable men, and they had done very good service in their present position since their appointment.

Mr. NORTON said that what they would like to know was whether any examinations were held by those men. He did not think it should be the business of those men to examine the station-masters, but rather to see that the station-masters examined their men in their presence. If the station-masters could conduct an examination of the men under them, it would be a proof of their own competency. Those examinations should be carried out in order to show that the station-masters themselves understood the work.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not think they were instructed to examine station-masters. Their duties were more to point out any irregularities; and their chief duty was to see that the rolling stock was kept moving, and not being collected in any one place; and generally to supervise the stations along the line. He believed the examination of the station-masters should take place before they were appointed, and not afterwards. He did not know that the abilities of those men would qualify them to examine all the station-masters on the line; possibly the station-masters would be more competent to examine them; but their duty was more particularly to travel, and see that goods vans were not delayed at side-stations, such as Grandchester. An engine often took trucks as far as Grandchester and left them there, and it was the inspector's duty to see that those trucks were not delayed there for three or four days, but were passed on; and they had also to supervise the traffic generally.

Mr. BEATTIE said the Minister for Works had just come to exactly the reason why those men were appointed. There were a great many complaints some time ago about goods having been left on the road, and nobody could account for them. He had inquired himself to know whether a guard or any other officer in charge of a train, on receiving the shipping note for the goods going by his train, had any power to leave a portion of his loading before getting to his destination. How could the man account for his manifest after he had got to the end of his journey, and say, "I left three or four trucks behind"? It would be very difficult for the station-master where those goods were left behind, because he would have to check over the manifest and the goods received before the others came on. He did not believe that the authorities at the head office understood for some time afterwards that the goods were left in that way. He had heard of an instance himself,

in which a gentleman, who was well known, and who represented a large company, sent goods up from Brisbane, and to his great surprise, after making the journey to the place to which the goods were despatched himself, he found that the goods did not arrive for some eight days afterwards; the guard having left them at some station on the line. That was frequently done, and the guard of the next train coming up, thinking that he might have too many trucks on, would leave a couple there also, and they had either to wait until a special engine came up to take them on, or they were taken on by some light train. To remedy those evils, and to see that that system was not continued, the Government appointed two traffic inspectors to look after it, and there was good reason for the appointment. He was astonished when he heard that someone in charge of a train might take it upon his own responsibility to leave goods vans at a station because he might think he would have some difficulty in taking the train up the Little Liverpool, for instance. That was a very bad system, and such a power should not be left in the hands of anyone in charge of a train.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the traffic inspectors were appointed in January last, and they were instructed to travel over the line and report to the Traffic Manager the arrival and despatch of goods; and their duties also included the examination of all stations on the line to see that the convenience of the public was studied, and that the stations were kept in good order. Those were the instructions given them, and he believed they had carried them out well.

Mr. NORTON said he quite understood that the traffic inspectors would be able to do that work well, but the fact remained that they did not hold examinations. He agreed that officers should be examined before they received appointments, and so they were; but many of them were young men who were put for a time under a station-master to act as his assistant. Those men had to be sent on, when they might not have had a great deal of experience, to take charge of stations themselves. Unless they had a pretty fair amount of work they were apt to get rusty. They were supposed by the rules to keep themselves up in the rules and regulations, in order that they might at any time be able to undergo an examination upon them. But, as a matter of fact, men stuck away at side-stations grew rather careless, and forgot the rules they were compelled to learn at one time. Those men had to be shifted to more important stations, and it was necessary then that they should undergo an examination. The object of the examination was to ascertain that they had kept themselves up in the rules and regulations of the office, so that at any time they might be capable of being shifted to larger stations where they would have a greater amount of responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he agreed with the hon. member that it was very desirable that there should be occasional examinations, and he was sure the traffic inspectors were quite competent to conduct them.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought the case of Mr. Bunting, the station-master at Oxley, was worthy of consideration, and he hoped that in view of the number of hours that officer had to work, and of his previous good character, he would be treated very leniently. He had a strong feeling for that gentleman because he once saved him (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) from an accident. Hon. members would have read in the evidence taken at the recent inquiry that on one occasion Mr. Bunting discovered an error in a time-table which would have run a material train into a special train by

which (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) was to travel; consequently he felt rather strongly for Mr. Bunting. But, putting joking on one side, he thought, considering his length of service, and that the staff-and-ticket system had hitherto been carried out very imperfectly, and also that his defence was that his action was due to a slip of the memory, the Government should seriously consider his case and give him a trial somewhere else—if not as an officer in charge of a station, in some other position equally remunerative.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was no doubt that the station-master at Oxley was deserving of some little consideration. Seeing that the particular special train to which reference had been made only ran once a week, it was not to be surprised that it should escape Mr. Bunting's memory. He could not, however, remain a station-master, but the department would find him something else to do, perhaps employ him as a clerk. He (the Minister for Works) desired to give the public every confidence in their officers, and he could not, therefore, again appoint Mr. Bunting as a station-master.

Mr. NORTON said there was one thing to be said in favour of Mr. Bunting, and that was that if the staff-and-ticket system had been properly carried out it was very likely he would not have sent the train on.

The PREMIER: He could have given the ticket if he had the staff.

Mr. NORTON said he might have done so, but if the same regulations were adopted as were in force elsewhere, the driver or guard would have been shown the staff before starting with the ticket, and the accident would probably not have happened. There was one thing he was quite sure of, and that was that with that rule Mr. Bunting, with his experience, would be a far better station-master than some of the inexperienced men whom the Government were bound to appoint to positions of that kind; and he believed that, on reflection, the public would come to the same conclusion.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was not going to plead that Mr. Bunting should be reinstated as station-master. He was glad to hear that the Minister for Works would do something for the man, and trusted that the office to which he would be appointed would be as remunerative as the position he previously held. It was quite possible that mistakes could be committed, even with the staff-and-ticket system, and he could mention several cases which had occurred in other parts of the world. It was not an infallible system. It was, therefore, just as well that the travelling public should not have any ground for the suspicion that Mr. Bunting would fail again. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) thought that was a fitting opportunity to ask the Minister for Works how it was that the people of the Albion had a grievance about the running of a train which had been running nearly since the Sandgate line had been opened? When the line was opened, a train started from Sandgate in the morning and after it passed the Junction ran into Brisbane without stopping. Representations were made to him that it was very inconvenient to the people at Albion to have the train passing there without stopping to take up passengers, and he then gave instructions that it should stop at that station, and it had done so up to within the last few months. The Albion station could be shown by statistics to be one of the most important stations between Brisbane and Sandgate; he was sure there must be from twenty to thirty persons who got out there every morning, and sometimes a great many more; there was often a large crowd on the platform,

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there had been an agitation got up by the people travelling from Sandgate to run the train referred to right through without stopping at the Albion, and the consequence of that was that their request was acceded to, and arrangements were made that the train which started from the Racecourse branch about a quarter of an hour before the Sandgate train should accommodate the people of the Albion. However, they found it did not suit, and the time-table had been again altered; and the train was now running as before, taking up passengers at the Albion. When those persons who came down from the West, where population was not so closely settled, complained of the delays caused by the frequent stoppages, he pointed out that the purpose of the railway was to accommodate the public.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he had been intending to speak on that subject for some time, but had been waiting until the matter of appointing a traffic manager had been discussed. But now, as that particular train had been mentioned, perhaps they had better finish it off and have done with it. He thought that in no comparatively little matter had the need of a traffic manager been so noticeable as in the arrangements with reference to that particular train. At first sight it might appear reasonable to say that a train passing the Albion and the suburbs between Brisbane and the Junction should stop at every station to pick up passengers, and that it would be a disregard of the convenience of the travelling public if that were not done. But he would endeavour to show that there were two sides to the question, and that the Sandgate people had by far the better side. The train referred to left Sandgate at ten minutes to 8 o'clock in the morning, and there was a train left the Racecourse about fifteen minutes earlier. He did not know the exact time, but that was near enough. The Sandgate train was pretty nearly filled up with regular passengers every morning when it started from Sandgate, and the people who came to town by it travelled the longest distance possible on that line. Having to stop at every station to pick up passengers, it was nearly 9 o'clock before the train arrived at Brisbane. There were a large number of Civil servants and men employed by private firms, and many of those men he knew, from the time the train arrived in Brisbane, must of necessity be late if their work began at 9 o'clock. Seeing that the carriages were well filled when they left Sandgate, and seeing also that a train passed the suburban stations ten or fifteen minutes earlier, taking up passengers, the Sandgate people naturally asked why they should be put to such inconvenience by the passengers who resided in the suburbs who refused to avail themselves of the earlier train. He had been travelling on the line for the last two years, and he knew that, by reason of the Albion passengers refusing to avail themselves of the earlier train, the passengers from Sandgate were put to great inconvenience through overcrowding. It was a very wise and business-like regulation that the train from Sandgate, of which he spoke, after leaving Nundah should go straight through to Brisbane, so as to give passengers reasonable time to get to their places of business. But what did the gentlemen of the Albion do? It would hardly be credited that the Minister for Works, with all his sturdiness and resolution of character—and ruggedness, he had almost said, of demeanour—and the Commissioner for Railways, and the whole of the Traffic Department, had been baffled by a little ragged, dirty boy. The regulation was that the train, after leaving Nundah, should not stop at

the Albion except to put down passengers; but any Minister for Works or traffic manager might easily see how the Albion people could circumvent that regulation. He would not avail himself of the privileges of Parliament by using the term "dirty boy"; but there was an unkempt "arab" for whom those gentlemen bought a season ticket for a few shillings, and whom they engaged to go down by the train every morning and get out at Nundah, then get in again and stop the train to get out at the Albion, thus giving the gentlemen who employed him the opportunity to get in. He would not say one word in advocacy of the train running through without stopping at intermediate stations if there was not another train provided; but he said it was not fair to the residents of Sandgate—an important seaside town, with an increasing population, the interest of which ought to be considered, and the business of which was worth nursing and attending to—it was not fair that three-quarters of an hour or fifty minutes of their time should be occupied in getting from Sandgate to Brisbane, a distance of only twelve miles, and a like period in getting home again at night. The result was, that not only were the Sandgate people late, but the Albion people were late themselves. Some of them were Civil servants, and if he were their boss he would keep a register of their time and dock them for being late. They could easily come to town by the train which left the Albion fifteen minutes earlier; but they would have to breakfast earlier; and they complained that they would then be in town ten minutes too soon. But that ought not to break their hearts. The Sandgate people expected something very different from the new management of the Traffic Department; but though there had been a marked improvement in the management of the goods traffic since the present Minister came into power, there was no such improvement in the arrangements for the convenience of the passenger traffic. There was no "go" in the department—no originality; there were no luxuries, and hardly any conveniences. The Sandgate people thought—reasonably thought, he submitted—that there ought to be a train running through from Brisbane twice in the evening, doing the journey in half-an-hour, and a through train in the morning occupying a like time. It was humiliating that the whole arrangement—the wise arrangement of the Traffic Department in regard to that train—should be circumvented, knocked out of gear, and blocked by that young urchin; and he hoped that when the Traffic Manager returned to his place, with all the added dignity and power which a reappointment ought to give, he would provide a remedy for the evil.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he agreed that the present was not the proper time to discuss the question just raised, on which he had intended to speak further on; but as they had drifted so far, he would take the opportunity of saying part, at any rate, of what he intended to say on the subject. The hon. member for Fassifern had said it was humiliating that the traffic arrangements should be so far behind the age, but that hon. gentleman entirely understated the circumstances appertaining to the traffic management in connection with the railways in the vicinity of Brisbane. Why was it that no attempt had been made to emulate the system in vogue in the suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne? Surely it would be worth while to give the Acting Traffic Manager a holiday, or to send one of his clerks down to those cities to see what was done there. The original intention of running trains on the Sandgate line, at odd hours one way and even hours the other way, had not been established. It was intended that it should be a sort of coaching

system—an engine with a few light carriages running at frequent intervals; and the traffic would never be properly developed till some such system was adopted. The Minister for Works had stated that he altered the time-table the other day to suit the convenience of the people at the Albion. That was a backward step in his opinion; he thought that hon. gentleman should have adhered to the former arrangement. In Sydney there was not a suburb within fifteen miles so small as the Albion, yet it was arranged there that some trains should stop at every station, while others should stop at only a few, to suit the convenience of those who lived the longest distance out of town. The hon. member for Fassifern had spoken as a resident of Sandgate, and he (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) was speaking as the representative of Sandgate in that Committee; and he wished to intimate to the department that they should have no peace, or worse than no peace, if they did not establish something like a common-sense system of working the traffic on that line. They only asked for a common-sense system; and if the department could only give them 50 per cent. of what was commonly accepted as common-sense management, the traffic receipts would swell to a very considerable extent. Speaking of the train that left Sandgate in the morning, he would suggest that two trains should be run through from Sandgate in the morning, and two in the evening. Of the former, one should arrive in Brisbane at a quarter to 9, and the second at about half-past 9. That was what his constituents required, and what he was there to demand for them; and, to use the words of the hon. member for Fassifern, he should feel humiliated if the Minister for Works did not bring about that reform at the beginning of the year. If the hon. gentleman failed to do that, he wished officially to intimate to the Government that there were citizens of Brisbane and Sandgate who were prepared to run the line themselves and pay interest. They would buy the Government out, and would take rolling-stock and a few engines, if they could get them at a fair valuation. He was certain that some such proposal would be put before the Government unless there was some evidence of the existence of sense in that department shown to that section of his constituents.

Mr. NORTON said that there was one matter in regard to that Albion train that he would refer to. That train was supposed to arrive at five minutes to 9; but it did not generally arrive till 9 or a few minutes later. He knew that was the case, because he usually came in by the Toowong train; and although that train always reached Brisbane up to time, it had to wait outside the station until the Sandgate train had been up to the platform and moved out again. Why could not one train go on one side of the platform and the other go to the other side? They frequently had to wait for five or six minutes for no other purpose than to let the Sandgate train run in to the platform. Some of the men who came in by that 9 o'clock train were clerks in different offices, who were supposed to be at work at 9 o'clock, and they ought to be considered.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said there was no doubt that the Sandgate people deserved some consideration. There was a very large traffic being developed there; but the people of Albion likewise deserved consideration. The only remedy was for the Government to run more trains; it was in their power to do so now that they had some additional engines, and he supposed they had rolling-stock as well. He could assure the hon. member for Fassifern that he was mistaken if he thought that the Racecourse train came in

empty. It did not; it was generally a well filled train; but the engine was very small and could not carry a heavy load. If there were more powerful engines put on to the Sandgate train, which would draw one or more extra carriages, there would be an end to that overcrowding that the hon. member spoke of. The only advantage that the Sandgate people would receive by passing the Albion would be a gain of about two or three minutes, and it was scarcely worth while for the Minister to get himself into hot water for the sake of three minutes. But the absurdity was carried further still. The train that left Brisbane at 10 o'clock actually refused to take anybody from the Albion, or take anybody from Brisbane to be let down at the Albion. He knew of one or two cases where a school teacher had to open his school at 10 o'clock, but because the teacher was obliged to go by the next train, the school was never opened until about twenty minutes past 10 o'clock; all through the absurd regulation of not taking people who were going to the Albion. They must go on to Sandgate, and it was absurd that they should not be allowed to get out at the Albion.

Mr. WHITE said he wished to refer back to that part of the discussion relating to the fitting up of brakes. The hon. member for Port Curtis, and also the hon. member for Maryborough (Mr. Annear), had been blowing the trumpet for Mr. Horniblow, and other hon. members had also been expressing their confidence that that officer would test those brakes with great ability and fairness. He did not know the gentleman; but he would ask those hon. members if they were aware that an inquiry had once been held between Mr. Horniblow and Mr. Evans about the fitting up of brakes, and that that inquiry threw discredit upon Mr. Horniblow? He was not aware whether any report was actually made about that inquiry. It took place some years ago; either in Brisbane or in Ipswich. Mr. Horniblow occupied a very important position, and therefore he thought hon. members ought to know more about that inquiry. There was another matter he would refer to. The draftsmen had been removed from Ipswich to Brisbane, thereby divorcing actually the drafting business from the workshops. There was a distance of about twenty-four miles to travel now to bring the draftsmen into communication with the workshops. It seemed rather an inconsistent piece of business, and he could not see why it had been brought about.

Mr. ANNEAR said the hon. member for Townsville was able to answer for himself; but so far as he was concerned he did not blow Mr. Horniblow's trumpet as the hon. member had said. He (Mr. Annear) said that when the vacuum brake was tested it would be one of Mr. Horniblow's duties to decide upon its effectiveness or otherwise. He might also inform the Committee that Brisbane was not the only place where machinery was imported direct from England. There was machinery imported into Rockhampton for railway purposes, and also into Maryborough, and it all had to be passed by that gentleman. He had not been blowing Mr. Horniblow's trumpet, but he would do so now. He thought Mr. Horniblow was a very competent man, and a man well suited for the position he occupied. He had known him many years, and he believed he had given entire satisfaction. He was aware, of course, that Mr. Horniblow was not altogether liked in certain quarters; he was supposed to have done certain things at a particular time, but he (Mr. Annear) did not believe it. As to the police inquiry, it was not his (Mr. Annear's) duty to investigate that. He believed the vacuum brake would be a great safety to the rolling-stock of the colony, and he was sure that Mr. Horniblow would give it a fair test.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not wish to blow Mr. Horniblow's trumpet, but he thought he was an efficient officer, and one who was very well suited for the position he occupied. The hon. member for Stanley seemed to have a serious grievance with regard to the draftsmen, who, he said, had been divorced from the workshops in Ipswich and brought down to Brisbane. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) would suggest to the hon. member that the way to get over that was for the workshops to follow them.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £1,925 be granted for the Chief Engineer's Department, Southern Division. There was an increase of £25 to one of the clerks.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he saw that the Deputy Chief Engineer had been wiped out. Was that any saving to the country; and did the duties that were performed by that officer require to be done now? Was the £800 salary a complete saving?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Engineer-in-Chief had been relieved of the duties of the maintenance of existing lines, and a second department had been established for that purpose. The office of deputy chief engineer was then abolished.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked where on the Estimates was the separate department to be found, and how much did it cost?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was in the next item—Maintenance of Existing Lines. The Chief Engineer was relieved of that duty, and it was handed over to Mr. Cross, the Engineer of Existing Lines.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that Mr. Cross was not a new officer. He was in the department before, and he had a salary of £800 then. What change had taken place? Mr. Cross was put down now for a salary of £800, and on last year's Estimates he was put down for the same amount.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: £600.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: He had £200 beside that.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said Mr. Cross had always had £800, and had drawn it as regularly as the Minister for Works drew his £1,000. What change, then, had been made? It seemed that Mr. Cross performed the same duties as he had before.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said Mr. Cross performed duties that were previously performed by the Chief Engineer; but it was considered advisable to divide the Maintenance Department from the Construction Department, and Mr. Cross was appointed Engineer of Existing Lines with an increase of £200 a year.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman did not seem to have studied his own Estimates, or else he would not have said that Mr. Cross had an increase of £200, because he had £800 before. The hon. gentleman told them that the reason why the office of deputy chief engineer was abolished was that a separate department was formed. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) understood from the hon. gentleman's explanation that not only did Mr. Cross perform the same duties as he did before, but he had added to them some of those of the Engineer-in-Chief. Were they to understand that Mr. Cross had separate responsibility altogether from the Engineer-in-Chief—that he had the sole responsibility of the maintenance of existing lines?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. Previous to the separation of the Construction and Maintenance Departments, Mr. Cross had £600 a year; but as the Engineer-in-Chief had enough to do to attend to the construction of lines, it was thought desirable to have a separate branch for the maintenance of existing lines; and it was placed under Mr. Cross, whose salary was increased to £800.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that he supposed they were to understand that the Resident Engineer, assistant engineers, chief clerks, a lot of other clerks, the Superintendent of Ways and Works, and the line inspectors were entirely responsible to Mr. Cross; and that the Engineer-in-Chief was free from the responsibility?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Free from the entire responsibility of the maintenance of existing lines?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he would like to know why a course should have been pursued that he had never heard of before—the Engineer-in-Chief being relieved of one of his chief responsibilities. It did not exist in the other colonies.

The PREMIER: Yes, it does, in New South Wales.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I say it does not.

The PREMIER: It does.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: What was the use of the hon. member saying that? He (Sir T. McIlwraith) was in the department in Victoria for years, and he knew what was done there. The hon. member was too much inclined to let things pass on mere assertion. The system did not exist in Victoria.

The PREMIER: I said it existed in New South Wales.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: If it does exist there it is not long since it was begun.

The PREMIER: More than twenty years.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he should like to know the reason why it was found necessary to appoint an Engineer of Existing Lines, and whether it was only in connection with the Southern and Western Railway that the change had taken place. Had an Engineer of Existing Lines been appointed for the Central, Northern, and Maryborough districts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was considered that the Chief Engineer had quite as much as he could look after in the lines under construction, and it was thought desirable to relieve him of the duties connected with the existing lines, so a separate department was formed for the purpose. In New South Wales all lines open for traffic were under the Engineer for Existing Lines, and he thought it was a very good arrangement. He did not know how it was in Victoria.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it was not so in Victoria or South Australia; he was acquainted with the departments in those colonies. His friend, the hon. member for Townsville, told him he thought the system was in force in New South Wales. He understood that Mr. Cross was perfectly independent of the Engineer-in-Chief. How was it determined when the responsibility changed? The Engineer-in-Chief, he supposed, finished a line completely, and handed it over to the Engineer for Existing Lines?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH : And Mr. Cross was considered by the Minister for Works competent to work a department of that kind?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS : Yes.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he thought the Minister would require some information about Mr. Cross before he was finished with him. If he would look into the way Mr. Cross had managed his previous duties, he would find that he had to be watched very carefully to see whether he performed the duties entrusted to him. He did not come out with a clear record at all from his previous works, and the Government should have inquired very carefully in the department before appointing him to such very heavy responsibilities. Next to that of the Traffic Manager, there was not a more important department than that, and the Government should have given a good deal more consideration to the matter before separating the departments in the way they had done. He thought the Chief Engineer should not have been relieved of his responsibilities; and that when they had made up their minds to relieve him, they might have made a better choice. Of course the principal reason why the Deputy Chief Engineer was made to disappear was that the Government wanted to get rid of the gentleman himself. He was not going to refer to that point now, but he would refer to a point raised the other night when he had not an opportunity of replying. The Premier took advantage of his position in replying to him (Sir T. McIlwraith) to make some statements with regard to the late Deputy Engineer-in-Chief, which were thoroughly unfounded on fact. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) had exposed what he considered to be a gross dereliction of duty on the part of the Government in an arrangement they made by which the country was virtually defrauded of a very large amount of money—at all events, a large amount of money was paid to a firm of Government contractors without a sufficient reason having been shown. He challenged the department to tell why, in the case of the contractors Annear and Company, they should have departed from the old-established custom; and the only answer he got throughout the debate was that a fresh engineer-in-chief was appointed under that contract, because Mr. Thorneloe Smith, who was the engineer, had brought about a lawsuit in every important contract with which he had been connected in the colony. That statement was made by the Premier himself, and it was thoroughly untrue. He thought it was a statement that ought to be called back by the Premier, as doing a great injustice to an engineer who, whether he was a popular man or not, had done great and acknowledged service to almost every Government in the colony. The hon. gentleman said a lawsuit had been connected with almost every work of which Mr. Smith had had charge, and he mentioned Peto and Brassey's, Mr. Williams—

The PREMIER : You are quoting someone else's speech.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he was mentioning the Premier's speech. The hon. gentleman said a lawsuit had followed every contract under Mr. Smith's charge. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) wanted to show that Mr. Smith from his peculiar abilities was brought forward to do very important work for the Government at a time when other engineers broke down and got the Government into difficulties. In the first place, he would take the contract of Peto and Brassey. There the Government got into great difficulties with the engineers. The questions

which were subsequently submitted to arbitration arose before Mr. Smith—who was acknowledged to be the best man in the country for the purpose—was sent for to complete the contract. They arose, not out of his administration, but out of the administration of previous engineers, who had got the Government into a mess. He got the Government out of the difficulty, and was promised great rewards by the then Macalister Government; and had it not been for political influence he would have been Engineer-in-Chief. Next there was Mr. Williams' contract from Toowoomba to Warwick. Mr. Smith did not commence that contract; but after it was pretty well on towards completion, and when the greater part of the cuttings and embankments were done, the Government got into difficulties through the laches of their engineer. They appealed to their best confidential man—Mr. Smith—and he was sent up to take the work of a man who had failed in his duty to the Government and was disgraced. Mr. Smith had to make the best of a bad job with which he was not connected. In that case they went to law. Peto and Brassey's contract, as he had said, went to arbitration, and Mr. Smith was highly complimented by the arbitrator, the late Mr. Thomas Higinbotham, the Chief Engineer of Victoria. The lawsuit went on almost every point in favour of Mr. Smith's contention. However, that was not material to the question. The real point was that Mr. Smith was blamed for having raised points which were contested in a court of law, while the fact was that they were raised entirely by engineers who preceded him, who were dismissed by the Government, and whose place he was sent to fill as the most valued and trusted officer the Government could find. The only case of his that went to law at all was Annear and Company's contract. The Premier the other night actually charged Mr. Thorneloe Smith with having made a bungle in the engineering of the Maryborough bridge, which brought the Government into trouble, and gave the contractors the right to a lawsuit. That was not true, because the bungle—if bungle it was—was completed before Mr. Smith went there at all. He had nothing whatever to do with the engineering of the Maryborough bridge, by which the cylinders were sunk so far into the rock. It was done by his predecessor, or the Engineer-in-Chief, and it was done before Mr. Smith saw the bridge. Very well, he got that job with the contractor exactly in the same way, because he was a thoroughly good officer and it required a man who had the courage to say "No," and not one of those suave individuals who would league themselves with anyone in order to take advantage of the Government. The Government called upon Mr. Smith again long after the first disputes that arose had been brought forward, and the only point in which Mr. Smith was concerned was that of the ballast. All the other points in which claims were made occurred before Mr. Smith took charge of the contract at all, and with which he had no more to do than the Chairman of Committees. Those were the only three cases in which Mr. Smith had been connected with a case that had been referred to arbitration or law, and he was in such a position that he ought to have the thanks of the House for getting the Government out of difficulties into which they had been dragged by their Chief Engineer. Yet Mr. Smith's action was said to have been the cause of Annear's case being referred to arbitration. That it was referred to arbitration was due altogether to the action of other Government officers, as was plainly and clearly proved by him the other night. The real reason, however, of that was that Annear and

Company happened to be friendly to the present Government, and they actually went out of their way to take a course that they had never pursued before—an illegal course, he maintained. Illegal, as far as his opinion went, but at all events if it was legal why were other Government contractors not to have the same privilege of appealing to arbitration? Why should that privilege be confined exclusively to Annear and Company? Was the disagreeability of the temper of a Government engineer a sufficient reason why the Government should appoint another Engineer-in-Chief to supply his place? Because, if it was, Government contractors would have a fine time for the future, and would make themselves as disagreeable to the Engineer-in-Chief or district engineer as they possibly could. He had no doubt they would get plenty of contractors who would make themselves objectionable, and fall out with the engineer, if they could see the same prospect of having their claims settled in the way Annear and Company were dealt with. It was a right that had been granted to certain contractors for which there was not the slightest justification; but if there was a justification—if it was just at all, ought not the same terms to be allowed to other contractors in settling their claims against the Government?

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman was not very accurate that evening. He said he never heard of an engineer for existing lines in Australia. Well, perhaps he had not, but because he had not it did not follow that there were no such officers. He found that in Victoria the name of the Engineer of Existing Lines was W. H. Green, and he got a salary of £1,200 a year. In New South Wales the name of the Engineer of Existing Lines was Cowbery, and he got £1,000 a year. He did not know whether there was one in New Zealand or not, and he did not know how long those he had named had held their offices; but the Engineer for Existing Lines had existed in New South Wales as long as he could remember. The hon. member had also quoted from a speech he (the Premier) had delivered, but his memory must be defective again. It was somebody else's speech.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: No; it was your own.

The PREMIER said the hon. member was wrong again. He knew that the hon. member entertained a high regard for Mr. Thorneloe Smith, but he (the Premier) did not entertain so high an opinion of him as the hon. member.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Who cares whether you do or not?

The PREMIER said that probably quite as many people would agree with his judgment of Mr. Smith as the hon. member's; and possibly, his (the Premier's) opinion was of more importance at the present time. The hon. gentleman said he accused Mr. Smith of getting the Government into trouble. Well, he would not endeavour to enumerate all the cases that had come under his notice where Mr. Smith with his unfortunate temper had involved the Government in difficulties. Some of them were more prominent than others, but the cases in which he involved the Government in a great deal of trouble and annoyance were very numerous indeed. He remembered the case of Mr. Gilliver, a contractor for certain work at Ipswich, in which the contractors brought an action against the Government, and the hon. gentleman gave evidence on behalf of the Government, while he (the Premier) was their counsel. He had no hesitation in saying that the whole of the trouble was caused by Mr. Smith and his unfortunate

temper. It had become notorious; but what had that got to do with the case of Annear and Company? The hon. gentleman had misstated the grounds on which the Government appointed an independent Engineer-in-Chief; but he did not think it necessary to discuss the matter again. It was not on account of Mr. Smith's temper that the Government saw the necessity of appointing an independent Engineer-in-Chief to decide the case; but because it had struck them that it would be grossly unfair to appoint a man to decide a case in dispute in which he himself was an interested party. Was it not contrary to natural justice to appoint Mr. Smith to decide in that case? He thought so, and, without in any way violating the contract, an independent man had been appointed. He only expressed the hope that no Government would ever be so lost to a sense of natural justice as to let an interested person decide a contested point; and that, if they did, the first opportunity would be taken of afterwards remedying the mistake.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman seemed to forget that it was not at that stage that the contrariety to natural justice arose. The contract itself was the injustice—the hon. gentleman's own contract; the contract containing the clause of which he acknowledged himself to be the immaculate author. The hon. gentleman had boasted of that over and over again, and the very clause which he boasted of as being so perfect that no contractor could get the better of it was itself contrary to natural justice. It very likely was contrary to natural justice, but the hon. gentleman was responsible for that, and he now declined to allow other contractors, similarly situated to Annear and Company, to have an appeal to arbitration. The hon. gentleman said it was not an appeal to arbitration, but he (Sir T. McIlwraith) said it was, and if he gave the same justice to other contractors they would not quarrel as to whether it was an appeal to arbitration or not. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) had referred to three cases with which Mr. Smith was connected, and the Premier had referred to another, and one in which he himself gave evidence. But he remembered more of the case than the hon. gentleman appeared to do. He remembered that after he had given his evidence and retired from the witness-box the hon. gentleman said when the verdict was brought in that it was a thoroughly Ipswich verdict, and completely against the evidence. The Premier seemed to understand the thing thoroughly, and the remark he made was that he did not see how anyone could expect anything else. He would like to know now from the Premier whether Mr. Smith was responsible for that case. He also wanted to know another thing: Was Mr. Smith allowed the usual privilege of Civil servants retiring from the Public Service, of a month's salary for every year that he was connected with the Government Service? He had been a most faithful servant of the Government, and in fact he did not know that for the last twenty-one years the Government had had a more faithful servant. Further, it was Mr. Smith's strong desire to serve the interests of the colony by which he was paid that had got him into the only difficulty that had happened to him. No man in his position had ever retired from the Government Service without being allowed the privilege of a month's pay for every year's service. Had he been allowed that?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is it the intention of the Government to allow him that privilege?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Then it simply amounted to this: that one of the oldest officers in the Government Service had been dismissed without the slightest consideration. Well, they had not heard the last of Mr. Smith, who had been dismissed for no other reason than that he happened to be a friend of a prominent member of a former Administration. There was no need to disguise the fact that Mr. Smith was dismissed because he was a personal friend of his (Sir T. McIlwraith's) own. He had known Mr. Smith and honoured him for the last thirty years, and the Premier thought that in hitting Mr. Smith he struck him. The hon. gentleman would very likely find the blow recoil upon his own head.

The PREMIER said the hon. gentleman was mistaken if he thought the Government were actuated by the principle—with which, no doubt, he was very familiar—of striking at a member of the Civil Service to hit a political opponent. They had seen a good deal of that in times past, but it had not been seen, nor would it be seen, so long as the party at present on those benches was in power. The hon. member asked, why was Amear and Company's the only case in which an independent Chief Engineer was appointed outside the service? The reason was, because it was the only case ever heard of in this colony in which the Government made the man who got up the dispute and had the quarrel, the judge to determine the dispute in question.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Premier was as much mistaken as he so readily accused other people of being. Whenever a contractor, under the 40th clause, had a dispute with the Chief Engineer the same thing occurred. It must be with the Chief Engineer that the contractor had the dispute, and by the clause which the hon. member boasted of having drafted he was made a judge in the case in which he was one of the principals. Mr. Smith was only acting as Chief Engineer during the absence of Mr. Stanley, and had the Government wished to refer the dispute to Mr. Stanley's arbitration they could easily have done so after his return. There was no reason for appointing Mr. Wade, except, as the hon. gentleman had said, it was against natural justice—and the clause was most decidedly against natural justice. Nearly five months ago the hon. gentleman acknowledged to him across the table that the 40th clause was inequitable, but he had not made the slightest attempt, so far as hon. members knew, to alter it. Several contracts had been let since, and every one of them under that condition; and such being the case, it was inevitable that the Chief Engineer must occupy the position of principal and judge at the same time. As to Mr. Smith, he was a first-class engineer, and a man upon whom the Government could always thoroughly rely. No doubt that gentleman had a most unfortunate temper, but like the other officer whose case had been discussed earlier in the evening, he was too zealous for the Government. It was, however, unfair to dismiss him without the usual allowance given to Civil servants in his position—namely, a month's salary for every year he had been in the service. If the discussion on Mr. Smith was over, he intended to enter upon another topic, which would obliterate Mr. Smith entirely.

Mr. BEATTIE said that, before they went into other matters, he had a question to put to the hon. member for Townsville in reference to Mr. Smith and his ungovernable temper. When Mr. Smith returned from Maryborough and took charge in Brisbane, he also, of course, took charge of the Sandgate line. It was rumoured

that Mr. Smith at once began to torment the contractor for that line, Mr. Bashford. Mr. Bashford, it was said, complained about it to the hon. Minister for Works—the hon. member for Townsville—and Mr. Smith was requested not to torment Mr. Bashford so much. He would give the hon. member his authority for the statement outside the Chamber. Mr. Smith then ceased to torment Mr. Bashford, and on the completion of the contract, Mr. Bashford, having a trump-card in his hand, made a claim upon the Government for £16,000 or £17,000 for extra work. There was no opportunity to check the claim, and Mr. Smith had to recommend the payment of the amount. The person who told him must have known something about the matter, and if it was true, the country had suffered in that case from the bad temper of Mr. Smith. Did Mr. Bashford receive that amount for extra labour without the constructing engineer's certificate? He hoped the ex-Minister for Works would be able to answer the question, because the sooner a rumour of that kind was denied, if incorrect, the better for all concerned.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had no recollection of Mr. Bashford complaining to him about Mr. Smith. If he did, he had not the slightest doubt that he gave Mr. Smith the same instructions that he gave to Mr. Stanley and Mr. Ballard—namely, that if they expected contractors to make cheap and good railways they must not hamper them, but place every facility in their way, at the same time protecting them from the caprice, ill-will, and ignorance of resident engineers. He remembered Mr. Bashford complaining of the then District Engineer, Mr. Brown, and good reason he had to complain of him; but he was coming to that presently. The Minister for Works, in bringing up the estimate, and giving reasons for the severance of the existing lines of railway from the construction engineers, said it was considered that the construction engineers had enough to do in looking after construction.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is my opinion.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that if the hon. gentleman was better informed he would not have expressed such an opinion. He might tell him that the construction engineers in Queensland had not half as much to do as the construction engineers in the other colonies. In this colony they had actually two engineering staffs—two construction engineers—one of which was the result of what was an accident in the history of the colony. Hon. members were aware how Mr. Ballard was first appointed, and that when he had fulfilled his agreement with the Government he was allowed to rank as Engineer-in-Chief, thereby establishing two different systems—two different engineers with two different staffs. Now let them compare the work done in the colony by those two staffs, and the work done in the other colonies; and he wanted the Minister for Works to give the matter his serious attention. The Chief Engineer of the southern part of the colony was put down in the Estimates for £1,925. That was the vote asked for under the head of Chief Engineer's Department; but if hon. members turned to page 89 they would find out what the Chief Engineer and staff cost the country. £7,590 was there asked for the Chief Engineer's staff, which, added to £1,925, made £9,515 which the Southern and Western Railway cost them. Now what was the amount of work that he had to do? What was the amount of mileage of railway under his charge? 600 miles, certainly not much more; and he had constructed not much more than half of that. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) would ask the Committee presently

to consider the mode in which some of them had been constructed. Let them see what the Chief Engineer in New South Wales had got. He must say the Premier was right in his contention about New South Wales. The office of Engineer-in-Chief was separate there from the charge of existing lines. Mr. Whitton was Engineer-in-Chief, and Mr. Cowdery was Officer in Charge of Existing Lines. But the system did not work very well. It did not do to have two heads. It was far better to have one head. And the double-headed plan had been found out there not to be a good plan. In Victoria, although there was an officer of existing lines, it was simply a title, for he was under the control of the other officer. In South Australia, he believed, it was the same, because he could find no officer of existing lines or maintenance in the South Australian Estimates. Let them come now to what Mr. Whitton and his staff cost in New South Wales. The amount asked for by the Railway Department there this year amounted exactly to £7,275—that was putting Mr. Whitton on the same equality as Mr. Stanley here—namely, wiping out allowances and travelling expenses; that gave £7,275 against £9,515. And what was the work done by the two gentlemen? He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) thought he need hardly tell anybody in that Committee that the amount of work done in New South Wales, and the amount of money expended in railway construction, was at least twice the amount of work done in the southern and western half of Queensland, and twice the amount of money spent on railway construction. And yet the Chief Engineer and his staff in the southern part of Queensland cost £2,300 more than the Chief Engineer and his staff in New South Wales. In addition to that expenditure there was £7,212 for the Northern staff in Queensland to be added, making altogether £16,727 spent on the two engineers and two staffs through a system which, he said, had arisen by mere accident. The Southern engineer got more than the Chief Engineer in New South Wales, and their Northern engineer and his staff got a little more also; and both together got more than double as much as the engineer in New South Wales. In South Australia, where the construction was about the same as in Queensland both in money and in number of miles of railway, the total expense of the engineer's staff was £7,797. He thought it was time that they began to make some alteration in their system. It was time, he thought, that they pulled some of the engineers up, and put the whole of the staffs of the colony under one chief. It was no use for anyone to say that one man could not do the work; because Mr. Whitton in New South Wales did more, and Mr. Muir in South Australia did an equal amount of work, and for far less money. Now, let them see if the work was so much better done in Queensland that they could afford to pay so much more money for having it done. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley had referred to the Sandgate Railway. He would take the Sandgate Railway as a test, and he would take another railway that bore on the 40th clause of the hon. the Premier. What had been the result? When the estimate was brought in by himself for the Sandgate Railway it amounted to £32,000, but it was found that the line would cost £60,000. That was the engineer's estimate. And £14,000 was added to the £52,000 in the following year—£6,000 of which was for land resumptions and so forth. £60,000 was to be the cost of the railway according to the engineer's estimate. The contract was taken for £38,000 by Mr. Bashford. It was perfectly true, as was said by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, that Mr. Bashford got far more

than he bargained for, but it was not on account of Mr. Smith's bad temper as the hon. member alleged. It was on account of the badly designed line, and an incompetent officer being placed in charge of it. Now, after the £60,000 had been voted by the Committee—that was £52,000 and £14,000, including £6,000 for land resumptions—in the following year, it might be in the recollection of hon. members he had to bring in an estimate for £20,000 to complete the railway which was bargained for for £38,000, and which the engineer had assured him, and he assured the Committee, could be done for £60,000. That was £80,000 in all asked for by the Chief Engineer. But that was not all. They now found that in the Loan Estimates there was an additional sum of £25,000 asked for to complete the Sandgate Railway, making £105,000 in all to make it. Now that railway was to have been made as a second-class line for £4,000 per mile, but as a first-class line for £6,000, and yet it was actually going to cost £8,600 per mile.

The PREMIER: False economy.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman said that it was on account of false economy. It was not. There was no false economy about it. The engineer was told to make a cheap railway, but he was not to be restricted in any particular way, because that was a matter which he left to the engineer himself. A Minister, even if he were an engineer, would not assume the position of dictating to an engineer. The responsibility rested with the head officer of the Government. It was in consequence of a badly designed line, and also of the officer in charge. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) was frequently on the Sandgate line, and saw what was being done there. He had called Mr. Stanley's attention to it and to the want of knowledge of the officer in charge of the line, but his representations were not attended to. Mr. Stanley left the colony on leave of absence, and he told Mr. Smith the same thing. He told Mr. Smith to find out for himself, telling him what he had told Mr. Stanley. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) said, "Do not take my word; find it out for yourself;" and in four weeks Mr. Smith came to him and said he was correct, and he got rid of the gentleman in charge of the line. That was the reason why Mr. Bashford had so many extras; because of the officer in charge of the work, who might be a very good officer for the specialty he was engaged for—steel bridge making; but he doubted even that. The steel bridge he had erected over Breakfast Creek had not looked very safe for some time; and he had recently seen it tied up with chains; so that even in that particular speciality the officer referred to did not appear to be up to the mark. As he had said, Mr. Bashford got, instead of £38,000, £55,000 at the end of his contract. One would naturally have supposed that £55,000 would have finished the line, because it was supposed to be finished and completed before it was opened for traffic, with the exception of a few small works that were included in the contract; but instead of £55,000 it would cost nearly two £55,000's—£8,600 per mile. The hon. the Premier said it was through false economy. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) knew that there were some members of the House who did not believe in cheap railways; who did not believe that cheap railways could be made thoroughly; but, as far as documentary estimates could prove it, he would prove before he sat down that cheap railways could be made—much cheaper than they were making them in the colony. Hon. members were aware that the Victorian Government this year brought in a Railway Bill providing for the construction of a great number of railways

—for, in fact, a very large extension of their present railway system—railways which were to be built all over the length and breadth of that colony. There was no particular place selected where cheap railways could be made—a place something like the floor of that Chamber, for instance, where any man ought to be able to make a cheap railway—but the lines were selected all over Victoria. He had before him a list of Victorian lines with the cost of each line and its length, and he found there were about thirty lines, north, west, east, and south, and that the total cost per mile of the 950 miles which those lines covered—that was outside the suburban lines—was £3,960 per mile.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: And wider gauge.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes, the gauge was wider. There was no comparison between the work there and here. He knew, as he had said, that there were members in that House who did not believe in cheap railways; and the hon. the Minister for Works had twice within the last three or four days referred to the Brisbane Valley line, and spoken of what he called his (Hon. J. M. Macrossan's) extraordinary curves. He would tell the hon. gentleman something about that line before he sat down. There were members of that House who talked as if such a thing as cheap railways should not be made; as if they were to go on in the old groove that they had been walking in for years, and make the same kind of railways they had been making; and that if they attempted to make cheap railways the engineers would make a bungle of it. Yet, as he had shown, there were 900 and odd miles of railway proposed to be constructed in Victoria at £3,960 per mile—under £4,000 per mile—and yet their cheap Sandgate line was going to cost £8,600 per mile! Hon. members would say that that was only an estimate. Certainly it was only an estimate, but he thought the Victorians would take very good care that their estimates were not exceeded by from 40 to 50 per cent. That was only an estimate; but he would give hon. gentlemen something more than an estimate. He would give them the cost of railways already constructed in Victoria and actually carrying traffic. He held in his hand a list of the railways in that colony open for traffic up to the end of last year, and he should read to hon. members the names of the railways, the number of miles, and the average cost of construction of each line—taking those only which had cost under £4,000 per mile; and he would point out that the figures applied to railways all over Victoria, so that there was no particular spot selected for the making of cheap railways—they were made in mountainous country and level country all over the colony. Of course there were variations in price; but, as he had stated, he would only read those which had cost under £4,000 per mile. The first was from St. Arnaud to Donald, a mining line, the length of which was 25½ miles, and the average cost £3,841 per mile. Then there was a small line to the Ballarat racecourse, that he would not mention. The next was Inglewood to Charlton, a line that he knew very well, and one which certainly did not present any easier country, so far as engineering was concerned, than the Sandgate Railway did. That was 42½ miles in length, and cost £3,465 per mile. Then Charlton to Wycheproof, 16½ miles, £3,912 per mile; Korong Vale to Boort, 18 miles, £3,297 per mile. Those were in the northern system. He would now take the western system. Colac to Camperdown, 28 miles, £3,704 per mile; Horsham to Dimboola, 21½ miles, £3,121 per mile; Ballarat to Scarsdale, 13½ miles, £3,799 per mile. Then in the north-eastern system, Shepparton to Numurkah,

20½ miles, £3,108 per mile—£108 per mile more than he used to say in that House that railways could be made for in this colony; Toolanda to Tatura, 7 miles, £3,822 per mile; Benalla to St. James, 20½ miles, £2,961 per mile—under £3,000 per mile; Everton to Myrtleford, 16½ miles, £3,397 per mile; and in the eastern system he would take one—Taralgon to Heyfield, 22½ miles, £3,862 per mile. Those railways were completed and open for traffic, so that it was beyond a matter of estimate; and every one of them was on the 5 feet 3 inch gauge.

THE PREMIER: What does that include?

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Everything for the making of the railway, so far as he could tell from the table from which he had quoted. There was nothing to show that it did not include everything. As he had said, all those lines were on the 5 feet 3 inch gauge, and every hon. member who knew anything at all about railways must be aware of the vast difference there was between the cost of a line constructed on the 5 feet 3 inch gauge and one built on the 3 feet 6 inch gauge. The rolling-stock must be so much heavier from its size that the line must be so much stronger to bear the traffic. Besides that, there was an additional quantity of ballast required, additional width of banks and cuttings, additional width of bridges, additional length of sleepers—in fact, everything was against the making of cheap lines on the 5 feet 3 inch gauge in a country like Victoria; and yet it appeared that they could not make them here at the same rate on the 3 feet 6 inch gauge with everything in their favour. He had no record with regard to the railways of New South Wales; but he could give his experience of railways there, which, as far as he was concerned, were far better than any record. He knew a new line that was being made in that colony thirty-two miles in length. On the average, there were 10,000 cubic yards per mile of excavation on that line. They had no such average in Queensland. There were over 2,000 yards of ballast per mile. Of course, it was a 4 feet 8½ inch gauge. The sleepers were all squared and were longer, heavier, and more costly than the sleepers in Queensland. He could not tell the number of culverts there were on the line, but there were a great many brick culverts from 3 feet up to 20 feet. There were a considerable number of timber crossings. Everything was in proportion to that, and the contractor's price for that line was a fraction over £5,000 per mile. Add station buildings and the cost of rails to that, and it would not bring it up to £6,000 per mile; and it should be remembered that they did not pretend to make cheap railways there. Yet here, hon. members pretended to make cheap railways which cost £8,600 per mile. The Premier had contended in that House that railways, sufficient for branch lines and for ordinary railway purposes, could be made for £2,000 a mile.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear! I believe so still.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had never believed that, but it was an argument in favour of what he had always been contending for, that they should make cheap lines. They could do it if they had the men to make them, and if they had not the men to make them they should get them. He was bringing those things forward to prove that they were not getting the value of their money. They should have one engineer; he did not care who he was, but the Government should be satisfied that he was competent to do the work of the colony, and competent to make lines at a fair price. Now, to go to the Brisbane Valley line. The Brisbane Valley line was between nineteen

and twenty miles in length where it was open to for loading. When the engineer's estimate was brought before him for that line, and when the plan was laid before him, the estimate was much higher than what he thought the estimate for ordinary cheap lines in the colony should be. It was something over £4,000 a mile. He saw on the plan put before him a great many curves, and he asked the Engineer-in-Chief at the time why there were so many? He said it was on account of the difficulties in the country, and that owing to the hills coming down to the banks of the river a number of curves were necessary to get round those different points. Unfortunately that was one of the lines which he never went over to inspect himself. If he had gone over it he might have been able to show the engineer that many of those curves would not be necessary. The engineer might have found that out had he gone over it himself, but he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) believed he had never gone over it, or visited it at all, but left the whole of the work to his subordinates. The contract for that line was let for £42,000.

The PREMIER: How many miles?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Between nineteen and twenty miles. The contract was let at £42,000. He did not intend to go into all the details of the carrying out of that contract, although they did not reflect any credit on the Engineer-in-Chief, or on his department. He had in his hand a report obtained from a civil engineer of experience who happened to be in the colony lately, and who was employed by the contractors to visit the line and report upon what he saw, with the documentary evidence laid before him. The report was too long to read to the Committee; but when he got it he could scarcely credit it. He had taken the opportunity of visiting the Brisbane Valley line himself for the first time that day week. He had followed the line through from end to end, and he would tell hon. members what he found. He found that the line as it was now—he might tell hon. members of the Committee that the line was taken out of the hands of the contractors within three weeks after the line was opened for traffic. It was taken out of their hands because it was in bad order—the maintenance was taken out of their hands first, and the line then taken out of their hands altogether. It was in bad order, there was no question about that; and it was not in good order now, though he believed it was in better order than when it was taken over. What did he find? He found that the line—as that engineer to whom he had referred stated in his report—was not the line the contractors agreed to construct. It was not the same line. The engineer whose opinion he had given was a man of some eminence in his profession, and was also a man of experience. He had been employed by the contractor not to make a biased report, but to report upon what he saw. He compared the line with the documentary evidence submitted to him—the plan of the line and the correspondence that had passed between the contractors and the Engineer's Department. In the first place the banks, according to contract, were to be 13 feet, and it could be proved by evidence from the Railway Department that the contractors were actually prevented from making them more than 13 feet, as if it was not to the advantage of the Government to make them as broad as possible. The curves, to which the Minister for Works had referred so often, had to be put in as they were on the plan. A great many of them were four-chain curves—not parabolic curves, such as Mr. Ballard put in in the North, when he put in four-chain curves—they were circular curves,

In the early part of the contract some difficulty arose about getting ballast, and Mr. Smith was in charge during the absence of the present Chief Engineer. A certain kind of ballast which was produced by the contractor was rejected by Mr. Smith, and a certain other kind of ballast, very similar to the first but a little better in quality, was accepted by Mr. Smith upon a reduction of 15 per cent. upon the contract price. Mr. Smith made a mistake in accepting that ballast at all, and he was quite certain the Engineer-in-Chief made a mistake in accepting any of it—it was evidently an error of judgment. He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) went to the quarry where that ballast came from, and he would never have accepted it. It was simply indurated clay, which would undoubtedly go when the first wet weather came on. The fact was, the rain would dissolve that ballast. Mr. Stanley took the ballast which Mr. Smith had rejected at a reduction of 15 per cent. upon the contract price, and he took the ballast which Mr. Smith had accepted at a reduction of 15 per cent. at a reduction of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. upon the contract price. There was another kind of ballast—sandstone-ballast—certainly not good ballast, but far better than the ballast which was accepted, as it would stand the weather well—and that ballast was entirely rejected. He did not know whether it was rejected by Mr. Stanley or by his subordinate, but it was entirely rejected. There were 12,000 or 13,000 yards of the ballast of which he spoke put into that line, and a quantity of ballast from Bundamba, and some sandstone ballast taken from higher up the line. Next he came to the alteration of the line. When the line was open for traffic it was found, immediately the traffic began to run around those four-chain curves, that the wretched rolling-stock would not go round the curves. The stock either went off the road, or made a road to suit itself. That was the result, and the only result that could be expected from their wretched rolling-stock. Every time a train went over one of the curves the curve was dragged over, in some cases, as much as eight or ten inches. Several times the train went off the line alongside. He did not know how many times that occurred, but he was positively certain of four times. The ballast which had been accepted, and for which the contractor was, therefore, not any longer responsible, became mud, and, between the inferior ballast and those curves, the line could not be kept in running order. The contractors had men employed there doing their best, and as fast as every train went over those curves the men set to work to put the line into its place again. It was reported to the Chief Engineer's Department that the line was bad and unsafe for traffic, and it was undoubtedly bad, but that was the fault of the engineer and the bad ballast. The line was taken out of the hands of the contractors, and the Government actually cut out all those curves, and flattened them out to six-chain and seven-chain curves, and many of them were reverse curves, which made the matter even worse. He had no hesitation in saying that a very small additional expenditure on the line would have enabled the curves on the upper part of the line to have been left out, with the exception of two curves of very large radius. In addition to cutting out the curves, the Government took out the bad ballast from under the ends of the sleepers and put in other ballast, and every bank almost without exception was made fifteen feet wide, and all that was done by the Railway Department under the pretence of maintaining the line at the expense of the contractors. Now, that gentleman was called upon to decide on that particular case under the 40th clause of the conditions,

He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) asked the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government whether it was natural justice to put that officer in the position of judge? He (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) thought it was not. There were many other matters in connection with that line which were really a disgrace to the Engineer's Department; and which had never been brought under the notice of the Minister for Works; but he did not wish to weary the Committee. He knew that the Minister had been on the line once, but thought that was all, and the Commissioner had also been over the line once. The disgraceful correspondence that had taken place in connection with the line, if laid before the hon. the Premier, would, he was quite certain, cause that hon. gentleman to make an inquiry into the conduct of the whole Railway Department, and if he did he would find that it was in a disorganised and demoralised state. Some hon. members had spoken about cliques that afternoon, and he could tell the Committee that there were cliques of incapable men in that department who ought to be cleared out. But he would give another instance of their blundering on the Brisbane Valley line, near the particular place where all those curves were cut out or flattened. The original drawings showed a bridge with five 20-foot openings. Subsequently another was added, making six openings. Four of those openings had been filled in by the Government, and the slopes of the banks actually overlapped each other at the two centre openings. Whether there was ever any use for such a bridge he did not pretend to say; but if there was it should have been left, and the openings should not have been filled in. That was another instance of the engineer's blundering. And all those things were laid on the contractors; they had to bear the brunt of it, and they must submit to it. According to the 40th clause of the conditions, they could not go to law—they could not appeal to arbitration. The Chief Engineer was the final judge of the whole case, and at the same time he himself was responsible for all the blundering. There were other lines that he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) knew of which were equally bad, and in connection with which the conduct of the Chief Engineer had been worse than in that particular case, but he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) had not visited them as he had done the Brisbane Valley Railway. What did all that prove? It proved that the Government could not in natural justice—to use a phrase of the hon. the Premier—refuse any demand made upon them. And if they believed that report which he held in his hand, and which he had verified; and if they believed the statements which he had made about the Sandgate line which were in evidence; and if they asked Mr. Thorneloe Smith for his opinion as to the ability of the gentlemen placed in charge of the construction of the Sandgate line, they must admit that an inquiry should be made into the working of the Railway Department in Brisbane. If a thorough investigation were made they would find that it wanted complete reorganisation. It was an Augean stable. From the day the Brisbane Valley contract was entered into up to within two months of the line being taken over by the Government, fresh orders were being issued by the Railway Department, fresh works and alterations were being made as if there had been no line designed at first, as if the engineer were making the line as he went along. He would like to hear what the Premier had to say on the subject. He thought the hon. gentleman must think a little more seriously upon that now than he did when he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) began his speech, and when the hon. gentleman said the extra cost of the Sandgate

line was the result of false economy. It was not false economy. It was the result of the action of the engineer, who was restricted to a second-class line at a cost of £4,000 per mile, but who went in for a first-class line at £6,000 per mile, which had now been increased to £8,000. The contractor had a gentleman over him who allowed him extras, as the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had stated, to the amount of about £17,000, nearly half the original contract. The sketch plan he held in his hand was a sketch of the curves on the Brisbane Valley line which had been cut out, and showed the bridge of which he spoke where the openings had been filled in. It was almost in the centre of those curves. He had often heard it asked why engineers were so fond of making curves, and he thought the answer given would apply in that case—“Because curves are so much more beautiful than straight lines.” He had been told that on many of their lines the first thing the Government ought to do when the railways were taken over from the contractors was to cut out the beautiful curves made by the Chief Engineer. At any rate, he thought their practical experience showed them that the kind of curves which ought to be put in were the parabolic curves adopted by Mr. Ballard on the Northern line.

The PREMIER said he had listened with great interest to the hon. member for Townsville, who had given the Committee a great deal of information, nearly all of which was news to him. During the course of the hon. member's speech he interjected in reference to the low cost of the construction of the Sandgate line that it was false economy, and he thought so still. When a line was built to carry certain traffic on conditions which would not allow it to carry that traffic, it must be altered, and the alterations sometimes cost more than the original line; and he believed a great part of the extra cost of the Sandgate line was from that cause. The hon. gentleman asked why so many curves should be put into lines of railway. He fancied *a priori* the reason was that the engineer was bound to keep down to a certain amount per mile, without so much regard to the length of the line. In such a case there was a great objection to cuttings, and a preference for keeping to the surface as much as possible. A surface line of twenty miles with a great many curves would cost very little per mile; and a line between the same places, ten or twelve miles long, though costing more per mile, might cost less for the total line, and infinitely less for working expenses and maintenance. He believed that railways could be built much cheaper in the colony; but he did not know whose fault it was that they were so costly. During the short time he was Minister for Works, he tried what he could do in that direction, but he had not had time to effect his object. The hon. member for Townsville also tried to do a great deal in that way, but he had not been very successful, seeing that a great many errors at present complained of came into existence under his administration. The hon. gentleman had told the Committee some startling things in connection with the Brisbane Valley line, and he (the Premier) should like to see the line, and have an inquiry made into the matter. No doubt the Minister for Works would see that a full inquiry was made. He could not at present express a pronounced opinion, because he had heard only one side, but when the Government were in possession of all the facts they would not hesitate to do what was right in connection with the matter.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Mulgrave had accused the Govern-

ment of getting rid of Mr. Smith because he was a friend of his, and that was the most miserable reason he had ever heard from anyone. He had no hostile feeling to the hon. member himself. Mr. Smith's services were dispensed with because they were not required. The hon. member for Townsville had found fault with the expense of the department; but, now they came to an instance of economy, fault was found again. There was a chief engineer, a deputy engineer, and a resident engineer; and he had come to the conclusion that the services of the deputy engineer were not required, and that the office ought to be abolished. During the whole of the time Mr. Smith had been in the service of the Government he had never availed himself of the Civil Service Act by contributing to the superannuation fund; and why should the Government make provision for him now? There was not a single instance of an officer who had not contributed to that fund receiving a retiring allowance from the Government; and why should Mr. Smith? If that officer's services had been dispensed with years ago it would have been much better for the colony. With reference to the Maryborough and Gympie line, no Government could possibly have refrained from taking the action taken by the present Government. Mr. Smith was Resident Engineer; and by the time the line was completed he was Chief Engineer, the sole judge of the work condemned by himself. He was satisfied that if any similar case were pointed out he should be prepared to do the very same thing. He did not know anything about the Brisbane Valley Railway. It appeared to be full of curves, but he understood that it was built exactly as the hon. member for Townsville wished, that gentleman being Minister for Works at the time. The hon. gentleman instructed the Chief Engineer to build a railway for a certain sum, and that officer had to gerrymander about to do so. Not only that, but the curves were three-chain curves, and when the rolling-stock came round them the wheels locked in the rails, and they were thrown off the line in many instances. He always understood the hon. member for Townsville to be the father of that line. Then there was the Harrisville line, in the construction of which the hon. gentleman tied the Chief Engineer down to a certain price. He (the Minister for Works) had never believed in cheap railways, but had always looked upon them as the most costly in the end. They could not carry a load, and the consequence was that freights had to be raised. The Premier was Minister for Works once, and he was going to construct cheap railways; he believed the hon. member was going to try his hand at Townsville. The northern line crossed a range; and he (the Minister for Works) had a team of bullocks that would take a bigger load up that range than a locomotive. The hon. member for Townsville seemed to be so remarkably well acquainted with the railway that he thought the hon. gentleman must have been a partner in its construction. He did not say the hon. gentleman had been so; but it was a rumour, and from the amount of knowledge that gentleman showed of the harassing and annoyance the contractors received, he thought there might be some truth in the rumour. Of course if the hon. gentleman said "No" he would have to accept his denial.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. member for Townsville had not said anything at all. The Minister for Works said he had heard a rumour; but probably the hon. gentleman picked it up from some person, and took the opportunity of bringing it out in that Committee. He really could not have believed such a thing had he not

heard it, and possibly the hon. gentleman did not know how utterly contemptible such an assertion was. He could tell the hon. gentleman another thing about cheap railway lines. He had gone up the Fassifern line with a much larger load than any team of bullocks could have taken up that range; but in constructing the line upon that system they had got it open for traffic eighteen months before they otherwise would. If they had an engineer like Mr. Ballard to build railways, they would have found that those curves referred to would not have had to have been altered, and no carriages would have jumped off the line, and he would have seen that the work was properly done. Mr. Ballard had proved that it was possible to make good cheap lines. No other man could have made as cheap a line over that frightful country between the Westwood and the Dawson as he did. But it could not have been done if they had not employed a proper man to do it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that if the hon. gentleman was not satisfied with the correctness of the return which was issued by the Victorian Government he should go down for a few weeks and satisfy himself. The lines there were on the 5 feet 3 inch gauge, while those in Queensland were only 3 feet 6 inches; so that a line costing £4,000 there in similar country should be made here for £3,000. He had tried to make cheap railways, and had tried to economise on behalf of the colony, but he found, unfortunately, that he had not men to deal with who could do it; but there were men who could do it if the Government chose to employ them. There were hon. members in that Committee who knew as much about the Brisbane Valley line as he did, with the exception that he had travelled over it; but so far as documentary proofs were concerned hon. gentlemen knew as much about it as he did. What the hon. gentleman had heard about him he did not know; he could not say he did not care, because no man could say that. That rumour was untrue, and the hon. gentleman knew it was untrue, and he should not have mentioned it when he did not believe it. One of the contractors was his partner now in New South Wales; but it did not follow that he was his partner then.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he thought that some of the mistakes that had arisen in connection with the so-called cheap lines had arisen from the heads of the department. The Minister for Works for the time being had always insisted upon his engineer making a line at so much per mile. He thoroughly believed in the principle advocated by many engineers in the old world, and adopted by Mr. Ballard. The Engineer for Railways was instructed to go from one point to another point at the cheapest total sum, and not go surveying and meandering all over the country to find a cheap route. The man who would construct a line from Brisbane to Sandgate in ten miles for £30,000 was a better man than a man who would take the line a longer distance for £2,500 per mile. The instructions should be totally reversed, and Parliament should know the different routes that might be taken, and the amount for each. The rate per mile was most deceiving to the public and to Parliament, and he had no sympathy with the engineer who tried to go from Brisbane to Gympie, or from Warwick to St. George, at a low rate per mile if he increased the distance thereby. He should always support an engineer who built a railway from point to point, at the lowest gross sum.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the engineer gave his own estimate of the cost of the line; he was told to make a cheap line, and he produced his own estimates, and the estimate for the

Brisbane Valley line was nearly £4,000 per mile, and the estimate for the Sandgate line was £3,000. He had proof that Mr. Ballard offered repeatedly to make a line at £3,000 per mile; and why should not Mr. Stanley be asked to do what Mr. Ballard had offered to do? As for his telling the engineer he was not to go here nor there, the thing was preposterous. The engineer employed his staff of surveyors to do the work and he was responsible; he (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) was only a layman, and the engineer and his staff were professional men.

Mr. SALKELD said that he happened to know that a great deal of what had been said by the hon. member for Townsville, about the Brisbane Valley Branch especially, was true. On nearly every trip something went wrong. He went up there once to see the line, and was told before he started that there would be some hitch, and it did happen that on going round one of the curves they were delayed for some time. A little more expenditure would have been well laid out on those sharp curves. There was very little sense displayed in fixing the site of the station at Lowood. He had been informed by one of the officers that it was only intended for a temporary station, and as soon as another section of the line was opened it would not be used. The terminus was at the very best place; just at a bend of the Brisbane River, and the nearest place for the traffic that came in from the back plains. There was a dense scrub, which was all taken up and settled by agriculturists. But the department did so little for the district that they put the station on the wrong side. There was only one wrong side, and the department managed to find it. Besides that, they put the table that turned the engines on the wrong side. He was informed that for that reason the engines could only go in one way; they had to go in one way and come out another. If they went in the reverse way they went off the line. Then there was a large amount of timber there, and the place occupied by the table ought to have been devoted to a timber station. When he heard that the station was going to be put there, he could not believe that anyone who knew anything at all about the district would do such a thing. He did not make inquiries, because he thought it was a mistake, but about a week or ten days afterwards he was told that the station was being built. Nine-twentieths—yes, forty-nine-fiftieths—of the traffic came from the south-west and went in on the other side. There were not half-a-dozen farmers on the station side; but on the other side right up to Grandchester there was a large number of farmers, and they had to go round about a mile and a-half to cross a bridge to get to the station. He believed there was a timber-stage on that side now. He thought such mistakes as he had pointed out ought to be avoided; there was no excuse for them. It did not require any engineering skill to decide matters of that kind. He was quite sure any of the settlers there would have been able to give information on the subject; and the officers of the department might easily have ascertained where the traffic was likely to come from. It was well known that other stations had had to be removed, and that would have to be removed too. That involved expense, of course, and those things therefore should be avoided. He believed there was a great deal of truth in what had been said about the badness of the line—the engineering part of the line. Knowing that the Sandgate, South Brisbane, Fassifern, and Brisbane Valley lines were initiated by the hon. member for Townsville, he (Mr. Salkeld) had wondered why the hon. member did not see about them before; but the hon. member had explained that he was not an

engineer, and he expected the engineers to attend to all that. He (Mr. Salkeld) was quite sure that the Brisbane Valley and the Fassifern lines would have to be re-made; they would not be able to carry the traffic in eight or ten years. On the Fassifern line if there were three or four waggon-loads a train could not get up the inclines.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Fassifern line was made as an experiment, as most hon. members knew at the time, and it was certainly built at a very cheap rate. He believed the grades were 1 in 30; but that was not at all unusual in New South Wales. There were a good many places there where there were very long grades of 1 in 30 and 1 in 33. Of course they were proper lines and bigger engines.

Mr. NORTON said the Minister for Works stated that Mr. Thorneloe Smith did not receive any allowance when he was got rid of, because he had never been connected with the Civil Service, and had never contributed to the fund. But was he ever in a position to do that? His was not a fixed appointment like that of the Chief Engineer. He was paid out of Loan, and though he was twenty years in the service he was never more than a supernumerary. A supernumerary could not contribute to the fund. He (Mr. Norton) knew that he made complaints that he could not, by making contributions to the fund, insure to himself a retiring allowance. He hoped the hon. member would inquire into the matter, and see if what he (Mr. Norton) had said was the case. If so, then he hoped the hon. member would do that justice which the case demanded. Now, he should like to say a word with regard to the appointment of arbitrator in the Annear case. The engineer of the line stated that the work was supervised by the gentleman to whom afterwards was submitted the final decision—the gentleman who finally decided with regard to the first section of the line. Was that not Mr. Stanley? If he (Mr. Norton) was not very much mistaken, that first section was carried out, and the final arrangements were made by Mr. Stanley, and claims were settled by him before he went home. Yet, in spite of the fact that the final vouchers had been signed by the contractor without protest—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. NORTON: If that was not the case the hon. gentleman had made an incorrect statement in that House. Some time since he put a question to the hon. gentleman—whether the contractors had signed the final vouchers for that section. The reply was that they had, and the hon. gentleman referred him to the correspondence that had been published. That was all he (Mr. Norton) knew of the case. He had heard it before, on what was supposed to be the very best authority, and he believed it was a matter of protest some time afterwards. At any rate, the position was not the same as the position with regard to the first section, because there the case was not changed by Mr. Thorneloe Smith, to whom the matter was referred.

Mr. ANNEAR said he wished to say a few words in answer to the hon. gentleman. All the questions were not submitted to Mr. Stanley.

Mr. NORTON: They ought to have been, then.

Mr. ANNEAR said, as far as his firm was concerned they never looked to Mr. Wade as an arbitrator at all, but as Chief Engineer. One of the claims he decided was for the maintenance of the line owing to the delay in the construction of the Antigua Bridge on the first sixteen-mile section. Mr. Wade decided that the delay was caused by the alterations in the plans, and gave an award for the maintenance of that

line for, he thought, eighteen or nineteen months. The hon. leader of the Opposition had said it looked as if it was because his (Mr. Annear's) firm was friendly to the Government that Mr. Wade was got up. All he could say was, that the gentleman who occupied the position of Speaker in the last Parliament had no more consistent supporter in Maryborough than he was, so long as he professed the creed now professed by the gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches; but when Mr. King gave up those principles he (Mr. Annear) withdrew his support in favour of a gentleman who came forward on the side of the present Government. He was very much pleased with the speech of the hon. member for Townsville, and he could sympathise with him; for after the treatment his firm had received he could believe that almost anything would be done to worry and harass a contractor in every way. His firm employed, as a totally disinterested party, a gentleman who had been engaged on the Mount Esk Railway, and he measured twelve miles of the No. 1 section. That measurement showed something like 1,560 yards in excess of what they had been paid for. That ballast was put there by them, and was paid for by them, but up to the present time they had never been paid for it. He would point out one or two of the claims, and appealed to the leader of the Opposition, who was an engineer, and to the good sense of the two gentlemen who had been Ministers for Works, whether his statement was not true. When a section of the Western Railway taken by Messrs. Bashford and Thorn, was under construction, they were refused the use of gravel ballast. The gravel was sent to all the Chief Engineers south, who decided that Mr. Smith was wrong; and the gravel ballast was allowed to be used. When his firm took the second section of the Gympie Railway they knew where there was a beautiful quarry of gravel ballast, but Mr. Smith would not allow it to be used. He (Mr. Annear) was confident that it was better gravel than he had seen on other railways; and he went in company with several of their own and the Government officers, and broke down some of the ballast before their face. About 4 cwt. of it was put in a box without screening, nailed up in their presence, and sent off under shipping receipt to the Chief Engineer. They got a letter from the Chief Engineer, saying that he approved of the sample, and they started using the gravel. When Mr. Smith came he asked by whose orders they were using that gravel ballast, and when he was shown the letter from the Chief Engineer he said, "I do not care for twenty Stanleys," and ordered that the gravel should not be used. When Mr. Wade went to examine that gravel he said in presence of Mr. Depree, Mr. McGhie, and others, that he never saw better material for ballast. There were 20,000 yards of that gravel lying there, and every ounce of it would, he was sure, be used for the Kilkivan Railway. There was another claim, which was disallowed by Mr. Wade. There was a bridge at Durhamboy, 1,400 feet long, the highest part of which was 7 feet from the ground. The sawn sleepers, 9 inches by 5 inches, were only 2 feet from centre to centre, so that the bridge was almost all timbered over. They had 500 men employed; the locomotive was in full swing, the ballast men were at work, the permanent way was all going on, when Mr. Smith stopped the work because the foot-boards were not nailed on the bridge; a thing which was never known to be done before the permanent way was placed. The reason given was that the lives of the men were in danger, although the bridge was almost timbered over; and if a man fell it would be for only a distance of seven feet, and on to soft swampy ground. In their case justice

had not been done. They sent in their bill for £26,000, and that money was honestly owing to his partner and himself. He might say that Mr. Wade never touched the Antigua Bridge at all. While on the subject of bridges he might point out that, while Mr. Stanley was absent in England, Messrs. Fountain and Company were at work for twelve months on a single cylinder of the Burrum Bridge trying to get rock; but when Mr. Stanley came back he told Mr. Smith that there was no occasion to reach the rock, so long as the cylinder would stand a weight of fifty tons without deflection. They started the next cylinder and finished it in nine days, and then they got two pairs down in a fortnight. The great loss to his firm was the delay over the Antigua Bridge. It was only sixteen miles from Maryborough, and the line was sixty-one miles. The day the last rail was laid in Gympie, the last rivet was put in that bridge. They sent in a claim which hon. members would see in the papers. He never expected to be drawn from obscurity and held up as such a nefarious character as he must be if all that was said was true. It was a long time before he would want to have any more to do with railways under the Queensland authorities, if he was to be treated as he had been treated before. He could sympathise with the hon. member for Townsville. He had heard a great deal about the Brisbane Valley line, and if the curves had to be altered and the banks removed, the construction of the line must have been bad at the beginning. Before sitting down he should like to say that the 40th clause of the conditions, about which the deputation had waited upon the Minister last week, ought to be wiped out altogether, for no man, whether in law or in equity, should be the judge of his own wrong or his own incompetence. He hoped the hon. gentleman would see the necessity of meeting the wishes of the contractors in the same way as they had been met in Victoria and New South Wales. He had no desire to say anything harsh of any of the gentlemen connected with the Railway Department. He had had his share of them and hoped he would never have anything more to do with them. He could earn his living quite independently of them.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the sum of £222,490 be granted for the Southern and Western Railway. He would point out as he had done before, with reference to the Engineer of Existing Lines, that a new department had been created. Mr. Cross was previously Resident Engineer at £600 a year, and his salary was to be increased by £200. The Assistant Engineer was previously paid from Loan. The chief clerk who was put down on the Estimates had not yet been appointed, and all the other officers were transfers, so that there was no additional expense. In the Traffic Department there was an increase of £100. The clerk in charge of trains had his salary raised from £300 to £325, and the clerk from £275 to £300. The cashier's salary was also increased by £50. There was a number of additional station-masters; five additional assistants, five additional clerks, sixteen additional guards and pointsmen, watchmen, gatekeepers, etc., amounting in the aggregate to 340 additional men. In the Locomotive Department there were additional engineers, enginemen, firemen, fitters, turners, and moulders numbering 400 men. In the Store Department there was one additional clerk at £60; and, of course the extension of the lines necessitated an increase of men.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the Minister for Works did not say a word about the item of traffic manager. He understood,

before he came to the House, that something was stated in regard to the position of Commissioner for Railways and the Traffic Manager, and that there would be an alteration in the office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Speak up; I cannot hear a word you say.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said the remark of the hon. gentleman gave him an opportunity of reciprocating that request, as he was very frequently at a loss to understand what the hon. gentleman said. Perhaps he was becoming a little deaf. He would give him credit for being deaf, at any rate. What he was saying was that the item of traffic manager had not been referred to by the Minister for Works. He understood, before he entered the House, that some remarks were made in reference to the relative positions of the Commissioner for Railways and the Traffic Manager.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said Mr. Thallon had accepted the position of Traffic Manager at £600 a year, the same salary under which he was engaged.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is he to be independent altogether of the Commissioner?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Traffic Manager would have the whole control over the Traffic Department, but the Commissioner would be the medium of communication.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is the Traffic Manager to be under the Commissioner, and responsible to the Commissioner?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Is the Commissioner to be the head of the department?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it would be utterly impossible for the Minister to do the work of the department. Whatever correspondence took place, of course would come through the Commissioner, who would forward it to the Traffic Manager for report. It was provided that if the Traffic Manager wished to have direct communication with the Minister he might have it. The Commissioner would have no control over him other than as an under secretary.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON: This is most extraordinary.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman said the Commissioner would have no control over the Traffic Manager. How, then, was the responsibility divided?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Traffic Manager would be responsible for his own department, and all matters connected with it, but whatever communications took place would be through the Commissioner. Supposing, for instance, there was a short delivery of goods, as a matter of course the Commissioner for Railways would be communicated with, and then he would forward on the report to the Traffic Manager.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said that was just the very thing the Traffic Manager ought to attend to. He had no wish to discuss the matter just then.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it had been stated over and over again that the Commissioner for Railways gave up control of the Traffic Department. How was it possible for the Traffic Manager to control his department if the Commissioner could step in between him and those who were under him? The hon. member did not know what he was talking about.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said it appeared now that if a man had a complaint to make about the non-delivery of a bag of chaff he must communicate with the Commissioner of Railways and not with the head of the Traffic Department. Surely it was the Traffic Manager

who should be addressed under those circumstances! Mr. Thallon should have his own staff, and there should be nothing interposed between him and the Minister or the public. That scheme had never been arranged by the Minister for Works; it had been devised for him; and it was red tape with a vengeance.

The PREMIER said it struck him that what the hon. gentleman objected to would be for the convenience of the public. Although the matter would be dealt with by the Traffic Manager it was desirable that everything that was going on in the department should be known by the permanent head. No delay would be caused, because communications of the kind would be simply passed over to the Traffic Manager to be dealt with.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it appeared that, so far as the public and the Minister for Works were concerned, the Commissioner was to occupy exactly the same position as he did before. The Traffic Manager was not to be allowed to communicate with the Minister, because it would be *infra dig.* for the Commissioner to be put in that position.

The PREMIER: Why not?

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Because the Minister for Works has just told us that he is not to transact business directly with the Minister.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have said nothing of the sort.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the impression left on his mind was that any communication between the Traffic Manager and the Minister was to be filtered through the Commissioner. He failed to see how the position of the public was bettered by that arrangement. If the hon. gentleman intended to withdraw his statement, he would give him an opportunity for further explanation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that what he stated was that the Traffic Manager would have access to the Minister whenever he chose. The reason why correspondence affecting the Traffic Department would first go to the Commissioner, to be by him handed to the Traffic Manager, was simply to enable the head of the department to know everything that was going on. If that was not done grave irregularities might occur.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was red tape with a vengeance. A man complaining of short delivery had to write to the Commissioner about it, and then the Commissioner wrote to the Traffic Manager.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; he simply forwards the correspondence.

The PREMIER said one would think the hon. member had never been in office in his life. He must know perfectly well that if a complaint came in to an under secretary—and the Commissioner should be an under secretary—the complaint was simply passed on to the person in charge of the branch to which the complaint referred. There was no letter written; the under secretary merely opened the letter of complaint, and handed it on.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Minister for Works first told them that the Traffic Manager was to be entirely independent, then that he was not to be independent, and now the Premier had made out a middle scheme by which both were to be independent, except that the Commissioner was to have the privilege of opening the Traffic Manager's letters and handing them on to him. That was nonsense. The system in vogue at the present time was that the Commissioner transacted the business of the Traffic Department as far as the Minister and

the public were concerned. He never believed in making the Commissioner traffic manager, and he told the Minister at the time he made the appointment that he had made a great mistake, because Mr. Herbert was not a traffic manager and did not pretend to be. He wanted to know how the public were to be benefited by the new arrangements that were to be made?

Mr. MIDGLEY said, now that a change was to be made, the opinion was pretty general that the distinction between those two offices should be as sharply drawn as possible, and the duties as clearly stated and defined as possible. He had had a good deal to do with the Railway Department, and he did not see why, in the matter referred to—short delivery of goods—there should be any necessity for the interference of two officials. That was for the thing to be deferred or delayed.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You would compromise the department.

Mr. MIDGLEY: That was the reason that had been alleged, and it should have weight. Say that a man sent a quantity of goods to a certain place. The man to whom the goods were sent always signed for what he got. If anything was missing it was a matter which the man at the station should report, and it was either for the Commissioner or the Traffic Manager to make inquiry. But let it be the one or the other. He himself had had a claim against the department for wrong delivery of goods for the last four years, and he had never been able to get the matter attended to. It was a little matter, and he had had to give the Railway Department the benefit of it. He meant to let the matter slide. But either the Commissioner or the Traffic Manager should have direct dealings with consignors and consignees—have power to settle any matter in dispute, and have done with it. They were appointing a gentleman to the office; let there be some dignity, some responsibility, and some duties attached to the office; and let him be responsible for the faithful and efficient discharge of those duties.

Mr. SALKELD said there seemed to be an attempt to concentrate everything in the hands of the Commissioner. He had been told by an officer who formerly was in the department that nothing could be done—even the most trifling matter—except through the Commissioner's office. If a box of pens or a ball of twine was wanted it could not be got unless by means of a certificate from the Commissioner. The goods were actually got and used long before the authority was given. And in most cases the order had to be copied out fourteen or fifteen times. That was red tape with a vengeance! With a little business ability in the management, those things should be impossible. Surely they could get a man to entrust the management of the traffic to who would take as great an interest in protecting the department and seeing that it was not plundered, as the Commissioner for Railways. If they did not, they would drift about, and the result would be more red tape, delays, dissatisfaction, grumbling, and another change.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought the intention of the new scheme was that the Minister, not being in a position to see all the heads of departments, desired to get a knowledge of all that was going on through one head. For instance, the Engineer of Existing Lines looked after all the lines, and he was not hampered in his work; but if any claim was made against his department it was made through the Commissioner. In the same way the Traffic Manager was not to be hampered in any way in the working of his department; but if a claim was made for loss of goods or for compensation, that demand

was to be made through the Commissioner; because it would pass through him to the Minister. That was simply to bring, in a quicker way than at present, the whole business of all the departments under the cognisance of the Minister. At any rate that was how he looked at it.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON said he did not see great economy of the time of the Minister in dealing through the hands of the Commissioner of Railways with the same matter which had been conveyed to the latter by the Traffic Manager. As a matter of principle and to ensure efficiency and give fair play to the Traffic Manager, they must place him in such a position that he would come into contact with the public direct. He (Mr. Macdonald-Paterson) did not object to the Commissioner as Under-Secretary for Railways, and he hoped the Government would keep him in that position as had been suggested. As long as the Commissioner for Railways remained as he was, there would be an unwarranted ambition on his part to grasp as much influence and ramify his office as much as he could. The Minister for Works had stated that the Traffic Manager would be liable to commit and compromise the Government on matters such as the settlement of claims. Surely the Traffic Manager was a better man to consider the question of claims than the Commissioner. Was every question of claim to be relegated from the Traffic Manager to the Commissioner? If so, did they not see that the one man was as liable, if not more liable, to commit and compromise the Government as the other, who had a close knowledge of the whole circumstances of the case? Why should it be necessary on the part of the Traffic Manager to report in detail all the circumstances to the Commissioner? Why not give to the Minister for Works a report every day or every week, instead of having it filtered through the Commissioner, or Under Secretary for Railways? Moreover, the Minister for Works, in stating a case, spoke of a letter of complaint for short delivery of goods. Now, every member of the public did not choose to communicate with the department by letter. How would they deal with those who made verbal complaints, or who wished to confer on matters of importance in regard to traffic, or damaged goods, or otherwise? Who was to hear the complaints of members of the public in person? Was it the Traffic Manager or the Commissioner for Railways? If the former, was he to report to the Commissioner, who was to report to the Minister? If the latter, was he to report to the Minister and re-report to the Traffic Manager? If the Minister for Works had taken a little time to think over the matter, he would have seen that it was a piece of perfect folly. They should keep the Commissioner for Railways as Under Secretary. On the other hand, the Traffic Manager should have complete and entire control of his department, and should come in contact with the public who used the railway either as passengers or as traders. If the Minister for Works made that arrangement, he would confer a great boon on the public of Queensland. That was a matter in which the mercantile firms of the colony took a great deal of interest. If there was to be, as suggested, a medium of communication with the public, no matter whether the Railway Commissioner or the Minister for Works, there was no difficulty in foreseeing a complete break-down. It would not be doing justice to Mr. Thallon, the new Traffic Manager, and by no means be doing that justice to the public which they expected from the new arrangements. He should be glad if the Minister for Works would intimate whether the Commissioner for

Railways or the Acting Commissioner was to be struck out. He understood that it was not intended that there should be three officers—the Commissioner, a Deputy Commissioner, and the Traffic Manager.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it would be impossible to abolish the office of Commissioner for Railways, because in many cases that officer was mentioned in the Railway Acts as having certain powers and authority.

Mr. FOOTE said he would point out to the hon. member for Moreton that there must, in the first place, be a Ministerial head of the department, and next to that head there was the Commissioner, who, in his estimation, was a very necessary officer. He did not see how affairs in connection with their railways, which were very largely increasing and extending, could be carried out unless there was a head to the department. He had heard a great deal said in the Committee about bungling and dissatisfaction and a lot of other things; but he could quite understand that it was almost impossible for the large traffic of the department to be carried on without a hitch at any time—that there should never be a parcel lost or delayed. They all knew that such things happened in other departments. Those who were in the habit of shipping goods from England and other places knew that they did not always come to hand without a hitch or delay. According to his experience he found great difficulty in other departments, as well as the Traffic Department, in getting his goods; and, as a rule, in shipping from England there were nearly always "shorts," where there was anything like a large consignment. Of course cases of that kind were dealt with in a proper manner; the claim had to be proved, and after it was proved compensation was paid properly and fairly, and there was no difficulty in the matter. In the course of his business with the Traffic Department he had experienced delays, which, in some instances, had been brought about by the shortness of rolling-stock. Neither the Commissioner for Railways nor the Traffic Manager could, on short notice—a month, or even two or three months—make a sufficient quantity of rolling-stock to meet the requirements of the traffic. It was impossible. Then there were fluctuations in trade. People who were always looking out for the highest market held back their goods, and when the market got good they immediately rushed them in, and occasionally last year there had not been sufficient rolling-stock for the carriage of those goods. But he took it for granted, according to his own experience, that the best that could possibly be done was done under the circumstances. He hoped that the new Traffic Manager would prove to be all that was expected of him. There was an old saying, that "a new broom sweeps clean," and when they were going to make a change, it was to be "all that they desired." That was the case sometimes, until they had got a little experience, and then they found that what they anticipated would be so good was not so good after all. He agreed with many hon. gentlemen who had spoken, that the Traffic Department ought to be separate; but at the same time he did not fall in with the idea of the hon. member for Moreton, that the Traffic Manager should have sole control of his department to such an extent that if there was a loss of goods, and a claim was sent in, he should be the sole arbitrator as to whether it should be paid or not.

Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON: I did not say that.

Mr. FOOTE: What the hon. member said was to the same effect.

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Mr. MACDONALD-PATERSON: Not at all.

Mr. FOOTE said he held that it was the duty of the Traffic Manager to send in his report to the Commissioner and not to go to the Minister direct. The Minister would have plenty to do if he had to deal with every case where there was a delay of goods or various other charges that arose in connection with the details of the department. The proper course was for the Traffic Manager to report to the Commissioner, and if he could not decide the matter, let him refer it to the Ministerial head of the department, and get his decision. That was his view of the case. As to the allusion made by the junior member for Ipswich, about red-tapeism in small matters of detail that occurred in the office, he failed to see that there should not be somebody made responsible for them. It was only right that accounts should be sent to the proper quarter, and he did not think that any delay had arisen by that. If they were to open the door for every officer or head of a department to incur whatever expense he liked, they would soon have a very large expenditure indeed. Those matters should be worked under a proper system; and next to the Ministerial head of the department, the Commissioner was the proper officer to deal with them. He had none of those big complaints to make with reference to the Railway Department. He had had occasionally to complain in reference to lost goods and things of that sort, but after a little time the matter had generally been brought right, as was usual in other cases, such as the shipping of goods from England and other places.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he supposed that the new Traffic Manager would have certain instructions and information upon which he would have to work. He believed it was a fact that Mr. Thallon, when in the office before, experienced considerable annoyance, because the exercise of his authority in a matter of that kind was resented by the Commissioner. He believed that was the case, and that it would be likely to arise again. He could see no objection in referring the matter in dispute to the Commissioner. The only justification for doing so would be that the Commissioner would have additional information than that reported to him by the Traffic Manager; or the other reason would be that the Commissioner might probably take a different view of the matter from that taken by the Traffic Manager. It was then very likely that delays would arise from sending backwards and forwards, and getting fresh reports of the transaction. It was a matter of great importance to the public; because, if the matter of a mere award or decision as to missing goods or damaged goods was to be taken out of the hands of the Traffic Manager, other matters in which he was concerned might with equal right be interfered with and altered. Let the man have his duties and his responsibilities, and hold him responsible. He could not give particulars of the matter; but he believed that Mr. Thallon, when he was in the position before, came into collision with the Commissioner because he held a certain view in regard to a certain claim, and the Commissioner held a totally different one.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for Fassifern had stated a short time ago that some years since he had a claim against the department which he had not been able to get settled; but if his system was adopted the Traffic Manager would be able to settle it, whether it was right or wrong, and the Minister would know nothing about it.

Mr. MIDGLEY said he certainly thought the matter ought to go before the Minister. He held that the Traffic Manager ought to place the

matter before the Minister. He did not think that he should have so much authority in his own hands as to decide it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister would have to decide upon a case without knowing anything about it.

Mr. SALKELD said he would not know anything about it except what was put before him by the Traffic Manager. What they wanted was that the Traffic Manager should be a responsible officer, and liable to be blamed, censured, or dismissed if he did not do his duties. He did not think the hon. member for Bundamba properly understood what he was talking about. He had instanced the red-tape business going on in the department, and said a box of pens or a ball of string could not be got without referring to the Commissioner.

Mr. FOOTE: And quite right too.

Mr. SALKELD said there was no check in referring to the Commissioner, as he would not know whether the things were wanted or not. Some things had to be copied and entered in the books fifteen or sixteen times, and he thought what they wanted was some good sense and business tact in the management of the department. Anyone who knew anything about it must know that the management of their railways cost far more than it ought to.

Mr. FOOTE said he never said that the hon. member did not know what he was talking about. The hon. member was giving instances of boxes of pens and balls of string, and he gave him credit for knowing what he was talking about; at the same time he entirely disagreed with the hon. member. There should be a proper head of the department, and subordinates should not be allowed to buy this and that without proper authority. The head of the department should know what an office was likely to require and when it was extravagant or wasteful; and when there was a proper form in which things should be done, and when requisitions for articles required had to be laid before the Commissioner, it served as a check upon the different departments. As to "red tape," it was in everybody's mouth. It was the first word mentioned, and if they used white tape for tying up parcels they would hear of "white tape" instead of "red tape." He did not think the term was very damaging to those who understood it. There must be tape of some kind, and it was very proper that it should be so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said Mr. Thallon had not asked for his reappointment, and when the Government came to the conclusion to reappoint him, they informed him by letter of the exact position he would be placed in. Mr. Thallon had been here before, and he knew what he would have to contend with. He had accepted the appointment offered him now; and when he was satisfied himself he could not see why hon. members should get up so much fume and fury about it.

Mr. NORTON said he would like to know if the Traffic Manager was appointed for any term of years?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What do you mean by any term? The Government are not in the habit of entering into a contract with anyone for any term, such as three months or twelve months. Mr. Thallon will remain in the service while he does his duty.

Mr. NORTON said the Government were in the habit of appointing officers for a term of years, and he understood Mr. Thallon had come out to the colony engaged for a term of years. After what the Minister for Works had said he

presumed he might take it for granted that Mr. Thallon had not been engaged for a term of years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. NORTON said there was one other matter in which the Committee were interested. What was to become of the present manager and the clerk of trains? Were they to receive other appointments?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said they would be for the time employed in some other capacity. Mr. McKean, the present Traffic Manager, did not ask for his present appointment, and he believed he had done the best he could to carry on the Traffic Department. It should not be forgotten that he was for a long time at a great disadvantage owing to the want of rolling-stock, and had had great difficulties to contend with. The appointment was offered to him, and it was the intention of the Government to make Mr. McKean's position as good as possible. The same would apply to the clerk of trains. That gentleman had not applied for his present appointment; he would not say it was forced upon him, but he was asked to accept it, and he believed that he also had endeavoured to do the best he could.

Mr. NORTON said he believed the hon. gentleman was quite right, as he understood that those gentlemen did not wish to take the offices offered them. Mr. McKean had borne such a good character before in the department, that it might be expected that he was able to fill any place open for him in the Government Service, and he was glad to find that the Minister for Works also held that opinion.

Mr. FOOTE said he understood that the clerk of trains did not wish to be promoted, but had been asked to accept the position, and he (Mr. Foote) was given to understand that he was promoted because of the able manner in which he defeated the hon. member for Port Curtis at the time he brought down that report.

Mr. NORTON said he had inquired into that matter, and he did not think it was so. He had not forgotten the incident to which the hon. member referred, but he was not one of those who bore any malice, or kept anything against a man in his mind. The next matter he wished to ask the Minister for Works about had reference to the station-masters. There were eleven new station-masters, and he supposed the hon. gentleman had in view some places where others would be required. Had the hon. gentleman made provision for new appointments? Some time ago great difficulty was experienced in getting suitable persons for the position of station-master. For instance, some difficulty was experienced in getting a man fitted in all respects for the responsible position of station-master at Maryborough. The only way of keeping up a supply of station-masters was by appointing assistant station-masters who would gain what experience could be given them by those who had been longer in the service, in order that they might subsequently fill appointments at new stations when required. Was there a supply of such men now in the department?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said a few new station-masters had been appointed. For instance, when the Brisbane Valley branch was opened station-masters were appointed there, and two or three were also appointed on the first section of the Killarney line when it was opened. At present men were employed first as porters, and were afterwards gradually trained till they were fit to be station-masters.

Mr. FOOTE said he noticed there was a host of assistant station-masters. He had never heard of such officers in any other colony. He supposed that in other places, as a rule, a porter who was under training for a station-master performed the duties of that position until he became efficient and was sent to take charge of a station.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there were two station-masters at Brisbane, one of whom was called the assistant station-master. A man could not always be on duty; he could not be on duty from 5 o'clock in the morning until 12 o'clock at night. It was therefore necessary to have two station-masters—one to relieve the other. There were also two station-masters at Toowoomba, where there was a considerable amount of work, and where the hours were long. He presumed that the reason for calling one assistant station-master was to distinguish him from the other.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he wanted to say something about station-masters and gatekeepers. Some two or three months ago he called for a return in reference to the time station-masters and gatekeepers had to work on the Sandgate line, and on the Southern and Western line, as far as Ipswich. From that return it appeared that some of those officials were working from seventeen to twenty hours a day. No doubt those long hours had a great deal to do with the mismanagement, or rather carelessness, sometimes exhibited by station-masters. It was said at the time that the hours were not continuous, but he contended that, if a man had to be at his station or gate every time a train passed during those seventeen or twenty hours, the whole of his time was taken up, and his employment was therefore continuous. He thought it would be a good plan to classify the gatekeepers. There were some who had too much work to do, and probably some who had too little. Fifty-six gatekeepers were employed last year, and a hundred were required this year, and yet the increase was only £500. In other words, last year they paid fifty-six men £2,000, and this year they were to pay a hundred men £2,500. They had no right to work men seventeen hours a day; if they did they need not be surprised to hear of accidents and collisions on the railways. He thought the men should be paid according to the number of hours they were employed and the nature of the work they performed. There was a gatekeeper at Redbank who had far more to do than some station-masters. The gate was the crossway of the Brisbane road, and had to be opened every time a vehicle came along both night and day. He supposed there was only one man employed there, and there ought to be two.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So there are.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was glad to hear that. He referred to that matter in order that it might receive the attention of the Minister. He would have something to say subsequently in reference to the Sunday traffic; but he would make no observations on the subject just now, as probably some hon. member might wish to speak about the station-masters.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that one of the duties of the Traffic Manager, when he entered upon his office, would be to ascertain what hours the men were working, and to rearrange the work so that every man should be employed only a reasonable number of hours a day. He was told that the labour many of the men had to do was light; but still he thought seventeen hours was too long.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

The House adjourned at one minute past 11 o'clock.