

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 27 OCTOBER 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 27 October, 1885.

Enoggera Election.—New Member.—Barcoo Election.—South Brisbane Gas and Light Company (Limited) Bill.—Seizure of the “Forest King.”—Railway Extension to Southport and Nerang.—Supplementary Estimates.—Message from the Legislative Council.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Adjournment.

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

ENOGGERA ELECTION.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that I have this day received, from the returning officer of the electoral district of Enoggera, the return of the writ issued by me for the election of a member to serve in the place of John Lloyd Bale, Esquire, with a certificate of the election of Robert Bulcock, Esquire, as a member for the said district.

NEW MEMBER.

Mr. Robert Bulcock was sworn in, and took his seat as a member for the electoral district of Enoggera.

BARCOO ELECTION.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that, pursuant to the provisions in that behalf of the 8th section of the Additional Members Act of 1885, the returning officer for the electoral district of Barcoo has furnished me with a copy, certified under his hand, of the electoral roll for that district, and that upon its receipt, pursuant to the provisions of the 9th section of the said Act, I have issued my writ for the election of a member to represent such district in the Legislative Assembly.

SOUTH BRISBANE GAS AND LIGHT COMPANY (LIMITED) BILL.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to lay on the table of the House the evidence—together with the report thereon—taken before the select committee appointed on the 23rd instant to consider and report upon the South Brisbane Gas and Light Company (Limited) Bill. I move that the papers be printed.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of Mr. CHUBB, the second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Friday next.

SEIZURE OF THE "FOREST KING."

MR. MIDDLEY said : Mr. Speaker,—I beg to present to the House the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into and report upon the seizure of the schooner "Forest King." I move that the papers be printed.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY EXTENSION TO SOUTHPORT AND NERANG.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions, namely:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the South Coast Railway from Beenleigh to Southport and Nerang, in length 28 miles 51 chains 60 links, as laid upon the table of the House on the 23rd instant.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the South Coast Railway from Beenleigh to Southport and Nerang, in length 28 miles 51 chains 60 links, as laid upon the table of the House on the 23rd instant.

2. That the plan, section, and book of reference be forwarded to the Legislative Council, for their approval, by message in the usual form.

—said the object of the Government in bringing down those plans for the approval of Parliament, at the close of the session, was to secure the extension of the railway to Southport and Nerang, so that the line might become remunerative as soon as possible, short lines being always expensive to work. It would go through a considerable quantity of agricultural country, and accommodate a large number of farmers. Besides that, it would be the means of giving an opportunity to the residents of Brisbane and elsewhere of reaching Southport with much more convenience than at present. The length of the line, including the branch to Southport, was about 28½ miles. The distance from where the branch left the main line to Southport was about 4 miles, and the direction of the branch was almost direct to Nerang ; which would be a great convenience to everyone travelling between the border and that town. The country which the line passed through was very rough, and he was afraid that the hon. member for Townsville would disapprove of the amount it was estimated to cost. There were some very expensive bridges—some four or five of them, he thought. There was one over the Albert River which was estimated to cost £10,136. Then there was one over the Cooinera to cost £17,190, and one over the Nerang, £19,185, besides two smaller ones costing about £2,000 each. Those bridges would make it a costly line, and he did not think it would be constructed under £6,000 per mile. But he believed that, when constructed, it would be a line which would repay the whole of the outlay. There would be no gradients upon it steeper than 1 in 50, which was the ruling gradient in the southern part of the colony, and the sharpest curve would be about 8 chains, so that the line would be well adapted for either goods or passenger traffic. The terminus at Southport would be about a quarter of a mile from the jetty, and would be upon Government land. So that there would be no land to be resumed for that purpose, and, with the exception of some plantations it passed through—not a great number—the cost of resuming land on any part of the line would not be excessive. He trusted that the Committee would see the matter

in that light and adopt the plans, so that the railway might be proceeded with with as little delay as possible and make that portion of the South Coast Railway already opened remunerative. There would be one tunnel on the line, about 5½ chains in length, which would save making many heavy cuttings.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had no intention of opposing the line on account of the cost, as was suggested by the hon. Minister for Works. He knew that the country was very difficult for railway-making, so far as crossing rivers was concerned. He had been over it as far as Nerang and knew something about it, and was always under the impression that bridging those rivers would cost a great deal of money. If timber were used in the construction of those bridges, there would be a danger of its being bored by the insects that existed in those waters, so that it would be advisable that they should be constructed of iron, which would make them far more costly than ordinary bridges in the interior. What he wished particularly to point out was that the line would cost on an average £6,000 per mile, according to the calculation of the Minister for Works, or £168,000. In the £10,000,000 loan they had voted £150,000 for a railway from Southport to the border. Therefore, besides the £18,000 which that portion would cost in excess of the vote, there would be still 25 miles to construct to the border, over exceedingly rough country, which would cost £5,000 or £6,000 per mile. All he could say was that at that cost of construction it would be "devil take the hindmost" with the railways on the £10,000,000 loan. Before the last of them was constructed there would be no money left. In addition to the £168,000 that line was to cost, he supposed there would be a considerable sum required for the resumption of land. The Minister for Works had not told them whether £6,000 a mile was to pay the cost of sidings and stations ; if not, that would add another hundred or two to the cost per mile. Taking the whole length of the line that had to be constructed, the £10,000,000 loan would not be half enough. Besides that £168,000 there were 25 miles at £5,000 a mile ; and that, with the cost of resumption, would bring up the whole cost to double the amount on the Loan Estimates. He simply wished to caution hon. members who had railways to be constructed in the Northern, Central, and Western districts to see that their railways were not neglected to the advantage of the railways which were being hurried on in the South.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member need not be afraid that the other lines would be neglected, even if the loan were not sufficient. It was not the first line that had required a further sum to be provided out of loans to complete it. He could assure the hon. member that all the money on the Loan Estimates would be appropriated for the purposes for which it was voted.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not see how the Minister could guarantee that. Already his estimate for part of the line exceeded the amount voted for the whole by £18,000, exclusive of the cost of resuming the land. The hon. member's guarantee was worth nothing unless he stopped short at Southport or Nerang ; and he did not suppose the hon. member intended to do that. He might guarantee the Committee that he would not extend that line any further, and that the other lines would come in for the money voted for them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there had hardly been a line built in the colony which had not cost more than the sum voted in the first instance. They had had to supplement the

votes on many lines carried out by the hon. member himself. If the amount was insufficient more money would have to be provided. He did not see any difficulty in carrying out the work without interfering with other lines.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he admitted that a great many lines in the colony had cost more than the money voted in the first instance, and that more money had to be borrowed afterwards; but the hon. member forgot that they had committed themselves to that £10,000,000, which was to be extended over a period of four years, and that there were many parts of the country not included in the estimate which were languishing for railways. What would be their chance of getting railways if more money had to be borrowed after the £10,000,000 was expended, to finish the railways they were already constructing? There were five or six districts quite as much entitled to railways as any which had been before the House, but they would have to wait, not only till the £10,000,000 loan had been expended, but also until more money had been borrowed to complete the lines already begun.

Mr. NORTON said he thought the matter was one which concerned the Treasurer very much. The Minister for Works had pointed out that the amounts voted for other railways had not proved sufficient; but in former loans the deficiencies had never been so enormous that the people who took up their debentures had any cause to feel uneasy. When they had a loan of such a nature that a whole sheet of the statute was occupied with a mere list of the lines for which money was to be borrowed, and when the Ministers showed, as line after line was introduced, that the mere construction, independent of what had to be paid as compensation for land, would require more than the sum voted, it became a very serious question. He did not remember all the lines that they had passed, but the Beauaraba Railway would cost for construction alone one-third more than the amount authorised by Parliament, and the same was the case with the Emu Park line. At that rate, it would take a sum of £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 more to complete the work already authorised. In the present case a sum of £168,000 had been voted for the line from Beenleigh to Southport and the border. According to the Minister's showing, the whole of that sum would be exhausted in the mere construction of the line, and after that there was an additional five-and-twenty miles to carry the railway to the border, and for which there was no money provided at all. He would like to know whether it was the intention of the Government to complete that line to the border merely on the strength of its having been authorised by the House, and leave others out? Was it their intention to devote the whole of the £10,000,000 loan to the completion of the railways already authorised and leave others out altogether? When the question of the extension to Fortitude Valley was before the Committee, the Premier, in support of the motion for the adoption of the plans of that railway, urged that the Committee were already committed to the expenditure because they had already agreed to the vote; but the Committee were equally committed to the expenditure in every one of those cases. He ventured to say that in the case of a large number of them, as had already been shown, there would be a deficiency in the amount voted. That would have to be made up somehow, and how was it to be done? It was not merely a question for the Minister for Works, but it was also a question for the Colonial Treasurer, and he would like that hon. gentleman to give the Committee what information he could as to the proposals of the Government in

connection with the construction of the lines authorised—whether it was their intention to borrow more money to complete the whole of the lines authorised, or whether they intended to go on with the construction of authorised lines only so far as the £10,000,000 would go?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said he was not at all disquieted over the circumstance that the proposed expenditure upon those railway lines exceeded the amount of money sanctioned by Parliament on the Loan Estimates of last year. He was rather surprised that the hon. gentleman who had so much experience of the Works Department should take exception to what was an everyday occurrence. The amount voted on the Loan Estimates did not in any way convey to the public that the proposed works would be constructed for that amount. The hon. gentleman surely had not reflected upon what had been done by his own administration in that respect. It was the rule and not the exception, unfortunately, that all those votes were exceeded when the works came to be constructed. The hon. gentleman's argument would tend to this: That the Government had no right to frame a Loan estimate until they were in possession of the tenders for the lines to be authorised, and also in possession of the information as to the exact value of the land to be resumed; in fact, that they should not ask the House for a Loan vote until they could assure the country that the Loan vote would be sufficient to ensure the construction of the works for which the loan was asked. That was impracticable. Those Loan votes were merely the sanction of the House on account of the construction of the lines, and doubtless must be supplemented in the future by further appropriation, either from Loan or from some other source. He had no hesitation in saying that it would be from Loan in the future. If hon. gentlemen would look over the Loan Estimates for 1884-5 they would find that a large number of items in those Estimates were to provide funds to complete works initiated and carried on by the last Administration. There was the railway from Stanthorpe to the border—£82,000. The previous vote for that line was £125,000, showing a deficiency of £82,000 on that line alone. South Brisbane branch, to complete—a very small line, and yet no less than £45,000 was required; Beenleigh branch, to complete, £18,000; Sandgate branch, to complete, £25,000; Warwick and Killarney, to complete, £65,000; Maryborough and Gympie, to complete, £35,000; Clermont branch, to complete, £35,000; Townsville and Charters Towers Railway, to complete, £30,000; and so on. So that nearly £1,000,000 of the loan was required to complete lines authorised and under construction. He did not mean to cast any reflections upon the late Government for not having made due provision for those railways, because it was utterly impossible for them to do so, and to say what would be actually required to complete those lines. The hon. gentleman appeared to be under some apprehension that other lines, the plans of which had not yet been laid upon the table of the House, would suffer in consequence of the money provided on the Loan Estimates proving insufficient, or that that money would be swallowed up in the construction of the railways already authorised. Surely the hon. gentleman did not mean to say that the borrowing powers of the colony were circumscribed, and that they would not be able to provide for the unforeseen expenditure in the construction of those lines! The future Treasurer, in framing his Loan Estimates, would provide for funds for carrying out those lines just as they had had to do in connection with the lines he had mentioned. The hon.

gentleman ought to remember that when the late Administration left office they left a deficit in the Immigration vote of something like £300,000. They had overdrawn the Loan vote for immigration purposes to the extent of between £200,000 and £300,000. The present Government had had to provide for recouping that vote and carrying on immigration on a scale which the country required. Unless to protract the discussion upon the motion for the adoption of those plans, he could not see any force in the arguments used by the two hon. gentlemen opposite, who had taken part in the discussion, and who had been Ministers of the Crown in the Works Department. Hon. members need be under no apprehension that they would not be able to provide funds for the construction of those lines. He could not inform the Committee what was the intention of his hon. colleague with respect to carrying the line to the border; but he could assure hon. members that the Government intended to submit to Parliament the various lines for which they had received parliamentary sanction on the Loan Estimates, and as funds were required, he had no hesitation in saying that they would be obtained. The hon. gentleman opposite might as well entertain the apprehension that the Government would be unable to borrow the balance of the loan. He might say, "We have only sold two and a-half millions of money and we have yet seven and a-half millions to sell, and we will not be able to sell them, and consequently no other railway construction can be proceeded with." That would be just as valid an objection as the hon. member for Port Curtis had raised. Hon. members need not be under the slightest apprehension that they would not be able to sell the balance of the loan, or that they would not be able to provide the sums that would be undoubtedly necessary to complete the railways already authorised. The sums represented on the Loan Estimates were, as hon. members knew well, only approximate estimates.

Mr. NORTON said the Colonial Treasurer had, no doubt, argued very well from his own point of view. It was evident, however, that he had not the slightest regard for the position in which the country had been placed. The hon. member and his colleagues were quite alive to the secrets of all previous Governments in the administration of the Railway, Treasury, and other departments, and ought to have been guided by the experience or the results of the policy pursued by their predecessors. The Government had already before their eyes evidence which ought to have prevented them from underestimating the sum required for the construction of lines. They knew perfectly well that some of the sums voted from recent loans for railway construction had been insufficient for the completion of the lines authorised, and that they had therefore to be made up by other votes passed a short time ago. The Opposition admitted all that, and said that the present Government, which professed to be a reform Government, ought to have obviated or avoided all the faults of their predecessors, and that they ought to have been particular in framing their Loan Estimates, so that they should not be under the necessity of appealing to the capitalists at home for further sums to complete the work put down on the Loan Estimates. It was no use for the Treasurer to try to throw dust in the eyes of the Committee by referring to the fact that the late Government overdraw the Immigration vote to a large amount. There was a surplus left in the Treasury which must have been much more than was required to pay that deficiency. But what the Colonial Treasurer had to consider was this: that after having seen the mistakes made by previous Governments

in connection with Railway votes he ought to have been very careful in preparing his Estimates for the construction of particular railways. But as a matter of fact, when they came to look over the whole of the votes submitted by the present Government, and compared them with the reports of the Railway Department already laid on the table, they found that not only would the whole of the £10,000,000 loan be required, but that £4,000,000 or £5,000,000 more would have to be borrowed. Now, that was not fair to the public. It was allowed at the time the loan was passed that for some years at any rate the colony would not be in a position to float additional loans, however great the necessity might be. Great necessities did arise sometimes for particular lines, but however urgent any that might arise might be, the Government of the day would not be in a position to go into the market for a further loan for railway lines. The people of the country, on the other hand, naturally expected that lines authorised should be constructed, but the fact was that, large though the sum borrowed for them was, it was far from adequate for their completion. He did not propose to discuss the desirability of constructing the particular line under notice, because a line which had been authorised by the House must be constructed. At the same time, there was the fact that for that particular line the sum of £168,000 had been authorised.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the amount was £150,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that the balance of £18,000 was expended on the completion of the line to Beenleigh.

Mr. NORTON said that there would then not be enough money in the estimate to pay the compensation required by the property owners along the line who would have land taken from them. When the Estimates were originally passed the people believed that they were to have a railway constructed to the New South Wales border. If that were done, and an attempt made to carry out all the other lines which had been authorised, then it would be not only impossible to complete them without asking for more money, but other lines which it was necessary to complete within the next few years would have to stand over until the Government could arrange for another loan for the completion of the authorised and for new railways. Money authorised to be spent on certain lines had not been so spent, and as they knew that it was not lying to the credit of those lines it must have been devoted to some other purposes. The Bowen railway was a case in point. The time must come very soon when the Treasurer of the colony, whoever he might be, would find himself in a very awkward position. He regretted exceedingly that the present Government, which professed to be so anxious to obviate the mistakes of their predecessors, were not more careful to see that the sums they asked for last year for railway construction were not something like sufficient for the purpose.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped the result of the existing state of affairs in respect to railway construction would not be so disastrous as there was reason to anticipate it might be. If they went on spending money at the present rate they would soon not be able to borrow any more. The Colonial Treasurer had told them that the former Governments had also been guilty of getting votes for lines that had to be supplemented afterwards. Then he read them a list of the lines on the £10,000,000 Loan Estimates and said that £1,000,000 of the £10,000,000 was for completing

railways which were formerly authorised. The hon. gentleman was far beyond the mark. There was not half-a-million, and some of the amounts which he mentioned were not to complete, but to make additional sections. With regard to some of the items, such as those for the lines between Townsville and Charters Towers and between Maryborough and Gympie, it was a question whether the money should be borrowed at all. Those lines were already completed; the expenditure to be incurred was to put ballast on, to strengthen bridges, and to erect sidings—which ought properly to come out of traffic. Previous Governments borrowed money for railways to be expended over, at the outside, two years, and therefore there was some excuse for them if what they borrowed for any particular line fell short of what was actually required; but when a Government went in for a £10,000,000 loan the utmost accuracy was necessary, because they committed the country practically to five years' expenditure, at the rate of £2,000,000 a year. Through their want of accuracy, or rather through not compelling their engineers to be accurate, they were committing the country to an additional two years' expenditure at the same rate; for it would require that additional amount to complete the works for which the £10,000,000 loan was authorised. But, in the meantime, what was to become of other portions of the colony? There were two districts in the electorate he represented that should have railways—agricultural railways, which would pay from the start—and yet they would be left out in the cold because the Government had committed the country to such an extent that they would be utterly unable to provide any more railways for five or six years, at least. The Colonial Treasurer forgot that, and he also forgot to say anything about the Samford railway—a railway in the district which the hon. gentleman represented—which was to be made out of surplus revenue—when he got it. As to that, all he had to say was, that if the present rate of extravagant expenditure in all the departments was continued, combined with the deficient revenue under the Land Act, the people of Samford would not get a railway out of the surplus revenue for the next ten years. To return to the railway under discussion, was it to stop at Nerang, or to be continued to the border? If the latter, which was voted by the House, it would cost an additional £150,000 or £160,000 belonging to some other railway on the £10,000,000 loan vote. The hon. gentleman would continue to draw upon the loan so long as there was a single penny left to be drawn, but if it was intended to carry on the present line from Nerang to the border it was evident that it could only be done out of money that had been voted for some other railway on the £10,000,000 loan. The money would be spent in the same way as the money for the Bowen railway had been spent.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government would do the same as previous Governments had done. If there was any deficiency it would be provided for in the next Loan vote. There had not been a single line in the colony that had been completed for the amount voted for it in the first instance.

Mr. NORTON: You will never get another loan.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the principle advocated by the hon. member for Port Curtis was carried out—of voting sufficient money before the line was commenced to be built—it would be a long time before the line from Bundaberg to Gladstone was finished. Yet the Government intended to carry on that line, notwithstanding the opinion of the hon. member for Port Curtis.

Mr. NORTON: I am glad to hear it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: And if there was not sufficient money voted on the Estimates to complete the line to Gladstone they were prepared to commence the line and carry it on as far as the money would reach. The remainder would be provided for in the same way as had been the case with other lines.

Mr. NORTON said he had purposely avoided making any reference to the Bundaberg-Gladstone line; but, as the hon. gentleman had referred to it, he must say that his remarks upon it were exceedingly contradictory. Only last June the hon. gentleman told him that both he and the Colonial Treasurer were favourable to the Bundaberg-Gladstone line being commenced from both ends. Only a month ago the Minister for Works told him that the plans of the line would be laid on the table of the House during the present session.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will lay them on the table to-morrow if the hon. gentleman likes.

Mr. NORTON said he should be highly pleased to see them, but he feared it would be somewhat premature, because the work of the permanent survey was not yet finished. As to the line being constructed as far as the money would go, he (Mr. Norton) pointed out when the money was voted that it would be the greatest possible mistake to vote for a line from Bundaberg towards Gladstone for the sum asked for, because a line constructed for a portion of the way only would be of no use. But as the hon. gentleman had promised him that the line should be constructed from both ends he had considered the matter as settled. He then believed the promise would be carried out, but now he found the hon. gentleman flatly contradicting himself, and saying that it should be constructed from one end only. As the Minister for Works had offered to place the plans on the table to-morrow, he (Mr. Norton) should like to see them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government had not the slightest intention of keeping back the Bundaberg and Gladstone railway. If the hon. member was under that apprehension, he (the Minister for Works) had no objection to bring the plans down to-morrow.

Mr. NORTON said, under the circumstances, he thought he had better profess to be under that apprehension. He believed that the hon. gentleman was quite sincere, but he did not always carry out his promises; perhaps circumstances arose which made him alter his opinion. Although he was quite prepared to accept the hon. gentleman's statement, he hoped that as he had promised to bring down the plans of the Bundaberg-Gladstone line to-morrow he would do so.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he would take that opportunity of asking the Minister for Works a question which he trusted he would answer. He knew it was not usual to ask questions without due notice, but he wished to get his answer direct from the Minister, and not have it anticipated in the columns of a newspaper. He wished to ask if that was the last railway he intended to make radiating from Brisbane around it—if he had any more in reserve?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would answer the question with the greatest of pleasure. It was not the last by a great many. He hoped to live to bring down several other railways about Brisbane.

Mr. SHERIDAN said he hoped the hon. gentleman would live long enough to do so, but he trusted that there would be a good long time between them. He was glad that the session was drawing to a close and that there would be no more proposed about Brisbane just now, because he had come to the conclusion that

when those lines were exhausted the Central and Northern districts would get a modicum of fair play, which otherwise they would not. There was an old proverb that "when things were at the worst they were sure to mend," and probably when Brisbane had a *cheveux de frise* of railways round about it the Central and Northern districts would get a small measure of fair play.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member had two railways being constructed in his own district. Did he want any more?

Mr. SHERIDAN: Oh, yes!

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he understood that the continuation of the line, without paying for land, would exhaust the whole of the money voted and £18,000 besides. He wanted to know, first, in the event of there being a deficit—which the Minister admitted there must be—which line would be taken first—that to Southport, or the one to Nerang? In the second place, where were the Government going to get the money for the completion of the line when their present means were exhausted? If they let the contract for that line the consequence would be that it would take £50,000 or £60,000 more than the amount voted, and how did the Government propose to find the money?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government would find the money exactly in the same way as the hon. gentleman did when he was making railways. They would simply appropriate the money and put it on the next Loan Bill. There was nearly a million of money placed on the last Loan Estimates to complete railways. The course the Government would adopt was the same as that taken by the last Government and all previous Governments.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman had told them that if the funds were insufficient the line would be completed out of the next loan. Did he mean that the South Coast Railway was to wait until an additional portion of the £10,000,000 loan had been raised?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. The intention of the Government was to carry out the work, and the hon. gentleman knew just as well as he did how the money would be got.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman said he knew how the money would be got. He knew what he would have done in a similar case, but he did not know what the Government intended to do. He considered that what they proposed to do was very dishonest. The Minister for Works admitted that if the money voted for this line was found to be insufficient they would appropriate the money voted for railways in other parts of the colony, and the consequence would be that there would be a deficit in the funds for those railways when they came to be constructed. That was not honest.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is exactly what the previous Government did.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That was not a fact. The present Government had initiated a different policy altogether. One reason why they said they should have the £10,000,000 loan was, that previous Governments had borrowed money in a little peddling way—that they went in for only a portion of the amount necessary to construct a railway, and then had to ask for an additional amount to complete it. The hon. gentleman now took the very policy of the previous Government as a justification of the policy of the present Government, which was to ask for a sum to cover the expenditure for a large number of years—the Minister for Works said six, and the

Treasurer five, years. The outcome of that policy, so far as it affected the Loan vote, was that the Government selected which line to bring before the House, admitting that it was about 40 per cent. under-estimated, and stating that they intended to spend the money voted in the £10,000,000 loan, not for the particular object for which it was voted, but upon a line of railway simply because it had been sanctioned. They were, therefore, spending money under false pretences, and doing what they had always been accused of doing—favouring certain particular districts. The fact of the matter was, the Ministry had managed to demoralise the constituencies thoroughly by getting the full power into their own hands, and the Committee had consented to their having that power. But the country ought to understand that at the present time the power of the Government was unlimited over that £10,000,000. The Committee were supposed to be under the delusion that when the money was voted it was voted for specific purposes. That was not the case. If the Government asked for £100,000 for a particular railway that was to cost £200,000, they actually demanded and acknowledged that they should spend the whole of that £200,000 out of the money that had been borrowed for other purposes, and they trusted in the next loan to come, after the £10,000,000 loan, to reimburse that vote from which the money had been taken. He knew the dissatisfaction that there would be in the different districts of the colony when that was understood. He had nothing to say against the South Coast line, and should like to see it going on; but he did not think it was the right thing that the line should be constructed at the expense of any other line in the colony for which the sanction of the Committee had been asked.

The PREMIER said one would think the Government were going to commit some tremendous sin against constitutional government and squander the money of the country—raised for one purpose—on an entirely different one. What did it all mean? The Committee was asked to approve of the plans of a railway from Beenleigh to Southport and Nerang, and it appeared that the money authorised to be borrowed for that purpose would be short by about £20,000, or something like that.

Mr. NORTON: For 25 miles of railway!

The PREMIER said the line would cost about £20,000 more than the money authorised to be borrowed. The money had been authorised to be borrowed for a line to the border; but it would not pay for that line, and, in the meantime, the Government proposed to make the line so far as the money would pay for it, and 3 or 4 miles further.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You are contradicting the Minister for Works.

The PREMIER said they knew what the facts of the case were. The Government wished to go on with the line, and they had not money enough to make it to the border. They did not consider it necessary to keep the whole line waiting until they got money. They proposed to do what had been done by every Government that had held office in the country, and make one job of it, because it would then pay; and not stop where it would not pay at all. They would ask Parliament to sanction the extra £20,000 or £30,000 as soon as necessary.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier seemed to consider that he had made things clear. No doubt they were clear to himself, but they were by no means clear to his hon. colleague. The Ministry had been asked as plainly as possible, in the event of the money voted for the line not being sufficient to complete the line that

authority was asked for now, what they would do for the money? Would they wait until another loan was voted for the purpose? The Minister for Works said he would do nothing of the sort; but would make use of the money now in the Treasury to the extent of £50,000. The Premier rose and said they would do nothing of the sort, they had only asked for authority to make the line so far as the money would take it. That was not the fact. The fact was that after they had asked for, and obtained, authority to make the line, and £18,000 in excess of the vote, for works alone, in addition to that, they would have to pay for the land, and then make 25 miles of line beyond that.

The PREMIER: We will wait till we get authority to make it.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier had said that the money would be obtained by asking for another loan; but the Minister for Works said the opposite—that they would complete the line now, and trust to Providence to get the money.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it appeared to him, as it would appear to most members of the Committee, that the action proposed by the Government was somewhat inconsistent with the promises from time to time made by the Minister for Works to deputations that waited upon him. He would call the attention of the senior member for Enoggera, who had never carried out any promises yet, and also that of the junior member, who had been lately promising all things, to the fact that when a deputation waited upon the Minister for Works, introduced by the Colonial Treasurer himself, asking for an extension towards Samford, the reply of the hon. Minister for Works to that deputation was that he was very sorry indeed, but all the loan money had been allocated. That was only one of many instances—a typical case. That was a position that the Minister for Works denied now; but that was the answer given by him to a deputation that waited upon him to ask for a necessary line. The inability of the Government to carry out that line was shown by the statement made to that deputation that the money had already been voted to other purposes. But what did they find now? That money had been voted for a railway, and a large excess was to be expended upon it without any Parliamentary authority, so far as he could see. That was to be asked for afterwards. When they had got into debt, Parliament was to be asked to find money to pay off a liability that had been incurred.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that really the hon. gentlemen who had addressed themselves to the question on the other side wished the Committee to believe that they had that prescience that they knew to the uttermost farthing what a line would cost, and upon no occasion whatever had they submitted an estimate which was inadequate. While the debate had been going on he had been amusing himself by looking up the Loan Estimates since 1879—since the date that the hon. member for Mulgrave introduced his £3,000,000 loan, which at that time was as comprehensive, if not more so, than the £10,000,000 loan of last year.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You said it was not.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said at that time it was. The £3,000,000 was supposed to cover all the requirements of the colony in the direction of railway construction. Let them glance at one item in the list. In 1879 the line from Brisbane to Sandgate was proposed. He did not find fault with the proposition, but warmly supported it. That was for thirteen miles at £4,000 per mile, £52,000. That was in 1879-80.

The hon. gentleman found that the £3,000,000 loan was exhausted by 1881-2, and accordingly, in that year, there was "Brisbane to Sandgate, to complete, £14,000." There was another loan introduced by the hon. gentleman, in 1882-3, and there again was "Brisbane to Sandgate, to complete—the second completion—£20,000." They then expected some finality, but when the £10,000,000 loan was floated they found "Brisbane to Sandgate, to complete, £25,000." That was in addition to the three loans of 1879, 1881-2, and 1882-3. They had been blamed by preceding speakers for not having framed their £10,000,000 loan estimate in such a way that it would cover the amount of money which they intended for the line. If that were not the gravamen of the charge, what was the complaint against them? The hon. member for Mulgrave did not hear the earlier part of the debate, and they would have to go over it twice. If he cared to take up time, he could show how other railways had appeared two or three times on the Loan Estimates. As he had stated already, the amounts on the Estimates were simply an approximation to the amounts required, and, unfortunately, the history of loan estimates was that they almost invariably fell short of the actual requirements. If the estimates were exceeded, surely the hon. member was not afraid that they would not find the means to replenish the Treasury, as had been done in the past.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. member tried to get out of the argument against his policy by misstating the charge. The hon. member said the charge was that they had under-estimated the cost of the railways and had to ask for an additional amount, and he tried to make light of the charge by saying that their predecessors did exactly the same thing. The charge was something perfectly different, and it had been stated so often that the hon. member must understand it. However, he would try to make it a little plainer. It was perfectly true that the last Ministry had to ask for money to augment the amount borrowed for different lines—it was their policy. The present Government said it was a bad policy, and they altered it. They said, "We shall state what we want for a particular line, and make up our mind what we are going to borrow for the next five years." The Treasurer said they were not going to bring in Loan Bills every year, but would go in for one big loan of £10,000,000, which would serve for five or six years. That was the Government policy, and it necessitated several things. It deprived the Government of the privilege of going back to the policy of their predecessors and supplementing an insufficient loan by another loan. They were committed to the policy of no fresh loans for five years, and so they adopted the policy of stealing what they required from other votes. That was the charge against the Government. They deliberately said that if the money voted for one line was not sufficient they would get the money from the other votes. Of course the lines from which the money was taken would have to wait until another big loan was floated in the course of five or six years. Look how hollow were the answers given by the Colonial Treasurer to the different constituencies! When his own constituency asked for a line, he said the Government could not give them any money because they had made up their minds as to the works for the next five or six years. Was that a fact? No; because the Government meant to use, for completing one line, the money that was voted for another. They had deliberately gone in for a system that would leave the last-comers without any money at all. It was no justification for the Treasurer to say what previous

Governments had done. Previous Governments asked for a sum on account of a certain railway, knowing well that, the next year or the next, they would have to come down and ask for more; but the present Government had deliberately barred themselves from that. They could not possibly get the money by another Loan Act. They could only get the money by stealing it, and they were stealing it at the present time. The charge against the Government was that of defrauding the different constituencies. The Premier had plausibly tried to hide the fact; but he could not do it except by denying the plain admission made by the Minister for Works. The Premier said that if the amount on the Estimates was insufficient the Government would come down and ask for another Loan Act. That was not the case. The Minister for Works said as plainly as possible that they would complete the line, and if the amount voted was not sufficient he would take what was required from the money voted for another line. The system was, that if a district kept friendly with the Government they would get their railway. The House had lost complete control over the votes, and the Minister for Works had so managed things that he could spend the money just as he pleased.

Question put.

Mr. MOREHEAD said no answer had been given by the Minister for Works to the speech of the hon. the leader of the Opposition. He (Mr. Morehead) did not care how angry the Premier got; the angrier the hon. gentleman got the better he (Mr. Morehead) was pleased. It was like a maximum and minimum thermometer, as one side went up the other went down. No doubt the Minister for Works found the speech of the leader of the Opposition unanswerable. Hon. members who were not interested in the railways to be constructed out of the £10,000,000 loan, but who had been promised that their districts would have lines when the next loan was floated, should consider that if the £10,000,000 was spent without regard to the allocation made by Parliament, there would be a deficit of £1,000,000 or £2,000,000 on the lines to which Parliament was pledged. Then it would be said that those lines must be completed before any new lines could be undertaken, and the consequence would be that the constituencies which thought themselves entitled to railways, but which were not mentioned in the schedule to the last Loan Act, would be still farther thrown back. The Minister for Works ought to be able to answer the speech made by the hon. leader of the Opposition, who had very clearly set forth the case against the Government. He did not see why, simply because the Government happened to have a majority, they should refuse to reply to the reasonable arguments brought forward by hon. members who happened to be in the minority.

Mr. SHERIDAN said the Minister for Works, in reply to his question, stated that he had nothing to complain of, because there were two railways in course of construction in the Maryborough district. It was quite true that there were two railways under construction there—one from Maryborough to Kilkivan, and the other an extension from Howard to Bundaberg. He would inform the hon. gentleman, however, that the money for both of those railways was voted by the former Government; and there was no portion of the loan—although a certain sum was set aside for that district—being expended there.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to know whether the statement made by the Minister for Works or that made by the Premier was correct—whether the line was to be continued to the border, irrespective of the cost

of it, and irrespective of the amount voted by Parliament, or whether it was to stop at Nerang and Southport, because the vote would then be expended? The two statements were contradictory. The Minister for Works had told them that he would do as former Governments had done, and complete the line, and the Committee would be asked at some future time for the money that had already been expended. The Premier, on the other hand, said the line would be completed as far as that vote, minus £13,000, would take it.

The PREMIER: I said nothing of the kind. I said it would be completed a certain part of the way—to Nerang and Southport.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that was just what he had said. The hon. gentleman said the line would be completed as far as Nerang and Southport, but that there would be a deficiency of £18,000 or £20,000, which was nothing. The Minister for Works said the opposite, and he wished to know which was the correct statement—whether the line would be continued to the border or stop at Nerang?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member must be out of his senses. He had never said the line would be completed to the border. The plans only proposed an extension to Nerang and Southport, and what was the good of the hon. gentleman saying that he (Mr. Miles) said the Government proposed to carry it to the border? He supposed it would go there some day. The hon. member knew well that the Government would have to get authority from the House to convey the line to the border. He hoped that some day or other it would be carried to the border, but at present they only asked authority to carry the line to Nerang and Southport.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman saw perfectly that the Premier had made a speech exactly opposite to the speech made by the hon. gentleman previously. He would tell the Committee what had been said. He had asked the Minister for Works whether, in the event of the vote not being sufficient to carry the line to Southport and Nerang, he would spend the money, or whether he would let it go only as far as the vote would allow, and ask the House for an additional vote? The hon. gentleman said of course he would spend the money to complete the line as far as Nerang and Southport. The Premier came in shortly afterwards, and made a distinctly different speech. He said the Government did not intend to expend more money than had been voted by the House, and they would do as previous Governments had done, and ask the House for an additional amount to complete the line, if the money voted was not sufficient to complete it. The two speeches were contradictory, and showed two different policies. The precedents set by previous Governments could not possibly get the Minister for Works out of the difficulty. Previous Governments could come and ask for an additional sum to complete a line, but the present Government could not do that, because in their wisdom they had said, "We have made up our minds that this is all the colony will require for a certain number of years." Having said that, how could they say that the vote was under-estimated? They could not do that, and what they proposed to do was to steal the amount required from votes for other purposes. They borrowed money in the London market for the construction of a railway in a certain district, and they would spend it upon the construction of a railway from Southport to the border. No previous Government had done such a thing because they had no necessity to do it, but the present Government were forced to do it,

and the consequence would be that in a few years there would be a number of votes with no money behind them, because the money would be found to have been spent for some purpose altogether different from that for which it was borrowed. The Opposition knew, and even hon. members on the Government side had suspicions, that that was the policy. They saw it now, and the hon. member for Maryborough rose up and complained that the Government were not expending the portion of the loan allocated to the district he represented. The Minister for Works replied that there were two lines already going on there, and he was at once reminded that not a single penny of the £10,000,000 loan was being spent there, and that all that was being done was to finish works for which the money was voted by the previous Government. As a matter of fact the Government were keeping back the lines in the northern part of the colony.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is not true.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it was the fact; and it was a fact in regard to the way in which the sanction of the House was asked for lines, and the money applied to the construction of lines which it suited the hon. member to push on. The position was a perfectly logical one. The Minister for Works, by the admissions he had made from time to time, had told them that the £10,000,000 loan, to do the work set down, would have to be increased to £15,000,000 or £16,000,000—that the amount of money asked for would not nearly complete the works for which the sanction of the House had been obtained. They now unfolded a further policy, that when the money voted for a particular item was not sufficient for the work they swept off the amount required from some other item on the £10,000,000 loan. The result would be that a number of complaints would arise that works for which money was voted were not being carried out, and there would be wigs on the green by-and-by.

The PREMIER said that what he had been wondering was, what all that had got to do with the question before them. The hon. gentleman opposite generally aimed at something, but in his speeches up to the present he could see nothing but his opinion of the Government policy. The hon. member had given them his version of the Government policy two or three times, and it had been pointed out that it was a misapprehension of the Government policy, to put it mildly. The hon. gentleman knew that he was only saying what had been said already. He had put his views before the country several times. He had represented that the Government were going to ruin the country, that they were going to take the money voted for one purpose and spend it upon another; that they would not be able to raise any more money. They knew all about those things before, and hon. gentlemen inside the House, and people outside, could form a perfectly just estimate of the arguments which the hon. member used, and those used in answer to them. He would remind hon. members that the question before the Committee was the advisability or otherwise of adopting the plans of the railway to Southport and Nerang. If the hon. member thought the insufficiency of the vote a sufficient reason for opposing the motion for the adoption of those plans, let him vote against it.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he had heard the Premier make that speech fifty times. Whenever a member on the Opposition side made a speech to which the Premier could not reply he got up and told them that he had heard it a dozen times over. The Opposition had been replied to in the same

words a dozen times before. That reply was always the Premier's refuge when he found himself in a difficulty and unable to answer the arguments brought against him. It was a matter of the greatest indifference to him (Sir T. McIlwraith) that a contradiction had been established between the Premier and the Minister for Works. The Minister for Works would sit alongside his Premier although their opinions were in every respect contradictory. The contradiction established between them on the present occasion was, therefore, not of much interest. It was, however, a great thing for the country to find out that the Opposition had got at last at the policy of the Government. It was now clear that when the Government asked for £10,000,000 they meant £15,000,000, and that they were to spend as much of the extra £5,000,000 on their own friends as they chose. They had so managed that the money matters were entirely in their own hands.

The PREMIER said he could not allow the last statement of the leader of the Opposition to pass without a reply. The hon. member knew as well as he himself did that what he had stated was not the policy of the Government, and he did not believe his own words when he said that he thought it was. The hon. member knew as well as everybody else that all the railways could not be constructed at once, and of course there must be some choice when there were twenty lines put down and only three or four could be carried out at one time. He had no ground for saying that the Government chose lines to benefit their own friends. Arguments of that kind, indeed, did not require an answer. The hon. gentleman's statement, too, that the Government deliberately intended to take money from one line to spend on another had no foundation whatever. They knew quite well that their Estimates of last year were not perfectly accurate. They knew very well that many of the lines on their list could not be completed with the money allotted for them. Nobody ever believed that they could, so there was nothing new in the statement. The mere fact that the money voted for a certain line was deficient by a few thousand pounds was taken hold of to make a charge against the Government and to make the country believe that the lines would not be completed. There were plenty of means for meeting the deficiency when it arose. The difficulty had not arisen yet. When it did the Government would be able to meet it, acting honestly and dealing fairly with all persons, no matter whether they were friends or foes.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier had told him that he (Sir T. McIlwraith) did not believe his own statements. That was merely a matter of opinion, and remarks of the kind from the Premier did not affect him in the slightest degree. When, however, he saw the Premier getting so very angry and abusing his friends, he (Sir T. McIlwraith) knew that the hon. member had a bad case. Often before the Premier had made the same speech, and it was a speech which he (Sir T. McIlwraith) knew so well that he could point to a dozen places in *Hansard* where it could be found almost word for word. Whenever it was delivered, he knew that the Premier had no case. In addition to that, when the Opposition persisted in stating their case, and the Premier got angry and abused them, it was clear that he had a hopeless case. The Premier could see perfectly well that he could not run to the refuge which had been open to previous Governments. He could not come forward and say, "I have not sufficient money for this line, give me a loan of some more." The Government had

debarred themselves from that refuge by having stated when they submitted the £10,000,000 loan that they would not borrow again for years. Their only refuge now was to steal money from other votes. The lines being entirely in the hands of the Government, and the Ministry of the day, and not Parliament, regulating the spending of the money, the result would be that the £10,000,000 loan would not be honestly or equitably distributed. It might be all right so far as the voting of the money was concerned, but they would find that whilst a large number of works would be completed at a large increase of cost others would be not nearly completed for want of sufficient money. That would be the upshot of the instructions given to the Government for the spending of the £10,000,000 loan. The Minister for Works had himself said that when the money was not sufficient for a particular work the Government would go on with the work, if they chose, by taking money from votes for work in other districts.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Premier had stated that it was not expected that the money from the £10,000,000 loan would be sufficient for the works intended to be constructed.

The PREMIER said what he stated was that nobody supposed the loan would build all the lines on the list.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he knew that a statement to the contrary effect was made last year, and it was combated by the Opposition, who argued that the money would not be sufficient. The arguments of the Opposition on that occasion were controverted by the Premier and his colleagues. What the Premier supposed last year could not therefore be the same as he supposed now. He had said the House was not under laws like those of the Medes and the Persians. The Ministry, however, were themselves governed by laws which were as irrevocable as those of the Medes and Persians. It was continually the excuse of the Minister for Works, when asked for any assistance, that the Government could not enter into any new work no matter how necessitous it might be, as they had made arrangements to spread the £10,000,000 loan over five years, and could not go to the London market to borrow more money. That was the only reason he gave when trying to defeat the motion for the purchase of land at the Darling Downs. The Premier tried to minimise the facts in relation to the South Coast line. He said they were only expending a few thousands more, and seemed to forget that the vote was not for a railway from Beenleigh to Southport or Nerang, but from Beenleigh to the border. £150,000 was voted for a line to the border, to twenty-five miles beyond Nerang, but half the line was to cost £18,000 more than was originally set down for the whole of it. Did the Premier suppose last year that £150,000 was to make a line to the border, or only to Nerang?

The PREMIER said he really did not remember.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that at all events the sum originally voted, with £18,000 added, would not make the line halfway to the border. That indicated that the result would be, as had been pointed out several times, that for the lines which came last for construction there would be no money until another loan was floated.

Nr. NORTON said it was quite evident now that the deficiencies in the votes for the first lines constructed would be made up from the votes for other lines. The South Coast line was but one illustration of that. Another was the line to Beauvaraba, the sum voted for which was

£48,000, whilst the sum actually estimated was something like £60,000. Where was that money to come from? It must come from the vote for another line. It was no use the Premier trying to throw dust in their eyes. They knew perfectly well that until another loan was raised the whole of those lines could not be even commenced, simply because the money voted for particular lines would be taken away from them and used in completing others.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution to the House, and the resolution was adopted.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES.

The SPEAKER informed the House that he had received a message from His Excellency the Governor, in accordance with the 18th section of the Constitution Act of 1867, transmitting Supplementary Estimates for 1885-6, and Supplementary Estimates No. 2, for 1884-5.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the Estimates were ordered to be printed, and referred to Committee of Supply.

MESSAGE FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER informed the House that he had received a message from the Legislative Council, returning the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Bill, with amendments.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration in committee to-morrow.

SUPPLY—RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the House resolved itself into a Committee further to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £1,925 be granted for Chief Engineer's Department, Southern Division. The vote was exactly the same as that provided last year.

Mr. SHERIDAN said that when the House was last in Committee of Supply he made a mistake, which he wished to correct at the earliest possible moment. His statement was that there was no portion of the £10,000,000 loan being expended in the Maryborough district. Since making that statement he had discovered that it was wrong, for, on referring to *Hansard*, vol. xlv., he found that an additional provision of £35,000 was required to complete the Maryborough and Gympie line, bringing up the amount from £365,500 to £400,500. There was also a further sum of £25,000 asked for on account of the Maryborough and Burrum line, the amount of the previous vote having been £70,000. Such being the case, he deemed it his duty to set himself right by admitting that he had made a mistake and by apologising for having done so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he knew at the time that the hon. member for Maryborough was making a mistake quite unintentionally, and he was glad the hon. member admitted it. Of course, the hon. member would not have made the mistake had he known the facts of the case.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked whether the duplication of the line to Ipswich was being carried out under the Chief Engineer or the Engineer for Existing Lines?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that it was being carried out under the Chief Engineer.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he believed that a portion of the work—the widening of the bridges—had been let by contract. It was currently reported now—whether correctly or not he could not say—that the Government intended to proceed with all the rest of the work on that line by day work. Was that the case, or not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the bridge work was being done by contract; but as to the cutting down of the very steep embankments with the risk and danger of keeping the line open—it would be almost impossible to get a contractor to do it. The hon. member shook his head; but he (the Minister for Works) could only say that there was very great risk connected with that work, and the Government had no desire to see any more accidents such as the one that took place at Darra. He was perfectly satisfied that no contractor would undertake the work and keep the line clear except at enormous cost, and the Government had therefore come to the conclusion that it would be better and safer to keep it in their own hands than to place it in the hands of a contractor.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was extremely sorry to hear that the Government had come to that conclusion. It was a great mistake to suppose that the Government could do that work cheaper than a contractor.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not say the Government could do it cheaper. I said with more safety.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman said it would cost an enormous sum if done by a contractor, and the inference was that it would cost less if done by the Government. He also said that it would be impossible to get a contractor to do it; but such was not the case. They were duplicating a long portion of one of the lines in New South Wales, and they had found no trouble in getting contractors to tender for the work. The engineer had only to make out his specification and requirements, and contractors would do the work better, and cheaper, and more safely than the Government could do it, and he was only sorry that the Government had come to the conclusion to do it otherwise. They had heard a good deal about the "Government stroke," and he would like the hon. gentleman to see men working in that way, and then look at men working for a contractor. A greater mistake could hardly have been made by the Government in duplicating the line, which had been an unfortunate one from the start. It was initiated under a wrong system—not exactly piece work, but something very near it—which had resulted in its costing nearly three times as much as it would have cost if it had been done by contract. He was very sorry to see that the Minister for Works was going to make a similar bungle in carrying out the duplication by piece-work, instead of by contract.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was very hard to please the hon. member for Townsville. It was impossible to know what he wanted. Last night he was growling against the Government engineers and foremen for interfering too much with contractors, and now he said that work should be done by contract, although it was perfectly clear that the trouble of keeping the line clear for traffic would be very harassing upon the contractor. It was impossible to please the hon. member. He thought himself one of those heaven-born engineers who knew better how to do works of that kind than anyone could tell him. He knew that the hon. gentleman had some experience of contracts in New South Wales, and how

about harassing there? He expected that contractors had to do work there as well as contractors had to do it elsewhere.

Mr. ANNEAR said he thought the duplication of the line between the station and the bridge would be far better carried out by the Government—from his knowledge of the gangers in their service—than by a contractor. With regard to the duplication in New South Wales, referred to by the hon. gentleman, he believed it was between Parramatta and Penrith. He had been over that line, and he had not seen any cuttings there to compare with the cuttings between the railway station and the bridge here. From what he had seen of the gangers in his own district—he did not know anything about them elsewhere—he was convinced that they were really reliable men, and that the work would be carried out as cheaply, as safely, and as well as by any contractor in the colony. No doubt it was a very dangerous piece of work. The Government had the responsibility of keeping the line open; they would have men on whom they could depend; and, in his opinion, no accident would occur.

Mr. NORTON said he hardly agreed with the last speaker that the work would be done as cheaply by "Government stroke."

Mr. ANNEAR: No "Government stroke" about those men.

Mr. NORTON said he did not know whether there was or not; but he remembered the Minister for Works, in speaking on another matter a few days ago, describing the Government Service as a sort of paradise, where men could do the "Government stroke" for the rest of their lives. He supposed a number of men could be picked up for the work—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member might just as well sit down; I cannot hear a word he is saying.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Speak up!

Mr. NORTON: If so many members were not speaking at the same time, the junior member for Cook would have no occasion to say "Speak up." He believed that hon. member was one of those who were speaking.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Members cannot hear the hon. member, therefore they talked themselves. If the hon. member could be heard there would not be any conversation going on.

Mr. NORTON: The reporters in the gallery could generally hear him, and he believed hon. members could if they tried to do so. He was not complaining; it was the Minister for Works who said he could not hear what was being said.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall not permit the hon. member to misrepresent me.

Mr. NORTON: He had no desire to misrepresent anything said by hon. members. The Minister for Works said he (Mr. Norton) might just as well sit down, because he could not hear him. He was—

Mr. KELLETT: We cannot hear you now.

The CHAIRMAN: I must request hon. members not to interrupt the speaker.

Mr. KELLETT: I only remarked that we could not hear the hon. member now. I do not think that is much of an interruption.

Mr. NORTON said he was very sorry, but he could assure the Minister for Works that he had no intention of misrepresenting him. He had been saying that he did not believe what the hon. gentleman said—that the work on the line between Brisbane and Ipswich could be done as

cheaply by day labour as by contract. There was really no more difficulty in carrying out that work by contract than in carrying out any other work. If contractors did the work they would be able to keep the line quite clear enough to enable trains to travel as usual. The hon. gentleman said it could be done more safely by employing day labour; but he did not agree with him, because if the work were done by contract there would be more inspectors appointed along the line to see that the work was conducted in a manner which would ensure public safety.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not think the hon. member for Port Curtis agreed with anybody. He did not wish to be offensive to the hon. gentleman, who got up and drawled and drawled away without anybody hearing what he was saying, and it was enough to aggravate a saint. The hon. gentleman knew perfectly well that keeping the line open while cutting down embankments was very precarious work, and he would like to know where they would get a contractor to undertake to do that unless he was paid a very high price indeed. He did not suppose for one moment that the work would be done cheaper by day labour; but it could be done with more safety, and that was what he looked at. He did not know whether the hon. member for Port Curtis and the hon. member for Townsville expected the Government to consult them as to what they should do. It appeared very much like it. The hon. member for Townsville was so full of conceit in himself that there was no individual, no matter who he might be, who could do anything without his assistance. Talk about taking charge of the Channel fleet: the hon. member for Townsville would even undertake to build the railway from Cairns to Herberton, which was supposed to be a most difficult work, without the assistance of a professional man at all. Some of the cuttings he had referred to were very deep, and it would be difficult to keep the line clear. There was no mystery about that.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. Minister for Works had expressed himself very forcibly. He said that the hon. member for Townsville thought that the Government ought to consult him. That was wrong; but hon. gentlemen could criticise the Government. He thought the hon. gentleman wished to get through his estimates; but he was not going the proper way about it. It would take some time to go through them at that rate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is plenty of time.

Mr. ARCHER said there was; but it would make the Colonial Secretary look very glum by-and-by if the Minister for Works went on in that way. He could assure the hon. gentleman that he was mistaken in the importance he gave himself if he thought the hon. member for Townsville was not able to criticise him. Not only he, but every other gentleman in the Committee, would take the liberty of criticising him, and he did not think the hon. member for Townsville would be put down by being called "vain and bumptious" and all the other epithets that were applied to him. The hon. Minister for Works was in a bad temper, and if he had kept his temper he would have done better.

Mr. NORTON said he felt sorry to irritate the hon. gentleman, because his experience of him was that he had a very amiable temper. Hon. members need not laugh; the hon. gentleman had always treated him with great courtesy and consideration. But he was bound, on account of the position he held, to ask whatever questions

he chose, or criticise the hon. gentleman in any way he thought necessary. Therefore the hon. gentleman need not take any great offence. He did not expect that the Minister for Works would consult him in anything; but he intended to exercise his right to criticise any item upon the Estimates he considered necessary. The hon. gentleman had not shown that it would be cheaper to have the work in question done by day labour than by contract. All his arguments tended to show that it could be done cheaper, and as safely, by contract.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman had not attempted to find out how much it would cost if done by contract, so that it was impossible for him to make a comparison as to the relative costs of day work and contract work. If he had called for tenders, he would know. The engineer could give an estimate of what he could do it for, as, no doubt, he had done. Until that was done it was beyond the power of the Minister for Works to say which was the cheaper course to pursue. He believed the contract work was, as it was in every case; but it could only be decided by calling for tenders. If tenders were called and were found to be too high, the Minister could refuse them. As for the safe working of the line, that could be provided for as well by contractors as by Government inspectors. He (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) hoped that criticism did not annoy the Minister for Works. He could assure the hon. gentleman that if he wanted to trail the tail of his coat round the room it would be pretty often trodden upon. If he wished to get through with his estimates he would have to stand a fair amount of criticism. Hitherto there had been no unnecessary or captious criticism, and no attempt had been made to trouble the Minister for Works; in fact, every allowance had been made for his age and infirmity. Of course the hon. gentleman was blind to his own infirmity, but he could assure the hon. gentleman that there was not a member of the Committee who did not make extraordinary allowances for his age and infirmity. He (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) would repeat that the engineer could not say which was the cheaper system till tenders had been called for and compared with the estimated cost; and as for the safe working of the line, it was a matter of opinion. His opinion was that it could be worked as safely under contractors as under Government inspectors.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would admit that, as a general rule, it was far better to have work done by contract, but that particular work was of a particularly dangerous character, and it would be almost impossible to get a contractor to do it except at a very high rate. The hon. member told him that if he wished to get through his estimates he must be prepared to stand criticism. He was prepared for that, but he knew that hon. members had made up their minds to put him through what was termed his facings. He had to put up with a certain amount of abuse whether he liked it or not; and all he could say was that he would be very happy to return it. He had no desire to withhold any information so long as it was asked for in a civil way. He would ask hon. members, if they wanted to put him through his facings, to do it in a decent way.

Mr. BEATTIE said the hon. member for Townsville considered it was a matter of opinion whether contract or day work was the cheaper. He (Mr. Beattie's) experience was that the contractor must have a very large profit indeed, and it was not always the case that contracting was the best way. He himself had often done work and saved the contractor's profit and a

good deal also of the original tender. The particular work in question would be very expensive if it were done by contract, because it would necessitate the employment of extra overseers by the Government, who would not be required if the Government were doing the work themselves. A contractor would require an immense margin to work on in taking a job of that kind. He thought the Government had done very wisely in having the work done under their own supervision. He might say in passing that the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Port Curtis were not at all complimentary to some of the employés of the Government. From their knowledge of the department they must surely know of some good men in the Government employ. He (Mr. Beattie) knew some men in the department in whom he would place every confidence to carry out the work for the Government just as well as if they were employed by a contractor. He thought the Minister deserved some credit for adopting the system, particularly in the two dangerous cuttings between the station and Indooroopilly.

Mr. NORTON said he did not think either he or the hon. member for Townsville had said anything to justify the hon. member's charge that they had condemned the officers of the department. All they had said was that in every body of men there were a large number who would not work as hard on day labour as at contract work. They all knew how the term "Government stroke" had come into vogue, though the term might just as well be applied to everyone employed on day labour by a private firm.

Mr. HAMILTON asked how it was that the chief clerk in the department received a lower salary than the chief clerks in other departments? There seemed to be a stated salary—£500 a year—for chief clerks, but in this case it was only £450. He would like to know the reason for making the exception. There was certainly one other case where a chief clerk got only £450, but the predecessor got £500, and the present holder had only been a short time in the position. The chief clerk of the department they were now considering had, he believed, been seventeen or eighteen years in the service.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he believed Mr. Hamilton, the officer in question, to be a very efficient officer, and he believed he had been promised an increase for some time past. The Government, however, had come to the conclusion that no increase should be put on the Estimates for the present year, otherwise Mr. Hamilton would have had an increase. He well deserved it; his work had increased considerably, and he was a very efficient officer, and next year he (the Minister for Works) would recommend an increase of £50.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was not quite certain as to the steps to be taken by the Minister for Works, and as, from the comments made by members on the Government side of the Committee, they seemed to have understood the statement in the same way, he should like to know whether the Government intended to carry out the whole of the work of the duplication of the line between Brisbane and Ipswich by day labour or only the deep cuttings?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, as to whether the whole of the work should be done by day work or not, his own opinion was that it was only in those particular cuttings—those rocky cuttings, where the bank was so high that there would be considerable trouble and risk in keeping the line open—that day labour should be employed. However, he saw no particular danger in dealing with the cuttings

between the bridge across the river and Ipswich; there was not the same risk or danger there. The cuttings on the side of the river between the bridge and the present station were very deep, and all through rock, and some considerable trouble would be experienced in making those cuttings and keeping the line open; and he thought that, as the Government had trustworthy men as gangers, there was more safety in doing that particular work themselves. He was perfectly aware that whenever work could be done by contract that was the proper way to do it; and he did not think it was the right thing for the Government to go in for any more day labour than they could possibly avoid.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was, then, to understand that the Government had not decided beyond those deep cuttings? And what about the Sandgate line? Was that being done by day work or by contract?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that was being done by day work. It was only a very small job, and so far it was being done satisfactorily and reasonably.

Mr. KELLETT said he was a great believer in work being done by contract, because it was the cheapest and most satisfactory way of doing it as a rule; but in the present instance he was thoroughly at one with the action taken in doing the work by day labour. He took a good deal of interest in the duplication of the line, and he had made inquiries from a few men who understood the work, because he found there were not many contractors here who knew exactly how to go about making the cuttings and allow of the working of the railway at the same time. He had been told by one contractor that if he was putting in a contract he would have to leave a very large margin indeed for the delays that might be occasioned, in order that he might be sure of getting safely out of it. From hearing that from a man who understood the work, he was satisfied that the work could be done cheaper by the Government taking it in hand than by letting it by contract. The great thing to be looked to was the safety of the line, and a contractor who might be anxious to push on the work and make money might take action that would not be conducive to the safety of persons travelling on the line. While on the subject he would ask the Minister for Works whether the cuttings now being made were being made wide enough for a wide-gauge railway in the future. His reason for asking was, that he was sorry to see that the bridges already contracted for on the duplication were only made to take a narrow-gauge railway. Last session there was a very long discussion upon that subject, and the Minister for Works distinctly stated at the time that it was advisable that the works now being started should be made wide enough to carry a 4 feet 8½ inches railway. The Premier also stated that such action would be taken. The contracts were let for the bridges for some £49,000 and he was very much astonished to find that they would not take the wide gauge as promised. The Minister for Works and the Premier had each made a distinct promise in the House, and without the sanction of the House they had gone back from their promise and acted in a different manner. He happened to hear, a few days before tenders were called for the bridges, that it was not contemplated to make them wide enough to take the broad gauge; and he made it his business to interview the Premier and ask him if he was aware that that was the case. Well, the Premier was never more astonished in his life than when he told him what was being done. He left with the impression

that it would be altered; but he supposed that as they had gone so far they would not go back. When it became necessary, and he hoped that would be in a very short time, to make the bridges wide enough for the broad gauge, the expense of making the bridges wider by the extra three feet would be as much as the £49,000 which the bridges were to cost. He had made inquiries to find out what would be the extra cost if the bridges were made to take the broad gauge at the present time, and he was told that it would be about 10 per cent. extra. If that was so, a great saving might have been made. He would like to know if the cuttings were to be made wide enough to take the broad gauge, or whether they were to be made in the same peddling fashion as the bridges were to be made?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the statement of the hon. member for Stanley was hardly correct. He could not make a promise to the House that future extensions should be made on the broader gauge. As near as he could recollect, he said that it would be a very good thing if it could be done, but it was entirely a matter of cost. No hon. member would suppose that any promise he could make would commit the country to an expenditure of several millions of money. He would like to know what earthly use it would be to construct a railway from Stanthorpe to the border on a 4½ feet gauge, and to duplicate the line from Brisbane to Ipswich on the same gauge. His own opinion was that it would be utterly absurd to alter the gauge of their railways at the present time. Such a proceeding would increase their outlay to such an extent that it would be utterly impossible to meet their ordinary requirements. He believed that, if the gradients of the present lines were kept down, the lines would be sufficient for all purposes for the next fifty years. Tenders were being called for the extension of the line from Stanthorpe to the border, and it had been surveyed for a 3 feet 6 inch gauge, which worked very well with curves of 5 chains. A wider gauge would require curves of 8 chains, and the line would have to be all re-surveyed, which would mean a considerable loss of time. Again, the bridge across the Brisbane River at Indooroopilly was only built for the 3 feet 6 inch gauge, and was not intended to carry heavier rolling-stock than was at present on the lines. It would only be throwing money away to make wider cuttings and wider bridges when they were not likely to be used; but even if they were likely to be used where was the money to come from? The Government were told very often that they were bringing ruin on the country by a lavish expenditure. They would be really open to a charge of extravagance if they were to alter the gauge of the railways. He did not refuse to widen any embankments and bridges on his own responsibility, but had taken the opinion of the Chief Engineer on the subject, and had found that the cost of getting up the Main Range with a 4 feet 8½ inch gauge would be something enormous. The Government were not in a position to undertake a work of that kind at present.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £254,517 be voted to defray the salaries, etc., of the Southern and Western Railway. Hon. members would see that there was an increase in the item for maintenance of permanent way of £11,000. In the Traffic Department, a new time-table clerk had been appointed at a reduction of £50 on the salary paid to his predecessor. There were fourteen additional station-masters, at an increased expenditure of £1,500; five additional assistant and relieving

station-masters, at an increase of £730; five additional clerks at stations, at an increase of £1,150; five additional guards, at an increase of £500; an additional station inspector, at £200; an additional gatekeeper, at £100—altogether twenty-four additional men in the Traffic Department, representing a total increase as compared with the previous year's estimate of £2,750. In the Locomotive Department there were twenty-five additional cleaners, enginemen, firemen, etc., at an increase of £2,908; six additional fitters, trimmers, moulders, etc., at an increase of £965; one additional carriage-builder and a painter, at an increase of £295; six additional inspectors and oilers, at an increase of £728; and four additional men of other callings, at an increase of £346. The item for fuel and contingencies was also increased by £3,550. The total number of additional men in the Locomotive Department was forty-three, and the total increase over the vote for last year was £8,714. An additional sum of £9,000 was asked for the Stores Department. It would be remembered that when the Estimates were before the Committee last year several members complained very much about the long hours station-masters were on duty. Consequently they had in most instances been allowed assistance—there was either a station-master and an assistant station-master, or a station-master and a porter. That accounted for a considerable increase, and the additional length of line opened necessitated an increase in the item for fuel.

Mr. DONALDSON said the present seemed an opportune time to discuss the railway rates. The tariff charged in the colony for the carriage of goods by rail was so very exorbitant that it promised fair, before very long, to divert all the trade in the south-western portion of Queensland into New South Wales. It was high time some attention was paid to that matter, and some alteration should be made in it, if they wished to secure that trade for Brisbane. He had been in communication for some time with residents in the western and south-western parts of Queensland, and they all complained bitterly of the high rate of tariff charged for the carriage of goods on the Queensland railways. In fact the rate was so high that it absolutely prohibited them from sending their produce to, and getting their supplies from, Brisbane. It must be evident to all that such a state of things must be a great loss to the capital. Railways were made to develop the resources of the interior, but if, after constructing them, the rates of carriage were made so high as to prevent goods being carried thereon, they were adopting a suicidal policy, because they were driving away the trade which legitimately belonged to them into another colony. Perhaps he could not bring the facts of the case more forcibly home to hon. members than by reading a letter which he had received from one of the leading merchants, not only in Brisbane, but also in the Western district, and who forwarded more goods by the Southern and Western Railway than any other firm in that part of Queensland. The letter was as follows:—

"227 Queen street,
Brisbane, 23rd Aug., 1895.

"John Donaldson, Esq., M.L.A.,
Brisbane.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"As I hope and expect, before the present session of Parliament closes, some discussion will take place upon the railway goods tariff question, I have thought that a few remarks from me upon the subject might be useful to you.

"I have now had nearly fifteen years' experience as a forwarder of goods on the South-western line, and during that time have paid the Railway Department many thousands of pounds for freight.

"I enclose you a comparative statement showing the rate charged upon our line to Dulbydilla (which is now the terminus of the Western line), also the rate charged for a distance of 503 miles, which, if present rates are not altered when the line is opened so far, will be the charge; also showing the rate between Sydney and Bourke, a distance of 563, which is only say 13 miles less than from Brisbane to Charleville.

"From these figures you will see that the trade of the whole of the south-west portion of the colony must go to Bourke, and that places as far north as Adavale on the Bulloo, Yarrongvale on the Paroo, and Murweh on the Warrego, will find it cheaper to get their supplies from and forward their produce to Sydney *via* Bourke, than over our lines.

"Already several stations that have for some years been buying in Brisbane, and forwarding their wool here, have arranged this year to send *via* Bourke; even from two stations alone this means a loss of traffic of several hundreds of tons of stores and wool per year.

"A glance at the map, attached to Mr. Curnow's report, laid upon the table of the House, will show that unless the rates are reduced the difference in distance to the places I have named as between Dulbydilla and Bourke will not have the effect of securing their trade, unless in exceptional seasons of drought, when the traffic will take the roads that are the best to travel on, if they are equal. It must go *via* Bourke, even if the distance is 100 miles further from Bourke than from Dulbydilla. It seems to me that, in order to save this trade, a very material reduction will have to be made in the railway freight on many of the principal articles used on stations. Flour in New South Wales is carried to Bourke, a distance of 503 miles, for £1 13s. per ton. Our rate to Dulbydilla will be £8 17s. 11d. Sugar is carried at the same rate here, whilst from Sydney to Bourke the rate is £4 12s. 3d., or less than half our rate. The difference is such that it would pay a squatter to send his wool by teams over 200 miles further in order to truck from Bourke, and, of course, by whichever route he sends his wool he gets his supplies.

"I do not advocate a heavy reduction in all classes of goods, as, for instance, wines and spirits, and many articles of drapery, will bear a high rate of carriage, and a reduction would not tend to any corresponding increase of traffic. There is no doubt, however, that some effort should be made to retain the trade we have had hitherto.

"I look, however, upon the southern and western portions of the colony as lost to us. The towns of Cunnamulla, Eulo, Thargomindah, and the stations near them, tried a few years back to deal with Brisbane, but the high rates of railrage prevented them. Stations and towns north of those places, now the line is open from Sydney to Bourke, will be compelled to follow their example; and, having once made business connections with Sydney, it will be a most difficult matter to get their trade back again.

"The only way I see to prevent this great loss, is by carrying wool, flour, and other necessities of life generally, at the lowest possible rate.

"From a comparison of the tariff of the New South Wales lines, you will see that they adopt a sliding scale upon all weighty goods, and that the rates for short distances are their highest per ton per mile. Ours, however, are the lowest for short distances. First-class goods to Ipswich are carried at 2½d. per ton per mile, whilst from there to the western terminus it is over 5d. per ton per mile. From Toowoomba westward it is exactly 5d.

"The want of a sliding scale of tariff appears to be its weakest point. The goods traffic to Ipswich must certainly be carried on at a loss, or the residents in the West are paying too high. The produce traffic cannot pay, and I doubt if the Queensland ground flour rate pays. The reason assigned for such low rates is to protect the farming industry, but if such protection is necessary the Custom House is where the tax should be levied. Then all consumers would pay it alike. Under the present system, the farther one lives from Brisbane the larger the tax one has to pay upon imported produce, for it cannot cost more to carry Tasmanian or New Zealand produce than Queensland grown. The charge for railrage, however, is nearly 50 per cent. more.

"The classification of goods also requires readjusting. Many lines that are now carried under first-class rates should be in a special class. Oilmen's stores, dried fruits, jams, tea, etc., should certainly not cost from 25 to 50 per cent. of their value to convey them 400 miles by rail.

"The sugar-planter must think it rather hard that the Railway Department charge more to convey ration sugar to Dulbydilla, 410 miles, than they get for growing and delivering it in Brisbane.

"It is no doubt a difficult matter for one or two men to frame a tariff, and I think the proper way would be to appoint a commission upon which the Railway Department and the producing and mercantile interests would be represented.

"I have now been nearly fifteen years in business in the West, and I am now paying more per ton to get goods up to Charleville than I did for the first four years I was in business, when the railway was only open to Dalby.

"As railways are made to open up the country, and as so far they have not had that effect under the present system, it appears to me that unless a change is speedily made that even under the new Land Act settlement in the West will be as sparse as it is at the present time.

"Believe me,

"Dear Sir,

"Yours truly,

"R. SKINNER."

That letter touched upon all the main facts, so that there was not much left for him to say. With regard to the rates for over 410 miles, they were just about equal to those by bullock teams for the same goods—£12 per ton. Only that day he heard of an order having been sent from Adavale to Brisbane for certain goods, and the same goods could be sent from Sydney and travel 400 miles by land at a cheaper rate than they could be sent in Queensland a distance of 210 miles. Such a state of things should not exist. Surely, with only half the land carriage that other colonies had, they should not be able to compete against us by reason of their low railway rates. The Minister for Works had contended that they were not able to carry at the same low rate as New South Wales, and possibly they might not be able to do so at quite so low a rate, but at the same time it was quite competent for them to charge such rates that persons at long distances should not be called upon to pay more per ton per mile than those at short distances. If a reduction was made it should be on the long and not on the short distances. He had also the copy of another letter from Mr. Dye, manager for Wright, Heaton, and Company, which he would read. It was as follows:—

"Wright, Heaton, and Company, Limited,

"245 Queen street,

"Brisbane, 23rd October, 1885.

"J. Donaldson, Esquire,

"Brisbane.

"DEAR SIR,—

"I have this morning received a letter from a gentleman in Sydney who is well posted up in railway matters, in which he states that the New South Wales Government are disposed to make a very material reduction in the railway carriage of goods going over the Queensland border, so as to cut Queensland out of the carrying trade altogether. I am also informed that a high official has lately been to the Western country, taking a quiet look at it, and has just returned, making a number of recommendations. My correspondent further says that any reductions on railway rates for distances as far as Mitchell will have to be at least 50 per cent. on present rates or Queensland will be out of the trade entirely.

"At the present time our firm are having large transactions from New South Wales, with the south-western portion of Queensland, extending as far as Adavale and Charleville, with every possibility of their extending further north. St. George is also being supplied *via* Narrabri, and, from letters I am receiving from constituents out west, I do not hesitate to state that unless some very great reductions are made in our railway tariff, the railway, so far as the Southern and Western lines are concerned, will soon become useless."

"Yours etc.,

"THOMAS F. DYE,

"General Manager."

Adavale was distant, he believed, about 220 miles from Dulbydilla, and he knew that wool had been sent from Milo Station to Bourke that year; and he had been informed by one of the proprietors that had it not been that they had entered into a contract with the Western

Carrying Company to send 200 tons to Brisbane, not a single bale of that wool would have been sent down here. Every bale over and above that quantity had been sent south. Messrs. McLean and Barker, the proprietors of another station lower down on the Bulloo, were also send their wool to Bourke, which was about 100 miles greater land carriage than to Dulbydilla, and the reason they gave was that the rates were so great upon our lines as to preclude them from sending it to Bourke. He would read a comparative statement of the rates charged here as far as Dulbydilla—411 miles from Brisbane—and the rates charged in New South Wales to Bourke, which was 503 miles from Sydney, and he would then show what our charges would be for 503 miles at present rates. Flour, per ton, from Sydney to Bourke, was £1 5s. 9d.; Brisbane to Dulbydilla, £8 18s. 9d.; and when the line was constructed to 503 miles the charge here would be £10 16s. 10d. Sugar, from Sydney to Bourke, if sent in quantity of six tons, £5 0s. 7d.; in small quantities, £7 13s. 10d.; from Brisbane to Dulbydilla, £8 18s. 9d., without any reduction for large quantities; to 503 miles, £10 16s. 10d.—almost double. Groceries, Sydney to Bourke, £10 14s. 3d.; Brisbane to Dulbydilla, £13 17s. 11d.; to 503 miles, £16 1s. 8d. Wire, Sydney to Bourke, £6 3s. 3d.; Brisbane to Dulbydilla, £5 12s. 6d.; to 503 miles, £6 10s. 4d. There was very little difference in that item. New woolpacks, Sydney to Bourke, £3 18s.; Brisbane to Dulbydilla, £8 18s. 9d.; and to 503 miles, £10 10s. 10d. Wool, per bale, 15s. from Bourke; if properly dumped and hooped with iron an allowance of 15 per cent., which brought the charge down to 12s. 9d.; from Dulbydilla, £9 18s. 4d., or £1 19s. 8d. per bale; and for the same distance as Bourke it would be £2 5s. 11d. per bale. Was it possible to expect to get freight sent on our lines for anything like a reasonable distance when it could be sent to Bourke for less than one-third our rates? Galvanised iron, from Sydney to Bourke, was £6 3s. 3d. per ton; Brisbane to Dulbydilla £8 18s. 9d.; and for the same distance as Bourke, £10 16s. 10d. On wool in bales under 250 lbs. there was an allowance of 15 per cent. He did not know whether there was any reduction here; he had not been furnished with it. From those rates it would be readily seen that in some instances our rates were more than double those of New South Wales. He knew that the Minister for Works would say that those low rates had been fixed in New South Wales because they had to compete with other colonies, but that argument did not apply to their western lines, where they had no competition, and yet their rates were so much cheaper than ours and the lines were managed in a way that led to very satisfactory results indeed. He trusted that hon. members would take the matter into their serious consideration. Let them try and save the trade of the colony as far as they could. They were extending their railways into a portion of the colony the trade of which should belong to them, and they should endeavour to secure it; but when bullock teams could carry at £12 per ton in some portions of the colony they could not expect to get freight at the present rates. He earnestly hoped that a reduction would be made in order to save the trade of those portions of the colony from going into New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he might inform the hon. gentleman that Government had already had the matter under their consideration for some time past, and had come to the conclusion that the main line had now reached a distance inland when the Railway Department were in a position to revise the tariff. But it was utterly impossible that they could carry at the same rates as New South

Wales. The hon. gentleman quoted the rates between Sydney and Bourke, and had pointed out that there was no competition there. He would remind him that they could not have differential rates in Queensland. In New South Wales they could not charge people living along the line to Bourke at higher rates than were charged nearer Sydney. They were charging at that low rate for the purpose of taking the trade from Victoria, and it was utterly impossible in Queensland to carry goods at those rates.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Their trains take double the loads.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That is in consequence of the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that on the New South Wales lines they had heavy rolling stock and powerful engines that could draw 400 tons, whilst in Queensland the engines could only draw 150 tons. However, the Commissioner for Railways and the Traffic Manager had the matter under consideration, and the tariff would be brought down to as low a rate as possible. He hoped that would satisfy the hon. gentleman. The railway had now reached a distance when it would be possible to make considerable reductions on certain goods—such as flour, sugar, and wool.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he did not think that the Minister for Works had given a very satisfactory answer to the hon. member for Warrego. The subject was brought forward last year on the same ground that it had been brought forward upon now by the Minister for Works. Why did it happen that in Queensland they could not compete on even terms with the other colonies? Why did it happen that it cost four times as much to carry goods on their railways as it did in other colonies? Simply because their railways were constructed too lightly, and the hon. gentleman himself, when the subject was brought forward last year, said that now was the time to start afresh; it would not cost very much. The following was a speech the hon. gentleman made upon the gauge question:—

"The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe the alteration of gauge is only a question of time, and I certainly think this is a very good time to make the alteration. We have already sanctioned a line from Stanthorpe to the border, tenders for which will be opened in the course of a few days, and a commencement will be speedily made to connect with New South Wales. I hope the House will give us authority to build the direct railway by way of Warwick and the double line to Ipswich, and then within two or three years we shall have a direct line from the border near Tenterfield right on to Gympie. I am further of opinion that within the next twelve or fifteen years no more narrow-gauge railways will be laid down; all the lines will be built on the broad-gauge system. The difference in cost of construction is not very material."

The question was continued while they discussed a large number of lines, and the Minister asked that when he brought forward the plans and sections of the various railways that were referred to in that discussion he might be authorised to make them on the broad-gauge principle. He, for one, was very much disappointed that the Government had forgotten that promise, and the policy that was evidently adopted by the Committee at that time. He was very glad to see that the line between Brisbane and Ipswich was to be widened. He knew the danger there was in carrying on works of that kind while the ordinary traffic was being carried on; but that was a greater reason why the Minister should have held to his promise, and asked the sanction of the Committee for such an increase in the width of the bridges and culverts, and cuttings, and tunnels, as would make additional work unnecessary when the broad gauge actually came in

force in those parts of the colony. That point was decidedly agreed to by the Minister for Works as representing the Government, and it was partially agreed to by the Premier, and there was no doubt that the policy of the Committee last year was in favour of the broad gauge. The reason was perfectly obvious. Were they going to sit down quietly and say, "We have adopted an expensive system of making railways; we have gone in for the narrow gauge, which is most expensive, and we find ourselves placed alongside of a colony which has adopted another system, and we find that to make a certain profit on our railways we must charge a tariff that forces trade into the adjoining colony—are we to sit content with that as the policy of Queensland?" The thing was absurd. The hon. gentleman talked about differential rates to protect business. He remembered well when the battle for the trade of Southern and South-western Queensland to come to Brisbane was fought, and at one time they did succeed in bringing it to Brisbane; but of late years it had gone elsewhere. It was of no use to say that the Traffic Manager and Commissioner were going to revise the tariff. It was for that Committee to say upon what conditions that tariff must be made. They should have the trade of the south-western portion of the colony for the colony itself. If New South Wales adopted the same system with which she fought Victoria, Queensland ought to be prepared to fight her with her own weapons. If their railways now were not sufficient to protect their own trade it would not do to sit down and say it could not be helped. According to the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief, the cost of changing to the broad gauge on all railways made since the debate last year would have been under £1,000,000, and the policy then approved of by the House and the Minister himself was that all extensions were to be carried out on the broad gauge. It was well known that the cost of making a wide-gauge railway was not much more than that of making one on the narrow gauge. Of course, the break in the gauge would be inconvenient for a time, but by degrees the change could be made all over the colony until all the lines had a gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches. Labour was not more expensive in this colony than in the other colonies; the country was not more difficult, and the trade would be as great. Therefore, if they adopted the proper means they could look confidently forward to keeping the trade on their own lines. The Ministry were going away from their own policy. They were commencing an expensive work—the widening of the Ipswich line—and instead of making one job of it they were making two. It would have to be widened again for a double line on the broad gauge. A great mistake had been made by the Minister. The House adopted the system and the Ministry had broken faith with them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The House did nothing of the sort.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said no formal resolution had been come to on the matter, but the feeling of the House was most undoubtedly in favour of a system by which the gauge would gradually be altered. The Minister himself adopted it. He would read another speech of the hon. member's on the same date:—

"The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the time had now arrived when the line between Brisbane and Ipswich should be doubled. If any accident happened upon it now it blocked the whole of the traffic. The trains were running under staff regulations, and if one delay took place all the trains were delayed. With reference to the question of change of gauge, the present afforded a very favourable opportunity to, at all events, lay down a line that would be suitable for a wider gauge."

He was quoting the Hon. William Miles, Minister for Works.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: All right.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH:—

"The additional cost would not be very excessive, and when the time came it would be easy to shift the rails to a wider gauge. It would not be a bad thing to commence with the line they had sanctioned that evening. Eventually the gauge on all the lines would have to be altered, and in the meantime it might be advisable so to construct the tracks as to make provision for a wider gauge when the time for that arrived."

When the leader of the Opposition and the Government were at one, and there was no great dissent on the part of members generally, he thought he was quite right in considering they had the sense of the House. He was perfectly justified in considering that the decision of the House last year was that the matter should have the immediate attention of the Government, and the Government had not been fulfilling their pledge when they brought down plans and sections without provision being made for a wider gauge. The Ministry had broken faith with the House and gone away, not only from their own ideas, but from the ideas of members of Parliament.

The PREMIER said two questions had been raised—first with respect to competing with New South Wales for the trade of the South Western district. There was no doubt they would have to fight New South Wales for that trade. They had built the railways to get that trade, and the Government intended to get it. Competition of that kind generally resulted in some loss at first; but it was better to get the trade even without much profit on the railways than to lose it altogether. That matter was under the consideration of the Government. He himself was prepared to fight New South Wales, as that colony had fought Victoria. With respect to the gauge, it was quite true that last year the House was rather carried away by the arguments in favour of the broad gauge. The matter was discussed one evening, and the conclusion the Committee arrived at—rather hastily, perhaps—was, that it was desirable that the broad gauge should be laid down as soon as possible, and that on the double line to Ipswich the alterations should be made in such a way as to admit of the broad gauge being used if necessary. But before carrying into effect a conclusion of that kind the Government had to look at it more carefully—find out what it would cost, what the probability was of the broad gauge being adopted within a reasonable time, and also what advantages would be gained by it. He forgot the time that would be saved between Brisbane and Ipswich by having the broad gauge, but it was less than twenty minutes. Beyond Ipswich the adoption of the broad gauge, either on the present road over the Main Range or on that projected to Warwick, would be impossible. The present road would not carry the broad gauge: for one reason because the tunnels were not big enough, and for another, because the curves were too sharp. It would therefore involve the construction of an entirely new road over the Main Range. On the road to Warwick it would be quite impracticable to take the broad gauge by the route surveyed or anywhere near that route, except at an entirely prohibitive cost. Under those circumstances it was a matter for serious consideration, whether it was worth while to incur the additional expense between Brisbane and Ipswich. The inconvenience would be great, and what would be the compensating advantage? They were confronted also by the fact that the bridge over the river at Indooroopilly was not broad enough or strong enough to carry the heavier rolling stock, and they were not prepared

to ask for a new bridge there. Considering all those circumstances, the Government came to the conclusion that it would not be a wise thing, in the interests of economy or efficiency, to make any change at the present time. The broad-gauge railway could not be laid down for several years, and at any rate under the circumstances the Government considered it not worth while to incur the additional expense at the present time. For his own part he doubted very much whether it would not take a very much longer time than the hon. member had mentioned before the broad-gauge was adopted. The battle of the gauges was an unending battle; and the more he thought on the subject the more he was inclined to believe that the narrow-gauge was the best for the colony. Some hon. members would, no doubt, consider that absurd, and think that the advantages of the broad-gauge were obvious. He did not think them obvious, however, and there were many men who agreed with him. However, the Government came to the conclusion, after weighing the various matters pointed out, that it would not be wise or right at the present time to make any change, and they also came to the conclusion that if the matter was put fairly before the Committee they would probably come to the same conclusion.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier had given it as his more mature opinion that there was not much to be gained by a change from the narrow to the broad gauge. On what the hon. gentleman based that opinion he did not know, but his hon. colleague had stated one fact to the Committee that ought undoubtedly to have made the Premier come to a different conclusion altogether. He told them that the power of work on the New South Wales railways as compared with the Queensland railways was as 40 to 15—that was to say that engines that could haul 400 tons in New South Wales could haul no more than 150 tons in Queensland. He would like to know why that was so. Was it because the engineers, drivers, stokers, and guards in New South Wales were paid more money? That was not the cause. Was it because the lines cost more? That was not the cause. It was simply and purely because in Queensland they were working a very expensive class of railways. That was the only reason. The Premier had told them he had more maturely considered the matter, but he had not brought forward a single fact that had not been thoroughly discussed before. The hon. member had mentioned the Indoeroopilly bridge, and had said it was not big enough or strong enough for a broad-gauge railway. But he would tell the Committee that a broad-gauge railway was not much heavier than a narrow-gauge railway, though it was so much more convenient, and he doubted very much whether the Indoeroopilly could not be adapted for a broad-gauge railway. All the other bridges could be adopted for the broad gauge. The hon. gentleman had also mentioned the tunnels, but that was not a new idea. They knew they had to increase the size and width of the tunnels for a double line as well as for a double broad-gauge line. They knew all that before and yet they came to the conclusion that the broad-gauge should not be adopted in the colony. The Premier was in an illogical position altogether, and he knew it and knew he could not hold it. The time would come when they would have to adopt the broad gauge, and that it was the most economical had been admitted by the Minister for Works. An additional reason was, that so long as they adopted a gauge which was not the gauge adopted in the civilised world, they would have great difficulty in working their railways. The hon. gentleman had told them that they had great diffi-

culty in getting a small order for engines attended to in England. Was that because the people engaged in the trade in England were so busy that they could not attend to the order? No: it was because of the exceptional gauge, and only certain shops could fulfil the order. If they had the broad gauge they could get as many engines in the same time as would horse their railways for twenty years to come. He had to warn the Premier that it was hopeless to talk of fighting New South Wales with their broad gauge, except at enormous loss. One of the reasons they advanced when borrowing money was that their railways paid. He would certainly not like to see them put in such a position that they would not pay: but if they had railways with a debt of some millions of money on them they could wipe it off if they had gauges that would enable them to compete with the other colonies. The Premier would find that the most economical course. The Government had lost an excellent opportunity in the duplication of the Brisbane and Ipswich Railway; and he would regret very much to see the Gympie line commenced on any but a broad-gauge railway. They had seen themselves jumping from about £2,500 per mile—which was acknowledged to be a good amount for making railways—up to £4,000, which was the cost estimated for every line passed within the last month or two. They could face that, and he said they could face the other question which was a great deal more useful—the changing of the narrow-gauge into the broad-gauge. No one advocated that it should be done all at once. All that was said was that it ought to be done; and the Minister for Works and the Premier said it ought to be done; and it was acknowledged that in future all lines brought down for the sanction of the House ought to be on the broad-gauge principle. He admitted that there would be inconvenience in the change of the gauges, but it could easily be got over. It would, perhaps, be a serious inconvenience for years, but nothing at all when compared with the enormous amount they were paying for freight at the present time. The amount they had to pay for carriage at the present time into the interior was perfectly appalling. He did not require to go to the merchants to know the rates. He had been looking at the rates for carriage to a station in the Maranoa, that he had something to do with, in 1867 and 1868. Those were not years remarkable for low rates of carriage, but he was paying a great deal more now, when he had got the railway within a day and a-half of the station, whilst in 1867 and 1868, the railway had only reached as far as Toowoomba. Anyone who heard the rates read by the hon. member for Warrego would see the great advantage of the change. It was quite outside any policy of the Commissioner or Under Secretary for Railways. When they saw the difference of £8, and £1 5s. 6d. on a ton of flour, they would see that it was a decided advantage. The Minister for Works should go to the root of the matter at once. They could not, of course, stand going on year after year working the railways at a tremendous loss, but his argument was that, as wise men, they ought to put themselves in a position to fight New South Wales on equal terms.

THE PREMIER said he did not admit the fact, but assuming that a broad-gauge line was better than a narrow-gauge line, then they had to consider the question as to whether they could afford to change the narrow for the broad gauge now. Similar questions had to be asked and answered in private as well as in public life. Could they afford the better thing now, or should they do with the inferior thing in the meantime and buy the better thing afterwards, when they could afford it? That, in short, was the problem

they had to face. The Chief Engineer had estimated the cost of altering the line from Brisbane *via* Toowoomba to the border, to the broad gauge, at £1,580,000, exclusive of the cost of new rolling-stock. That was a very considerable sum, and the Government did not feel justified, especially when they remembered the wants of other parts of the colony, in asking the House to sanction such an additional expenditure now or for some years to come.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief ought to have been laid on the table, so that members could have seen the basis on which it was framed. In the commencement of 1883 he asked the same officer for an estimate of what it would cost to change the whole of the then existing lines to a 4 feet 8½ inch gauge, and the amount was stated at under £1,000,000. He would like the great difference in the two estimates explained. He agreed with the Premier that, of course, they ought to consider whether they were able to afford a change of gauge now. It was a very great point; but in considering it they should not forget that every day they were making the change more difficult and costly. Indeed, the change might be financially impossible if they delayed it many years longer. If, on the other hand, they commenced now, they would only suffer the inconvenience and extra expense of trans-shipment for a time, and before ten or fifteen years had elapsed the whole change would be completed. The expenditure involved would be spent gradually, and would not fall all at once on the finances of the colony. First, let them look at what they would lose by deferring the change—by continuing to use the narrow-gauge lines; and in the next place, the enormous advance which was taking place in the cost of railway construction—an advance which might go on in an increasing ratio. They were at present in the position of having to fight New South Wales at a loss, in order to keep trade in their own colony. They ought to have an instrument of traffic just as good for that purpose as that possessed by New South Wales. If they had that they would fight on fair terms. He thought, himself, that it was rather mean of New South Wales to introduce differential rates. At the same time, Queensland, if her traffic was attacked, must do likewise with an efficient instrument which, however, she would never secure until she faced in a straightforward way the question of changing the gauge of her railways.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS said the leader of the Opposition had accused the Government of robbing some lines of railway to complete others. What would be the result if they took the advice he now gave as to widening the gauge of the railway? Simply that they would have to rob a great deal more. The sums on the Loan Estimates for new lines were for lines of a 3 feet 6 inch gauge. If the gauge was widened they were bound to cost a great deal more money. But that would please the leader of the Opposition, as he was extremely anxious to land the Government in financial difficulties, and so prevent them from carrying out their public works policy. His first statement was that the present Government could not borrow money. When he found that they could he tried to devise some means of forcing them into a mass of financial difficulties.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said there was another argument in favour of continuing with the narrow-gauged railways for the present, and that was that, although broad-gauge railways might be economical as regarded the carrying of a large amount of traffic at low rates, yet what Queensland wanted at present was not so much railways

for carrying an enormous amount of traffic, but railways for a moderate amount of traffic which had to be carried very long distances at moderate rates. Even if the settlers had to pay exceptionally high rates on the Queensland railways, he was not sure that the rapid construction of high-rate railways into the interior would not do more for the development of the resources of the colony than if they went on with the construction of broad-gauge lines at a slow progress. At all events, if the people in the interior did pay higher rates for carriage, they would benefit by the certainty and quickness of the communication. It was all very well for the leader of the Opposition to say that the policy of broad-gauge railways was adopted last year by the House simply because speakers on both sides advocated the change, and were left to air their eloquence without criticism; but he, Sir T. McIlwraith, had himself had ample opportunities of altering the gauge, and had failed to make any attempt in that direction. Why was the question brought forward now? It was said that there was a debate on the question last year. He (Mr. Lumley Hill) certainly was not in the Assembly last year.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Owing to circumstances over which you had no control.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Yes; the California Gully. He did not take it that the principle of broad-gauge railways had been adopted in that Assembly at any time, and he considered that the present would be a very bad time indeed for forcing it upon the country. He could see plainly, from the disastrous drought that had occurred, that the trade with the interior would slack off a good deal for the next two or three years.

Mr. PALMER said that with regard to differential rates, of which the Minister for Works complained, on the New South Wales railways, the hon. gentleman himself was the author of differential rates on the Southern and Western Railway. The difference in the rate of carriage between Brisbane and Ipswich and Brisbane and the western terminus of the line was conspicuous. It was the usual rule that charity should begin at home, and the Minister for Works should explain how it was that goods could be carried from Brisbane to Ipswich at a less rate per mile than they could be carried at to the western terminus. The hon. gentleman seemed to have forgotten the usual rule that the further the distance the less the rate of freight per mile should be.

Mr. FOOTE said the reason for the differential rate between Brisbane and Ipswich could be easily explained. It was adopted by the late Government, when the hon. member for Townsville was Minister for Works. At that time there were two or three steamers, plying on the river between those places, by which most of the goods were being carried, and a differential rate was imposed, in order to run those steamers off the river. They succeeded in doing that, and they had got the trade; but if the rates were altered it would bring back the steamers.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that was the most extraordinary argument he had ever heard. Lately two steamboat companies on the coast had been competing at cut-throat rates; but although they had raised the rates lately it had not brought in another line of steamers. And he very much questioned whether the raising of the rates between Brisbane and Ipswich would result in restoring the steamers to the river. In the interests of trade, the Minister for Works should act honestly towards every portion of the community—and not favour that extraordinary portion of the community, Ipswich, that extra-

ordinary ulcer which existed in Queensland. He wondered the hon. gentleman did not dose it—did not give it some medicine. It had been experimented upon by many Ministers, and the value of the Ipswich and West Moreton vote used to be gauged by what they could get—they voted on the side that paid them best. That was what the Committee had now been practically told by the hon. member for Bundamba. With regard to the railway rates, it had been clearly shown that they were disgraceful and discreditable in comparison with the rates charged in other colonies. If they were to compete with New South Wales, even in keeping their own trade away from that colony, they must bring down the tariff to such a rate as would compare favourably with the tariff in the southern colony. There was nothing to be gained, at present, as far as he could see, by altering the gauge; there was too large an amount of money invested in the narrow-gauge railways to alter it without a vast amount of consideration. The cost would be too enormous; it would be more than the colony could sustain. But some alteration in the rates had become a matter of necessity. Those who principally supported the great trunk lines into the interior—the pastoral tenants of the colony—could probably stand an excessive charge in years when they were fairly prosperous after a little grumbling—but at the present time the charge for bringing wool down on the main trunk lines was so excessive that the industry could not stand it. The charge for bringing wool from the terminus to Brisbane was at the rate of 1½d. per pound—more than double the freight to England. After arriving at Brisbane the wool was muled in other costs for cartage and other charges. Arrived in England it realised 5d. a pound, or possibly less, up to 7d., and under those terms no industry in the world could stand such taxation. In the old days, as the hon. member for Mulgrave had stated, wool, though it took a much longer time to get to the place of export, was brought down at a very much less cost—at so much less, indeed, as to more than compensate for any celerity it might have obtained by being carried by railway. Years and years ago, at Mount Abundance, when the railway only went as far as Dalby, wool was brought into Brisbane at half what it now had to pay by rail all the way. Unless the Government were prepared to lower the tariff they must either check the industry or destroy the railway traffic. Those were the only two alternatives. Even if they worked the railways at a loss in the meantime it would be a benefit to the colony rather than charge an excessive rate to bolster up the railway revenue at the expense of injuring and ultimately destroying one of the greatest producing interests in the colony. The drays having been driven off the road the squatter or selector was bound to send his produce to market by rail, but the tariff was so high that he could no longer live by it. While he did not agree with the leader of the Opposition that the time had come to substitute the broad gauge for the narrow gauge, he considered the time had most certainly arrived when there should be a revival of the tariff, so that produce could be brought to market at a rate which would compare favourably with the rate that was paid in the colony many years ago.

Mr. FOOTE said he did not quite agree with the hon. gentleman who had just sat down. He believed the rates for long distances were much too high for the convenience of people outside, and if the other colonies were competing against us with the view of drawing traffic from us they must be doing so at very considerable loss. Possibly they were making too much of the trade in the south-western corner of the colony. Perhaps there was not so much there as was

expected; at any rate, he did not think there was sufficient trade there to justify the colony in changing its gauge in order to secure it. He believed it was the impression of the Committee that the Government had promised to revise the tariff and do all they could to meet the contingencies that had arisen, and secure the trade of the colony. As to the low price of wool in England, he did not see that the Railway Department had anything to do with that, and he thought the hon. member for Balonne must be mistaken when he said that wool used to be carried years ago cheaper from Mount Abundance to Brisbane than at present.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is true.

Mr. FOOTE said he could hardly conceive it. He could remember seasons something like the present when wool could not be carried at all by carriers. The wool-growers near the railway lines were not placed in that position now, and even if the rates were high they were sure of getting their produce to port, and it did not remain for two or three years in their sheds as it had done before now. He remembered seasons when it was impossible for teams to travel beyond Dalby without the owners losing all their stock and having their drays stuck up for a long period; so that, taking all things together, the wool-growers were in a much better position than they were a few years ago, and, with the modifications of the tariff which had been suggested, and which the Minister for Works had consented to, no doubt matters would come right. The hon. member for Balonne thought that Ipswich should be specially dealt with. He seemed to have a great regard for Ipswich, and thought it required a little physic; but he (Mr. Foote) thought the hon. member required a little himself. A few doses would do him a great deal of good, and he would find his system a great deal cooler after it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had not heard the last sentence uttered by the hon. member. He had attended to him until he heard him making statements so utterly untrue that he did not bother about him any further. If the hon. member would repeat his statement he would reply to him.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Minister for Works, in reply to the hon. member for Warrego, stated that the revision of the tariff was under the consideration of the Commissioner and the Traffic Manager. He presumed, of course, that it would apply to the whole colony. He did not suppose the Government would revise the tariff specially for the purpose of getting the trade of the south-west corner of Queensland. If they did they would bring a hornet's nest about their ears. He did not believe in differential tariffs; very few people did, and if the Government thought that by revising the tariff they would get the trade that was going into New South Wales, which belonged to Queensland, they were egregiously mistaken, because the New South Wales people could carry much cheaper. They were not trying to get our trade, but were simply extending their lines to their own border, and the natural course of trade would gravitate towards the cheapest carriage, and the cheapest carriage from the Queensland border was into New South Wales. If they commenced a war of tariffs with New South Wales, it would be like an army with old flint matchlocks fighting another army with Martini-Henry rifles, and Queensland would be certain to get the worst of it. As to the question of gauges, he was not an advocate of changing to the broader gauge. Of course, the wider the gauge the better for purposes of economical working and carrying heavy

loads, but there was considerable difference in the cost of construction, and he had always maintained that they would make more railways with the narrow gauge for the same money than with the broad gauge. Instead of having now 1,330 or 1,340 miles of railway with the narrow gauge, they would probably not have more than 800 or 900 with the broad gauge, so that it was a question of whether they should have more lines or the broader gauge. Although the Minister for Works had indulged in a long tirade against the leader of the Opposition in regard to the broad gauge, he was himself in favour of it last session. He then even went so far as to consider whether it would be advisable not to open the tenders for the Stanthorpe line, which were put in the very week that the discussion took place, until it was seen whether it would be desirable to make that portion of the line on the broad gauge. That statement was made in answer to the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, and if the hon. gentleman had not made his mind up then why did he make such a proposition as that? He might have been carried away at the time, but neither he nor the Premier were ever likely to be carried away, and both of them were committed to the broad gauge. No one advocated the immediate adoption of it, but what was advocated was, that on new lines the cuttings, bridges, and culverts should be widened in such a way that when it was found advisable to adopt the wide gauge it could be done without much extra cost. If it was to be a question of broad gauge at all, the sooner some arrangement of that kind was made the better it would be for the country, because in a short time, at the rate they were spending money on railways, it would be beyond the power of the colony to adopt it. He did not advocate the broad gauge. The narrow gauge had served them very well so far, and unless they were going into competition with new South Wales it would serve as well in the future as it had in the past; but if they were going into competition with that colony to secure a modicum of the traffic which now went there from Queensland, they would be sorry for it before very long.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had never attempted to deny what he said last session in connection with the broad gauge, but he was sure the hon. member would give him credit for having common sense. Because he expressed an opinion that it would be a good thing to change the gauge he was not going to rush into it without getting some estimate of the cost. First of all, he considered what was to be the cost to the country, and when he came to inquire into the matter he found it would be madness to attempt to do anything of the sort. Did hon. gentlemen think for one moment that he of his own responsibility would commit the country to a couple of millions of money for widening the gauge? He would say it would be a good thing to widen the gauge; but it became a question of cost, and he could quite agree with what had been said by an hon. member, that it would be madness and folly for them to try and compete with New South Wales for trade unless they had the same instruments to fight with. Why did not the leader of the Opposition propose that the gradients should be eased from Chinchilla westward? At present the engines could drag from Toowoomba 250 tons as far as Chinchilla; but there they had to divide the load, because they came to a gradient of 1 in 50. At the time that line was being constructed he urged the necessity of keeping down the gradients; and if those in charge of the department at that time had done so he thought it would have suited all requirements for the next fifty years to come. He did not see why it could not be done now. The broad-gauge system would land the colony in ruin.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he did not intend to prolong the debate, but he must express his surprise at the hon. member for Townsville, who said that last session he (the Colonial Treasurer) expressed his approval of the change from the narrow to the broad gauge. Whatever might have been the general opinion, he was one of the first to point out that if the colony adopted the broad gauge, the proposed loan of £10,000,000 would not go a very long way in carrying out new lines of railway. No doubt the change would be very desirable if they could afford it; but at the same time they must not forget that if they had commenced with a broader gauge, he was convinced that they would not have had the same mileage of lines that they had been able to build upon the narrow gauge. Considering the state of the colony, the sparse population, and the limited resources, they ought to be gratified that they had been able to obtain such an extent of roadway, even though it were upon the narrow gauge. That was the proper view of the question. If they were in a position to afford the luxury of the broad gauge it might be desirable to have it. But he thought it would be better that they should be able to build all the railways set forth in the last Loan Estimate rather than, by changing the gauge, content themselves with a smaller number. It was only stated that evening that the money on the Loan Estimate would not be sufficient to carry out all the lines of railway the Government intended to build; but if they changed the gauge at the present time they would want very much more—possibly a second Loan Estimate.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. member expressed his surprise that anybody should say that he had in any way assented to the alteration of the gauge. Of course, no one during that discussion advocated, as he said before, that the gauge should be altered. Those who were advocating the broad gauge advocated it in this way: that arrangements should be made on all those lines under discussion for widening them, so that when they desired to make the broad gauge the alteration could be made without much additional cost. The Treasurer did go so far as that, but he was very cautious, and so was the Premier; but both assented so far as that went. He thought the Minister for Works had become more sensible when he actually thought, before he opened the tenders for the Stanthorpe line, of calling for fresh tenders on a wider gauge. He would read what the hon. the Treasurer said in speaking about the conversation that had occurred during the afternoon in the Committee on the question of the broad gauge:—

“As his hon. colleague the Premier had said, he thought the conversation that afternoon could be regarded as little more than indicating an opinion of hon. members of the desirability of introducing at some time a change of gauge. But if they insisted on it now the whole of the Government works of the colony would be delayed for an indefinite period. He trusted that the works would be provided for, and that as far as possible the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge would be introduced where convenient. He hoped it would not be understood that the works were to be delayed, and the money expended solely for the construction of railways of 4 feet 8½ inch gauge.”

That was all that was asked. The hon. gentleman fully agreed that what was asked should be provided for, so that both himself and his two colleagues were committed. With reference to what the Minister for Works said about cutting down the gradients, 1 in 50 was the ruling gradient all over the Southern and Western line; so that if the gradients were cut down in one case they would have to be reduced in the others. The grades were like the links of a chain, and every line must be reckoned by the steepest

gradient. The strength of a chain was the strength of its weakest link. If they had 1 in 50 gradients, occasionally the loads would have to be divided and two engines supplied, as at present; but that was the case in the other colonies. They had powerful engines in New South Wales, but still they had to divide the loads. There was scarcely a single night in a year when the Southern train was not divided before it got to Goulburn. He did not think, unless the Minister for Works made up his mind to reduce all the 1 in 50 grades everywhere, the idea would be of much service, and it would be a very expensive process, though perhaps not equal to that of widening the gauge. He did not think the Minister for Works would face it.

Mr. PALMER said he wished to draw attention to some anomalies in the Estimates and the report of the Works Department. In the first place he thought the department was too much for the Minister. It was hydra-headed. The Minister for Works, the Minister for Mines, and the Minister for Railways were too much for one department. The railways alone could make a department of themselves. A division had been made between the Colonial Secretary's Department and the Department of Public Instruction; but he was sure the Colonial Secretary could much more easily have attended to both departments than the Minister for Works could undertake his three. The time had arrived for an alteration. He would now refer to the estimated receipts for the year—£768,000. Hon. gentlemen would recollect that that was problematical, while the estimated expenditure, £513,609, might be taken as a certainty. The difference was what they had to pay—the interest on the loan. He saw that the loan was £8,882,280, which had been expended on the railways of the colony. At the rate of 4 per cent., which was given forth to the world as the rate the railways were earning, there was a deficit of nearly £100,000 on that item alone. There was another matter—the discrepancy between the report of that department and that of the Auditor-General, a difference of about £77,000. Part of that difference might be attributed to the difference in the financial year, which in one case ended on the 30th June and in the other on the 31st December. Looking at some of the items of expenditure in the report of the department, perhaps they would see where some of the £77,000 came in. It was stated that the railways should only be carried out on Loan Estimates. There was not the slightest doubt that there was a fictitious method of making the earnings look more than they really were, by voting large sums from loan to carry out what revenue itself should do. There was an item for relaying roads with extra sleepers; that should come from revenue. There were a score of different sums for advertising; that pertained to revenue. Fencing reserve at Goodna; that should come out of revenue. Immigration barracks at Mackay; perhaps the Minister for Works would explain that item.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: What page of the Estimates have you got?

Mr. PALMER: I am reading from page 20 to 27 of the Railway Report. Marsupial pits were charged to loan, and diamond drills. Those were a few items he had picked out. He did not think they were putting forth an honest return. The construction branch was required to repair lines from loan, which should be charged to revenue. It was a fool's paradise they were living in. If the railways were earning only 3½ per cent. they should say so. It was very hard to correct one return by the other; the Auditor-General's report was as one-sided as that

of the Commissioner for Railways. He supposed the difference in the financial year would explain some of it; but he wished the Minister for Works would explain some of the items in the report, which were placed wrongly in one department when they should be in another. The matter of non-paying traffic was an item which required alteration. Why was not every department charged absolutely with the large sums which should properly be charged to it?

Mr. WHITE said he had a question to ask. The Traffic Department had a history in its treatment of the agricultural community. During the late Government's term of office many inferior men were foisted upon the department by patronage. Even the good men amongst the station-masters and porters were anything but civil to customers. The whole management of the traffic appeared to be utterly disorganised. The stations were blocked with farmers' produce for months together, without ever being cleared, and the excuse given was the deficiency of rolling-stock. At the same time engines were standing waiting for repairs at the workshops while they sent to England for fittings which could have been made at once by men who were on the spot. Engines that were running during the day could have been turned out two or three nights during the week, if necessary, to clear away that great pressure upon the farmers and clear away the goods from the sheds, and there was no attempt made to do it. At the same time waggons, laden and empty, were standing about at various points on the line where they were not wanted. It appeared to be nobody's business to look after the business and see that the most was made of the means at the disposal of the department. All that was the result of the imperious official incapacity which was described by the hon. member for Townsville as a "clique," which ran the new Traffic Manager off, and was so well organised that he was unable to put his hand on a single man of them. He took it for granted that was the reason the hon. member for Townsville resigned his position as Minister for Works; but was it creditable of the hon. gentleman, after being four years a Minister, to leave the country saddled with an arrogant inefficient officialism? Did he expect that his successor, the hon. member for Port Curtis, would take the bull by the horns? He believed that hon. gentleman had left things as good as he found them. The present Minister for Works made changes which resulted in a decided improvement, although it was of a temporary or partial character. That scandalous happy-go-lucky system of running trains culminated in the Darra disaster, and disclosed to the travelling public the risks that were being run. All that appeared to be changed, and they now had a Traffic Manager who understood his business. He had persuaded various important customers that he was ready to consider their interests which were previously ignored. The question he wanted to ask was: What had become of the clique? Had it been smashed up in the Darra accident, or had it betaken itself to some of the Northern railways; or was it yet in abeyance, and would it presume to raise its hydra head in their midst again?

Mr. FOXTON said he did not know whether the Minister for Works could answer the question put by the hon. member for Stanley or not, but while the hon. gentleman was considering it he would like to ask a question on his own account. The hon. gentleman probably recollected that a commission was appointed in 1882 or 1883 to inquire into the management of the railways, and more especially as to the convenience and

comfort of passengers. The gentlemen appointed upon the commission were Messrs. Wilson, King, and Sinclair, and amongst the recommendations they made was one to the effect that scarcely in any instance were the platforms of the suburban stations sufficiently long to satisfy the requirements of the traffic. That was a matter which ever since then had been taken considerable interest in by persons who used the suburban lines. He thought that, with the exception of the platform at Toowong, the criticism of the Commissioners was tolerably just. Some of the platforms were absurdly short, leading, in many instances, to serious falls. The stations, as a rule, were not very well lighted, and in some instances were not lighted at all, except on one side, and it was impossible for people coming out of a lighted carriage to tell whether they were getting on to the platform or not. That had occasioned several serious falls, and to his own knowledge, serious consequences had ensued from those falls. It was fortunate that the department had had no claims for damages made against them on that account. The recommendation he spoke of was made by the Commissioners some three years ago, and so far as he was aware nothing had been done to remedy the evil.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was going to ask a question of the Minister for Works which he was sure that gentleman would most readily answer. It was with regard to the report brought up by the railway commissioners in Victoria respecting the working of the railways in that colony, when vested in a board of three commissioners, and taken away from all political influence as they had been for nearly two years. He was sure the hon. gentleman must have read the report, and if so, he would have seen that the management of the railways in Victoria was presided over by three commissioners—intelligent and capable men—one a man of great capacity and ability, specially brought out from England. The hon. member would doubtless also be able to inform the Committee that a considerable reduction had been made in the cost of management of the railways, and that an enormous increase in revenue to the country had accrued; and further that political influence—so far as appointments in the Railway Department were concerned—had ceased to exist. Could they bring about such a state of affairs here, it would certainly relieve the Minister for Works of a great many difficulties. It would relieve him, in the first instance, of the exercise of his intelligence—that would be to him an immense relief. It would relieve him of the pressure brought to bear upon him in connection with appointments in the Railway Department—that would be a great relief to him also; and it would also increase the revenue, and would in that case be a relief, at all events, to the Colonial Treasurer. He would ask the hon. gentleman to tell the Committee whether he had read the last report brought up by Mr. Speight and his colleagues, and whether the Government were or were not prepared to suggest some such mode as that of dealing with the railways in this colony?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had not read the report, and he presumed that whenever the House chose to bring about the result the hon. member had alluded to they could do so. The question of handing over the management of railways to a commission had not been considered by the Government, though he quite agreed with the hon. member that it would, perhaps, be a very good thing to do, and possibly such a result would come about before very long. The extension of the lines throughout the colony would necessitate some alteration in the mode of

management, and he believed they would be far more easily managed by a commission than by a political head. He could not say that any great political pressure had been brought to bear on him, and he had always resisted anything of the kind. The hon. member for Warrego had been very anxious for him to carry racehorses free, and to get everything carried on the railways at as low a rate as possible. He, however, could not see why racehorses should be carried free. Whilst he thought the Railway Department was very free from political influence, he had not the slightest doubt that it could be managed by a commission at a much lower cost than at present. With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Carnarvon, he knew that the station and platform at Toowong were very inconvenient, but when the line was duplicated the matter would be rectified.

Mr. DONALDSON said the Minister for Works had made a slight error when he said that he (Mr. Donaldson) asked that racehorses might be carried free on the railways. All he did was to point out sometime last year, that in the other colonies racehorses were conveyed at reduced rates, and that a similar concession might be made in Queensland, as there was no doubt that race meetings caused people to travel and added considerably to the railway revenue. The Minister, however, could not see the matter in that light. Could the Minister state when the differential rate on the long carriage of goods was likely to come into force?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that it would come into force as soon as the session closed.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked out of what vote the Railway Arbitrator was paid?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Railway Arbitrator was paid from the Loan Fund, or out of the sums voted for the particular railways he was arbitrating for. The Loan Fund was very handy for many things.

Mr. FOXTON said the Minister for Works did not evidently catch the drift of his remarks. What he (Mr. Foxton) said was that the Toowong station was a happy exception to the others, as it had a fairly long platform. There was scarcely another platform on the line which was not too short. The trains invariably overlapped them by three or four carriages, and passengers in those carriages had to alight in the gutter alongside the permanent way.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that most of those platforms and stations would be altered in connection with the duplication of the line. Due attention would be paid to the matter.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that in Victoria quarterly returns were supplied by the railway commissioners. Those returns indicated very clearly the progress of the Victorian railway system, also the cost of management, and the profit or loss on the traffic. If the same system were introduced in Queensland, it would be a wholesome change. He would quote a few figures from the report of the Victorian Commissioners for the quarter ended 30th June, 1884, which would show what might be expected from the strenuous endeavours of men taken away from party politics to control railways on purely business lines. The Victorian Board came into existence shortly before the corresponding quarter of 1883. The percentage of expenditure to revenue for the quarter ended 30th June, 1883, was 81·32, and for the corresponding quarter of 1884 only 65·73. The revenue per train mile for the same periods was 6s. 248d. and 6s. 253d. respectively. The expenditure, which was a

more important question, was 5s. '057d. per train mile for the June quarter of 1883, and 4s. '099d. for the corresponding quarter of 1884. For the half-year ended 30th June, 1883, the per centage of expenditure to revenue was 69'66, whilst it was only 60'84 for the corresponding six months of 1884. The revenue for the same periods was 6s. 744d. and 6s. 2'18d. respectively; and the expenditure 4s. '706d. and 3s. '194d. respectively. Those figures clearly proved that the sooner the management of the railways of any colony was taken out of the hands of the Government and vested in a commission the better. If hon. members would read the reports of the Commissioners of the Victorian Railways they would see that Victoria, at any rate, was going in the right direction in the matter of railway management. He was astonished to hear the Minister for Works say that he had not read those reports nor the articles that had appeared in the leading southern newspapers, pointing out the benefits that Victoria had derived from vesting the management of its railways in a non-political body. It would be well if the hon. gentleman would consider that question, and he might then see his way to bring forward in a succeeding session some measure by which the management of the Queensland railways might be dealt with as they were dealt with in Victoria. The system there was no longer an experiment; it had been proved a perfect success in good hands. The Queensland railways, on the other hand, were disgracefully mismanaged, for which he did not blame the Minister for Works but the system.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said there was a good deal in what the hon. member for Balonne had said, but if that hon. member had any serious wish to bring about a reformation of that kind, he had better not preface his recommendation with remarks which must be offensive to the Minister for Works. The hon. member would then gain his object more readily, and he would find himself more attentively listened to. There was not much, except offence, in the hon. member's remarks; there was not even anything very funny in them. The hon. member told the Minister for Works to exercise what little intelligence he had—

Mr. MOREHEAD: I cannot give you intelligence.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it was not his intelligence, but the hon. member's offensiveness that was in question. He had no wish to read the hon. member a lecture, but he would tell him that his remarks would carry much more weight if he omitted those offensive allusions in a serious question of that kind. He believed in the railways being managed by a competent board; and it would relieve the Minister himself by taking off a great deal of the pressure that was brought to bear upon him for political purposes. The administration of the Land Act was invested in a board, and that was about the best part of the Act—which he was willing to accept, but in which he did not believe. He would certainly vote in favour of removing the control of the railways from the immediate direction of the Minister for Works, and he hoped to see a measure with that object in view brought forward before very long.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he begged to apologise for having wounded the fine feelings of the hon. member for Cook. He would withdraw anything he had said that would wound a gentleman who was really so sensitive—a gentleman who did not care on which side of the House he sat so long as he got a seat. He deeply regretted having offended him even through the Minister for Works. But he made no personal attack on the hon. member for Cook, who championed the

Minister for Works, and he would therefore express, through the Minister for Works his regret for having offended the fine feelings of that hon. gentleman.

Mr. SALKELD said that whilst admitting that the Railway Department was in a very badly organised state, he did not think the proper remedy was the one which had been suggested by the hon. member for Balonne, namely, the formation of an outside board of management. The hon. member for Cook said he looked upon the Land Board as one of the best provisions in the Land Act. He (Mr. Salkeld) looked upon it to some extent as an experiment, and he was by no means certain that it would be a success. At all events, before trying any more experiments he should like to see how that answered. The proper remedy lay in another direction. The Minister for Works had got into an unpleasant and awkward position by allowing the Railway Department to have a dual head, the relations between which were so strained that they did not speak to each other, and the officials did not know whom to correspond with so as to get their work done. That was a very unsatisfactory state of affairs, and he regretted that he was not present last night to take part in the debate upon it. The only consolation was that it was not likely to end in a disaster such as they had some time ago. It was a great pity that the Minister for Works ever permitted Mr. Herbert to take the position of Under Secretary for Railways, for it was bound to injure the Public Service. Looking to the public safety, and having due regard to the public economy, he thought the Government had made a great mistake in putting Mr. Herbert in that position. He believed that if the Minister for Works had had his way he would not have had him back; but pressure was brought to bear upon him.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must confine himself to the question. The matter he is referring to was disposed of last night.

Mr. SALKELD: Other hon. members had referred to it.

The CHAIRMAN: No; certainly not.

Mr. SALKELD said he would confine his remarks to the question before the Committee. A great deal had been said about the merits of the broad and narrow gauges, and he remembered well the battle of the gauges in the old country, as he was connected with railways all his life there. While it might have been a mistake here to commence with the narrow gauge, they were now so much committed to it that he did not see any practical way of altering it. It would necessitate altering not only bridges and permanent way but rolling stock, and would lead to a great deal of inconvenience while the change was being made. With regard to widening bridges and cuttings and making provision on new lines for the wider gauge, he contended that they should decide in the first place whether they would have the wide gauge before going to expense in that way, which might turn out to be unnecessary. A suggestion had been made in connection with securing the trade of the south-western portion of the colony, which he would like to emphasise. It had been said that they could not compete with the New South Wales lines because they had the wide gauge, by means of which they were able to carry a larger amount of traffic cheaper than Queensland could. No doubt that was correct—the wide gauge could always beat the narrow in the amount of traffic and cheapness of carriage, but if the intention was to adopt the wide gauge from Brisbane to the border to secure the trade there, a good deal might be said in favour of it. Another matter

he wished to refer to was this: He thought a great mistake had been made in adopting such steep gradients and such sharp curves on their lines, and any alterations made ought to be in the direction of easing those gradients and curves, which would not be a very great expense—nothing like providing for the wide gauge. In constructing all new lines they should ease the gradients and curves as much as possible, because in that way they would increase the carrying power of the present gauge. On some of the branch lines the gradients were 1 in 30, which he thought must have been made against the advice of all practical men who understood the matter. On the main line the steepest grade was 1 in 50, which was also too steep, especially after they got over the Main Range, where far easier grades could be adopted without any very heavy expenditure. Last night he asked the Minister for Works a question about the Railway Arbitrator, and was told that his salary was paid out of loan. He understood that the previous Government insisted upon two members of the Legislative Council, who were in the receipt of salaries under the Government, either giving up their appointments or resigning their seats in that Chamber. He believed that that was done in accordance with a resolution passed by that House some time ago, but it now appeared that the Railway Arbitrator was made an exception. He wanted to know if the Government were going to follow the example of their predecessors in that matter, and require the Railway Arbitrator either to give up his seat in the Legislative Council or appoint a fresh arbitrator? The general idea was that the difference was made in the present case because that gentleman belonged to the legal profession, but he thought the Government should not make a difference of that kind even though there were so many lawyers amongst them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had stated yesterday that the Railway Arbitrator's salary was paid out of Loan, and was not on the Estimates at all. He thought it ought to be, so that members should have an opportunity of expressing their opinion on that particular vote, and he thought he could fairly promise that if the Government were in office when the Estimates were brought up again the salary of the Railway Arbitrator would appear upon them. As to the other question, he could not answer it. He was not the head of the Government, and could not inform the hon. member that any action would be taken to request the Railway Arbitrator to resign his seat in the Upper House.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he believed that now was the proper time to ask for some information about brakes. Last year, when the Estimates were going through, they were told that two brakes—the Westinghouse and the automatic vacuum—were to be tested, but that it could not be decided for three or four months which would be adopted. There had been sufficient time since then to have both thoroughly tested, and he should like to know the result?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said two trains had been fitted up—one with the Westinghouse and the other with the vacuum brake—one running to Sandgate and the other to Ipswich. They had been working for about three months with very satisfactory results.

Mr. NORTON: Which one has the Westinghouse brake?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Which one! What did it matter to the hon. member which train ran to Sandgate and which ran to Ipswich?

Mr. NORTON: A great deal.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked how they could possibly judge a brake unless they knew on what line it was being tested? A great deal depended upon that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that the two trains fitted up with that brake were running between Brisbane and Sandgate, and Brisbane and Ipswich.

Mr. NORTON said he was very sorry that he happened to put the hon. gentleman out by asking the question. It was a matter of importance because people liked to know what train they were riding in.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A matter of curiosity.

Mr. NORTON said it was a little more than that.

The PREMIER: We are not on a railway train to-night.

Mr. NORTON said they were on a vote of a quarter of a million, and he did not think the Premier need complain if there was some considerable discussion upon it. He asked the question with regard to the brake, because he had noticed that a train that ran on the Ipswich line always pulled up with a jerk. He had seen ladies almost thrown down by it, when standing up in the carriage, just before the train stopped. He did not know whether it was the fault of the brake or of the way in which it was used. The men might not be used to it.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was very sorry that the hon. gentleman had not answered his question. Had the gentlemen decided which brake was the best? He held in his hand the results of a number of tests; but he wished to know what was the actual experience of the Government from the tests they had been making for the last twelve months? Surely they had come to some conclusion. The hon. gentleman had pointed out last session that the brake was a means by which the public safety was to be provided for. No doubt it was; but they had a right to know which was the best brake, according to the results of the different tests made. How many faults had been made by each brake?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not catch what the hon. member said as to the difference between the two brakes. From the tests there appeared to be very little difference between the Westinghouse and automatic brakes. They had been used on trains for the last three months, and were tested in September last, the result being that the two were found to be about equal.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the hon. gentleman would have any objection to lay the results of the tests upon the table some day during the week, so that hon. members would know the number of faults made by each, and the number of miles run?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have no objection.

Mr. ANNEAR said he wished to ask the Minister for Works one question; but before he did so he would refer to a matter which he saw in that advertising medium, the *Telegraph*, that evening. He knew that paper did not often get into his constituency, but one of his constituents might by chance open it. It stated that when the division was taken last night he had not voted. The fact was he could not vote, he was not in the Committee; his business compelled him to leave at 11 o'clock, but had he been there he should have voted with the noble six. He wished to ask the Minister for Works if the charges were uniform throughout the colony on all kinds of farm produce?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the rates charged on railways were uniform throughout the whole colony. There was a difference in the kind of farm produce.

Mr. ANNEAR said farm produce from Ipswich to Brisbane was carried at the rate of 2s. 6d. a ton. Was it carried on other lines for the same distance at the same rate? If not, it should be. Why should there be any distinction made between Brisbane and Ipswich, or between Brisbane and Warwick? He believed farm produce from Warwick to Brisbane was carried at 25s. a ton, which was rather a lower rate in proportion to the distance than it was carried at from Maryborough to Gympie—namely, £1 per ton. It was no wonder that outside people complained that they charged so much for taking up flour and other things, when they saw that people in those favoured places had their produce carried almost for nothing, because they were near the capital and pressure could be brought to bear. Those charges had been in existence for many years. There should be no exception made, and people should be charged and treated alike.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Minister for Works would tell them the reason of the increase of £11,000 in the maintenance of the permanent way for the present year upon that of last year? He knew there were a few more miles opened, but £11,000 represented a great many miles.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the increase was caused by the additional length of line opened. There had been extensions amounting to seventy-nine miles since that time last year, and, as a matter of course, the railway could not be maintained upon the same sum that it was maintained upon formerly.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he supposed it was partly in consequence of the new arrangement of taking the line over from the contractors as soon as it was opened. Formerly the contractors used to keep the lines for six months. There was another item he should like some information about. He saw the expenses of Sunday traffic had been reduced from £3,000 to £2,500. Was the Minister going to reduce the wages of the men who were working on Sunday?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was no reduction whatever. A larger amount had been voted last year than was required.

Mr. NORTON said there were two extra hands under the head of coachbuilders, trimmers, &c. The increase was not large, but he had noticed some new carriages with a plate indicating that they had been built in the Ipswich workshops. He would like to know how many had been built there which under ordinary circumstances would have been given out by contract.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that eighteen or twenty carriages had been turned out at the Ipswich workshops during the last twelve months.

Mr. NORTON said there had been complaints that some of the contractors, who had been hitherto building railway carriages, had not sufficient work to enable them to keep their men always employed. He did not know what foundation there was for the complaint, but he would like to know from the Minister whether all the contractors usually employed in that way were now engaged in contracts for the Government.

The MINISTER OF WORKS said he could not answer the hon. gentleman's question. He knew most of the contractors were employed in building stock waggons and goods waggons; with

one or two exceptions the contractors did not care about carriage work. The Nundah Company of course had a very good plant, and that work suited them very well, and there was another firm in Ipswich. One contractor in Brisbane had to be relieved of his contract, because he could not carry it out. He might mention that all the carriages built in the Ipswich workshops were done by contract, not by day labour. Of course the Government found all the materials, but they let the contracts for putting the body of the carriages together, and for painting and fitting the insides.

Mr. ALAND said the work was done by contract, but the men had the run of Government material; that was where the mistake came in. He was very much disappointed to hear the Minister for Works speak in favour of the carriages being made in the Government workshops. The Government did not know how much they cost; they had a certain set of figures set before them, which they assumed were correct, but he was sure the carriages cost infinitely more than the amount set down for them. It was not fair to outside factories. It was no use to say they did not care about building carriages; there were plenty of factories that would be only too glad to contract for them; and he was sure that carriages of a certain class made outside the workshops were equal to carriages of the same class made inside. He thought the time was come when the Ipswich workshops should be confined to repairing. It was not fair that contractors should be asked to make hopper waggons and trucks and be excluded from making carriages. One firm in Toowoomba turned out excellent carriages, and had gone to the expense of getting special appliances for the purpose, which were now lying idle on their hands. There was another matter which deserved attention. All the work had to be delivered in Brisbane. It would be no extra cost to the Government if they took them over in Toowoomba or Ipswich; and by making the contractor bring them to Brisbane, they were handicapping him very heavily as against Brisbane.

Mr. NORTON said he was glad to hear the hon. member for Toowoomba speak up, because he believed there was a great deal of truth in the report that the contractors did not get all the work they could do. There were indications some years ago that some of the contractors meant to go more largely into the work of building carriages as well as ordinary waggons, but there was no doubt that when they saw such a large sum put on the Estimates last year for the Ipswich workshops it acted as a deterrent to them; because they would take it as an indication that the Government intended to do as much of the work as possible. He felt sure that the more contractors they had engaged on the work the better and more cheaply it would be done, both outside and in the Ipswich workshops; because if the contractors could do the work cheaply it would force the Ipswich workshops to do it also at a low price. He believed the hon. member for Toowoomba was quite right about the Government not knowing what the carriages really cost. Who was to know what the timber cost? They knew the original cost, but there was interest to be added to that, because it lay two or three years in some instances before it was used. He did not believe any notice was taken of the interest.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was very glad the hon. member for Port Curtis had introduced the question. The whole of the carriages now running on the Maryborough and Gympie line, and a good many of the carriages running in the North were made in Maryborough. The first contract taken by the firm of Negus Brothers, in Maryborough, was taken for about

£240 a carriage less than the great firm of Hudson Brothers, in Sydney, tendered for. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Aland, that the time had arrived when they should unmask the state of affairs that had existed in the Ipswich workshops for a long time. They were told that they could make carriages and do repairs in the Ipswich workshops cheaper than by contract; but who told them that? The people most interested in the workshops—people who walked about the town which had been nursed by the Government for so long. There were firms in Rockhampton that tendered for carriages. Great credit was due to the hon. member for Townsville, when he was Minister for Works, for initiating that system of contracts. In consequence of that, firms had spent thousands of pounds in getting plant suitable for the work. That should be taken into consideration. Last year they had been told by the hon. member for Ipswich that the reason why carriages could be made cheaper in that chosen spot was that they had seasoned cedar. But there was one firm in Maryborough which had more seasoned cedar and cut more cedar in twelve months than the Ipswich workshops had ever done since they were started. That was the firm of Fairlie and Sons. There was quite enough for the Ipswich workshops to do in the repairs that were needed. Last session a return was laid upon the table of the House showing the cost of making carriages in the Ipswich shops; but those returns could be made to show anything. Where a man was employed for three hours on a carriage and an hour on repairs it was just as easy to put down three hours for repairs and an hour for the carriage, and no one would know the difference. The hon. member made a mistake when he said the work could only be done in Ipswich. There were at Maryborough the Vulcan Foundry, John Walker and Company, Fairlie and Sons, and Negus Brothers—every one of which had plant suitable for turning out any rolling-stock required in the colony, and carriages especially. He made that assertion, and he believed it was true: that they could be made 30 per cent. cheaper than in the Ipswich workshops.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he knew what was occurring in Maryborough, and he knew quite well that carriages could be built there; but it did not pay to have carriages built in Maryborough and the pieces brought down here and put together here. They could build carriages for the Maryborough Railway very well, because they could put them on their own sidings and run them on to the railway, and thus save the cost of the freight for the carriage pieces and of putting them together—which was a very important item. He thought that something like £4,000 a month was paid for the construction of rolling-stock outside of the Government works. Tenders were being called for almost every day.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that the Minister for Works last year admitted to the House that he believed that most of the rolling stock, and especially carriages, should be built by contract. That was accepted by almost all as a good principle; but he did not suppose that anyone would think that he had fulfilled that promise when he construed it to mean the letting of contracts for the work inside of the Ipswich workshops. It was absurd to suppose that hon. members believed he meant that. He himself had been Minister for Works at one time, and during that time there was one thing he had tried to get at, and that was the cost of the work done in the Ipswich workshops; but he had never been able to do it even in much smaller things than in the building of

carriages, and precisely for the reason mentioned by the hon. member for Maryborough—that everyone in a position to give information upon the point was interested in having as much work as possible done in the workshops. The Minister for Works had much better go himself and find out those things. He had given them to understand that he did not like the Government stroke; and the expenditure of so much money upon carriages built in the Ipswich workshops really meant the Government stroke. The swelling of that particular estimate did not show that the efforts of the hon. gentleman to put down the Government stroke were really having any effect. Nobody believed that the work could not be done well in the colony, though there were many firms that did not like it. If they did not like it they need not take it up; but there were plenty of firms who could do all the carriage building required, and it was a great discouragement to them to find so much money put down really for the purpose of competing with them. If they knew that the Government policy was to have all that work that could be contracted for, he had not the slightest doubt they could get all the work of that kind that they wanted done. There was another matter he wished to bring before the Committee, and a matter to which he wished to attract the attention of the Minister for Works and the Government, as one of great importance, and that was the coal traffic on the river Brisbane. When they considered the great expense they had gone to in the construction of railways and wharves, and on the appurtenances connected therewith, and considered the number of ships that left Brisbane in ballast to load coals at Newcastle, also that not one ship had left Brisbane loaded with coal of late years; and further, that ordinary sea-going ships could not load coals at Brisbane without punts, that not one of the steamers in the intercolonial trade could load coals at the present wharves, and that it was perfectly impossible to load coals at Brisbane except out of punts, they must come to the conclusion that some mistake had been made in the management of that business. Another fact they had to consider was that no vessel could, by the combined efforts of the Government and of the mine-owners, load more than 100 tons a day, and that it would, therefore, take ten days to load 1000 tons in Brisbane—whilst at Newcastle a vessel could go in with one tide without coal, and come out by the next with 1000 tons on board. He did not lay all the blame at the door of the Government. A great deal of the blame was attributable to the mine-owners, who could not claim that they had done everything in their power to make a big coal trade for Brisbane, or complain that they had been kept back by a want of facilities. They ought for one thing to have gone deeper for better coal. Two-thirds of the coal they got could not come into competition with what was raised at Newcastle. It was not because the better coal did not exist in West Moreton, but because they would not go a sufficient depth. Neither did the owners use the appliances that men all over the world used when they went into a big thing. The appliances they used for conveying the coal from the rooms to the mouth of the shaft were of the most primitive description and were obsolete long ago. And now how did the Government stand in respect to the coal trade? No export coal trade existed, although the prosperity of Brisbane and the district depended on it. That it ought to exist was evident, as the coal was in the ground and there would be an enormous sale for it if they could get it out in sufficient quantities. The Minister for Works did not appear to be listening.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could hear the hon. member.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it was very difficult to make the Minister for Works understand anything even when he was looking intelligently at the person speaking.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he heard what the hon. member was saying. What more did the hon. member want?

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he wished the hon. member to understand as well as to hear. There used to be a system by which the coal was taken a short distance by rail to the river at Oxley, where it was emptied into punts. That was still done to some extent. So far as the Government was concerned, however, although they used to give the mine-owners facilities to get their coal to Oxley, as soon as they constructed the railway to South Brisbane they without any justification stopped the practice. The coal that came down to South Brisbane was all, with a small exception, put into punts there, and the punts then went alongside ships in the river. Before, the coal-owners were at liberty to punt their coal down the river, but were now debarred from using the river as a means of saving the expense of railway haulage. And what arrangements had the Government made at South Brisbane? There were two cranes there, but they were so placed that if a big ship went alongside it would occupy the whole space, and leave no room for any other vessel. In the next place they were so situated that if one of them was over a hatchway the other could not be used at all. The arms of the cranes, too, were so short that they could not reach the hatchways of ordinary steamers. The consequence was that the great bulk of the coal loaded at Brisbane was still conveyed by punts to the vessels. The length of the puntage might perhaps be only two or three hundred yards, but it cost very nearly as much as did the puntage from Oxley or Ipswich. So far, then, as the coal traffic with steamers was concerned, Brisbane was in no better a position than it was a long time since. Indeed, it was in some respects in a worse position. Supposing a whole coal train started from the pits. On its arrival at Woollongabba it was split up into different trains which were sent in to the wharf at different times. Thus an owner might get two or three trucks of his train emptied into one punt, and might have to wait half a day before he could get another punt loaded. The arrangements, in fact, worked so disadvantageously that no export trade existed. The whole of the present trade was entirely of a local character. Vessels that came here loaded, instead of going away with coals to another port seeking cargo, had to go away in ballast to Newcastle, take in coal, and then go seeking cargo to some other part of the world. That was a very serious matter, and one which the Government ought to take into consideration. The Minister for Works would understand that he was not bringing any censure upon him for neglecting the business; he was simply trying to draw his very serious attention to the fact that it had been to a very considerable extent neglected. With a little thought the present state of things could be materially altered. Mr. Thallon, the Traffic Manager, was perfectly capable of working a very considerable reform: he had great ability as a traffic manager, and he (Sir T. McIlwraith) hoped the Minister for Works would give him full authority to provide a remedy for the shortcomings to which he had called attention—that was to provide the means by which vessels

of all sizes could be loaded cheaply and expeditiously at Brisbane or elsewhere. If that was done the coal miners would increase their output enormously. They saw the prospect of a big trade, which Newcastle was getting; why should not the Government, therefore, put their heads together and devise some scheme by which foreign-going vessels, both sailing and steam, could be cheaply and expeditiously loaded somewhere in the Brisbane River.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the South Brisbane Railway had only been open for traffic about twelve months, and at first there was a great deal of trouble to get coal-owners to send their coal along that line at all. However, a great deal of trouble was taken, and rates were reduced, and the trade had grown to its present extent during the last seven or eight months. He freely admitted that the cranes were defective for loading vessels, but it was intended to erect new ones, and arrangements would be made in the meantime to meet the requirements of the trade. Every endeavour was being made to assist the coal-owners to get their coal on board the ships. There were already a considerable number of hopper waggons, and contracts were out for a 100 more. On one occasion, when Mr. Gulland undertook to supply one of those large steamers with 1,700 tons of coal, and he failed to do so, it was not through any fault of the Railway Department but because the coal trimmers would not work. The coal was on the wharf, but it could not be discharged. He need hardly assure hon. members that the department was just as anxious to get traffic for their railway as the coal-owners were willing to send their coal. But there was one thing the department could not do; it could not store their coal on the wharves. If coal was to be stored it should be stored at the pit's mouth, and when the line to Ipswich was duplicated there would not be the slightest trouble in bringing all the coal down for shipment that they could put out.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he was sorry that the Minister for Works did not seem to admit that a great deal required to be done. The fact that with such a coal-field as West Moreton lying close by, and such a fine river running right through it, with a railway right down to the wharves, they had never succeeded in exporting a cargo of coal, spoke for itself. It was evident that the hon. gentleman had never looked into the question. He could quite understand a block taking place in loading a large vessel, but that was the fault of the Government in not having a wharf and cranes where and by which vessels could be loaded alongside. With proper appliances not one-tenth of the coal would have to be trimmed, instead of two-thirds as was the case at present. No doubt the duplication of the line would be a very good thing, but the real remedy for the block lay in quite a different direction. Any amount of coal could be got down to the wharf, but it could not be got away. But it would be the easiest thing in the world to adopt the somewhat primitive, but quite sufficient, arrangements by which ordinary coasting steamers were coaled in a few hours at Newcastle. So far as the coal trade of Brisbane was concerned, they were exactly in their old condition. In the old days the coal was brought down the river in barges, and so it was now; for the proportion that came by rail had to be punted from the wharf to the vessel for which it was intended. It was quite a common sight to see a punt laden with coal alongside a vessel, and a man at a winch laboriously raising the coal out of the punt and up the ship's side. But they did it in that way in the days of Noah!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the cranes to which the hon. gentleman took so much objection were brought out by his own Government. It was well known to hon. members that the coal trade had only sprung up within the last few months.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was sorry to interrupt the hon. member, but he thought it his duty to call attention to the state of the Committee.

Quorum formed.

Mr. JORDAN said he thought the Committee were indebted to the hon. member for Mulgrave for having again called the attention of hon. members to the very important question of the coal trade of the colony, and the prospects of its further development which had been obstructed by the apathy of the Government. The hon. gentleman had referred not only to the improved character of the coal now produced, but also to the want of accommodation for shipping coal at the wharves in South Brisbane. The late Government made the railway to South Brisbane for that purpose, and it cost the country a great deal of money; but the wharf was too short, the water was too shallow, and the cranes were too short, and not at all suitable for the purpose; and the Government had known those things for the last eighteen months. About that time he accompanied the Minister for Works and the Premier to the wharf—the Engineer for Harbours and Rivers being also present—when the very things which the hon. member for Mulgrave had now pointed out in detail were placed before those members of the Government, and there was a distinct promise made by the Minister for Works that the wharf should be lengthened by 700 feet, and those who were present understood that it was to be done at once. The hon. Chairman of Committees was present at the time, and he need not remind him of what took place. It was not a question affecting South Brisbane only, but the whole colony—the development of the coal trade of the colony, which might rapidly assume very large proportions and be a great source of wealth to the colony. There was no excuse for the unreasonable and protracted delay that had taken place on the part of the Government. He could not understand it; it was a mystery to him. It was only a few weeks ago when he entreated the Minister for Works to lengthen the wharf, and asked him respectfully why it had not been done. The answer he got was, that the department was so busy that they could not get out the plans. Could that Committee put up with such an excuse as that? He (Mr. Jordan) moved the adjournment of the House for the purpose of calling attention to the matter a few weeks ago, when he read portions of an interesting report detailing all the facts, and it was then stated—something in the same way as it had been stated that night—that the department were anxious to provide all the facilities which did not at present exist. But it was not the Railway Department that was at fault; it was the Minister for Works, because he would not allow the wharf to be extended 700 feet longer, although he distinctly promised eighteen months ago that it should be lengthened to that extent. It was time it was done. There was no excuse for leaving it undone. It was discreditable and injurious to the colony. He was not speaking about his constituents now; he put the matter on broader grounds, and it was quite time that it should be thoroughly understood. He repeated that it was discreditable to the colony that steps should not have been taken immediately for the purpose of developing the coal trade of the country. He hoped that they should have no more of those

miserable excuses on the part of the Minister for Works, but that the hon. gentleman would get up and tell the Committee that the wharves should be made, according to promise, 700 feet longer, and facilities created for shipping coal. Look at the two cranes that were there, miserable abortions, with arms not long enough to put coal on board ship. It was a shame and disgrace to the colony.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was sorry to hear the remarks of the hon. member for South Brisbane, who was usually not offensive, but he had made a statement just now which he knew to be untrue.

Mr. JORDAN: I did not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You did.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Chair!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member for South Brisbane said he (the Minister for Works) promised to extend that wharf eighteen months ago. What he told the hon. member then was that there was no money available for the purpose.

Mr. JORDAN: I beg your pardon; you did not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could appeal to the Chairman of Committees, who was present at the time, to bear out what he had stated. The hon. member for South Brisbane must have lost his head or he would not have made such a statement. There was no money available eighteen months ago. Provision was made on the last Loan Estimates for extending the wharf, and he was sure that if the hon. member would reconsider the matter, he would remember that he (the Minister for Works) did not make any such promise eighteen months ago. The hon. member for Mulgrave had been condemning the whole of the arrangements for the shipping of coal, and talked about the miserable cranes. Who put the cranes there? It was not the present Government. They were not responsible for that, nor for the wharves being built so that vessels could not get alongside of them. It was like the blunders of the hon. member himself. He could assure the hon. member that when the present Government undertook to do work, they would do it properly. He was very sorry indeed that the hon. member for South Brisbane should have lost his temper over the matter.

Mr. JORDAN: I have not.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member had lost his temper. However, it was not worth taking notice of. All he could say was this: that the present coal traffic had sprung up within the last two or three months, and the hon. member for Mulgrave thought he was doing a grand thing to get up and make a tirade, and endeavour to throw the blame on the Government for not seeing the thing beforehand, and expending £100,000 twelve months before the trade had sprung up. The Government were quite willing to give all the assistance they could for the export of coal, and if the hon. member for South Brisbane would only have a little patience—he had told him before that “Rome was not made in a day”—he would find that was the case. It was out of the question that all the public works provided for in the last Loan Act could be done at one time. Some of them must stand over, and he could only repeat what he had said before, that every exertion would be made to assist the colony to export its coal.

Mr. KELLETT said there was no doubt the coal traffic had very much increased of late; but the great fault in regard to the want of facilities for shipping the coal was owing to the fact that

the railway was taken to the wrong place. Somehow or other the Ipswich and South Brisbane people got the line taken to South Brisbane; but it ought to have gone either to Bulimba or to the powder magazine. The construction of that line in the direction chosen was a blot upon the last Government. He believed the Orient Company's steamers were likely to come up the Brisbane River before long; but they were not likely to come round Kangaroo Point for some years. They would not be able to come round that point till some of it was cut away—which, he supposed, would be done in time—but they could get up as far as the Bulimba reach, where vessels of any size could be coaled; and the sooner accommodation was provided for shipping coal either there or at the powder magazine the better.

Mr. JORDAN said the railway was a fact, whether it was a mistake or not. He did not think it was a mistake. Sea-going vessels went up as far as the Victoria Bridge—he wished they could go higher—and they only wanted the wharf lengthened 700 feet to provide accommodation sufficient to establish a large coal export trade.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: I move that this House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the consideration of the amendments made by the Council in the Undue Subdivision of Lands Prevention Bill; and in order to assist hon. gentlemen, I propose to have circulated to-morrow morning the message we desire to send to the Council with regard to those amendments. Afterwards we propose to go into Committee of Supply.

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