

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 28 OCTOBER 1885

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, 28 October, 1885.

Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Bill—consideration in committee of Legislative Council's amendments.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Report of the Standing Orders Committee.—Adjournment.

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

UNDUE SUBDIVISION OF LAND PREVENTION BILL—CONSIDERATION IN COMMITTEE OF LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. S. W. Griffith), the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole, to consider the Legislative Council's amendments in this Bill.

On clause 4, in which it was proposed to add, after "the Real Property Act of 1861," the words "and the Real Property Act of 1877"—

The PREMIER said that the amendment was unnecessary, as the Real Property Act of 1877 was merely an amendment of the Real Property Act of 1861. He therefore moved that the amendment be disagreed to.

Question put and passed.

On clause 5, which it was proposed to omit with the view of inserting the following:—

It shall not be lawful to erect a dwelling-house fronting a street or lane laid out after the passing of this Act at a less distance than 33 feet from the middle

line of such street or lane, or to use as a dwelling-house any building erected after the passing of this Act, and being at a less distance than 33 feet from the middle line of a street or lane, unless in either case the building is at the corner of a street and a lane, and is distant not less than 33 feet from the middle line of the street.

The PREMIER said the Legislative Council proposed to omit clause 5 and to substitute another clause. Clause 5 as passed by the Assembly provided that it should not be lawful to erect a dwelling-house fronting a lane at a less distance than 22 feet from such lane. The intention was to provide that where there were lines of dwelling-houses—where, in fact, there was a street with dwelling-houses on both sides—there should be 66 feet between them. There were plenty of streets and lanes laid out before the passing of that Bill which were much less than 66 feet, and he thought the provision should apply to them. The Legislative Council, however, proposed to substitute another clause dealing only with all streets and lanes laid out after the passing of the Bill. He proposed to agree to the amendment omitting clause 5, and to amend the clause substituted for it in the manner in which notice had been given.

Question — That the amendment omitting clause 5 be agreed to—put.

Mr. BUCKLAND said the new clause compelled a person holding an allotment to build 33 feet from the middle of the lane?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. BUCKLAND: Instead of 22 feet from the side of the road?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said he proposed to amend the proposed new clause by leaving out the words "laid out after the passing of this Act" in the 2nd line, so that it should apply to all streets and lanes. That was the intention of the original clause, and to save existing rights where people had houses at present, it was proposed to add the following:—

Provided that when a building erected before the passing of this Act, and being at a distance of less than thirty-three feet from the middle line of a street or lane, is wholly or partially destroyed, or falls out of repair, it shall be lawful to re-erect such building upon the original site, or any other site not nearer to the street or lane than the original site.

That would give effect to what was intended by the clause, and also to what was intended by that Committee. He moved, first, that the words "laid out after the passing of this Act" be omitted.

Question put.

Mr. BEATTIE said he certainly could not see his way to support the proposed amendment, which would do a great deal of injustice to poor men who had bought property with the intention of building upon it. If they started with the idea that every allotment was 2 chains or 2½ chains deep he could understand that it might possibly be advantageous. But all allotments which were of a uniform size, some 16 perches or 14 perches, were not so; some of them were square which abutted on lanes 25 feet wide, and the amendment would necessitate the owners building right back upon such allotments, which might be 50 feet square. In some localities about Brisbane—he spoke more particularly about the suburbs—that would be a great injustice, and would not tend to improve the sanitary condition of those localities. For this reason: if houses were set back 22 feet from the side of a lane, or 33 feet back from the middle of it, where the allotments were only 50 feet in depth, they would all be huddled together behind, and the necessary

outhouses would be right up against the back doors. Some allotments were almost all frontage and had very little depth, and they could not be dealt with in that manner. He knew allotments in the suburbs which had a depth of only 25 feet, and a frontage to a lane or street of 1½ chains, and the owners of them would be prevented from utilising them. If the words proposed to be omitted were retained it would be the duty of the local authority to see that the by-laws respecting the sanitary condition of the locality were complied with. If the words were not retained a great deal of injury would be done to people who had purchased land, as they would be prevented from building after the passing of the Act. He trusted the Colonial Secretary would see his way to leaving the words in. If the whole of the allotments had a uniform depth of 100 feet or more there would not be so much difficulty in the way.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier seemed to consider that he had attained both objects—that he agreed with the other Chamber, and at the same time agreed with their own ideas when they passed the Bill—in the amendment he proposed in the Council's amendment; but he had done nothing of the kind. He had not saved the existing rights of a large body of men who had bought small allotments. Why should they break faith with them? They were ignored altogether. Hon. members knew that the buying of small allotments had been going on for months, and no action had been taken in the way of making a general law that would have the effect of guarding the working men in the colony, particularly round about Brisbane and Rockhampton, in the speculation that had been going on. They did not know how the law would apply to them at all. The Premier said that the amendment he had moved would not disturb the existing rights of men who violated the principle of the new law—they would not be disturbed so long as they had built houses. He did not take into consideration the number of men who had bought land for building houses upon, which would now be perfectly useless.

The PREMIER said that what he proposed would certainly bring back the clause to its original intention; but, of course, the Committee were at liberty to reconsider it. The original conclusion of the Committee was that it should not be lawful to erect dwelling-houses less than 22 feet from the side of the lane. That was much harder, because the lane might be 30 or 40 feet wide. The clause inserted by the Council was no doubt an improvement upon it. They intended that buildings should not be erected within 66 feet of one another, but he was very anxious to do no harm to existing rights. He should, therefore, not oppose a further amendment made by the Council, which would protect a case where land was already subdivided to a considerable extent, but all the allotments not sold. With respect to the present amendment, they would either have to provide that no lane should be less than 66 feet in width, or say that houses should not be built less than 33 feet from the centre of it. If the Committee were of opinion that the amendment would interfere with existing rights he did not desire to press it. In all Health Acts some persons must suffer. It was a question whether so many people would suffer as to counterbalance the advantage to be derived.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that when previous Bills had been brought in, infringing on vested interests, reasons had always been given for them, and they always knew the extent to which they were infringing. In the present case they did not know that at all; he did not think the Premier himself knew the extent to which they

were injuring a number of men. They had no information as to how many of those small allotments had been sold, and they had only a vague idea what would be the result of their action. He did not agree at all with the principle of the amendment proposed by the Premier. If a man had bought land upon which he could not build in accordance with the Act, his case was not considered at all; but if he happened to have a house built, he could go on eternally rebuilding his house in the same way when it became necessary. He did not believe in the Bill at all; he believed in a Sanitary Act, but not in a measure of that kind.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he thought it would have been better if the Bill had been confined to the width of streets and lanes, and the size of allotments, and if the question of buildings had been left out altogether.

Mr. SCOTT said he could see the force of the objection that the amendment would inflict a great hardship on those whose allotments had not sufficient depth, and he thought it would be better if the Premier could see his way to limit the action of his amendment to such allotments as went back some specified depth from the street.

The PREMIER said he did not think it would be practicable to adopt the hon. member's suggestion. He would withdraw his amendment with the view of moving some necessary verbal amendments.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the new clause was amended by the omission of the words "street or" in the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th lines, and of all the words from "and is distant" to the end of the clause.

The PREMIER moved the addition to the clause of the following proviso:—

Provided that when a building erected before the passing of this Act, and being at a distance of less than thirty-three feet from the middle line of a lane, is wholly or partially destroyed, or falls out of repair, it shall be lawful to re-erect such building upon the original site, or any other site not nearer to the lane than the original site.

He thought that was fair and reasonable.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he did not see how that was to be carried out. There was no record of the fact of houses being erected on certain places when the Act was passed, and in twenty years' time how were they to tell whether a particular building was distant 33 feet from the centre of a lane at the time the Act was passed?

The PREMIER said the question arose continually in Great Britain, but he thought it presented no practical difficulty.

Mr. SCOTT said he could not see the use of the proviso at all. The clause itself said it should not be lawful to erect a dwelling-house fronting a street or lane laid out "after" the passing of the Act. That was sufficient.

The PREMIER said that with the permission of the Committee he would withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. BLACK said he would like to be more clear about the last portion of clause 5. The first two portions of the clause did not apply to buildings "at the corner of a street and a lane." So that a man who had an allotment at the corner of a street and a lane could build up to the edge of the lane, and the owner of the next allotment must build 33 feet from the centre of the lane?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. BLACK said that gave a great advantage to the owner of a corner allotment, and he could not imagine that that was intended. He understood that the reason for putting the buildings back was that in the event of the lane being turned into a street there would be no buildings in the way.

The PREMIER said there would be alternate streets and lanes of 66 feet and 22 feet respectively, and half the allotments would be fronting the street and the other half would be fronting the lane.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was no answer to the hon. member for Mackay. The space between the houses was to be 66 feet for the sake of ventilation, and it was ridiculous in the same clause to allow each end of the lane to be blocked up. They would make the lane only 22 feet wide at the ends, and there would have to be 66 feet between the houses. That looked rather ridiculous, considering the object was to give ventilation.

The PREMIER said that of course was so, but to provide that the building should not be nearer than 33 feet from the centre of a lane at a corner of a lane and a street would be really to provide that the lane should be 66 feet wide. Practically it was not necessary that every opening in a street should be 66 feet wide.

Question put and passed.

On clause 8—"Map showing undue subdivision not to be received except in certain cases"—

The PREMIER moved that the Legislative Council's first amendment in the clause, inserting the words "and the Real Property Act of 1877," be disagreed to for the reasons he had stated.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said the next amendment in the clause, making the size of the allotments 32 perches instead of 16 perches, was a very important one, and he was going to move that it be disagreed to. They knew that a quarter of an acre of land in a valuable position would be beyond the reach of purchasers of small means, whom he thought it extremely desirable to encourage. Sixteen perches was an arbitrary figure, but so was thirty-two, and they knew that 16 perches was quite enough for an ordinary homestead. No doubt it would not suit speculators in land if 32 perches was made the minimum, but he did not propose to disagree to the amendment in their interests, but in the interests of purchasers whom he desired to see encouraged to make homes of their own.

Mr. BLACK said he agreed with the remarks made by the Premier. At the same time he would point out to the Committee that the reasons advanced by the hon. gentleman were extremely inconsistent with the policy of the Government on the land question. The hon. gentleman's reason for disagreeing with the amendment was that it put it out of the power of persons with small means to acquire a freehold for themselves; but he had understood that it was the land policy of the Government to discourage the acquisition of freeholds. The leasing provisions of the Land Bill were amended in passing through the House, so as not to apply to town and suburban land; but he thought he was right in saying that the Minister for Lands expressed a hope that the time would come when they would be applied even to town and suburban lands. He believed 16-perch allotments would be large enough, but the proposal was in direct opposition to the principles of the Land Bill introduced by the Government.

Mr. BEATTIE said they were not going to discuss the Land Bill just now, and he agreed with the Premier that the amendment of the Legislative Council was an undesirable one. He would have been very glad to have seen the proposed law in existence years ago. He would give an instance of what some men were doing at the present time, in consequence, no doubt, of the Bill having passed so far through Parliament. In one of the suburbs there was a piece of land 3 acres in extent. An individual had cut that land up by making streets through it, and he had divided it into 126 allotments, which in size were less than half the width of that Chamber, and he was asking £30 a lot for them. How anybody could breathe on them, he (Mr. Beattie) did not know. Hon. members could go and see the place for themselves. It was really time that a Bill was passed to put it out of any one's power to cut land up into such small allotments. Men, however, should not be compelled to purchase 32 perches of land when 16 perches would answer the purpose. There was one thing in particular he wished to point out to the Committee, and it was, that some serious collapse might take place so far as purchasers of allotments were concerned. Men were buying land, and cutting it up into small allotments of from 8 to 12 perches, which they sold on the time-payment system. *Bona fide* purchasers bought those allotments, and by-and-by they might find that the individual who sold them was not able to pay the person from whom he in the first instance bought the land. How, then, could the small *bona fide* purchasers recover from the man they bought from if he went insolvent? He was afraid that would be the case in Brisbane, and other towns, and that the working men would suffer. He hoped, however, that the Council's amendment would not be agreed to.

Mr. BROOKES said he would ask the senior member for Fortitude Valley for permission to doubt his illustration. Three acres of land cut up as the hon. member said into 126 allotments would give only 4 perches for each allotment.

Mr. BEATTIE said that was what they were, or rather only $3\frac{1}{2}$ perches each.

Mr. BROOKES asked if there were not streets running through the 3 acres?

Mr. BEATTIE said the area was intersected by lanes—not streets.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the senior member for Fortitude Valley had stated that there were 126 lots in the 3 acres, and if an allowance were made for the streets or lanes each allotment would be very small indeed.

Mr. BEATTIE said they were $3\frac{1}{2}$ perches each exactly.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH asked where the locality of those allotments was, and if there was a chance of any further speculation?

Mr. BEATTIE said he was sure the leader of the Opposition would not purchase any of them. He would be happy to take the hon. gentleman down to see the allotments. They were pegged out, and he could jump from one peg to another.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he could point to allotments in Brisbane which had been sold by the Government and which only contained $3\frac{1}{2}$ perches.

Mr. BULCOCK: There is only one.

Mr. BUCKLAND said the amendment of the Council, substituting 32 perches for 16 perches, was a mistake. Working men who at present held 16 perches of land would be unable to convey or do anything with it if that amendment was passed. The amendment, in fact, would put owners of 16-perch

allotments in the power of adjoining owners, and make it impossible to obtain a fair value for the land. As to the arguments of the senior member for Fortitude Valley, he did not think there were many instances in which buyers of land failed to get their titles. People who knew what they were about would not buy land unless they saw that the title was perfectly clear. Such things it was true had happened, but he did not think they were likely to occur frequently. He would be happy to support the proposition of the Premier.

Mr. BAILEY said he could state, in confirmation of what had been said by the senior member for Fortitude Valley, that there were people selling land on terms of a small cash instalment, and the balance in three, six, and twelve months, and sometimes two years; and that, being unable to get the title for the land they so sold, they refused a cash payment for the whole.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson) said he did not believe that any respectable land agent would lend himself to the practice of submitting land for sale to the public without being able to issue a title. As far as he had observed, all the men who dealt in land invariably considered that it was their primary duty to see that the title was in a condition that it could be given to any purchaser who chose to pay cash, and he had not heard of any who had been unable eventually to obtain their title. He, therefore, did not think it right that a suspicion should be circulated in the minds of buyers when there really was no difficulty in people getting their titles. All knew the adage "*Caveat emptor*"—a buyer must beware and look out for his title; and buyers as a rule did not suffer flaws in their titles to escape their notice. With regard to the subdivision of land, he thought that 16 perches was a fair minimum size, and the decision arrived at by the Government not to accept the amendment of the Council was a very wise one. The amendment of the Upper House was calculated to exclude all buyers of small means from securing a freehold property which it was desirable that they should possess for the purpose of residence. At the same time it should be borne in mind that the Government of the colony had already set an example to speculators in land to cut land up into small allotments. The plan of section 31 of Brisbane would show that nearly the whole of the allotments between Eagle street and the Post Office, fronting Queen street, were only from $3\frac{1}{2}$ to 6 perches each, and there never had been an outcry against that most minute subdivision of land. There was a general feeling amongst respectable land agents, in selling land, that the width of streets should be 66 feet, and of lanes 20 or 25 feet, and that lots should not be less than from 16 to 25 perches; although there were, of course, some owners who wished to make the most they could out of their land. But, as he had said before, the Government of the colony first set the example of cutting up land into small allotments, and that example had been followed by a large number of speculators. He again entered his protest against an unfounded apprehension being circulated that the buying of land at the present time was attended with the risk to purchasers that they might be unable to get their titles. He believed there was not the slightest foundation for any such apprehension, and should be very sorry to see it get abroad.

Mr. BEATTIE said he was sorry the Colonial Treasurer should have got so warm upon the subject. He knew well that there were honourable land agents in the colony, but there were men who dealt in land of whom that could not be said. Suppose a man leased a large

block of land at, say, Rockhampton, and that in his lease there was a purchasing clause which entitled him to purchase the land within five years, at which time he would get his title. Suppose he sold portions of the land on the strength of that clause before the end of five years, he could not give a title to the purchaser if he went insolvent before the original purchase was completed. A case of that kind had actually been brought under his notice. His remarks had no reference to particular land agents in Brisbane or Rockhampton, or anywhere in particular, because he believed that all those with whom he was acquainted looked well after the interests of their clients.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he could endorse what had fallen from the Colonial Treasurer with reference to sales of land. He had been connected with that business for twenty years, and in almost every case he had known, the agent was satisfied before the sale of land that the sellers were able to convey. As to the remarks of the hon. member for Wide Bay, he need only say that within the last ten days he had offered land by auction on the conditions of one-third cash, and the balance at four, eight, and twelve months, bearing 8 per cent. interest, or 5 per cent. deduction for cash. In a few minutes he sold a large quantity for which payment was made in cash, the 5 per cent. deducted, and the transfers had since been completed. He did not wish such an unfounded statement to get abroad that there was a probability that, with land sold on terms lately, the titles might not be forthcoming after the purchase money had been paid. He said this in justice to himself and other persons engaged in the same business.

Mr. BAILEY said he had heard of more than one case where cash payments had actually been refused. The reason for that was that the seller of the land was not able to get his own title to it until he had got enough money from the purchasers; and that might sometimes take a year or two.

Mr. SCOTT asked whether it was possible for a man who had not a title to land to get it divided in portions for sale in the Real Property Office?

The PREMIER said the question before the Committee was the area of land to be sold, not how it should be sold or the title to it.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. member for Leichhardt was simply asking for an expression of opinion with reference to some remarks that had fallen from the hon. member for Fortitude Valley.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had raised a very important question, and instead of replying to it, the land agents in the Committee, not content with their flaming advertisements in the newspapers, had been trying to monopolise *Hansard* on their own account. The fact that the hon. member for Bulimba was prepared to guarantee the title of any land he might sell had nothing whatever to do with the question. In spite of what the Colonial Treasurer had said, he knew that the titles to an immense number of pieces of land that had lately been sold in Brisbane and neighbourhood were in great jeopardy, and must necessarily be, because the vendor was not in a position to pay off the mortgage on the land and get his own title to it. Why should a mortgagee go to the expense and trouble of giving deeds for little bits of land here and there out of a particular block, and very likely spoiling his estate, before he had been able to get his money back? As a matter of fact, additional security had to be given when deeds were given up under those circumstances. There were good many instances of that, and the titles were in danger, there could be no doubt.

Mr. FOXTON said he had prepared a great many contracts for the sale of land, and in every one there was inserted a provision that, whenever the purchaser of the block paid the amount of purchase money received from any particular sub-purchaser, the title should be conveyed direct from the original vendor to the sub-purchaser. Adequate protection was afforded in such a title as that.

Mr. SCOTT asked if a leaseholder could go to the Registrar-General's Office and get his leased land cut up into allotments for sale; or must that be done by the absolute owner of the land?

The PREMIER said of course it could only be done by the registered owner. Nobody else could do it. Plans of that kind could only be lodged for purposes of transfer by the persons entitled to transfer.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he was very glad to hear the answer given by the hon. the Premier, which was, of course, one that they might expect from him or any person who had any knowledge regarding real property. It was well that the outside public should know the opinion of the Premier, who was one of the greatest lawyers in the colony on that matter, because at the present time the position, as far as syndicates were concerned, was this: Robber No. 1, as they were called, was the first person who bought the land; he sold to robber No. 2, who distributed the plunder in various channels, in 16-perch allotments, amongst hundreds of investors. Robber No. 1 still held the deeds, and perhaps before the titles were perfected upon the payment of the purchase money an exchange took place again, and so the ball rolled on. The first syndicate or individual held the deed, and then, like a spider's web, the transactions spread out in a hundred different directions; and he was perfectly certain that, in the immediate future, an enormous amount of trouble would arise with regard to getting titles to those lands. He was, therefore, very glad that the Premier had given the information he had—that no transfer of property could be made until the matter had been dealt with in the Real Property Office, and that the persons who were entitled to give transfers were the holders of the deed. There had been so much backing and filling in connection with those matters during the last few months that a clear exposition of the case was very much desired.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the Legislative Council's amendment in clause 9 be disagreed to for the same reason.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said the Legislative Council proposed a new subsection in clause 9 for the purpose of protecting persons who had already had land subdivided and had actually sold some of it, keeping the remainder, because it had been pointed out that an injustice might be done in this way: They might have sold a number of lots, and the pieces left might be of such an area that, under the provisions of the Bill, they could not sell them at all. He believed that that would happen in very few cases, and he himself was not disposed to agree to the amendment; but it was one that commended itself to a good many people, and as he was anxious to get the Bill through in as good a form as possible, if they could not make it perfect, he proposed to agree to the new subsection with some amendments, chiefly verbal, of which he had given notice. He moved that after "map" on line 3 of the subsection the words "or plan" be inserted.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said he had another verbal amendment to move—that before "Registrar," in the same line, "Registrar-General or" be inserted. The office of Registrar of Titles had only been in existence about twelve months, and a great many plans had been lodged with the Registrar-General.

Amendment agreed to.

The PREMIER said the next amendment was not a formal one. He proposed that the words "the passing of the Act" in line 4 be omitted, and "15th day of October, 1885," be inserted. The object of the amendment was that the protection should be confined to persons who had lodged plans before the date mentioned, which was the day on which the Bill was read a third time in that House and when its provisions were well known. He thought the amendment was perfectly fair. It would protect all *bond fide* transactions.

Mr. BUCKLAND asked if he was to understand that the Bill was to take effect from the 15th October?

The PREMIER: This saving clause will.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he did not agree with that at all. He knew of engagements that had been entered into for the sale of land; the purchase money was borrowed on mortgage, and the mortgage had been registered since that time. It would be very unfair to make the clause take effect from the 15th October. He could assure the Committee that the matter he referred to was not entered into to take advantage of the time before the Bill became law; it was business that could not be completed in time.

The PREMIER: What is the transaction?

Mr. BUCKLAND: The sale of land, being the purchase money borrowed on mortgage.

The PREMIER said the hon. member did not understand the point. There was nothing in the Bill to affect any contract made before the passing of it. As it left that House, it provided that where any contract for the sale of land had been made before the passing of it it should be protected. The subsection added by the Legislative Council dealt, not with contracts, but merely with lodging a plan of subdivision not accompanied by any contract at all; so that if the clause were allowed to pass as it stood anybody who had lodged plans subdividing the land into the most minute fractions would secure the right to sell it. Where land had been agreed to be sold before the passing of the Bill the transaction was protected.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: In what way?

The PREMIER: Because the clause will not interfere with it.

Mr. KELLET said he thought it was a most monstrous amendment. A very radical change had already been contemplated by the Bill, and it was going too far. He himself knew of some instances—and he had no doubt other hon. gentlemen knew of them—where arrangements had been made to purchase land on certain conditions, and a price was given accordingly. Those arrangements would be upset by the clause if passed as amended. Before a man paid a certain amount of money he had made up his mind as to how he would divide the land and how the transaction was to be carried out, and plans had been made. In many cases those plans had not been lodged in the office. It would interfere with a great many *bond fide* transactions which were in contemplation before the Bill was passed at all, and it would be quite time enough if the date were fixed from the passing of the Bill, as in the clause. It was a very radical change as it was,

and it should not be rushed for the sake of preventing further transactions which might be pushed through now. The Premier said the land might be divided into minute portions; but he did not think land would be divided into minute portions. He knew of some transactions that would be very much affected if the amendment were passed, which he hoped it would not be.

The PREMIER said it seemed to him to be a very poor argument that a man was at present contemplating to do a thing that Parliament declared to be radically bad, and had not been able to effect his intention. He had received a warning that Parliament did not intend to allow it, so he said, "Give me a few days that I may do so," and then he would obtain a vested right to carry out his evil purpose. The argument did not commend itself to his mind.

Mr. KELLETT said he did not see the force of the Premier's argument at all. He said that because men had evil intentions which they might wish to carry out certain transactions which had been almost completed, on the idea that the Bill provided that lands should be divided in a certain way, could not be carried out. To amend the clause in the manner indicated would cause a great deal of loss to certain parties.

Mr. FOXTON said he was under the impression, when the Bill was read a second time, that, in deference to the largely expressed opinion of hon. gentlemen that it should not be retrospective, the Premier introduced the 9th clause for the purpose of getting rid of the retrospection.

The PREMIER: So I did.

Mr. FOXTON said he was not in the Committee when the 9th clause was moved, and very possibly he might not, owing to the length of the clause, have detected the fact that the 6th subsection, as inserted by the Council, had been omitted. That was an omission that caused the Bill to be retrospective in a certain direction, although the clause as a whole guarded against retrospectiveness in respect to almost every other case and incident that could arise. He was inclined to think that the feeling of the Committee, when the clause was introduced, was that they had taken it, more or less, upon trust from the Premier, that the clause would get rid of retrospectiveness, and consequently, it being a long clause, it might not have been scanned so closely as it appeared to have been in the other Chamber. He certainly endorsed a great deal of what had been said by the hon. member for Stanley. He knew of instances in which the clause would do a great deal of harm. Engagements had been entered into by persons for the purchase of land, knowing that, in pursuance of the law as it was then supposed to exist, they were at liberty to cut it up in a certain way—places that might become business sites and be beyond the operation of the Bill before very many months were over. When it became known that the clause did not provide for making the Bill retrospective the plans were put into the Real Property Office at once, and properly so; because it was understood that the Bill should not be retrospective in any way. Subsection (c) exempted cases where the certificate of title was registered before the passing of the Bill. Why not put in the 15th October there, and make the whole Bill operate from that date? He did not see that it was reasonable or just that the amendment of the Council should be interfered with in the way the Premier proposed.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he did not believe in the Bill being retrospective. He knew of transactions that took place since the 15th October, and registration and transfer of that very property had taken place.

The PREMIER said those transactions were protected still. The clause simply dealt with lodging plans for the purpose of evading the law.

Mr. BUCKLAND said the survey of the land he referred to was made fully three months ago, before notice of the Bill was given, and the first sale of the land took place during the past fourteen or fifteen days. It happened that the allotment he referred to was about half-a-perch less than the standard accepted by the Committee—16 perches. It had been sold and money borrowed to pay for it, and he knew that the transfer was lodged and a mortgage with it for registration.

Mr. FOXTON said he could, perhaps, make his meaning clearer by giving an instance. He knew of a plan which had been lodged since the 15th October, and a dealing upon that plan had taken place, and it was impossible for the proprietor to withdraw that plan, which he was bound by—at all events, so far as the streets were concerned. It appeared to him that that plan had been lodged in pursuance of the law as it stood at present, and in fulfilling just rights.

The PREMIER: I suppose I shall have to give way.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why? Let us have some more discussion; I should like to understand it.

The PREMIER said the Bill provided for all vested interests. The provision introduced by the Legislative Council would allow anyone, from now till the Act was assented to, to cut up their land into as small portions as they pleased, and by lodging the plan at the Real Property Office to retain a vested right to sell those portions whenever they pleased. All the benefit of the Bill would be lost.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he thought that if the Bill was a proper one the Premier's amendment was a proper one. If they declared that a certain thing was to the disadvantage of the colony why should they give anyone the privilege to do it up to a certain date? If they were not taking a right from anyone—

Mr. FOXTON: But you are.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was what he wanted to understand. He would explain what he did not think was a right. Suppose a man had a 10-acre estate near Brisbane, and cut it up with 22-foot streets and 10-foot lanes and 8-perch allotments, and that by selling one of those allotments and registering the transaction before the passing of the Act he could evade the Act so far as all the rest was concerned, that would be a gross injustice. They wanted to prevent a case like that. Why should they say that it was a very bad thing to have narrow streets and small allotments, and then give twelve months—they might as well give twelve as one—for people to cut up land with narrow streets and small allotments? If a man had bought a 10-perch allotment for the purpose of building a house it would be an abominable injustice for them to say they would not allow him to build his house there; but if certain men who had bought land with a view of cutting it up into small allotments came forward and said Parliament was infringing on vested rights by passing a law to prevent it, he could only say Parliament was doing nothing of the kind. If they chose to go in for a speculation of that sort it was at their own risk. If the Parliament decided it was a bad thing for the public why should they make an exception in favour of men who had bought land for the purpose of doing it? The effect of rejecting the Premier's amendment would be to bring about a wholesale evasion of

the law so far as Brisbane was concerned; because people outside would not be able to get in their plans in time to take advantage of it. If the Bill was good at all the amendment was a very necessary one.

Mr. FOXTON said he spoke of cases which he thought the hon. member had not taken into consideration. Suppose a sale had taken place on a plan which had never been lodged in the Real Property Office—which it might not be necessary to lodge till twelve months after the first sale—and suppose one-fourth of the allotments had been sold. The sales had been actually effected upon that plan, perhaps twelve months ago, and the vendor lodged the plan in the Real Property Office, say, on the 16th October. Then, if the amendment were carried, although he was bound by his contracts with a certain number of purchasers, the plan was worthless to him for the balance of the allotments.

The PREMIER: Let him have a new plan made.

Mr. FOXTON said he could not do that without buying back every allotment, because the plan lodged in the Real Property Office was irrevocable.

The PREMIER said the plan was only irrevocable so far as the streets were concerned. If a man had cut up land, or intimated his intention of cutting it up into 3-perch allotments, it was the object of the Bill to stop him from doing the harm he intended. Let him go to the expense of a re-survey.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he did not think people were rushing in plans to evade the law. Those who had land not cut up were, so far as he knew, quite content to abide by the Bill, and thought it a good Bill. But where people had cut up land with some of the sections less than 16 perches, and where they had sold part of it but had not deposited the plans—because they were not required to do so until the money was actually paid and the title wanted—he thought it was perfectly fair that they should now be allowed to deposit the plans. They had no evidence that people were rushing in bogus plans; and they ought to take care that in guarding against imaginary fraud they did not commit an injustice towards those people who were perfectly innocent, who had acted within what had been the law, and who had no intention of defrauding at all.

Mr. FOXTON said the Premier was perfectly correct in stating that a plan was only irrevocable so far as regarded the actual streets. The vendor might throw two allotments into one, but by doing that he would have to very materially increase his frontages. Allotments of less than 16 perches were, as a rule, tolerably centrally situated, and were sold at so much a foot. The buyers would be limited, because it would take a man of larger means to purchase a full-sized allotment with a larger frontage than the allotments which appeared on the first plan. The point was that it would at once depreciate the value of the remaining allotments. As to the objection that a number of plans would be rushed into the office during the ensuing fortnight, if it took that long to obtain the Governor's assent to the Bill, it should be remembered that it took some time to survey a block of land, and the plan could not be lodged until the survey was effected. He spoke particularly of cases in which the plan was prepared twelve months ago and had not yet been lodged, and of cases in which portions of the estates had been sold as far back as twelve months ago. In such cases injustice would be done should the amendment be agreed to.

Mr. SCOTT said he had an objection to making any law retrospective. Why should they not fix to-morrow as the day from which it should be in force? That would meet the whole question. Plans could be drawn up in half-an-hour sufficient to lodge in the office.

Mr. FOXTON said the hon. member for Leichhardt was wrong. It was necessary for a surveyor to go on the land and survey it before the plan could be lodged. He had to make a declaration that he had been on the land and surveyed it before the plan could be lodged.

Mr. CHUBB said that what the hon. member for Carnarvon said was true, but it was only done by a regulation made by the Registrar-General. The Registrar-General had made an arbitrary rule that no plan was to be accepted unless the surveyor made a declaration that the measurements and boundaries marked on the plan had been certified as correct by actual survey. However, the Real Property Act gave no legal authority for that rule, and the point was that if the Registrar-General refused to accept any other plan to-morrow the Supreme Court might compel him to do so.

Mr. BUCKLAND said that if the Premier would not withdraw his amendment he would move that the date be altered to the 31st October.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he thought the Premier would withdraw the amendment when such good cause was shown, and when they were sufficiently guarded by the necessity for the actual survey, whether by law or by that very wise regulation which the Registrar-General appeared to enforce; more especially when no hon. member appeared to be able to give any evidence that any attempt would be made to rush plans into the office. All retrospective legislation was bad, as they should not interfere with what had passed. It should be remembered also that it was the poor man who would suffer by the amendment. He had got his allotment a little short of 16 perches, and it became utterly useless to him though he would have to pay rates on it all the same. The result would be that a wealthier owner having an allotment alongside could say to himself, "All I have got to do is to wait and I have got this man's land at my own price." The poor man would have to go to him in the end and get rid of the land. The amendment, as the hon. member for Carnarvon had pointed out, would depreciate the value of the remaining allotments.

Mr. BEATTIE said he did not agree with the hon. member, because if a man could prove that he was a *bonâ fide* purchaser the Registrar-General would have to give him his title. The system adopted for a long time in and around Brisbane was, that men were in the habit of cutting up land and never sent in a plan to the Registrar-General. They gave a man a title to land he purchased on a plan, and they always kept two allotments at the end of a street as a *cul de sac*. They got people to build on the allotments in the street, and thus increased the value of the allotments left by the proprietors; and it was only when they sold all the land that they sent in the plan. Hon. members would remember the discussion that took place on the Divisional Boards Act Amendment Bill, and he believed that the amendment he suggested then would have prevented all that had it been accepted. He proposed that all plans for the subdivision of land should be submitted to the local authorities throughout the colony, and their certificate to the Registrar-General would be authority for him to accept the plans. That would have prevented a good deal of the cutting

up of land into 6, 8, and 10 perch allotments. He could not see the injury the amendment was going to do, because he believed vested rights would be protected, and where there was a *bond fide* purchaser the Registrar-General would have to give him his title. He believed there were a great many persons trying to rush their plans through the office within the last fortnight, but if the Premier would withdraw his amendment he would support the amendment of the hon. member for Bulimba.

Mr. FOXTON said that unless the Legislative Council's amendment was carried it would do a further injustice to persons holding unsold allotments where the plans had not already been lodged, because section 9 said:—

"After the passing of this Act it shall not be lawful to register any instrument dealing with any allotment or portion of suburban or country land which is of a less area than sixteen perches, unless in one of the cases following, that is to say"—

He would go on to subsection (10) of the clause—

"When the instrument is a conveyance, mortgage, transfer, or lease of land to the owner of land adjoining the land dealt with by the instrument."

That simply meant that if the proprietor of an estate, as they were called, had sold allotments 1, 3, 5, and 7 in a street, he would be only able to sell the intervening allotments 2, 4, and 6, to the men who held allotments 1, 3, 5, or 7. He would have to pay rates if he kept them, and he could not get rid of them by selling to anybody else. The holders of the sold allotments could say, "We will take our own time and you will have to sell to us in the end." That would be the effect of the amendment in scores of instances he knew of.

The PREMIER said that what he was most anxious to do was to get the Bill passed in some shape so that it might be of use; and, as he would take care that any attempt made to rush plans into the office without proper survey should not succeed, he would withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

The PREMIER moved that the word "conveying" in lines 4 and 5 be omitted, and the words "the transfer of" inserted.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the word "such" in the 5th line be omitted, and the word "the" inserted.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that after "subdivisions" the words "comprised in such map or plan" be added.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said the next amendment of the Council was the transposition of subsection 9 of clause 9 to follow the new subsection 6. He approved of the transposition, and moved that the amendment be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had agreed to some of the amendments, had disagreed to others, and had agreed to others with amendments.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this Bill be returned to the Legislative Council with a message to the following effect:—

The Legislative Assembly having had under consideration the Legislative Council's amendments in the Undue Subdivision of Land Prevention Bill,—

Disagree to the amendment in clause 4—

Because it appears to be unnecessary, the Real Property Act of 1877 being merely an amendment of the Act of 1861;

Agree to the omission of clause 5;

Agree to the new clause in substitution for clause 5, with the following amendments:—

Omit in the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th lines the following words—"street or";

Omit after the word "lane" in the 7th line all the remaining words of the clause:

In which amendments they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

Disagree to the first amendment in clause 8 for reasons above advanced;

Disagree to the second amendment in clause 8—

Because it would tend to put it out of the power of persons of small means to acquire a freehold for themselves, and the minimum area of sixteen perches proposed by the Bill will probably be sufficient to prevent undue subdivision of land;

Disagree to the first amendment in clause 9 for the same reasons;

Agree to the proposed subsection 6 of clause 9 with the following amendments:—

After "map" on line 3 of the subsection insert "or plan";

Before "Registrar" in the same line insert "Registrar-General or";

Omit "conveying" in lines 4 and 5 and insert "the transfer of";

Omit "such" in line 5 and insert "the";

After "subdivisions" add "comprised in such map or plan";

In which amendments they invite the concurrence of the Legislative Council.

And agree to the transposition of subsection 9 of clause 9 to follow the new subsection 6.

Question put and passed.

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 (Hon. W. Miles) moved that £37,760 be granted for the Maryborough and Gympie Railway, salaries and contingencies. Seven additional station-masters, clerks, guards, and porters had been appointed, and there was an increase of £100 in the item for extra labour and contingencies; the total increase in the vote being £1,043.

Mr. NORTON asked if there was still a difficulty in getting a full supply of coal for the Maryborough line in the district?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that some months ago there was a difficulty, and they had to get coal from Newcastle. That difficulty had ceased for some time past, and they could get as much coal in the district as was required.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £13,940 be granted for the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway, salaries and contingencies. The amount was exactly the same as that voted last year.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that £119,475 be granted for the Central Railway, salaries and contingencies. Hon. members would observe that there was a considerable reduction on the vote for maintenance of permanent way. The amount voted last year, £57,800, left a surplus of £16,000, which of course lapsed. That might have been owing to dry seasons resulting in a diminution of traffic; but, owing to whatever cause, the balance was as he had stated. For the present year it was proposed to ask for £50,800, or £7,800 less than the previous year's vote. In the Traffic Department there had been an increase of eight station-masters, clerks, and boys, £300; sixteen guards, porters, pointsmen, and watchmen, £770; and extra labour, £250; making a total increase of £1,320 in the department. In the Locomotive Department there were ten additional enginemen, foremen, and cleaners, £1,092; five additional fitters, turners, and machinists, £422; two additional coach and

waggon builders, £89; and extra labour, an increase of £2,525; making a total increase in that department of £4,128. There was also an increase in the vote for stores and contingencies of £4,450. There had been thirty-four miles of additional line opened, which accounted for the additional men required.

Mr. FERGUSON said the Minister for Works had told the Committee that there had been a certain increase in the number of men employed on the Central Railway. He would like to know whether the rate of wages those men received was decided by the head office in Brisbane, or by the recommendation of the head office at Rockhampton, Townsville, or Maryborough, as the case might be?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the rule was that the pay was regulated by the recommendation of the locomotive foremen.

Mr. FERGUSON said what he wanted to point out was that there was a wonderful difference between the increased amount of money put down opposite the additional number of men employed on the Central and Northern lines and on the Southern and Western line. On the Southern and Western line there was an increase of seventy-two men, and the amount of money opposite that number was £9,122, or an average of £126 a year. On the Central line there was an increase of forty-one men—the same class of men exactly—and the increase in money opposite that number was £2,677, or an average of £65 a year, as against £126 on the Southern and Western line—almost double. On the Northern line there was an increase of twenty-three men, and £2,154, or an average of £89 a year. In fact, as far as he could make out, the same class of men, doing the same class of work, received almost double on the Southern and Western Railway to what they did on the Central line. On the Southern and Western line there was an increase of fourteen station-masters, averaging £107 a year; on the Central line there was an increase of eight, showing an increase of £37 each. Take the whole estimate through, it was the same—they were simply receiving about double the amount on the Southern and Western Railway that they were on the Central. He could see no reason for it, because if there was any difference at all it should be in favour of the northern part of the colony, where the expenses of living were so much higher than in the South, exactly the same hours being worked and the same labour performed in each place. He called the attention of the Minister for Works to the same thing when the Estimates of 1883-4 were before the Committee, and it was rectified; and unless there was a general reduction in the whole of the staff he could not see how the additional number of men could be getting anything like fair pay on the Central and Northern lines.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Commissioner for Railways had informed him that as a rule the men employed on the Central and Northern lines were paid a higher rate of wages than those in the South. In the figures the hon. member had quoted there were a number of boys who received only small salaries.

Mr. FERGUSON said he would take the item of "Station-masters, clerks, booking clerks, and boys" on the Central line. There was an increase of eight, and the increase in the amount of money was £300, or at the rate of £37 10s. each. The Minister could not get over that—there was the item on the Estimates. Then there was an increase of sixteen men in "Guards, porters, pointsmen, and watchmen," while the increase in money was £770—an average of about £41.

Those items were as plain as possible. It was no use saying the men on the Central and Northern lines were paid more than those in the South, because there were the figures before them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the figures mentioned by the hon. member included a large number of boys, who received only small wages.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Minister for Works had not replied at all to the argument of the hon. member, and did not appear to understand the objection that he had brought forward. The hon. member for Rockhampton had stated that there was a certain increase in a certain class of men on the Central Railway, and an increase in the same class of men on the Southern and Western Railway, and the amount per head put down for the men on the Southern and Western Railway was a great deal more than for those on the Central Railway. That proved either that there had been a general increase in wages on the Southern and Western lines, or that exceptionally high prices were paid to the men on that line. It rather indicated that there had been a general increase on the Southern and Western line, and none on the Central line. The fact had to be accounted for.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was assured that the men on the Central and Northern lines were paid rather over what they were on the Southern and Western lines. If the hon. member for Rockhampton wished, he would bring down a return, showing exactly the rate of wages paid to every employé in the department.

Mr. FERGUSON said the men on the Central and Northern lines might now be paid more than they were in the South: but they could not be, once that estimate was passed. As he had pointed out, on the Central line, 41 additional men were set down to receive £2,677, or £65 a year each, while the same class of men, on the Southern and Western line, were put down at an average of £126 each—nearly 100 per cent. more. That was the amount they received unless there was some other fund that they were paid out of, which was not down on the Estimates.

Mr. SALKELD said he might assist the hon. member for Rockhampton. If he turned to the Southern and Western Railway estimates he would see what was paid altogether. The hon. gentleman was simply taking the average of the increases. If he would take the whole lot he would find that on the Southern and Western Railway there were station-masters, assistants, and relieving station-masters and clerks, 125 officers, receiving on an average £141 9s. per annum. On the Central Railway there were 40 station-masters, etc., receiving £6,000, which was an average of £150 each. So that the average on the Southern and Western Railway was £141 9s., while on the Central Railway it was £150. That was the proper way to look at it. The hon. gentleman was taking simply the additional hands, and the additional expenditure. If he took the lot he would find that what the hon. Minister for Works had said was correct.

Mr. SCOTT said the men on the subdivision last year numbered 96; but for the present year they numbered 120—an increase of 24. The increase in the salaries was £1,320, or something like an average of £53 per annum. That was what the extra men were receiving on the Central line now.

Mr. SALKELD said he wished to allude to a matter in connection with the Central Railway, and he believed he was correct in the information he had received. It was that a great number of the engine-drivers and firemen had left the

department, and it was found very difficult to get men to go there or remain there. He had heard of some individual cases where men were sent from the other lines and who were recognised as being really good and efficient men. But they very soon left, as was said, on account of the treatment they received from the locomotive foreman. One man went into New South Wales, and it was very difficult to get engine-drivers as competent as that man was. He believed he was correct in saying that the department found it very difficult to get good engine-drivers to remain on the Central line. If such were really the case it indicated that there was something wrong. He did not know much about the locomotive foreman; but he did not seem to be very agreeable to his men. He was just throwing out a hint, so that the Minister for Works might keep an eye there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he believed that there was some truth in what the hon. gentleman had referred to. There did exist some friction between the locomotive foreman and the drivers, and the Government had intended to make some change there in connection with the locomotive department. The locomotive foreman was very troublesome, and it was very possible that what the hon. gentleman had stated was correct. The matter would be looked into and rectified shortly.

Mr. SCOTT said he would like a little information concerning the Springsure Railway. He had been told that the contractor was getting on with the work very slowly; and as he was on the easiest part of it only now, it would be quite impossible for him to complete it within the contract time. Had the Minister for Works received any information as to how the contractor was getting on, or whether he would finish within the contract time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that he had learned from the accountant that, judging from the way the vouchers were coming in, the contractor was making some progress.

Mr. SCOTT said he was glad to hear it, because it was only a week or two ago that he received a letter from Springsure stating that he was making no progress at all, and was engaged upon the easiest portion of the line.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was possible that the Minister for Lands might give them some information with regard to that railway, which was one that he had been mixed up with a good deal. It was a railway that he said he did not believe in, but he would vote for it if the electors of the Leichhardt would put him into power as Minister for Lands. As one of the members for the district, the hon. member should know how the work was progressing. It might be progressing in the way he might wish it to be progressing—very slowly; or it might be progressing in the way in which the Minister for Works said it was—in a very satisfactory way. Knowing, as they all knew, the exceptional knowledge the Minister for Lands possessed of that railway, he might give some information.

Mr. DONALDSON said he wished to call attention to the absurdly long time sheep had to be trucked before they arrived at the yards here. It was a matter that required great attention. He thought he could not do better than read a letter which appeared in last Friday's *Courier*, headed "Railway Mismanagement":—

"To the Editor of the Brisbane Courier."

"Sir,—It is surely preposterous at any time of the year, but especially so in such weather as the present, that live stock must be trucked at Dalby on Tuesday afternoon for sale in Brisbane on Thursday afternoon, some proportionately west or east of here. Where is the

Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals? Forty-eight hours perishing for want of a drink does not improve stock as human food, and for a distance of 150 miles would be considered absurdly unnecessary under any railway management than our own. It is not for me to suggest a remedy, but I think some new brooms are wanted in the department. I commend this matter to your attention; perhaps you can do something. It is quite useless individuals making suggestions to the department.—I am, sir, etc.,

"G. MORRIS SIMPSON."

In that day's *Courier* he noticed an explanation, which he presumed had been supplied by the Railway Department. It was put in a very conspicuous part of the paper:—

"A few days ago we published a letter from Mr. G. M. Simpson, complaining that sheep had to be trucked at Dalby on Tuesday afternoon for sale in Brisbane on Thursday. He adds, very naturally, that 'forty-eight hours perishing for want of a drink does not improve condition of stock as human food.' The fact that the sheep were forty-eight hours in the trucks is not denied, but we are assured that they were trucked at Dalby at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, and put into the siding at Normanby ready for delivery to consignees at noon on Wednesday. The consignees were advised of the probable time the sheep would arrive, and it appears no blame can attach to the department for the dreadful cruelty with which the sheep were treated; but if, as Mr. Simpson says, it is at present necessary to truck the sheep on Tuesday afternoon, an alteration might perhaps be made to bring the time of shipment nearer to that at which the sale is held. It is to be feared much cruelty has been and still is practised in connection with this trade."

That explanation, which he believed was supplied by the Railway Department, left the inference that the blame should be put on the shoulders of the agents who received the sheep here. Now, if sheep could arrive in time on Wednesday to be sold that afternoon, surely they could be trucked a day later and arrive on Thursday in time for the sale. It was absurd to truck sheep for a journey of 150 miles, forty-eight hours before the sale, particularly in a season like this, when there was no possibility of getting water or feed for them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed the sheep the hon. member alluded to were trucked at Dalby at 6 o'clock on Tuesday evening, and arrived at Brisbane at 12 o'clock on Wednesday.

Mr. DONALDSON: And they had not to be sold till next day.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was informed that the fact was as he had stated.

Mr. DONALDSON: That is admitted.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that he could not see, then, what there was to find fault with. If people wanted a special train for every few trucks of sheep they would have to pay for it. Oftentimes the trucks were picked up by the train from the West during the night, and of course the sheep must be trucked before dark. He had been trucking sheep for years, and he did not see much to complain of. He was sure he had trucked more sheep than ever the hon. member had, and he had never complained.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was confident that if the hon. member had to send sheep to market, and they had to wait forty-eight hours in the trucks before they were sold, he would complain. If sheep could arrive at 12 on Wednesday there was no reason why they should not arrive at 12 on Thursday. It was a matter of mercy to the animals as well as of preventing the deterioration of the meat. If the sheep were kept a long time without water or feed they could not be so good for mutton. With regard to the statement of the Minister, that he had trucked more sheep than he (Mr. Donaldson) had, he begged to differ with the hon. member. Within the last few months he believed he had trucked as many

sheep as the hon. member had in his whole lifetime. Within the last year he had looked after the trucking of sheep in Victoria and New South Wales, and had trucked 40,000 or 50,000 in six weeks. It would be a long time before the hon. member would have such a record.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was at a loss to understand how the hon. member made it forty-eight hours from 6 on Tuesday evening till 12 on Wednesday. If the sheep were forty-eight hours on the road from Dalby to Brisbane it was a great deal too long. He was told the consignee could have had the sheep some considerable time before he took them away.

Mr. DONALDSON said there was no advantage in getting the sheep here, because no feed or water could be got for them. His contention was that it would be better to send them away at the same hour on Wednesday, and let them arrive at 12 on Thursday, the day of the sale.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Railway Department had nothing to do with the time the owner of the sheep trucked them. He ordered the trucks and was supplied with them.

Mr. DONALDSON said the owner of the sheep would not have sent them away on Tuesday if he could have done it on Wednesday. That was what he complained of—he had to truck the sheep perforce on Tuesday because the department would not supply the trucks on Wednesday.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that, if that were the case, there must be something wrong. He would inquire into the matter. Of course it sometimes happened that there were not enough trucks; and if a great number of sheep were to be sent away some of them would have to wait. He did not think it often occurred, because he believed there was rolling-stock in excess of ordinary requirements.

Mr. DONALDSON said he was informed it was the usual practice that sheep had to be sent away from Dalby on Tuesday afternoon; consequently they were in Brisbane a great deal too long before the actual sale. He trusted the matter would be remedied.

Mr. FERGUSON said that he was not at all satisfied with the explanation of the Minister for Works. He wanted to know if it was the intention of the Minister to reduce the salaries of the whole of the staff on the Central Railway, or not? According to the Estimates they must have been reduced. He would just refer to the first line in the estimate for the Traffic Department. Last year there were thirty-two men, and the amount paid to them was £5,700—or at the rate of, say, about £180 a year. For the present year there were forty men—that was eight additional—and the increase was only £300 on the total amount, an average of £37 for the eight additional men; and he wanted to know if the eight additional men were being paid £37 each, or was the whole staff being reduced? It must be one or other. The eight additional men were only receiving £37 a year, or the whole forty must be reduced in proportion. The next item was an addition of sixteen men; and the increase in the estimate was £770, or an average of about £48 a year. Before the present year the men were receiving wages in the same proportion as on the Southern and Western line; but according to the present estimate there would be a reduction of the salaries of the whole staff. In other words, there were last year 200 men on the Central line receiving about £180 a year, and there was an addition of forty men for the present year at an additional rate of £50 a year; they could not be paid at that rate, so that the effect of the

present estimate would be to reduce the whole staff. He was quite satisfied with the estimate of last year, because he knew they were paid at the same rate as on the Southern and Western Railway. That was brought about in 1883-4. The Minister for Works made a change then; but now they were going back to the old system, as far as he could see.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the hon. member would wait until to-morrow he would bring down a schedule with the names and salaries attached to each of the employés on the Southern and Western and Central Railways. He was assured that they were paid at the same rates on both lines. He did not fix the salaries, and he hoped the information he would give the hon. member in the schedule he brought down would satisfy the hon. member. It was not the intention of the Government to make any distinction on any of the railways, either South or North.

Mr. FERGUSON said, exactly; but would the schedule be in accordance with the estimate before them or with the estimate of last year? The amount down for the present year would have the effect of reducing the whole of the staff. If the schedule for the Central Railway was drawn up in accordance with the estimate they were passing now he would be satisfied.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that the Chief Engineer, Mr. Ballard, was not very particular in the number of men he put down, but that would not affect the employés, so long as they got the same rate of payment as was given elsewhere. He would endeavour to furnish the hon. member with information which he hoped would satisfy him.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. Minister for Works said that Mr. Ballard was not very particular as to the number of men he put down; and he also said that it was not the intention of the Government to make any difference between the men working on the Southern and Western line, and on the Central and Northern lines. He (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) must take exception to both those statements. If Mr. Ballard had put down a certain number of men as increase to the staff, there must be an exception made as the amount put down on the estimate as increase would only give those men £50 a year. As to the other statement about the Government not making any difference between the salaries paid to the men on the Southern, Central, and Northern lines, if that was so, the present Government were acting differently from the previous Government, because there was a difference made in that respect. When he was Minister for Works, as the records of the office would show, he caused the then Commissioner for Railways to make inquiries as to the cost of living on the Central and Northern lines, and a comparison was made between the cost of living on the three lines; and the salaries of the men working on those lines were equalised according to the cost of living on them. A man getting 6s. 6d. a day on the Southern and Western line would be a good deal better paid than a man getting the same wages on the Central line, because the man working on the Central line had to pay a good deal more for his living; and he would be infinitely better paid than a man working on the Northern line for 6s. 6d. a day, because the cost of living on that line was still more increased. They were now told by the Minister for Works that he made no difference, and if so he must have made an alteration because he (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) had certainly raised the wages of the men working on

the Central and Northern lines over those working on the Southern and Western line, because of the increased cost of living.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that when he said he made no difference he meant to say that he had not interfered with the rules and regulations in force. The hon. member knew that when he was Minister for Works he could not tell exactly what each man's salary was. Men were often taken on on probation, at certain salaries, and if they gave satisfaction their salaries were increased. He did not interfere with those things. The information he had was that men on the Northern lines were paid at a higher rate than the men on the Southern lines. As a rule, new hands were taken on at a lower salary until they gave satisfaction, and then their salaries were raised from time to time. Porters and guards were in different classes and did not get the same salary. They were paid according to their classification, and men of the first class got a little more than others. As the men were promoted from time to time their salaries were increased.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was very glad to hear the hon. gentleman say he had not interfered with the regulations made. He was satisfied with the explanation. The information the hon. gentleman had received that men on the Northern lines were paid at a higher rate than those on the Southern was correct, if the regulation made when he was in office had not been interfered with. Looking at the schedule sent down with the Estimates for 1885-6 on the whole, the salaries paid to station-masters on the Central Railway were higher than those paid to station-masters holding corresponding positions on the Southern and Western line, and he supposed the same thing applied to the three lines. The Minister had promised to lay on the table a schedule which would probably explain the whole matter clearly.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would be very glad indeed to supply all the information in his power.

Mr. BLACK asked for an explanation of an item of £1,000 for cartage? There had been a similar item of £1,500 for the Southern Railway.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the items referred to were to cover the cost of carting produce from the railway stations to the wharves. The amount was included in the freight charged by the department. The Government contracted with carriers to convey produce from the railway stations to the wharves.

Mr. BLACK asked if that principle was extended to all the railways?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it applied to Brisbane and Rockhampton.

Mr. FOOTE asked if it applied to wool only, or to all kinds of produce?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he believed it applied to all kinds of produce. The arrangement was made for the purpose of keeping the goods-sheds clear. Some consignees did not have carts to take their goods away, and there were in consequence frequent blocks in the railway goods-sheds.

Mr. FOOTE said he wished to know if the Government carted goods from the wharves to the stations as well as from the stations to the wharves?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the arrangement only applied to the delivery of goods conveyed by the railways. Goods were not carted by the Government from the wharves to the railway stations.

Mr. FOOTE said he was not quite satisfied with the replies of the Minister for Works. He

had an idea that wool only was carted by the Government, as he knew parties who had to pay for the cartage of their goods from the railway stations to the wharves. He would like to be satisfied on that point?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had explained that the cost of carting goods from the stations to the wharves was added to the freight charges.

Mr. FOOTE said the Minister did not seem to understand his question. Was it not for wool only and not for general produce that the Government provided cartage?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it appeared that it was at the option of the parties who forwarded the goods whether they were carted by the Railway Department or by other carriers.

Mr. FOOTE said that was not yet an answer to his question. He was satisfied that the cartage item was for wool only, and he wanted a distinct answer on the point.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the only answer he could give was that the item applied to wool, but the Government would forward other goods to their destination and charge for the cartage.

Mr. FOOTE said he would put the question in another way. There were two items on the Estimates for cartage—one of £1,500 and the other of £1,000. Did the goods for the cartage of which those items were placed on the Estimates include maize, chaff, hay, and other things?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that they did not.

Mr. FOOTE said the question had then to be reduced to what he had already stated, but he wanted a more distinct answer still. Were the votes in question for the purpose of carting squatters' produce only—that was to say, wool, tallow, and hides?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the votes were for the cartage of wool, but that if the persons forwarding tallow and hides wished the department to cart them to the wharves, the department would do so, and would add the cost of the cartage to the railway freight.

Mr. FOOTE said he believed the department undertook to deliver wool, tallow, and hides in the city wherever required, and those sums were placed on the Estimates for that purpose. He wished, however, to know why the department did not treat all customers alike? It undertook to deliver wool, tallow, and hides, but no other produce. Had the Minister been candid enough to say at first that the items were for the cartage of squatters' produce only, he (Mr. Foote) would not have detained the Committee so long.

Mr. FERGUSON said the cartage work under notice had been done at Rockhampton in a very satisfactory manner for eight or ten years. The carter had to work at a certain price, and he gave every satisfaction to the Government and to the public. All of a sudden, however, he received notice that the work would be handed over to another party, and that was done without even calling for tenders. It was now in the hands of Messrs. Wright, Heaton, and Company. He did not know if it was as well done now as before or not, but that did not matter. The point was, that the former carter had a large plant and many horses—all in working order, that he was doing his work faithfully and satisfactorily, and that without notice being given or tenders being called the work was suddenly taken from him and handed over to another party. He did not think the Government were justified in

acting in that way, which was very unjust to the former contractor, to others who might have wished to have tendered for the work, and to the public generally. He would like to hear an explanation of that from the Minister for Works?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was very glad that a question had now been asked that he could answer. The best answer that he could give was that tenders were called for. Recently he met a certain gentleman in Queen street, who said he noticed that tenders were called for the cartage of produce from the Rockhampton railway station to the wharves; that there was a man there who had been doing the work for a number of years, and that he would be glad if that man was the lowest tenderer, so that he might get the work again. Messrs. Wright, Heaton, and Company were the lowest tenderers, and they got the contract.

Mr. FERGUSON said the Minister was not correct as far as the particular case to which he alluded was concerned; he must be thinking about some other case. He would ask him distinctly whether tenders were called for in that case?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the circumstance he had mentioned showed that people interested were aware that tenders had been called for.

Mr. FERGUSON said that his information was that another firm was asked what they would do the work for, and that because they offered to do it for 1d. or 2d. a ton less it was given to them. He did not consider that calling for tenders.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he should like to have the matter fully explained. Was it a fact that tenders were called for that work in the usual way—namely, by advertisement in the public papers?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said tenders were called for, and two tenders were received—one from Wright, Heaton, and Company, and one from another contractor who had been doing the work for some years. In accordance with the usual rule, the lowest tender was accepted.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Were tenders called for by advertisement in the public newspapers?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Tenders were called for in the *Gazette*, as all other Government tenders were.

Mr. FERGUSON asked if the tenders were called for the whole of the work, or only for a portion of it?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied that the tender did not include the cartage of Government stores and material from the wharves to the railway station.

Mr. PALMER said it did not seem to be a right principle to cart away produce sent down by railway at the expense of the country. There was no reason why, because the Government contracted to carry goods by rail, they should also cart them through the town after being delivered at the station. If the goods were allowed to accumulate at the stores, let them be charged storage; that would be sufficient to induce the consignees to clear them away.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the system had been in operation for a number of years, and it was introduced for the purpose of keeping the goods-sheds clear of goods.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said he did not yet understand whether tenders for the contract for cartage from the railway station to the wharves at Rockhampton were called in the usual way—namely, by advertisement in the local papers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said tenders were called for carrying goods from the railway station to the wharf, but not from the wharf to the railway station.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Why should there be any difference?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was an advantage to the Railway Department to contract with carriers to keep the goods-sheds free of goods. That was the reason.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said that at Brisbane the carriage of Government stores from the wharves to the railway station was tendered for, just the same as carrying produce from the railway station to the wharves; and when he was in office the same principle was in operation at Rockhampton. He did not know whether the present Government had changed the practice. The Government stores to be taken from the wharves to the railway station were chiefly rails, and the carriage of them was tendered for at so much per ton.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that whatever was the practice when the hon. gentleman was in office he could assure him was the practice now. There had been no alteration.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that might be a compliment to the late Government, but it was not at all satisfactory to the Committee. The hon. gentleman had given no reason whatever for not calling for tenders for carrying Government stores from the wharves to the railway station. It was no reason at all to say that the department were very anxious to get goods away from the railway sheds, because it did not apply to the cartage of railway materials from the wharves to the station.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not think it was the duty of the Government to carry goods from warehouses to the railway station.

Mr. BAILEY said he would like to suggest to the Railway Department a slight amelioration with regard to the position of the maintenance men. Four or five of those men were stationed at different points on the lines, and he thought it would be only a fair thing to allow one of the men half-a-day, once a week—say on Saturday, to go to the nearest town to get rations for himself and his mates. They had very hard and responsible work to perform, and they had to pay railway fares to go to the nearest town to purchase their food. He thought it was only a small concession which the Government might very well grant.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the maintenance men could have their rations sent free by rail, and he did not think the hon. member's suggestion would be a good one to adopt, either for the men or for the department.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was not satisfied about the tenders. He would ask the Minister for Works if tenders were called for the conveyance of Government stores from the wharf at Brisbane to the railway station? The quantity of railway material carried to the railway station in the course of the year was very large, and formed an important item in the contract. If tenders were not called for that work they ought to have been.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said tenders were called for all goods. A large quantity of material was received on account of the Railway Department; it was all included in the contract.

Mr. FERGUSON said he would like to know if all the cartage to and from the railway station in Rockhampton was included in the contract, or were tenders called for it? Some of it he knew was not tendered for, and the Minister must know it too.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he could not give the hon. member any further answer than he had given. He had told him over and over again that tenders were called for in the *Gazette*.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that was not what the hon. gentleman had told them. He had told them that on the Central Railway tenders were called for the delivery of goods from the railway station to the warehouses in town, and the reason for doing so was that the Government wanted to clear the goods from the railway; but that tenders were not called for the delivery of Government material at the railway station—it was let by private contract. On the other hand, in Brisbane, he had told them that the work was all done by tender in the usual way. What they wanted to know was, why a different rule should be applied to Rockhampton, as compared with Brisbane?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said what he stated was, that tenders were called for the delivery of produce from the railway station, and railway material and other Government stores were included in the tender, but it did not include private goods.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: The hon. member now said that tenders were actually called for the delivery of Government goods to the railway station in Rockhampton.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would get the *Government Gazette* if the hon. member wished it, and show the advertisement for the tenders. It was a very little affair, and he thought the Opposition might find something better to occupy their time with. First there was the hon. member for Rockhampton asking about tenders, then the hon. member for Warrego complaining about the delay of some sheep, and it could not be expected that he (the Minister for Works) could answer all questions on the spur of the moment. He had given all the information asked for over and over again.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped the hon. gentleman would not lose his temper over that little affair, as he called it. Hon. members had a right to ask for information and to criticise the Estimates fairly as they were put before them. He did not know whether he was correct or not, but it had occurred to him that perhaps the reason why there was a difference in the mode of calling for tenders between Brisbane and Rockhampton—

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: He says now there is no difference.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Perhaps the difference arose from there being a branch line down to the Government wharf at Rockhampton, and probably the railway material was carried from the wharf by rail. But, of course, if the hon. gentleman said there was no difference, that could not be the reason.

The PREMIER said he had the advertisement calling for tenders which he would read:—

“Commissioner for Railways’ Office.

“Brisbane, 24th October, 1884.

“NOTICE.

“To Carters and others.

“Tenders will be received at this office up to four (4) o’clock p.m. on Friday, 28th November, 1884, from persons willing to contract for two (2) years, from 1st January, 1885, for the undermentioned services, viz.:—

1. Cartage of wool from railway station, Rockhampton, to any wharf or store in Rockhampton.

2. Cartage of general goods between the railway station, Rockhampton, and any wharf or store in Rockhampton.

“Further particulars may be obtained at this office, or at the Traffic Manager’s Office, Rockhampton.

“The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

“F. GURNOW,

“Acting Commissioner for Railways.”

That was at page 1484 of the *Government Gazette* for the second half of last year, and it did not include the carrying of railway material from the wharf to the railway station, because the railway ran down to the wharf and the material was put on the trucks there; the Government did not engage other people to carry it for them.

Mr. PALMER said it was not such a trifling matter as the hon. gentleman said. He noticed on looking up the expenses upon railways for last year that the carriage of railway material cost nearly £10,000.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that the Premier thought he had explained everything; but he had shown that the Minister for Works had been trying to humbug the Committee through his ignorance. They had been told that it was useless to call for tenders to convey railway material from the wharves to the railway station, as there was a Government line; but he said tenders were let for that privately, because it suited them. In other cases it had not suited them. Their object was to clear the railway station of goods. He thought no explanation had been given after all, and the Committee were in a perfect fog. He did not think £1,000 would carry one-tenth part of the material from the railway station at Rockhampton to the different places, nor would £1,500 do it from the Brisbane station to the places in Brisbane. If the hon. gentleman had listened to what was said by the hon. member for Bundamba (Mr. Foote), he would have seen that his explanation was nearer the mark.

Mr. NORTON said he would like to know whether carriages or trucks were constructed at the Rockhampton workshops, or whether only repairing was carried on?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that only two trucks and two carriages had been constructed there during the last year.

Mr. NORTON said he asked the question expecting to get an answer in the negative, because he had not heard of that system having been adopted up there. It was the greatest mistake the Government could make, to manufacture its own rolling-stock when it could be better done by private contract. He had hoped to hear that nothing but repairing was being done at the Government shops.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government had no intention of establishing workshops at Rockhampton. It was absolutely necessary to have shops there for repairs; and in slack time a few waggons were built to keep the men employed. There was no intention of turning those shops into works for the construction of rolling-stock.

Mr. ANNEAR said he would like to ask the hon. gentleman if he could tell the Committee, how many carriages and trucks had been built in the Government shops during the last twelve months, and how many had been built by private contractors?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the hon. gentleman would give notice of his question in the ordinary way he would give every information. How was it possible for him to have all those things at his fingers’ ends? In all his experience he had never had such petty, peddling, nasty questions put to him.

Mr. ANNEAR said he did not put the question to obstruct business, and it was not a peddling question. It was a most important question, and if the hon. gentleman would only ask the Commissioner he would get all the information he had asked for. They were told last night that £4,000 was paid away every month to contractors. It was easy to ascertain that. The

Government workshops were well in hand, and it was pretty well known what work they did from week to week and month to month.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that last year there were 47 waggons built for the Southern and Western line, 53 for the Maryborough line, 23 for the Central line, 28 for the Mackay line, 40 for the Northern, and 1 for the Cooktown line; making a total of 192 in all, 181 of which were built by private contractors.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that of course the Minister for Works must expect a great deal of anxiety on the part of hon. gentlemen to see that the Government were not departing from a principle which had been acknowledged—that was, that as much work as possible should be done by contract. The hon. gentleman was always talking in his rugged way about the “Government stroke,” and ought to be one of the first to let by contract as much work as he could. Seeing the large increase there was on the Estimates for the Ipswich workshops, hon. gentlemen were getting very anxious, and a great deal of unnecessary trouble was put upon the Minister’s shoulders while passing the Estimates through. It was only what he should have expected, and what he ought to have guarded against by sticking to the principles the Committee had adopted. To say he had done so was to say what was not a fact. So long as he bought expensive machinery, and erected large workshops, he discouraged private firms, and would not get good tenders when he called for them. Ministers were departing from the expressed policy of that Committee. There was another subject which deserved some consideration—that was the maintenance. Last year it was down for £57,800 and for the present year £50,000—a reduction of £7,800, notwithstanding that a large extent of new lines had been opened. The Minister explained that less maintenance was required on account of the exceptionally dry weather. He was glad to know that the country benefited in some way by the drought; but he noticed that the maintenance on the Southern and Western line, instead of being decreased, was very much increased, although the drought had not been much less severe in that district. Last year, he believed, but for the hurried way in which the Estimates were put through, that item would have received very rough handling. This year the maintenance was increased by £3 a mile, though, according to the reason given by the Minister for Works, it ought to be decreased. He fancied there was a screw loose somewhere. The maintenance was becoming unbearable. In the report of the Commissioner for Railways, on page 14, they found the expenditure per mile on the different lines. The Northern Railway, which carried the heaviest traffic per mile, cost in maintenance for the year 1884, £142 17s. 5d.; the Central Railway, £142 14s. 8d.; the Maryborough Railway, £123 18s. 6d.; while on the Southern and Western Railway it had increased to £157 6s. 7d., an enormous increase on two years ago. That ought not to be so, because large portions of it had been opened up during the year, and coming fresh from the contractor’s hands ought to cost very little for maintenance. He would like to know why the same causes which operated to make a decrease on the Central Railway, should not operate in the same way on the Southern and Western Railway.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had explained that there was a reduction of £7,800, because last year there was an unexpended balance of £16,000, and that the only way to account for that was on the ground that the season was a dry one, and he presumed the line

did not require so much maintenance. At all events, there was a balance last year of £16,000, and he did not feel that he would be justified in asking for the same amount or more for the present year. He believed the amount on the Estimates would be ample. If not, he presumed that an additional amount could be put on the Supplementary Estimates.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. member tried to assume stupidity, and answered questions which he was never asked. He was not charged with asking for more money than was wanted. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) had taken the hon. gentleman’s own statement that the maintenance on the Central line was a good deal less on account of the drought, and he asked why the same cause did not operate in the same way on the Southern and Western line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said if the hon. gentleman would look at the Commissioner’s report, page 13, he would find the reason given there:—

“Central and Clermont Railway.”—The maintenance expenditure on this system during the year has not been so heavy as previous years’ averages, in consequence of no ballasting having been done, and this, it is anticipated, will increase the cost for the year 1885; but the permanent way and buildings have, it is reported, been kept in good working order.

“Southern and Western Railway System.”—The Engineer for Existing Lines reports that the lines under his charge have been maintained in a good state of efficiency during the year, and that the train-mile cost was reduced by 1½d. per mile, although the average cost per mile maintained—£157—exceeded the cost for 1883 by about £3 per mile, which he attributes to the earthworks, timber, bridges, etc., requiring increased attention, and the cost of repairs to Breakfast Creek bridge, also to the fact that a considerable quantity of new sleepers have been placed on the Brisbane and Ipswich and Western lines.”

The hon. gentleman, with all his experience, ought to know how maintenance might be increased. If they had to lay down fresh sleepers or replace the rails, of course it increased the cost.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said they had heard pretty often from the Minister for Works that session that they were going to make good lines—permanent lines—lines which did not require much for maintenance. They found that so far from that being the case, those lines cost most for maintenance. He knew every bit of the report the hon. member had read, and the hon. member had just quoted a bit of the report of which he (Sir T. McIlwraith) had himself quoted in support of his own argument. If the hon. member looked at what he had just read with regard to the Clermont and Central Railways, he would see that the reason given why the cost of maintenance on the Central line last year was less than anticipated was because there was no ballasting to be done. But this year it was quite different, and, therefore, an additional amount would be required. The Minister for Works had not asked for any additional amount, and said no additional amount would be required. What he wanted to direct the hon. gentleman’s attention to was, that he considered the cost of maintenance on the Southern and Western line a great deal too high. Last year it was enormously increased, and the reason given was that it was a bad year, and that large repairs and additions had to be made that would not be required in other years. As a matter of fact, there had not been any very costly repairs, nothing like during previous years. But they found that the cost of maintenance on the Southern and Western Railway was the present year increased £3 per mile on the vastly increased amount of last year. So that within the last two years they found that the cost of maintenance on that line was increased 27 per cent. The Central line remained pretty much as it was;

and the fact was being demonstrated to them that the cheap lines were costing only about one-half what the Southern and Western line cost. In fact, they found that they were costing for maintenance about 20 per cent. less than the Southern and Western line. The Minister for Works might say that was due to the increased traffic on the Southern line, but the increased traffic would not account for any such increase in the cost of maintenance. If the hon. gentleman examined the maintenance department, he would find that there was more extravagance and more of the "Government stroke" in that department than in any other.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Works had told them he did not believe in cheap railways, and that they would not derive any benefit from them, yet he noticed that in the matter of the cost of maintenance, the cheap railways had the best of it, as was shown by the fact that the vote for maintenance on the Central line was not increased at all in the same proportion as the vote for the Southern line. The hon. gentleman had read from the report of the Commissioner just now. Well, he would take the trouble to read another part of it:—

"The gross earnings for 1883 amounted to £590,557, and for 1884 £682,179, while the working expenses for 1883 amounted to £291,347, and for 1884 to £357,535 (see appendix No. 24), showing an increase in the earnings of 16 per cent., and in the expenditure of 23 per cent."

That was an increase on the wrong side of the ledger of 7 per cent. The expenditure increased at a greater ratio than the earnings, and that was more conspicuous on the Southern lines than on the Northern lines. For several weeks past he had taken the opportunity occasionally to go over the report of the Commissioner for Railways, considering it his duty to make himself acquainted with the working of those lines. He had referred to several items and discrepancies in the report, but the Minister for Works had never done him the common courtesy to notice one matter he had referred to. He could not find in the report, for instance, where the non-paying traffic was placed. That was a very serious item, because they were told that their railways were paying 4 per cent., and he did not believe it. The non-paying traffic did not go into the department in dollars or cash, and he would ask if it was included in the actual receipts? The hon. gentleman should be able to give them some information, but his opinion was that the department had got ahead of him. He noticed that the Premier, who generally gave a helping hand to his colleagues, allowed the unfortunate Minister for Works to flounder in and out of his depth without assisting him in any way. The hon. gentleman ought to give an answer to the questions put to him. He would like to know where the non-paying traffic came in and where it appeared?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You have it all in the report.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said of course they had it all in the report, but the only way they had of understanding some parts of the report was by questioning the Minister for Works. There were some parts of the report he did not understand, and which he would like to criticise, and he could only do so through the Minister for Works. They were trying to get an explanation of what was deficient in the report by questioning the Minister for Works. Here was a part he did not understand: He found that the non-paying trains had increased from 229 in 1883, to 378 in 1884. Well, he had searched the report carefully for an hour, to try and find the reasons given for that, and he was at a loss to understand it. Could

the Minister enlighten them upon the subject? Why should the non-paying trains, in a system of railways like theirs, increase something like 60 per cent. in that time? The Minister for Works should enlighten them on the subject, because it might be owing to great extravagance on the part of the Government. He could not understand.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that if the hon. gentleman could not understand what was before him he was afraid he could not help him.

The PREMIER said the hon. member for Burke had asked where the information as to the non-paying traffic was to be found. It would be found at page 14 of the report. If hon. members would call attention to a particular item they would get the information they required; but hon. members had been getting up and putting conundrums to the Minister for Works hoping it would take him some time—as his eyesight was not so good—to point out the information. That seemed to him inconsistent with the dignity of a member of Parliament. He had been informed, on very good authority, that the Minister for Works was not to be allowed to get through his estimates that night. He had seen obstruction in all sorts of forms in that House during the last thirteen years—obstruction concealed and open. What they had seen since Monday indicated that for some reason or another the business of the session was to be protracted. He had thought earlier in the session that both sides were desirous of getting on with the business, and the Government gave every assistance for that purpose. Nevertheless, there had apparently been a determination on the part of a very few members that the business should be pushed on as slowly as possible. If it was any satisfaction to hon. members, he might say that the Colonial Treasurer and himself would not be able to leave Brisbane until the 14th of November.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that nobody cared a straw when the Premier was going to leave Brisbane. The hon. member had a wonderful genius for finding out things that had been organised on the Opposition side before the leader of the Opposition knew anything at all about them. His friend Smith round the corner—he had always got that man hanging about—told him everything the Opposition were going to do. It appeared, according to the hon. gentleman, that they had now made up their minds to obstruct. If, however, the Premier would take the trouble to look over *Hansard* and would, with a rule, measure what had been talked by the Opposition and Government sides on the Estimates during the last two or three days he, would find that the obstruction, if obstruction there had been, came from the Government side. When he (Sir T. McIlwraith) made up his mind to obstruct he would say so and let the Premier understand what he meant; and what was more, he would, as he had done on a previous occasion, make the Premier cave in. If the Premier would put some better temper into his erratic colleague, the Minister for Works, matters would improve. The Minister for Works lost his temper too easily. He was good-natured enough when he had got the right side of a question; but he should be prepared to answer any question as to works connected with his own department. He had been asked nothing in the form of conundrums, as far as he (Sir T. McIlwraith) could see, but only a number of plain questions which he had continually evaded. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) believed that course of procedure was not intentional on the Minister's part, but that the Minister did not

understand the questions put to him. And yet a great many of the questions were so plain that they only required a simple "yes" or "no" in reply. Another Minister would have answered them straight off, but the Minister for Works gave in his replies wrong information that led the Committee astray. Now, he (Sir T. McIlwraith) would put one question, which he hoped would not be a conundrum to the Minister for Works. The Commissioner's report showed that the number of non-paying trains run on the Southern and Western Railway in 1883 was 229, whilst in 1884 they increased to 378. Why was the increase in non-paying trains so far out of proportion to the increase in the other traffic?

Mr. PALMER said he was not in the habit of making conundrums. The only answer he could find to the question he had asked was in page 14 of the Commissioner's report, and it was one which allowed him to come to any conclusion he liked on the subject. The report said :—

"A diversity of opinion exists as to what should, and what should not, be charged to the 'Working' and 'Capital' accounts; but as, in Appendix No. 1 to this report, all details of expenditure are given, and the accounts to which such expenditure is charged are clearly shown, anyone can arrive at conclusions therefrom on the basis of his own views, if he differs from the principle on which this report is compiled."

He thought some of them did differ from the principle on which that report was compiled, and neither the Premier nor the Minister for Works had thrown much light on the subject. The point raised was not a trifling one. The non-paying traffic cost £97,500, and was therefore a matter of serious interest. With regard to the statement made by the Premier that a conspiracy had been formed to obstruct business, he (Mr. Palmer) had heard nothing about obstruction of any kind. The Premier had drawn a good deal on his imagination or perhaps on his temper.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that by referring to page 39 of the Commissioner's report they would find that the total cost of the non-paying traffic on the Central Railway alone was £12,025 0s. 11d. The details which were given were not of very much importance, but when they remembered that credit was taken by the Commissioner for the non-paying traffic, the figures quoted became a very important item. He also desired to point out to the Minister for Works, by way of fixing it on his mind, that the very cheap railways in the North he had been in the habit of condemning were £25 per mile better than the more costly lines which were being made in the South. It was to be hoped that the Minister would bear that fact in mind in future when he talked with such extravagance and want of temper about cheap railways. Not only were the lines in question constructed more cheaply, but they were also maintained more cheaply, and, consequently, paid more interest than the more expensive railways. He would now ask the Minister for Works, not a conundrum, but a plain arithmetical question. The Traffic Manager of the Southern Railways received £600 a year, and 12s. 6d. a day for expenses when travelling. He had nothing to say against him; for he believed him to be a thoroughly efficient officer. The Traffic Manager on the Central Railway, however, was quite as efficient—at least he had proved himself to be so far—and yet he only received £500 a year. He did not think there was £100 difference in the capacity of the two men. Why, then, was there that difference in their salaries?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Traffic Manager on the Central Railway had his salary increased last year by £100, and he could

hardly expect to get another increase this year. There was no comparison between the work done by the Traffic Managers on the Southern and Western Railway and the Central Railway. There were 200 trains a day on the former as against 20 on the latter. The only increase to salary on the estimate was an increase of £50 to the Traffic Manager of the Northern line, bringing that officer's salary from £350 to £400.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Premier had told the Committee that they might go on as they liked until the 14th of next month, but that on that day he intended to leave them and go north. He felt inclined to ask, "Upon what meat does this our Cæsar feed that he has grown so great?" He did not know why the hon. gentleman should fix upon the 14th of next month as the date of his departure. But if the hon. gentleman would only go and never come back again he should be only too pleased. The Committee, said the hon. gentleman, might bother him as much as they liked up to a certain date, but on the 14th of next month he was going away. He would say to him, "Stand not on the order of your going, but go at once," and let him take his colleagues with him, and his supporters also, and if they did not return it would be a benefit to the colony, provided that first they insured their lives and, in the interest of the colony, the ship by which they travelled. And if they were never heard of more, he and his friends would put up tombs or cenotaphs, or in some cases monuments, although he believed that their acts would in some cases be monuments enough against them. He did not see why the Committee should be hustled in such a manner. The point raised by the hon. member for Townsville was a very important one, and although the Premier wanted to get away north on the 14th of next month, he did not see why they should be pressed to pass the Estimates, no matter how lucidly they were explained by the Minister for Works. He was willing to sacrifice his time, perhaps intermittently, to criticise those Estimates, because it was very necessary that criticism should be brought to bear upon them. The question put by the hon. member for Townsville had not been properly answered—the question with regard to the salary of the Traffic Manager of the Central Railway. Only the other day the Colonial Treasurer was speaking about the enormous traffic carried by that line, and how well the receipts kept up. Next month might probably show a different state of affairs; but so far as the wool traffic was concerned, and the very considerable inward traffic supplying stations and townships in the interior, the traffic to and from Rockhampton would compare very favourably with that to and from Brisbane. The remuneration of the Traffic Manager on that line should, therefore, be consistent with the work he had to do.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was quite true that the Traffic Manager on the Central Railway had his salary increased last year, but he started at a very small salary, as also did the Traffic Manager for the Northern Railway—whose salary was to be increased from £350 to £400—while the Traffic Manager for the Southern and Western Railway started at the salary he was now receiving. But as the Minister had decided not to increase any salaries he would not say much more, beyond expressing a hope that when he did take it into his head to increase salaries he would not overlook those two very deserving officers. It did not follow that, because there were more trains per day running on the Southern and Western Railway, therefore the Traffic Manager's work was proportionately increased. The work was nearly as difficult on the Central or Northern Railway as it was on the Southern and Western Railway.

Mr. MOREHEAD asked if the Minister for Works was prepared to recommend to the Government a scheme by which the management of the railways of the colony should be vested in a board, as was the case in Victoria?

The PREMIER said the Government had not as yet taken the question into consideration. When they did so they would duly announce to the House the result of their deliberations.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he asked the question because the Minister for Works, last night, expressed his full approval of the way in which the railways of Victoria were managed by a board.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he thought the hon. member was stating what was hardly correct. He never said he approved of the Victorian system. He hoped hon. gentlemen opposite did not expect the Government to assist them in obstructing business.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman was very ready to talk about obstruction because the hon. member for Balonne was making more inquiries. Well, there were a few more inquiries that he (Sir T. McIlwraith) would make. They all knew how rigidly severe the Minister for Works was with regard to free passes, and how disagreeable he had made himself to deputations and others with regard to them. It fact, he had said that it was an abuse and he would stamp it out. Last year they had the case of two gentlemen from England, who applied for free passes, and the hon. gentleman sent them out of his office; but when he was informed that they were influential members of the Press, or something of that sort, he granted them passes. People generally believed that the Minister for Works had done something in the way of reducing the number of free passes; but last year what was done, so far as appeared from the very meagre information the Commissioner had given? In 1883 there were 23,659 free passes; in 1884 there were 26,725. Of course that did not tell much by itself, because a great many free passes were granted to immigrants, police, benevolent and hospital patients, railway servants and labourers; and with that the Minister for Works had very little to do. They did not expect him to initiate much reform there, but they did expect to him do so far as the general public were concerned. Under the term "other passes"—that was, passes given by Ministers to their friends—he found that in 1883 there were 673, and in 1884, the first year of the administration of the Minister for Works, they had increased about 50 per cent.—to 937; so that instead of stamping out the evil it had increased under his control by more than one-half. He would like to know what explanation the hon. member could give of that. It was a fair subject for discussion.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said all the free passes he had ever granted since he had been Minister for Works were two. The two gentlemen referred to got the best of him, and had the advantage of passes, but with those exceptions he had never granted a pass to anyone.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: Did anyone ever hear such an admission of the abrogation of functions from a Minister of the Crown? The hon. gentleman proclaimed that he would put the nuisance down—that he would free the department from the abuse; and now his excuse, when they found that it had increased by one-half, was that he had nothing to do with it—that he had only issued two free passes himself. That only made the matter all the worse, because it showed that he had handed over the business to someone over whom that

House could exercise no control. He had always heard that the hon. gentleman was Minister for Works only in bounce and name, and now he was certain of it from his own words. He had no more control in the Works Office than he (Sir T. McIlwraith) had at that moment.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that in order to bring the Minister for Works back to the statement he (Mr. Morehead) had made, to the effect that the hon. gentleman said last night that he was in favour of appointing commissioners to manage their railways, and his (the Minister for Works') contradiction, he would quote from *Hansard* what the hon. gentleman said. He (Mr. Morehead) had suggested that commissioners should be appointed, and this was what the hon. gentleman said:—

"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."

He would ask the Chairman who was right and who was wrong?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he would be glad to furnish the hon. the leader of the Opposition with a return of all free passes, and by whom issued. He himself had only issued two.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that surely the hon. gentleman did not think that was any excuse for having neglected his duty. He was the man who was responsible. When he (Sir T. McIlwraith) was Minister for Works, no man, except the Premier, would dare to issue a free pass without his authority, and he was responsible for them all. He did not want the return the hon. gentleman offered; he had it before him, and he saw that instead of the hon. gentleman stamping the evil out it had increased to a very large extent, and his excuse only made the case a great deal worse.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he could give the history of the two individuals referred to, whom the Minister for Works had assisted along the railway line by free passes. They came into his office and represented themselves to be farmers. One had a seedy white hat; the other a hat that was a little better, with a green veil round it. They said they wanted him to give them an introduction to the Minister for Works; that they were English farmers seeking the truth as to farming in the colony, and they wanted free passes. He knowing what a stern Spartan the Minister for Works was, a cold shudder ran down his back-bone at the bare suggestion. He saw that he was in a difficult position, and informed those gentlemen that it was no use getting a recommendation from him—that he sat on the wrong side of the House—and as to free passes the Minister for Works was entirely against them—that he was a stern and just man, who would not grant a pass to anyone. They said that they had got passes in the other colonies, and that they should insist upon getting them here. He said if they represented the matter in that way to the Minister probably he, if not he himself, would get some of his minions to remove them from his office in a much more rapid way than they entered it. However, they said they wanted to see the country and they would have passes, and if the Minister for Works dared to treat them in that way they were going to write a book and they would put him in it. He told the Minister for Works that before the interview came off; and he said that if those fellows came near him he would show them the way

out. He warned the hon. gentleman that he was to be interviewed by those two terrible fellows, and went out of his way to do it. The next thing he heard was that he had given them free passes. That was the story.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving that £58,437 be granted for the Northern Railway, said there was an increase in the maintenance of the permanent way of £6,680, and an increase of £10 to one clerk. In the Traffic Department there was an increase of £50 to the Traffic Manager, and twenty-three additional station-masters, clerks, guards, porters, etc., £2,154; the total increase in the department being £2,704. In the Locomotive Department there were several additional engine-drivers, firemen, fitters, etc., making an increase of £1,712. For extra labour and fuel and contingencies there was an increase of £150, making a total increase of £1,862. In the wages and stores department there was an increase of £1,865.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Will the Minister for Works tell us how many miles additional he calculates will be opened during the year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said thirty-two miles additional had been opened since that time last year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Does the hon. gentleman reckon upon any more being opened before the end of the financial year?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There will be about twenty miles opened in seven or eight months.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that would be next year. How many additional stations had been opened since last year? Twenty-three additional station-masters, guards, porters, etc., had been appointed. Surely that was enough to cover a great many new stations.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is only one additional station.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: It certainly seemed very strange that for one additional station they should require twenty-three additional station-masters, guards, etc.! Surely the stations were worked efficiently last year! Even supposing half-a-dozen had been required for the portion of the line which was opened last year, surely the balance would not be required for one station. He knew that the Minister was not responsible for the estimate further than bringing it before the Committee. He never had anything to do with making it up. There was about £7,000 down for additional maintenance, yet there was only £150 down for extra fuel and contingencies. Surely if it required so much for additional maintenance, and extra station-masters, guards, etc., it would require more than £150 for fuel and contingencies. He quite believed what the Minister for Works said some time ago, that Mr. Ballard was making up the estimates in a queer way; he must have pitchforked that estimate together, it could not have been made up in a rational way at all. There was an additional length of 32 miles, and only £150 down extra for fuel, and extra labour and contingencies. Supposing the fuel came to half that, how far would £75 go for fuel upon a Northern line where it cost £1 per ton? The thing was so utterly ridiculous that it was almost useless to talk about it. He thought it would have opened the eyes of the Minister for Works when he saw the estimate, and he should have sent it back to Mr. Ballard for readjustment, or at least the Commissioner should have seen to it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the amount put down for contingencies and fuel was £7,550.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said there was only £150 more than last year. He spoke plainly enough. There were thirty-two miles of additional railway opened for which £7,000 was asked for maintenance. He did not object to that, but the Minister also asked for twenty-three additional station-masters, guards, porters, etc., for one station, and for that thirty-two miles of additional length he asked for £150 for fuel and contingencies over last year. There would be sixty or seventy tons of fuel for that thirty-two miles over which two trains would run daily during the whole year. The estimates had not been fairly put together. He did not blame the Minister for that, but the Commissioner, who should have put them in a proper state before they were laid before Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said a considerable portion of the vote last year had lapsed, and the amount now on the Estimates was considered sufficient. It was exactly the same as in the case of the Central Railway.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that explanation was right enough, but it was something like a blunder to ask £16,000 too much last year for maintenance. How did the Minister explain twenty-three additional station-masters, guards, and porters for one additional station?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he believed it was caused by the opening of the Ravenswood branch.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: How many stations are there on that line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Only one station, and two or three stopping places.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said probably it was not the right time to ask the question, but he would like to know if any survey was going on at the present time from Hughenden towards the Etheridge Gold Fields?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said no railway survey was going on there. The surveyor had had to be brought in from Hughenden on account of want of water and grass. It was utterly impossible to carry out the work till there was a change in the weather.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Is the Minister certain his answer is correct? I have been informed differently.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that a sum of £9,200 be granted for the Mackay Railway. He could not give much information about that line. It had only been open about two months, and the earnings in that time had been somewhere about £800—chiefly from passenger traffic.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he saw the maintenance of the permanent way was down for six months only. Did the contractor maintain it for a certain time?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked how many months the items under the heads of "Traffic, Locomotive, and Stores Departments" were for?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: About eleven months.

Mr. BLACK said there was no provision for a traffic manager. He would like to ask the Minister what he proposed to do with the large traffic that might be encouraged there—whether

he proposed to take steps by providing shed accommodation, and so on, to get the sugar traffic?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he understood a good many of the planters had made contracts with carriers to carry their sugar. He had no doubt the railway rates would have to be brought down considerably, so as to drive the carriers off the road. He believed the traffic manager was doing his best to encourage trade on the line.

Mr. BLACK said the hon. member had only anticipated for the year a revenue of £2,000, and it would appear that the returns from the traffic so far—exclusive of any sugar or cane—had been about £100 a week; so it was evident that the hon. gentleman had considerably under-estimated the probable traffic.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said it was only guesswork, and surely the hon. member did not expect him to give a correct estimate of the earnings of the railway almost before it had been completed. He hoped the revenue would exceed £2,000; at all events, the department would endeavour to secure as much as possible. It was very possible they would have to carry the sugar at a lower rate to drive the carriers off the road, as they had to reduce the rates in Brisbane to drive the boats off the river.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the sum of £6,870 be voted for the Cooktown Railway. He could tell hon. members that the first section would be open for traffic in about a month.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the Committee should get more information from the hon. gentleman. He should let them know how far the railway had been extended.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he was not in a position to give hon. members much information about that railway further than that the section was about thirty-one miles in length. He could not say what the traffic on it would be, but it would not be much.

Mr. MOREHEAD said it was not a question about the traffic, but there was a sum of £3,720 asked for maintenance of permanent way for six months; and there were amounts set down for station-masters, guards, porters, driver, foreman, fitter, and storekeeper, and they should have some information as to how those men were employed. They were asked to vote large amounts to work a railway which apparently was not completed, and which the Minister for Works had told them would never pay.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if the Minister had made up his mind as to the number of trains to run per day? It would be very little use running trains to the terminus of the first section, and he was inclined to think that the vote for the traffic department, which amounted to about £700, was premature.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said those questions were on a par with the questions he had been asked during the whole of the time his estimates were going through. He could give no information as to how many trains would be run on the line. If hon. members would read the Commissioner's report they would find that he stated that the only traffic he expected on the line would be the rations and material for those engaged in constructing the second section. Hon. members could glean from that that there were not likely to be many trains run or that the traffic would be very profitable.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Works, when the extension of the Cooktown Railway was before the House the other day, gave no

definite information as to where it was to be extended to. He found at page 124 of the Commissioner's report that definite instructions were given to carry out the suggestion of Messrs. Warren and Smith, surveyors. The statement made was as follows:—

"In consequence of the difficulties met with in the surveys to Maytown, and the almost impracticable nature of the ground beyond it for extension, Mr. Warren proposed to survey a route to Palmerville, from which a branch line could be obtained to near Maytown. This line would go through coalfields about 100 miles from Cooktown, and it would have the advantage that it could be extended if found desirable.

"Instructions were given in June to carry this suggestion out."

That was an answer at once as to where the railway was to go. As to the coalfields mentioned, he was often in the district, but he had never heard of them, and he thought they must be like the coalfields in the district represented by the hon. member for Bowen—very problematical.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the Minister for Works, in reply to the question he asked him, cocked his hat a little too soon. He saw he was on the last vote of his Estimates, and he thought he was going to slip through; but they had now a complete discovery contradicting the statements of the hon. gentleman in proposing the adoption of the plans of the extension of that railway. The hon. gentleman said no instructions had been given to survey the line to Palmerville, and that if he found out that the line had gone beyond the point where it should strike off to go to Maytown tenders would not be called for beyond that point. He had not been asking the hon. member what the probable earnings on the line would be, because he never imagined that the hon. member could answer that question. But surely the carriage of the material for the second section did not require a staff such as that set down. There was a staff of nine, and there would probably not be a train oftener than once every three days. But the question raised by the hon. member for Burke was a far more important one than that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government had given no instructions to survey a line to Palmerville. The intention of the Government was to take the railway to Maytown, and they had no intention of going to Palmerville with the railway. As to the number of men employed on the line, the hon. member knew that if they were not required they would not be employed.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said surely the hon. gentleman had not abrogated his position as Minister for Works altogether. He told them not many minutes ago that he had not issued more than two free passes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will bring you down a return of the free passes.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not want the return. There were 900 free passes issued, and the Minister only issued two. Who issued those free passes, and who gave instructions to carry the railway to Palmerville? The Minister said he did not. Who should give such instructions but the Minister for Works? Who was responsible to that House but the Minister for Works? He would read for the hon. gentleman what was stated in the report plainly enough, at page 124:—

"At the close of 1883, Messrs. Warren and Smith were making trial surveys between the Normanby River and Maytown.

"In consequence of the difficulties met with in the surveys to Maytown, and the almost impracticable nature of the ground beyond it for extension, Mr. Warren proposed to survey a route to Palmerville, from which a branch line could be obtained to near Maytown.

"This line would go through coalfields about 100 miles from Cooktown, and it would have the advantage that it could be extended if found desirable.

"Instructions were given in June to carry this suggestion out."

Now who gave those instructions?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he did not.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said it was a most extraordinary thing. They saw the Minister for Works, the only man responsible to the House for the work of the Railway Department, shaking his head and saying he never gave instructions to carry out that line. Had he allowed Mr. Ballard to boss him so far that that gentleman could make railways wherever he liked without consulting the Minister at all? The Minister had said that the line was not going to Palmerville, but the Commissioner's report showed that he was wrong in saying so, or to put it in the mildest form, that he was mistaken. If the railway was taken to Palmerville it would never pay, and it would cost as much to take it from the point of divergence to Palmerville as the whole direct line from Cooktown to Maytown. Here was what the Minister said in reply to the hon. member for Townsville on the question, on the 20th October, as reported in *Hansard*:—

"The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he might inform the hon. member for Townsville that the present Government had never interfered in any way as to the route the railway in question should take. The instructions given in the first instance to the Engineer-in-Chief had not been altered, and the Government had no intention whatever of diverting the line to Palmerville. He was himself of opinion that the best country was towards Maytown."

Who then was the person who had diverted the survey? It must have been Mr. Ballard.

The PREMIER said the Government had not the slightest intention of making a railway to Palmerville. Although Mr. Ballard might have surveyed to Palmerville it did not follow that the Government were to adopt his opinion. Their opinion was that a railway to Palmerville would not pay. He supposed that a certain amount of discretion had to be allowed to Mr. Ballard, and it was probably in the exercise of that discretion that he had sent an engineer to survey an alternative line. But why should an action of that kind on the part of Mr. Ballard disquiet hon. members. Mr. Ballard was not the Government, nor did he constitute both Houses of Parliament. He could only make surveys and recommendations to the Government, and there was surely no harm in doing that. It would perhaps be satisfactory to know that both routes had been surveyed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked who gave the instructions to have the alternative route surveyed?

The PREMIER said the Minister for Works did not.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked who then?

The PREMIER said it was perhaps the hon. member himself. At all events the instructions were not issued by the present Government. He thought it was not usual to give direct instructions in each case as to what particular route should be surveyed. He thought, however, that special instructions should have been asked for before the surveyors were sent out on a new route.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the Premier was simply trying to conceal the fact that the Government had been made tools of by their surveyors. The evidence before the Committee was that the Government asked the House to sanction the construction of the second section

of the Cooktown and Maytown line. Members on examining the plans came to the conclusion that the line was not going to Maytown but to Palmerville. They challenged the Government to explain the matter, and the Government disclaimed any intention of making a railway to Palmerville, and said they had never given instructions to carry a survey to that place. To say the least, the Government were evidently utterly ignorant of what had been done. It now appeared, from Mr. Delisser's report, that instructions were given to survey a line which would avoid Maytown altogether and which would go to Palmerville, no matter what Parliament had decided on. The consequence was that Parliament had been actually asked to approve of a line contrary to what they had determined. The surveyors had taken the liberty of altering the decision of Parliament, and also what appeared to be the determination of the Government. The country was not safe if the conduct of its business was to be diverted from the responsible heads of departments to men who were not responsible at all. The Minister for Works attempted to shirk his responsibility by saying he knew nothing whatever about the matter. For what was he paid £1,000 a year, and for what did he hold his present position but to be responsible and to perform the duties belonging to the Minister for Works?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that if hon. members would turn to page 105 of the Commissioner's report they would find that instead of an attempt being made to avoid Maytown the surveys made were simply of two alternative routes for the purpose of reaching Maytown. The Chief Engineer wrote:—

"*Flying Surveys*.—During the year flying surveys were completed to Maytown over two (2) routes. The most direct route runs by the Mossman River, which is in a mountain gorge, heading at a point on the Main Range known as the 'Lone Star Gap.' This line runs through rough precipitous country between the crossing of the Laura River and Maytown, the whole distance from Cooktown to Maytown being about 115 miles.

"The other route, by Palmerville, traverses easy country for a distance of 100 miles from Cooktown; but between there and Palmerville (23½ miles) more difficult country is encountered; from Palmerville to Maytown (17 miles) the country is rough. Total distance from Cooktown to Maytown by this route is about 140 miles."

It was evident, therefore, that the engineer had been trying alternative routes to see which would afford the easiest access to Maytown, and that there had been no intention to avoid taking the railway to Maytown.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said it was ridiculous to see a Minister trying to delude the Committee from the plain common sense of a report made months after those flying surveys were taken. It was well known that flying surveys were taken to both places, but in June last Mr. Delisser was instructed to carry out a survey from the terminus of the Cooktown and Maytown line towards Palmerville. There could not be any doubt from which Government those instructions emanated. The report of Mr. Delisser did not refer to the flying surveys, but to a survey made since June, and that survey was the survey which the Government had got the House to approve; so that under false pretences they had sanctioned the construction of a line from Cooktown to Palmerville when the House had already decided that it should go to Maytown. The deplorable thing was that neither the Premier nor the Minister for Works knew anything about it. They were made tools of by their own employés. Such an abnegation of duty on the part of a Minister had never come under the notice of Parliament before. The complete ignorance of the Minister for Works had been

thoroughly demonstrated, and the result was that they had approved of plans for a railway which Parliament had never sanctioned.

The PREMIER said that if the fact was as the hon. member believed—probably it was not—but if it was, then the Government would not ask the Legislative Council for their approval of the plans. The plans were laid on the table of the House in good faith. The Government had no reason whatever to believe that the line was going in any other direction than to Maytown, for which instructions had been given. If the Government had been deceived in the matter the person who had so deceived them would have to answer for his conduct.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said the hon. member would not get out of the difficulty in that way. He forgot the position in which he had left the country. Did not the Minister for Works demonstrate to the Committee that it was absolutely necessary to go on with the second section of the line, as the other part of the line would be perfectly useless till it was completed. The Minister had neglected the duty for which he was paid by the country, and now the Premier came forward, admitted that a mistake had been made, and tried to get out of it by saying that he would not ask the Upper House to pass the plans. After what had passed it was probable the Upper House would not require to be asked by the Government not to pass the plans; that would be done without any pressure on the part of the Government. The Government had actually rendered of no avail the entire services of their engineers for the last two months. They had cozened the House into accepting plans for a railway which the House never intended to make. It was a deplorable illustration of the extraordinary state into which matters had got in the Works Office.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the second section of the Cooktown and Maytown Railway was approved of last session, but it was found to be an inconvenient stopping place, and the Chief Engineer requested the Government to get approval of the plans for twelve miles further, to the Laura River, so as to get a good site for a terminal station. His information was that that was on the direct line to Maytown.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said that not only was that the impression of the Minister for Works, but he impressed it upon the House, too, and only the hon. member for Mulgrave had a suspicion that it was not so. He (Hon. Mr. Macrossan) did not know whether it was on the road to Maytown or to Palmerville; but he had a suspicion that it was on the road to Palmerville. But there was a gentleman sitting in the gallery at the time who imparted to the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, the information which he gave to the Committee—that he had interviewed the surveyor two months ago and the surveyor told him he was taking the line to Palmerville, and that, if he had intended to take it to Maytown, he should have branched off ten miles further back. But the Minister for Works had so strong an impression that the line was going to Maytown that the hon. member for Cook gave way and submitted his mind to the impression of the Minister for Works. He was certain that the gentleman who gave that information would say nothing that was not true, and he had no interest in stating anything untrue; and his desire would naturally be to get the line to Maytown, of which place he was a resident. That gentleman to whom he referred also told the same thing to him that he told to the hon. member for Cook—namely, that he had it from the surveyor himself that the line was being taken direct to Palmerville.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Works stated the other night that the section of the line for which approval was asked would be common to both lines—a line to Palmerville and a line to Maytown. He (Mr. Palmer) had since then received some information which led him to dispute it. He had been across the Laura River, and there was a definite starting point showing whether the line from Cooktown would go to Maytown or to Palmerville. That point was a public-house on the road, kept by a man named Jones. From his knowledge of the direction of the country he was certain that the terminus of the second section of the line approved of the other night was on the direct road to Palmerville, and not to Maytown. Had the line been going to Maytown it would have crossed the Laura six miles above Jones's public-house. Now, they found that the permanent survey crossed the Laura a mile below Jones's public-house, which was the direct route to Palmerville. He did not think the Minister for Works was right when he said that the present terminus at the Laura was common to both routes. From his knowledge of the country, and from information he had received since the recent discussion on the subject, he had every reason to doubt the hon. gentleman's statement.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said, when the Chief Engineer sent to the Minister for Works plans, sections, and book of reference, describing a railway "from Cooktown to Maytown," how in the name of common sense could he (the Minister for Works) be responsible if the line happened to go towards Palmerville? He had been assured over and over again that the necessity for getting the third section of the line passed was to reach the Laura River, where there was a suitable place for a station. If he had been led astray somebody would have to be accountable for it. He had no knowledge of the locality, but he had been assured that the third section was between Cooktown and Maytown. He had not altered or tampered with the plans in any way, and the Government had no desire to lead members astray. If their information was incorrect there were ways and means of rectifying it. Somebody would have to be responsible.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did not want to cry *vae victis*, but during all the years he had been a member of that House he had never heard a more humiliating statement than that just made by the Minister for Works. He had told them that he had come to a definite conclusion with regard to a certain railway, and now, when it was pointed out to him that gross errors had been made, either by himself or his department,—and that, too, was dealing with the expenditure of a very large sum of money—he said that if a mistake had been made he was not responsible for it—it was some of his subordinates, and they must suffer if a mistake had been made. That was the first time he had ever heard a Minister of the Crown in that House refuse to take the responsibility that he should take upon his own shoulders. If Ministers were to shelter themselves behind their subordinates things would soon come to a pretty pass. If it had not been for the hon. member for Burke bringing the matter up that night he questioned very much whether that gross blunder or crime—whatever it might be—would ever have been detected. All credit to the hon. member for Burke for the way in which he had brought the Minister for Works upon his knees before that Committee to ask for mercy.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: What!

The PREMIER: He does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he knew perfectly well what he was talking about. It was about the *ad misericordiam* appeal which had been made by the Minister for Works for mercy at the hands of that Committee. That hon. gentleman had distinctly admitted that a gross error had been committed, and said that somebody was going to suffer, and in the meantime he apologised and said he was sorry that he should have been the medium of bringing a grossly erroneous statement before the Committee—a statement for which he was responsible, and in connection with which he now tried to shelter himself behind his subordinates. That was the position the hon. gentleman had landed himself in, and he thought no Minister of the Crown in this colony had ever been placed in such a contemptible position. He had tried to get the assistance of the special pleader—the leader of the Government—but even then he had failed, and he now threw himself on the mercy of the Committee and promised that it would not occur again. He did not think that was sufficient justification for the attitude the hon. gentleman had assumed. He thought every credit was due to the hon. member for Burke for having exposed either the designs of the Ministry or the incapacity of the Minister for Works.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN asked if, since the plans were adopted on the 20th instant, the Minister for Works had communicated by wire or otherwise with Mr. Ballard, to ascertain whether those plans were as he had stated—common to both routes?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had not, because he had come to the conclusion that Mr. Ballard would not send down plans respecting an extension from Cooktown to Maytown if it was going to Palmerville. He was under the impression that the plans were plans of the direct route to Maytown.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman had forgotten that he was not quite sure the other day whether the line adopted was common to both routes. There was some doubt about a certain point, and he said he would see that tenders were not called beyond that point until he had ascertained whether it was common to both.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So I shall.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. gentleman had not done so, although he might have found out by wiring to Mr. Ballard. He would like to point out to the Premier, so that there should be no further blunder, that the people who were surveying the line would maintain that the line was common to both, because he believed they were taking it by Palmerville to Maytown; so that if the Minister for Works wired he would very likely get an answer that it was common to both. Therefore, care must be taken that another blunder was not committed.

Mr. PALMER said he was certain, if his information was correct, that although the line might be common to both routes in a roundabout way, it was not common to the direct route, and if they took the line to Palmerville they would have to cross country equally as rough as from Maytown to the Laura.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as the Minister for Works seemed to know very little about the matter, perhaps it would be as well to postpone the vote until he got definite information.

Mr. NORTON said before the vote was absolutely disposed of he would like to say, with regard to the plans of the Bundaberg-Gladstone railway, which the Minister for Works had

placed on the table that afternoon, that he hoped before the session closed the hon. gentleman would ask the House to approve of them. Of course the plans being laid on the table was of no value whatever unless they received the approval of Parliament—they might just as well have remained in the Minister's office; and he hoped that, under the circumstances, the hon. gentleman would treat them in the same way that he had treated all other plans that had been brought before the House. With regard to what took place last night, he was reported in *Hansard* to have said that he considered laying the plans on the table now would be premature. He never said it would be premature to do so; what he said was that they should have been laid upon the table at the beginning of the session instead of at the end. He hoped the Minister for Works would ask the approval of the Committee of them before the session ended.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there was only one Government day left, and he could not possibly ask the Committee to approve of them.

Mr. NORTON: Are we not going to sit next week?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is not the present intention to do so.

Mr. NORTON said he was under the impression that they were; he thought the Government did not expect to get through their business until next week.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER, in moving that £12,877 be granted for salaries, Postmaster-General's Department, said the changes in that vote were very trivial. There was a new officer appointed—a postal inspector—an officer, he believed, who was very much required, in order that the Postmaster-General might have fuller information about the different mail routes, etc., throughout the colony. There were many mail routes in the colony of which the Postmaster-General knew nothing, practically—not even whether they were required or not. An officer of that kind was appointed as long as sixteen years ago; but for some reason or other the office was allowed to fall into abeyance. There were a few additional officers, one at Bowen and one at the Brisbane office.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said he had no intention of discussing the Postmaster-General's estimates that night, and he had no doubt that many hon. gentlemen besides himself would have something to say on them. How far did the hon. gentleman wish to go?

The PREMIER: Through the Estimates.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: There is not the slightest chance of doing that. I intend to speak for two hours myself.

The PREMIER: The sooner you begin the sooner you will have finished. I was informed early to-day that the Committee would not be allowed to get beyond the Minister for Works' department this evening, and it looks very like it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: You have got through them.

The PREMIER said it had never been the practice in discussing the Estimates to adjourn at that hour. There had never been an instance, since he had been in Parliament, of the Postmaster-General's estimates taking more than two hours to discuss. He had no objection to their being discussed, but what he protested against was the obvious method of obstruction that had been going on all the week. He had had the curiosity to see what was

the usual time for adjourning when the Estimates were under discussion, and had found it was about 11 o'clock. The Government had not the slightest wish to prevent discussion, but would give the fullest information. There were some items he wished to discuss himself, but that was no reason why they should not begin.

Mr. MOREHEAD said the hon. gentleman seemed to be surrounded by informers, and was continually getting information from various sources. He had told them that he had been informed during the day that the Opposition did not intend to let him get beyond the Minister for Works' department. He should like to know who informed him, and who informed his informer. No gentlemen on that side of the Committee had combined to make the Government stop at that particular point, so far as he knew. It might have been the biggest wire-puller in the colony, next to the Premier, the junior member for Enoggera. When the Premier was told by the leader of the Opposition that it was a question of great importance, which they all would admit, and it would take him some considerable time to discuss the Postmaster-General's estimates at length, the Premier said he was going to force the discussion on that night. The hon. gentleman would do no good by that. They had disposed of the Minister for Works, after a very long struggle, he admitted, and that gentleman had apparently retired. The Postmaster-General's estimates would certainly take a whole evening to discuss, and he should have something to say in reference to the management of that department.

The PREMIER : Say some of it now.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he would not. The hon. gentleman might know him well enough to know that he would not go out of his way to oblige him. He could assure him, if he did not know it before, that he would not move one inch. When it suited him he would give his opinion as to the department in question. It did not suit him to do so that night, unless under pressure, or unless the hon. gentleman intended to bring in brute force to make them sit up all night and compel them to go on with the Estimates.

The PREMIER said there was nothing like open confession. They had known all along that there was obstruction, and now the hon. gentleman openly avowed it.

Mr. MOREHEAD : I stand by myself.

The PREMIER said he could not prevent obstruction. Hon. gentlemen had it in their power to keep the Estimates going for another six weeks if they liked. He did not wish to get away to the Musgrave election, as had been suggested. Was the House to be kept in session until that election was over for fear he should call at some port in the electorate and make a speech before the election came on? Were they arrived at such a pass as that?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN : There is no port in the Musgrave electorate.

The PREMIER said he thought there were half-a-dozen. He had not been at the Herbert River but he had been at Mourilyan Harbour and at Cairns, and had also been at Townsville. It would be too great a degradation of parliamentary procedure if the session were to be protracted on that account. Would it give hon. gentlemen any comfort if he solemnly promised not to make a speech? If it would save time he would be inclined to give such an assurance. He did not wish to inconvenience any hon. gentleman; but he had been wondering what was the reason for the obstruction until the little birds were whispering through the air yesterday.

Mr. MOREHEAD : The informers.

The PREMIER said they were the hon. gentleman's own friends who gave the information. If the hon. gentleman had any questions to ask about the Postmaster-General's estimates he should name them that evening. There might be some he could not answer. If the hon. gentleman desired to further public business, if there were any questions he could not answer now, and the hon. gentleman would give notice, he would be able to give the information tomorrow. Probably that was not what the hon. gentleman desired, but a more deliberate attempt to stop business he had never seen.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that it was pure childishness on the hon. member's part to attribute obstruction to the Opposition. He (Sir T. McIlwraith) intended to have the Estimates discussed fairly, and it was no use for the hon. member to try and browbeat the Committee. As for somebody having told the hon. member that work was to be retarded to prevent his speaking at the Townsville or Musgrave elections, that was a most extraordinary communication to get from anyone on the Opposition side. He was quite sure that party had no connection with the leader of the Opposition. He did not care if the hon. member went to Townsville tomorrow, and he would like to be present with the hon. member to hear him unburden himself on several questions which were agitating the country. He did not see that it would delay business in any way to stop at the Postmaster-General's estimates. It was pure childishness to say they were obstructing. Anyone who had heard the debates that night must know that they had been very useful to the country. They had been very useful to the Premier, who might do something in the shape of what he had suggested on the estimate before them. An inspector was to be appointed, because there were many offices throughout the country that the department knew nothing about. It had been demonstrated that there was a great part of the Minister for Works' Department that no one knew anything about, and that was one very useful result of the debate. He did not remember any more useful debate ever having taken place in the Committee. As to what was a reasonable time to adjourn, that was a matter of quiet arrangement between the parties on both sides. They had done a reasonable amount of work, and the hon. gentleman knew it would be a waste of time to commence a new department, because the ground would all have to be gone over again. The hon. member knew very well that there were several very important questions connected with the Postal Department to be considered, and they must be discussed fully and fairly. There never was a time when that department deserved more discussion than it did now. It was a fact that the Postmaster-General's estimates often went through in a couple of hours; but it would have done a good deal of good to the department if they had taken several days. Why should they not demand time to discuss the department fully without being taunted with the truculent accusation that they were obstructing business? The Government had had more time put at their disposal by the Opposition, and with less objection, than any previous Government ever had. There never was a Government who got less obstruction than the present Government, and no leader of the Opposition had ever assisted the Government so much in getting along with the Estimates.

The PREMIER said he acknowledged the services the hon. leader of the Opposition had very often rendered to the Government, but there were occasions on which he had not thought that he owed him any gratitude in that respect. With respect to the Postmaster-General's esti-

mates, he had no desire that they should be rushed through. He quite agreed that sometimes they had gone through without sufficient discussion. Hon. members said they were going to raise some particular points; and as he was not the Minister in charge of that department, it might facilitate business if they would indicate, at any rate, the points upon which they desired information.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that when the hon. member talked reason he would get reason. One subject upon which he (Sir T. McIlwraith) would require a good deal of information was the Postal Union—how far the negotiations had gone as to the colonies of Australia, and Queensland in particular, getting into the Postal Union—what position they were in with regard to that question. That was a question in which they were vitally interested, and in which there were results not yet made public, so far as he was aware. Then he wanted to know what the Government were going to do with reference to the mail service between this colony and Great Britain. The Premier knew the position at the present time, and the efforts made by the other colonies to join together in a service, mainly southern. He wanted to know what the Government had done—if they had made up their mind what position they would take up in that matter. Then there was another matter that would require discussion and explanation—what steps the Government had taken with regard to the reduction of the price of telegrams from 1s. to 6d., in the colony. Then he would want information with regard to the amended tariff the Government proposed to suit the Press of this colony and the other colonies, as well as the public. Those were four matters of vital importance to which he himself would refer.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said the questions of the hon. member for Mulgrave referred to general policy; but he intended to refer to questions of administration. He would want to know whether the Telegraph Department could not come to some arrangement by which the work of railway telegraphing could be done by the Railway Department itself, as was done in the other colonies. That was a very important matter, which should be understood and discussed by the Committee. Before sitting down, he would like to say a word on what the Premier had said about going to Townsville. The hon. member said a friend of the hon. member for Balonne had told him a conspiracy or agreement had been made that the Committee should not go through the Minister for Works' estimates to-night, in order to prevent the hon. gentleman going to the Townsville election. Some wag must have been trying to see how credulous the hon. member was, for credulity could go no farther. The hon. member knew very well they could not protract the session so as to prevent him visiting Townsville or Musgrave. It did not matter very much; the hon. member was not likely to do himself or his party much good there. Before he did go he would like to tell him a question he would have to answer—a question, too, which was not in connection with the Townsville election; and that was the question of territorial separation.

The PREMIER said when the question was put to him it would be time enough to consider the matter. He hoped the reference to his visit to the North was initiated as a joke, and would be regarded as a joke. With respect to some of the matters the hon. member for Mulgrave referred to he admitted that he was not in a position to give him the information he desired that evening. He would be able and be very glad to give the information to-morrow, and he would

therefore ask his hon. colleague to move the Chairman out of the chair, and they could go on with the Estimates to-morrow.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

REPORT OF STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—On behalf of yourself as Chairman of the Standing Orders Committee I beg to bring up the report of the Standing Orders Committee in compliance with an order of the House made on the 8th July. I move that the paper be printed.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER moved that the Standing Orders recommended by the Standing Orders Committee be taken into consideration in committee on Friday next.

Question put.

Mr. CHUBB said: I believe I am a member of the Standing Orders Committee, and I have never been asked to attend its meetings, nor have I received any notice of those meetings.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not wish to delay the House, but it appears to me there is something very peculiar about these committees. I am a member of the Refreshment Committee, and I have never received any notice to attend its meetings. Then, again, I have heard members of the Buildings Committee say that they have received no notice to attend its meetings. There are one or two things wanting attending to about the House, and it is a disgrace that they are not attended to. There is some decayed work outside the Legislative Council Chamber, which if attended to at once could be put to rights for a few pounds, but if it is not attended to at once it may cost a large sum to remedy it.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: I move that the House do now adjourn. We propose to go on with Supply to-morrow.

The House adjourned at a quarter past 10 o'clock.