

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Council**

**FRIDAY, 30 OCTOBER 1885**

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**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.***Friday, 30 October, 1885.*

Logan Village to Beaudesert Railway.—Mackay Railway Extension.—Cairns to Herberton Railway.—Suspension of Standing Orders.—Pacific Island Labourers Act of 1880 Amendment Bill—third reading.—Licensing Bill—third reading.—Noble Estate Enabling Bill—third reading.—Federal Council (Adopting) Bill (Queensland)—third reading.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

**LOGAN VILLAGE TO BEAUDESERT RAILWAY.**

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. T. Macdonald-Paterson) moved—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed extension of the Logan branch of the Southern Railway from Logan Village to Beaudesert be now adopted.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Logan branch of the Southern Railway from Logan Village to Beaudesert, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 21st October.

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

The Hon. T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR said : Hon. gentlemen,—I know this part of the country pretty well, and I feel that a railway there will do a great deal of good ; but I question whether this is the proper time to make one—whether we can afford the expense.

Question put and passed.

**MACKAY RAILWAY EXTENSION.**

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed Wharf Line Extension of the Mackay Railway be now adopted.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Wharf Line Extension of the Mackay Railway, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 27th October.

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

Question put and passed.

**CAIRNS TO HERBERTON RAILWAY.**

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved—

That the report of the Select Committee on the proposed railway from Cairns to Herberton be now adopted.

The Hon. A. J. THYNNE said : Hon. gentlemen,—Before this motion is adopted, it will be well to give a little attention to the evidence taken before the select committee, and I hope we shall have some explanation of some parts of the evidence—to which I shall refer—by some of the members of that committee. Mr. Hannam, Mr. Nisbet, Mr. Gardiner, and Mr. Amos were the principal witnesses examined, and, on their evidence, the House is asked to commit the country to an enormous amount of expenditure. I fully recognise the desirableness of avoiding any unnecessary delay in giving the important district of Herberton railway communication as soon as possible ; but we must bear in mind that a little undue haste may lead to an unnecessary waste of money and probably an unnecessary waste of time. There is one answer in this evidence which thoroughly justifies me in not allowing this motion to pass without comment. At question 357, Mr. N. E. Amos, who has been for ten years employed as a Government railway surveyor, is asked—

“ Do you consider that the route you propose compares favourably with the proposed Government route from Cairns, over the coast range ? ”

The answer to that is this :—

“ If I had been asked at the first, by the Government, to make a report on the Cairns Range, I would have reported that it was impracticable. Money will force a railway anywhere, and plenty of it, no doubt, will force a railway up the Cairns Range.”

That answer is enough to put hon. members on the strictest inquiry, as to whether they can commit the country to the adoption of this scheme on the information before the Committee. We have here a route surveyed by the Government officers, from Cairns to Herberton. That has been surveyed by Mr. Monk, and inspected once or twice, in a rather rough-and-ready fashion. Riding over in a buggy, or some such mode of conveyance, is scarcely a proper method of testing the propriety of constructing a railway, the construction of which is estimated at £9,000 a mile. This railway was planned by Mr. Monk and his assistants, and, that hon. members may judge of the reliability of the method in which this survey has been carried on, I may point out that Mr. Monk's assistants consisted of a Mr. Greensill, assistant surveyor, who is not even a licensed surveyor—he is a railway surveyor—a young man of twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, who has probably been educated in our own department. There was another assistant whose name it is not necessary for me to mention, but it may be seen in question 165 ; his survey had to be disregarded altogether ; he was incompetent to perform his work, and his services were dispensed with. Then we have Mr. Monk and this young surveyor. I wish to guard against making any reflection or casting any doubt on their capacity, but at the same time this is scarcely the material on which I for one can form the conclusion that this railway should be made, no matter what the cost may be. The cost of the first part—24 or 25 miles—is estimated

at £9,000 a mile, and that is enough to put us on inquiry. In reply to question 41, Mr. Hannam stated—

"At the time that I made the exploration in February, 1884, I estimated the average cost from Cairns to Herberton at £9,000 a mile."

That is the cost from Cairns to Herberton. What is the cost of the most troublesome and expensive part, from Cairns to the top of the range? There is nothing here that I can see to show us what the total cost of the railway is likely to be. Is it tens of thousands, or hundreds of thousands, or how many hundreds of thousands? I think it is a pity that the people who took some trouble to get witnesses were not aided in getting their evidence placed before the committee. I notice in the proceedings that the committee were asked to defray the expenses of at least some witnesses from the district, but they declined to do so. They paid the expenses of Mr. Hannam, and that is the only one, I notice, whose expenses and sustentation fees were paid. They refused to pay the expenses and sustentation fees of other witnesses, who probably would have been able to throw considerable light on the subject. I would not advocate giving the committee the privilege of summoning any number of witnesses they chose, but at least two or three might have been summoned in addition to those who were summoned, instead of throwing on a few people the whole of the cost of an investigation, which would certainly result in public benefit, no matter whether the opponents or supporters of the line were successful. If we consider the enormous sum of money which this line involves, and compare the comparatively trifling amount which two or three witnesses would have cost to bring down, we shall see that the policy of not encouraging and procuring all the information possible was not a good one. The Postmaster-General yesterday said that, if hon. gentlemen had had as much of this Cairns railway as the members of the committee, they would have been glad to get rid of it as quickly as possible, but I do not think that the question of being glad to get rid of it should weigh with hon. members. They have a duty to perform, no matter what their feelings may be. The Port Douglas route has been put forward as an alternative scheme by those who think it better than the one by Cairns—more suitable, less expensive, and having other advantages beyond that of the Cairns route. So far as I am concerned, I have no more inclination—in regard to the different routes from Cairns, from Port Douglas, or from Mourilyan—towards one than the other. I have no idea which is the best route, and, after looking through the evidence; I am not satisfied that the one the committee recommend is the best. I think that the policy of the construction of this line has been referred to the committee, and they, as well as this House, ought to look into the question whether a better route cannot be obtained. There are reports mentioned throughout this evidence, but we find that this Port Douglas route has not been surveyed by Mr. Hannam, beyond a two days' trip—two days going, and two days returning—at the ordinary rate of travelling. It has not been inspected by Mr. Delisser, Mr. Ballard's assistant, nor Mr. McDonnell, nor by the other officer spoken of. They have not made that careful examination of this proposed line which ought to have been made; and the evidence strongly supports the statement made by a great many people in the North, that these alternative routes have not received that careful examination which the parties in the matter demand. There is the evidence of Mr. Gardiner; I do not know

who he is, but, at any rate, his estimate of the Port Douglas route is considerably lower than Mr. Hannam's estimate of the Cairns route. Mr. Amos' estimate for the first twenty-five miles is about £7,250 a mile, while that of Mr. Hannam is £9,000. Now, in view of Mr. Amos' position in the department, his long service, and the evident confidence reposed in him by the Government—

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: He is not in the department.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: He has been employed by the department for many years. In question 322, he says he is—

"At present a licensed surveyor. I have been, I may say, in connection with the same question, for ten years actively engaged by the Government of Queensland on the railway surveys—in camp almost entirely for ten years."

That statement has been made, and in no way denied. Now, one of the statements which have been made by a number of the Northern people, whether justifiable or not, is this: that there has been a kind of combination or determination on the part of a number of Government officials to carry this railway by way of Cairns in spite of every opposition; and if hon. gentlemen will look towards the latter part of this evidence I think they will see that it discloses a state of affairs which calls for the most careful investigation from this House. Mr. Amos was employed by the people of Port Douglas to investigate and report upon the proposed line from Port Douglas to the range. He did that part of the work, at any rate, which included an inspection of the line up to the point arranged for, and then he received his pay. He then went to Cooktown for the purpose of writing out his report, and from something which was communicated to him—and we know how these things may be done—he had reason to believe that his report on the Port Douglas route would be distasteful to some person in office. He cautiously communicated with the Surveyor-General on the subject, and I will read to hon. gentlemen the evidence which bears on this point. Mr. Amos is asked at question 362—

"In the course of your examination, just now, Mr. Amos, you stated that you were prohibited by the Surveyor-General from furnishing the information that you obtained in the course of a survey of a railway line from Port Douglas. Am I right in that understanding? Yes, sir; correct."

"363. You made that survey under instructions from the Surveyor-General? No."

"364. From whom? The people of Port Douglas employed me."

"365. I will put it in another way:—Did you make a survey of that railway under instructions from the Engineer's Department? No."

"366. Or were you in their employment at the time? No, sir."

"367. The survey, then, that you made was quite independent in any way of any Government departments? Quite."

"368. Then you were a licensed surveyor in the district? In the Cook district."

"369. Carrying on surveys for the Government? Yes, sir."

"370. But only as a licensed surveyor? As a contract surveyor, not as a staff surveyor."

"371. Then, may I ask you in what way could the Surveyor-General prohibit you from supplying information to anybody? I can only tell you that it is a fact. I had heard indirectly—I am a bit frightened, Mr. Chairman, and may say that I do not like giving this information—that the Surveyor-General objected to it. I wired to him to know, if I reported to the people of Port Douglas on the route which I had discovered over the Port Douglas range, would it be detrimental to my status in the department. He replied to me: 'If I hear of you reporting upon the matter referred to in your telegram, I will deem it my duty to at once dismiss you from the department.' I thought that quite conclusive."

What state of affairs, hon. gentlemen, does this disclose? Is it any wonder that the people of Port Douglas, after they had employed a man

and paid him for making a survey, are indignant when they learn that the surveyor whom they have employed to acquire information dare not report to them, on account of certain influences, after they had paid him for the work? This surveyor, who was under the influence of his superior officer, was obliged to refund the money that was paid him, and the information that could be obtained was kept a blank from the committee and kept a blank from this House. That information ought to have been published, and ought to have been here, and we ought not to be asked, in the absence of information which has been burked and smothered, to pass this railway. Whether hon. gentlemen are prepared to approve of this Bill or not, I must say that I cannot believe that there has been sufficient shown in the evidence brought forward by the committee to justify me in giving my vote for it, and if I stand alone I shall vote against the motion as a protest against the way in which this business has been managed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—For the last speaker to talk about information that has been hushed and smothered is simply to talk in a random and reckless manner, and to make assertions that have no foundation in fact.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: Explain it then.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: If the hon. gentleman had been on the committee he would understand the laborious way in which the members of the committee attended to this as well as all their other duties. I admit at once that this matter caused me surprise, and I was instrumental in getting some information upon that point; and to say that that information was suppressed to hear one side and not the other—to take the assertion of a nervous witness who, apparently, has the most peculiar ideas of reverence for the head of a department—which a small boy would not have for a king—is, to say the least of it, absurd. Mr. Amos made a mistake in communicating with the department at all. He wanted to be relieved from the duty of reporting upon the line. Perhaps he had no confidence in his own measurements or in his own surveys, and doubtless he had been instructed at that time to carry out certain work for the Government which it was absolutely necessary should be quickly completed. I am satisfied that the work was in no way slurred by the committee, and I am satisfied that Mr. Amos was not a man in whose ability we can trust to the same extent that we can trust Mr. Willoughby Hannam, who is generally acknowledged to be the best surveying engineer in Australia. Mr. Hannam is a man who, in his former estimates of work, has gone practically within 5 per cent. of the actual cost, and we were bound to accept his estimate, having had that experience of him. He has the highest interests of the country at heart; he has been engaged in his present profession for thirty-two years, and he has proved himself to be a most competent and reliable man, a man who will select the best route according to his judgment, and who would not be turned aside by the opinions, convictions, or wishes of any other man. What conclusion could the committee come to? They accepted the evidence—the evidence of the man who had been tried and who had been proved trustworthy during the whole of his professional career. Hon. gentlemen have heard the position I have placed Mr. Amos in. I believe him to be a capable surveyor, but at the time he gave that evidence he was apparently not in good health. He felt himself aggrieved, and it was an evidence of weakness of character to refer to the Surveyor-General at all. However, I say at once that if I were the Minister

for Lands I would take this matter up and see it to the bottom, because the Surveyor-General has no more right to exercise authority over a gentleman who is practising his profession in the colony as a surveyor than he has to exercise authority over any hon. gentleman in this Chamber. I was very sorry, indeed, to see in the evidence any reference whatever to the Surveyor-General. The little episode which took place between him and Mr. Amos has no relationship whatever to the question of the Cairns-Herberton railway, and the question for the committee to decide—the question that was referred to them—was the policy of constructing that line. Incidental evidence was taken which was foreign to the subject matter referred to the committee, but after consideration the committee decided that in view of the rivalry that existed, not only at Port Douglas but elsewhere, it was desirable that they should loosen the rules of taking evidence, which are usually lax in committees, and give everybody who thought he was aggrieved or interested in the line an opportunity of giving evidence. I think that was the spirit that animated the committee, and that was the opinion that they acted upon. With reference to the subject of expenses the hon. gentleman said the committee had, in his judgment, not acted wisely in refusing to pay the expenses of witnesses who were prepared to tender evidence which would be adverse to the Cairns-Herberton route. Now, I think that assertion can be dismissed in a sentence. I, as chairman of the committee, felt bound, in some degree, to pilot this part of the Government policy through the House and through the committee, and at the same time I was anxious that as much evidence as possible should be taken. Now this matter has been before the public for some years. It was very well known that the Government engineers had recommended the Cairns-Herberton route, and it was very well known that weeks previous to the formation of the committee, and at the last moment, there was a general rush, not only to the chairman, but to the other members of the committee—a rush of telegrams and letters asking authority to come down at the expense of the country and give evidence adverse to the railway which had been submitted to the committee. Well, in my judgment—and other members of the committee can speak for themselves—I thought it was very inadvisable indeed that witnesses without number should come down here to give evidence in relation to routes which had not been referred to the consideration of the committee at all, and that these witnesses should seek their expenses out of the public purse. The decision of the committee was a very proper one; they decided to receive such evidence as would be tendered by any person who thought himself aggrieved by the policy involved by the proposed adoption of the Cairns-Herberton route. I think that was the very utmost extent to which the committee could have gone. That was done; and a great deal of evidence was taken, not only in relation to the route, but in relation to the several harbours from which the railway might be taken to Herberton, and these matters speak for themselves. Now, reference has been made to the amount per mile mentioned by witnesses interested in the Port Douglas route—witnesses who were employed by the Port Douglas people and paid by them. The price mentioned is in the one case from £3,600 to £4,000 per mile, and in the other £9,000; but the Hon. Mr. Thynne takes the figures at £7,000 and £9,000 respectively; but Mr. Amos did not include rails, fastenings, or stations.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: Including rails and fastenings.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Then I will go back to the evidence as it was presented to me personally. I remember there was evidence given by Mr. Amos as to the total cost, but originally he gave a lower estimate, which did not include rails, fastenings, or stations.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: May I be permitted to explain? Mr. Hannam estimates the cost of the rails, fastenings, and stations, in the answer to question 231, at about £2,000. By reference to questions and answers 344 and 345 it will be seen they are as follow:—

"344. Did you make any estimate of the probable cost of the line according to that survey? The cost of the line depends upon the style of construction. I could put a line down there very cheaply, or make a very expensive one, such as has been constructed at Cooktown. I should say £4,000 would be the outside for the first four miles.

"345. Yes. But all the way through —? Well, all the way through, I could not tell you. £6,000 for the next four miles; I think £5,000, but I will say £6,000, for the next mile and a-half; the other three miles will cost probably £10,000 a mile; then, £4,000 per mile right through for the rest of the distance."

That would be roughly £5,250 per mile, and, adding the cost of rails and fastenings, the cost would come up to about £7,300, as against Mr. Hannam's estimate of £9,000 per mile.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That is quite correct. In the first instance, I was referring to the evidence given by Mr. Gardiner, whose estimate was extremely low for a railway through that difficult country. This matter of railway construction is one to which I have given a great deal of attention in times past, and I make myself acquainted with the price of rails as regularly as reading the daily telegrams. I am well acquainted with the fact, as no doubt other hon. gentlemen are also, that even in the most level country no line can be constructed for less than £3,500 per mile, including rails and fastenings. I think, even at the present low price of rails, which is something like £4 12s. 6d. to £5 7s. 6d., according to weight, no railway could be constructed at a less price per mile than the figure I have mentioned. Now, in the evidence, one witness says the line can be constructed with no less than seventeen tunnels, and including rails and fastenings, for £4,000 per mile. I refer to the witness Gardiner. I am not quite certain as to the amount, but it is, I think, something like £5,000 per mile. If we add to that £2,000 per mile for rails, fastenings, stations and fences, as included in Mr. Hannam's report, that will make the estimate about the same as the estimate given by Mr. Amos. The question then arises whether we should take the evidence of an inexperienced witness as against the evidence of an experienced engineer like Mr. Hannam, who has gone through the crucible of good times and bad, and through droughts and floods, and who has seen many years' service under the Government of this colony, especially in reference to railway construction. Mr. Hannam was engaged on the railway over the Main Range, and also on the Warwick extensions; and he discovered the best route from Westwood through the Gogango Range to the Dawson. He has also been employed on many other important works, to the satisfaction of the colony and the credit of his own reputation. Were we to take the evidence of other persons with less experience, against the evidence of that gentleman, whose reputation is at stake, I contend that it was impossible, although every item of evidence has been weighed, to come to any other conclusion than that the evidence of Mr. Willoughby Hannam should tip the scale, because it preponderates over the evidence of the other witness both in regard to skilled knowledge and an intimate acquaintance with the character of the

work and the cost of carrying out that work in that part of the colony. He has a practical knowledge of the cost per mile for which contracts can be executed in that part of our territory. The evidence submitted to the committee proved that the route from Cairns to Herberton is better than the route from Port Douglas to Herberton. The two routes are very much the same as regards physical difficulties, but the Port Douglas route is a little longer, and the cost of constructing the line from there would be about 5 per cent. more than from Cairns to Herberton. When we come to consider the merits of the different harbours, the evidence of Mr. Nisbet clearly demonstrates that the harbour of Cairns is very much larger than the harbour at Mourilyan, and that the harbour at Port Douglas is no harbour at all. Mr. Nisbet also states that a harbour could be made at Port Douglas at an expenditure about equal to the cost of a cutting to give fifteen feet deep at low water from the sea into the Cairns Harbour, but even with that expenditure the harbour of Port Douglas would be inferior to the harbour at Cairns. These facts are worthy of the most serious consideration, because, the harbour accommodation on the coast is a necessary element in the consideration of this question by the House. One of the termini has been fixed upon—namely, Herberton; and the other one will be fixed by these plans at Cairns. It is just as well that the committee relaxed the usual rules in regard to evidence, and received as much evidence as possible, because, had they not done so, there might have been some doubt in the matter. But the evidence which has been obtained clearly shows that the only harbour of the three which will afford safe as well as large accommodation, irrespective of the difficulty of constructing a railway to the interior, is the harbour at Cairns. I think that conclusion will be accepted by every hon. gentleman in this House. Moreover, it has been clearly proved by the best obtainable witness in the colony, who has personally examined the route—not simply by riding over the country in a buggy, but has carefully examined both routes, foot by foot and mile by mile, and made his notes as to the quantities, both of cuttings, bridges, tunnels, and gradients—and after giving the matter every consideration, he has stated, in his evidence before the committee, that the Port Douglas route is the longer, and would be 5 per cent. dearer than the proposed route from Cairns to Herberton. I am very glad indeed that the matter has received attention from those interested in the respective routes. I can assure hon. gentlemen that the question has been considered entirely from a national point of view. I do not believe it could have received more careful consideration than has been devoted to it by the committee. We have overstepped the bounds of the Standing Orders in respect to time. We have gone weeks beyond the time allotted for the consideration of matters of this kind, and within which a report should be drawn up, in order to elucidate as much information as possible, and satisfy ourselves that the report which we brought up was founded upon the best evidence obtainable. Adverting for a moment to the cost of the line, I notice that the Hon. Mr. Thynne said that £9,000 per mile was a very great sum. I myself am happy to find that in these days we can construct a railway over such country as that from the coast to Herberton for £9,000 per mile. In 1864 it could not have been done for £13,000 per mile. Hon. members should bear in mind that this £9,000 per mile will include everything connected with the railway except rolling-stock. It is, in my opinion, a marvel of cheapness, and an

achievement of which the country should be proud. I think it is my duty to refer to an observation made by the Hon. Mr. Thynne in reference to someone, whose name I did not catch, who is not a licensed surveyor. I would inform the hon. gentleman that that is a separate business altogether from a railway surveyor. The business of a land surveyor is a different business altogether from the business of what the Americans call a surveying engineer. The latter is a civil engineer, and occupies a higher grade. His work requires a different kind of talent altogether from that required by what is termed a licensed surveyor. It is the surveying engineers who are really the savers of expense in making railways. We know this very well: that the champion of cheap railways in this colony—Mr. Ballard—has never for a moment stated that he was a surveying engineer. He calls himself a constructing engineer, and has always said, "Give me a first-class staff of surveying engineers and I will build you railways cheaply; but if one cannot get a good staff of surveying engineers no constructing engineer can build cheap railways." The hon. member will do well to bear in mind that the greater includes the less, but the less does not include the greater. A surveying engineer is a higher position than that to which the hon. gentleman referred. I do not think it is any argument to say that, because Mr. Amos' estimates are lower than those of Mr. Hannam, that is a reason why we should defer this railway, or why the Hon. Mr. Thynne should call for a division on the motion. It is simply a matter of opinion and judgment between two men; and the question is, who has the largest experience. Has Mr. Amos ever constructed a line of railway in his life? I answer, no.

The HON. A. J. THYNNE: He has been a surveying engineer for ten years.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Has Mr. Amos ever prepared estimates for the Government of this colony, or any other colony, in connection with railway construction? I answer, no. Has he ever occupied the responsible position of constructing engineer? I answer, no. Yet it is attempted to put his evidence in the scale against the evidence of Mr. Hannam, who has performed some of the greatest engineering achievements possible in Queensland, and perhaps in Australia. I think the construction of the railway over the Main Range from Murphy's Creek to Toowoomba, is a feat quite as great, if not greater, than that of the Zig-zag in New South Wales; and the line is very much more convenient, and much safer; and, in giving this opinion, I am expressing what has been said by engineers in the southern colonies. If the House thinks that this railway is premature; that the evidence before us is insufficient to justify us in adopting this report; or that it is advisable that this matter should be deferred either for a month or a year, by all means let a motion be tabled to that effect; but I apprehend that no such feeling exists among hon. gentlemen. There are great industries languishing in that part of the colony where it is proposed to construct this line, for lack of communication between the interior and the coast, and I think it would be an absurdity to construct a line from Herberton to Port Douglas, where a harbour does not exist. On the other hand, to defer the construction of this line for the purpose of enabling the Government to spend more money to find out another track, would not be wise. Cairns possesses a magnificent harbour that cannot be excelled; and the House, in delaying this matter, can scarcely exclude from their consideration the pregnant circumstance of good

harbour accommodation. We have the evidence of one of the best engineers of the colony, who is also one of the best bushmen in the colony, and who has examined the rival routes; and we find that he declares the Cairns harbour route is shorter than the route from Port Douglas by some miles, and that he also declares that the proposed line can be constructed for 5 per cent. less than a line from Port Douglas to Herberton. He also states that the interests of that particular portion of the colony will be best served by this line; that it will go through country thickly timbered; and that the district is only waiting for the axe and railway carriage to send down to market enormous quantities of the finest timber in the world. I contend that, having all this information, it would be absurd to attempt to delay a question of this kind, and keep back a district, which, at the present time promises to be one of the richest, not only in Queensland, but in all Australia. I hope the House will pass this railway.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—In considering the question of this railway, I think there is very little doubt that a line is required somewhere on that portion of our coast from which this line is proposed to be constructed to give access to the interior of the country. The coast range is of that peculiar character that it is far more practicable to carry a railway through it, than it would be to construct a dray-road. I believe a dray-road would actually cost more to construct than a railway. Where you have tremendous steep sidings to work upon and occasional tunnelling to do, a railway must be a matter of less cost than a dray road, so that I think we may be satisfied that a railway ought to be constructed somewhere in the Cairns and Herberton district. The next question we have to consider is, where should the line start from? It is more important to say where it shall start from on the coast than the precise point to which it should go on the uplands. Three places have been mentioned as being suitable. Mourilyan Harbour is one, Port Douglas another, and Cairns a third. Mourilyan Harbour cannot, under any circumstances, ever be made a very convenient port for large vessels. Port Douglas has disadvantages, inasmuch as the entrance is not well enough covered by the reefs along the coast to be protected from the heavy rolling of the sea; and, although it might be possible to dredge a channel near to the wharves, still, if that was done, it would yet be a very indifferent harbour. Then we come to Cairns, and we find that it is the best harbour of the three. There we have a portion of the coast which is better protected from the rolling of the outside sea, and vessels find better anchorage there and a much safer spot at which goods can be landed. As regards the port, there is the disadvantage that if we require to get a depth of fifteen feet in the approach at very low water we should have to dredge for some three miles; but at high water there is very good access indeed to the inner deep water at Cairns. Under these circumstances I think we may rest satisfied that that is the proper point from which the railway should start unless some very extraordinary conditions should be found to exist in favour of constructing the line from some other point. The evidence, I am sorry to say, had to be collected by the committee from a variety of sources; but they should not have been required to seek evidence in that way, because the Government ought always to be in possession of sufficient information to certify as to whether the work is a proper one or not before they put a railway before the House at all. With regard to the competing lines from Port Douglas and Cairns, the line from Port Douglas is not asserted by one of the parties to be substantially

better or cheaper than the other. The question of cost is not one we can safely go upon when the estimates are made by two different officers; and from my knowledge of Mr. Hannam I can say that if we are to take an estimate from anyone we can scarcely get a more reliable railway surveyor than Mr. Hannam. I know something about him, because he was employed in my department; and though I was very sorry to lose him as a land surveyor, I did all I could to get him appointed as a railway surveyor, as I looked upon him as a man whose talents were to a great extent lost where he was. A railway surveyor in a country like this requires special talent—a talent not to be acquired by any kind of instruction or practice, though it may be greatly improved by them; and I am sorry to say that some engineers who are thoroughly up in questions of construction have in some places run us into serious and heavy expenses by injudicious selection of the lines of route. However, in this case, I may say that the most qualified officer in the Railway Department is Mr. Hannam—certainly, so far as the selection of a line through a piece of new country is concerned. His abilities as a constructing engineer are, I believe, most excellent—I do not speak so much there from my personal knowledge, but I hear him highly spoken of by those who have anything to do with him in regard to the question of construction. Therefore, we may take his evidence as equal if not superior to any other with regard to the conflicting lines. Even if the question resolved itself to the point that the two lines were equal, I should consider that the weight of evidence would be in favour of the Cairns route. I have given my reasons for coming to that conclusion because I think it is better not to give an opinion without giving my reasons.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—After the exhaustive explanation given by the Postmaster-General, and seeing that the minutes of evidence are in the hands of hon. members, it is unnecessary for me to do more than give in a few words the reasons why I concur in this report being brought up without any note of dissent. We, after carefully listening to the evidence, and weighing the relative value of the different parts, arrived at the only just conclusion we could, unless we had been asked to say whether a further survey should be made within a radius of 60 or 100 miles, instead of deciding on the policy and desirableness of constructing the proposed line. The question for the committee to consider was not as to the general policy of the construction of a line, but whether the expense was reasonable; and we believed the line as surveyed by the engineers to be the best and the most suitable. I will briefly summarise the result of our researches. We are unanimous—and therefore I say “we”—in the opinion that the harbour of Cairns is the best of the harbours within any reasonable distance of Herberton; that it is the central one; and that the cost of the line from Cairns to Herberton would not in the long run be greater than that of a line from Port Douglas to Herberton. Further, I very much doubt whether it would be possible to have got an equally good line from Port Douglas; but allowing that it would have been possible to make a line in some small degree better from there than from Cairns, the overwhelming evidence in favour of the port of Cairns as the point from which the whole of the produce from that part of the country should be shipped was enough to overbalance any disadvantages, if they did exist, that were set before us by those who were interested in the Port Douglas line. Under these circumstances there was nothing left for us to do but to

bring up the report we have. The only thing I would add is that the Government did not produce the amount of evidence that ought to have been in their possession before they undertook the work. It is not right to leave the whole question of obtaining evidence in the hands of a select committee, because they have not the opportunities—they cannot command the public servants from whom the information is to be got; and even taking the powers of the committee to be stretched to the utmost, if we sent for every person we wished to examine it would not always be practicable for them to attend just at the time we were sitting. Therefore, the Government are wrong in principle in endeavouring to bring any one of these railways up for approval without having first availed themselves of the facilities they possess to procure better information for the guidance of the select committee.

The HON. E. B. FORREST said: Hon. gentlemen.—The only point that has not been dealt with exhaustively by the Postmaster-General and the Hon. Mr. Gregory, in reply to the Hon. Mr. Thynne, was in reference to the decision of the select committee not to obtain witnesses from Port Douglas. The hon. gentleman seemed to make the only point he did make when he spoke with reference to that decision; but I would ask if he is aware what names of persons likely to come down were submitted to the committee, and whether he is prepared to say that the evidence they were likely to give was worth trying to obtain? I think that before the hon. gentleman takes exception to the action of the committee he should know something of the matter, because the committee did take steps to find out who were likely to give information; and I may say that, in reply to a request from Port Douglas, the committee distinctly stated that they were willing to receive any evidence, though it was a question whether they should receive much evidence as to rival routes. I would also ask the Hon. Mr. Thynne whether he is aware that one of the witnesses named by the Port Douglas people, who did not get paid, declined to give evidence? Every opportunity was given to the Port Douglas people interested in their own route to produce any evidence in their possession. They produced some evidence, though I confess they did not go far, because the committee felt that it was more a question of reporting on the proposed line than a question of the route the railway should take. As the subject has been fully dealt with on other points, I do not feel called upon to say any more.

Question put, and the House divided :—

#### CONTENTS, 16.

The Hons. T. Macdonald-Paterson, F. H. Holberton, J. C. Foote, A. C. Gregory, P. T. Gregory, E. B. Forrest, G. King, W. D. Box, J. C. Smyth, W. Aplin, W. G. Power, T. L. Murray-Prior, J. Swan, W. H. Wilson, D. F. Roberts, and J. Cowlishaw.

#### NON-CONTENTS, 2.

The Hons. W. Graham and A. J. Thynne.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The POSTMASTER - GENERAL then moved—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Cairns to Herberton (first section), from 0 miles to 24 miles and including the Wharf line shown by the said plan (being from 2 miles to 8½ miles, the plan, section, and book of reference of the line described as the Alternative Line, and passing by way of Selection 138), as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 16th September.

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

Question put and passed.

## SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said: Hon. gentlemen,—In moving this motion, to which I trust this House will assent, having, as it has, relation to the speedy completion of business of a formal character in this House, I wish to state that if there be any business arising before the prorogation of Parliament which any hon. gentleman desires to deal with in a formal manner, I shall at once, on behalf of the Government, assent to its being done. I do not wish to specify any particular business, nor is it desirable to enter into a discussion upon what may or may not happen, but I am led to make this observation from what was said to me this afternoon by the Hon. F. T. Gregory; and it is well that it should be understood that an arrangement has been come to between him and me on that subject, which I think will be satisfactory to all who desire that discussion, if it is desirable, should take place upon any question. My motion is, and I beg to move it with the consent of the House, that so much of the Standing Orders be suspended during the remainder of the session as will admit of the passing of Bills through all their stages in one day.

The PRESIDENT: The House must distinctly understand that this motion can only be put by unanimous consent, and that if one member objects it cannot be put.

The HON. W. FORREST said: Before this motion is put I should like to have a little more specific information as to the business which has to come before the House. I think it is a most dangerous thing to suspend the Standing Orders unless we have any special work to get through. Hitherto I have not objected to the Postmaster-General taking as many days as he thought necessary for the business of the House, but we have met on many days and done little or no work, and why we are now asked to rush through the business in this manner I cannot understand. The Standing Orders of the House say distinctly that except in cases of urgent or pressing necessity the Standing Orders shall not be suspended without notice. I do not intend to oppose the motion, but I want to hear some further reasons for this course, and if I do not get a satisfactory reason I shall oppose the motion.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Does the hon. gentleman object to the question being put?

The HON. W. FORREST: I do not exactly take that course; but I want to get some specific information, and unless I do get it I will object to this motion. I think it is a most dangerous thing to rush business through in this manner, especially when no explanation has been given why it is necessary to hurry through the work so quickly.

The HON. F. T. GREGORY said: I hope the Postmaster-General will not think that I am taking upon myself to answer for him any objection to the motion in consequence of the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Forrest. The fact of the matter is that the Postmaster-General and myself have discussed the urgency of getting through business towards the close of the session, and, speaking on behalf of a number of hon. gentlemen on this side, we have no reason whatever to object to the motion being put. It simply amounts to this: that if there is anything that comes before us that is really objectionable and considered undesirable to pass we are still in a position to throw it out or stop it. I quite concur in the Postmaster-General's views as to the importance of relaxing the rules of the House to facilitate a small quantity of business being got through at the end of the session. I hope

the Hon. Mr. Forrest will accept the explanation as showing that we are not in any way yielding an important point by allowing the motion to pass.

Question put and passed.

## PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS ACT OF 1880 AMENDMENT BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

## LICENSING BILL—THIRD READING.

On the Order of the Day being read, the POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that it be discharged from the paper, and the Bill be recommended for the consideration of schedule 4, form 6.

Question put and passed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that, in schedule 4, form 6, line 53, after the word "license," the following words be inserted: "for the sale of wine." That would make that notice of application correspond with the licensed victuallers' notice of application.

Amendment agreed to; and schedule, as amended, put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with a further amendment. The report was adopted, the Bill read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

## NOBLE ESTATE ENABLING BILL—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the HON. A. J. THYNNE, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

## FEDERAL COUNCIL (ADOPTING) BILL (QUEENSLAND)—THIRD READING.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the President left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider this Bill in detail.

Preamble postponed.

On clause 1, as follows:—

"In pursuance of the powers contained in the said recited Act, it is hereby declared and enacted that the said Act shall come into operation and be in force in Queensland on and from the first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, if at that date the said Act is in force in at least three other of the Australasian colonies.

"If at that date the said Act is not in force in at least three other of the Australasian colonies, then it shall come into operation and be in force in Queensland so soon after the first day of December, one thousand eight hundred and eighty-five, as it shall also be in force in at least three other of the said colonies.

"Subject to the provisions hereinbefore contained, if under the provisions of any Act or ordinance of any colony the coming of the said Act into operation in such colony is made contingent upon the said Act being in force in Queensland, then the said Act shall come into operation and be in force in Queensland when and so soon as its coming into operation and being in force in Queensland would bring it into operation in such colony.

"The coming of the said Act into operation in Queensland shall be notified by the Governor by proclamation."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had a small amendment to propose in that clause. He moved that after the word "colonies" at the end of the 1st paragraph there be inserted the words "of which two of the colonies of New South Wales, South Australia, and Victoria are two."



Amendment agreed to, and clause passed with consequential amendments.

The remaining clauses and the preamble were passed as printed.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, the CHAIRMAN left the chair and reported the Bill to the House with amendments.

The report was adopted; and the Bill was passed through its remaining stages without discussion, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Assembly, by message in the usual form.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed, and the House adjourned at three minutes to 6 o'clock.

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