

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 21 OCTOBER 1886

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 21 October, 1886.

Formal Motion.—Cable Communication with Europe.—
Burning of the Barque "Rockhampton."—South
Brisbane Mechanics Institute Sale Bill.—second
reading.—Laidley Creek Branch Railway.—North
Coast Railway Extension.—Adjournment.

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

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to :—

By Mr. HAMILTON—

That there be laid on the table of the House, the reports upon and the evidence taken at the inquiry in connection with the accident to the electric light on the 24th August; also, copies of all correspondence in connection with the same matter.

CABLE COMMUNICATION WITH EUROPE.

Mr. PALMER, in moving—

That, in view of the improbability of any substantial reduction of cable rates between Australasia and Europe by the existing routes, this House is of opinion that the Government should consider the advisability of negotiating with any other colony or colonies, with a view to establishing fresh cable communication with Europe, or subsidising a new submarine cable—

said: Mr. Speaker,—The importance of the motion I have put on the paper is a sufficient excuse, I think, for bringing it forward, because it is evident to everybody that the rates, so far, of cable messages are utterly prohibitory—prohibitory almost to everyone, with the exception of merchants with very large businesses, or Colonial Treasurers, wishing to publish very glowing accounts of their budgets. I do not know that our Colonial Treasurer has been in that position; but I know that the Colonial Treasurer of New South Wales spent £1,400 in publishing a glowing account of his budget speech at home. These are special cases; but the great object of such communication is that it should be within the means of every one. I suppose it will be in the recollection of hon. members that the late leader of the Opposition, Sir Thomas McLlwraith, called attention last year to the crushing effect of the tariffs that were being imposed by the monopoly of the cable company, and the beneficial result of that action is to be seen by the papers laid upon the table of the House, containing the correspondence respecting the reduction of the rates for messages, in which Mr. Pender, the chairman of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, therein referred to, takes exception to the statements of the then leader of the Opposition. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, the action of Sir Thomas McLlwraith had the effect of administering to him a sort of electric shock, because it was the means of at once reducing the tariff at least by 1s. 4d. per word unconditionally, and of stating a proposal to reduce it by another 1s. 4d., with certain conditions which it would not be advisable for the colonies—particularly for this colony—to agree to. I will refer to these conditions further on. There is no mistake, Mr. Speaker, that the

history altogether of this cable communication is one of a huge monopoly, and the money of the company seems to be expended not in trying to reduce the expense, but in buying up a monopoly, so as to encircle the colonies, as it were, like an octopus, in the coils of the different cable companies. We see that by the history of the line connecting Europe and Australasia, through Asia. It has a monopoly at Gibraltar and in the Mediterranean, and in Egypt again, where a man who can hardly say that his seat on his throne is secure takes it upon himself to prescribe what shall be the rates to these colonies. The position is absurd altogether, and the colonies should set themselves to rectify it. When cable communication was established between Europe and Australia, it showed the convenience that arose through the connection; and once the colonies became used to this new luxury for promoting business and enhancing property in every way, it also showed how necessary it was that some means should be taken to ensure communication, as I will show by the interruptions that have taken place from the opening of the submarine cable between Port Darwin and Singapore, on the 22nd October, 1872. On the Australian land lines alone the interruptions in 1872 were only 6 days; in 1873, 18 days; in 1874, 20 days; in 1875, 17½ days; in 1876, 25 days; in 1877, 34 days; in 1878, 38½ days; in 1879, 22 days; in 1880, 2 days; in 1881, 5½ days; in 1882, 6½ days; and in 1883, 6 days. Those interruptions were on the land lines alone. On the Port Darwin cable there were interruptions on 52 days in 1874, 22 days in 1875, 19 days in 1876, 28 days in 1877, 23 days in 1878, and 21 days in 1879. A second cable was laid as the result of a conference held in Sydney, at which New South Wales and another colony agreed to subsidise a fresh cable from Port Darwin to Penang; but so far from removing the difficulty it left things pretty well as they were; and the result after the second cable was laid was that in May, 1883, there were 16 days' interruption on that line alone. Such interruptions as that taking place year after year show at once the position the colonies should take up to have a new line altogether. I was referring just now to the unnecessarily exorbitant charges made by the company, and I need give no further proof than the charges between Europe and Bombay, as compared with those between Madras and Port Darwin. The distance from Europe to Bombay is 6,500 miles, and the charge is 2s. 11d; the distance from Madras to Port Darwin is 3,500 miles—only a little more than half the other—and the charge is 6s. 10d., or more than twice as great. The reason for that is the possible competition between Bombay and Europe through the Russian lines. There is no possible competition between Madras and Port Darwin. Hence these crushing tariffs; and so it will go on as long as the thing is in the present hands. The position was made very clear by the very trenchant remarks made by the Hon. Sir Thomas McLlwraith last year. In reference to reducing the tariff to 1s. per word, the thing can hardly come to pass just yet. It may in the future be possible, but from what I have read I have no doubt that even 2s. 6d. a word is quite within the bounds of practical business of the submarine cable. The overtures made by Mr. Pender, after attention was signally called to the opinion of the colonies on the matter, was to provide substitutes in one way or the other, but the substitutes were only a still further entanglement of the subject. One of the proposals for reducing the rates was that land lines' rates should be reduced between Bombay and Madras, for which distance

7d. per word is charged. They charge that exorbitant rate for repeating cable messages, but for messages from point to point within their own territory they only charge 2½d. and 1½d., so that the charge of 7d. is not a fair charge for deferred international or intercolonial messages. In South Australia also the charge is unfair. The intercolonial rates there from Port Darwin to Adelaide are 15d. per word, while in their own territory the charge is only 1d. per word, with the exception of messages sent from the northern end of the Port Darwin line, for which the charge is 6d. per word. The charge for messages from Adelaide to Port Darwin is altogether out of proportion to the intercolonial messages. But the reduction of those rates would not make the difference in the charges which the chairman of the Extension Company said would be necessary to a reduction of the whole tariff, showing of course that it was merely an excuse. The traffic through South Australia shows that a possible substantial reduction would lead to more business being done, as shown by the traffic through South Australia in 1882, compared with that in 1883. In 1882 the traffic through South Australia amounted to £225,567, receipts. There was an increase of £25,710 in the traffic through South Australia in the year 1883 over 1882, showing that there is a perceptible increase even at the crushing rates charged, and if they are once lifted or removed no doubt the rebound would be enormous. With regard to the operations of the companies, I have been enabled to make an extract from the *Times* of the amount of money invested in submarine cables over the world, which shows that their contention, that it is a hazardous enterprise and has small profits, should be taken with a great deal of reservation. There are twenty-six companies owning 98,450 miles of cable. Their capital amounts to £34,459,000, with a reserve fund of £3,148,000. Their gross annual revenue is £3,477,000, which is over 10 per cent. To show the dividends declared by these companies, I will give a few instances. The percentage of dividends of the Anglo-American line is 3½ per cent.; the American Telegraph Cable Company, 5 per cent.; the Black Sea, 4 per cent.; the Brazilian Submarine, 6 per cent.; the Telegraph Paris de New York, 4 per cent.; the Central American Cuba (submarine), 8 per cent.; the Direct United States, 5 per cent.; the Eastern, 6 per cent.; the Eastern and South African, 8 per cent.; the Eastern Extension, 7 per cent.; the German Union, 8 per cent.; the Great Northern, 8 per cent.; the River Plate, 15 per cent.; the Submarine Cable, 15 per cent. There are a few which have no returns, but we ought to recollect this, Mr. Speaker: that the cost of making submarine cables has been reduced very nearly one-half during the last few years, owing to improvements in mechanics and improvements in the industry generally. These companies having invested their capital in an illegitimate manner, that is in trying to raise monopolies and to perpetuate them, they are not to be considered at all compared with the interests of the colony. We can take the example of the European people themselves in the Postal Union. They knew very well how to take care of their own interests, and quite disregarded the interests of the colonies in any shape or form. The colonies can profit by their example, and at all events take care that they are not made the victims of monopolies like these. I suppose since the great East India Company's monopoly there has been no such monopoly in the world as the monopoly of these cable companies. I have shown the necessity, in consequence of the constant interruptions that take place, of some additional cable communication. I will just refer to some of the correspondence relative to this

subject, where Mr. Pender makes offers from his own point of view, of what would meet the oft-expressed wishes of the colonies for further concessions in the cable rates. I need not go over the whole of them, but I will summarise the three different offers in connection with the routes which he says are available to the colonies. For route No. 1 he gives as the capital that would be required, £1,500,000. That route is from San Francisco to Brisbane, touching at Honolulu and New Caledonia; length, including slack, say 8,000 knots at £175 per knot, say, £1,500,000. The estimated annual cost of working is £88,000, and the estimated receipts at a 7s. 6d. tariff, £130,000, and at a 5s. tariff, £95,000; and the interest on the capital, taking the tariff at 7s. 6d., would be only 2½ per cent. No. 2 route is from Western Australia—North-west Cape—to Ceylon, touching Keeling Island; in length about 3,000 knots, at £175 per knot—say, £525,000. The annual cost of working that he estimates at £44,000, and the receipts at a 7s. 6d. tariff £55,000, and at a 5s. tariff only £6,250; and the interest on capital under a 7s. 6d. tariff 2 per cent.—quite subverting the generally recognised rule not only in telegraphs, but in railways and other enterprises, that if you cheapen the rates you raise the traffic. Route No. 3 is from Queensland to Ceylon, touching at Java; in length 4,500 knots, at £175 per knot—say, £787,000; that is the capital that would be required for the line. His estimated annual cost of working that line is £59,000, and the estimate of receipts at a 7s. 6d. tariff, £75,000, and at a 5s. tariff, £31,000, which would give 2 per cent. interest upon the capital at a 7s. 6d. tariff. These proposals are to be taken as from Mr. John Pender's point of view, and not as encouraging to the colonies; but with a view that his monopoly and the monopolies of other companies associated with his own might be carried on from generation to generation, or until they could get what they considered good returns for the money they invested. Next we have a telegram from Mr. Pender to the Chief Secretary referring to the constant demands for concessions in the cable rates:—

"As your colony has long felt aggrieved because Port Darwin, instead of Normanton, was made the terminus of our cable system, although the arrangement was made by the cable contractors and not by my company, we would be prepared, in order to remove such grievance and give increased security to the telegraphic communication, to lay a submarine cable at our own expense, costing about £70,000, between the Roper River and Normanton, to connect your system with the South Australian under a traffic arrangement between the two colonies, and I am given to understand that South Australia would be prepared to discuss this question with your Government."

That makes No. 4 route, which Mr. Pender offers to the colonies. It is nice to have a sponsor or mentor like this to offer you all kinds of routes at his own cost. But this route is open to the same objections as the present route, because these constant interruptions occur between Port Darwin and Singapore, and this proposed extension to Normanton would not relieve us of them and would leave the chain just as weak as it was before, and we know the weakest link in a chain is the strength of it. I am sorry the correspondence I asked for ten days ago has not been laid before the House, because the information in them is therefore not now forthcoming. The last telegram from Mr. Pender setting forth any definite proposal is dated 22nd June, 1886, and as it is of a more stupendous nature than any of the others, I may as well read it. He says:—

"Proposals for extending cable subsidy having been declined company as further evidence of their desire to meet colonies wishes and in response to frequently expressed opinion that large reduction of tariff would result in large growth of traffic submit following propo-

sition for your consideration namely company would be prepared to lower tariff between Europe and Darwin to any figure colonies might fix down to limit of out payment on consideration of colonies guaranteeing average receipts over cables for last three (3) years. If guarantee extended to Eastern Company and their partners amount colonies would have to make up at 5s. tariff if no increase took place would be about one hundred and seven thousand pounds with increase of 25 per cent. eighty-nine thousand (89,000) pounds 75 per cent. fifty-one thousand (51,000) pounds 100 per cent. thirty-two thousand (32,000) pounds at four (4) shillings tariff without increase one hundred and nineteen thousand (119,000) pounds with increase 25 per cent. one hundred and three thousand (103,000) pounds 50 per cent. eighty-seven thousand (87,000) pounds 75 per cent. seventy-one thousand (71,000) pounds 100 per cent. fifty-five thousand (55,000) pounds. Above figures based on assumption that South Australia would reduce her transit to ten (10) pence and five (5) pence per word respectively. This would be fair way of testing effects of cheap tariff and might be tried as an experiment for five (5) or ten (10) years at end of which period should results not be considered satisfactory either party would be at liberty revert existing arrangement. I believe guarantee principle would prove best solution for colonies as it would give them full control over tariff and enable them greatly benefit telegraphing public."

Well, the Chief Secretary declined to consider that, but he asked the question, if the amounts mentioned in that telegram were in addition to or inclusive of, the subsidy; and the reply—the astonishing reply—comes from Mr. Pender, that those amounts are to be considered in addition to the Government subsidy. That is the last from Mr. Pender. The latest phase of the question so far is that a Canadian line is proposed, from Vancouver to Brisbane, and the telegram states that the Pacific Cable Company, formed with a capital of £2,000,000, propose to reduce the rates to 4s.; but we have no guarantee that this company will not go the way of all cable companies, and that the monopoly may not be extended in another direction. However, I think this proposed line from Brisbane to Vancouver is as good an experimental line as any yet proposed. We know from Mr. John Pender's paper that the cost per word from San Francisco to England is 2s., and it is not likely to be more than that from Vancouver to England. It is quite feasible that it should be carried from here to Vancouver at 2s. a word when there is an uninterrupted submarine cable, so that there at once is a prospect of cheaper communication. If the other colonies would join with Queensland it would be reduced still further. The distance from Brisbane to England, touching New Zealand, is almost the same as by the Red Sea. Touching New Zealand, Honolulu, Vancouver, across Canada to Europe, it is 14,800 miles, and *via* the Red Sea, 11,250 miles; so that there is very little difference between them. Of course, if the line could be taken direct from Brisbane without touching at New Zealand, it would save a great deal in distance; but we must recollect that there is a submarine cable from Sydney to New Zealand which cost £300,000, and that of course would be a very great saving to start with. The connection between Cook's Straits and New Zealand cost another £30,000, and these are all matters that may well be taken into consideration. There is not the slightest doubt that the route should be different from the present one. What the idea of the Government in the early days was I have no idea. The station put at Kimberley, at the mouth of the Norman, was evidently concerned with some route different from that by which we have communication now. That station serves a good purpose now, as far as shipping goes, but as far as cable communication is concerned it seems altogether out of the way since the line has been extended to Thursday Island. If Kimberley were taken as a starting point, there is a possibility that a connection might be made with Ceylon or South Africa. There is a line running

from Europe to Capetown, all down the West Coast of Africa, and from a certain point on that coast, Cape Verde, there is a double line to England. There are, therefore, half-a-dozen practicable routes for cable communication between Queensland and Europe—if we say between the colonies and Europe, they might easily and cheaply be carried out. I believe that the prophecy made by Sir Thomas McLlwraith that cable rates would be reduced to half-a-crown, word, is within easy reach of fulfilment. That is my reason for proposing the motion on the paper.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sorry that the hon. member did not defer this motion a little longer until the papers containing the correspondence which has passed on the subject had been laid on the table. I promised the other day to lay them on the table, but they are not yet printed. I agree with a great deal of what the hon. member has said. Hon. members will have seen by the papers laid on the table some time ago that this Government has resolutely declined to have anything to do with the existing monopoly. We have refused from the first to join in any subsidy to it. What we want is another means of communication; merely to lay another cable alongside the first, between the same terminal points, and going over the same lines through Asia, is not duplicating the communication at all. Whatever Government has been in power, that policy has always been maintained, and I hope will continue to be maintained. Several communications of various kinds have been made to the Government within the last three years by people saying they represented cable companies, or possible cable companies; but no definite proposals have yet been made. When it got as far as telling them that if they submitted definite proposals, and showed their authority to negotiate, the Government would consider the matter, it never went any farther. However, sir, I believe, and in fact I am satisfied, that there is very likely now to be a serious effort to establish another means of communication across the Pacific. The matter has been taken in hand by some eminent persons in Canada, and some people connected with the Australian colonies also, who are likely to succeed in a matter of that kind; and they seem to understand exactly how it is to be carried out. I extremely regret that we have not the papers here to refer to; we have only one copy, and that is in the Printer's hands. If that line is constructed we shall have complete communication, practically not liable to interruption. The route proposed is from British Columbia to either Queensland or New Zealand; I do not think it is settled which is the best way. The company is projected, and, I believe, is likely to be formed; but the matter is not forward enough yet for the Government to take any action in the matter. As yet we have only received preliminary communications, which I hope to be able to lay on the table to-morrow or on Tuesday. I do not think a route from the Gulf would be of much use, because the land line would pass through country which might be hostile in case of war, and that is a very serious and indeed insuperable objection. A line *via* Mauritius or the east coast of Africa would have too long a distance as sea; the distance, I think, speaking from memory, is 3,000 miles. I think the best route would be through America, and the Government would be very glad to assist that. I do not know at the present time whether it is proposed to ask for any subsidy from the Colonial Governments; I do not know what the proposal is. I fully recognise the importance of the question. I am of opinion that the maintenance of uninterrupted

telegraphic communication with Europe is of more importance almost than the maintenance of regular mail communication; and if we could not afford both, I think we should be justified in paying for telegraphic communication rather than mail, because while with the existing communication by sea, the time of arrival of a mail now is only a matter of a few days, any interruption to the telegraph under certain circumstances would be a very serious thing indeed. However, I hope we shall not have any need to consider any alternative of that kind. I can assure the House that the matter will receive the best attention of the Government as soon as it is in a position to take any action. I must again express my regret that the other papers are not before the House, as they would have assisted the discussion very materially.

Mr. PALMER, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I am glad to hear that the Chief Secretary intends to keep the matter in view, and that he will take the earliest opportunity of putting his views, and the views of the colony generally, upon it into practice. I would suggest that a line going from Brisbane or Sydney to Vancouver will pass through territory and seas that are under the control of the colonies; and by the adoption of that route uninterrupted communication may be ensured. If we were to adopt San Francisco as a terminus of the cable it might be subject to various interruptions.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. J. R. Dickson): British Columbia was mentioned by the Premier, not San Francisco.

Mr. PALMER: I am aware of that; but it has been said by others that San Francisco would be a very promising point of departure. I do not know whether a subject of this kind could properly be considered by the Federal Council, but it is a subject well worth considering by the Government whether submarine cables should not be subjected to some international law by which they might be held sacred during time of war, so that the colonies and outlying nations should not be debarred from telegraphic communication with the rest of the world simply because two powers happened to be at war with each other.

Question put and passed.

BURNING OF THE BARQUE "ROCKHAMPTON."

Mr. W. BROOKES, in moving—

That the House will, to-morrow, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of an address to The Administrator, praying that His Excellency will be pleased to cause to be placed upon the Supplementary Estimates for the current financial year the sum of one thousand pounds (£1,000) as compensation to the captain of the British ship "Rockhampton"—

said: Mr. Speaker,—The facts connected with this motion are by this time tolerably familiar to hon. members of the House; so that it will be simply necessary for me to say on the present occasion that the Committee have carefully reconsidered the circumstances of the case, as disclosed by the evidence taken before them, and that they have arrived at the sum of £1,000, as representing in their deliberate opinion a very reasonable compensation for the total destruction of the means of livelihood of Captain Killen. If the motion is allowed to pass, I shall be prepared to-morrow to furnish any further information that may be deemed necessary. In the meantime I see no insuperable objection to the motion passing.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—The House having on a previous occasion agreed to the adoption of the report of the committee which investigated the cir-

cumstances connected with the burning of this ship, it is only natural that the hon. member should move this resolution. I do not rise at the present time to object to the House going into committee, seeing that it has approved of the adoption of the report, but I do not wish it to be inferred from any silence on my part that the objections have been removed which I raised to the character of the report. Nor do I assent to the request which is submitted to the House in the form of this motion. It is unnecessary for me now to enter upon the reasons why I object to it, for whatever is said to-day will have to be repeated to-morrow in committee. The hon. member must understand that, although there is no objection to this going into committee to-morrow as proposed, the objections I raised last week have not been removed, and that I do not consider the amount he is asking for is by any means such an amount as would be warranted even were it more conclusively proven that the captain had suffered loss through the negligence of any Government officer.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—When this matter was before the House the other day he House consented to the motion then moved, because the hon. gentleman allowed it to go.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No.

Mr. NORTON: The Colonial Treasurer certainly raised objections to it, but when the question "aye or no" was put, the hon. gentleman did not call for a division. It is highly probable, from what I have heard, that if he had called for a division the result would have been against the motion. With regard to the sum it is now proposed to give to the captain of the vessel, it occurs to me that it is a very small sum if he is entitled to anything. If he is entitled to anything at all, he is entitled to the whole of the loss he has sustained; and if he is not entitled to that, I doubt whether he is entitled to anything at all. However, I do not intend to discuss the matter now, and when it goes into committee I shall be quite prepared to hear what hon. members have to say both for and against it. For my own part, I feel very doubtful—although circumstances seem to indicate that the fire may have originated in the manner suggested—whether the evidence is sufficient to entitle the captain to receive from the country the sum of £1,000.

Question put and passed.

SOUTH BRISBANE MECHANICS INSTITUTE SALE BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. FRASER said: Mr. Speaker,—The Bill that I have now the honour to move the second reading of is one of a class with which the House is pretty familiar. It is not at all an unfrequent thing that grants of land made years ago for specific purposes have through change in the locality and various other circumstances become comparatively useless for the purposes for which they were originally intended, and hence we find that frequent applications are made to this House for permission to deal with those properties, not for the purpose of diverting the grant from its original purpose, but in order to adapt it to the altered circumstances of the locality and time. Now, that can be said to be particularly the case with the Bill that I have to deal with this afternoon. Originally a grant of land was made to South Brisbane for the purposes of a school of arts. That was in 1861, I believe; and in 1862 the trustees were converted into a corporation under the Religious, Educational, and Charitable Institutions Act. Then, in 1863, a Bill entitled the South

Brisbane Mechanics Institute Bill was passed, to set forth the trusts of the grant. Well, a building was erected upon this land twenty years ago, and it is found at the present time to be quite unsuited in every way for the purposes of the institute. Then again, Mr. Speaker, the property is so situated that if a suitable building were erected upon it the situation would be unsuited for the purposes. The traffic in Stanley street, where the property is situated, has so increased, and is still increasing at such a rate, that the noise interferes with the work carried on in a reading-room, library, or lecture hall. And another thing is this: The value of the property has increased to such an extent through the very agency and means that have rendered it unsuitable—it being now computed to be worth from £6,000 to £8,000, and that, I believe, is within the mark—that for the purposes of the institute it represents a very heavy rental of £400 to £500 a year; while, owing to other circumstances, the trustees are so tied down that they cannot erect upon the land premises commensurate with this rent. Now, by the Act passed in 1863, the trustees are restricted in their power of mortgaging to the amount of £500, and of course it will be seen at once that a sum of £500 is utterly inadequate for the purpose of enabling the trustees to carry out the object they have in view. Then the question occurs, what is the best plan for dealing with the matter? It will be admitted that it would be a matter for regret—seeing the population of South Brisbane, that a useful institution of this kind should not be established in the centre of population to serve the purposes of a public library, a lecture hall, or as a place for evening classes—it would be a matter of regret, I say, if nothing could be done to remove the difficulty which exists, and enable the trustees to accomplish the objects they have in view. Well, sir, the proposal now is to sell this property and to buy a site in a more suitable locality; and hon. members will see on reference to the evidence taken before the select committee that it is calculated—and I believe it is quite correct—that the sum realised by the sale of the present property will enable them to buy a site, and at the same time enable them to erect a building that will accomplish all the objects they desire, thus avoiding the necessity of mortgaging at all, or running any risk in the matter, supposing they had the power. That is briefly the object they have in bringing this Bill before the House at the present time. I think if it can be shown that there is not the slightest intention, and that the Bill itself guards against the equivalent of the ground being diverted from the object for which it was originally intended—if that can be shown, I cannot see that there can be any objection at all to passing the Bill. I may say, Mr. Speaker, that the trustees and managing committee of the institution, to show their *bona fides* in the matter, have already, at their own personal risk, secured an allotment of land in Grey street, at the back of their present premises. If the Bill be passed, they do not intend to sell the property immediately, but will take an opportunity of doing so to the best advantage; and I believe they have also this intention, Mr. Speaker: to leave a right-of-way from Stanley street, through their present property—not to sell the whole 66 feet frontage, but to sell so much, less a right-of-way to enable them to get access from Stanley street to the building they intend to erect fronting Grey street, immediately behind their present property. That, Mr. Speaker, is briefly the object they have in view in promoting the Bill, and I shall now advert shortly to the Bill itself. I shall not occupy many minutes, as the whole thing is comparatively in a nutshell. By referring to

the report, which hon. members have in their hands, as well as the Bill itself, they will see that the select committee made certain alterations in both the preamble and the Bill itself. I believe that is unusual, but I think I can show that, in doing this, they have not in the slightest degree interfered with any part of the preamble beyond the mere recital of facts. Why all the facts were not included in the preamble originally I can understand. You will see from what I have stated, Mr. Speaker, that the property is in a somewhat different position from many ordinary properties that have come before us in this way. To the best of my recollection they were cases where the property was simply in the hands of trustees. But this company having been formed into a corporation, and a special Act having been subsequently obtained, I believe that the gentleman who drafted the Bill had not all these documents before him when he drew it up. But these documents having come before the committee, they felt called upon to set forth the whole facts of the case in the preamble as it now stands. I may say that the object of the Bill, and the reason why it is promoted, is not in the slightest degree altered. Then again, Mr. Speaker, the committee altered the 1st clause slightly, at the request, or rather with the approval, of the gentlemen who are promoting the Bill. You will observe, Mr. Speaker, that the 1st clause restricted the mode of sale entirely to public auction. Well, anyone accustomed or acquainted with dealings in this class of property will easily understand that it would not be wise to confine the mode of sale entirely to public auction, and knock the property down to the highest bidder. Therefore the committee introduced an amendment, to the effect that they shall have power to sell by public auction or private contract, as they find most advisable. Then a new clause has been introduced—the 2nd clause, which gives them full liberty to make their own terms and conditions in selling the property. In fact, it is only extending or enlarging the power that is given in the 1st clause—setting it forth more fully. The 3rd clause briefly defines how the money derived from the proceeds of the sale is to be applied. The only amendment introduced by the committee in this clause is that, out of the proceeds of the sale, the expense of promoting this Bill shall be defrayed. I think that is nothing but fair and reasonable, and it also has been sanctioned by the promoters of the Bill. There is one matter in connection with this clause to which I would direct attention. It is provided in the latter part that the proceeds of the sale shall not be used except for the purchase of another allotment or allotments of land in a more convenient situation, and for defraying the cost of erecting thereon and furnishing buildings suitable for the purposes of a mechanics' institute. The word "furnishing" has been introduced, and there is some doubt whether that covers the intention. I may say that the gentlemen promoting the Bill wish to have power of appropriating part of the proceeds of the sale to the equipment of a first-rate library, and I am not sure whether this word will cover that or not. If there should be no objection to it, it may be more fully defined when the Bill is in committee. I hardly think that there can be any great objection to appropriating part of the funds to that object—the establishment of a first-class library. They have a pretty good library already. The 4th clause enacts the provisions under which the property must be held. These are briefly the whole of the facts of the case, and I do not know that I need trespass any further upon the attention of the House this afternoon. Probably there are some legal matters in con-

nection with the Bill that it may be desirable to deal with in committee. I do not anticipate that any serious objection will be offered to the Bill. I may say that at the present time the institute is free from debt. There was a small mortgage some time ago, but that has been paid off. I will only just repeat that the one object of the promoters of the Bill is a very commendable one—that is, to keep alive a useful institution in a large centre of population; and they wish to do so without encumbering their property by any mortgage liability. I believe, from my own knowledge of the value of the property, that they will be well able to do that. I have no intention of calling the attention of members to the evidence at any great length. It is very short, and deals with the points to which I have just alluded. We had doubts—the trustees had doubts—as to whether it was necessary to come to this House at all, seeing that they had come under the Religious, Educational, and Charitable Institutions Act, which gives power to trustees to dispose of property entrusted to them. But they consulted high legal authority on the matter, and the opinion of counsel was that they had no power to sell and that they are still trustees within the meaning of the Public Lands Act of 1859. In consequence of that opinion, they brought this Bill before the House. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—The Bill as introduced required a great deal of amendment, but I do not think there is much objection to it in its present form. There is no doubt that the site where the institute is at present is unsuitable, and that the land may be well sold and other land acquired. But I am not quite clear what the effect of this Bill may be in combination with the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Act of 1863. That is a public Act, and provides for mortgaging the land to the extent of £500. Well, this Bill, as amended, provides that—

“The corporation shall hold the lands and property so to be purchased and acquired as aforesaid upon the trusts declared in the said recited deed of grant to all intents and purposes as though the said land had been thereby granted to the said corporation.”

The question may arise whether the powers to borrow will still attach, and whether it is desirable that the trustees should retain the power to borrow. It may be convenient to clear that up, and to repeal that clause in the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Act. The law with respect to public trusts dealing with public lands is in an extremely confused condition, and I think it would be just as well to settle that point one way or another. We should say distinctly whether the Act of 1863 shall or shall not apply.

Mr. PALMER: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. the Premier has not answered the hint thrown out by the hon. gentleman who introduced the Bill, as to the meaning of the word “furnishing.” I know that the member for South Brisbane is anxious that it should be within the limits of the trustees to provide a library, which is a principal part of a mechanics’ institute. The want of a public library is a reflection on the whole of Brisbane, and in this Bill they are anxious to be within the law, and provide a library for a large part of Brisbane. The Premier has overlooked that point, but I am certain it will be attended to in committee. Being a member of the committee, I attended every meeting except the two last, at which I could not be present. From the appearance of the Bill, the extraordinary state in which it was brought before the committee is only too apparent. The whole Bill is one mass of erasures. I think that gentlemen who undertake to bring up a Bill before a committee

ought to see that it is a little more in form than that. As to the borrowing powers, that question was discussed in committee. We had the legal opinion before us, and the decision we came to after looking over the Acts connected with it was that the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Act would be superseded by this Bill when it was passed, and that there was no occasion to say in this Bill that that clause was repealed. It was so by that Act which the hon. member for South Brisbane quoted—the Religious, Educational, and Charitable Institutions Act.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the committee who have had to deal with this Bill deserve a great deal of credit for the trouble they have taken with it. Anyone who looks over the Bill now sees as much of the work of the committee as of the original draftsman, or more. One-half of the Bill is altered. I think the committee deserve great credit for having done what is overlooked by many other committees in matters of this kind—that is, they have insisted on the property which is purchased with the funds derived from the land sold being held in trust as under the original grant. I believe in many cases where this House has given power to sell land no such provision has been made. I refer to one case at Maryborough where land was given in trust. A Bill was passed through this House to authorise the trustees to sell the land and to devote the funds to a particular purpose. But having acquired land with the funds so realised they can do what they like with it. I think the committee deserve very great credit for having seen that provision introduced into this Bill. There is one matter which I think requires consideration. In the 3rd clause it says that “the costs, charges, and expenses of and attending the applying for and obtaining and passing of this Act” ought to be taken out of the money derived from the sale of the land. I think it is advisable, on account of the precedent that it may be made, that the cost attending the passing of such Bills through the House should be derived from some other source. No doubt the funds of the institute in this case will be sufficient to pay the costs, but the money derived from the sale of the land—the whole of it—ought to be devoted to the purpose for which the institution was founded.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who spoke last stated that the committee had gone to a considerable amount of pains with this Bill. It certainly is a small measure, but I can assure hon. members that it really took a good deal of time and consideration on the part of the committee in order to bring it up in its present form; and I am not sure, after hearing the remarks made by the Premier, whether we have really made the Bill perfect yet. However, I hope that if we have not done all that we intended to have done, we shall have the valuable assistance of the Premier to help us in the matter. There is, I know, a wish on the part of the committee of the institution to retain the power to borrow which they have now under the old Act. But there was an equally strong feeling on the part of the select committee to whom the Bill was referred, if not to prevent them altogether from borrowing, at any rate to restrict their borrowing powers to such an extent that the interests of the institution should not be jeopardised, because, as you know, sir, we have several instances around and about us in which trustees having power to borrow have borrowed, and having borrowed they have been obliged to sell, and the interests of the people at large and the subscribers also have been thereby sacrificed. I myself do not much approve of trustees having the power to mortgage at all, and therefore if

there is any intention when the Bill gets into committee of giving the corporation power to borrow, if I do not oppose the proposal I shall certainly move that the amount which may be borrowed be limited to such a sum as will not cause the interests of the institution to suffer should the power to borrow be exercised.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think this Bill will be a very great benefit to the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute. The land upon which the present building stands has become valuable, on account of the growing importance of Stanley street, for purposes other than a mechanics' institute. Therefore I think it is a very good thing to give the committee power to sell the land so long as the proceeds are re-invested in a similar institution. I certainly deprecate as a rule giving trustees power to borrow upon property which has been conveyed to them by the Crown for public purposes. At the same time, in the present case, where the committee possess that privilege under the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Act of 1863, up to £500, I do not see why they should be placed in any worse position by the present proposed legislation than they previously occupied. If we withdraw the power they have to borrow to the extent of £500, the committee will certainly be placed at a disadvantage. If this Bill is passed and the existing Act is repealed, they will be debarred from borrowing any amount whatever. On the other hand, if the Act of 1863 be not repealed, and it is clearly proven that the committee retain the power to borrow in its present form, they will still have the right to mortgage to the extent of £500. But while, as I have already said, I am of opinion that it is undesirable as a general rule to give trustees in such cases the power to borrow on mortgage, still I think we ought not to withdraw from the trustees in this instance the power which they at present enjoy. Therefore I am disposed to maintain the right to borrow to the extent of £500.

Mr. NORTON: In other respects their position is improved.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is merely improved in a fiduciary sense for the benefit of those whom the committee represent. But the occasion may arise when a temporary advance from their banker of a few hundred pounds might be of advantage in furnishing the institute, as one hon. member has suggested, with a more extensive library than they possess at the present time. Therefore, in committee, I would recommend my hon. friend to be very tender in accepting any amendment by which he would lose to the committee of the institution the possibility of obtaining a temporary advance to the extent of £500.

Question—That the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed.

The committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

LAIDLEY CREEK BRANCH RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. Miles) said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that you do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the following resolutions, namely:—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Laidley Creek branch, commencing at Laidley station and ending on the right bank of Laidley Creek, in length 10 miles 68 chains 17 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 12th day of October instant.

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

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Laidley Creek branch, commencing at Laidley station, and ending on the right bank of Laidley Creek, in length 10 miles 68 chains 17 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 12th day of October instant.

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

—said he would give the Committee full information with regard to that railway. Hon. members would have no reason to complain of want of information, as some did on the previous evening when objecting to the railway then before the Committee. It was, however, a very easy thing for those who objected to any proposition brought forward to say that the Government had not given sufficient information on the subject. However, he would endeavour to do his best, and satisfy hon. gentlemen as far as he possibly could. The branch line commenced at a loop line at the Laidley station, and ran in a southern direction up the east bank of Laidley Creek for a distance of 10 miles 68 chains. From $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles to 7 miles it ran along a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -chain road, and, as the ground was very favourable, the line along there could be constructed almost entirely on the surface; and it would be possible to take sufficient land almost exclusively from the road, while still leaving a width of 1 chain available for ordinary traffic. The ruling gradient was 1 in 50, and the minimum radius of curve was 8 chains excepting at the junction where a 7-chain curve had been used in order to avoid some improvements. The earthwork was light, a considerable portion of the line being surface formation, and the waterways were not extensive. Timber for bridges and sleepers was scarce in the neighbourhood of the line, but could be obtained within a few miles. Stone suitable for ballast was available along the line from the Seven-mile onwards. The country traversed by the line was good agricultural land, being black-soil flats, mostly under cultivation, and there was also a considerable area of agricultural land beyond the terminus of the branch, some of which was already under cultivation, and a large area no doubt would be when brought within reach of railway communication. Provision was made for stations as follows:—The first would be at the siding, $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from the commencement, to accommodate the local settlers; the second one would be 7 miles away; and the third $10\frac{3}{4}$ miles—that was the terminal station, suitable for all the settlement about and beyond that point. The estimate of the Chief Engineer was put down at £3,000 per mile; but he (Mr. Miles) was of opinion that a line of that description could be constructed at a less cost. It was purely an agricultural line, and, in his opinion, there would be no necessity for the heavy ballast that was used upon ordinary lines. The traffic would not be required to exceed more than ten miles or twelve miles per hour, and the Government would not have proposed that short branch had it not been that it could be worked without additional cost. There was already a staff located at Grandchester for assisting trains over the Range, and they could do the additional work for that agricultural line without extra cost. The trains would only be run when there was produce to bring in. The farmers would give notice to the station-master that there was produce ready, and it could be brought in without any additional cost whatever. It was not to be a passenger line; but there would be a compartment in the guard's van suitable for all the purposes of the passenger traffic. He had visited the locality, and had satisfied himself that it was a very desirable line to construct. He had already said the estimate of the Chief Engineer was £3,000 per mile; that was supposing new rails

were laid down. But there were plenty of cast rails which were being replaced. The hon. member for Townsville was laughing what had he to laugh at?

Mr. BLACK: We don't want a second-hand line

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said there would be any quantity of rails which were now being taken up on the line between Brisbane and Ipswich, and which would be perfectly suitable for the line under discussion. Hon. members would distinctly understand that the line was being built for the conveyance of the produce of farmers—to bring their produce to market. At present that took two days; they lost one day going to the railway station, and another day going back. When they came to consider that that valley of Laidley Creek, some few years ago, was occupied by a man and a boy, and was used for grazing cattle, and that now there was a large agricultural settlement there, they would understand that it behoved the Government to do all they possibly could to assist that industry, so long as they saw their way clear to do so without any loss to the country. He did not expect much sympathy from hon. members opposite. The farming class was a class which received very little consideration from them. However, it was the duty of the Government to deal justly and fairly with all classes of the community, no matter whether they were squatters or farmers, and, in his opinion, there was no place more suitable for laying down an agricultural line to convey farmers' produce to market than the branch which was proposed to be built up Laidley Creek. He had already stated that land was now occupied by a large number of farmers; he could hardly tell the exact number, but he imagined it must be considerably over 1,000.

Mr. DONALDSON: Look at the census papers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the Government would not have felt justified in introducing the line if it had been necessary to provide a staff to work it; but that branch line could be worked by the present staff located at Grandchester, without additional cost. The line would pass along almost level country, and could be fenced off on one side of the road without interfering with the ordinary traffic. He was of opinion that the line was a desirable one to construct, and if any further information were desired he should be very glad to supply it. He might say that the line was a complete one, and that he could give all the information required without going 200 or 300 miles beyond the end of it, as hon. members expected him to do last night. The line would terminate at the end of the section now proposed, and there was a considerable quantity of land beyond that point that would be available for settlement. The line would meet the requirements of the settlers in the way of bringing their produce to market, and he hoped that it would meet with the approval of hon. members.

Mr. BLACK said the Minister for Works had given various reasons—no doubt very good reasons in his own opinion—for every line that had been before the Committee during the last day or two; and also took credit for having given far more information about the present line than any previous line they had discussed; but the hon. gentleman had hardly given the information the Committee really wanted—the information that would have been most valuable in connection with the proposed line. It seemed to be quite a second-hand line—a lot of old sleepers and old rails knocking about, and old engines

were to be utilised—and it was to be worked by a supernumerary staff, who were supposed to be able to develop the agricultural industry of Laidley. Where he maintained the hon. member had failed in giving information was in not saying anything as to the amount of traffic likely to be carried on the line, though he pointed out that it was only to be made use of on temporary occasions. When a farmer sent word down that he had a load of pumpkins, then the Government would send up a train to bring them to Brisbane or Ipswich, or to whatever place pumpkins were in demand; on other occasions it seemed that the line was to remain idle, according to the information given by the Minister for Works. Therefore, they must understand that if they committed themselves to the construction of the line, they could not defer the payment of the interest; nor could they charge the interest to those loads of hay and other agricultural produce. The interest on the cost of construction would be a permanent charge against the consolidated revenue of the country. There was another matter which was worthy of consideration. Though the Minister for Works had an engineer who was admitted to be one of the ablest engineers in the colony, yet the Minister apparently had no confidence whatever in his judgment. The Engineer-in-Chief had intimated to the Minister, and the Minister for Works had intimated to the Committee, that he thought the line would cost £3,000 per mile. He did not know of any instance in which the Engineer had been able to construct a line below his own estimate; they knew to their cost that in the majority of cases the cost had exceeded the estimate laid down by the Engineer-in-Chief. However, the heaven-born Minister for Works, notwithstanding the fact that he placed full confidence in the Engineer in other respects, told the Committee that the estimate of the Engineer was not to be depended on, and that the line was not going to cost £3,000 per mile. He ventured to say that if the Engineer admitted it would cost £3,000 per mile—and that did not include the old rails and sleepers, which were of some little value, he supposed—if he estimated it to cost £3,000 per mile, they might depend upon it that the line would cost £4,000 per mile. He would like the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White—in whose electorate the line was to be made, and who was a thoroughly practical farmer, and who knew what produce was grown in the district—to give the information the Minister for Works had not given—namely, how many farms there were—he believed there were some—what the produce was, and what the rate would be that the farmers could afford to pay for the temporary use of the line.

Mr. WHITE said the line was entirely a matter of cost. The Laidley Valley was limited in extent, and therefore they must limit the money that must be expended on a line there. There was no doubt that it was capable of very considerable expansion in the area that had yet to be brought under cultivation, and also in the variety of produce that was likely to be grown there in the future. He undertook a pretty hard day's ride on the road up the valley in order to gain certain information he wanted about the amount of land that was under cultivation and ready to be cropped during the present year, and he took it in moderately small quantities. He did not get all the names of the holders, but he got some names of owners and some names of tenants, and he made pretty sure that he did not exceed the acreage that was actually under each name that he got. He made a start in his calculation, six miles from Laidley station. There was to be a station at seven miles, at a place on the creek, and an

admirable place as a centre. He considered the farmers would go from a mile on the Laidley side up to the Seven-mile station, and he had calculated the area of land under cultivation from six miles upwards, the produce from which would go to the Seven-mile station. He found that only 2,385 acres were under cultivation there this summer, but he calculated that there was likely to be considerable expansion of the acreage under cultivation. One farmer had told him that he had made a bargain with two men for a farm he had across the creek, and they had got thirty acres under cultivation this summer, but they were intending to put into cultivation fifty or sixty acres next year; and in that direction he considered they might look for a considerable amount of expansion. At present, however, he only found that 2,335 acres were under cultivation, and he had calculated the amount of produce that would probably come from that acreage. The land under corn might safely be calculated to yield a ton per acre. The other crops that would be raised on the land not under corn would be potatoes and lucerne, and he was within the mark in saying that there were 200 acres under potatoes. By counting only five tons per acre, there would be an extra four tons per acre or 800 tons in addition to the produce of corn. He was quite within the mark there, because they grew two crops in the year. In fact, they grew several crops with various success; they planted during the summer at various times and with various success, but they had two certain seasons for planting—the beginning of August and the end of February. The planting in the end of February gave almost a sure crop; it was very rarely that it failed, and it produced a very large quantity of potatoes. He was far below the mark in computing the extra yield of potatoes there at 800 tons. He found there were already 300 acres under lucerne, and they cut the lucerne there no less than seven times during the year. He computed that he would be safely within the mark by counting an additional three tons to the acre for lucerne alone, and that would give 900 tons extra. That amount of produce was bound to come, because that was the crop they were producing in the season they had now entered upon. In addition to that, if there was a railway up there, there would be the pumpkins the hon. member for MacKay spoke about. There would be an extraordinary quantity of pumpkins grown, and he would be a long way within the mark in hazarding the assertion that there would be at least 1,000 tons of pumpkins to be added to the amount of produce he had already mentioned. He had only found that for that six miles upward 5,000 tons of produce would be raised this year. Then there was a siding within three miles of Laidley, and though he did not know the amount of produce that would go to that siding, he found that the produce of something exceeding 1,100 acres would be likely to go to that siding; at least 2,300 tons of produce would go to that Three-mile siding, but as the freight for the three miles would be very little, the returns for that amount of produce would not amount to much, and the other section was of course most important. In dealing with the Seven-mile station, he had not mentioned anything about the probability of some considerable produce coming over to that station from Sandy Creek. The station would be barely two miles from Sandy Creek, though there was a rather steep ridge between. There were at least half-a-dozen farmers there who came in to Laidley from that way, and they had cut a road through the scrub for themselves, and sent their children to the school at the Seven-mile station. Sixteen children came over from Sandy Creek to the school there. He had not calculated

anything from that, as he supposed there would be some expense in the opening of a road. He had not calculated either what timber might come, but Mount Mistake was a wonderful country for timber; and the probability was that considerable settlement would take place at Mount Mistake, as it appeared the land on the top was wonderfully good, and it was only about eighteen miles from Laidley. He could not speak as to the energy of the people there, and to what extent and how quickly they would put the rest of the valley under cultivation. There was no doubt that the area was limited, and what made him anxious was that the people in that favoured valley—highly favoured as it was in respect of soil and climate—might actually be pauperised by money being spent for their benefit, that it might happen would never be remunerative. That was what gave him anxiety. He would not venture to spend money further than the prospects he had given would warrant. He did not know whether the Government would be prepared to make the railway as far as the Seven mile to begin with as a first section. That would undoubtedly pay, and he was extremely anxious that the line should be a payable one to begin with, because it was something of an experiment, and if it paid it would encourage the Government to give other agricultural settlements in the colony a small branch. He was considerably surprised and disappointed at the very large estimate of the cost of construction. During the trial survey the line was carried along the side of what they might call a private road, which was within a few chains of the main road where all the traffic was. He called it a private road because it was simply used by a farmer or two going to the paddock. The farmers complained that the line was being run inside the fence of the paddocks along that two miles of road, and there was no necessity for it. They did not want the paddocks made any less than they were, because they knew that no compensation could give them the value of it according to the present estimate. He (Mr. White) went to the Chief Engineer's office about the matter, and he was told that the Government had no power to take the road, as the owners might object. He then visited all the owners of property abutting on the road, and asked them if they would rather have the railway along the road or inside the paddocks. They were overjoyed at the idea of it going along the road; they did not want it to go on the paddocks at all. He then went back to the Chief Engineer's office and told him that, and thought the matter was settled; but when they came to make the permanent survey, the engineer said they must go into the paddocks, because the road might be wanted some day. The road was hardly used for anything except by a farmer or two going to the paddocks; and it went within three miles from Laidley on to the main traffic road, a chain and a-half wide. Of course, there would be plenty of width for the railway; and when the railway was constructed there would be very little traffic on the road. He was very much disappointed at the estimate; and if the railway was to cost that much money he would positively feel bound to vote against it. At the present time he would not vote for more than £20,000 being spent on the line till that was proved to be payable. He knew it would be payable if they did not go too far. The first seven miles would pay at once; there was no question about that. He had not mentioned anything about the up traffic. He did not know the number of people there, but from the number of acres under cultivation they might conclude that a large number of working men were employed; and of course there would be a considerable amount of goods going back which would bring in money. He was quite sure

there was traffic to pay up to seven miles; but according to the estimated cost he doubted if it would pay farther until it was proved.

Mr. FOOTE said he hoped the hon. member was not attacking the measure from any interested motives. He was aware that a certain clique about Laidley had been opposing the railway from the commencement. He had himself received a communication on the subject, asking him to use his influence in the matter; and he had an idea that document proceeded from interested persons, who did not want the line to go up the Laidley Valley for fear of injury being done to the interests of persons owning property in what was known as the township of Laidley. Another point was raised—that the line would spoil certain paddocks by dividing them in two, and they asked that it should be taken in some other direction in order that their land might be spared. He thought that in such a matter as that personal interests should be sunk altogether, and consideration be had only to the general good of parties interested in the locality where the line was about to be made. The hon. member appeared to him to have taken a very narrow view of the matter, and expressed grave doubts that the line would cost more than the estimate. He (Mr. Foote) believed the line would cost under the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief, for the reasons set forth by the Minister for Works. It was not a line on which a great deal of traffic could be expected. It was intended as a trial line for the purpose of the farmers in a purely agricultural district, as a matter of very great convenience to them, to enable them to convey their produce to market in all seasons. That was impossible under existing circumstances, while the roads were made by and in the hands of divisional boards. In fine weather it did not matter so much, because every part of the bush formed a good road; but in wet seasons it was utterly impossible for many of those farmers to convey their produce to market, no matter what abundance they held, nor how much it might be required elsewhere. It had been shown that there were a large number of sleepers and rails available for the work; and that would be a great saving in the cost. The principal work to be done would be to make culverts and form the road.

Mr. DONALDSON: Lock, stock, and barrel.

Mr. FOOTE said that lock, stock, and barrel were already there. The earth was there, the ballast was there, and the sleepers were there. Hardly anything would have to be imported. Some culverts would have to be made, but he was not prepared to say how many. It was a purely agricultural district, a very interesting district, a very rising district, and a district in which agricultural land fetched a higher price than any other he had ever heard of in the colony. The hon. member, Mr. White, must not think for a moment that he owned all the district—that he was the only one who had an interest in it. They all had an interest in it; Brisbane, Ipswich, and many other places had an interest in it, and wished to see it flourish. Other lines of the kind had been constructed in the colony. There was one near Warwick which, he was sorry to say, did not pay, and one at Fassifern, which paid something like 2 per cent. He had no doubt that the Laidley Valley line would commence to pay immediately after it was finished, and one result would be that every available acre of land within a certain radius would at once be put under cultivation. He regretted very much the tone taken by the hon. member for Stanley, and he trusted the Committee would pass the line.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it was really refreshing to hear the conscientious way in which the hon. member for Stanley advocated the merits of the line. He did not himself think it was of much use going into any criticism on a railway of that nature. It would be too like "straining at a gnat," after swallowing such camels as they did last night and the night before. The hon. member had told them something about the demerits of the line, and from inquiries he (Mr. Hill) had made outside the House, he was able to ascertain that what land there was up there was very good, but that there was very little of it. But he felt pretty sure the hon. member would get his railway; he was a thorough-going supporter of the party, voting for every one of their measures, and surely he ought to have his railway awarded to him whether he wanted it or not.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was sorry the senior member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, was not in his place to defend the proposed railway after the way it had been handled by the junior member for that district. From what the hon. member, Mr. White, had said it would appear that the land was so valuable in the Laidley district that the farmers themselves were afraid to give up any of it for the purpose of making a railway. But was not that one of the main reasons why such a line as that ought to be made? He had not had much communication with the farmers of Laidley on the subject, but he had seen a few of them. Some appeared to be very anxious for the railway, while others were opposed to it. That might, perhaps, be accounted for by what the hon. member said—that the line would only pay well for the first seven miles, and perhaps those who were opposed to it lived beyond that limit. No line in the country would pay better. The land was as valuable as any in Queensland. Not even sugar lands had fetched a higher price than the farm lands of the Laidley district—some having been sold as high as £50 an acre. If farmers were able to pay £50 an acre for land, they would be bound to use all the most modern appliances to make it pay; and that showed that a railway of that kind ought to be made. But if the hon. members representing the district were against the railway they could not expect the Committee to pass it. At the same time, it was his opinion that there was not a railway in the colony that would pay better, at least as far as the seven miles, as mentioned by the hon. member for Stanley, were concerned.

Mr. ALAND said the hon. member who had just sat down had stated that the line would be one of the best paying lines in the colony, but it was well known that agricultural lines did not pay. He thought, after listening to the remarks of the hon. member for Stanley, they should do wrong in passing the line. Surely the hon. member understood the interests of his constituents better than Ministers themselves. Indeed, he thought the Minister for Works ought to withdraw the plans, and really not ask the Committee to vote upon the matter. Now, in reference to the line paying, he would take the hon. member for Stanley's own figures. Say that 7,000 tons of agricultural produce was carried along the line in twelve months. First of all, the cost of the line for seven miles would be £21,000.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: You cannot only take the seven miles; interest has to be paid upon the whole line.

Mr. ALAND: Well, supposing the line was carried out for the full length, that would cost £30,000, and the interest on that would be £1,200 a year. Now, then, they were going to carry 7,000 tons on the line during twelve months.

He did not think they were likely to carry more, because he found from the Commissioner for Railways' report of last year that the total amount of agricultural produce from Laidley was 3,500 tons. That was from the whole of the Laidley district, although he granted that last year was not a very fair year to make a calculation upon. But they must remember this: that whilst a large portion of the colony was very much affected by the drought, Laidley was not so much affected as some other parts of the colony, and the condition of things about there enabled the people to grow, in proportion, larger crops than other parts of the colony. Seven thousand tons were to be carried on the line in a year, and the most the Minister for Works could charge upon that was 2d. per ton per mile. It certainly would not be more than that, because less was charged upon the main line; but if that sum per ton was paid, that would give a revenue of £583 only, so that it was no use saying that the line would pay. He would have been disposed to have supported the line, as being one which would prove of great convenience to the farmers of Laidley Creek, and which would supply traffic to the main line, but he did not think he would be justified in giving his vote in favour of it after what had fallen from the hon. member for Stanley.

Mr. WHITE said they were not so highly favoured in the Laidley Valley as the hon. member for Toowoomba, as they had to pay twice 2d. for the carriage of their produce, and perhaps the hon. member was not aware of that. The people of the Downs were favoured, and perhaps justly so; but it was a fact that the people of Laidley had to pay 4d. per ton from Laidley to Ipswich. Of course, as the line was being made for the farmers, they would have to pay a little higher rate of carriage. That would be perfectly right; and it could not be expected that the farmers would grumble. Although he had taken an adverse view of the case, he had taken the precaution to keep on the safe side, and at the same time he thought he would be justified in voting for the line, knowing that he could trust the Government to make it in two sections—to make seven miles first and see whether it would be wise to go on with the remainder. He had no fear that the Government would act injudiciously in a matter like that, but he simply put the facts before the Committee in order that hon. members might not be led away with the wild ideas that were sometimes formed. He had given a very low estimate of what the line was likely to return, and, if hon. members wished it, he could give the names of the owners of land in the district, which would guide them in checking his calculations. He had taken pains to point out that it was absolutely necessary that the Government should start on a sound basis, and he had merely pointed out that in his opinion he did not think it would be advisable to make the railway the whole distance at the proposed cost, because probably for a time at least it would not pay, and would retard the construction of public works at other places which required them. There was no doubt whatever about the first seven miles paying, as he had already said, and if that was tried first, then perhaps there would be some justification for going on with the remainder of the line.

Mr. PALMER said he thought it very wrong and wicked of the hon. member for Toowoomba to take a man's whip and use it on his own back. The hon. member knew that he was going to vote against the line, and he used the honest convictions of the hon. member for Stanley as a whip to scourge the hon. member's own back. That was not fair, and it was not the usual way in which the hon. member went about his busi-

ness. Now, he thought the hon. member for Stanley might very well have applied the arguments he had used against the line under discussion to the Warwick and St. George railway when it was before the House last evening, and it was rather astonishing that the hon. member had so completely overlooked such arguments on an occasion when they would really have had great weight. He remembered the arguments used by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, when advocating the proposed line the year before last. He should be disappointed if the prospects that hon. member held out then with regard to a seam of coal, which he expected such results from, were not realised. From the hon. member's description of it, it held out good promises. The hon. member had carried home a quantity of it in his pocket and burned it, and said that it burned like a candle. As it was only distant a mile and a-half from the creek, with very little haulage, the hon. member had anticipated very good results from the coal in 1884. And surely if such good results were expected in 1884, the coal should now have developed into great results. However, when they heard the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, on the subject, he had no doubt that hon. gentleman would give them all the information about it. He anticipated some revelations with regard to it. Considering that the coal about Ipswich had been at such a discount in regard to its qualities for steaming purposes on railway lines, he should be very glad to hear that the proposed railway would have coal for an item of freightage as well as the agricultural produce which the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, had told them of. He only hoped the hon. gentleman's prophecy would be realised. Of the pumpkins, lucerne, corn, and potatoes, it would take a great quantity to pay the interest upon the £30,000 which it would require to make those ten miles of railway. He only hoped it would be realised, but considering the amount that they had passed within the last two nights he thought it would make very little difference to the country whether the line was carried or not. It was a mere flea-bite in comparison with what had been passed for what were called non-productive lines. There was another matter, and that was that the Laidley line was the one on which it had been proposed the steel sleepers were to be tested for the Normanton to Cloncurry line, and that placed him in a position of difficulty as to how he should give his vote on the question. He would like to see those sleepers tested shortly, but if they were deferred until the Laidley line was constructed he was rather doubtful about the sleeper experiment. He thought the Minister for Works would perhaps find some other line to experiment on besides the Laidley Creek line. There had been no mention made of a petition presented by the residents of Laidley the year before last, against the railway line, and said to be from a large number of the residents at the creek. Was there anything in that petition, or was it all moonshine? The petition was signed by over 150 residents of Laidley Creek, which was supposed to be a large majority. They had heard nothing of that; but he supposed they would get some further information from the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, when he spoke.

Mr. KELLETT said he was sorry that by an unlucky accident he was not present when the debate on the question before them was commenced, and he would explain the reason. Private business took precedence up to 6 o'clock on that day, and all through the session it had occupied until that hour, and had not been finished; and being busy, and not knowing that anything but private business, in which he had nothing to say, would be gone on with, he was not present in time. He only came in at the end of the speech of his

colleague, Mr. White, and what he heard him say, and what he had since heard that he had said, was about the most extraordinary proceeding he had ever heard of, not only in that House, but in the records of any Parliament in the history of that or any other colony. He did not think it had ever been known before, for the member for a district, which he was sent to Parliament to represent and endeavour to get its wants and requirements fulfilled, to come forward and try as far as in him lay to stop a piece of work like that proposed, that would be of advantage to the whole district. He had thought that there would be a very short debate indeed on that railway, because it was a farmers' railway, through a rich agricultural district, which was known to be, for its size, the greatest farm-producing district in Queensland by a very long way; in fact there was no other piece of land in the country that could at all compete with it in that respect. When the question was brought forward previously he had had figures prepared from Government statistics showing that plainly, but he could not find the agricultural return to which he referred in time to make use of it now. However, it showed that more agricultural produce came down from Laidley station than came from either Toowoomba, Warwick, or the great Rosewood centre. It was the principal one of the lot; its aggregate of tons was more than any one of them. Toowoomba, which they had been told for many years was the garden of Queensland, and which had such a name that it had had any amount of public money spent round about it, did not send down on the railway, within a good deal, the same quantity of agricultural produce as Laidley did. There were a good many hon. members who were intimately acquainted with the place. In the first place, the railway proposed to be made would be constructed on very cheap lines. Most of it would go along a road, and he might state that if it had gone entirely along the road, as first proposed, there would have been no objection to it. But there was a little clique about Laidley township, who lived close by there, and had the "pull" of their neighbours so far by having their produce close to the present line; and like the dog in the manger they did not wish anybody else further on to have any chance the same as themselves. He knew one or two of them, and one who, he thought, had a little more common sense told him that they would sooner not have the railway, and a petition was presented against it. After that petition was presented he (Mr. Kellett) made it his business to examine it carefully and see who signed it, and he found that there were only a few people round about the township who did not wish their neighbours away some distance on the black soil to have the same advantages as themselves. The country was very rich agricultural land, and the roads were very bad. In the first place he should say that, luckily for the people there, they got a great quantity of rain. The valley was surrounded by mountains, which conducted very much to that result, and on the black-soil roads for many months in the summer-time it was simply impossible to travel. That was the first thing that brought about the question of having a cheap branch railway established in the district. He might also inform the Committee that the Minister for Works, who entertained some doubt about short lines paying until they were pushed on further, before submitting the plans to the House, made it his business to go up and see the place for himself. The hon. gentleman did not invite him, so he was not there to crack up the district, or the line. He went up quietly to see it for himself. He (Mr. Kellett) believed that his colleague, Mr. White, was with him, and the

result was that the Minister was perfectly satisfied that it was advisable that a railway should be built there; that it could be made very cheaply, open up a great tract of country, and be a large feeder to the main Southern and Western line. The hon. gentleman also knew another matter that he (Mr. Kellett) did not know at the time; that was that the engines at Little Liverpool close by, which were there for the purpose of drawing heavy trains over the Range, could be used for working the proposed branch with very small additional expense.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No additional expense at all.

Mr. KELLETT: No additional expense at all. The hon. gentleman therefore felt that he was perfectly justified in recommending the construction of the line. From inquiries members had made, and from what he (Mr. Kellett) had heard, he believed that there would have been very little discussion upon that railway; but when hon. members heard the member for the district—a man who lived upon the spot—saying that at present it was not advisable to have it, that might very fairly raise doubts in their minds as to whether it was required or not. It happened that the hon. member he referred to lived in the district; he (Mr. Kellett) did not. The hon. member was one of those who owned property near the railway station, and he believed that he, along with one or two other narrow-minded men like himself, would not gain, but would probably lose by the railway being extended to his neighbours. He had also other property—valuable property—not far from the seven-mile point to which he thought it advisable the railway should go, and no further. Believing that, hon. members would understand that he (Mr. White) had spoken entirely in his own interests. He (Mr. Kellett) said that if there had been the slightest spark of manliness in the man he would have come to his colleague and told him that he proposed to do certain things—that, as he had done that night, he would try and block that railway. He repeated that, if there was any common manliness in the man, he would have done that, especially considering that the present was the first time he had been elected to Parliament. He (Mr. Kellett) might state that the Stanley district was one of the most scattered and yet populous districts in the settled portion of the colony. It was of a most extraordinary shape. It started from within four miles of Ipswich, ran up to the town common of Toowoomba, took in large agricultural centres on the railway line, ran up by Crow's Nest, through there, and across to the headwaters of the Mary, came down the Brisbane River to near Caboolture, and then turned round and went back to Ipswich again. There were about twenty-six polling places in that district, and he had to visit every one of them at the last election. It would not have been necessary for him to do so except to introduce that new colleague of his, and he might now be proud of the introduction—very proud of it! He introduced that hon. member, did all the talking and all the drinking, because his colleague would do neither the one nor the other.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Who paid?

Mr. KELLETT: The hon. member paid his share, but it was his (Mr. Kellett's) duty to take him round in his buggy and introduce him to the electors.

Mr. JESSOP: Will you do it again?

Mr. KELLETT: No, indeed he would not, nor would his constituents ask him to do so. The hon. member must evidently have made up his mind never to try again for that district, and in the meantime he was endeavouring to feather his

own nest; but he had gone a very poor way about it, because he (Mr. Kellett) thought that the common sense of hon. members would enable them to see from the hon. member's speech that he was working entirely in his own interests. He was so satisfied of the common sense and fair feeling that there was on both sides of the Committee that the hon. member's speech, instead of doing this railway any harm, would, on the contrary, do it a great deal of good; because he thought the members of that Committee would never allow any man, occupying the position of a member representing a district, to try and ruin the best interests of that district. Many members of the Committee had seen the place referred to and knew the value of the land and what it could produce. They knew that the fact of extending that railway to ten miles would treble or quadruple in the next two years—at the same rate they were going at now—the agricultural produce that was brought in from there. It was a thing which they ought to encourage when they knew what a quantity of stuff of that kind was imported from the southern colonies during the last two years, and the amount of money sent out of the colony for it. Here they had a grand agricultural district which, if the railway were there, could produce nearly all the stuff that could be consumed in Brisbane. The member for the district knew that, and yet from dirty, paltry, petty, mean motives—he (Mr. Kellett) had no compunction in saying it, although it went against his grain to say it of his colleague—that hon. member went and tried to stop the men in that district from attaining what would be a great benefit to them. The hon. member, Mr. White, went to that place when he was a very poor man, and he knew the settlers there were an industrious struggling class who for years had worked twelve, fourteen, and sixteen hours a day to try and clear that land, and grow crops on it so as to be able to pay their rents. Those men were working up now, and some of them, the most prosperous farmers in that creek, were, as he knew, men who had worked up from nothing. To try and damage the interest of those men was, he (Mr. Kellett) said, a dastardly act—and since he had been a member of that House such a thing had never been perpetrated in any other Parliament. He could hardly use right enough words; he was trying to keep within bounds from fear the Chairman would call him to question for it; but if he spoke the real plain truth, he might tell the Committee more. He would, however, try and let the hon. gentleman off lightly, but he thought it would not be long before he should be sent to that new building that was being put up in Toowoomba. It was sure to come. There was nothing else for him but that place or some place like it, where people were put in and cared for. Such a proceeding he had never known in that House. He was perfectly satisfied that if any hon. members visited that district they would agree with the Minister for Works, and think with him that that valuable piece of country should be opened up by a branch railway. He did not think he need say any more.

Mr. WHITE said there was a great deal of what his hon. colleague had said which was quite correct—quite true. He felt that he, perhaps, deserved it all. He thought very probably that hon. members might misapprehend his exact meaning.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. WHITE: When he said he would vote against it he meant to say that, if the whole £33,000, which was the amount of the estimate, was actually to be laid out at once, he would vote against it.

Mr. JESSOP: Nonsense!
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Mr. WHITE: But considering that the Government had his confidence as well as the confidence of the majority of the House, he had no hesitation in trusting them with the expenditure of that money; and therefore, of course, he would vote for it. The hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Aland, had spoken about 2d. a mile. Mr. Aland had a tendency to mislead the Committee on the subject of the rate of freight. He thought it was within a fraction of 4d. that they paid from Laidley station to Ipswich. He had made a calculation of the amount the freight would come to. The traffic that would go on the line supposing it was made this summer would amount to £11,000 freight; that was excluding the idea of elasticity. He had made no calculation for the timber that would come down the line, nor of the traffic that would go up. A large number of people were located up there who would want provisions, the carriage of which was high, and would amount to something considerable. With regard to the coal that the member for Burke spoke of, the coal was there and no mistake about it for it had been found in moderate quantities. It was of most splendid quality, and the probability was that it would be a good steam coal. But be that as it might, the calculation he had made was to be taken as a sound basis to begin with, whatever the elasticity might be in the direction of fresh land being cleared and put under cultivation. The probability was that the whole of that valley would be laid down by the small settlers in lucerne, and instead of one ton to the acre, which he calculated for corn, there would be four tons to the acre.

Mr. NORTON: Three tons.

Mr. WHITE said three was too low; his calculation was four tons to the acre. There were not less than seven cuttings, and in fact four tons to the acre was a low calculation. The way he would put it would be three tons of lucerne and one ton of corn to the acre. But considering that the increase would be on an onward progress, they might leave a wide margin. It would be very rare to find a short line like that proposed to have such a basis to commence with before it was made.

Mr. NORTON said he remembered on one occasion when the hon. member who had just sat down addressed the House he told them that during the time he was canvassing his constituents the only real objection to him was, "You are too white; you are too honest, Peter; that is all the fault we have to find with you." When he heard the hon. gentleman make the speech he had made that evening, he was forcibly reminded of his former speech. But he was sorry to say that having listened to the remarks the hon. gentleman had made since his first speech he did not know what to think. He did not know whether he had said what he intended or had failed to express the views he had intended. But he was not going to find fault with the hon. member in connection with that matter, as he was very anxious to get the fullest information he could. He was discussing the subject with the hon. member on the previous evening, and the hon. member had told him what were his calculations in connection with the matter. He (Mr. Norton) was exceedingly sorry that there should be a difference of opinion between the two members representing the constituency in which the proposed line was to be constructed, but he was not surprised at it. The hon. member, Mr. White, had assured him that he had gone round the district with the object of getting the fullest information that could be obtained with regard to the amount of cultivation there, and the quantity of produce the land was likely to return;

and the figures the hon. member had given the Committee that evening were the same that he had given to him (Mr. Norton) the previous day. The hon. member represented that in round numbers there were 2,300 acres of land under cultivation beyond a point six miles from Laidley. Of that area there were 1,800 acres of maize, estimated to produce one ton to the acre, or 1,800 tons, which was a very good return to get from maize. There were 200 tons of potatoes, which the hon. member calculated would yield four tons per acre, or 800 tons; and there were 300 acres of lucerne, estimated to return three tons per acre, or 900 tons. The total produce of the district for the year, therefore, which it was said would be carried on the proposed line, was 3,500 tons. Of course, the cultivation might extend, but all the land was not so good; if they went further up the creek they would come to land which was not so fit for agriculture. The land on Laidley Creek itself was generally good, but, as he had said, there was other land not so suitable for agricultural purposes. The hon. member further estimated that if the railway was constructed, not less than 1,000 tons of pumpkins would be grown, which would increase the total estimated produce to 4,500 tons. It was all very well to say that the people there would be willing to pay a higher rate for carriage on the railway than was charged on the existing lines, but they knew what would be the result when they came to use the line.

Mr. WHITE said he rose to correct the hon. member, if he would permit him to do so. He gave the figures in a very rough way. He counted the whole carriage, in the first place, reckoning one ton of produce to the acre of the land if it was all sown with corn. He counted the potatoes at five tons to the acre, but deducting one ton to the acre already counted. In the first instance, he put it at four tons to the acre, to add to the other; and then he put the lucerne at three tons to the acre, allowing for the ton which he had previously counted, so that it gave a total of 5,085 tons.

Mr. NORTON said he put down the figures as they were given to him by the hon. member. There were 1,800 acres of maize at a ton to the acre, which gave 1,800 tons; and 200 acres of potatoes at four tons per acre, which gave 800 tons.

Mr. WHITE : I said five tons per acre.

Mr. NORTON : We will throw that in by-and-by.

Mr. WHITE : I am below the mark.

Mr. NORTON said they would make due allowance for that by-and-by. Then there were 300 acres of lucerne at three tons to the acre, which gave 900 tons. The total was 3,500 tons, and if they added 1,000 tons of pumpkins, the amount was increased to 4,500 tons. If the line was to be constructed, the people might not say much at first if a higher freight was to be charged than was now paid on the other railway. But when they came to use the line they would be justified in claiming that their produce should be carried at the same rate as was charged on other railways, and he thought they would be entitled to that, and that any member of any Government occupying the position of Minister for Works would be obliged to charge them the same rate as was paid by other persons. If they referred to the goods rates they would find that the rate for agricultural produce between Brisbane and Laidley was 10s. 10d.

Mr. WHITE : It is unfair to reckon it in that way. Count it from Laidley to Ipswich; the rate to Brisbane is exceptional.

Mr. NORTON said he did not wish to take any advantage of the hon. gentleman's figures; he was simply referring to the rate-book, and he found that the cost for fifty-one miles was 10s. 10d., and for the ten miles beyond that the charge would be at the rate of 2d. per mile.

Mr. WHITE : It is quite unfair to take it that way; take it from Ipswich to Laidley.

Mr. NORTON said the hon. member got too excited. He (Mr. Norton) was obliged to take the official figures, and he found there that the cost from Brisbane to Laidley was 10s. 10d. Then, if they calculated the amount that would be realised from the 4,500 tons for the extra ten miles at 2d. per mile they would find the result to be £375. That was £375 a year from the produce of the district, and a large proportion of that was not to be carried ten miles on the line; it was to be carried only to the 7½-mile platform; so that the amount would not be as much as £375. The real distance he knew was something over ten miles—about 10½ miles. He thought that, taking the figures of the hon. member himself, and allowing for the rates charged for the ten miles, they obtained a pretty accurate approach to the returns which would be received. And according to those figures the receipts from the proposed line of ten miles, as he had already shown, would be about £375 a year. But he was willing to accept the statement of the hon. member's colleague, Mr. Kellett, that the produce would be a great deal more than that stated by the hon. gentleman, and that it would be four times as much. If they took it at four times as much, the returns would be £1,500 a year for those ten miles alone. Of course the produce would be charged at the same rate on the main line as was charged for other produce. But allowing that there would be four times the amount of produce as suggested by the hon. member, Mr. Kellett, and that the whole of that produce was carried over the ten miles of new line, the whole receipts from the agricultural produce of the district during the year would be £1,500. The Minister for Works said the running of the trains would cost nothing. Of course, it must cost something; they must pay for their coal. He thought they might take as a basis of the calculation on that point the average cost of running trains on the Southern and Western Railway. On that line the average cost per train per mile was within 3s. 5½d., and taking that as a basis the cost of running a train from Laidley to the end of the proposed new line and back again would be £3 8s. 9d. Therefore, if the trains were to run once a week only it would not make very much profit, and then they must consider the line was to cost £30,000. The estimate was £3,000 per mile, so that the expenditure for the ten miles would amount to £30,000, which involved £1,200 a year interest. So that on the cost of construction alone the annual interest would be £1,200. Then they had, in addition to that, the ironwork. Certainly they were not very valuable rails which it was proposed to supply for that line, as he understood the Minister for Works was going to use old rails which had been cast off from other lines. Their value was not very great; still it amounted to something, and added to the total expenditure. Of course they must take all those things into their calculation if they wished to ascertain what the cost of the line would be, and what the probable return would be. Everybody must know that, even if the cost of running the trains was nothing at all, there must still be a balance to debit. It could not give a return, because it could not, by any possibility, pay the interest on £30,000—the cost of construction, and the additional cost of the rails, and expenses connected with running a train. He did not see how it was

possible. He would now refer to another item. The hon. member said that about 1,100 tons would be carried from the first station, $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles from Laidley station. That, at 6d. for three miles, would only amount to £27 10s., which was not worth counting. Now, they must remember that at the present time the produce was carted down to Laidley station, and brought down by rail, and the only thing that was to be gained by constructing the line, so far as he could see, was that the farmers would be enabled to get their produce into the station at a very small cost indeed to themselves, and would have a longer time to do their work on the farms, because they would be saved the time which was occupied in carting goods to the station. After all, that was not very much. Then the Minister for Works told them, in regard to that matter, that it would not be a passenger line. He (Mr. Norton) took it that a number of the people living in that portion of the district would not travel very often; but some of them might, of course, go frequently. The great bulk of them would travel very seldom, and they would have a very good idea of what the Minister for Works judged the amount of the passenger traffic would be from the fact that he did not consider it a passenger line at all. The receipts from passengers would hardly be worth counting. When they looked at the matter in that way, they could not help wondering how it was that the Minister for Works did not object to that particular line, when he objected to a line he was asked to construct from Rosewood to Marburg, which was not so long a distance; and he took it that the traffic on that line, short as it was, would be much larger, and would at any rate keep a train going during the year. On the proposed line, according to the Minister for Works, when a farmer had enough produce to send in, he would send word to the station-master at Laidley, who would send sufficient trucks to bring it down. Would it pay to lay down a line ten miles long on which there was not sufficient traffic to run a train once or twice a week? He did not see how it could possibly pay. Even if the cost of sending the engine and trucks was confined to the wear and tear and fuel, how could it pay? It would not pay the interest on the money spent on its construction. The Minister for Works had explained that it could be built, in his opinion, for less than £3,000 per mile; but they must take the engineer's estimate, and the Chief Engineer was the best authority the Government had. It had been explained already that in most cases, if not in all, the cost of the lines had been over, rather than under, the amount estimated by the Chief Engineer. That had been so in many cases, and the probability was it would be so in this. In addition to the produce mentioned by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, there would be return goods; but they would not amount to much, as the cost of their carriage was very small. There would also be the carriage on timber, possibly; but would the total receipts amount to £2,000 a year? He did not think they would amount to anything like £2,000 a year. He had already shown that, allowing 2d. a mile for four times the amount of produce claimed by the hon. member for Stanley, they would only receive £1,500 a year as the gross receipts; and if they added receipts from timber and returned goods, and a few passengers, he was sure they could not expect more than £2,000 a year as the result of that expenditure of £30,000. He was quite prepared, before he went into details, to give the hon. member every support if he could see his way to do so, but the figures were so astounding to the hon. gentleman that he, in his honest way of putting it, admitted before he sat down that it

would not be wise to go to that expense. Afterwards he qualified his remark by saying that he would vote for it on condition that it was first extended to the $\frac{7}{8}$ -mile platform. Was it not absurd to build a line only $10\frac{3}{4}$ miles long in two sections? He could not see his way to support it in any way. If it were an agricultural line which was likely to give anything in the shape of a fair return, he would support it; but he had already shown how—unless the figures given were very inaccurate—it could not possibly pay. He saw no reason to doubt the hon. gentleman's figures as to the amount of land under agriculture, because he went round and showed him (Mr. Norton) a paper containing a list of the names of the farmers, and the amount of land each had. The hon. gentleman must have gone into the matter very carefully; but he (Mr. Norton) did not see how he could support him. It appeared to him that in a case of that kind a tram-line served by horses would be sufficient for the purpose. It would be quite equal to carrying all the produce there was at present; and it would be possible to adopt a system of that kind. There were some hundreds of miles of movable tramways in use on the canefields in the Mackay district, and every truck was supposed to carry one ton of sugar-cane. They cost £500 per mile, and could be shifted whenever required. If the hon. member was willing to adopt a system of that kind, by which those movable tram-lines could be laid down and taken up after the crops were brought in, and then taken to a neighbouring locality, he would support him. He suggested that to the Minister for Works, because it appeared to him that a scheme of that sort was far more plausible than the one before them. For instance, if a tram-line of that kind were laid down to Laidley Creek, when it had brought the produce in from that portion of the district it could be laid down to Sandy Creek to bring in the produce from there. He hoped hon. members would treat the matter seriously, because he believed the scheme could be adopted there as well as in Mackay. There was nothing in the figures before them to justify the proposed expenditure. He could not help wondering whether it was not a piece of sarcasm on the part of the Minister for Works, because he told them that he knew all about the line and could give them every information. He (Mr. Norton) quite believed the hon. gentleman was prepared to give that information; but he could hardly give them as much information as the hon. member for Stanley had given them and yet be prepared to go in for that large expenditure. He would ask the Minister for Works to give them some further information in regard to the matter, to counteract the bad effect of the information supplied by the hon. member for the district. He was sure that hon. members would see, after the figures that had been quoted, that it would be unreasonable to support the proposal before the Committee.

Mr. WHITE said that the remarks made by the leader of the Opposition were misleading. He said the rate was something like 2d. per ton per mile; but it must be borne in mind that the rate from Ipswich to Brisbane was exceptional. For years he had paid 7s. 9d. per ton from Laidley to Ipswich, and the distance being twenty-five miles, that was a fraction below 4d. per ton per mile. But there was no farmer who would object to pay considerably more than that in order to make the line pay. They did not pay so much from Toowoomba. The freight was regulated in such a way as to encourage traffic in some places; but from Laidley the rates were exceptional, because they

could not get out of it. From Toowoomba they had exceptional rates, to encourage the freight from the Downs to leave some margin of profit for the storekeepers and producers; but for many years 7s. 9d. per ton had been the lowest rate between Laidley and Ipswich. The leader of the Opposition had also cut under his figures in his calculation as to the produce per acre. He (Mr. White) had cut quite below the actual produce that would no doubt be forthcoming, and his calculations were upon the produce and freight that there would be during the present season. That came to £1,100, and that was not taking into account any freight upwards to the people, which went at the very highest rate, and which would, no doubt, produce a considerable amount, and not taking into account any timber or coal or anything but the actual produce that was there to begin with; so that the remarks of the leader of the Opposition tended to create a wrong impression. In his calculations he (Mr. White) had gone below the mark, and left room for expansion. He had left room for bad seasons and disappointment in crops, and he could not afford to let his calculations be under-estimated.

Mr. KELLETT said it was of no use for his colleague to try to better his position, because no hon. member would take the slightest notice of any statement he made now. He would leave the hon. member alone, because he did not think him worth attacking any longer. The leader of the Opposition started his argument on a wrong basis altogether, because he had taken the figures supplied by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White. The fact that he had shown his enemy his figures before he started ought to have shown what were his motives in the matter, and he was astonished at the leader of the Opposition taking those figures and making calculations on an entirely unsound and wrong basis, because he gave the hon. gentleman credit for fair play and common sense. It was well known that more produce came down from Laidley years ago than the hon. gentleman made out. And what right had his hon. colleague to under-estimate the amount, as he had done according to his own statement? If any license were used it should be in the way of over-estimating the amount, because thousands of acres would be brought under cultivation in consequence of the construction of the line. He was sorry the hon. member had tried to mislead the Committee.

Mr. NORTON said he based his calculations on the figures supplied him by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, and those figures appeared to be correct, so far as the land under cultivation was concerned. He had no intention of using them against him, and if the hon. member could show figures justifying the construction of the line he would give it his support, because he believed it would pass through a rich agricultural district. But, taking the hon. member's figures, and making every allowance for good seasons, and even quadrupling the figures, he found that, if the total quantity of produce were carried along the whole ten miles of railway, the receipts, according to the scale of charges in the *Government Gazette*, would only amount to £1,500. He did not want to take advantage of the hon. member in any way. He was simply stating facts. If the charges were wrong it was not his fault.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. member made a great deal of capital of the question as to whether the line was going to pay or not. The country would benefit by the construction of the branch line apart from the amount of traffic which it would carry. The mere fact of building the branch line would open

up a large area of country that was now lying waste, and surely if it would do that it would do something towards returning a revenue. It would settle more people and more dutiable goods would be consumed, and, above all, more produce would be grown, making so much less to be imported from the neighbouring colonies. That ought to be taken into consideration. Instead of that the hon. member kept harping upon the question whether the line would pay. He remembered very well that at one time there was a great deal of agitation about removing the railway station from Laidley because there was no traffic. What was the result now? It was one of the best paying stations on the whole of the line, and he had not the slightest doubt that by extending that branch line they would settle a large number of people on the land, and not only that, but those now cultivating the land there would be enabled to cultivate double the quantity, and that was one of the reasons given to him for asking for the line. He had said "You do not seem to have all your land under cultivation," and the reason given was that they could not afford to cart their produce fourteen or fifteen miles to the Laidley station. The hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, came to him a short time ago and said he would be satisfied if the line was constructed for seven miles, and he had told him that the Government did not look exactly to meet those who were only seven miles from Laidley. The farmers within seven miles might fairly carry their produce to market, but it was those who were fourteen or fifteen miles up the creek that the line would be built to accommodate. A good deal of capital had been made out of the proposition to build the line on a different principle to that upon which their present lines were built—to make it a less expensive line. When he saw the engineer's estimate he saw at once that he had estimated the cost of the line on the same principle as the cost of their main lines, which had been laid down on an expensive principle. He maintained that as the proposed line was peculiarly an agricultural branch line, it was not necessary to go to so much expense in ballast or in sleepers. As to the use of the rails which were being replaced by 60-lb. rails, he was satisfied there was fourteen or fifteen years' wear in those rails. The proposed line would be purely an agricultural line, and it would not be necessary to have a speed of more than ten or twelve miles an hour on it, and it would be a gross waste of public money to build a railway of that description on the same principle as that on which their main lines were constructed. He had had no opportunity lately to consult the engineer on the cost of the line, as he had gone away to endeavour to arrange about the border station; but he was quite satisfied that if he had pointed out to him the description of railway required he would at once have agreed that the line could be built at a much smaller cost than he had stated in his estimate. He believed it was very desirable that the line should be built, and there was this great advantage in connection with it, as he had pointed out before, that it could be worked without any additional cost, as there was already the staff located at Grandchester to assist the heavy traffic over the Liverpool Range.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What is the distance from Grandchester to Laidley?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the distance from Grandchester was about four miles, and the staff was kept there for the purpose of working between Grandchester and Laidley, and they could do the additional work without any additional cost. He had been very much surprised at the hon. member, Mr. White, saying

that seven miles would be suitable for him, as it was not those located seven miles from Laidley that they wanted to accommodate, but those who were fifteen or sixteen miles from the railway. He was perfectly satisfied that the proposed line was one which the Government were perfectly justified in constructing.

Mr. NORTON said he was very glad to get some further explanation from the Minister for Works. He wished for further information in order that he might be enabled to correct any judgment he might have formed improperly. There was one matter in connection with the hon. member's speech to which he could not help referring. The hon. gentleman was very fond of accusing the hon. member for Townsville of having made cheap railways, but now he was going to do the same thing himself.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: This is an entirely different railway altogether.

Mr. NORTON said that if the hon. gentleman had brought down and shown them what the engineer's estimate for a cheap line of railway would have been, they would then know what they were about, but he brought down the engineer's estimate for £3,000 per mile, and then said he was himself going to build it cheaper than that. The Chief Engineer might not agree to that, and might say that his reputation as an engineer would be at stake if he consented to make the line any cheaper than the estimate he had given. What would they do then? He wanted to put fairly before the hon. gentleman what his objection was. Having given the engineer's estimate at £3,000 per mile, they were forced to be guided by that unless the hon. member could bring forward a cheaper estimate, and show that the line could be constructed for £2,000 or £2,500 per mile. The hon. member had stated that by carrying out the proposed line the produce would be doubled. He expected that, and thought it quite possible that it would, and that the produce would also be increased beyond the point to which the line would be carried for some eight or ten miles. They could hardly expect, however, that the amount of produce would be more than four times that stated by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, and he was quite willing to take it at four times that amount. That hon. member had put the figures down at a very low rate except with respect to corn, and he thought that forty bushels per acre was a heavy yield. But allowing that the hon. member's estimate was a low one, and taking the amount of produce at four times that amount, the receipts that would be received for the carriage of that produce would only amount to £1,500 a year. The hon. member would see, therefore, that he was not attempting to take advantage of the figures given by the hon. member for Stanley, and he could assure the hon. member that he was quite willing to accept all he said and take any details he liked to give them as a basis on which to calculate what they might expect from the line. As to making a grievous matter of the probable remuneration from the line, they were bound to do that, unless some large present benefit could be shown to be given, and unless it could be shown also that in course of time the line would be remunerative. If it could be shown that there was any prospect of that he would support it. They had to take into consideration whether a line was going to be remunerative or not, because they were going to borrow money for the work. He did not believe the line passed yesterday would be remunerative, and if these smaller lines were to be unremunerative too, the loss on the year's transactions—that was to say the amount that had to be made up from some other source to meet the interest

which fell due every year—would become considerable. That was why they had to consider the remunerativeness or otherwise of the line.

Mr. KELLETT said he found, on reference to the figures published in 1883, that £2,612 worth of agricultural produce came from Laidley station.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Worth?

Mr. KELLETT said that was the worth of the produce from that station alone, so it thoroughly upset the argument of the leader of the Opposition, who made out, by doubling and quadrupling, and so on, that it would now be worth about £1,500.

Mr. NORTON: Not at all.

Mr. KELLETT: The settlement had largely increased, and was increasing daily, and the quantity of land put under the plough had doubled nearly every year since.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he thought that after the speeches they had had from the other side, more especially from the Minister for Works and the first member for Stanley who had spoken—Mr. White—no hon. member who cared for the future welfare of the colony would be prepared to vote for the line. One member for Stanley had said he would not vote for it, and now they had the argument of the other member for Stanley that in 1883 there was £2,612 worth of agricultural produce—

Mr. KELLETT: Freight paid.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said he had interjected the word "worth" when the hon. member spoke, and the hon. member repeated it; he thought it must have been a mistake. He knew something of the Laidley district; it was a very nice district indeed; it possessed very fair land, well watered and well timbered, and he thought the sylvan beauty and quiet of the place should not be disturbed at present by a railway. They had made a good many railways with the same plausible intention of doing good to the agricultural districts, and with the same hope that they were going to pay, and what had been the result? They had made railways in districts which promised far more than the district which the proposed railway was going to benefit, and the result had been, according to the last report of the Commissioner for Railways, that they had not paid working expenses. On the South Brisbane line, which certainly ought to pay—it carried something more than agricultural produce—the receipts last year had fallen short of the working expenses by £1,114. The Highfields line was another which ought to pay, and which had a better prospect before it—

Mr. KELLETT: No, nothing like it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The expenditure on that line was in excess of the working expenses by £1,297. On the Killarney line, which had been a favourite line of his own after visiting the grand district through which it went, they had to make up £1,596 of working expenses. On the Bundaberg line, which was introduced with a great flourish of trumpets seven or eight years ago, and forced down members' throats, as hon. members who were in the House at the time would remember, they had to pay £852, and there had been a continuous deficit ever since the line was made. On the Clermont line they actually had to pay £4,539 to make up the working expenses last year; the Mackay line, £306—that was only for a few months; and Cooktown, £241. Each of the two last lines would be many thousands behind this year, and the others quite in proportion. Now, they had another line proposed; it was no use passing it under false pretences, because it would not pay, neither would it

open up any more country. It would no doubt increase the value of their land to the settlers on Laidley Creek, and it might enable a few who had selections to sell them at a good figure, but it would not open up more land. The land was already selected. The valley was hemmed in; it was a *cul-de-sac* with a mountain range across the end. The farmers at present had only a few miles to cart their produce—in fact, as few miles as farmers in any country in any part of the world where there was good railway communication. It was nothing in England or Ireland or Scotland for a farmer to have to cart his produce ten or twelve miles to market or to the railway station. If they passed the railway, it would only increase the value of a few people's land, and increase the amount of money that the taxpayers of the colony had to pay year after year.

Mr. JORDAN said he believed, with the member for Townsville, that if this line were made it would increase the value of the land in this wonderful valley, where the land was said to be some of the richest in the colony, he thought; and if so, he thought it would have the effect of subdividing the farms. During the thirty years' experience he had had in the colony, he had taken a great interest in agricultural settlement; and he had always noticed that the smaller the farms the greater in proportion was the produce. A small farm thoroughly well worked would produce as much as four or five times the area in the hands of one person; hence it was that the Germans, who contented themselves with small farms of five, ten, or twenty acres, were the most successful agriculturists in the colony. He believed that if they built the proposed railway the farms would be subdivided, and instead of having some 400 people living there, in the course of a few years there would be two or three times as many. The farms would be cultivated more like gardens, as the Germans cultivated their farms, and that would make the railway pay. The senior member for Stanley said that in 1883 the amount paid for freight was £2,600 odd.

Mr. NORTON: From the whole district.

Mr. JORDAN said the leader of the Opposition made out in a certain way—basing his calculations upon the singular statistics of the junior member for Stanley—that it would come to about £350 a year; but if it was £2,600 odd three years ago—

Mr. NORTON: From the whole district.

Mr. JORDAN: There was a great discrepancy. He thought the Committee could rely on the calculations of the senior member for Stanley.

Mr. KELLETT: They are not calculations; they are statistics.

Mr. JORDAN said he had no doubt they were reliable statistics. It was admitted that there had been a very great increase of settlement during the last three years, so that since 1883 the freight must have very largely increased. With the subdivision of farms which the railway would create, he believed it would be increased fivefold. The Minister for Works had told them that when the Engineer-in-Chief gave in his estimate for the line at £3,000 a mile, he did so with the idea that the rails would be new.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: That £3,000 is for construction. Rails are never included in the original cost of a line.

Mr. JORDAN said he understood the Minister for Works to say that on account of there being some old rails available, which he said would yet last fourteen or fifteen years, the cost of the line would be diminished.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: He did not say that.

Mr. JORDAN said that even if the line cost £3,000 a mile, the fact that freight three years ago amounted to £2,600—and settlement had largely increased since then—was sufficient evidence to prove to him that the railway would really pay a fair percentage on the cost of construction. Even if the line did not pay in that way directly, it would pay the colony to build it. It was an experimental line—a short line made into an agricultural district, going nowhere else. They wanted to see what the result of such an experiment would be—although the facts stated by the hon. member, Mr. Kellett, had settled the question to his satisfaction. The experiment would show on a small scale what was likely to be the result on other railways into agricultural districts. He was not surprised at there being some difference of opinion amongst the farmers of the district as to the necessity for the railway. When the Logan line was being built, there were a number of farmers—small farmers especially—who did not believe in the railway, and objected to it. When asked why, the reason they generally gave was, that they thought their land would be taken away from them. They had not a great deal, and they were afraid a portion of it would be taken from them at the Government price. They did not believe in giving up their land for such a purpose. They also believed that if a railway were made to Brisbane, farm produce would be reduced in price. They had their own waggons and horses, and were accustomed to take their produce seventeen miles into Brisbane, and they thought that, if taken in by the railway, it would not fetch quite so much. No doubt some of the Laidley farmers objected to the proposed line on the same grounds. The hon. member, Mr. Kellett, had not heard the speech of his colleague. If he had, he would not have been so hard upon him. He seemed to imagine that his hon. colleague had objected to the line altogether. The hon. member, Mr. White, had made a speech really recommending the line, but he said that if it were to cost all that money, and if the farmers were to have their land taken away from them, he could not see his way to voting for it. The hon. member's speech, taken as a whole, was in advocacy of the line, and if the hon. member, Mr. Kellett, had heard it he would not have said what he did. But no doubt the two hon. members would continue as friendly as ever, and go on representing the district as amicably as before.

Mr. WHITE said that when the hon. member for Townsville was in office he made a piece of road at Laidley Creek; and last week a waggon, belonging to a man who had twenty tons of potatoes, last year's crop, which he could not get away, got imbedded up to the axle right in the middle of the road, and he believed it was there still.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The blame for that must be laid upon the divisional board, not upon the member for Townsville.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he had listened with considerable interest to the debates on the railway propositions of the Government, and he sincerely congratulated the country on the admirable spirit in which the debates had been conducted. Hon. members were evidently getting alarmed at the terrible national debt that was being incurred for railway construction. When the £10,000,000 loan was before the House in 1884, he expressed his disapproval of their running so recklessly into debt. At the same time he supported the loan, saying that he would have done so quite as cheerfully if it had been

for three times the amount. He did so because he considered that reckless borrowing was a natural disease, not of Queensland only, but of Australia, and as every disease had to run its course, the sooner that disease ran its course the better, and the sooner the time would arrive for the adoption of a wiser policy. In order to understand the line now under consideration, they ought to carefully separate the different railway proposals of the Government. There were railway lines which, it was not difficult to foresee, would not pay for many years, but of which it was advisable, as a national policy, to undertake the building, and even to incur debt for them. In that category might be placed the lines running into the far West—the trunk lines—and also those running along the coast. Those were lines which the Government ought to undertake, even although it was evident that they would not pay for some years to come. Then there was the transcontinental railway, of which a beginning had been made by sanctioning the line from Normanton to Cloncurry. It was of the utmost importance, even if they ran deeper into debt, that the Government should construct that line than to let it fall into the clutches of a land-grant syndicate. If those railways were not built by the country, it was nearly certain that they would be undertaken by a succeeding Government on the land-grant system.

Mr. DONALDSON: But you were always opposed to borrowing.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he was opposed to it still. But of two evils he had chosen the least. A country like Queensland could always get out of debt, but once let the land-grant monopolist get a firm grip—such a monopoly as would be created by carrying out the system of land-grant railways—and they would never shake themselves free from it. There was the great difference. Then the next system of railways were the coast railways, and they ought to receive the careful attention of the Government. Even if it was seen they would not pay for some time they were important in this sense—that £50,000 was annually spent for defence purposes, and that without such railways the money spent on defence would be useless. Then they came to the branch railways, which were simply and purely of a local character, and there the Government must take a lesson from the spirit which pervaded the debates of the last two days. They ought to adopt a different system for building those branch lines. They ought to make it incumbent on the district in which the line was built to be responsible for a certain amount of deficiency.

Mr. DONALDSON: Hear, hear! But they would not get the railways.

Mr. ISAMBERT said hon. members seemed to be sceptical as to whether certain railways would pay or not. He remembered very well when Mr. Malbon Thompson, speaking on a similar subject, defended the building of railways, even if they did not pay, on the ground that roads had to be built. That the country spent thousands of pounds in road-building, which never returned any money, and yet those roads had to be built. If the views of some hon. members were to be adopted, they ought not to build any roads; yet they were a necessity. They had to be built, and for the same reasons many railways had to be built which were not immediately payable, but the local districts which were benefited ought to be made responsible to a certain amount for the deficiency, and the basis for such responsibility might be taken from the Divisional Boards Act. The divisional boards had to subscribe one-third of the expenditure for road purposes and the Government paid two-thirds, and he

should say that any district wanting a railway should be made responsible for at least one-third of any deficiency that might be incurred in working expenses or in interest. If that system were once established they might be sure that a great deal of log-rolling would cease. A district would not come forward and agitate its members, making mere tools and log-rolling instruments of them to get a railway at the expense of the country. They would feel in asking for a railway that a certain amount of responsibility attached to them, and then it was certain the House would listen with more attention and respect to the propositions that were made than it now did. The sooner, therefore, the Government adopted a different policy with regard to branch railways the better it would be for them. They would be saved from a great amount of annoyance; they would get rid of all political railways; and they would reduce political log-rolling to a minimum. According to what fell from the hon. member for Stanley, he had no doubt that the railway through the Laidley Valley would prove a great boon to the people. He did not say that he believed it would be a paying branch railway, but that it would pay sufficiently well to justify the Government in going to the expense, particularly as the road was very heavy, and made agricultural settlement almost an impossibility. If the line was not built a macadamised road would have to be built, and he believed the line could be built for about £2,000 a mile, while a macadamised road would cost nearly as much. The reasons why branch lines did not pay was simply owing to the fact that agriculture, pure and simple, did not exist without almost insuperable difficulties in other respects. The producing as well as the manufacturing interests must go hand in hand, and if any hon. member could show him a system other than protection by which the manufacturing interest might be fostered, he should be happy to accept it in preference to protection. A short time ago the landowners and residents of the central district of the Rosewood proposed to the Government to build a railway. They wanted a line built *via* Marburg, because the line that should have gone through Rosewood had been carefully taken round about it, and the settlement carefully avoided. It was absolutely necessary that there should be better communication, but there were difficulties in the way. A station to please the people in the central district of the Rosewood would not please the people at the Rosewood gate, the same disparity of interest existing between them as existed between Warwick and Toowoomba. Parties in the central district of the Rosewood offered to build a railway if the Government would guarantee the interest for ten years; and he thought the Government should introduce a Bill enabling persons to construct railways with a moderate guarantee for interest. That would enable the people to obtain the help of capitalists, and enable them to build railways which the Government did not feel justified in carrying out.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You do not believe in borrowing at all.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he did not condemn borrowing within the colony, but the colony borrowed outside, and the interest on the money went out of the country. There was where the danger came in. If they fostered the interests of the colony, money would be forthcoming.

Mr. FOOTE: I rise to a point of order.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he should support the line proposed.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 28.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Rutledge, Dickson, Miles, Dutton, Moreton, Sheridan, Kellett, Foote, Bulcock, Smyth, Jordan, White, Buckland, Stevenson, Isambert, Wakefield, Annear, McMaster, Salkeld, Lissner, Hill, Macfarlane, S. W. Brooks, Wallace, Horwitz, Kates, and Adams.

NOES, 10.

Messrs. Norton, Chubb, Macrossan, Black, Lalor, Donaldson, Palmer, Philp, Murphy, and Campbell.

Resolved in the affirmative.

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

NORTH COAST RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move—

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

1. That the House approve of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the North Coast Railway, section 5, from 98 miles, near Martin's Half-way House, Noosa road, to 115 miles 28 chains 72 links, at end of rails at Gympie station, in length 17 miles 28 chains 72 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 12th day of October instant.

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

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the North Coast Railway, section 5, from 98 miles, near Martin's Half-way House, Noosa road, to 115 miles 28 chains 72 links at end of rails at Gympie station, in length 17 miles 28 chains 72 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 12th day of October instant.

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

—said the object in asking the Committee to approve of the plan, section, and book of reference of the line from the Gympie end was because there was some conflict of opinion as to the route the second section should take. There was great difference of opinion amongst the people living in the locality beyond the first section as to the route that should be adopted, and although surveys had been made, one of which showed a saving of several miles, no conclusion had been arrived at on the point. Therefore it was proposed to commence the fifth section at 98 miles from Brisbane. The construction of that section from Gympie would materially tend to expedite the opening of the whole line, and there would be an attendant advantage that the permanent-way material could be taken to the one end of the section in about 62 miles, from the port of Maryborough, instead of 95 miles, from Brisbane. The section commenced from near Martin's Half-way House on the Noosa road. The mileage of the point of commencement had been fixed, according to the amended trial surveys, at 98 miles, but it was hoped that the chainage of the permanent survey to that point would not be more than 95 miles from Brisbane, thus making the through distance from Brisbane to Gympie about 112 miles. That was considerably less than the coach road, which was estimated at 126½ miles. The route of the line followed generally the left bank of the Six-mile Creek and crossed it about 4½ miles from Gympie, below the influxes of the Three-mile and Four-mile Creeks, thus avoiding a large area of country subject to be flooded by back water from the Mary River. The works on the section were necessarily somewhat heavy from the rough character of the country,

and the high floods to which the tributaries of the Mary River were subject. But the examination of the country had been very thorough, and numerous trial surveys had been made *vis à vis* each bank of the Six-mile Creek to ensure the attainment of the best possible line, with the result that the line adopted was shorter by nearly 3 miles than the first survey, and there had been a saving in bridging of nearly 1½ mile. The principal bridges were those over the Six-mile Creek, at 110 miles 70 chains, and at Deep Creek, 113 miles 68 chains. The bridge over the Six-mile Creek would be about 2,100 feet in length, and about 70 feet high at the ordinary channel, above which the flood rose 65 feet. The bridge over Deep Creek would be about 1,100 feet in length, and about 62 feet above the ordinary channel, above which the flood rose 56 feet. Timber for both bridgework and sleepers was abundant and of excellent quality; there was stone available for ballast in many places, and there was a large quantity of suitable stone in the mullock heaps at all the principal mines in Gympie. Good sand was plentiful in the bed of the Six-mile Creek, close to the sites of the numerous concrete culverts required. The country was fair pastoral, with a little land in the flat suitable for agriculture. The timber—which was of every description—was abundant and of good quality, and a considerable traffic in timber might be expected. Provision was made for three stations—that at the commencement of the section, Cooran station, was close to the half-way house between Gympie and Noosa. The Noosa traffic would come in there. Six-mile Creek station, at 110 miles 20 chains, which was close to the main Brisbane road, would accommodate the settlers up Six-mile Creek and up the Mary River. The Monkland station, at 113 miles, would accommodate the miners at the Monkland and at the One-Mile. The length of line to construct was 17 miles 28 chains 72 links, and the approximate estimated cost was £151,728, or £8,740 per mile. Anyone who knew anything about the country about Gympie must expect that the construction would be very costly. A considerable time ago he went up the line from Maryborough to Gympie, and endeavoured to fix on the place for the easiest junction with the new line. But take it which way they would, the country was so broken that it must be a very expensive work. Indeed, that would be the most expensive section of the whole line, from the broken nature of the country. The reason, under any circumstances, for commencing the section at Gympie was that it would save a considerable distance in the carriage of rails and other material. The distance from the Brisbane end would be something like ninety-six miles, whereas it was only sixty odd miles from Maryborough. Being a main line it was unnecessary for him to go into details. He had no doubt the hon. member for Gympie and the hon. member for Wide Bay, who were thoroughly acquainted with the locality, would be able to give the Committee much information, and their opinion as to the route. According to the engineer's report, after many trial surveys, they had come to the conclusion that the one proposed was the correct and shortest route.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What is the quantity of earthworks?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he had no estimate of the earthworks. The cost of clearing would be £867 19s.; fencing, £3,616 5s.; earthworks, £48,500 11s. 6d.; road diversions and level crossings, £1,052 10s.; bridges, culverts, and drains, £46,637 14s. 6d.; permanent way, £29,027 10s.; station works, £4,760; supervision, £3,471 16s.; contingencies, £13,793 8s. 7d.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What is the total?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: £8,740 11s. 6d. per mile; or, in all, £151,727 14s. 7d.

Mr. SMYTH said he thought it was necessary that he should follow the Minister for Works and give a little information about the country through which the proposed line would pass. He thought it was quite time that railway communication was established between Brisbane and Gympie. It should have been done ten or twelve years ago. It was high time that the second town in the colony was connected with the metropolis. The hon. member for Maryborough might laugh at that statement, but the town from which it was now proposed to start that line had the largest white population of any town in the colony outside Brisbane. The railway would, no doubt, be an expensive one to construct. Starting from Gympie, the railway station was very high, and in order to get down to Deep Creek a number of curves were necessary which made the line longer than it would be otherwise. The gradients on that portion of the line, from Gympie to Deep Creek Crossing, would be 1 in 50. He did not anticipate that there would be any serious floods there such as had occurred previously, so that there was not much fear of the bridge being injured. They had had no serious floods for the past seven or eight years, and he did not suppose that they would see any in the future, because the scrubs on the banks of the Mary River which had to a certain extent obstructed the flow of the water had been mostly cleared away, and the water had now a freer run than it had formerly. Therefore he did not anticipate anything like the floods of the old times. Starting from Gympie, a matter of some expense was the amount of compensation that would have to be paid for property, but against that there was a set-off of a large quantity of ballast along the line—estimated to be about half-a-million tons—worth 3s. a yard. Most of it was broken ready to be put on the trucks and placed on the road. That railway would be one of the best-paying lines in the colony—the best-paying line introduced by the Government. From Gympie the line would go to Deep Creek; thence to Six-mile Creek, and then to Martin's Half-way House, on the Noosa road. Noosa was a fine watering-place, where a great number of people lived. About Martin's there was good agricultural land, and it was scarcely necessary for him to tell hon. members that the land about Petrie's Creek, Mooloolah, and Mellum Creek, and other places along the route of the line was of excellent quality. But not only was there a large amount of splendid agricultural land along the line—the district was also without exception the finest timber district in the colony; it was one of the finest timber districts in Australia. To give the Committee an idea of the timber there he might state that some mines were getting ironbark timber from forty feet to sixty feet long, and from a foot to sixteen inches thick, at 4d. per running foot. In fact, cedar, pine, ironbark, and almost every other kind of useful timber that could be got in the colony were obtained there of splendid quality, and in large quantities. There was one very large saw-mill at Gympie now, which sent timber by rail to Maryborough and thence transhipped it to Brisbane. There would, he was confident, be a large timber traffic on the proposed line. There were a great number of crushing machines on the goldfield, and they used large quantities of wood and coal, which would also be carried on the line, and that would save considerable expense in the working of the mines. At the present

time they paid 11s. per cord for wood on the railway trucks, and it cost another 6s. a cord to get it to the mine, so that the total cost was 17s. per cord. When the proposed railway was constructed they would probably be able to get the wood delivered at the side of the mine for 5s. or 6s. less, which would be a great saving to the proprietors, while at the same time it would be supplying traffic for the Railway Department. He would just quote a few figures to show the necessity for the line. He did not like to trouble hon. members with figures, as they were, as a rule, very dry, but he would not give many. The population of the goldfield at the present time was 11,867. Of that number 6,595 were males. And what looked well, and showed that the district was a settled district, was the fact that there were 5,272 females, a proportion nearly equal to that of the males. That showed the substantiality of the place. Of Chinese and Polynesians they did not possess many; there were only 117. There was no need for any agitation there to shift the Chinese. Chinese storekeepers, as a rule, could not get a footing at Gympie. The total white population was 11,750. When the line was constructed to Brisbane, Gympie would be connected with Maryborough, Maryborough with Howard, Howard with Bundaberg, and Bundaberg with Mount Perry; and in a couple of years' time they would be able to go right through to Adelaide by rail. In Gympie there were 1,444 quartz miners. The revenue from miners' rights, etc., was £3,286. The number of miners' rights issued last year, according to the official returns, was 1,853. There might seem to be a discrepancy between the number of miners and the number of miners' rights issued, but there were many business people who took out miners' rights, and that would account for the difference. The area of land held under mining leases was 943 acres, and the average area for each lessee was nine acres. The leases as a rule were not held in very large blocks. The number of quartz stampers working on the field was 265 head. In addition to that, to show that the population was pretty well settled and what kind of a community there was on the goldfield, he would mention the number of leases and applications granted under the Gold Fields Homestead Act. The number was 563, and the area of land selected was 9,750 acres. The amount of gold sent away from the goldfields by escort, up to the end of December last, was 1,132,731 oz., of the total value of somewhere over £4,000,000. He did not know what amount had gone away by private hands, but there was always a considerable quantity taken away by private individuals in the early days of a goldfield. The total number of selections under the Land Act was a matter which should also be considered in discussing that question. A considerable quantity of land had been taken up there, and it had been specially selected by parties who had been successful in mining. When mining was prosperous there was a large amount of selection. The total number of selectors under the Acts of 1868 and 1876 was 388, and the area selected was 197,332 acres. As he had stated before, the district was the finest timber district in Australia. It returned a greater revenue for timber leases and other matters in connection with them, than any other district in the colony. To prove that he would give some figures showing the amount received from licenses issued last year. From ordinary timber licenses there was received a sum of £334; from special timber licenses, £265; from royalty, £219; total, £818. The district was not only a gold-mining district, but it was also, as he had already shown, a timber district and a farming district. To show how the rising generation were getting on, he would point out

that in the public schools there were 1,733 children on the rolls. That number was exclusive of those attending Roman Catholic and private schools, so that there must be at least 3,000 children in Gympie. He did not think any line that had been proposed by the Government was more necessary or would pay better than the proposed line between Brisbane and Gympie. When the line was first projected there were two different routes proposed, one inland and the other towards the coast. The line from Brisbane to Caboolture was common to both, and was surveyed many years ago. The Government had now got that line well towards being finished, and he believed it would be opened to Bald Hills before very long. The bridge over the Pine River was completed, and when that section was finished it would considerably shorten the distance over which the mails had to be carried. He hoped that the Committee would not offer any opposition to the line, seeing that it was the main trunk line along the coast.

Mr. MELLOR said he was glad the hon. Minister for Works had seen fit to bring forward that section of the main trunk line along the coast. It was not, as some people said, a Gympie railway. It was the North Coast railway, and they ought to consider it a national work, independent of what other interests it might serve. It had been pointed out by the hon. member for Gympie that there was a large population at the other end, and therefore they must look upon it as a national work. He believed the Committee would look upon it as such, and did not think there would be any opposition to it. He considered that it would be a good paying line, and that was a consideration that had been brought forward in connection with other lines during the last two or three nights—whether they would be paying lines or not. There could be no doubt in the minds of hon. gentlemen that this line would pay from the start. There was one little matter they complained about, and that was that the line had been so long forthcoming. They had had many promises that the plans and sections would be laid upon the table, and had hoped and expected that the line would have been almost started before this time. Still they were thankful that it was now, so far, an accomplished fact, and he thought the Committee would pass the line almost without a word. What the hon. member for Gympie had said in reference to the resources of the district could not be doubted for an instant. He did not think there was a better-timbered district in the whole colony than that through which the line would pass, and he hoped that the Government would soon see fit to commence the other section at the Brisbane end. He would like to see the line pushed on as fast as possible, and it would be only fair that the section from Caboolture should be commenced almost immediately. It would have this effect, when that section were completed—in fact it could be completed almost as quickly as the section to Caboolture—that it would enable people to get to Gympie from Brisbane, and from Gympie to Maryborough and the whole district in one day. If the line were completed from here to Mellum Creek, as well as the section before the Committee, the rest of the distance could be bridged over by coach, and people would be able to leave Brisbane in the morning and get to Gympie or Maryborough at night; and it would be a very great convenience to the large population at the other end. There was not only the Gympie population, but the Maryborough population and the population of the Wide Bay district. The whole of that district was a large centre of population; he supposed it contained about one-eighth of the population of the whole colony.

The line would be a great convenience, and the Government ought to try and push it on as fast as possible.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Do you want to see it done at once?

Mr. MELLOR: Yes; without any unnecessary delay; but he need not dwell long upon that. Everything had been said that needed to be said by the hon. member for Gympie. In reference to starting from the Gympie end, there was a great advantage in that, as was mentioned by the Minister for Works. Some people said it was not right to start at both ends. He had heard that remark made, but he thought it was quite right. It was easier to get the rails and the rolling-stock from Maryborough than from Brisbane. There would be less expense in carriage of rails and rolling-stock. The hon. Minister for Works referred to the ballast which was obtainable at Gympie. That was a very great consideration, and he thought the people of Gympie would be willing to give the stone for ballast, of which there were thousands and millions of tons there, and the contractors would be able to tender for the sections from Gympie towards Brisbane at a much lower rate, which would be a very great advantage to the Government. There had been some delay through there having been two routes under consideration; but the Government had decided to adopt the coast line. The inland route up the valley of the Mary was discarded on account of the heavy cost of the work that would be necessary; but the people of Gympie were not so particular about the route so long as they obtained a direct railway to Brisbane. That was the principal idea and wish of the people in that district, and it was only natural that they should ask that there should be direct communication with the metropolis. At the present time, although there was a coach running between Brisbane and Gympie, it took two days to go to Gympie, and two days to return and it took even longer to go by water sometimes; so that communication between Brisbane and Gympie was very defective. The last time he went to Gympie he started on a Friday night, and got back to Brisbane on the following Friday morning, and had a day and a-half in Gympie. He was travelling nearly all the time, and yet Gympie was only 120 miles from Brisbane. Reference had been made to Mr. Phillips, who, he had no doubt, was a very good railway surveyor, and a gentleman who stood high in the estimation of a great many people in the colony; but when he departed from that, and began to make observations about the land, he (Mr. Mellor) certainly thought he was out of his path altogether. He distinctly stated that that gentleman's remarks in reference to the land in the valley of the Mary were far from being correct. He believed that the land in the Mary Valley would command the attention of the country; he had no doubt about it, and at no distant future it would want a railway to itself. He would certainly have gone in stronger for that route had he not been interested in that district as much as he was. As he was interested in it he would not advocate that route. It was a district that would be valuable to the country, and would eventually contain a large population; it was a district in which a railway must be made before its products could be got at, because it was almost impossible to make roads there, and if made they would be almost as expensive as railways; so that he thought the route chosen, so far as expensiveness was concerned, was about the best. As soon as the first section from Gympie was completed it would be a paying line, because it was on the way to Noosa, which was one of the finest

watering-places in the colony, and he had not the slightest doubt that the people of the district would take advantage of the line to get to that watering-place, so that the passenger traffic alone would make it pay right away from the start. He hoped that no time would be lost in constructing the second section from Brisbane towards Mellum Creek, and also the one under consideration.

Mr. NORTON said he was glad on the present occasion to be able to favour the views put forward by the Minister for Works, and he hoped, after the last division that took place, the Premier would be disposed to think that members on his side did not always try to make party questions of the railways brought before them for consideration.

The PREMIER: Only sometimes.

Mr. NORTON said the line had received a great deal of consideration both inside and outside that Chamber, and the great point of contention had been as to the route to be taken; but he took it that the route had been settled, and the only doubt he had now was whether it should go by the route now proposed, or by the head of the Mary River. However, he was not going to object to the route proposed, because he did not pretend to know so much about it as other hon. members who had spoken. He felt quite sure, in spite of what had been said, that the line would not pay at the start, and that there was no chance of its paying until it was completed. All along the coast the country was very slightly inhabited, and the line could not be expected to pay till it reached the point of its destination, but when it was open between Brisbane and Gympie it would create a considerable amount of traffic between those places, besides a great amount from the Maryborough and the Wide Bay district. A good deal of revenue would also be derived in an indirect way from the construction of the line. The head of the Mary River had been pointed out as a very rich timber district which it would be impossible to work without a railway, and the indirect advantage to be derived by the Government would be the royalty received on that timber. In addition to that there would be the amount received for freight. The demand for timber had increased so largely within the last few years, that in carrying out the railway lines they were bound to consider the value to the country of opening up supplies of timber which, without railways, were unavailable. For some years large quantities of timber had been sent from Brisbane to be used in the construction of public works in the North. He was at Bowen at the time of the completion of the jetty there, and he was told that all the piles used were brought up from Brisbane. Of course the nearer they got to the northern parts of the colony, requiring supplies of timber, the more immediately the cost of the works requiring timber was reduced; and by opening up large supplies of timber which could be used for wharfage and other purposes the Government derived an indirect profit in that way, as well as from the royalty obtained on account of the timber cut. From what he had heard and read of the country, he thought it was desirable to carry out the line as soon as possible from the Gympie end, for he was satisfied—and he felt sure that every other hon. member would be satisfied if he thought over the matter—that so long as the line was continued from the Brisbane end only it would be a loss to the country, because all the through traffic would be lost until the line was completed.

Mr. WAKEFIELD said the Minister for Works had fallen into a common error in bringing forward the batch of railways which had been considered, inasmuch as he had left the best line to be

considered last. He (Mr. Wakefield) had been over the country, and he could testify to the advantages to be derived from the construction of the line. In the first place, it would be a portion of the trunk line connecting the northern and the southern portions of the colony; in the next place, it would connect one of the largest goldfields in the colony with the metropolis and seat of government; in the third place, it would be an agricultural line, as it passed through a settled district nearly the whole way. It would also add a great deal to the revenue on account of the supply of timber which it would open up, as pointed out by the leader of the Opposition. Timber was sent from Brisbane as far as Normanton at the present time; and nearly the whole of the Northern ports received supplies of timber from the southern portions of the colony. He had travelled in the district, and he could safely say that a finer timber district did not exist in Queensland. It would also be a suburban line, because it would go from Brisbane to Bald Hills and the Pine River, and thence to Caboolture; so that it had every feature to commend it as a paying line. He did not think any hon. member would doubt or want an array of figures to prove the payable-ness of the line, and he was glad that it was to start from the Gympie end, because the ballast at that end could be procured at a very low cost, and it would begin to pay at once. He had much pleasure in supporting the resolution.

Mr. SHERIDAN said that as one of the members for Maryborough, and intimately connected with Gympie as Maryborough was, he rose to state that he believed that in the whole town of Maryborough there was not one person who would not rejoice that that line was being made. He was sure the people of Maryborough were just as desirous that Maryborough should be connected with the metropolis by a coast line as the people of Gympie or any other place. He should be but repeating what he thought was their view when he said they would be very glad to have a line of railway extending up to Rockhampton or even to Townsville and running parallel with the coast throughout, thus connecting all the coast towns with the metropolis. He knew a good deal about the proposed line, and he remembered when the present line was first made and when it became a portion of his own duty to keep an account of all the traffic on the road. A person was stationed at Gootchie to enumerate and keep an account of all the traffic, whether by vehicle, on foot, or on horseback, on the road, and the result was that it was stated that the line would not pay for the grease for the wheels. But the line was built, and it had proved to be the best paying line in Queensland up to the present, and it had paid from the beginning and it was paying now. A line which would connect that line with the metropolis and with Gympie would certainly prove of very great advantage to the colony and would have his willing support.

Mr. BLACK said that hon. gentlemen who had spoken on the other side need have no apprehension about the proposed line passing on its merits, which he admitted were superior to those of the lines brought before the Committee yesterday and that day. The policy of the Government in the present case was a good one. The proposed line was one which they could see had a reasonable prospect of being remunerative, and he regretted very much that the same policy had not been adopted with the others. From the way in which a most certainly unprofitable line was carried just now by a very large majority, showing that there was no party vote on the question—when they saw that line carried notwithstanding all the arguments

brought forward, and sound arguments, too, against it—he was certain that the Government could be satisfied that every one of the lines they were going to bring forward during the session would be carried. He had come to that conclusion somewhat reluctantly, because he was perhaps weak enough to think that the lines were going to be discussed on their merits.

The PREMIER : So thought we at one time.

Mr. BLACK said it appeared that the Government railway policy would be carried whether the railways were good lines for the colony or not. The Government seemed to have drifted into the most reckless expenditure of loan money. They had passed lines which would not only absorb the £10,000,000 loan passed in 1884, but would require another loan of £6,000,000 or £7,000,000 to complete them. That he considered the most dangerous feature in their railway policy. They were committing the next Government—though it might possibly be the same Government that was in power now—but they were committing the next Government to a policy that might prove dangerous to the country. Another point which hon. members had failed to consider in connection with the matter was, that the necessity for the next loan after the £10,000,000 loan, that would be required to complete the lines authorised by the House, would prevent many new and important lines from being contemplated. The Treasurer himself represented a constituency that had long—and possibly with some sort of justice—demanded a railway.

The COLONIAL TREASURER : Hear, hear !

Mr. BLACK said the hon. member for Rosewood had also advocated a line of far greater merit than the Laidley Creek branch line which they had passed that evening, and that was the line to Marburg. What chance would there be of any of those lines being undertaken if the present railway policy of the Government were carried out ? Then the Speaker the other night made a most valuable suggestion, but there was no hope of its being carried out, and that was to connect the whole of the coast towns of the colony by railway. There would be no chance of such a policy as that being carried out, because the Government were so committing the country by the lines they were now proposing that it would be years before any new lines of railway could be considered. He regretted that such was the case ; but he thought there was every probability of some of the lines, which had been passed by a bare majority of one in that Committee, being thrown out when they got to another place. The Chairman had relieved himself of a very grave responsibility by suggesting that the matter would be left to the consideration of another House, and he hoped sincerely it would receive that consideration which it deserved. He was not quite certain that the members of the Government, having performed what they considered their duty to the country and their constituencies in bringing their railway policy before the House, would be very sorry if some of those lines which they had recently passed were shelved in the other Chamber. For himself, as the representative of a Northern constituency—although he regretted to see what he considered most reckless expenditure on the part of the Government—he was glad to say that there had been very little reckless expenditure on the Northern line, and he expected the time was not far distant when the members for the Southern districts, who were so much at the beck and call of the Government as to vote away millions of money in unnecessary and unremunerative expenditure, would find that they had a nice little debt to pay in providing interest on the loan expenditure of the South

when the northern portion of the colony was separated. He noticed they had at present a loan indebtedness of nearly £21,000,000—£20,820,850—or £66 per head of the population. He believed they had the largest indebtedness of any of the colonies, and they had already to pay £871,565 a year for interest on loans ; and it was inevitable that another loan would have to be floated, he took it, within six months. What would be the position of the Treasurer in the English money market when he attempted to float another loan, if the whole of the railway schemes of the Government received the assent of the other House ?

The PREMIER : They are all in the Loan Bill now.

Mr. BLACK said it was also inevitable that the Treasurer would have a deficit of something like half-a-million when he called the House together next year. Notwithstanding the very glowing Estimates he laid before the House, they found that the revenue for the last quarter fell very considerably below his expectations, and the Customs revenue, if it remained anything like what it was now for the remaining three-quarters of the year, would show a deficiency of £100,000 alone on the year's transactions—and that, notwithstanding the additional duties which the Treasurer had imposed. The railways that had already been constructed would show a deficiency of £110,000—that was even if they did not decrease any more than they had done at present, and he was very much afraid they would continue to decrease. Even if there were no loss on the land revenue, it seemed to him that there would be a certain loss of £440,000 on the year's transactions. There was not the least sign of a revival in trade ; none of the industries of the colony were really progressing ; they were living on money borrowed from home. They had already passed, counting the line now under consideration, £679,200 worth of railways, of which £582,000 was for Southern lines and £97,200 for Northern lines. But it was not merely that sum they had to consider ; it was the huge amount they were committed to in order to complete those lines. The St. George line, which they passed yesterday—twenty-five miles at an estimated cost of £4,000 a mile. £100,000—committed the colony to an expenditure of £3,000,000, and judging from the debates upon it, there was no reasonable hope of its paying. The hon. member for Wide Bay of course spoke hopefully of the Gympie line, and the hon. member for Gympie spoke—not at all, he believed, in an exaggerated way—of the profits of that line. He (Mr. Black) would be quite prepared to endorse the policy of connecting the chief towns of the colony where they knew a population existed. That line was justifiable, though he thought the hon. member for Wide Bay went a little too far—was a little too greedy—when he was not satisfied with an expenditure of £150,000, but wanted another section started at once from this end. No doubt, if the hon. member brought a little more pressure to bear, the Minister for Works would oblige him to that extent. He was going to bring down another batch next week, and perhaps he would include another section of the Brisbane-Gympie railway amongst them. The principle of the Government seemed to be to try and get through the money as quickly as they could ; but the day of retribution would inevitably come, and that, he was afraid, before they were many years older. They were spending at present at the rate of half-a-million of loan money every quarter ; last quarter's expenditure was £516,503, and notwithstanding that huge expenditure, there was a greater cry from the unemployed than had been heard since the colony of Queensland started.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS No

Mr. BLACK: At any rate, since 1866. He would admit that there had been a crisis before the present, but it was not met by an unnecessary expenditure of loan money. Relief was given by allowing industries, and especially the industries of the North, to develop themselves. That was what brought relief to the colony then, and it was to that the Government would have to look before very long for relief from the present depression. He regretted exceedingly that he had to criticise in that way what he could not but consider a very lavish and reckless expenditure of public money. What he was afraid of was that when the next loan was put on the English market it would be as great a failure as the New Zealand loan had been. The New Zealand indebtedness was something like £58 per head of population; ours was now £66; and he was afraid we could show very slightly better prospects of future prosperity than New Zealand. He hoped the time was not very far distant when the conflicting interests of the different parts of the colony would be divided, and then the southern portion of the colony would feel the scourge which they were now making to whip their own backs with.

Mr. ADAMS said that when he voted against two sections of railways he had done so conscientiously, because he was opposed to heaping more burdens on the people of Queensland than they were able to bear. It was not his wish to give a silent vote upon any matter, and it was his wish that the business of the country should be gone on with; therefore he had said very little upon any matter before the House. He had just been told by an hon. member that he had created a diversion by crossing the floor after the last division had been called, but it was not his intention to create a diversion; he had fully made up his mind long before which way he was going to vote. He had always advocated the carrying of railways as far out as possible, so as to settle the people on the land, because he considered that was the only way Queensland would get her revenue; and therefore he would have stultified himself had he voted against the last line. Although after the speeches that had been delivered, especially by the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, he was not thoroughly convinced that the line would pay, still it would settle people on the land, and that was the reason he had walked across the House and voted for it. For the same reason he would vote for the line now before the Committee, because it would settle people on the land, and every person settled on the land brought receipts into the Treasury. More than that, he took it that the line would be a part and parcel of the main coastal line, which had been spoken of on both sides of the Committee; and therefore, combining those two reasons, he considered that he would be wanting in his duty to his constituents and to the people of the colony if he did not vote for it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said the hon. member for Mackay was rather gloomy in his prognostications as to the future prospects of the colony. He hoped things would not be so bad as the hon. member assumed; still he was afraid, looking at the expenditure that was going on, and the loss of revenue on all sides, that the Treasurer would be justified in saying, as Metternich did in Europe forty years ago, "After me the deluge." Whether that came or not, they were perfectly justified in passing that section of the line, seeing that the House had approved of the line long ago. It was certainly a very rough section, and if it could be made within the estimate they ought to be satisfied, but it would certainly increase the whole cost of the line. The sum of £448,000 was put down for it on the loan vote of 1884, making it a little more than £4,000 a mile.

The present section would cost nearly £9,000 a mile, and that would necessarily increase the cost of the line throughout. It was necessary that the entire line should be finished as soon as possible. The money for it had been borrowed, and interest was being paid upon it, and the sooner they got some return from it the better it would be for the State. The Minister for Works had done what was right in beginning the line at the other end, and he hoped he would not delay in beginning another section of it at the southern end, so as to get the line finished. He regarded the line in perhaps a different light from some hon. members. He hoped the day was far distant when the people of Queensland might be called upon to defend themselves against a foreign enemy. Personally, he looked upon the proposed line as a link in their chain of defence. If any part of the coast was threatened, the forces of the colony could be easily concentrated at that particular spot, and the defence would be more likely to be a successful one. He regarded the line, therefore, as a portion of the national defences, just as he did the Defence Force, the "Gayundah," or any other defence they had at present. For that reason alone the Committee ought to very cheerfully vote that section, and all other sections connecting the coast towns of the colony. He was very sorry to hear the hon. member for Wide Bay, Mr. Mellor, make any remark derogatory to the character of Mr. Phillips, their late inspector of surveys. Mr. Phillips stood too high in the estimation of the House, and especially in the estimation of the people who knew him—as the Minister for Works knew him, as he (Mr. Macrossan) knew him, and as previous Ministers for Works knew him—to be injured by any remarks the hon. member for Wide Bay might make against him. Mr. Phillips had experience, not only as an engineer, but as a very old colonist who had laboured in every district in Queensland, from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Brisbane. Mr. Phillips, therefore, knew exactly what he was talking about; and in his report about the valley of the Mary was not quite in accordance with the opinions of the hon. member for Wide Bay—it was so much the worse for the hon. member for Wide Bay. Those who knew Mr. Phillips would take his opinion infinitely before the opinion of the hon. member for Wide Bay. Returning to the question, he might remark that the Government were making a certain sacrifice of revenue by beginning the line at the Gympie end. Some hon. members might not be aware that the Commissioner for Railways took credit for the rails that were carried by rail to sections under construction. If the Minister for Works had consented to take the line crawling from the Brisbane end, there would have been a longer section to carry the rails over, and therefore the Minister for Works deserved great credit for having sacrificed a certain amount of revenue—which would have had to be taken out of loan and put to the credit of the consolidated revenue—for the carrying of rails. They were now making the line to Bundaberg, and would soon be called upon to pass the section from Bundaberg to Gladstone, and when those three sections were finished the metropolis would be brought into very near communication with Rockhampton. Hon. members could thus see what a grand engine of defence the coastal line would be in the event of the colony having, in time of war, to concentrate troops to defend any threatened point. He hoped, therefore, that the Minister for Works would go on as quickly as possible with the construction of the line with the money which was available from the loan vote. But he was afraid the hon. gentleman had not enough to carry on the line to Townsville.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have plenty of money.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he was very glad to hear it, but he should have felt far more satisfied to have heard the Colonial Treasurer ejaculate "Hear, hear!" to that remark. He hoped the hon. gentleman would spend the money in connecting all the coast towns in one line.

Mr. ANNEAR said he looked upon the line as a national work, and a work which any Government would be quite ready to carry out. He said last night that it ought not to go forth to the world that they were constructing railways to find work for the unemployed. At the same time, he thought they should take advantage of the depression that existed in the colony, and the Government should carry out its railway policy with a little more spirit. He fully agreed with the hon. member for Townsville that the coastal line should be gone on with and completed as quickly as possible. It was well known that railways could be constructed in the colony at the present day at from 25 per cent. to 30 per cent. cheaper than they could be constructed seven or eight years ago; and such being the case the Government ought to put more spirit into their railway policy. The hon. member for Moreton said the Minister for Works had got a happy knack of leaving the best of everything to the last. The present line might be the best of the first batch; but the second batch had to come on yet, and he believed there would be some very good things indeed in it. He did not take the gloomy view of the hon. member for Mackay; he had great faith in the future of the colony. The hon. member said there was no progress going on in Queensland. What, he would ask him, about the mining industry? What about the hundreds of thousands of pounds of English capital which they saw every day was about to be poured into the colony for the development of its mines? None of the other colonies had ever experienced such a state of things. Every day they read of companies proposing to invest £50,000, £100,000, £200,000, £300,000, in mining properties in Queensland.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: They may overdo

Mr. ANNEAR said they could not overdo it so long as they were developing new mines. In the Wide Bay and other districts new mines were being brought into existence every day—mines that were unknown before. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Townsville that Mr. Phillips was a very competent officer, and he for one should not like to say one word about him. He should take good care for the future that anything he might hear by way of rumour would not again be repeated by him in a private conversation, which he considered should be treated as strictly private and confidential. The hon. member for Townsville seemed to disagree with the member for Wide Bay, Mr. Mellor, in saying that he thought Mr. Phillips's report was not a fair one. Now, Mr. Phillips could only give a report on the character of the country as it was at the time he passed through it, and at the time Mr. Phillips saw it it was almost in a state of desolation. There was no grass, and it was in a general state of depression, but in all districts of the colony that had passed away, and therefore he did not think they should take Mr. Phillips's report as a definite or final one. He took it to be a truthful report of the country at the time, and he was sorry when he read *Hansard* to see that Mr. Phillips's name was brought into the debate last night. He was sure he was the last man in the colony to do anything dishonourable, or anything that would not become a gentleman.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he was glad to be able to support the resolution, as he was one of those who attended a meeting in Gympie fifteen years ago to advocate the construction of the Maryborough to Gympie line. He recollected that at that time the argument used by those opposed to the line was that Cobb's coach, which had before run daily, was then running tri-weekly, because there was not sufficient passenger traffic to support horses and drivers; but now, after all the arguments used, they found that that line was about the best paying line in the colony, and he was certain the line connecting Gympie with the city of Brisbane would pay still better. He knew the country pretty well through which it would pass, and better land for agricultural purposes did not exist. It was also plentifully supplied with timber—valuable timber—such as beech and hardwood of the very best description and in any quantity. Already the first section had been made as far as Caboolture, and from the settlement that had taken place it was easy to predict a success for the line and that thick settlement would follow along the whole route. He did not take the gloomy view of the hon. member for Mackay in reference to the finances of the colony, because he had no doubt that the public works policy the Government had brought forward would bring Queensland to the front, and that Great Britain would have more confidence in it than formerly. Although the colony was going through a period of depression, he was convinced that it would not last for long, and he only hoped that the lines which had been passed during the last week through the House, and particularly the line connecting the present terminus in the city with Fortitude Valley, which properly should be called the extension of the North Coast line, would bring prosperity to the country. In advocating the Maryborough and Gympie line, fifteen years ago, he had no idea that he should have an opportunity of speaking in the House upon the present proposal of the Government, and he had very great pleasure in supporting the resolution.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he did not understand the reference made by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, in connection with what he had said in support of Mr. Phillips. He should like the hon. member to explain himself, for he had had no conversation with anyone about Mr. Phillips.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was not present last night, but on reading *Hansard* that morning he saw that the hon. member for Toowoomba, the Speaker, in advocating his cause, said there was a scandal connected with Mr. Phillips, and that a syndicate had paid him to make a report on the *via recta*. The hon. gentleman said he was told that by a member of the House, and when he was pressed for the name he said it was he (Mr. Annear) who told him. That was perfectly true; the conversation took place in the House, and he (Mr. Annear) had said that he had heard that Mr. Phillips was engaged by a certain gentleman to make a report on that line; but he did not think, when repeating the rumour, that during the warmth of debate it would be repeated again. When he heard the rumour he did not believe it, and he did not really think he should see it repeated in *Hansard*. That was what he had referred to in his previous speech, and he in no way identified the hon. member for Townsville with the conversation; that hon. gentleman had nothing whatever to do with it.

Mr. MURPHY said he had much pleasure in rising to say that he would support the line if it went to a division, because he considered that it was the first of the lines proposed by the Government in their railway policy which he could give approval to. The lines which had been

previously introduced were, in his opinion, such as the circumstances of the colony did not warrant them in passing. He was convinced that they had been brought forward only for political reasons. But the line before them would connect the main centres of population in this colony. It was a line that would be useful in many ways, and, even supposing there was no other reason for agreeing to it, a very good reason was that it was a line which ran along the coast, and which would be useful for the purposes of defence. But, besides that, it developed a great deal of good country. But the other lines which had been proposed, with the exception, perhaps, of the Laidley branch, would not have that effect. They passed through very indifferent country. The Minister for Works told a deputation that waited upon him the other day that he did not intend for the future to advocate any lines that would not pay. He (Mr. Murphy) voted against the Laidley railway that night because it was shown upon all sides that that line would not pay.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe it will.

Mr. MURPHY: He was satisfied it would not. The Minister for Works never attempted to show that the line would pay, and he (Mr. Murphy) was as satisfied as he was standing there that it would never pay for the grease put upon the axles. He wanted to know why the Minister for Works did not proceed with the Central Railway? That was a line that before the drought was paying better than any other railway in the south of Queensland, and now, forsooth, the Minister for Works said that he did not mean to go on with that railway, because he was afraid that separation would take place very shortly, and that it would be necessary to divert the course of that line towards the boundary of the new colony in order to prevent the line from Hughenden to Townsville taking the trade away—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the hon. gentleman was not justified in making such a statement. He never said he was afraid at all. The fact of the matter was the deputation got hold of a reporter and told him a wrong story.

Mr. MURPHY said he distinctly denied having said a single word that the Minister for Works did not utter. The hon. gentleman distinctly made the remarks that appeared in the paper.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said that was untrue. He thought he was just as much entitled to credit as the hon. member for Barcoo. He never said he was afraid of separation. He had said before that he did not care if it took place to-morrow.

Mr. MURPHY said perhaps the hon. gentleman did not say exactly that he was afraid of separation, but he said he thought it would take place very shortly, and—

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is making a misstatement. Can't he speak the truth?

Mr. MURPHY said he could only appeal to other members of the House who were with him at that deputation to corroborate his statement. He did not know if any of them were present—he did not think they were, and he was sorry for it, because he was quite sure that if they were present they would corroborate what he had stated. At any rate he thought the Minister for Works, in not inducing the Government to go on with the Central Railway, was doing gross injustice to the western part of Queensland. His excuse for not going on with that railway—as he (Mr. Murphy) had said

before—was that it was his intention to divert that railway from its present course—from the present surveyed line—towards Winton for the purpose of preventing the line from Hughenden to Townsville tapping its trade—that was, preventing the Northern colony, which he said he was afraid would shortly be separated from this colony, getting the trade from them. In fact he was endeavouring to make another border line to compete with the Townsville line. He would point out that large meetings had been held at Rockhampton and other places for the purpose of asking the Government to go on with that line. Surveys had already been made to—

Mr. KELLETT said he rose to a point of order. The question before the Committee was the consideration of the Gympie line, and the hon. member was rambling all over the country—to the Townsville line, the Western lines, and he did not know where; he was not speaking to the subject at all.

The CHAIRMAN said a good deal of latitude had been allowed to hon. members in discussing the question, and his attention had not been called to it.

Mr. KELLETT said, now that the Chairman's attention had been called to it, he would like to know if the hon. member was in order?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not strictly in order.

Mr. MURPHY said he was quite unused to the forms of the House, and perhaps he had been straying a little from the proper paths of debate. At the same time he was only doing so in order to illustrate his argument, and he thought he was quite justified in doing that. He was only saying that the Government, or the Minister for Works, had given as an excuse for not proceeding with the Central Railway that it would not pay; but yet he was introducing railways into that Committee without arguing for a moment that they would pay. As he had said before, the Central Railway before the drought was one of the best paying lines in the south of Queensland.

Mr. KELLETT said he again rose to a point of order. It was not the Central line they were discussing. It seemed to him a most absurd kind of business. He would like to have the Chairman's ruling upon the point.

Mr. MURPHY said he would say no more on the subject. He had said nearly all he wished to say on it, and he apologised if he had been out of order. If he had he hoped the Committee would excuse him, as he was not well used to the forms of the House. But he felt very keenly upon that point, and therefore he could not help expressing his sentiments upon it. He should certainly vote for the proposed line if it came to a division, which he knew it would not, because it was approved of generally by the whole of the Committee. It was a line they could all vote for without any fear of doing what was not right and fair and just to the whole colony.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said the whole of the offence he had committed, in the opinion of the hon. member for Barcoo, on the occasion of the deputation, was that he had stated that he would endeavour to divert the Central line towards population, and that they did not like. He told the deputation that the delay would be of a very short duration; that surveys were being made and he would see if he could not divert that line so as to give more facilities to the public by carrying it in the direction of Winton. He believed that was the proper course, and that was the whole of the offence he had committed. In the meantime he did not think there was any great necessity for

rushing on with that line. At present three trains per week were sufficient to carry the traffic upon it, and he did not see the necessity of rushing on with another fifty miles at the present time.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he hoped the Chairman would not call him to order for saying something in reply to what the hon. the Minister for Works had just said, and which had no connection with the Gympie railway. The hon. gentleman stated that the Government intended to divert the Central line towards population—towards Winton.

The PREMIER: I do not think he said the Government intended to do so.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: However, he could tell the Minister for Works, as member for Townsville and representing Northern interests, that if he brought down plans and sections changing the general course of the Central line as it had been adopted and carried out by every previous Government—going due west—he would find some difficulty in passing that section unless he brought down one carrying the Hughenden line towards Winton also. The hon. gentleman could depend upon that; and he had better at once change the mind of the Government from taking that line in any direction other than had been intended by every previous Government—that was due west, the same as the Northern Railway was going.

The PREMIER said his hon. colleague did not say that the Government intended to change the course of the Central Railway; he said that surveys were being carried out to see whether it could not be carried in a better and more profitable direction.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: To population.

The PREMIER: Surveys were now being made with that view, and he should like to see the line pushed on; but the proper time to discuss the route of the Central line was when they came to it.

Mr. MURPHY said as they had gone on to the Central line now he did not see it would be out of order for him to say a few words more on it. He distinctly said again that the Minister for Works did state that it was because separation was shortly to take place that that line was to be turned the other way. He (Mr. Murphy) did not see why their interests were to be sacrificed because separation was shortly to take place, or why that line should be stopped, and all the men thrown out of work, and the contractors made to break up their plant.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Question!

Mr. NORTON said that some allowance should be made for the hon. gentleman, who said that the remarks he was making were in illustration of his argument.

Mr. HIGSON said that, being one of the deputation to the Minister for Works about pushing on the Central Railway, he would be failing in his duty if he did not say a few words. The answer which the Minister for Works gave to the deputation was that it would not pay. For four or five years there had been depression and dry seasons, but before that it paid very well. They had gone through the worst of the country and the line was now coming to the country that would pay.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Question!

The CHAIRMAN said the hon. member was not in order. If the hon. member wished to discuss the question before the Committee he had no wish to stop him.

Mr. HIGSON said he only wanted to point out that the hon. member for Barcoo was quite correct as to the answer given to the deputation by the Minister for Works.

Question put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the Chairman leave the chair and report the resolution to the House.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said he would like to put the same question now that he put a few nights ago. When would the Minister for Works put the next batch of plans on the table of the House? They had got through with the whole of the first batch now.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said he expected to lay them on the table on Tuesday.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution, and, on the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the report was adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-five minutes past 10 o'clock.