

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 1 SEPTEMBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 1 September, 1887.

Questions.—Formal Motions.—Legislative Assembly Act of 1887 Amendment Bill—first reading.—Motion for Adjournment.—The Laidley Railway—Warwick Railway Station—Guns for Maryborough and Townsville. — Petitions — Queensland Trustees and Executors' Society.—Storage of Farm Produce.—The Cairns Railway Returns.—Divisional Boards Bill—third reading.—Copyright Registration Bill (Queensland).—Cairns Railway Returns.—Lands Department Returns.—Bundaberg School of Arts Land Sale Bill—second reading.—The Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act Amendment Act of 1884 Amendment Bill—first reading.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. BUCKLAND asked the Minister for Works—

If a Joint Action Board is formed for the purpose of erecting a bridge over the river Logan, from Chambers's Flat to Logan Village, will the Minister be prepared to assist in the erection from the unexpended bridge vote?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) replied—

As the proposed bridge would not be on a main road, the vote for bridges, main roads, is not available for the purpose.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL asked the Minister for Works—

When do the Government intend to call for tenders for the erection of the quarantine station on the North Shore at Cooktown?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

Action cannot be taken to construct the quarantine station buildings until the proposed tramway is completed. The Chief Engineer has been instructed to push forward the necessary plans, &c., for the tramway, so that tenders can be invited as quickly as possible.

Mr. ADAMS asked the Chief Secretary—

Is it the intention of the Government to place a sum of money on the Supplementary Estimates for the erection of a post-office at Bundaberg?—If so, how much?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) replied—

In the present state of the public finances the Government cannot undertake to place a sum of money on the Supplementary Estimates for the erection of a new post-office at Bundaberg, but immediate action will be taken to provide sufficient accommodation for the public.

Mr. SHERIDAN asked the Minister for Works—

How many tons of steel plates (Phillips's patent) have been purchased in England, and at what price per ton?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

2,793 tons of plates have been ordered; the price to be paid is £5 7s. 6d. per ton, delivered free on board at London.

Mr. MORGAN asked the Minister for Works—

1. Is there any rule regulating the extent of leave to be granted to surveyors employed under the Railway Department?

2. If so, what is the nature of such rule?

3. Are railway surveyors paid for the time during which they are absent from their camps without leave?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. Yes.

2. A fortnight's leave in each year, excepting cases of sickness.

3. No.

Mr. MOREHEAD (for Mr. Chubb) asked the Minister for Works—

1. What is the total amount of the claims sent in for compensation for lands resumed for the construction of the Fortitude Valley Railway?

2. Do these comprise all claims?

3. What total amount has been offered by the Government to the claimants?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

1. £298,333 7s. 3d.

2. No.

3. £350. (Offer made to one claimant only.)

Mr. WHITE (for Mr. Kellett) asked the Minister for Works—

Is it the intention of the Government to bring up the plans and specifications of the Laidley railway this session?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied—

As there is some doubt whether the line as surveyed is the cheapest and most desirable route to adopt, I propose to make further examination before submitting for approval the plans and specifications.

THE WARWICK RAILWAY STATION.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—Before we pass to the formal business, I would like, with the permission of the House, to give the Secretary for Public Works an opportunity of supplying the information he promised me yesterday afternoon relative to the Warwick railway station.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—We all know that the Warwick railway station was burnt about a month or five weeks ago. I find that within a week after it was burnt steps were taken to provide reasonably fair accommodation for the public until the new railway station, in course of erection at East Warwick, is completed. The contract time for that work will expire on the 23rd November next, and consequently between the time of the burning of the old station and the time the new one will be ready the public have to be provided with reasonable accommodation; but there is no justification for any extravagant expenditure for the temporary convenience of the public. Within a week or ten days after the burning of the station, temporary provision was made by the erection of a dining-room, kitchen, closets, and ladies' waiting room, giving fair accommodation, as the dining-room is 22 feet by 13 feet, and the other rooms 8 feet by 14 feet. That was run up within ten days after the burning of the station, and I think the department has been very prompt in providing for the temporary accommodation of the public. I find that there will probably be some rooms in the new railway station available for the convenience of the public about three weeks' time if the contractor does not object to their being used before he hands over his work. In the meantime the public should be prepared to meet with the trifling inconvenience inseparable from a makeshift building until the new building is ready for their accommodation. I may say that the officers of the department are the persons most seriously inconvenienced at present, as they are jammed into a corner and have scarcely room to carry on the station and telegraphic work. Some slight inconvenience must be put up with until the new station is ready.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By the PREMIER—

1. That this House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the law relating to the endowments of municipalities.

2. That leave be given to introduce a Bill to revive the operation of certain provisions of the Legislative Assembly Act of 1867.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ACT OF 1867 AMENDMENT BILL.

FIRST READING.

The PREMIER presented this Bill, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the second reading of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

THE LAIDLEY RAILWAY.—WARWICK RAILWAY STATION.—GUNS FOR MARYBOROUGH AND TOWNSVILLE.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to allude to a certain matter, and I will conclude with the usual motion. I was absent just now when the question I gave notice of yesterday was answered, and, having seen the answer given, it is evident the question has not been properly understood. The question I gave notice of was:—

"Is it the intention of the Government to bring up the plans and specifications of the Laidley railway this session?"

The answer given by the Minister for Works is this:—

"As there is some doubt whether the line as surveyed is the cheapest and most desirable route to take, I shall make further investigation before I submit the plans asked for."

That is no answer to my question whether the plans will be submitted this session or not. I think a fair answer should be given to a fair question. I do not think there can be much doubt about the best survey, as the whole valley has been surveyed backwards and forwards in all directions. Last session another survey was to be made, and was made and completed, and from my own knowledge I know there can be no question about the best route and no need for other surveys. What I wanted to know was whether the plans would be laid on the table this session. This railway was passed by the largest majority in favour of any railway passed in this House—28 to 10; and the late esteemed Minister for Works stated that it would be one of the first railway plans submitted to the House this session. Unfortunately he is not now here, and this is the sort of answer I get to my question. I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The question has been raised on more than one occasion in this House and out of it as to whether the route surveyed by the railway surveys is the correct one to follow or not. It has been asserted by those who know the district, and notably by one of the members for the district, Mr. White, that the route selected is the wrong one. Mr. White has represented that the route selected is the wrong one so far as cheapness of construction is concerned, and that is a most important thing to consider in an agricultural district. The hon. member may be right or the surveyors may be right, and possibly by examination an ordinary practical man—and I fancy I am one—may be able to see whether there is anything in the contention of the hon. member or not. Before the plans are laid on the table, therefore, I am determined to go up and have a look at the route, and see if there is anything in the objection taken to it; and until that is done I cannot say when the plans will be laid on the table. I will take the earliest opportunity to go up and inspect the route, and the plans will be submitted to the House as soon after that as possible.

The HON. G. THORN said: Mr. Speaker,—It does seem to be a most extraordinary thing that the only two railways promised this session are in places where two elections were coming off—in the Darling Downs district at Warwick and at South Brisbane.

The PREMIER: They were promised before either of the elections were dreamt of.

The HON. G. THORN: All the other railways were promised last session also. It seems to me an extraordinary thing that the leader of the Opposition should have allowed this matter to escape his attention. So far as this Laidley line is concerned, I think there can be no question that a proper survey has already been made, and I hope that line will receive the unanimous assent of the House.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Fassifern forgets one thing. The hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, did not vote as he should the other night, and therefore he must be punished for his sins somehow. His colleague is to be rewarded for his conduct on the same occasion by having his representations attended to.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—An insinuation has been made which cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed. The hon. member for Fassifern said that the only two railways the Government speak of going on with during the present session are in districts where elections are now pending. It may be singular, but the hon. member knows perfectly well that the promise was given by the late Minister for Works before his death, and that it is entirely owing to his lamented death that elections are pending in those two places. I think that is an unworthy insinuation, and in order that it may not be believed it should be at once contradicted.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—It seems to me that while the promises to the North are being kept, and Northern railways proceeded with, the Southern railways are kept hanging on. This Laidley line was passed last session by twenty-eight votes to ten, and I think it ought to be proceeded with. It is an agricultural district throughout, and I shall never oppose any railway for the carriage of agricultural products. It is the same with the straight line to Warwick: it passes through the finest agricultural district in Australia. The left bank of the Bremer is magnificent country, and the hon. leader of the Opposition knows quite well that Coochin is excellent growing country, so are Harrisville and Fassifern. When these lines embrace agricultural land in the settled districts they should be proceeded with at once.

Mr. SALKELD said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Stanley is quite right in pressing this question on the Government. If the hon. Minister for Works is correct in his information that the line surveyed is not the right one, I should say that whoever surveyed it should not be employed to survey any more railways. Anyone who knows the district knows that if ever there was a simple line to survey, that is it. Any surveyor competent for his work could ride over there and back again, and decide upon the best road almost immediately; there is no inherent difficulty of any kind. I hope the Minister for Works will go up at once and have the plans laid on the table during the present session, so that the work can be proceeded with.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—The late hon. Minister for Works was to have gone up to see that survey; but the unfortunate floods and other difficulties prevented him. I believe that the survey was made by as clever a surveyor as there is on the staff, and I have no one to blame but the head of the department. The staff were kept there for weeks doing nothing, and the only information the farmers could get was that they were waiting for the inspector, I suppose to decide which was to be the permanent line. The consequence was that ultimately they decided upon a line above the Seven-mile. I must say I am too deeply prejudiced to be fit to judge, because I was so enraged at the way they put the line beyond the Seven-mile. I would like some practical gentleman to give his opinion of it; it is beyond me altogether. I am satisfied that no hon. gentleman could go up there and see it and approve of the way it is taken beyond the Seven-mile. If the line, instead of costing £1,500 or £2,000 a mile, is to cost £4,000 or £5,000, it is preposterous in an agricultural district where there are only agriculturists to get the benefit. They feel the soreness of this waste of money; they do not want a line that will not be remunerative; they want a line with some chance of paying, and paying well. The inhabitants would be quite content to sign an agreement to pay 6d. a ton a mile to have their produce taken away; it is costing now not less than 1s. to 1s. 4d. to cart their produce

to the railway. It cannot possibly cost less than 1s. a mile; I have had to pay 8s. for six miles regularly. The railway which would reduce that high rate of freight would be a great boon to the farmers in the district.

WARWICK RAILWAY STATION.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I take the opportunity of this motion for adjournment to say a few words in reply to the information supplied to the House a few minutes ago by the Minister for Works with regard to the Warwick railway station. From the information he gave, the only inference to be drawn is that I grossly overstated the facts of the case yesterday afternoon. That I did not do. Practically, that station-yard is in the same condition as it was the morning after the fire occurred. There was a little gunyah promptly run up, constructed of the damaged iron that originally covered the roof of the station-house; I think the hon. member dignified it by the name of refreshment room and ladies' waiting-room. There may be room in it for a few bottles of whisky, but I am certain that no lady would think of entering it; and that it was never intended to do duty for any length of time is sufficiently proved by the fact that it was placed quite away from the platform, which still remains intact. The station-master's office, the booking clerk's office, and the telegraph operator's office are all crowded into a little building about twenty feet square, inside of which there is no accommodation whatever for the public. I believe it was simply run up to protect the refreshment room keeper against loss; I do not know whether he had any interest in it himself. The public are obliged to get out of the train and take their luggage on to the open platform, and when the rain is beating down it is extremely inconvenient and subjects them to a great deal of loss. Now, with regard to the new station of which we have heard so much, and some of the rooms of which are to be available in a month—the refreshment room will be available; there is a very nice station-yard being built there, and the goods shed and station-house are in course of erection. But there are no carriage-sheds and no station-master's house, and it will be six months before the business of the station can be transferred to East Warwick. In the meantime are the travelling public to be subjected to inconvenience and annoyance as at present? I do not ask for any expensive outlay, but that a shelter-shed should be erected along the platform so that people may have some protection for themselves and their luggage. An expenditure of £40 or £50 would be sufficient, and the necessary work could be done in twenty-four hours. That is all we ask for; it is not very much, and I think it ought to be done.

GUNS FOR TOWNSVILLE AND MARYBOROUGH.

Mr. ANNEAR said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to refer to a little matter in connection with our navy before the motion is withdrawn. I brought this question under the notice of the Minister for War previous to his departure for England, and also under the notice of the admiral of the fleet, but without effect. Over two months ago, two five-inch guns were taken from Brisbane—one to Townsville and the other to Maryborough—to be mounted, so that the naval corps there might learn their drill; but up to the present time those guns have been lying on the wharves in those two places. No effort has been made to mount them, though the men are anxious to learn their drill; and as the officers of the Defence Force are paid it is not unreasonable to request that the guns should be mounted. I bring this matter under the notice of the Minister now because I find it is of no use going to the officers in Brisbane, who will give promises, but that is all.

The PREMIER: You never told me about the matter.

Mr. ANNEAR: Perhaps the hon. gentleman has forgotten, but I made a special visit to his office previous to his departure for England. I also saw the admiral, and he said it would be attended to; but nothing has been done.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Do you mean the admiral of the horse-marines?

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I am perfectly satisfied at present with the reply given by the Minister for Works; but I will not give him any peace till he has fulfilled his promise. In reference to a remark of the leader of the Opposition, I may say that I do not take this as a punishment for my sins. I do not think I have sinned against the Government; I think I have assisted them at the present time in giving up their proposed land tax and changing their tactics. I hope the Minister for Works will come to Laidley Creek as soon as he can and judge for himself what ought to be done.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

PETITION.

QUEENSLAND TRUSTEES AND EXECUTORS' SOCIETY.

Mr. CHUBB presented a petition asking for leave to introduce a Bill to confer certain favours upon the Queensland Trustees and Executors' Society, Limited, and moved that it be received.

Question put and passed.

STORAGE OF FARM PRODUCE.

Mr. KATES, in moving—

That, in the opinion of the House, it is very desirable that a depot be erected at the metropolitan terminus of our Southern and Western Railway for the storage of farm produce coming down by that line; whereby the producers may be relieved from being compelled to submit to forced sales of their goods, and whereby they may be placed on equal footing with the farmers of other colonies, by gaining, for a reasonable consideration, sufficient time to offer their produce direct to intending buyers and consumers—

said: Mr. Speaker,—I think this motion will commend itself to the favourable consideration of hon. members. It is for the purpose of giving relief to farmers and producers in a certain direction without loss to the country. It often happens that in wet weather, when there are bad roads, large quantities of farm produce accumulate in the farmers' barns; and when the weather clears up and the roads become passable, large quantities come to Brisbane for sale. It may happen at the same time that quantities come by sea from New Zealand, Victoria, and other places, to our wharves, thereby flooding the market, and making farm produce almost unsaleable. According to the regulations of the Railway Department only six hours are allowed for the removal of produce; and if it is not removed within that time the owners are liable to the payment of a large sum by way of demurrage. A great deal of farm produce is worth only £3 or £4 a ton, and if the carriage is £1 a ton, and storage another £1 per ton, there is very little left for the farmer, who has only three alternatives—either to store it at the railway and pay a high charge, to submit to forced sales, or to fall into the hands of the middleman, the commission agent. All these courses are objectionable in the highest degree. I do not say that all commission agents and produce dealers are unscrupulous men; there are some honourable men among them in Brisbane who are of great advantage to producers, but there are also a great many unscrupulous men among them.

During the exhibition week some farmers from the Clifton district told me that they had sent down quantities of maize and hay to certain produce dealers, one item amounting to £40, and when they went for their money they were offered 80s. It transpired that the selfsame man had been in the insolvent court for the last twelve months. My object is to avoid these troubles to the farmer and producer; and I propose that the Government shall erect a depot for the storage of farm produce at the terminus of our Southern and Western Railway, to give producers time to find a better market. Such depot need not be a very elaborate building, but it should be a substantial building, at a cost of about \$6,000 or £7,000. That department should contain something like 100 stalls, each stall to hold say nine or ten tons of stuff; and the producer should be able to rent a stall at, say, 3s. or 4s. a week. The rent at 3s. a week would amount to something like £750 a year, which would pay the interest on the cost of construction and leave a balance of £300 a year to the department, part of which might be paid for the necessary attendants. So that the work would not only be a benefit to the farmer, but the country would lose nothing by it. I propose also that there should be a train running from the farming centres once or twice a week to relieve those centres, arriving here on Saturday morning in time for market; also that the farmer who sends a certain amount of produce by train should have the privilege of travelling in the same train free of charge, so as to attend the sales on the Saturday morning. I do not ask this as a privilege; I claim it as a right for the producer. Those farmers and producers are the customers and clients of the department, and the department is in duty bound to provide them with additional accommodation. We have been assisting the merchants in various ways. We spend large sums of money annually in subsidising mail steamers almost exclusively for the benefit of merchants and traders. We have been spending large sums of money, at a considerable loss to the State, in the extension of telegraphic communication from the most southern to the most northern part of the colony; also for the benefit, almost exclusively, of merchants and traders. And I do not think it is too much for me to ask the Government to erect a depot, under the conditions I have mentioned, which will be reproductive in time, and which will be a great boon to the farmers and producers of the colony. The Minister for Lands, during the debate on the Financial Statement, told us that the rate for the carriage of agricultural produce in Queensland was lower than in any other country in Australia. I hold in my hand a book which I have received from Mr. Speight, the chairman of the board of railway management in Victoria, from which it can be seen that agricultural produce is carried in Victoria 25 per cent. less than it is carried in Queensland. Speaking on this subject reminds me that the time has arrived when a Bill should be introduced into the House to make better provision for the construction, maintenance, and management of our State railways. It is not now as it was twenty years ago. Twenty years ago we had only 150 miles of railway; now we have between 1,600 and 1,700 miles. The business has assumed enormous proportions, and is now far more than one man can manage. But how is it managed? A member of Parliament who has, perhaps, had no commercial training, and who has never before had anything to do with railway management, is appointed Minister for Works. After a few years, if he is an intelligent man, he acquires some knowledge of the business; when, perhaps, some political complications arise, the Government is upset, and another

member of Parliament comes in as Minister for Works, who perhaps upsets at once all the arrangements which his predecessor has made for the benefit of the traffic and of the country. I maintain that the time has arrived—and most hon. members will, I believe, bear me out—when the management of our railways should be taken from the political head of the department and handed over to a non-political body. I do not, of course, compare this colony with Victoria, which is much smaller, and where the railways are more concentrated, but it can be easily seen from Mr. Speight's pamphlet that their railway management is far ahead of ours. I find from that gentleman's report that the year before last the gross revenue from the Victorian railways was £2,300,000, and the working expenses £1,287,000, leaving a profit on working amounting to £1,013,000. I have not a word to say against our own Commissioner for Railways or traffic manager; they are both good and energetic men, but they have been hampered by political heads. I know of one instance where the traffic manager sent in some very sensible suggestions to the responsible Minister, but they were not approved of, and the matter is lying dormant still. When we look at the return on capital invested in railways in Victoria, we find it gradually going ahead. On the northern system it has increased from 3·12 per cent. to 3·818 per cent.; on the western system, from 3·80 per cent. to 4·8 per cent.; on the eastern system, from 2·12 per cent. to 2·91 per cent.; and on the Hobson's Bay line, from 6·43 per cent. to 7·01 per cent. It is rising year by year, while in our own railway management it is going down, down, down, every year, from bad to worse. In 1884 the returns on our railways were £3 15s. per cent. on capital invested; in 1885, £2 12s. per cent.; in 1886, £1 15s. per cent.; and, in 1887, £1 0s. 6d. per cent. I should have been satisfied even if our railways had held their ground, but when we see them going back from year to year we must be convinced that it is high time the system was altered in the direction adopted in Victoria, and which the South Australian and New South Wales Governments are trying to introduce into their respective colonies. I do not see why Queensland should be the last in this respect. It was my intention, Mr. Speaker, to have moved in this direction this session; but the way things have turned out—with both the Government and the House upset—I do not know whether it will come on. However, I trust that if the matter is not taken in hand this year it will next year. There are many things in this Victorian report which bear out my assertion that it is desirable that our railway system should be in many ways changed. Speaking about agricultural produce, there is another point I wish to touch upon. I find from the Estimates that we have endowed our new Department of Agriculture, which was created during the recess, with the munificent sum of £1,500, out of which has to be paid the salary and expenses of the Under Secretary, Mr. McLean, which will leave not more than about £300 with which to carry on that important Department of Agriculture for the ensuing year. At the same time we find that the Mines Department has been allowed something like £27,000.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to a point of order. I should like to ask you, sir, if the hon. member is not travelling out of his record in introducing matters relating to railway management and the Departments of Agriculture and Mines? It is very unfair to hon. members who have business on the paper to be delayed by the hon. member wandering so far away from his subject.

The SPEAKER: The motion certainly opens out a very wide field, but perhaps the hon. member is merely introducing these matters to illustrate and enforce his arguments upon it. At present it is difficult to see how the Department of Agriculture can have anything to do with the erection of a dépôt at the metropolitan terminus for the storage of farm produce, which is really the question before the House.

Mr. KATES: I only wish to point out, sir, in connection with this matter, that there is now an Agricultural Department to deal specially with agricultural matters, and I think I was in order in doing so. I was about to point out the difference between the amounts granted for the Mining Department and the Agricultural Department. I have not a word to say against mining; it is a most valuable industry, but I think the difference in the amounts is rather too great, £27,000 for the one and only £1,500 for the other. I now wish to say a few words with reference to the rates, and I hope I am in order in doing so, as they are closely connected with the subject of the motion. We all know that in the Warwick district there are a great number of farmers, most excellent farmers. The late exhibition shows that the farmers of that district are first-class men, seeing that they took all the first prizes with their exhibits, especially hay and chaff. The distance from Killarney to Brisbane in a straight line is only 96 miles, but going round about by Gowrie Junction it is 194 miles, a difference of about 100 miles more than the straight line. Now what I want to ask the Minister for Works is, that until we get the straight line to Warwick, which I hope we shall in a year or two, he should give us the benefit of the rates for the extra distance our farmers have to send their produce. I ask him to waive the difference in rates between Warwick and Toowoomba, and put the Warwick people upon an equal footing with the Toowoomba people.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You won't want the straight line then.

Mr. KATES: I ask that until we get the straight line. There is a difference of 66 miles, and I think if the hon. gentleman will charge us 12s. a ton for the carriage of our produce to Brisbane, the same as from Toowoomba, he will find it very much to his advantage, because a great many trucks, instead of coming down empty, will be filled with produce, which it is desirable to sell. It will also create settlement, and do good all round. This is a hint I am throwing out in connection with this part of my remarks. I find that in Goulburn, which is 134 miles from Sydney, the farmers petitioned the Government to reduce the rate on potatoes to 5s. They said very much the same as we say—that they could not compete with the produce coming from New Zealand at a very low rate; and rather than allow the trucks to go back empty, I believe the Government of New South Wales have consented to carry potatoes from Goulburn to Sydney at 5s. I only hope our new Minister for Works will take a leaf from their book and assist us a little more, as considering that the price of chaff and hay is only about £3 or £4 a ton, and that we are called upon to pay £1 per ton freight in addition to storage and other charges, there is little or nothing left for the farmer. Even their children are becoming disheartened. Hon. members representing agricultural constituencies are constantly waited upon by the children of farmers, who seeing that the farming class have not received any consideration from the Government for the last ten or fifteen years, prefer to get into Government offices. I myself have frequently been applied to by them to get them billets in the Telegraph Department or some other department of the public service.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Why don't they go mining?

Mr. KATES: I do not wish to detain the House any longer. This is a very simple motion, and if adopted will lead to the establishment of a dépôt, which itself will be reproductive. In the course of a few years it will pay for itself, and as it will be of great advantage to the farmers, I hope the Government will adopt it. After all, Mr. Speaker, it is generally admitted that agriculture is the keystone of all national wealth and prosperity. With these few remarks I beg to move the motion. The chief object of it is to bring the producer face to face with the consumer and intending *bond fide* buyer.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with a great many of the remarks that have fallen from the hon. member for Darling Downs. At the present time it is well known that there is not storage room enough at the railway station, as agricultural produce has been coming down very largely of late. But I hardly think that this dépôt principle would work so well as he expects. I do not think it possible for a farmer to come down from the district of Warwick, 160 miles, with his produce and sell it himself in Brisbane. I know it is an impossibility. I may also say that I do not agree with him in what he has stated about the charges made to farmers for storage and demurrage. In fact, I think they are very leniently dealt with. To my own knowledge it is only when the shed is completely blocked with produce, and it is necessary to clear it, that they get notice that demurrage will be charged. At the present time there is not sufficient room. And as to the charge for storage, which the hon. member says commission agents make, I do not know anyone in town who makes such a charge, and I know a good deal about it. I do not think farmers are very hardly dealt with in that way. But, sir, I agree with the hon. member that the rates charged for agricultural produce from his district are too much in proportion to the value of the goods, and I think that in this direction we might let protection come in very fairly. This is a thing we have in our own hands, and taking 10s. per ton off these bulky goods, which are sold at a low price, is a form of protection the Government might very fairly concede. I think it would be protection in the right direction. It would prevent a great deal of imported goods coming into the colony if these rates were reduced; and if a special train were to run on certain days—let the department suit their own convenience as to that—even if special rates were charged—I believe it would be a great inducement to farmers to send their produce down to market, and we should also get it in better condition. An allusion has been made as to whether it is not necessary to follow in the same lines as Victoria and appoint commissioners to manage all our railways. Well, sir, at one time, when it was a new-fangled idea, I thought it might be done here, but at the present time and in our present position, I do not think it would be possible, because they not only manage but build railways. It would be very difficult for a board to do what is proposed by the hon. member for Darling Downs—to reduce the rates in a certain direction for a certain purpose. No board could very well take that in hand; but if the Government of the country delayed the construction of a line they might very fairly be asked to reduce the freights for a certain time. I read the other day that in one of the other colonies a deputation waited on the Minister and asked that the freight from Sydney to Bourke—which I think is nearly 500 miles—for agricul-

tural produce should be 10s. per ton. I do not know whether it was granted or not, but that was what the deputation considered a fair thing in the interest of the farmers, and also because it would result in a large quantity of goods upon which duty was paid being carried on the line, and it would encourage people to settle on the land. I believe the Government are taking it into their consideration whether a considerable reduction should not be made. I mention that to show what is being done elsewhere. I am satisfied that something must be done to assist the farmers, and it would be of great advantage to assist them, because instead of sending money to other colonies and getting no benefit except the small Customs duties, the money would be circulated in the country from the cities, and I believe if that was done we would not have the present deficit staring us in the face. That is the only way to encourage settlement on the land, by encouraging those already there by giving them greater advantages than they have at present.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The proposal of the hon. member for Darling Downs stripped of all its verbiage is this: that he asks the Government to construct warehouses at the expense of the country to store the produce of the farmers. That seems to be the whole thing. Now, that is a principle I certainly cannot endorse or approve of in any shape. There is no man in this House or out of it who would do more to assist the farmers or any other producers against the middlemen of the towns than I would. There are good middlemen, I admit, but I look upon them as the natural enemies of the producers, and would do my best to assist the producers in every manner I could; but I maintain that the Government has no business to take up any particular industry in the country, and say that they require certain conveniences which should be carried out at the expense of every other class of people in the country. That is an utterly false principle to admit for a moment. The hon. gentleman says that by building a shed, storing the produce for a time, and making certain charges, you can save a considerable amount of expense. Possibly you can, but how are the charges to be fixed? I venture to say that the hon. gentleman would be the very first to object to the charges, and say that we should charge nothing like that amount, as soon as the regulations were passed. The hon. gentleman says that agricultural produce ought to be carried from Warwick at the same price as from Toowoomba. Well, what is the use of building railways? If everyone is to pay the same rate of carriage for agricultural produce I could understand the principle, but, in its present shape, I cannot admit the justice of the principle at all. My idea is perfect fairness to everyone. Of course I think that every possible concession should be made to the producing interests, especially to the farmers; but I will not take them up and put them aside as something to be specially pampered and considered at the expense of everyone else.

Mr. KATES: They are your customers.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: So is everyone who produces anything, and to say that the farmers should be specially protected is a principle which I will not admit for a moment, even although I have an agricultural constituency to go back upon. Now, as to the accommodation at the railway station, I admit that the sheds are not equal to the requirements, and we have not been able to store the enormous quantities of produce that have been coming down during the last two or three months, or been able to give people sufficient time to take it away. We have not been able to protect it from the

weather, and I admit that it is necessary that some shed should be erected so that we can run the produce into it and protect it from the weather, and also that people may have a reasonable time to remove it. I believe that can be done at a moderate cost. I shall be able to see the plans and estimated cost of what is required shortly, and if it is in any way reasonable the Government will undertake the work.

Mr. KATES: That is all we want.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As soon as I get the cost I shall be able to tell the House whether the Government will be able to undertake the work. The hon. gentleman commented upon the railway management, but I have not been long enough in the department, and my general knowledge will not enable me to say, whether there is anything in his remarks or not. I think, however, that in the main he talked rather wildly, and that if he had anything to do with the department he would have to take a very different view indeed. It is possible that changes may be made without lessening the receipts from the railways, and that greater facilities and cheaper carriage may be given in many districts, but you cannot go on building railways where there is a sparse population and expect them to make returns such as they have in Victoria, where there are such thickly populated agricultural districts. You must wait, if you are to get any returns, and it is not possible to carry agricultural produce for next to nothing. However, something can be done possibly in that direction, and the rates may be more reasonably and equitably adjusted than at present. I fancy so. I am not speaking with any knowledge, but I shall give attention to this matter, and if I find it can be done at all I shall be very glad to do it; but I will not go to the extent advocated by the hon. member for Darling Downs.

Mr. GRIMES said: Mr. Speaker,—I heartily approve of the resolution moved by the hon. member for Darling Downs, though I cannot endorse all his remarks. I certainly cannot allow it to go forth that the Darling Downs is the only place that can produce good agricultural produce, and I think he has travelled outside of the lines of the resolution in puffing up his district at the expense of others. Neither can I go with him with reference to granting free passes to farmers when bringing their produce to market, because if we adopt that plan we should find that they would send produce down for the purpose of getting a free pass. The tables would be changed.

Mr. KATES: I would explain that my proposition was that only those farmers should get a free pass who sent a certain quantity of produce down and paid a certain sum of money to the department, so that every man would not be entitled to this concession. They must pay a certain sum, say £5 or £10, for a certain amount of produce, to entitle them to the privilege.

Mr. GRIMES: The further explanation of the hon. gentleman puts quite a different light on the matter of free passes. Of course, then, the Commissioner for Railways must determine who shall have free passes granted to them. Well, I am quite prepared to say that the farmers are placed at some disadvantage by the present system of managing this portion of the Railway Department with reference to the storage of produce. They are, by that system, forced into the hands of commission agents and brokers. That perhaps would not be so bad if it was all, but the brokers, in their turn, are forced by the circumstances of the case to accept a lower rate for the produce than the market necessitates that they should do. There is seldom storage accom-

modation at the railway station, and when there is, the charges are so high that they speedily eat up the whole value of the produce, and it is desirable to get it away as quickly as possible. I think six hours is the time allowed by the regulations for removing the stuff, and after that time the owners are charged at the rate of 2s. per ton per day for a very limited time. The broker has very little time at his disposal to really do his best for his clients, and in this way the produce is offered at a lower rate than is ruling for produce under ordinary circumstances. In this way, when there is a little glut at the railway station, the farmers come into competition with each other, and in order to remove it they are obliged to sell their produce at a very low rate. I see by the paper this afternoon that potatoes have been retailed at 3s. 9d. per cwt., and onions at 3s. That is the result of a bit of a glut at the railway station, and the farmers are forced to sell their produce at such a rate to have it removed. With reference to the farmers being induced to sell the produce themselves, I point out that they are not able to bring down sufficient on the one day. They may have to go six or seven miles to the railway station, and over bad roads; and with the number of drays at their disposal they could not get down more than two or three tons per day. It would not pay a farmer to come down forty or fifty miles and pay his fare and expenses in Brisbane with a small quantity like that; but if he could store it at the railway station at a reasonable rate until he could get three or four times that quantity down it might be worth his while to come down and sell his own produce and get a better price for it than commission agents or brokers could. Another thing has to be considered, and that is, if the trucks are kept waiting at the place the produce is to come from very heavy demurrage is demanded, and in that way the farmers have often very heavy charges to meet. It will be acknowledged by every one that the greater facilities we give the farmers to turn their produce into cash, with the least possible expense to them, the better it will be for them and for the country. I heartily support the resolution, and I hope the Minister for Works will see his way to make a differential rate for the storage of goods as he does for their carriage, because it is rather hard that hay or chaff worth £2 or £3 a ton should have to be paid for at the same rate of storage as produce worth £10 or £20 a ton.

Mr. SALKELD said: Mr. Speaker,—I quite agree with the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs, though I think he went out of his way in introducing revenue matters that have nothing to do with his motion. I was afraid when the Minister for Works commenced speaking that he was diametrically opposed to the resolution, but I was glad to hear before he finished that he practically held the same views as are expressed in the resolution; that is that the farmers should be supplied with a depôt or warehouse in which to store their produce until they find a good market for it. The hon. gentleman seemed at first to think the proposal a departure from business principles; but I know that in England the practice is adopted. I know it was in existence twenty-five years ago, and is followed at the present time. There are large warehouses there for the storage of produce and grain, and managed on a system of storage fees. I do not know whether the storage fees pay the expenses, but it is found that the system encourages a large traffic along the lines, and indirectly, if not directly, pays the railway companies. I am quite sure there is no departure from good business principles in the resolution. I am not

certain what views our present traffic manager holds on this subject, but he has had large experience of railways at home, and I venture to say he will heartily approve of a provision of this kind being carried into effect. It is well known that farmers in the country districts can only get their produce to market at certain times, when they are not very busy with other work and when the roads are good for traffic. The result is that when they are not otherwise busy and the roads are good they rush in their produce and glut the market, prices go down, and the produce is sacrificed. When rain sets in the supplies are stopped and the prices go up again, and these extreme variations of prices are not good either for the farmer or consumer. If this resolution is carried it will have a tendency to equalise prices for farmers and consumers. To say that produce shall be removed from the railway station within six hours is out of the question altogether, and the regulation has, I think, been found to be completely impracticable, and has not been enforced very strictly. If this resolution is carried into effect, and the farmer is not able to dispose of his produce within the six hours, he will have the option of storing it; and this is where the Minister for Works should be firm, and insist that certain reasonable charges shall be paid. I believe this proposal will very much help to equalise the prices of produce to consumers and farmers, and will also lead to a largely increased traffic being done on our railways.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sure the farmers should be very thankful to the hon. member for Darling Downs for bringing this matter forward. I think, however, he has overrated the disadvantages the farmers are labouring under at present. No member in this House sympathises with the farmers more than I do, and I would do everything I could to assist them, but I do not see my way clear to assist them at the expense of the State and to the disadvantage of other portions of the taxpayers. The farmers are not so badly off for storage room as the hon. member and other hon. members seem to think. As a matter of fact the municipal council of Brisbane built a large market for storage room, and none of the farmers will go to that market with their produce. The council cannot establish that market, though for the convenience of the farmers, they applied to the Minister for Works to have a siding run into the market building. That application was met and the siding constructed, but the corporation of Brisbane could not get the market established. Having built it with the ratepayers' money, as they cannot collect market tolls they have thought it proper to get the interest on their outlay by leasing the building. We could collect tolls from any goods that came to the market, but we had no law to compel the farmers to come to the market, and that put the municipal council at a disadvantage. The Brisbane Corporation, finding that the farmers would not patronise the market, offered it in sections, and the whole market has been let to different parties except one section that the corporation have kept for general purposes in case some of the farmers might want to send goods down. The storage the corporation could charge under the by-law was 6d. a ton. The goods could be kept there for forty-eight hours, and after that there would be a small charge if the goods were not sold. Finding the market did not take, the corporation have been endeavouring to induce the farmers to send their produce there for storage purposes, and the charge they have been making is 6d. per ton per week for maize, potatoes, and heavy goods, and for chaff in bales the small sum of 2d. per bale per week. Now, the real drawback

is that the Railway Department refuse to shunt trucks into the market except at a certain charge. That is a hardship which I hope the Minister for Works will see his way to remedy. I was informed by a gentleman who has a part of the market that he had fourteen bales of hay consigned to him this week—that would be two tons—and the Railway Department asked 5s. 3d. to shunt the two trucks into the market, or 2s. 7½d. per truck. Now, that amount added to the charge would make it rather heavy on the farmer. I cannot see why the Railway Department should not run the trucks into that market just as well as they used to run them on to the siding at the market which Mr. Midgley had near the gaol. However, that is a matter of detail that can be arranged with the department. I think that the farmers have not such a great deal to complain of for storage room. Some of the farmers want to become produce merchants; they are anxious to form a company, and they want the produce men in Brisbane to join in and take shares. They have tried that once already, and failed miserably. Now, the Minister for Works spoke of the middleman as the natural enemy of the farmer. I believe the middleman is the natural friend of the farmer. The farmer comes to Brisbane and sells 40 or 50 or 100 bags of maize, and he frequently has the money to take back with him. The middleman has to keep the produce in his store perhaps a week or two, and has to wait often months before he gets his return. What with bad debts and long-standing debts I think the middleman is the greater sufferer of the two.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: He grows fat on it.

Mr. McMASTER: I have not seen many produce men getting very fat on it. There was an hon. member in this House representing Fassifern who was a middleman; he was manager of a farmers' company, and it came to grief, financially speaking. The middleman is not such an enemy to the farmer; the one helps the other, and without the one the other could not get on very well. I should be very glad to give every assistance to the farmers, but I fail to see that the country should build a warehouse for them free of charge.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No.

Mr. McMASTER: That is the hon. member's resolution.

Mr. KATES: No; for a reasonable consideration.

Mr. McMASTER: I think they have sufficient facilities afforded to them. Is it fair that the State should build a place where the farmer can store his goods for a very small consideration while he hawks them round the town to the customers—a bag here and a bag there—a bag of chaff here, and a bale of hay to another place? He has no taxes to pay to the city, and he does not assist to maintain our roads. The resolution really amounts to this: The State is asked to build a shed where the farmer can store his goods while he goes hawking them about the town—if he cannot sell to-day, selling to-morrow. I am prepared to assist the farmers, but I am not prepared to establish a warehouse for them at the expense of the State. I agree that the railway charges over the Range ought to be made less. The farmers there ought to be put in some way more on an equality with those below the Range. They are handicapped in that respect, but I do not think they are handicapped as to the storage.

The Hon. G. THORN said: Mr. Speaker,—One fact has been altogether overlooked by the speakers on this question; that is, the reason

for the overcrowding at our railway stations. The reason is that our ports are crowded with produce from abroad. I am given to understand also that farm produce is carried from the other colonies to our Northern ports at a lower rate than we can send it at from Brisbane. If that is the case, I do not wonder at this glutting of the railway stations. The only remedy I can see is that the Government should put a proper fiscal policy before the country. As I said the other night in my speech on the Financial Statement, if we had a proper system of protection in vogue here at the present time we would not hear of this glut of produce at our railway stations. I shall not oppose the motion, but I advise him to withdraw it in view of the very fair proposal made by the Minister for Works. I hope that before long there will be a definite policy adopted here. There are people of all shades of opinion sitting together in this House, and there is no policy binding them together; and so long as this goes on so long will no settlement take place in the country.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—I did not expect so soon to hear such a speech as we have just heard from the hon. member for Fassifern; but he is perfectly correct. I was audacious enough to say the other night that we might have too many farmers. We have too many farmers now.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. W. BROOKES: We have—when every place is chockfull of farming produce, and the only remedy is that proposed by the hon. member for Fassifern. We must protect our own farmers, and we must do it by the imposition of such taxes as, while they may be reasonable, shall be certainly sufficient. If freetrade is to work all against our own colony, I do not see the sense of such a freetrade at all. The hon. member for Darling Downs has pushed the matter a little too far; he has asked a little too much; and I think, with the last speaker, that he may be very well satisfied for the time with what has fallen from the Minister for Works. The member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, does not like the farmer to come into immediate contact with his customers.

Mr. McMASTER: It is possible.

Mr. W. BROOKES: I was very much struck with that, and I did not like it. Now, I do not want anybody to come between the farmer and his customers unless it is absolutely necessary; and I think that to force the farmer to go to a middleman indicates something wrong. If the farmer can sell without going to the middleman so much the better—I am sure no reasonable person will dispute that. But part of the scheme of fostering native industries and encouraging native progress strikes at the middleman; and all reasonable theories with which I am acquainted make a great point of the enormous waste of money incurred by carrying things backwards and forwards. The hams and bacon, for instance, that come from New Zealand are brought at a frightful expense; and that is all waste of money. I think the time has come when, whoever governs the colony, our whole fiscal policy will have to be revised in the interests of the colonists. The interests of the colonists have gone for nothing hitherto, just as the interests of the farmers go for nothing now. The interests of the farmers, so far as I have heard the debate, have been pitted against those of the middlemen, who do not know the difference between the produce of the Downs and that of New South Wales, Victoria, and New Zealand. I think the balance ought to incline towards our own farmers, and I trust the time will come when these matters will be gone into. I do not think the farmers should be handicapped in the

way they are. What would be the use of growing farm produce at Roma when the price received for it here would not pay for the carriage? There should be a scale by which those nearest the market should have most to pay, and the rate should diminish the further away they are. That is common sense; and those common-sense views will more and more pervade the community. I hope the hon. member for Darling Downs will rest satisfied with what has fallen from the Minister for Works, and withdraw his motion, on the principle that if he does not accept a fair honest proportion of what he wants he may perhaps get nothing.

Mr. ISAMBERT said: Mr. Speaker,—I certainly expected better arguments from the hon. member for Darling Downs in favour of the motion than he has advanced. He went on the one-horse idea that Brisbane is the centre of Queensland whither everything must be sent and whence everything must go. He was far more sensible on a former occasion when arguing in favour of agricultural colleges and encouraging the protection of various articles now imported; at the same time the hon. member deserves credit for bringing forward the motion. Immense quantities of farm produce are sent to Brisbane. They are bulky and cheap, and hence the difficulty. Formerly we had only one railway—now we have many branches in agricultural districts; and the farmers, in the absence of diversified industries, have no outlet but Brisbane, and the consequence is that the Brisbane market is flooded. A bulky article like hay is sent from the Downs to Brisbane, and cheese from New Zealand is sent to Warwick and Toowoomba. Is that not absurd? The consumer and the producer live thousands of miles asunder, and the middleman and the carrier stand between them. The proposition of the hon. member for Fassifern and the remarks of the hon. member for North Brisbane are to the point. We do not want everything to be sent to Brisbane. I would like to see centres of industry all over the colony. Instead of the Warwick people sending hay to Brisbane they ought to send cheese down. It does not pay to send bulky produce long distances; but if the raw products are converted into manufactured articles of the highest value and smallest volume, then you can stand the railway freight. After the promise the Minister for Works has given to extend storage accommodation, and the new departure which the Government have at last taken in looking after our own industries, this ought to be sufficient assurance to the hon. member for Darling Downs to induce him to withdraw his motion. I support him so far that the farmers require greater attention at the hands of the Government.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—We have had a pretty lengthy discussion from the representatives of the farming interests, and statements have been made about farmers which I can hardly credit. I believe that some farmers are well off, thriving and prosperous, and I am very glad that they should be in that happy condition. Others, no doubt, are not. But I do not think that as a class they ought to have any special advantages granted to them at the expense of the rest of the community. As for farmers coming into direct contact with the consumers in town, it would be only a waste of time. They would do far better to remain on their farms, and trust to good, honest middlemen to dispose of their produce. I have no doubt there are plenty of those men here. I am not afraid of middlemen, nor do I consider them the curse of the colony, as the Minister for Works seems to do. What are lawyers but middlemen? In fact, we have to employ middlemen in every

line of business. Suppose a grazier were to come down with his sheep or cattle, and distribute them direct to the consumer, how would he look? How could the wool-growers dispose of their wool without the aid of middlemen? In fact, every branch of industry—even the mining industry—has to depend upon them. The farmers have their remedy in their own hands. They have only to select careful, honest, hard-working, and intelligent middlemen. They cannot expect to come down to Brisbane at the expense of the State, and get into direct contact with the consumer. The notion is simply ridiculous. As for the variations in price, that has to be submitted to in all markets, whether for stock, wool, or anything else.

Mr. KATES: The wool goes to England.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: But in London the market is sometimes glutted, and the wool has to be sold at an unremunerative price. It is a business that has precisely the same risks as any other business that men engage in has. We are told that farming is such a poor business that the farmers want all their sons to go into the Civil Service. If that is the case, they had better give up farming and take up some more remunerative occupation, such as mining; or they might become middlemen, or lawyers, or newspaper men, which I believe is rather a refuge for the destitute just at present. But I am not at all inclined to think that the farmers are in a destitute condition. I am quite sure they are not. Many of them are in a very good position, and they have no need whatever of any special pleading or special legislation on their behalf.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—The farming community are very slow to combine for any purpose whatever, notwithstanding that it may be to their own interest to do so. But a feeling of dissatisfaction has arisen in the minds of certain farmers of late, and two or three weeks ago they began to form a combination for their own protection. Shortly before this the market building at Brisbane was offered at auction, and no one made a bid for it; but as soon as the news of this farmers' association reached Brisbane, the middlemen rushed off to the town council and obtained a monopoly of the market for a whole year. This association, the committee of which has been formed, is to consist of farmers only. I believe they have refused to allow any business man to take shares in it.

Mr. McMASTER: They have asked middlemen to come in.

Mr. WHITE: That is not so. The middlemen have of late lost the confidence of the farmers by pushing imported produce to the front and depreciating the price of Queensland produce. They have been, as it were, crying the Queensland produce down as an inferior article, and selling the foreign produce at a higher price as a superior article, when, in many instances, the very opposite was the case.

Mr. McMASTER: No.

Mr. WHITE: I am convinced that that is the fact from certain things that have come to my knowledge. I was told, not more than two or three weeks ago, by a neighbour of mine—who has his barn full of corn, which he does not want to sell—that he was in Brisbane, and, like all farmers, wanted to know what price he might expect for it. He went into a middleman's place of business, and—farmers are always backward at meeting the principals in this business when they have not come to sell—asked the storeman what was the price of corn. The storeman replied that his master was in the office. As the farmer did not want to see the master, he again put the question. The storeman asked, "Is it Queensland

corn?" and, on being told that it was, said, "We do not buy any Queensland corn; we buy nothing but Californian corn." It is thus evident that those men are pushing this imported produce to the front and getting a good price for it, while they are depreciating the value of the Queensland produce and compelling it to be sold at a lower figure. Consequently the farmers, finding their interests injured in this way by the middlemen, are trying to extricate themselves from their grasp; and the Government will be perfectly justified in doing anything that will enable farmers to collect their produce for two or three days and come down and try to dispose of it without being driven to cart it out of the railway yards at once. It is quite a mistake to suppose that the farmers want to sell a bushel of potatoes to one man and a bag of corn to another. That will be left to the dealers.

Mr. McMASTER: The middlemen.

Mr. WHITE: No; there are a large number of small dealers now to whom they might sell, but at present they are obliged to consign to some middleman, who charges his own figure, and a very high one too, for his trouble in disposing of their produce. I think the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs is a very good one, and one that, at any rate, the Government ought to consider very carefully.

Mr. JESSOP said: Mr. Speaker,—I am inclined to support the motion of the hon. member for Darling Downs, for the simple reason that I think it is the duty of the Government to give every facility possible for the sale of produce of all kinds. The merchant has every facility given to him; he has sheds for the storage of his goods at every terminus on our lines, and I do not see why the same facilities should not be given to the agricultural portion of the community. I have followed all that has been said by the hon. members who have spoken, but I must confess that I cannot follow the hon. member for Rosewood, representing as he does such a large agricultural constituency. As to the middlemen, I have nothing at all to say about them. That is a matter that will settle itself in time, as these things always do. If the middlemen have goods sent to them under instructions they must obey those instructions, or take the market price. Very often people think their goods are worth more than they are in the market, and if they will not fetch the price they place upon them then they have to lie unsold. With regard to the price to be paid for storage and so on, that is a matter for the consideration of the Government if they build the shed; but I do not believe that producers will ever come down and sell their own produce. Some middlemen seem afraid that they will do so, but no such thing will happen. It is impossible. No man could afford to leave his home and work and come down to Brisbane and spend three or four days here to sell £20 or £30 worth of produce. But there is another portion of the produce of the colony that we have forgotten altogether—that is, pastoral produce. I should like the Government to put on some refrigerating cars, and to build sheds with cooling-rooms, so that meat might be brought down and sold at a low price, and thereby do away with the ruinous monopoly that we have now. That is one of the first steps the Government ought to take—to enable producers to get to market one of the most important items of food—namely, meat.

The Hon. G. THORN: And fish.

Mr. JESSOP: All kinds of goods. At present a producer at Dalby has to pay 1s. for sending down a sheep, and if it fetches 10s. in the Brisbane market he does not get more than 7s. or 8s.

I hope that before long the Government will take steps to provide refrigerating cars and receiving-rooms along the line, so that meat may be sent to market without being knocked about, and be sold at a price to suit consumers.

Mr. BROWN said: Mr. Speaker,—In regard to this proposal of the hon. member for Darling Downs, I am quite of opinion that every facility possible should be given for the storage of produce. Looking at it as a matter of food supply, there is no doubt that agricultural produce should be carried at as low a rate as possible. It is not a bit of use for farmers in the district of Warwick or other parts of the colony trying to bring their produce to market if the railway rates are higher than the cost of bringing the same kind of produce from Warrambool or New Zealand. Of course the argument may be used, "We cannot afford to run our railways without profit" but I do not think that consideration should weigh altogether in deciding the point, because we should rely for that to a very large extent upon the return carriage inland. The more produce we bring down the larger the population we shall settle in the interior, and the larger the amount of goods we shall carry back at a higher rate of freight; so that I think if we want to assist the farming industry, instead of talking about protection, we should reduce the rates on their produce as low as possible. I do not know what the rates are, but I understand from the speeches of hon. members that from Warwick to Brisbane they are higher than the farmers can afford to pay. If that is the case they should be reduced in consideration of the many advantages we should gain by carrying their produce at a low rate.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—It strikes me from the discussion we have heard this evening that the time has come when our protectionist friends are determined to air their crotchets under every kind of motion that comes before the House. I suppose we shall revise the tariff some day, and they are preparing themselves and the country for the great revolution they expect is going to take place when the people who are now receiving the benefits of freetrade will turn round and tax themselves and pay a great deal more money for the goods they will consume in the future than they are paying at present. But the country is not yet ready for protection. The people are a long way off being led away in that direction by one or two members of this House who have always held those views. The time has not yet come, and it will take considerable time before they manage to convince the working classes that it is for their benefit to tax themselves for the purpose of benefiting the few. The millennium has not yet come, Mr. Speaker. Hon. members have been speaking as if we were going to do away with middlemen, the working classes with employers, cattle producers with agents for selling their produce, and as if we are all going first-class to market. Everybody is going to do without everybody else, and do their own business. But you will always have middlemen and others to help to do the business of the country. While I sympathise with the farmers, and think the Government should do everything for them that they reasonably can do, I also think that they should do as much for everybody else in the country. We have no more right to give advantages to farmers, if other persons in the community will suffer thereby, than we have to give advantages to any particular manufacturer if other people should suffer in consequence. The hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Brown, has thrown out a suggestion which, if acted upon, will do more good for the farmers than anything in the

way of protection. They want their rates for railway carriage reduced, and I think we ought to have differential rates to distant parts of the colony, so that farming populations at a distance may be placed in the same position as those near the market. If we look at some of the Western places—for instance, Roma and Mitchell—those districts pay actually 100 per cent. more for some articles they purchase than the cost price in Brisbane. They buy coarse salt in Brisbane at £3 10s. per ton, and before they get it it costs them £7. They get flour sent away from Brisbane at £10 per ton, and before they receive it it costs £18; and how, under those conditions, are the people in those districts—farmers and other poor people—to live at the same level as those living nearer markets? I think we should have differential rates so as to encourage persons living in distant parts of the colony. It would do far more good for the farmers than giving them protection.

Mr. KATES: I don't want protection; I want storage.

Mr. MACFARLANE: I have always found farmers to be as independent a class as any in the community. They do not want to get things that other people are denied, and they will be quite content to receive fair play from the Government. Give the farmers and everybody else fair play, and there will then be no cause for complaint that we do great things for one class while another class is neglected.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member who has just sat down has told us that the time has not yet come for the policy of protection to be adapted to our industries. We are not asked to discuss that point. He also told us that the protectionists never lose an opportunity of preaching their doctrine; but sir, I think sound doctrine cannot be preached too often. I hope the freetrade heathen will profit by the discourses they hear during the next two or three years on the subject of protection *versus* freetrade. I do not see, in the motion tabled by my hon. friend the member for Darling Downs, anything approaching to protection. We are simply aiming to supply a means of helping a class of people who are of very great advantage to the community as a whole. We are asking for a means of helping them to prosecute their industry with success, and we are prepared to say that those people shall pay for the advantage they receive. We ask the Government to erect storage room where the farmers will be able to store their produce, and in return for that they are prepared to pay a small contribution—daily, weekly, or monthly, as the case may be—for the benefit so conferred upon them. I do not see that there is anything very serious or like protection in that. It is an act of encouragement which may be extended to any industry. A great deal has been said about the independence of farmers. That is trotted out to suit the opinions of individual members. The farmer is looked upon as dependent or independent, to suit the views of individuals. I do not think the farmer requires special “coddling”; but I do hold that the farmer is a *bona fide* wealth producer, and as such he is not on the same plane as the man who contributes absolutely nothing to the wealth of the community.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: What about miners?

Mr. MORGAN: I say that the miner is a very good man, and entitled to encouragement; but, Mr. Speaker, I am now dealing with a class of men I know, and that is the agriculturist, who creates wealth that we all afterwards share in, and whom it is to the interest of the State to protect. I think the Government

might act upon this motion whether it is carried or not, as they would be giving some little help to the farmers, who surely are entitled to encouragement. There is another way by which farmers could also be encouraged, and that is through the Railway Department direct. Quite recently, before the death of the late Minister for Works, my hon. friend Mr. Kates and I called upon him, and suggested that he might employ the Railway Department to the advantage of the farming industry on the Darling Downs and the colony generally, at any rate during the next few months. We pointed out to him that on the Darling Downs there were some thousands of tons of as good lucerne hay as I think can be produced, Mr. Speaker, in any part of Australia. It is lying in stacks, and the farmers' position is this: For some months past the ruling rate for that class of produce in the metropolitan market has been such, that, with the exorbitant railway rates rendered necessary by the circuitous route from Warwick to Brisbane, the farmers could not send their produce to Brisbane and sell it at a profit. They must compete with the farmers of the southern colonies who have not to pay these rates. We pointed that out to the Minister for Works and asked, in order to enable those men to compete during the next three months on an equal footing with the southern producers, and enable them to clear their farms of those large surplus crops before the new crops come in, that the rates between Warwick and Brisbane should be reduced from 17s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. per ton, and proportionately all through the district. There promises to be an early spring, and the lucerne crops will be ready for cutting very shortly now, and it is desirable that the farmers should get their last year's crop to market before the new one comes in. We pointed that out to the Minister, and also that from the Killarney railway station, which is 90 miles from Brisbane in a direct line, but which is 190 miles by the railway, the farmer has to pay 25s. per ton upon his produce, while the Toowoomba farmer, who is 10 miles further away from Brisbane, has only to pay half that price. That is not just or equitable. But to go back to what I was saying, Mr. Speaker: we asked for a reduction from 17s. 6d. to 12s. 6d. per ton in the case of Warwick, and proportionately in the cases of other Downs centres, with the object of enabling the local producers to clear their farms. The Minister for Works replied: “If you see the traffic manager, and he assures me that this can be done without loss to the department, I will do it.” I was disappointed with that answer. I thought that it was an answer that might well come from the non-political head of the department; but from a Minister who we hoped and expected would take a broader view of the matter than mere pounds, shillings, and pence, I was disappointed with it. Then we went to the traffic manager, and he showed us that, by running trains at that price for three months to achieve the purpose we had in view, the State would lose a possible £200. Now, by losing that £200 we might cut out £20,000 or £30,000 worth of southern produce; so I do not think the Minister for Works took a sensible view of the case. I think the State might submit to a trivial loss in order to benefit the industries of the State. The matter is not yet at an end; we propose to re-open negotiations with the new Minister for Works. Perhaps he may agree with us. It shows what an unfortunate position the farmers of that end of the colony are placed in by the railway rates. They are shut out of the Brisbane market, except when abnormally high rates prevail; and the whole thing is reduced to this condition of affairs, Mr. Speaker: that the Darling Downs farmer's opportunity is when

produce is at famine rates down here; and when his barns and stocks are filled he is almost praying that a famine may rule down here in order that he may make some profit. I think there must be something very "rotten in the State of Denmark" when that kind of thing prevails. I hope my friend the hon. member for Darling Downs will not withdraw his motion.

Mr. KATES: I have no intention of doing so.

Mr. MORGAN: We are not desirous of having any cut at the middleman. The middleman does play an important part in this business, and I will show you how he acts. It has come under my notice, and I know what I say is a fact. The farmer ships his produce here to a man who is called a produce dealer. I do not say that is the rule; but, say a produce dealer gets a consignment of some fifty bales of chaff; thirty of those bales may be of the finest quality and command a price equal to the imported article, and twenty may be of inferior quality. What does the dealer do, Mr. Speaker? The ruling rate, perhaps, is £3 for the best article, and he puts the thirty good bales in his own shop and retails it at £4 10s. The inferior article he submits for sale, and he probably realises a very small sum for it indeed. Now, if he submitted the whole together in the open market the good would carry off the bad, and he would get a fair average price all round. The result is this, that we have a middleman who is interested in getting his produce from the producer at a low price, and selling to the public at the highest price, and the man who ought to get some return for his labour is victimised. Now, I understand that the idea of a depôt is not by any means new and will not be peculiar to Queensland. These things are in existence not only in the other colonies but in England, and I believe I shall not be breaking confidence in saying that the traffic manager of the Southern and Western line, who we know is a man who is always desirous of promoting the interests of the public, is favourable to this project. He thinks it can be made the means by which the traffic can be very largely increased, and he thinks also that that can be done without making the proposed building any charge whatever upon the general taxpayer. A very small item for charges which the farmers would not feel might be imposed, and the depôt could be worked by the officers of the central railway station. If the depôt can be built, and, without injuring the general taxpayer, benefit the producer, I think most decidedly that the Government ought to lend a helping hand in doing so. I shall vote for the motion.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise for the purpose of saying that this motion has my sympathy. I can speak upon the subject without being charged with having a motive in doing so, because I represent a constituency in which there are no agriculturists whatever. Notwithstanding that, my constituency is equally interested with the Darling Downs constituency in forwarding the producing interests, and therefore, being as we are, intimately connected with the land, the farming class have the utmost sympathy of that very great producing class, the wool-growers or pastoral tenants. I think, as a representative of a large pastoral district that if I did not rise in my place in the House to let the farmers and the country know that they have our sympathy, I should not be doing my duty. I think, when we look at the Victorian system of railway management, and contrast it with ours, we shall see under what great disadvantages we are compared with them. I know there are miles and miles of sheds in the Spencer-street railway station for the express purpose of storing farmers' produce. I know that the commissioners who manage the

Railway Department of Victoria have devoted a great deal of thought to in what manner they can give the greatest encouragement to the farming industry in that colony, and it has only been since the railways of Victoria were brought under commissioners that that has been achieved. When their railway system was under a political head there were always the same complaints from the farmers that we hear in this colony. They always had the political head getting up in the House and making exactly similar speeches to that which was made by the Minister for Works this afternoon; but there is a very different state of affairs there now. We never hear complaints from farmers about the high rates charged on their produce. It does not matter whether the farmer is near or far from the market, the commissioners have arranged to make the railways pay, and yet have equalised the rates to the farmer who is near the market and the farmer who is far away. They have differential rates. They run the railways on commercial rules. They know it costs no more to load a truck for 10 miles than for 100 miles. They know the further they carry the goods the better it is for the railway and the cheaper they can carry them. That is the principle they have acted upon throughout. The main thing underlying this question is the proper management of our railways. Unless we have them efficiently managed we can never work them in the interests of the people. There will always be the complaint that the lines are not paying; but they do not pay because they are badly managed, and I maintain that if we only place them under efficient and proper management, and take them altogether out of the hands of the political head of the department, they will pay. We need only go to the adjoining colonies for examples. Go to New South Wales. There they are considering the very same question. And go to Victoria; there, as the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, says, the most valuable results have been achieved under the management of the commissioners. I have been travelling lately, and the only worse system of railways than our own that I have come across is the Egyptian system. They are the worst managed railways in the world, and the next to them are the Queensland railways. I came overland by rail the other day from New South Wales, and when I looked at the carriages I found them all blistered with the sun, cracking and spoiling through want of paint. I noticed everywhere when I came down the line, that instead of the rolling-stock being clean, well painted, and well kept, everything looked dirty and filthy. I got into a carriage at Wallangarra, the new railway station on the border, and I found cigar-ashes left on the seats by the men who had occupied the carriage the day before; and on my way I had to take up the cushions off the seats and throw off the bread-crumbs, and bits of butter, and odds and ends that were lying about them, left by previous travellers. Well, I have not seen that kind of thing on any other railways but the Egyptian railways, but they have got much dirtier people to deal with there than we have. There is no excuse for that kind of thing here, because our people are clean, and surely our carriages can be kept clean. I am saying this in illustration of the thorough want of management that pervades the whole system of our railways, and the sooner we take steps to do away with this kind of management the better it will be for our railways. I am sure that under such a new system the farmers of Queensland would get the same relief that the farmers of Victoria got when the Parliament of Victoria, in its wisdom, took the railways there out of political management. If our railways were private property, the property of an

individual, would he choose as a manager for that property a man who had no previous knowledge of railway management? Is it likely he would take a gentleman like the present Minister for Works and put him over a huge department like this, about which he knows nothing? I would like to know where the hon. gentleman got his knowledge of railway management, and why we should have a man, who never before had any experience of railways, beyond travelling upon them occasionally, foisted upon the country as our railway manager. I would not mind his being appointed the political head of the department, the representative of the department in this House. No doubt he could fill that office with ability; I am not saying anything about that, but I am quite sure he will be utterly incapable of practically managing our railways, because that is the position the Minister for Works is expected to take up in this country. I do not blame the hon. gentleman, but I blame the public for allowing such an anomaly to exist for a moment. I think the hon. gentleman has spent most of his life in this country, and he can have no practical experience of railway management in any other country. This department has grown to be of such magnitude that no man in this country has sufficient experience to manage it. I do not care where he got his experience in Australia, no man could have sufficient experience to manage such a huge overgrown department as this. They saw that in Victoria, and sent to England, and offered the highest salary to draw the best man to manage their railways, and we shall have to do the same thing if our railways are to be worked in the interests of farmers, graziers, and all classes in the community. The sooner we adopt that system the better it will be for the country.

Question put and passed.

THE CAIRNS RAILWAY RETURNS.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL, in moving—

That the Order of the House, made on the 4th instant, that there be laid upon the table of the House certain papers relating to the second section of the Cairns railway, be rescinded—

said: Mr. Speaker,—I have to give as my reasons for this motion that this order of the House referred to was made on a chance division just before tea-time. I was not in the House when it came to a division, otherwise I should have voted against the production of the schedule prices of the contract for the second section of the Cairns Railway. I may state that I was asked to put this notice on the paper by the late Minister for Works, who I am sure would have supported me very strongly on it. He said that when the Premier assented to the order being made, and when the Government voted for it, they did not understand the exact nature of the case. It appears that in all these contracts the contractors are in the habit of putting an extra large profit on the earthworks—clearing and cutting—the first works to be begun, in order that they may get a considerable amount of money into hand as soon as possible. On some of the other works they are content with little or no profit. If the prices are disclosed before the works are commenced the contractors will be brought into no end of trouble with their men. The men will look at one part of the contract and will say, “The contractors are getting 2s. 6d. a yard for this work, and we are getting, say, only 1s. 6d. a yard for it.” They will be all out on strike, considering they are not fairly dealt with, though they are not able to estimate the losses that may come afterwards on the contract and which this profit

on the earthworks is expected to counterbalance. I think if the original order were fulfilled the contractors would have a very fair claim against the Government in an action for damages. I hold in my hand a return made to the order of this House shewing that in respect of the Bundaberg Railway, McSharry and O'Rourke claimed for “loss sustained by District Engineer divulging our prices to the men employed by us, £3,000.” I believe we should have a very considerable claim sent in by the contractor for this second section of the Cairns Railway if the prices were divulged before the work was finished. It would be quite reasonable for hon. members of this House to ask for the schedule prices after the work is done, but while it is in process of being done Government are in honour bound to keep the schedule prices, which are sealed, a secret. It is the case that in these contracts the adjustment of prices is the result of the combination of the highest intelligence, and the man who has most brains in all probability gets the contract. By disclosing his brains to the public we should be giving them every advantage to make use of them. I am sure if such a course as this is adopted, of disclosing the schedule prices before the work is done, by the Queensland Government, they will find good and successful contractors very chary about coming here to contract for any public work, as they would be entirely at the mercy of their men in every piece of work in which they were engaged. I believe the work on the second section of the Cairns railway is going on in a most satisfactory way, and there are no complaints either from the men or from the people of the town. No complaints whatever have reached me as to the manner in which the contract is being carried on. I am aware, of course, that an objection has been raised to the contractor, Mr. Robb, getting the contract as against Carey and Maund, but that is a matter of another kind altogether, and I am willing to hear any discussion on that matter.

The SPEAKER: The business under consideration at the adjournment at 6 o'clock will now stand adjourned until after the disposal of Government business.

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

THIRD READING.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this Bill be now read a third time.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I objected to this going as a formal motion, not with any desire to delay the passing of the Bill, but simply to enter my protest against the amendment made in regard to endowments. As I understood the argument of the Chief Secretary the other day, it was to the effect that it was not absolutely compulsory on the Government to pay the £2 for £1 endowment. I do not pretend to know whether that is so or not, but I do think the divisional boards were under the impression that it would be paid. If it is not compulsory, I take it that when the Government of the day find they are not in a position to pay the double endowment they must take the responsibility upon themselves of stopping it or paying a less amount. If that is the case I think the Chief Secretary ought not to have brought the matter before the House and asked us to make a difference in the endowment, but should have taken the whole of the responsibility upon himself. I believe, as I have believed all along, that the boards are entitled to the payment of the £2 for £1 endowment for ten years; and I do not think any action of this House in amending the law can take from them the right they possess under the present Act. The

hon. gentleman referred to a provision inserted in the Act of 1878; but that provision is not in the Divisional Boards Act; nor, in my opinion, does it affect the question. I do not wish to increase the public expenditure, as the hon. gentleman states. I know that, on the strength of the £2 for £1 endowment, boards have obtained advances from banks to carry on necessary works; and only yesterday a gentleman in charge of a country bank told me that he had made advances to five boards on the strength of their being entitled to that endowment, but that now this amendment is passed those boards will get no more advances. By passing a measure of this kind not only are the boards unsettled, but they are placed in such a position that no monetary institution can tell what amendment may be made in the law which will take from them the security upon which they make advances. I simply enter my protest against the passage of the measure.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to say a few words in answer to the hon. member for Port Curtis. I find on reference that the clause I referred to is not contained in the Divisional Boards Act of 1879; I was under the impression that it was. The words of the section are: "It shall be lawful for the Governor to direct the Colonial Treasurer to pay to the credit of the divisional fund by way of endowment any sums of money equal to but not exceeding" the amount paid as endowment. There is nothing to compel the Government to do it. As I said the other evening, the better construction is that the Government are not bound to pay £2 for £1 unless the money is available. The boards, however, understood that they were entitled to the double endowment; and that being so, there is no doubt that an alteration ought not to be made without giving them fair notice. I am not going to repeat the arguments as to the duty of Parliament in keeping public expenditure under control. I do not think it has ever abandoned that control, but, if it has, it ought to resume it as soon as possible. As to the boards being crippled, they will have as much money every year for the next three years as they had last year; and as to the country bank manager referred to by the hon. gentleman not making any more advances, I think he does not understand his business. That is all I can say about him, nor do I think it is desirable that banks should make large advances to divisional boards. It is better that the boards should proceed in the legitimate way and not incur debts; in fact the law prohibits them from incurring liabilities of that kind.

Mr. NORTON: They cannot help it sometimes.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was passed, and ordered to be forwarded to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

COPYRIGHT REGISTRATION BILL (QUEENSLAND).

The SPEAKER said: I have received the following message from the Legislative Council:—

"MR. SPEAKER,
"The Legislative Council having this day agreed to a Bill entitled 'A Bill to make provision for the registration of copyright in books and dramatic pieces published in Queensland,' begs now to return the same to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

"A. H. PALMER,
"President.

"Legislative Council Chamber,
"1st September, 1887."

CAIRNS RAILWAY RETURNS.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL, resuming, said: Mr. Speaker,—I have very little more to say on this subject, and I hope hon. members will give it their most serious consideration. The motion for laying the papers on the table was carried on your casting vote, and I think if you had thoroughly understood the subject as I see it now, your vote would probably have been given the other way. If these schedules of prices are divulged, it is equal to the Government making use of the knowledge they get through the Custom House, and advertising the indented prices of every merchant's goods that go through their hands and letting the public know what they paid for them. It would destroy any contractor's business if his schedules of prices were published and made known before the contract was finished. After the contract is finished there can, of course, be no objection to the schedules being put before the House and before the country. I maintain that it would be a gross injustice to the contractor to reveal his schedule of prices while the work is going on. This contractor, Mr. Robb, I may mention, has a very heavy stake in the colony; the Government are thoroughly satisfied that the work will be well carried out. He has had to pay a deposit of £14,500 as security, which the Government hold; he has put on the work £10,000 worth of plant, and he is proceeding with his contract to the satisfaction of everyone—both the workmen and navvies on the line, and the townspeople of Cairns; whereas the previous contract was in the hands of a lame and inefficient contractor, who was the cause of a great deal of distress, not only to the men on the works, but also to the people of the town. The men do not care a bit what price Mr. Robb is getting so long as they are getting good wages. They have no desire to pry into the business secrets of the contractor. I cannot understand the view the Government took of the matter; I do not think they thoroughly understood the situation when they allowed themselves to support the motion. I can assure them that their late colleague, the late Minister for Works, represented most strongly to me the necessity of having the order rescinded. He told me he had received a protest by wire at once from the contractor against the order being complied with, and that the order would never have been made if he had been in his place in the House to explain the matter—which he would, no doubt, have done in a much more explicit manner than I have been able to do. I hope hon. members will seriously consider this question, and not conclude that because they voted one way on a certain occasion they are bound to vote the same way now, but will give a fair and free vote on the merits of the question.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—My colleague, Mr. Hill, has proposed that a motion carried by me some weeks since should be rescinded, and the reasons he has given in favour of his proposition are simply a repetition of the reasons which were given when my motion was carried—reasons which were then not considered sufficiently strong to warrant its rejection. I shall refer to some of the reasons which he has now adduced. He states that it would be unfair to contractors, and he gives an instance of a merchant's indents of the prices he pays for his goods being made public, and how that would injure him. But the prices are well known; they are advertised in the papers every day.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The selling price; not the price the merchant indented them for.

Mr. HAMILTON: We know the market price of the various goods which are imported here. The hon. member's reasons are simply

nonsensical. If I have a contract, say, for clearing, or for sinking a shaft, for which I am paid a certain price: if I sublet the contract, the price which the sub-contractors pay me is not regulated by the price which I obtained. It is regulated by what it will pay them to do it for; in other words, it is regulated by competition. The majority of persons working on that line are working for wages, and it matters not to them what the contractor is getting. They are receiving so much a day, and it is no concern of theirs whether the contractor makes £5,000 or £10,000, or nothing at all, out of the work. If they did not choose to work for fair wages they could leave, and the contractor would get others to fill their places. But the Premier told us he believed Mr. Robb would lose a great deal of money—that it would be a losing concern. If that is the case, do we think the sub-contractors would take the work at less than it would pay them to take it for? Certainly not. The mere statement of the Premier that he believes Mr. Robb will lose heavily on the contract should be an argument, if my colleague's argument is good, in favour of publishing what those schedules are. If my colleague's argument is correct, that the tenders of the sub-contractors would be regulated by what Mr. Robb is paid, provided they knew what he got; and if the Premier's statement is true, that Mr. Robb will lose a great deal of money on the contract, it follows that they would agree to work at a loss if they knew Mr. Robb was doing so. I quite agree with my colleague that the work is being done in a most satisfactory manner, and that the people of Cairns are thoroughly satisfied at the way in which the railway is progressing, and are very glad indeed that Mr. Robb has got the contract. Personally, I have nothing to say and no charge to bring against him. I am very glad he has got the contract. The charge I have made is against the Government. Mr. Robb is perfectly justified in getting the contract, and in getting as much as he can for it. But my colleague states that he has no desire to refrain from discussing the case of Carey and Maund against Robb, as to the favouritism apparently shown in accepting the tender of the higher man. He knows perfectly well that it is impossible to discuss this question unless those schedules which I have asked for are produced. It is no use trying to throw dust into the eyes of men who understand the question; and I repeat that it is impossible to discuss the merits of that case until those schedules are produced. For instance, a man who may be "in the swim" for a certain contract may offer to do concrete work for, say, £3 a cubic yard, and may offer to do woodwork for 10s. a foot, although the latter must at that rate entail a loss! Another contractor, who knows nothing about this, says, "I cannot do this woodwork for 10s. a foot; I should lose by it." Perhaps the proper price for the woodwork may be £2 a foot, but the man who knows he is going to get it, knows perfectly well—what the other, who is not "in the swim," does not know—that he will have no woodwork to do, but will have twice the amount of concrete in its place for which he has tendered to do for a very high price. If we have to wait till the work is done before we can discuss this case we shall have to wait four years; and what is the use of discussing it then? This Government will be a thing of the past long before that time.

Mr. BULCOCK: How do you know that?

Mr. HAMILTON: I know it from the almost universal feeling of the people of Queensland. The junior member for Cook states that a protest was received from the contractor. I consider that that protest was not from the contractor

but from the Government. I do not think the contractor has any objection to the production of the schedules. Before I moved in this matter I spoke to several contractors about it, and asked if it would affect them in any possible way. They all stated that it could not possibly affect them.

Mr. BULCOCK: They wanted to know the prices.

Mr. HAMILTON: It was perfectly immaterial to them what the price was after the contract was taken. Now, what are the real reasons for the objection to produce these papers? The real reasons have not been given. My colleague has stated that it was a chance division the other evening. Yes, it was a chance division. We all noticed that the Government did not like actually to oppose the motion. It would have been very indecent if they had done so, because it was in order to institute an inquiry against certain improper practices which we consider they have been guilty of that they were asked for. But although the Government did not actually object to it, you will recollect, Mr. Speaker, that when the division took place it was sixteen on each side, and I was not the only member on this side who noticed one of the Government members walk over and vote with us, and as soon as he saw that we were just level he actually got up on two occasions to walk back again, but he appeared to be ashamed to do so; he blushed and sat down again. I was not the only member who noticed that; and we see again to-night that the motion will not be opposed by the Ministry—that it will be carried.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS: Who blushed?

Mr. HAMILTON: I will not say who it was. Most members on that side are past blushing. Taking into consideration the fact that nearly four weeks have elapsed since my motion was passed, and the House ordered those papers to be produced—and they could have been produced next day—but the Government have not produced them, I say it justifies the inference that this action on the part of my colleague has been prompted by the Government in order that they may not be produced.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Prompted by the late Minister for Works.

Mr. HAMILTON: It may be so.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I told you so.

Mr. HAMILTON: That is an additional reason for my disbelieving it. I shall simply state the history of these tenders. We recollect that certain tenders were put in for the contract for the second section of the Cairns railway, and that Carey and Maund's was the lowest tender; that Robb and Co. were the next lowest. Carey and Maund being £23,000 or £24,000 lower than Robb and Co., the natural conclusion was that they would get the contract, but they did not get it. We know that instead of getting it—instead of being allowed a chance of getting it—the Government dealt with the next lowest tenderer, and he agreed to do the work for £7,000 lower than Carey and Maund, and they gave him the contract. Carey and Maund's tender was £298,000, the lowest; and they gave an immense contract of that description to a higher tenderer—allowed him to privately offer a paltry £7,000 less and gave it to him. Now, what was the reason given by the Government in support of their action in doing so? The Premier clouded the reasons by a large mass of verbiage, but I will give the real reasons he gave. He said: "I could have called for fresh tenders, which would have cost us considerable time, and involve a charge of breach of faith on the part of the Government with the northern portion of the colony. The Govern-

ment had to choose between that and making a private bargain." Now, will those reasons hold good? Perhaps it would have cost time to call for fresh tenders, but could they not just as easily have negotiated with both Messrs. Carey and Maund and Robb and Co., as with one of them? Or if it were desirable to negotiate with only one, was it not the honest thing to negotiate with the lowest tenderer? No reason whatever had been given for taking the higher tenderer. It was suggested by the Premier at one time that in a contract of this description it was necessary to have a man of standing. Well, sir, Messrs. Carey and Maund are people of standing. Mr. Carey is chairman of the Contractors' Association of New South Wales, and his firm is one of the highest standing in the colonies. Therefore that reason does not hold good, and as a matter of fact we have no reason whatever. Consequently when the real reason is not given to us—when the Government are apparently afraid to give the real reason for their action, which must be regarded by every one with grave suspicion—it is only our duty to investigate the matter and see what the real reason was. And I have reason to believe that if these papers are produced, as the House ordered four weeks ago they should be, we shall obtain the real reason. If they are not produced, those reasons will be clouded in mystery.

Mr. BAILEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think it was intended on the discussion of this motion that the House should enter upon the question of the acceptance of the tender of Mr. Robb. I thought it was introduced to discuss the propriety of the Government committing a breach of faith and honour with the present contractors, Robb and Co. It is the custom to have two documents given in by contractors with the Government, one of which is a public document, the other a private one. The public document is the gross sum of the tender that is put in, and if there be any lower sum the Government presumed accept the lowest tender; and to have a check upon that a private document is at the same time put in by the contractor—the schedule of prices; and the engineers of the Government have the option of checking the gross amount of the tender by that schedule of prices. But, sir, it is always recognised that the schedule of prices is a private document outside of that department. Why, sir, immediately the tender is accepted, that document is put under seal, and contractors perfectly recognise the fact that the schedule will not be divulged until the completion of the contract, and only then in the case of a dispute between the contractor and the Government. The schedule of prices has been framed by the brains of the officers of the contractors, who have gone all over the country making calculations and estimates which sometimes take many months to make; and to allow ignorant contractors to take advantage of the science and skill and energy of those men by publishing the schedule of prices, while the contract is going on, would be monstrous. I think, sir, that if the Government were to lay the schedule of prices on the table it would be a gross breach of faith on their part—a most dishonourable proceeding. That document is placed under seal for the express purpose of concealing its contents until a certain time, and no honourable man would ask to see it before that time has expired.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The motion of the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, for the rescission of the vote passed some time ago for laying the schedule of prices of the contract for the second section of the Cairns railway on the table of the House is, I

think, absolutely incontestable. I do not think the Government have any right to divulge the schedule of prices while the contract is unfinished. I certainly believe that had my friend, the late Hon. W. Miles, been present when the resolution was passed he would have objected to it most strenuously. I was not in the House at the time it came on, but I do not think the information asked for can be of any real service to the public, or to any but meddling and inquisitive minds.

Mr. HAMILTON: It would be of no service to the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The only question of public interest is the actual lump sum of the tenders. I cannot conceive of anything else of any interest to the public outside that, and I think the Government would be guilty of a gross breach of faith if they should consent to divulge the schedule prices for this contract while the work is still uncompleted.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—I just rise to say a word or two on the subject, because I daresay it will be remembered that when the matter was before the House on a previous occasion I voted for the resolution. I did so because the Government expressly wished to have an opportunity to give all the information they possibly could. At the time, I did not like that portion of the resolution in reference to the schedule of prices being divulged. I certainly voted for the original motion, but I intend now to give my vote in favour of rescinding it.

Mr. HAMILTON: They are all obedient to the Government.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—We have heard from the Minister for Works that the Government are not going to produce the schedule of prices which was ordered by this House to be produced on the 4th of August last. And we have heard also from the hon. member who last spoke that he is now willing to vote against what he voted for formerly; that he voted for the original resolution because the Government were expressly willing to give the information asked for. All I can say about the expressed willingness of the Government is this—that had they been willing to give the information they could have given it next day. It would not have taken two hours to copy out the information which this House ordered to be furnished, and the returns could have been laid on the table the following day. So that there was really no willingness on the part of the Government. They waited until they got an obedient follower to do the dirty work which they were afraid, or rather ashamed, to do themselves. Now, there has been some talk about the brains of the contractor being used to make out the schedule of prices, and about the man with the best brains having got the contract. If the man with the best brains is the man who made out the lowest tender, then the man with the best brains did not get the contract. The man who made out the lowest tender was Mr. Carey, and he did not get the contract. As the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, has said, if negotiations were about to be entered into with the contractors instead of fresh tenders being called for, Mr. Carey was the man with whom the Government should have negotiated, as his tender was £25,000 lower than Mr. Robb's. An excuse was made on a former occasion about Mr. Carey not being known, but I make bold to say that the Engineer-in-Chief knows Mr. Carey quite as well as Mr. Robb. There is no man in all Queensland, Mr. Robb included, who has carried out larger railway contracts than Mr. Carey. It is only a short time since he finished 120 miles of line in one contract in New South Wales, which is a

very much larger contract than has ever been let in Queensland. Another argument is that it would be a breach of faith with the contractors to give this information. I know very well that the contractors have a desire to keep their prices to themselves, but it is only from the general public that the contractors keep the prices. When the tenders are opened the contractors are present, and anyone who is an intimate friend of theirs can easily ascertain what the prices are.

Mr. ANNEAR: Those are the totals.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The totals are made known to the public. I am not talking about the totals but about the information hon. members are not willing should be given to the public for the purpose of showing whether Mr. Carey has received fair play; I doubt myself whether that gentleman has received fair play. I did not say so before, but I say it now, and the only way we can know whether he has received fair play is by comparing Mr. Robb's first schedule of prices, and his second one, with Mr. Carey's statements. Since the motion was carried on the 4th of August I have looked up the "Votes and Proceedings" of the New South Wales Parliament. I stated then, and proved that we had before done a similar thing to that which was proposed to be done by the resolution passed by the House. I showed that the schedule of prices for a contract had been published at a previous time, when there was occasion for doing it. I also stated that the same thing had been done in the other colonies, but I had not the "Votes and Proceedings" to lay my hands on at the time. I have them now, and I will prove to the House that it was done in New South Wales to a much larger extent than in Queensland, or than in any of the cases I quoted on the 4th August. A question arose in New South Wales concerning the contract from Wallerawang to Mudgee, and the Government was asked by a member of the New South Wales Assembly to divulge, not only the schedule of prices of one tender but the schedule of prices of both tenders for two different sections alongside the engineer's estimate of prices, and they were tabled without the slightest hesitation. Sir Henry Parkes, the present Premier of that colony, was Premier at the time, and he stated that he would table the tenders at once, that he had no objection to do so, and would offer no opposition to the motion. No other member spoke on the question except the mover of the motion and Sir Henry Parkes.

The PREMIER: Was the contract going on?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It was going on then, which was in 1881, and the contract was not finished for two years afterwards. Hon. members seem to think that we are asking the Government to do something horrifying, something that has never been done before. Here is the motion that was passed in the New South Wales Assembly:—

"Copies of all papers, letters, minutes, etc., bearing on the estimated cost of the Wallerawang and Mudgee railway, which have passed between the Engineer-in-Chief and the Assistant Engineer in charge of surveys, including all other minutes thereon; also a return showing the sum at which contracts Nos. 1 and 2 have been taken, the estimated cost (including earthworks, bridges, and culverts) of both contracts, together with a detailed estimate showing the quantities of each contract with the prices they have been taken at."

Here follows the schedule of prices for No. 1, the contractors for which were Monie and Mattinson; and here are also the items, one by one, the same as in our own schedule of prices, giving so many cubic yards of earthworks at so much per yard, so many cubic feet of timber, etc.; right through to the number of thirty or forty items, and the engineer's estimate is

given alongside. Then in No. 2 contract the same information is given with the difference in the names of the contractors, who were Fishburn and Morton, and in this case also the engineer's estimate is given alongside. I think that is sufficient proof that we are doing nothing so very bad, nor are we doing anything which we have not a right to do, in asking that the Government should lay the schedule of prices of a railway contract on the table when it is thought necessary; and I think in this particular case that it is necessary, because there is a strong suspicion in the minds of contractors both in Queensland and New South Wales that Messrs. Carey and Maund were unfairly dealt with, and that the work was given to Messrs. Robb and Co. for some other reason than that he was the lowest tenderer. The idea is, in New South Wales, that Carey was never intended to get the contract from the very start—that he was tabooed by some persons or persons in the Works Department, and that he might as well have not gone to the expense of going up the Cairns range, and using his brains, as has been stated to-night, in estimating what the work could be done for. He might as well not have gone there, because it was the full intention of the Works Department that no one should get that tender but Messrs. Robb and Co., of whom Mr. Overend was the Brisbane agent. Since the discussion took place here before I have received a letter from Mr. Carey, which I certainly would not have used; but I see that the Government are determined to rescind this motion, and I think that I am perfectly justified in reading the letter and the other matter which he has sent me, to show the grounds upon which the demand for the scheduled prices has been based. I shall read the letter, Mr. Speaker, which is addressed to me. It is dated 17th August, and is as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,

"As I cannot now expect to gain anything by prosecuting my firm's claim against the Queensland Government for the bad treatment they most undoubtedly were, without any reason, subjected to *in re* the Cairns-Herberton 2nd section of the railway tenders, I take the liberty of sending you a *précis* of all that occurred between the Hon. W. Miles and myself, and conversations that I had with John Robb and his reputed agent, James Overend, which may afford you and your friends who are moving in the House *in re* the matter, an opportunity of understanding all the circumstances fully. I am prepared to fully vouch—

I wish hon. members to pay attention to this—
"for the truth of my statements if required, at any time. My chief object is to put a stop to such unfair treatment again."

Mr. Carey is a gentleman well known in Sydney and Melbourne, and to prominent men in Brisbane.

"You will see my tender was used to bring Robb down £30,000, and if I had accepted the £7,000 that was offered me not to tender, the Government would have been victimised.

"Yours truly,

"J. H. CAREY."

Now, this is the *précis* which he sends me:—

"PRECIS OF FACTS CONNECTED WITH THE TENDERS FOR THE 2ND SECTION, CAIRNS-HERBERTON RAILWAY."

"January 14.—Tenders were opened in presence of the contractors, when the Commissioner for Railways declared Carey and Maund to be the lowest, but at the request of Carey did not declare the amount, as it was stated that the acceptance of the tender was a matter for the Executive to decide when they met on the 19th January.

"January 15.—The Commissioner told Carey in reply to his letter of the same date, and wherein he named his firm's Brisbane agent, that it was quite unnecessary for him to remain in Brisbane if his business called him to Sydney, as he would have ample time to return before it would be necessary for him to sign the contract. The Commissioner having first asked the Engineer-in-Chief if he required any further informa-

tion from Carey in reference to his firm's tender, to which the Engineer replied, 'I am perfectly satisfied with their tender, and am prepared to recommend it to the Minister for acceptance,' Carey left same day for Sydney.

"January 20.—A telegram appeared in Sydney newspapers that the Minister had decided to reject all the tenders for the section. Carey immediately started overland for Brisbane expecting to be able to complete the contract by some reduction in the amount of their tender, as was permitted by the Minister in previous cases—viz., the Wallangarra to Stanthorpe and the Rockhampton to Emu Park contracts—and in which cases the lowest tenderers were by all accounts asked by the Minister if they would reduce or amend their tenders to a specific sum.

"January 21.—A rumour having reached Sydney that the Government were negotiating with Robb and Co. to amend their tender, Maund, of the firm of Carey and Maund, wired to the Minister for Works, Brisbane, asking him to delay negotiations until Carey reached Brisbane, having started on the previous day.

"January 24.—Carey having been detained on journey overland owing to the floods"—

I think that was the time the Premier was going to England—

"and the consequent stoppage of the trains, when he arrived at Stanthorpe, casually heard that Robb and Co. had been asked by the Minister to amend their tender below Carey and Maund's amount, and he at once wired to the Minister for Works stating that his firm were prepared to cut under Robb and Co., and asking to delay closing the contract until his arrival by first opportunity in Brisbane."

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: That has nothing to do with the question.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It has a good deal to do with the question. The words, "wired to the Minister for Works stating that his firm were prepared to cut under Robb and Co." are underlined. That telegram is in the Works Department and would be part of the document used by the Government, I have no doubt.

"January 25.—Carey arrived in Brisbane and received at his agent's the first official notice by a letter from the Commissioner for Railways, bearing date January 24, stating that a tender from Robb for £29,984 3s. had been accepted, and his firm's deposit would now be returned.' No official notice having been previously sent him or his agent that the firm's tender had been rejected, Carey at once waited upon the hon. Minister for Works, Mr. Miles, and strongly protested at the injustice of the Government in dealing with Robb on an amended tender of £7,000 below the tender of his firm without first having given his firm the same opportunity of amending their tender, which they were prepared to do, as he stated in his telegram from Stanthorpe. Carey, being aware that the contract with Robb was not yet completed, then verbally offered to reduce his firm's tender £7,000 below Robb's amended tender, to which the Minister replied, 'It is too late, I have accepted Robb's tender.' The Minister admitted that the Engineer-in-Chief had recommended that Carey and Maund's tender be accepted, notwithstanding that their tender was 8 per cent. above his estimate, but said that he, as Minister, was not bound to act upon that recommendation. He acted independently and advised the Executive as he thought best, and he thought Carey and Maund had no reason to complain inasmuch as all the original tenders were refused, after which the Government could do as they liked, and as a natural consequence, he preferred giving the contract to a man he knew in preference to one he did not know."

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: A very good reason.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN:

"The Minister, in reply to Carey, said he had or could have no objection to the firm of Carey and Maund, as they were, by all accounts, held in good repute by the Engineers-in-Chief of other colonies; also that the rumour that Carey referred to in his wire from Stanthorpe as to Ballard being likely to act as engineer for his firm had no influence whatever on his decision of giving the contract to Robb."

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member for Townsville in order in reading this brief of Mr. Carey's?

The SPEAKER: Yes; I think the hon. gentleman is perfectly in order. It has reference to the question now before the House.

Mr. DONALDSON: The hon. member does not like it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I don't mind it a bit.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN:

"Carey informed the Minister that Ballard was in no way connected with his firm, and that he personally knew nothing of the dispute between the Queensland Government and Ballard, but that it was a fact that both Carey and Maund, and also Robb, asked Ballard whether he would act as resident engineer for them if they were successful in obtaining the contract, but he valued his services too high for either firm to avail themselves of his services, hence no agreement was ever entered into with him in any shape whatever. Carey then said to the Minister, 'Perhaps you will not be surprised to learn that I was told before we even tendered for the contract, that it was useless wasting our time as we would not get the contract, even though we were the lowest, as it was intended for one man and he only would get it, and further that we were offered £7,000 not to tender for the contract, which was refused'; the Minister replied, 'I know these things are done.' The Minister declined to give Carey and Maund the expenses they incurred in tendering.

"25th January.—Carey knowing the contract was not yet completed, confirmed by letter his verbal offer (on previous day) to reduce his tender £7,000 below Robb's amended tender.

"Later on same date commissioner wrote Carey that Robb had just completed his contract. The commissioner verbally stated to Carey that he could say nothing about the matter beyond that it was all settled at the same time that the tenders were rejected on the 19th January that Robb was to get the contract.

"25th January.—Carey met John Robb, who said the Minister sent for him and asked him if he would reduce his tender £30,000; he replied he would, and the Engineer-in-Chief was there and then ordered to have a fresh tender with schedule made out to that amount.

"27th January.—James Overend (then reputed Robb's agent or partner in results), said to Carey, 'You have every reason to be sore over this matter, but you must know it is a political job. Everything is done by that means in Queensland, and it cost him a round good sum to be able to manage those things, and he managed that in this instance with the Ministry.' He further stated"—

Now, this is the point, this is the matter that I was not aware of when we asked for the schedule of prices, but it is a matter upon which the schedule of prices would throw an infinity of light, and no other document could do it—

"He further stated that all the bridges were altered, so that concrete pillars were to be used instead of wood, which was a good thing for them; and he admitted that Robb's price for concrete in pillars to bridges was 100s. per cubic yard, whilst Carey and Maund's price for same was only 60s. per cubic yard, to which Carey replied, 'If such is the case Robb's tender, as amended, is £16,000 above his firm's original contract'; to which Overend replied, 'No matter, it does not add up in the schedule of figures to make up the total amount.' Overend also stated that he and Robb knew before the original tenders went in that the amount of Overend and Stack's tender was £378,000 odd, and that O'Rourke and Ahern's tender was £450,000 odd; hence it was virtually only Carey and Maund's tendering against Robb."

There is a marginal note here:—

"Carey's interview with Overend. *Vide* Robb's amended schedule—100s. for concrete in pillars under iron bridges against Carey and Maund's 60s., not totalled in amount of contract."

It would show that the tender was higher still if it was totalled. The Chief Secretary by a little thinking will understand—

The PREMIER: I understand it perfectly, and called my colleague's particular attention to the importance of watching against anything of that kind.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Now I put it to any member of this House whether it is not better for the sake of the Government and the country that these things should be made public, so that people and members of this House especially—I do not care so much about people outside—should know whether Carey and Maund had fair play given to them and

whether the tender which has been accepted has not been amended in such a way as to put the schedule of prices, if totalled up, actually higher than the price that Carey and Maund offered to do the work for? Now, any man who understands contracting knows that a very little alteration in the material and in the prices will make a great difference; and the difference, so far as I can see, is going to be made up to Robb and Co. by this alteration in the concrete. There may be other alterations as well. The difference between 60s. and 100s. in concrete, where there may be some thousands of cubic yards, is very great. It depends upon how many cubic yards there are. There may be only 100 and there may be 5,000, but it depends upon the number and upon other items in the schedule, whether Robb and Company in reducing the tender were reducing it so low as they appeared to be. I leave the matter with the Chief Secretary. He understands it as well as I do, although he has not had the same experience of contractors as I have had. But I am certain he understands it and understands the gravity of the statement made by Mr. Carey, which he says he can vouch for at any time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. member who has just sat down has mixed up several things which really have no connection with one another. He has mixed up the history of the letting of this contract with the question of the propriety of producing what is considered to be a private document. When the motion was first made by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, I said, on behalf of the Government, as the late Minister for Works was not here at the time, that so far as we were concerned we should be very glad to give the information. I am of the same opinion still. So far as we are concerned—so far as regards the question as between the Government and the House or the Government and the country—we should be glad to give the information. We have nothing to conceal, and if any mistakes have been made we are willing that those who made them should take the consequences, and be responsible for them.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: How will that be found out?

The PREMIER: The question is, however, whether we are justified in producing the document at the present time. I confess I do not think we are. I wish there was some way of getting at the facts without doing an injustice to the contractor. I do not like to be under any imputation; I must say that I do not believe all the statements made by Mr. Carey in the memorandum read by the hon. member for Townsville. It is very easy for Mr. Carey to make statements, evidently made from hearsay and from a conversation between his agent and Mr. Overend, in which he was told some cock-and-bull story about Queensland contracts never being let on their merits, and always being let by sidewinds. That is all rubbish, and everyone knows it has no foundation at the present time, at any rate. What the hon. gentleman says about the prices for concrete piers for bridges having been raised so much is a very serious matter indeed. It is a matter to which I myself directed the particular attention of the Chief Engineer before the tenders were invited. The late Mr. Miles was away from town at the time and he asked me, as this was a matter of considerable difficulty, to give it my personal attention. I sent for Mr. Hannam to come down to Brisbane to discuss the matter. I discussed with him particularly the question of the bridges, and I told him that in my opinion the bridges as described then were impossible of construction and he would have

to make different bridges. I am of that opinion still. I told him further that before the tenders were sent in he must amend the specifications and impose special conditions as to the bridges. I could see then the bridges would have to be altered. That ought to have been done, and I presume it was, as I directed it should be done before the tenders were sent in. I called attention to the timber piles for the bridges, and pointed out that they should substitute for them concrete or iron piers, and I presume all that was done. I afterwards communicated, on my way to England, with the late Minister for Works on the subject on what I thought would be a desirable alteration then in the character of the bridges. As to whether Robb's tender showed such an exorbitant price for concrete piers for the bridges that is a matter upon which I can express no opinion at present. If that is so, as stated by the hon. member for Townsville, somebody is very much to blame. If the difference is as much as between 60s. and 100s. per cubic yard it is an enormous charge, and somebody is to blame, and whoever is to blame should certainly be punished. However, as I say, I hesitate to believe all the accusations made by a disappointed tenderer until I have an opportunity of seeing what the facts are. I do not at present believe all those statements, and I have no information as to the prices, as I have never seen them.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Mr. Carey is a gentleman well known.

The PREMIER: I have personally no knowledge of the matter, but I say that so far as these matters are concerned, and so far as matters between the Government and the House are concerned, I can only repeat what I said the other day, that I should like to produce these papers. I should like to be able to produce them if only to satisfy my own curiosity, though, of course, I can do that by going to the Works Department to see them.

Mr. DONALDSON: Other members would like to see them also.

The PREMIER: Other members, of course, would like to see them also, but then there is the other aspect of the question to be considered—whether it is right to disclose papers supposed to be secret. I may say that I do not attach very great weight to the case the hon. gentleman quoted from New South Wales. We all know they do very curious things sometimes in New South Wales.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: You did it before yourself.

The PREMIER: I know we did it before, once, but I think the contract was then over in that case. The argument which has weighed most with me in this matter was one which I think was one referred to by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, and that is that a claim was seriously put forward for damages against the Government by Messrs. O'Rourke and McSharry, because their schedule prices were divulged before they had completed their work, and they said they had sustained a large amount of damage.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: They could not claim that against Parliament.

The PREMIER: I do not know, but if a complaint of that kind is made it shows that the contractors considered themselves hardly treated by having their prices divulged. I certainly feel in some difficulty in this matter, because personally my desire is to produce these papers, but I believe that on the whole the arguments are considerably the other way, and that we ought not to produce them. I may say I will certainly undertake to see the whole of them, and find out for myself what the facts are.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN : You could produce them without having them printed.

The PREMIER : I know that could be done, but every member could read them aloud, and it would amount to the same thing.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN : I do not think any hon. member would do that.

The PREMIER : I do ; I think there are some members in the House who would do it, although I have the very highest confidence in most members of the House and in the hon. member for Townsville. I would myself like to have the whole of this matter disclosed and made public, but I think, on the whole, the strongest arguments are in favour of this motion being carried.

Mr. MURPHY said : Mr. Speaker,—It is a great pity that the Government cannot see their way to lay these schedules on the table in accordance with the resolution agreed to by the House on the motion of the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton. It is a pity that the Government of the colony should be allowed to lie under any such imputation any longer than can possibly be avoided. I am quite sure we cannot go far wrong in following the precedent already set in another colony, and in this colony, in producing these papers. I think the excuse made by the Premier is very lame indeed. He evidently feels in a false position, and that the Government are in a false position with regard to this matter. We could see that plainly enough in his manner. I am quite sure the Government will be making a mistake and will not be acting in the interests of the people of the colony if they do not consent to allow these papers to be laid on the table of the House. I must say I do not agree with the conduct of my hon. friend the member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, who calls himself continually the "scavenger" of this House. He is continually trying to drag to light all the acts of any Government that ever sat on the opposite side of the House to himself with regard to every contract let by that Government, and he now turns deliberately round and assists in screening his own Government after having done what he is continually accusing the other side of the House of having done. The fact is, he has been scavenging so long in this House that he has become befouled himself, and wants someone to sweep him out. The only excuse the Government appear to have for refusing to produce these papers, or rather refusing to give this contract to Messrs. Carey and Maund, is because the contract was in the handwriting of Mr. Ballard, as was stated by the hon. member for Townsville, and because Mr. Ballard was dismissed by the Government from his office as Engineer.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL : What was he dismissed for ?

Mr. MURPHY : It may have been for dishonesty ; perhaps it was.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS : No, certainly not.

Mr. MURPHY : There is no reason why the Government should eternally persecute this man. He was convicted of no crime that I know of, and certainly there is no reason why other persons should be punished for the act of Mr. Ballard, because this contract happened to be in his handwriting. I think, sir, that the whole transaction is as shady as it can possibly be, and if the Government refuse to produce these documents, I for one shall not in the future look upon them as the honest Government which we have been accustomed to consider them for so long. We have been accustomed to look upon them as honest, even if they were foolish, but

they will lose even that attribute after this, at least in my opinion, and, I am sure, in the opinion of many people in this country.

Mr. ANNEAR said : Mr. Speaker,—I took part in the debate on this question when it was previously before the House, being of opinion that no man's schedule of prices should be divulged to the general public, and I am much strengthened in that opinion after hearing the remarks which have been made by hon. members. Now, sir, why should a contractor's prices not be divulged ? I know that contractors in tendering for works of this kind generally put a very good price on earthwork, and clearing, and bridgework, which are all works which they carry on rapidly when they first commence their contract. They do that in order to enable them to get a sum of money in their hands, knowing that they will be at a very large expense in the commencement of the job. The Government is perfectly secure, as has been pointed out by the hon. junior member for Cook, Mr. Robb had to deposit £14,500 as deposit money on this contract ; and his plant, before he could do any works by which he could benefit, came to £10,000 more—in all £24,500. Now, sir, if we divulge a man's schedule of prices, we are putting his workmen in a position that I contend they should not be placed in. He may be getting 2s. 6d. a yard for cuttings and he may be subletting them for 1s. 6d., whereby he makes a profit of 1s. a yard. They are many other items in his schedule on which he makes no profit at all, and he must rely on this work for making up his deficiency in that respect. Now, men take those sub-contracts at 1s. 6d. a yard and make good wages at them ; but when they see what their employer is getting, they say to one another, "Look here, Tom, or Jim, our boss is getting 2s. 6d. ; we must jack up and do no more until he gives us a better price." Now, that is doing a great injury to a man who takes work of such magnitude as this, and has to deposit such a large sum of money as Mr. Robb did in this case. I may say that the day after this was under discussion here before I met a railway contractor who said : "If you do this kind of thing it is ruination to any contractor. It would be a great loss to me if my schedule were published, so that all the men in my employ could see what was being done." The hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, seems to infer that a great wrong has been done to the colony.

Mr. HAMILTON : Yes.

Mr. ANNEAR : Where is the wrong ? Mr. Robb is carrying out the work £7,000 under the tender of Mr. Carey.

Mr. HAMILTON : Carey offered to do it for £7,000 less still.

Mr. ANNEAR : The totals of all the tenders have been given. The Government are prepared to give the totals of all the tenders, and that is all they should be asked to do.

Mr. HAMILTON : That proves nothing.

Mr. ANNEAR : Mr. Robb's tender was about £30,000 over Mr. Carey's, but Mr. Robb is carrying out the contract for between £7,000 and £8,000 less than Mr. Carey's tender.

Mr. MURPHY : You cannot tell that without seeing them.

Mr. ANNEAR : I know that as a fact. It has been stated in this House, and stated in the leading paper of this colony.

Mr. HAMILTON : Carey offered to cut him down by £7,000 more.

Mr. ANNEAR : The Government reserve to themselves the same right as any private individual. At the foot of every advertisement for

tenders they say, "The lowest or any tender need not necessarily be accepted." Now, when those tenders came in it was considered, I presume, by the Government that the whole of them were too high. It was also important that the work should be let, and the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, will bear me out in this—that before it was let there was an indignation meeting at Cairns, calling attention to the long delay in the carrying out of the work. There was another reason: The Premier was on the eve of departing for the old country, and I daresay he was anxious to see the work let before he left Queensland. I say that that contract was let in no way to the injury of the people of this colony. It has also been said that the prices have been reduced and the bridges altered. Now I know, Mr. Speaker, that the bridges in that contract, when it was tendered for by Mr. Carey, were the same bridges that are in the contract at the present time. Mr. Hannam, the Chief Engineer in the North, in whose honesty and ability I am sure every hon. member of this House has full confidence, had to go with Mr. Robb and his agents and reduce the schedule £30,000. Now, I do not for one moment doubt that Mr. Hannam carried out that duty entirely in the interest of the people of this colony. I may say that some few days before the death of the late lamented Minister for Works, Mr. Miles, I was in his office when a telegram was brought in from Mr. Robb protesting against the publication of his schedule of prices in this colony; so that the remark made by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, is perfectly correct. The hon. member for Townsville says that it has been done in New South Wales, but I take it that what has been done in that colony is no criterion as to what should be done in the Parliament of Queensland. I look upon this Parliament—and have looked upon it for years—as being far better conducted and containing far abler men, taking them as a whole, than the Parliament of that colony. I hope that the disgraceful scenes which we have seen in that Parliament will never be enacted in the Parliament of Queensland, and I do not think they will. As regards the remark made by Mr. James Overend, I know that gentleman very well, and he is a man to talk like that. He would say to those gentlemen from New South Wales, "What is the use of your coming up here to tender against us? We can teach you how to do those things." That is the style of talk of Mr. Overend, and I believe what is in Mr. Carey's letter was the chaff which Mr. James Overend metes out to every contractor who tenders for railways with him. There is no doubt that Mr. Carey is a perfect gentleman, and he would be well able to carry out this work if he had it to do. I am very sorry to hear the name of Mr. Ballard mentioned in this case at all. I look upon Mr. Ballard as a man who has done good work for this colony, and I hope the time will come when we shall see him doing further work for this colony. If Mr. Ballard were a tenderer, and his was the lowest tender, there is nothing, in my opinion, in Mr. Ballard's conduct to prevent him from getting the contract to carry out some of our most important works. There is no man in this colony more competent to do it. I hope that the senior member for Cook, Mr. Hamilton, will see that in order to satisfy all he wants he does not require anything more than the totals of the whole of the tenders for the Cairns railway contract placed on the table.

Mr. HAMILTON: We have the totals already.

Mr. ANNEAR: I am sure no wrong has been done to the people of the colony in the matter. To the late Minister for Works Mr. Carey was

not known, and there was great urgency in regard to letting the contract owing to the departure of the Premier for London. We saw those gentlemen in the North clamouring for separation, saying they could get no justice from the present Government, which is located in the South; and that gentleman did as I should have done myself. I think that if many contracts of this character are let in the North, the sooner we separate the better—a contract for fifteen miles of railway without rolling-stock, without stations, and without permanent way, for £290,000.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—From what has fallen from the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, I should think he has seen the tenders, and no doubt the schedule of prices.

Mr. ANNEAR: I have not.

Mr. CAMPBELL: If he has, every hon. member is entitled to see them. I was surprised to hear him speak in reference to the amount Mr. Robb had to pay down, and the amount of plant, and so forth. It is well known to this House that Mr. Carey was well able to pay down the amount, and that he was a successful contractor in New South Wales, where he had given every satisfaction to the Government. He has been hardly dealt with in this matter, and I am surprised at the hon. member for Maryborough, who is always patting the working man on the back, not wanting to allow the working man to see Mr. Robb's schedule of prices. With reference to the statement the hon. member for Townsville read, I happened to know nearly all of that before the contract was actually let to Mr. Robb. I was stuck up during the flood at a place where I happened to meet Mr. Carey, on his way from Sydney to Queensland to prevent Mr. Robb from getting the contract, if possible. I was with him when he forwarded the telegram from Stanthorpe, and knew the whole of the business, and I had great sympathy with Mr. Carey throughout, knowing, as I did, the enormous expense he was put to in going to Cairns and surveying that rough and rugged country. I claim that, whenever tenders are sent in, and the lowest tenderer is eligible, it is a gross injustice, not only on the part of the Government, but on the part of a private individual, if the lowest tenderer does not get the contract. Tenderers should not be put to such heavy expenditure and then shunted, in order that the contract may be given privately to another. I think it is only common justice to this House, and to the country, that the schedule prices of Mr. Robb should be exposed. I have heard a great deal in the past how the Government has been mulcted by contractors in this colony; in fact, I could prove it. I am in a position to prove that some of the best contractors we have in Queensland were in the swim, and that one of them has mulcted the Government to a considerable extent. If the work was altered after Mr. Carey's tender was rejected, I say the matter cannot be too closely scrutinised, and it is only fair and just that the whole matter should be exposed to the public.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—As a matter of principle I intend to vote for the production of the papers; and I think a strong case has been made out in this particular instance why they should be laid before the House. I do not see why any difference should be made between railway contractors and others. We know that the prices of other contractors are open for inspection; but it appears that railway contractors object for some reason or other, probably because they think men will take advantage of them if they know their prices. But the same remark applies to other contractors; and why railway contractors are to be privileged individuals, and

the public interest is to be subordinated to their interest, I am at a loss to know. If this matter is not investigated, we shall be simply doing what the Premier so lately condemned—handing over the control of the expenditure of public money to others. What we want to know is how the money has been expended; that information is denied, and it seems extraordinary that whenever questions are asked with regard to the expenditure of loan money there is always some excuse for keeping it in the dark, and that looks very suspicious. It looks as if the loan money was not being used for the public benefit, but for the benefit of the Government, as if they used it for their own ends, for political purposes; and unless we investigate the matter we shall not be doing our duty to our constituents. I shall, therefore, vote in favour of having the papers produced, not only in this case, but in every other case whenever necessity requires.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I regard this as a very serious question—the publication of schedules connected with railway contracts. When I say that, I merely repeat what I thought when the matter was before the House about a month ago. Before the question was then put I carefully considered it previous to deciding what action I would take. Under ordinary circumstances I should not have voted for the production of the schedules, but I did so then, thinking there were circumstances connected with this contract that altered the complexion of affairs altogether. It is thought by some people connected with contracting that the unsuccessful tenderers were not treated fairly in the matter; and I think there are good reasons for their entertaining that opinion. I do not pretend to say whether they are right or wrong, but I think they were justified in forming an opinion of that nature when their tenders were rejected—after they had gone to considerable expense in obtaining the necessary information in order to compile their tenders—and a contract was given privately to one of them. The sole objection to the contract lies in the fact that it was a private tender which was accepted. The usual and proper system is to call for tenders and to decide, when they are received, to which tenderer the contract should be given. Then we have fair competition. In this case, after a number of tenderers had come here—some from New South Wales—and had gone to considerable expense in finding out what information they must have before they could put a tender in, besides going to the expense of making up the tenders, the whole of them were rejected; and a chance was not given to the whole of them, or even to a few of them, to put in fresh tenders, but arrangements were made—whether initiated in the Works Department or by the gentleman who got the contract, I do not know—by which one man who had put in a tender had the work given to him. It has been argued that it was desirable to settle the matter before the Premier left for England; but surely the other Ministers could have decided upon the tender after his departure. Surely he is not so essential to the carrying on of the administration that no railway contract can be made without his presence. That is about the weakest argument that has been offered in explanation of the private contract. The hon. gentleman himself said that as a promise had been given to the people of Cairns that tenders should be called for by a certain time it was desirable that the promise should be fulfilled. A promise of that kind is all very well in its way, but if the Government were not really ready to call for tenders by the promised time, it would have been far better that invitations to tender should have been delayed until they were ready. That would have been no breach of faith with the people of Cairns. As I

said before, my chief objection is that all the tenderers were not treated fairly in this matter; and because of that, I think the circumstances are such as to require that those schedules should be laid on the table of the House. We shall then see, with that information before us, whether the action taken by the Government and by the present contractor has been fair and square, and if that is found to be the case all suspicion of wrong dealing will be removed. For that reason I shall oppose the motion to rescind the resolution previously passed.

Mr. BROWN said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one feature in this discussion which we should not lose sight of. It has been stated as a reason for not divulging these figures, by the hon. member for Maryborough, that they should not be disclosed because the contractor who might be getting 2s. 6d. a yard for certain work would not be able to get men to take it for 1s. 6d. a yard. That seems a very extraordinary reason, because if the work can be done for 1s. 6d. it is quite certain that the contractor has no right to tender for 2s. 6d. There is some mystery about this, which perhaps the production of the papers may explain.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—With regard to what the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Brown, has just said, it is a well-known fact, which I mentioned myself at the beginning of the debate, that contractors in their schedules of prices over-estimate some of the work and expect to make large profits out of it, while in other portions of the work they cut below the actual value and have to make up with the surplusage. The contractor looks to save himself chiefly by the earthwork and clearing, because that work begins first and gives him a good balance in hand to work on. He can then afford to lose money on the bridges or some other portion of the work. Sometimes contractors lose money on a considerable proportion of their schedules. But as it is a system which they all follow, it need not be complained of in any particular case. I have heard nothing in the debate that would induce me to recommend the Government to break faith with a contractor in any way. The documents are all placed under seal; it is a portion of the bargain that the schedules of prices should be kept secret, and to reveal them would certainly be a gross breach of faith. As to the four weeks that have elapsed since the passing of the former resolution, my colleague Mr. Hamilton knows perfectly well that directly his notice appeared on the paper I took the first opportunity of putting on a counter-motion; and the late Minister for Works, who was unfortunately absent through illness at the time, directly he came to town requested me to do so. Had he been here on that occasion all this trouble would have been saved, for he would have opposed the motion, and his vote would have turned the scale. He would have taken very good care that the hon. member's motion was not carried. We have had no explanation from the other side as to whether the Government would not lay themselves open to an action for damages in revealing the schedules of prices. My opinion is that they would. We have seen the case of McSharry and O'Rourke. We know them of old; we know what they were, and we know that they are at present engaged in a most expensive arbitration case with the Government of New South Wales, for which the people of that colony will have to pay very heavily. Mr. Ballard's name has been bandied about pretty freely to-night in connection with this affair. It was said that he was in alliance with Carey and Maund. If so—and we remember what was the nature of Mr. Ballard's connection

with McSharry and O'Rourke on the Central Railway—it was quite a sufficient ground, without any other, for the Government to refuse to have anything to do with Carey and Maund. The hon. member for Blackall says that Mr. Ballard resigned his position in the Government service.

Mr. PATTISON: I did not say any such thing.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Then it was the hon. member for Normanby.

Mr. STEVENSON: I never said anything of the sort.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Mr. Ballard was called upon to resign. He had to send in his resignation after the disgraceful illicit connection he was proved to have had with the firm of McSharry and O'Rourke. We know all about Mr. Ballard; and as long as the present Government is in existence or any worthy successors of them, neither Mr. Ballard nor McSharry and O'Rourke will ever get a contract in this colony. If the Opposition get into power, it is very likely they will—the McSharrys and O'Rourkes will be let loose upon us again. Therefore I really think it is worth while endeavouring to keep the present Government in power a little longer. I sincerely hope that the motion will be rescinded and that the Government will not produce those papers. I believe they will lay themselves open to a heavy claim for damages if they do.

Question put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 20.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Dutton, Moreton, Sheridan, Fraser, S. W. Brooks, Rutledge, Aland, Mellor, Buckland, McMaster, Wakefield, Salkeld, Kates, Annear, Higson, Lumley Hill, Bailey, Bulcock, and Grimes.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Norton, Chubb, Macrossan, Nelson, Hamilton, Adams, Pattison, Stevenson, Donaldson, Philp, Jessop, Brown, Campbell, and Murphy.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

LANDS DEPARTMENT RETURNS.

Mr. SALKELD, in moving—

1. That the order of the House made on the 11th August last, that there be laid upon the table of the House certain papers relating to lands obtained from the Crown by selection, auction, and pre-emption, be rescinded.

2. That the House do make the following order in place thereof:—That there be laid upon the table of the House, a return showing,—

- (1) The names of all landed proprietors—whether individuals, syndicates, banks, or other corporate bodies—owning six hundred and forty (640) acres or upwards of freehold country lands, with the area in each case;
- (2) The number, average area, and total area of all selections in each land agent's district taken up in each six months during the first two and a-half (2½) years after the coming into operation of the Crown Lands Acts of 1868, 1876, and 1884, respectively, distinguishing grazing from agricultural farms under the Act of 1884;
- (3) The area and price per acre of all lands sold by auction, and of all lands pre-empted under the Pastoral Leases Acts during each of the last eight (8) years.

—said: Mr. Speaker,—The order that was passed by the House on the 11th August included the names of the original purchasers or selectors, the dates of purchase or application to select, the dates of the issue of titles, and the price per acre paid to the Crown for such lands. It also ordered that the number of selections and the area of each selection be given. I intended to have altered that motion at the time, but it was declared “formal,” and by mistake I did not do so. My object in moving to rescind that order and substituting the present one is that it will

take a great deal less time and work than the original. I have ascertained that the work involved in the previous order would be very large indeed, and although the information would be very desirable to have, I have thought it best not to put the Government to the extra expense that it would necessitate, and to confine the order to its altered shape. I think it is very desirable that the motion should be passed, as it will be a great saving on the original order. I do not know that I need say anything more on the matter. The motion was declared “not formal,” but I do not suppose any hon. member will object to it.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I trust that this motion will not be allowed to pass. I speak in the interest of the country; I believe there will be a very great expense in getting out this return, and I am surprised that the Government do not offer some opposition to the motion. I am certainly not one who would oppose any information being given to the country that may be of any real service, but the cost of preparing and printing the return asked for in this motion will, I am certain, be very great, and after all it will not serve any useful purpose. I am confident that it will cost thousands of pounds to get this return, and what good will it be after all? The hon. member who proposed the motion certainly did not give any good reason why the return should be granted; in fact, he gave no reason whatever. If he had given strong reasons in support of his proposition, it is quite possible that I might have concurred in them, and not have opposed the motion. But the idea of spending several thousand pounds in this way, at a time when retrenchment is the order of the day in the public departments, seems to me a strange way of exercising economy. As I said before, I am surprised that the Government, who are the custodians of the public purse, have nothing to say in opposition to this motion. I do think that it ought not to be carried, unless some stronger reasons are given than those offered by the hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Salkeld.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know upon what the hon. gentleman who has just spoken bases his calculations of the cost of this return. He says that it will cost several thousands of pounds. Well, I do not think he knows much about it. I must say that it is a rather strange departure for the hon. member to start protecting the Government by economising in this way—by opposing the motion of the hon. member for Ipswich.

Mr. DONALDSON: When did I ever advocate extravagance?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not charge the hon. gentleman with advocating extravagance, but I say I am rather surprised at his effort to protect the Government. I do not know why he should object to the motion, because it is a very much curtailed return that is now asked for than the one formerly sanctioned by this House. It will not involve nearly so much work, and will consequently be very much less expensive. It will also contain a great deal of valuable information for everybody, both in this House and the country—information that most people in the country are totally ignorant of at the present time. They do not know how those lands have been acquired, or by whom or how they are now held. For the reasons I have given I am not disposed to object to the motion of the hon. member for Ipswich. I believe the return will be a valuable one. It will no doubt involve a good deal of work in preparing it, but the cost will be nothing like the amount mentioned by the hon. member

for Warrego. Probably at the outside the return will not cost more than £200 or £300. It will, I believe, take a long time to get the information, as some of the work can only be done by a clerk from the Lands Department after office-hours; it will probably take some months to prepare it, and I do not think the return is likely to be laid on the table of the House this session.

Mr STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—If this return was so necessary, why did not the Government have it prepared themselves instead of getting one of their supporters to take up the time of the House in asking for it? If they wanted the information published why did not the hon. member at the head of the Lands Department get it made out without making any fuss about it in this House? I do not believe the hon. gentleman has the slightest idea what the return is going to cost. I am informed by a very good authority—by a man who knows more about the Lands Office than the present Minister for Works, who until lately was Minister for Lands—that it will cost about £7,000. The Colonial Secretary laughs. Well, the hon. gentleman knows almost as much about the matter as the Minister for Works. It seems to be a very funny way of exercising economy to agree to the printing of such an expensive return. I am sure the lately appointed Treasurer ought to object to the proposal if no one else does, unless the Government put up the hon. member for Ipswich to make the motion.

Mr. SALKELD: No.

Mr. STEVENSON: I was informed as soon as the motion was tabled that the hon. member had been put up to it by the Government.

Mr. SALKELD: The hon. member is misinformed.

Mr. STEVENSON: If the hon. member says "No," of course I must accept his word; but "a wink is as good as a nod to a blind horse," as they say, and, of course, the hon. member for Ipswich being ready to take a quiet hint did not need any specific instruction in the matter. As the hon. member for Warrego suggests to me, the passing of this motion will, at any rate, show up the Land Act of the Minister for Works.

Mr. DONALDSON: No; I did not say that.

Mr. STEVENSON: Well, it will have that effect anyway; but, on the score of economy, I shall certainly very strongly oppose the motion, and I am perfectly sure that what I say in regard to the expense will be found to be correct, or very nearly so.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I should like to know what the Treasurer has to say on this subject. I have been told that a member on this side of the House who moved for some papers was asked to go through those papers and select what he thought should be printed, because the Government objected to printing too many papers at the present time, upon the score of economy. The printing of those papers would have cost £5 or £6 at the very outside, and the printing of those now asked for would cost hundreds. The Premier will probably remember that in 1876 I moved for a return of certain lands up to 1,280 acres. He was in the then existing Ministry, and he should know that that return cost something like £1,000, and it did not go so far as this motion. Why it was not kept up I do not know, but it did not ask for nearly as much information as is now asked for by the hon. member for Ipswich. I am inclined to think that the statement made by the

hon. member for Normanby, upon authority, as to the cost of this return, is much nearer the truth than the statement of the Minister for Works. On the principle of economy, I shall certainly oppose a motion of this kind being carried. It is proposed to dismiss officers in the Lands Department at the present time, and I think it would be shameful to incur such an expense as this return would involve. I should like to know what is the opinion of the Premier on this matter.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I am satisfied with the reason given by my hon. colleague, the Minister for Works—who knows better than I do what it would cost to make out this return—that the expense will not be very great. I do not think it will cost very much, and I think that the information will be very valuable; that it will be worth the small amount of money it will cost.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Do you know what mine cost?

The PREMIER: No, I do not; but I do not think this return will cost very much. As far as the 2nd paragraph is concerned, the information asked for in that can be obtained in the Lands Department, and a clerk can make out the returns in half-an-hour, and the third one could be made out in a couple of days. The information required for the 1st paragraph would, of course, involve some searching, but it would take very little writing. It would simply require the services of a clerk for possibly a fortnight or three weeks to make the necessary inquiries.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: How will the information be in the Lands Office when the Lands Department has changed hands since the land was alienated?

The PREMIER: The second and third returns, I say, can be made out in the Lands Office, and the information for the other one will have to be obtained by searching in the Real Property Office. That will occupy some time, but the copying of the return will not take long. The services of a clerk will, perhaps, be required for two or three weeks, at any rate not much longer.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. Minister for Works stated that a quantity of this work could be done in the Lands Office by clerks employed after hours.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I did not.

Mr. NORTON: Then I understood him to say so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman is wrong. I did not say that. I said the work in the Real Property Office would necessarily have to be done after office-hours.

Mr. NORTON: I think the hon. gentleman must have made a mistake. He did say the Lands Office, but he may have intended to say the Real Property Office. Hon. members would like to know if the clerks will be paid for overtime. Might I ask the hon. gentleman if such will be the case?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, they will not.

Mr. NORTON: I asked that question because I have been led to understand that the clerks lately have not been paid overtime. I see the lights burning in the windows of the Lands Office sometimes when I am going home. I saw them last night, and I presumed someone was at work there. If they do not get paid overtime, and are worked until that time at night, it is rather rough on them. It was 9 o'clock when I passed the Lands Office last night and the

lights were still burning, and I have seen them burning later than that. If the clerks are kept working until that time, it is very rough on them if they do not get paid overtime.

Mr. STEVENSON: They are sacking others at the same time.

Mr. NORTON: In regard to the return I do not like to oppose it, because I think it is always desirable if hon. gentlemen want information of this kind to let them have it. I am satisfied that the return will cost a great deal more than the hon. gentleman thinks. By the time the information is obtained and the figures tabulated as they will have to be, it will have cost a great deal larger sum than is expected. I am sure that the printing will cost very much more than the cost of working it up, and the information will be of no use unless it is printed. It is no use producing these tables and stowing them away below. What the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, said was quite right, that in some cases where a large number of papers were produced, hon. members were asked to select those which would answer their purpose. I have been asked to do it myself. I have gone over a batch of papers that I do not suppose would be more than one-fourth of these, and yet I was asked to look over them and select those I thought were necessary, before they were printed, and I did so. I know that others have done the same thing, and that it was done simply from motives of economy. We should save expense where it possibly can be saved, and if clerks are to be got rid of because the Government wish to economise, I think in matters like this the Government ought to consider very seriously whether they will agree to having a large return of this kind made at all. I hesitate to oppose returns of this kind, because they may lead to good; but I think a lot of the papers are obsolete, and will be of no use at all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House I would like to give a few words of explanation. It was indicated rather than expressed by the hon. member for Townsville, when somebody interjected, that the Lands Office clerks are paid for overtime. They are not paid overtime. They are allowed half-a-crown for supper when kept in the office until 9 o'clock or 10 o'clock; but I maintain that is not payment for overtime. They cannot get home for supper, and they must, therefore, go to an hotel for it. I am substantially correct in saying that they are not paid overtime. The expense of this return in the Lands Office will not be great; but as to the Real Property Office, I cannot estimate what the probable cost will be, for the very reason that the work will have to be done after office-hours. I am satisfied that the work will not be costly.

Question put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 17.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Rutledge, Dutton, Moreton, Fraser, Buckland, White, McMaster, Annear, Wakefield, Salkeld, Bailey, Grimes, Bulcock, Higson, Morgan, and Sheridan.

NOES, 14.

Messrs. Norton, Chubb, Murphy, Adams, Pattison, Stevenson, Macrossan, Nelson, Hamilton, Lumley Hill, Philp, S. W. Brooks, Brown, and Donaldson.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

BUNDABERG SCHOOL OF ARTS LAND SALE BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—In rising to move the second reading of this Bill, I may say that it is almost a *fac-simile* of a Bill which was passed by Parliament last session, and I do not think it worth my while

to go very much into detail. It is a Bill to enable the trustees of certain allotments of land in Bundaberg either to sell or mortgage the land for the purpose of erecting a new school of arts. Now, I do not think myself that there is any probability whatever of the trustees of the school of arts ever attempting to mortgage unless they are unable to get what they consider to be a fair value for the land. The Bill has been sent to a select committee, and I have to greatly thank the members of the committee for the assistance they have given me. I am sorry I could not get the members of the school of arts committee down from Bundaberg, but I have in their place induced two gentlemen in Brisbane, who know something about the value of the land, to give evidence. They were examined by the committee, and I am perfectly satisfied that those two gentlemen, who know the position of the school of arts, have given very valuable information. I must say that in going through the Bill I had valuable assistance from the hon. member for Bowen, and he has made certain amendments by striking out some portions of the Bill, which were considered absolutely unnecessary. The committee examined Mr. Buss, a gentleman who has had a great deal to do with land-purchasing in the district, and he was able to give a very clear idea as to the value of this property. I may mention that the trustees of the school of arts intend, if possible, to erect a more suitable building than they have at present. Some eighteen months ago they altered their rules so as to admit at a lower subscription than adults young men from sixteen years of age and upwards, and the result has been that many young men who used to loiter about the corners of the streets now go to the school of arts. I need not take up the time of the House any further, but will simply move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one matter in this Bill which strikes me as being somewhat insecure. Provision is made that the money obtained by the sale of this land shall be invested by the trustees in the same manner as the original grant; but a further power is given to the trustees to borrow the sum of £2,000. If they borrow that sum I do not see what is to prevent the mortgagees from selling the property at some future time if the trustees do not comply with the conditions of the mortgage. I remember that on two or three occasions very great objection has been made in this House to granting the power to trustees of these properties to mortgage them at all, for the reason that the same thing might happen in their case as happened in Brisbane at one time, and as has happened, as you know, sir, in Toowoomba, where the trustees did not comply with the conditions of the mortgage and the property was sacrificed. Unless there is some security given that the property will not pass out of the hands of the trustees in this way, this is a dangerous power to give.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it was the intention of the Committee to give power to the trustees to raise moneys by the mortgage of this land; but in the Bill it is stated that the power may be exercised "from time to time" to raise a sum or sums of money not exceeding at any one time the sum of £2,000. The question arises—Is it intended by this that the total sum to be raised in this way shall not exceed £2,000, or may a number of sums, each not exceeding £2,000, be raised in this way?

Mr. CHUBB: It is an exact copy of a similar clause in the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Land Sale Act.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I merely point that out. I have no objection to the Bill. I think it is desirable that the authorities of schools of arts should have the power to raise money for the purpose of enabling them to carry out their trust.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—This Bill received the very careful consideration of the select committee, and the points now referred to were discussed at some length by the members of that committee. We thought it advisable to modify the Bill upon the model of the South Brisbane Mechanics Institute Land Sale Act passed last session. The committee of the school of arts asked leave to borrow £3,000, but the Committee thought that too much, and would only allow them to go as high as £2,000 in the aggregate. That is, I think, as far as they may fairly be allowed to go. They also asked power to mortgage any lands that might be purchased from the proceeds of the land that would be sold, comprising the original grant, but the Committee did not allow that. The Committee reduced it as nearly as possible to a *fac-simile* of the Bill passed or the South Brisbane Mechanics' Institute. If we once recognise the propriety of allowing these societies to sell their land or mortgage it—and we have done so—I do not see how we can refuse the power to the committee of the Bundaberg or any other school of arts that may ask for it. Some formal amendments were also made in the Bill to make it harmonious and in accordance with the terms of the deed of grant.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of Mr. ADAMS, the committal of the Bill was made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

THE CHINESE IMMIGRANTS REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT ACT OF 1884 AMENDMENT BILL.

Mr. BROWN moved that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act Amendment Act of 1884.

Question put and passed.

Mr. BROWN moved—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill to amend the Chinese Immigrants Regulation Act Amendment Act of 1884.

Question put and passed

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution.

FIRST READING.

Mr. BROWN presented the Bill, and moved that it be read a first time.

Question put and passed, and the second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Thursday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—As there is no private business on the paper for tomorrow, I beg to move that this House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

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

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty minutes to 10 o'clock.