

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

FRIDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Friday, 30 September, 1887.

Error in Bill—Valuation Bill.—Question.—Formal Motions.—Question without Notice—Comparative Statement of Expenditure.—Management of Refreshment Rooms—Report of Joint Committee.—Railway from Normanton to Croydon.—Supply—Adjournment.

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

ERROR IN BILL.

VALUATION BILL.

The SPEAKER said: I have to inform the House that I have received the following letter from the Clerk of the Parliaments:—

"Brisbane, 30th September, 1887.

"SIR,

"In compliance with the 20th Joint Standing Order I have the honour to report that in the Valuation Bill there appear to be two clerical errors. In clause 11, line 5, page 4, and in clause 18, line 28, the word 'board' occurs where the general phraseology of the Bill appears to require the words 'local authority.'

"I have, &c.,

"H. W. RADFORD,

"Clerk of the Parliaments.

"To the Hon. the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly."

On the motion of the PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith), it was ordered that the letter be taken into consideration in committee on Tuesday next.

QUESTION.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN asked the Minister for Works—

1. Have plans and specifications of the second section of the Cairns Railway been altered since tenders were called for that section?—and, if so, what alterations have been made?

2. Were tenderers invited to quote a price for concrete in piers to bridges, without any quantities being given in the schedule?

3. Did tenderers quote a price for concrete in piers to bridges?—and, if so, was Robb and Co.'s price higher or lower than Carey and Maund's price, and how much higher or lower?

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

1. It is understood that some alterations have been made in piers of bridges, such as substituting wrought-iron cylinders for timber piers, and that in one instance an embankment has been substituted for a bridge; but detailed information in connection with these matters is expected in a few days.

2. Yes.

3. Tenderers did quote a price for concrete in piers to bridges, and Robb's price was higher than Carey and Maund's by 40s. per cubic yard for cement, and 10s. for lime, but Robb's prices have since been considerably reduced.

FORMAL MOTIONS.

The following formal motions were agreed to:—

By Mr. BUCKLAND—

That there be laid on the table of the House,—

1. All papers in connection with the petition, of date January, 1886, from ratepayers of subdivision No. 1 of the Bulimba Divisional Board, to be proclaimed a shire.

2. Any counter petitions that have been received objecting to said shire being proclaimed.

By Mr. MORGAN—

That there be laid upon the table of the House a Return showing the amount of public money advanced to local authorities during the three financial years ended 30th of June last, giving the amount of loan in each case, the purpose for which the money was advanced, and the period within which it is repayable.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

COMPARATIVE STATEMENT OF EXPENDITURE.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I would like to ask the Colonial Treasurer, without notice, now that we have arrived at the end of the first quarter of the financial year, if he will have prepared a return similar to that I laid on the table of the House last year, showing a comparative statement of the expenditure of the colony of Queensland during the quarters ended 30th September, 1886, and 30th September, 1887, respectively, with the expenditure made during such corresponding periods on account of the preceding financial year?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I will undertake to have such a return made out and laid on the table as soon as possible.

MANAGEMENT OF REFRESHMENT ROOMS.

REPORT OF JOINT COMMITTEE.

Mr. BLACK, in moving—

That the report of the Refreshment Rooms Committee be now adopted—

said: Mr. Speaker,—As hon. members are aware, it has been customary to subsidise the meals obtained by hon. members at 1s. per lunch, 1s. per dinner, and 6d. per breakfast, and it is considered only right, now that a certain amount is set apart annually for members' expenses, that this subsidy should cease. The committee have taken the matter into consideration, and it has been found that the amount of the subsidy paid to the caterer for meals obtained by members and officers of the House during the year comes to about £270. In bringing up this report, the Refreshment Rooms Committee have proposed such changes as they consider will be fair to members who may choose to get meals at the Refreshment Rooms, and will not be injurious to the caterer. One matter I must allude to is, that breakfasts, which have not been very largely consumed in the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms, are left entirely out, as it is considered that that is a meal which hon. members need not necessarily take there. Arrangements can, however be made by any hon. members who desire to obtain that meal here, between themselves and the caterer. The breakfast was, however, considered by the committee as being a meal for which no especial provision need be made. Hon. members will see by clause 4 of the report that it has been decided by the committee that the Refreshment Rooms should be closed on Sundays during the recess. In clause 2 it is stated—

"That the caterer be authorised to charge the sum of 1s. 6d. for luncheon and 2s. 6d. for dinner."

At the caterer's own suggestion, it is proposed, if this House thinks fit, to reduce the charge for dinner to 2s. I do not suppose there will be any objection to this suggestion, which was made by the caterer after this report was brought up. In moving the adoption of the report, therefore, I trust I shall be in order in moving its adoption, with the omission of the words "and sixpence" after the words "two shillings." The committee also made inquiries into one or two matters referred to on previous occasions in this House, concerning certain accounts being unsettled, and they believe there are no defaulters as suggested.

The PREMIER: At present.

Mr. BLACK: At present. There may be a good many in the future, but that I am not prepared to say.

The PREMIER: Or have been in the past.

Mr. BLACK: Hon. members will see by clause 7—

"That the committee undertake the responsibility of posting in the dining and smoking rooms the names of parties submitted to them by the caterer whose accounts have not been paid during the preceding month."

If the caterer chooses to give extended credit either to members or officers of the House, and fails to bring that before the committee, they can accept no responsibility, nor are they bound to inquire into private transactions between the caterer and any hon. member. There is really very little alteration made by this arrangement, except that the House will not in any way, in future, subsidise the meals obtained here by hon. members. Hon. members are now supposed to be paid their expenses, and it is believed they can pay a reasonable charge for any meals they may require to take in this House. Hon. members must understand that the allowance to the caterer remains the same, and hon. members will also understand that it is absolutely necessary that there should be a refreshment-room attached to the House of Parliament, because certain facilities should be given to hon. members to obtain dinner here, for if they had to disperse through Brisbane to get their dinners it would probably happen that there would be great difficulty in getting a House together after dinner. I believe it is the custom in all the colonies to have refreshment-rooms attached to the Houses of Parliament; but what the Committee suggest, under existing circumstances, is that members should pay for what they get, and the country should not be called upon to contribute anything towards the meals enjoyed by members. I beg to move that the report be adopted, except that the rate to be charged per dinner be 2s.

The SPEAKER: Does the House consent to the amendment proposed by the hon. member?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Question—That the report of the Refreshment Rooms Committee as amended be now adopted—put.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think there can be no objection to the adoption of the report. It is certainly improper, under existing circumstances, that the general public should be called upon to subsidise hon. members' meals. There can, I think, be no necessity for making provision for breakfasts, as the business of the House is not ordinarily done before breakfast, or except on very rare occasions.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not lately. Not since you changed sides.

The PREMIER: There is then no necessity to make special provision for breakfast. The salary of the caterer is, of course, a fixed sum. I am glad to hear that there are no arrears in the Refreshment Room now, although I believe the statement I made during the discussion on the Estimates was very much founded on fact, and if made two or three days earlier than it was made it would have been strictly accurate. I do not think it necessary to say anything further on the subject. I think the report should be adopted.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with the whole of the report, except that portion of it which puts upon the committee the responsibility of posting a member who has not paid his account during the preceding month. That, I think, should not be agreed to. The practice of the caterer is, I believe, at the end of the month to send his bill to the different members. It may easily happen that a member might put his bill into his pocket and forget all about it until he received a reminder

at the end of the following month. If that was done through a mere oversight, or want of memory, it would not be fair to post a member as a defaulter.

The PREMIER: I often forget mine for two or three months together.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Then why should a man be posted as a defaulter for a mere act of forgetfulness?

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the proposition is a very good one. It states that the committee shall undertake the responsibility of posting the names of parties submitted to them by the caterer whose accounts have not been paid during the preceding month. I hardly think it likely that the caterer would submit any names to the committee, in the first instance, where there is no default intended; and in the second place, the committee, having the responsibility of posting the names of members, would be very careful to ascertain whether there was any real or prolonged default before proceeding to do so. The rule, as I said before, is a good one as it stands. With regard to the fifth recommendation, which states—

"That the rooms shall be open only to members of Parliament and officers of both the Houses and the *Hansard* staff; and that any member of the Legislature of any of the Australian Colonies may be admitted to the Refreshment Rooms, if introduced by any member of the Queensland Parliament as his guest"—

I would point out that although it has been in existence for years, it is one that is certainly often evaded by many members of the House. Only within the last few weeks, while the House has been sitting, I have seen members take strangers—who might have been sitting at your right hand or left, Mr. Speaker—to the Parliamentary bar, amongst members who were probably discussing the various matters before the House, and supplied with refreshments at the expense of the members who took them down. That is a rather important matter, and I think it high time that attention was called to it. The rule has been broken over and over again; and only within the last week I saw the hon. member for Maryborough—I do not suppose he will deny it—take a stranger there. The rule, I may say, has been more honoured in the breach than in the observance. I call attention to the fact to prevent a recurrence of it. With regard to the main recommendation of the committee, I think it advisable, now that hon. members are paid two guineas a day for attendance here, that they should pay the cost of the meals they consume in the Parliamentary Refreshment Rooms; and I was glad to find that the report was accepted so cheerfully in another place where their daily two guineas are not yet served out to them by the State.

The PREMIER: They wanted to pay the whole half-crown.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I am told that that arose out of a misunderstanding on the part of the hon. gentleman who moved the resolution. As far as I can judge, I have seen hon. gentlemen who are not representatives, but nominees, eat as hearty a meal for the money they pay as any hon. member of this Chamber. They have so little to do that they confine their attention to their physical affairs, and they seem to do it in a remarkably hearty manner, and certainly get their money's worth, just as much as members of this House do. I hope the report will be adopted in the form as moved.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very pleased to find that the recommendations of the Refreshment Rooms Committee have been received in, I may say, so kind a manner by the members of the House. Although it may appear a small matter, it gave the committee a considerable amount of anxiety before they

finally agreed to bring up this report. I am also pleased to hear the remarks of the leader of the Opposition with reference to the introduction of strangers into the Refreshment Rooms. I am pleased, because the Refreshment Rooms Committee have on more than one occasion received complaints from hon. members on that subject. We felt it a rather delicate matter to deal with, because it was known that several members have been guilty of a breach of the rule. I myself, Mr. Speaker, have been a transgressor in that respect, but I can assure the House that I will not be the first transgressor, at all events, in the future; and I suppose the rule will be more religiously observed all round in the future than it has been in the past. With regard to recommendation No. 7, the committee had a good deal of talk over it before they consented to it as it stands. I do not think the objection raised to it by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, has very much weight, because, as hon. members will notice, a member has to receive his account twice before his name will be posted. The recommendation states—

"That the committee undertake the responsibility of posting in the dining and smoking rooms the names of parties submitted to them by the caterer whose accounts have not been paid during the preceding month."

It is not the account for the preceding month which will be posted. For instance, if an hon. member's account is due to-day, and it remains unpaid, it will not be posted during October, but at the end of November, so that the member would receive his account again on the 1st November before the committee took any notice of it; and, of course, the committee would take no notice of any complaint made by the caterer unless they had very good grounds for believing that the account was not going to be paid.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—Having been somewhat pointedly referred to by the leader of the Opposition, I at once acknowledge that I have, following the example of the hospitable members of the House, taken a friend down to the bar occasionally, but very seldom, and given him refreshments there. But I must say that in not a single instance was the example set me by the leader of the Opposition. I do not include him among the hospitable members whom I spoke of.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—It may be a very proper rule to make, to prevent members from taking their friends to the refreshment bar for a drink. At the same time, I do not see the necessity for making a hard-and-fast rule. So long as members exercise a proper discretion it cannot be a very heinous offence, even when the House is sitting. It is frequently done. I have done it myself, and I doubt whether a single hon. member who has spoken to-night has not broken that rule.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I have not.

Mr. HAMILTON: I have very often taken friends to the bar for a drink, and I know that many other members have done the same thing. With regard to the posting of members in default, no one, I think, will object to it; but there is something in what was said by the hon. member for Townsville on that point. The Premier insinuated the other day that there were members who had not paid their accounts. I have since heard that during the present session there is not a single member who has not paid his account, and that during the whole of the time that the colony has had a Parliament the number of defaulters has only been four. I do not know what course the committee will take, but I think the proper gentlemanly course, if a member happens not to pay the caterer for

two or three months—and I suppose hardly a member here has not let his account run on for a few months—would be for the caterer to refer to the Refreshment Rooms Committee, who would say to the gentleman in question, "I hear your account has not been paid; probably you have overlooked it; you had better pay the man." If after being reminded in that way he did not pay, the proper course would be to summon him as for any other debt. But I do not suppose there is anything in it, because I hear that during the present session there has not been a single defaulter.

Mr. SCOTT said: Mr. Speaker,—With regard to clause No. 5, I fully agree with it while the House is sitting, but I do not see the harm of a member, who may be showing a stranger through the building when the House is out of session, giving his guest something if he wishes. I have done that myself, and I do not think there was any harm in it. I think it is very objectionable that strangers should be in the Refreshment Room while the House is sitting, and while members may be discussing matters which are going on here. The latter part of the clause says:—

"Any member of the Legislature of any of the Australian colonies may be admitted to the Refreshment Rooms, if introduced by any member of the Queensland Parliament as his guest."

Mr. MOREHEAD: That is the existing rule.

Mr. SCOTT: What does the House understand by that? I want to know the meaning of it. Is it understood that a member of this Parliament can bring to dinner, as a guest every night for a fortnight or three weeks, a member of Parliament from any of the other colonies who may be residing in Brisbane for the time being.

The PREMIER: That is not very likely to occur.

Mr. SCOTT: It may not be likely, but I should like to know if the clause would cover that.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad to see this report brought up, and I only wish it had been adopted years ago. I am sure no hon. member will say that 2s. for a dinner such as we get down there is too much. We do not get such dinners anywhere else under 2s. 6d. or 3s. Now that members receive two guineas a day, I do not think they can object to paying 2s. for dinner and 1s. 6d. for lunch. With regard to the 7th clause, I do not believe the caterer would post any member who was not in arrear for months, and to a considerable amount. It has been the case that some members have not paid for six or nine months, and have run up accounts for £40 or £50. Then the caterer would be fully justified in having such a member posted. I know Mr. Baldwin is not likely to post any member for a paltry sum, even if it were due for two or three months. I shall support the adoption of the report.

The Hon. G. THORN said: Mr. Speaker,—One matter has escaped the attention of the members of this joint committee, and that is the question of selling intoxicating liquors to members of this House. A number of members of this House wear the blue ribbon—I saw one this afternoon with a blue ribbon hanging on his chain—some are Good Templars, and others are temperance men like myself, who think that an example should be set to the members of the general community. I am astonished that the stronger advocates of temperance have not given their views on this question—the hon. member for Ipswich, for example, Mr. Macfarlane. As to the price charged for meals, I believe that the next Parliament will return to the present scale, and that

this alteration is altogether unnecessary. I am not one of those who agree with hon. members of this House that we cannot get a better dinner outside for 2s. 6d. I can assure hon. members that we can get a better dinner outside for far less than 2s. 6d. I shall not oppose the adoption of the report, but I am sure that we shall come back in the next Parliament to our present scale. I should like to hear the hon. member for Ipswich and the hon. member for Oxley say something on the temperance side of the question.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—I was just going to rise to speak on the subject when the hon. member got up. I am perfectly satisfied with the recommendations of the joint committee, but I should have been very glad if they had recommended another rule touching upon the matter referred to by the hon. member for Fassifern. Hon. members are very jealous about their privileges—that only members of Parliament should have the use of the Refreshment Room—and I think it is perfectly right that if there is a privilege, no one should attempt to break through it. At the same time, I think the business of this House would be very much facilitated if hon. members, while the House is sitting, were not allowed to enter the bar—in other words, if the bar were shut while the House is sitting. I hope hon. members will not think me selfish because I do not use the bar myself and wish to prevent them from using it, but I really think it would be a very good thing, and would shorten the sessions. I am quite sure we should get away sooner at night if the bar were closed during the time the House was sitting. I have not much hope that such a rule will be adopted now; but if it had come from the joint committee I am not sure that it would not have passed. I throw out the hint, and if the joint committee another session would consider the matter, I really think they would have a very good chance of passing such a rule as that I have suggested.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY FROM NORMANTON TO CROYDON.

Mr. PALMER, in moving—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a line of railway should be constructed between Normanton and Croydon immediately—

said: Mr. Speaker,—When I brought the subject-matter of this motion under the notice of the House before, the Premier, in one of his replies, exonerated the Government from the necessity of taking any immediate action, by the position now occupied by some of the gold-fields in the North. He instanced the Palmer, the Hodgkinson, the Mulgrave, Etheridge, Gilbert, and several others—giving them as instances of places which had a larger population than Croydon has now, and said, “Look at the state they are in now.” Well, sir, instead of accepting that as an argument against the proposition I rather look upon it as one quite in favour of it, because no one will attempt to say that the mineral wealth of those fields is at all exhausted; perhaps in many cases it is scarcely touched. The wealth that has been shown to exist on those enormous fields since the last geological survey was made is still there awaiting an opportunity of being developed; and the reason I have brought this motion under the notice of the Government is that the same result may not happen to this promising goldfield that the Premier has pointed to as the present state of the fields he mentioned. I admit at once that there are difficulties of transit to those fields which give a little colour to his argument; for instance, the ranges, and the steep and rugged nature of the country between them and any available port,

militated in a very great measure against any railway being carried there, unless at very great cost. But I hold that those fields are only waiting for development until they have cheap and speedy means of communication by railway, and then they will develop to an enormous extent. We have only to look at the figures quoted in the last return from the Mines Department to show what an important industry the mining industry is in the northern part of Queensland, and the urgency of the department taking up the matter I have now brought under the notice of the House. I see that the Palmer Gold Field alone—that field that had been described as almost a deserted one—yielded, in 1886, 1,265,191 oz. of gold. There is only one field in the North to compare in any way with that; that is Charters Towers. The total yield from the Northern fields amounted to 3,640,956 oz. up to the end of 1886, and that at £3 10s. per oz. realised the value of £12,743,346; whereas from the Southern fields there have been 1,542,263 oz., which at the same value amounted to £5,390,920. Now, while admitting the difficulties in the way of any railway communication being carried to the fields that have been mentioned, I do not think any member will contradict me when I say that no such obstacles exist with regard to the Croydon Gold Field. There is nothing but very level country from the port, which is a valuable one, and I believe as good as any to be found on the eastern seaboard, if not better; so that the difficulty with regard to that is removed at once. And there is another matter, sir, which should encourage the Government to take the work in hand; that is the extraordinary seasons that prevail in the northern and western parts of the colony, more especially in the western, as compared with the eastern seaboard. I myself have been acquainted with twenty-two or twenty-three wet seasons in the North, some of them of long duration, none under three or four months, and during the whole of that time as a rule all traffic is absolutely stopped. In some instances the wet season is much longer; I have known some to continue for five and six months, and during that period traffic had been absolutely prohibited through the enormous wet weather. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I believe the country is one over which traffic could be easily carried by means of a railway. It is not so flooded as it is swampy and boggy—of a very boggy nature, almost bottomless in some places. The clay under-soil seems to have no tenacity whatever, and I know, from this fact alone, that in ordinary wet seasons, unless something is done in the way of railway communication, this promising goldfield will become just the same as the other fields mentioned have become. It will have to subside, as it were, and bide its time. The Premier also excused the Government on account of want of knowledge of the permanency of the reefs, stating that he did not know whether the field was likely to continue as great in richness as it has started. Well, sir, I can assure him that the field is showing every indication of richness and permanency. In the reefs discovered certainly the depth is not yet very great, but so far as they have gone down they continue to improve in quality and to increase in quantity. The deepest reef is about 200 feet. I know the Regina is down 175 feet, and the reef is growing thicker. I am informed by the hon. junior member for Cook that there is a reef down 240 feet. I know there are several down nearly 200 feet, and so far as they have gone they show permanency and increasing richness; so that I think that excuse will scarcely hold good now. And still further proof of the field becoming permanent is the extraordinary amount of cargo that is continually going there. One steamer the other day

took between 800 and 900 tons, and every fortnightly steamer—the mail steamer—is loaded with cargo for that field. The population there at present is between 6,000 and 7,000, and the steamer communication will very likely be doubled before next year; and if there is no possibility of traffic reaching the field in time to save them from starvation during the coming wet season, they will have to remove to Townsville or Normanton, or somewhere else, until such time as the conclusion of the wet season allows traffic to be resumed again—that is, ordinary wheel traffic, which at the best is a very slow, very expensive, and very useless kind of traffic to serve the purposes of such an enormous field. We all know that even in the case of the very richest fields there is nothing that will make them a success like cheap and expeditious traffic. I will challenge any hon. member to show an instance where a goldfield has been prosperous and successful to which a railway has not been the principal means of carrying success to it. In fact, proof of it may be seen in the northern part of Queensland at this day. I am certain that when the railway reaches Maytown there will be an enormous development of the reefs there and in all other instances in the Northern fields. This railway, also, is not going, as it were, to a pocket, where there can be no further extension beyond Croydon. There is a possibility of it being extended to the Etheridge—one of those fields mentioned as failing or in a state of decay. So that this railway will be simply a first instalment of what will become a line through a succession of what may be called enormous reefing fields, surpassed by none in Australia. I am quite certain of that. A proof of the difficulty of people holding on to that country, and trying to settle it, is also to be found in the Mines Report, which shows that the charge for crushing is 30s. per ton. That is the highest charge for crushing on any field in Queensland. Even on the Etheridge, further out, it is only 25s., and on Charters Towers and Gympie it is 9s. or 10s. a ton. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am quite certain that it is not to the interest of the northern part of the colony that this field should languish. It is not to the interest of Brisbane that it should. The trade that has been opened up with Brisbane and that field is enormous, and the Government will simply be doing their duty if they will carry out, as speedily as possible, railway communication from Normanton to Croydon. It is not as if there were any difficulties in the way. The country is perfectly level, with no engineering difficulties whatever. There are one or two rivers to cross, but they are very small.

The PREMIER: What about the Norman?

Mr. PALMER: I believe a route can be traversed by which there would be no creeks to cross after the Norman is crossed, so that as far as the engineering difficulties are concerned they are not to be considered. It will be a cheap line, and the first ten or twelve miles of the Cloncurry line can be availed of as a means of transit for this line.

The PREMIER: That goes in quite a different direction.

Mr. PALMER: It would be possible to use one line for both. They are not a very great distance apart. There is not a great distance between the Norman bar and Cloncurry by way of Rocky Point.

The PREMIER: About twelve miles.

Mr. PALMER: Considering the tremendous richness of these reefs, and the permanence of the field, and taking into consideration the extraordinary wet seasons which do occur there, I

think that I am only doing my duty to that part of the district which I represent by moving this motion at the present time. I am not in a fit state to speak at greater length, as I have been suffering for a week or two from a severe cold, so that I shall do no more at present than move the motion standing in my name.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know that it is desirable to simply affirm that a railway should be constructed from one of these places to the other. The construction of a railway involves the finding of money. The hon. gentleman has not made any suggestion as to how the money should be found. I thought possibly he would have suggested that the money provided for the construction of a line from Normanton to Cloncurry in the same district should be diverted at the present time to the construction of this line, and if he had suggested that—if he had made that proposal—it would be worthy of serious discussion.

Mr. PALMER: I was waiting for a suggestion from the Government.

The PREMIER: If this line is to be constructed then the one projected from Normanton to Cloncurry would have to be suspended for the present, at all events.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not necessarily.

The PREMIER: We could not go on with it at the present time, at any rate. We have no funds available, and it is not desirable to bring in another Loan Bill this session to provide for the construction of 130 miles of railway.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not as much as that.

The PREMIER: What is the distance?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Less than 100 miles by the direct line. That is what I have been informed.

The PREMIER: I have heard various distances mentioned, but I never heard it brought down to 100 miles. I know the bush miles are rather short sometimes, especially in the early days of a goldfield.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: That was not my experience.

The PREMIER: Perhaps when the 130 miles came to be measured they would be found not to be more than 100 miles. I am regarding this first of all as a matter of money. It is no use passing a resolution declaring it desirable to construct the line unless some money is available. If the hon. member desires to give practical effect to the resolution he should add that it is desirable that the money authorised to be raised for the construction of a line from Normanton to Cloncurry should be diverted to this purpose, and that would have given us a proper basis for discussion. That could easily be done by bringing in a Bill which would not take very long to pass; but I certainly cannot ask the House to pass a Loan Bill to authorise the borrowing of £250,000 to construct a line from Normanton to Croydon during the present session. It is difficult to know what a line like this would cost. I believe the country is very level. It would come out about twelve miles along the bank of the Norman River, but that is quite a different direction from the route to Cloncurry. The railway to Cloncurry strikes from Normanton from the other side of the town to the Flinders River west of south-west; and the other line from Normanton to the Rocky Crossing, on the road to Croydon, is almost due south. Then the country to be passed over is quite different. For the first fifteen or twenty miles out from Normanton on the road to Cloncurry the soil is hard

and gravelly, whereas the soil on this other line is more like the black soil, or rather chocolate-coloured soil, that extends all the way to Cloncurry. The conditions of the two places are quite different. The hon. member referred to the desirability of making a railway to Croydon, as a goldfield seldom prospered without a railway. I believe that is true to a great extent. Reefing fields cannot be said to prosper until they have better means of access than can be had by drays. As to the permanency of Croydon, of course that is to a great extent uncertain. I have made a good many inquiries about it during the last few weeks, and I confess I am very strongly disposed to think that the field has already proved that it will be of a permanent character. I am guided greatly by the judgment of most experienced persons who are prepared to expend large sums of money on the field, and I attach a great deal of weight to their opinions. So that I think we are justified in treating Croydon as a permanent goldfield; but certainly it would be rather unusual, and, in fact, quite unprecedented in the history of the colony, to propose to construct a railway to a goldfield within two years after it has been discovered. Yet I should be disposed to favourably consider a proposal to divert part of the money voted for the construction of the Normanton to Cloncurry line to the making of this line. It must be remembered, however, that the claims of the people of Cloncurry have to be considered. They have been led to understand that they were going to get their line.

Mr. PALMER: What about the line west from Hughenden?

The PREMIER: I think that that may wait, and wait patiently; but Cloncurry is a mining district.

Mr. PALMER: Divert the money from the Hughenden line.

The PREMIER: How much is there? The length of that line is 130 miles.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Divert the money from the Fortitude Valley line.

The PREMIER: Besides, the money referred to by the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Palmer, has already been claimed to be diverted for another purpose by the hon. member for Townsville—for the making of a railway from Townsville to Ingham. I think this is a matter upon which the Northern members might from their practical knowledge be allowed to have a good deal to say, and I am prepared to act to a great extent upon their judgment in the matter. As I said before, the Cloncurry people have claims for consideration. It is a rich mining district, though not very rich in gold; great hopes have been raised by the prospect of having a railway, and it would be a very serious blow to the prosperity of the district if the line were not constructed. Moreover, the large pastoral industry there would supply a great deal of traffic if a railway were constructed; in fact the construction of that railway would bring within easy reach of the seaboard one of the most valuable pastoral districts in the colony. In a matter of this kind I am prepared to be guided to a great extent by the opinions of the Northern members—just as in matters affecting the Central districts I am prepared to be guided by the opinions of the Central members; but I must at once say that there is no more money for a railway from Normanton, and the Government are not prepared to borrow any more for this purpose at the present time. But if this resolution is carried, practical effect can only be given to it by introducing a Bill authorising us to divert some of the money Parliament has already authorised for the construction of the other line.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the Chief Secretary has spoken very fairly, and though he is quite correct in saying it would be unprecedented to construct a railway to a goldfield only two years in existence, if he thinks seriously over the matter he will find that the reason why some of those goldfields have failed within two or three years after being discovered has been for the want of communication.

The PREMIER: I know.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: So that what is unprecedented is really a thing which should be done in this particular case in order to avoid a disaster of the same kind as has happened on several occasions before. The Hodgkinson is about the worst example that can be taken of any purely reefing field in Queensland, yet at the present time the average yield of gold there is 16 dwt. per ton—an amount of gold which would pay handsomely in many parts of New South Wales and in every part of Victoria. The difficulty is want of communication. That field was opened three or four years ago before there was anything that could be called a road, but simply a horse-track, and a very difficult horse-track too. It was opened some time when the Douglas Government were in office—about two years before that Government went out—and I suppose it was about two years after that before I was able to make a road which drays could use by double-banking up to the top of the range. By that time, however, the field was more than half deserted; the population had become discouraged, and had gone away to other fields which had been discovered in the meantime. The Etheridge is labouring under the same difficulty—want of communication—and the population has fluctuated, rising and falling, for the last twelve years. It is more than double the distance of the Hodgkinson from the seaboard, but the seaboard is more difficult of access in the case of the Hodgkinson. The Palmer, which has been quoted by the hon. member for Burke, and which was spoken of on a previous occasion by the Chief Secretary, was an alluvial field. It is now a reefing field, but it was an alluvial field, and the difficulty there was of a different character. Though distance and difficulty of access had a great deal to do with it, the reason why that field became nearly deserted was owing to the tremendous influx of Chinese. The European miners were driven away from the alluvial, and had they not—it is a well-known fact amongst the miners themselves, who know the way of working goldfields better than, I may say, the theoretical members of this House—had the European miners not been driven away by the Chinese, they would have systematically opened the reefs which were known to exist on the Palmer, by means of the produce of the alluvial workings; the same as was done on Ravenswood. That field was opened as an alluvial field. A party of four would take up a reefing claim, which the regulations allowed to be worked by two of them. At the same time the other two worked alluvial claims, and made enough to keep their comrades at work till they struck something that enabled the four of them to work the reef. Ravenswood has been partly deserted, because, though gold is known to exist in large quantities, the ore is of a refractory nature, and there are no means of extracting the gold profitably. As far as we know Croydon, that difficulty does not exist; and I think there is no doubt about the permanency of Croydon. As far as any goldfield can be declared to be permanent which has been only two years in existence, I think Croydon may be declared to be a permanent goldfield. At the present time a great many block claims have been taken up, and on some of them the reefs have been found. The hon.

gentleman at the head of the Government knows what a block claim is. It means that the man who takes up a claim calculates on going a great depth to find the reef, probably 100 or 200 feet.

The PREMIER: It is taken up over the reef.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is taken up on the underlie. A great many of these claims have been taken up at Croydon, and that shows the confidence of the miners themselves. Now, as to the confidence of capitalists. Four machines are already at work, and eight more are either in transit or in course of erection, making twelve machines. No such example as that is to be found on any purely reefing field in Australia. It is known that there are sixteen machines, reckoning those that are up, those that have not been put up, those in transit, and those projected—sixteen crushing machines for the Croydon Gold Field; that shows the confidence of capitalists. When I was going down to Sydney three or four weeks ago, I was told by a gentleman named Watson, from Victoria, who is known as an extremely fortunate miner, and whose good fortune has resulted very much from his judgment, that he had not the slightest doubt in his own mind about Croydon, and that he intended to invest largely in the field as soon as the leasing principle could be applied, which will be some time early next year. Capitalists do not like to invest their money where the regulations simply provide that claims can be taken up under miners' rights, but when they can take up leases they invest their money freely, if they have confidence in the field. He said he intended to do so, and he knew others who intended to invest capital in the field also. One of his near relations is putting up two large machines there now. All that shows the confidence of capitalists. Some years ago I remember hearing the Chief Secretary make a statement in this House, which appeared to me at the time to be a little exaggerated, but after all, when one considers it, the statement probably is not of an exaggerated nature. It was in relation to Charters Towers. He said it was an axiom in America that when ten or twelve teams could be employed constantly supplying provisions—where teams were necessary for the supply of provisions in any particular place—then the Americans thought a railway might be profitably made. That was stated by the hon. gentleman many years ago. Now, the Croydon actually employs 150 teams; that is the number known to be at work constantly on the road between Croydon and Normanton. I have it on the authority of a gentleman who, whilst going from Croydon to Normanton, counted the number of teams on the road during the two days' journey. So that if twelve or twenty teams will make a railway pay, 150 ought to make it pay well. Our experience of Charters Towers has been this: As soon as the railway was opened from Townsville four years ago, if hon. members refer to the Mines Report, they will find that the yield of gold very nearly doubled. That is wholly, or at any rate chiefly, owing to the easy means of communication.

The PREMIER: Hear, hear!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: In regard to Croydon, we cannot do better than adopt this resolution with an amendment, which I shall leave the mover to propose, but which I will suggest. The hon. leader of the Government very forcibly and very naturally says that he cannot bring in another Loan Bill at present. I quite agree with him in that. But the money may be diverted from another vote. The hon. gentleman also speaks of the importance of the Cloncurry, which I quite admit is an important district. At the present time, however, I am afraid that even if there were a railway opened to

Cloncurry its importance will be less—a great deal less—than that of some fields we have at present, which have less reliable means of communication than a railway. There is no prospect of copper paying very much, so far as we can see in the immediate future, the price of it being very low indeed. The chief prospect of that Cloncurry line would be from the impetus it would give the gold-mining interests of the field and also from the pastoral interests of the district. But it would not injure those interests if a portion of that money were diverted—if sufficient money were taken from the Cloncurry vote of £500,000 to make a railway to Croydon. I have been told that the distance from Normanton to Croydon is ninety miles as the crow flies; but assuming that it is over 100 miles—say 110 miles—with the mode of construction we have in the North, and with the easy nature of the country, I am quite certain that £300,000 would make the line and equip it. It will not cost nearly £3,000 per mile to make the line, because there will be very little earthworks on it, and of course every person acquainted with railway-making knows that it is the earthworks that make a line so costly. The chief work will be the laying of rails. If we divert £300,000 from the Cloncurry vote and apply it to the making of a line to Croydon, and use the balance in making the line towards Cloncurry at the same time, before the two amounts are expended the £10,000,000 loan vote will be entirely expended, and I suppose that will be within two years from the present time. We could not expend that £500,000 upon both lines in less than two years; so that by that time, the Government—whatever Government is in office—would be prepared to bring forward a Loan Bill, including the sum required to complete the line to Cloncurry. The Cloncurry vote would take that line eighty or ninety miles in the direction of Cloncurry, and would complete the Croydon line; and I say that the Croydon line is a far greater necessity than the Cloncurry or any other line at present projected in the colony. There can be no doubt that the Croydon will suffer greatly during the ensuing wet season, if there is a wet season at all, because the information that I have, and which I believe to be correct, is this: that 150 teams are just sufficient to keep the population supplied with rations and with other necessities in good weather as at the present time. Therefore, if these teams were stuck up, as I have known teams to be in the North, for three or four months without moving from one spot—if they were stuck up for one month only—there would be a small famine at Croydon. We could not endure three or four repetitions of that—we cannot help it for the next season; but if the people of Croydon see that there is a chance of having the distance shortened within twelve months, and the whole line made within two years, they will put up with a great deal before they leave the field, even if they were not very successful in their mining explorations. I think that that suggestion is one which might very well be adopted by the Premier. I think it will meet the objections which the Premier has to bringing in a Loan Bill, and it will also meet the objection which anyone may have to diverting the whole of the money from the Cloncurry vote. I could not ask that; I would only ask sufficient to make the line to Croydon, and I am certain that £300,000 will do that. From our experience of the way in which the Charters Towers line has paid since it was opened, I think we need not have the least fear that this £300,000 will return 10 per cent., because the charges can be made a little heavier than upon the other lines. Everything else there is charged higher for, and I do not think the people would object to being charged

higher, seeing that at present they pay £12 per ton for goods from Normanton to Croydon, a distance of 130 miles by road. I do not think they would object to paying higher rates than are paid on the Charters Towers line, and the continual influx of population which would take place, if that line were completed, of miners and capitalists from the South would make it pay. I believe it would pay 10 per cent. If it would not pay that it would pay at least 5 or 6 per cent., which is more than the interest we pay on the borrowed money. When we can borrow money at 4 or 4½ per cent., we can very well afford to make this line, which I am fully confident will pay 5 or 6 per cent. when the Charters Towers line has been paying that nearly all the time since it was opened. I think when the hon. member for Burke speaks, if he will amend his motion to take in the suggestion I have made, he will be able to induce the Government to accept it, and we can then expect to have a railway to Croydon.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad to see the manner in which the Premier has received this motion. I have been in communication with a very great many persons who are residing on the Croydon Field—old miners who have lived for many years in Queensland—and they are all of opinion that this will be one of the most permanent fields in the colony. The Premier states that it would be a very unusual proceeding to build a railway to a goldfield which has been discovered only a couple of years; but had it been more usual a great many goldfields which are at present deserted might now be prosperous. In regard to its permanency, I wired to the editor of the *Golden Age*, Mr. Morgan, asking him to give me the names of some of the deepest reefs on the Croydon Gold Field, and the prospects at that depth, and I received a reply from him yesterday. He stated in his wire that the Homeward Bound shaft is down 240 feet, the reef at that depth being 4 feet 6 inches thick, and running 5 oz. to the ton. No. 2 Highland Mary is down 150 feet, the reef 2 feet 6 inches wide at the bottom of the shaft, and richer and thicker than at the surface. The Proprietary Claim, Highland Mary, is down 190 feet, reef 3 feet 3 inches thick, and running 3 oz. to the ton. The Iguana shaft is down 180 feet, and the reef is thicker and richer at that depth than at the surface. The Waterfall is down 150 feet, and the reef is thicker and richer at that depth. The Croydon Queen is down 130 feet, and the reef also is richer and thicker than at the surface. These ascertained facts show that the field has already proved to be permanent. In some of those fields which were mentioned by the Premier a few nights since as having been deserted when it was thought in the first instance that they were going to be permanent, not many shafts were sunk to this depth before the fields were deserted. The Palmer has been alluded to, and we must recollect that the Palmer has turned out more gold, although it was discovered since the Charters Towers and Gympie fields, than either of them. But there is a railway to Gympie and a railway to Charters Towers; and I can bear out what has been said by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, as to the injurious effect the Chinese had on the Palmer field. I was on the Palmer at that time, and I know that miners then could not leave their claims to go prospecting, because if they did their claims would be rushed by Chinamen. I have seen miles and miles of the Palmer River and the gullies in that district lined by Chinamen, and the consequence was that European miners had to leave the field, as wages were low and provisions costly. It is now an ascertained fact

that the Palmer is a rich reefing field, and only within the last few months companies for working the field have been floated in London. The Hodgkinson, again, as the hon. member for Townsville has observed, although it is practically nearly deserted at the present time, would be a much more profitable field for investment were the means of communication better than they are. The average return of the reefs on that field is 16 dwt. to the ton, and on Gympie I know that there are reefs which would pay handsomely at 10 dwt. per ton. Therefore, if the Hodgkinson had the same facilities of railway communication as Gympie, the reefs which are now being struck would pay handsomely. The country through which the proposed line from Normanton to Croydon would pass presents no natural obstacles to railway construction such as would be encountered between the Hodgkinson and Port Douglas or between the Palmer and Cooktown. The cost of construction would be very slight, and the railway could be made in a very short time. I believe that if it were made it would not only pay, but that it would be one of the best paying lines in the country, as indeed all goldfields lines have proved to be, and that it would develop a goldfield which is considered by some of the most experienced miners to be one of the richest in Queensland.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I myself trust that the hon. member for Burke will see his way to introduce the amendment suggested by the hon. member for Townsville. I think it is a matter of the utmost importance that this Croydon line should be commenced as soon as possible. I would rather have seen the money appropriated for the Fortitude Valley line, which is about the most useless one that has been passed by this House, diverted to the purpose of making a line from Normanton to Cloncurry. Two miles of the Fortitude Valley line are to cost £200,000, which sum would very nearly make the railway to Croydon, and the two miles additional accommodation will not bring a brass farthing to the revenue; they will not pay for grease on the wheels. I am perfectly certain of that, and I do not think £200,000 will make the Fortitude Valley railway. I consider that it will be an utter waste of money. If the South would abstain from squandering money on unnecessary works of this kind and spend it in the construction of important and much-needed railways in the North it would be very much better for all parties concerned. I think it is of much more immediate importance that this Croydon line should be commenced, and I shall therefore vote for the appropriation of a part of the money voted for the Normanton to Cloncurry railway for that purpose. I would draw the attention of the House to the fact that the line to Croydon will not only be for the benefit of that place, but will ultimately, I hope, connect with the railway from Cairns to Herberton and the Etheridge. It will really be part of a great national railway scheme for the North. I believe that the whole of the country that such a line will go through—the country round Croydon, Georgetown, Irvinebank, and Watsonville—is rich mineral country, which contains not only gold, but also tin and silver. I believe that a railway running from Normanton to Croydon, and by Georgetown to Herberton and Cairns, will be one of the most profitable investments the State can make with its loan money. I have no doubt, from the information that I have received, that the field will be a permanent one, and I have no doubt that, even if it were not as good as it is represented to be, there is plenty of other country in the immediate neighbourhood and on the line of route which is well worth opening up and giving increased facilities of communication.

The great point in favour of the proposed line is that the country through which it will run is easy country for railway construction. The other day I, in company with some other hon. members, inspected the patent steel sleepers of Mr. Phillips, and I was immensely pleased with them. I think they are the very thing for the country between Normanton and Croydon, and that with them that railway could be easily completed in eighteen months or two years. They are, in my opinion, especially adapted to country which, like that, is utterly timberless. I trust that the House will accept the motion in the amended form suggested by the hon. member for Townsville, and that the work of making this railway will be commenced with all speed. The way in which mineral discoveries are being made is a very fortunate thing for the colony. They are our only stand-by, or our principal stand-by, at all events. When the industries of the colony get into a depressed state our mineral fields come to the front and bring us back to prosperity. I myself look forward with great hope, with something more than hope, to great prosperity and increase of wealth to the whole colony from Croydon, as well as the country in that neighbourhood.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall be very glad to support this motion, though I have some apprehension as to the propriety of diverting railway votes from the purposes for which they were first appropriated by the House to one rather different. Of course we must not forget that it was part of the loan scheme to build a line from Normanton to Cloncurry. No doubt the people of Cloncurry and the district round there are expecting that the promised railway will be carried out. If the proposed line to Croydon will not interfere with the construction of that line, I see no reason why a portion of the money appropriated for the Cloncurry railway may not be used for the purpose of connecting Normanton with this very valuable goldfield. If I am right, another 100 miles or a very little more would connect the line with Georgetown, and we would then have the Etheridge in railway communication with Normanton. The advantages of railway communication in that district would be undoubted. The hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, referred to the Valley railway. The proposed line to Croydon is more important than that line in this respect, that the Fortitude Valley line will not, I suppose, add a single inhabitant to the city of Brisbane, while the railway to Croydon will not only assist the large number of miners on the field, but will tend to induce settlement on the land. A hundred miles of railway into the interior of the country would induce people to settle on the land, so that from that point of view I think it would be a good thing if the Government could see their way to accept the suggestion of the hon. member for Townsville, and appropriate a certain portion of the vote for the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry towards the construction of this line. At the same time I hope if this proposal is adopted there will be no delay in the construction of the Cloncurry line. The surveys have been made for that line, and the sleepers are being tested, and I may add my testimony to the general opinion of them. I have seen them recently, and so far as one who is not an engineer can judge I think them very well adapted for the purpose for which it is proposed to use them, and also for a line of this kind, which would be very similar to the line from Normanton to Cloncurry. It is a very important thing, when we have a goldfield which in two years has so large a population as Croydon has now, that there should be every facility given for communication with that field, and for getting crushing machinery and plant

and everything necessary to open up the field on to it. If the investing public understand that the Government are prepared to carry out a line of railway to Croydon, they will be induced to invest capital more largely in the Croydon Gold Field, and by that investment the whole colony will benefit. Wherever we can we should encourage communication with goldfields of this kind. It is the miners' duty to open up the country; they explore it in the first instance for gold, and even if they do not succeed in finding it, or find it only in small quantities, by-and-by their tracks are followed by settlers, who settle upon the good country around, and assist in opening it up. I shall support the motion.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Speaker,—If there is any point upon which the members of this House are unanimous, it is that the Croydon Gold Field is likely to be one of the richest and most permanent in the colony. It is very remarkable to note, as an illustration of the enterprise of the mining population of this country, that under such adverse circumstances they should have penetrated so far into an inhospitable region such as I understand Croydon is, for the purpose of searching for minerals believed to exist there. It is very gratifying to find that their enterprise has been so richly rewarded thus far, and that the enterprise of the capitalists going to their help is likely also to meet a very rich recompense. I think if there ever was a proposition, although an unusual one, that would justify acceptance, it is that suggested by the hon. member for Townsville to the hon. member for Burke, who has brought the matter of this Croydon railway forward. I say "unusual," but it is not unprecedented in this House, for the hon. member for Bowen, who preceded me, will remember that in the case of the electorate for which he sits a similar thing was done. A sum of money was voted on the Loan Estimates for a railway from Bowen to a particular spot, and by an Act passed last session that money was diverted for the purpose of a line in another direction. There can be no doubt that there was considerable justification for that, but whatever the justification may have been for that, there can be no question as to the justification for the diversion of a large proportion of the amount voted for the construction of the Cloncurry line towards the construction of a line to Croydon. I have received several communications from persons to whose credit I attach considerable importance, and who are at the present time resident at Croydon. Those communications assure me that the reefs there are not only promising well, but the further they go down the brighter the prospects of their permanency and richness appear to be. The population of the field, I am told, is nearly 7,000, and people are constantly arriving there, and one can only contemplate with something like horror the prospect of a large population like that being hemmed in, as they probably would be, by a long succession of heavy rains, from means of communication with the outside world and being cut off almost completely from obtaining supplies. The hon. member for Burke need not have the slightest hesitation in accepting the suggestion made by the hon. member for Townsville under the circumstances, and the sooner it is adopted the better. I am perfectly satisfied that not only will the people of Croydon approve of this, because it will tend very considerably to develop the resources of that field, but even the people of Cloncurry and those interested in the construction of that line will approve of the suspension of that work for the purpose of giving assistance to those to whom it is a matter of life and death almost to have rapid and thorough means of communication. As the hon. member for

Townsville pointed out, there is not gold at Cloncurry, and the mineral produced there in such large quantities does not command so high a price in the English markets, or the markets of the world, as gold, nor does it afford the same inducement to capital to be sunk in the development of the industry that would find scope at Cloncurry. The case of Croydon is different; and I am quite sure those interested in the construction of the Cloncurry railway would be very willing to wait until the time arrives—and it will arrive, I have not the slightest doubt—for the construction of their railway, and support, in the meantime, the interests of their near neighbours by the immediate construction of a line to that neighbourhood.

Mr. FOOTE said: Mr. Speaker,—I have no intention of opposing this motion, and I think the hon. member who introduced it has made out a very good case, and it has also been very favourably received by the Premier. I rise more for the purpose of referring to certain remarks made by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Hill, with reference to the test line laid down with Phillips's sleepers as a specimen of what may be done in laying down railways in the interior, and especially in sparsely timbered country. I am informed that the line laid down with these sleepers is not of sufficient length to form a proper test, and I am also told on good authority, by persons in the locality, that the cost of maintenance of the line is almost equal to the cost of continual construction. If that is found to be so the Government should be very careful before they enter upon a contract for the construction of a long length of line, of, say, 100 or 130 miles, on this system. They should certainly test it further than they have yet done, as, as I have said, it is stated that the cost of maintenance is almost equal to the cost of perpetual construction.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member says he has been informed that the cost of maintenance of this test line is almost equal to the cost of continual construction, but I may point out that when the sleepers and line are laid down first there is necessarily a great deal of expense incurred in maintaining the line in a fit state for trains to run over it. That may be properly considered as part of the first cost of construction, and as the line is used and becomes consolidated that expenditure for maintenance will considerably decrease.

Mr. FOOTE: It will continue.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think so. When the grass grows around it it will settle down into one solid compact mass, and I believe it will be as good a line as we have, and will cost less for maintenance than any ordinary ballasted line. That is only my own opinion, and there are others who can form a better opinion, who have arrived at a different conclusion; but I have very good grounds for forming that opinion, and I believe it will be found to be the correct one. I am very glad to find that the members for the North have shown such good sense as to accept the suggestion put forward by the Premier for the deviation of a portion of the money that has been set aside for the Normanton to Cloncurry line. If ever an expenditure of money can be justified anywhere, it can be justified on a line from Normanton to Croydon—though I do not share the extremely sanguine opinions expressed by many members as to the certainty of the permanent value of that field. I think, though I do not pretend to know very much of mining, that a reefing field requires a very much longer time to prove its absolute durability than Croydon has yet had. And the opinions of mining experts, I find, are

not much more to be relied on than those of ordinary men. They put their money into things of that kind to back up their opinions, and it very often happens that they lose their money and find that their opinions were wrong. Still there seems a very good chance of it becoming a permanent goldfield. There is one thing that hon. members for the North must take into consideration, and that is that if a portion of the money is deviated for the purpose of constructing a line from Normanton to Croydon, both the lines cannot go on simultaneously. There are many difficulties in the way of that, and hon. members must decide to have either one line or the other. If the Croydon line is commenced at once the other will have to remain in abeyance, for a time at all events. I am not prepared to say how long, but at present both lines cannot go on simultaneously, I feel satisfied. But I do not think that would be a matter for very serious complaint among the far Northern members. Cloncurry, after all, will have a long time to wait before the railway can get there and be of any benefit to Normanton or any portion of the North; and even when it does reach Cloncurry, I fail to see how Cloncurry would get very much advantage from it, unless there should happen to be a "boom" in copper, which I believe is the chief metal found there. But there can be no question that a line to Croydon would be immediately remunerative, and it would continue to be a remunerative line if Croydon turned out to be an established and permanent field. Moreover, it is in the right direction for continuing that line through to the east coast, which I think is a very important thing, for it will then tap what I suppose is the richest mining country in Australia, while it will do much to develop those fields to the right and left of it—such as Woolgar, the Gilbert, and the Etheridge. If the Northern members can make up their minds about that they will do a very wise thing in the interests of the North. But they must understand distinctly that there is very little chance, in my opinion, of the two lines going on simultaneously, and they must select which they will go on with—the one from Normanton to Cloncurry or the one from Normanton to Croydon.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—I have listened with a good deal of interest to some of the remarks that have fallen, not only from Northern members, but from the Government; and although I should very much like to see this railway from Normanton to Croydon made—being perfectly convinced that it would aid enormously that far-distant part of the colony—I cannot help feeling rather suspicious as to whether, between two stools, that part of the colony will not fall to the ground. For this particular railway—from Normanton to Cloncurry—there is no less than £500,000 on the Loan Estimate. It has already been very considerably delayed. Surveys have had to be made, and experiments had to be made with steel sleepers. I may say that in my opinion, unless the steel sleeper system is adopted, railways are impracticable up there. The thing is quite out of the question; white ants would destroy any timber. However, after waiting patiently for the Government to make surveys, and when there is gradually approaching the probability of the line from Normanton to Cloncurry being commenced, it is now proposed, not only to divert a portion of that vote of £500,000, but to stop the construction of the line to Cloncurry. What will this really involve? Surveys will have to be made, plans and specifications will have to be prepared and submitted to Parliament, not, certainly, this session; and I am very much inclined to think that if we accede to this proposition of the Government it will be a very good excuse to them for doing nothing.

They will cease operations on the Normanton to Cloncurry line, and they will certainly not go on with the Normanton to Croydon line. That is my feeling. The Minister for Works says distinctly that he will not go on with both those lines simultaneously. Why should not one-half of the £500,000 be devoted to each line, that they might be gone on with simultaneously? To such a deviation of the vote I, as a Northern member, should offer no opposition whatever. Everything is in train for commencing the Normanton to Cloncurry line. The experiment with the steel sleepers has been, in my opinion, a pronounced success. Hon. members who have taken the trouble to go over that deviation, as I have done, will be exceedingly satisfied with the result of that experiment. It is the very thing that is wanted, and I believe contracts are invited for a large number to be imported from England. There is nothing to delay the construction of that line. But I am very much staggered at the Minister for Works assuring the House that if the proposed deviation is made the Normanton to Cloncurry line must be suspended.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I did not understand the Premier to say that.

Mr. BLACK: The Minister for Works said it must be distinctly understood that if we consent to the deviation of a portion of this vote of £500,000 to construct a railway from Normanton to Croydon the Normanton to Cloncurry line must be suspended.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: That does not agree with what the Premier said.

Mr. BLACK: That is what the Minister for Works said just now, and on that account I am extremely suspicious, because the Government will not be able to bring down the plans and specifications for the Croydon line this session, and next session there will be a fresh Parliament. That means that all works in the Gulf country, in the shape of railway construction, will be indefinitely suspended. I, as a Northern member, will not fall into the trap. I maintain that there is no reason why, on the Normanton to Cloncurry line, the tenders for the first section should not be accepted at once, entirely independent of the Croydon line. If the Government will give any promise that the diversion of a portion of this vote to the Croydon line will not jeopardise the other work, which I know can be gone on with almost immediately, I shall certainly support it, but not otherwise. If the Government are going to make use of the debate here this evening to suspend work which could be gone on with in connection with the Cloncurry line, until they can have surveys made, I shall oppose it. I am very much afraid that that is what the Government will do unless we get an assurance from the Premier and the Minister for Works that the two lines shall go on simultaneously. There is no reason for delay in the Cloncurry line. I hope hon. members will understand the position I take up. I wish to see a portion of that vote diverted to Croydon, but I do not want to see the other line suspended, because I know it would mean a delay of one or two years.

Mr. ANNEAR said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad that the hon. member for Bundamba has referred to the matter of the laying of this railway with steel sleepers. Steel sleepers are no novelty; they have been used for many years past, and especially in India; there are hundreds of miles of railway constructed with iron or steel sleepers in that country.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not the same pattern.

Mr. ANNEAR: Not the same pattern; perhaps some of them are an improvement on the pattern we have in this colony, but that is not the question at all. Two reports have been laid on the table this session by two engineers—Mr. Cross, the Engineer in charge of maintenance in the Southern division, and Mr. Stanley, the Chief Engineer. Now, those two reports are directly opposed one to the other, and, that being the case, I think that before commencing the extensive construction of railways on this principle we should call in an independent engineer—the ablest man we could get from the other colonies—and see how far his opinion goes to back up the opinion of either of these gentlemen. Under this system railways are to be constructed without formation—without being raised from the water. They are to have no drainage on either side; they can be made on the surface of the ground, and they will answer all purposes, and be far cheaper. Now, I have visited the small piece of line that we have on the Fassifern Railway, and I saw there that the line was drained. There were many drains put on that piece of road to take off the water, but under the system as laid down by Mr. Phillips's pamphlet, there were to be no drains at all. The Premier, when he brought forward this matter, said that half of the sleepers would be imbedded in the ground, and there would be a space from the under side of the rail to the top of the formation whereby the water would escape; but what was the result with these sleepers? The second time the train went over them the day I was there, most of the sleepers began to swim in their own juice—the water came over the top of them. There was no space there; the bottom of the rails themselves were about level with the ground. I want to know how the water is to escape. It will take days of dry weather before it would dry up, so as to allow men to go with their tools and bring that road up to its proper level. That is what I contend. No one objects to the use of steel sleepers, but you will never make a railway in this country without a ballasted road. You must have these sleepers raised above the drainage like any other railways, not only in this colony, but throughout the whole world where railways are constructed. Let hon. members take, not my opinion, but the opinion of the greatest recognised authorities in the world, and see if any of them will uphold the making of railways on the surface of the ground without ballast. I say they will not. Now, I have a return here extracted from the Commissioner's report, from which hon. members will see what our ballasted roads throughout the colony have been costing, and what the steel sleeper roads will cost in proportion to the cost of this small bit of line which has been laid down:—

"MARYBOROUGH RAILWAY AND BRANCHES.

"Number of men on repairs to permanent way (see Commissioner's Annual Report, page 136, Return C) per mile	0'88
"Cost per mile per annum for ordinary repairs to permanent way, including earthworks and ballasting (see Commissioner's Annual Report, page 136, Return B), per mile	£122 0 0

"SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY AND BRANCHES.

"Number of men on repairs to permanent way (see Commissioner's Annual Report, page 148, Return C) per mile	0'88
"Cost per mile per annum for ordinary repairs to permanent way, including earthworks and ballasting (see Commissioner's Annual Report, page 148, Return B)	£105 12 0

"Phillips's Deviation.

"Number of men on repairs per mile	9'00
"£81 expended on repairs on $\frac{1}{2}$ mile for three (3) months, equals an annual outlay per mile of	£432 0 0

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is a return given by Mr. Walter Cross, who advocates in his report the construction of railways under this system, so there is no doubt he has not increased the cost; I have no doubt he has given a fair average. Now, two years would pay for the ballast on the road as used now on our railways, but by this system it costs for maintenance alone £432 per mile. There is no harm done in getting the sleepers ready, but the Government should have taken the suggestion of the Chief Engineer, and laid ten or twenty miles of this railway to see how it acted before they incurred such a large expense. I have no doubt that after the first section has been laid it will not be six months before they are convinced that they must return to the recognised system of railway-making. I shall support this motion of the hon. member for Burke. I am very glad to see that it is not true, as that hon. member himself often says, that the Government give everything to their friends and nothing at all to their opponents. I have always found, as I see now, that a gentleman who opposes the Government on all occasions, as the hon. member for Burke does, receives quite as much consideration as those who at all times are their faithful supporters. I believe that if this railway is carried out it will be very beneficial, not only to the people of Normanton and Croydon, but to the colony as a whole. I do not see why there should be any great delay in making the surveys, if the country is the same as I have heard. It should not be long before tenders are called, and this novelty of a railway, which we are now about to enter on, be tried. I do think, sir, that the Valley railway, as it is called, often meets with very unfair treatment from hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House, and I am surprised at the Valley members sitting so quietly on those occasions without defending that railway.

The PREMIER: It is not worth taking notice of.

Mr. ANNEAR: I do not call it the Valley railway at all; I never did. It is the commencement and finish of our Northern coastal system of railways. In three or four years from this time between 400 and 500 miles of railway will come into the city of Brisbane by that route where one mile did not come into it before, and, such being the case, I call that the commencement and finish of our Northern coastal system of railways. Now, to come back to my former remarks, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that I shall be a false prophet as far as the construction of railways under the new system that we are about to commence is concerned. I hope it will not turn out as I think it will, but I do think that we ought to have asked—it would have been money well spent—gentleman like Mr. Whitton, from New South Wales, or Mr. Watson, from Victoria, or Mr. Mais, from South Australia, to give an opinion upon it, if we are going to disregard altogether—for that seems to be what the Government are going to do—to disregard altogether the opinion of their own professional adviser in reference to the construction of railways in this colony. I refer to the Chief Engineer, Mr. Stanley, whose report is wholly disregarded. The Premier says he is going on the lines of common sense, not engineering skill; but I am sure it will be found in a little while that the Government will have to get some engineering assistance to remedy the great defect they will have incurred in attempting the construction of railways without having drainage, or proper bridging, culverts, ballast, and so on, the same as we have had hitherto in this colony. Under the system we have adopted the cost of construction of our railways has been as

cheap and as effective as in any of the Australian colonies. We have made more railways, far more—that is, in length—than any of the other colonies. We have now 1,700 miles of railway running in the colony every day. That is a great work to have accomplished, sir, in the term of twenty years.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I am placed somewhat at a disadvantage in speaking after the hon. member for Maryborough upon a subject of which he, at all events, is supposed to know something, and about which I, perhaps, may be supposed to know very little. He has referred to two reports sent in to the Government, one by Mr. Stanley and the other by Mr. Cross. It is quite true that these reports are diametrically opposed to each other, one condemnatory *in toto* of the steel sleepers, and the other approving of them somewhat highly. The hon. gentleman has stated that these steel sleepers may be used, but that it will be found that ballast will be required in the construction of the permanent way. Well, sir, if that be so, I maintain that it is better for us to make a trial with these sleepers without ballast, and if it is found afterwards that ballast is required, it can be applied after the railway is constructed. The hon. member for Mackay has pointed out, and he is fully informed on the subject, that it is impossible in the part of the country referred to to construct railways with timber sleepers. Why, sir, we know that when the Post and Telegraph Department erected houses in that neighbourhood, towards the Gulf country, they had to build them with coated piles—sheathed piles, I think they call them—driven into the ground so that the white ants could not get anywhere near the timber; and the houses were built some eight or nine feet off the ground, I believe. Now, if that is the case we know full well that before ordinary sleepers were in the ground six months they would be thoroughly eaten through by white ants, and rendered, of course, absolutely worthless. I think the hon. member for Maryborough was somewhat unfair in what he stated in reference to the cost of this deviation, which is known as Phillips's deviation. It is true that the cost for keeping that line in repair is somewhat excessive in comparison with the ordinary construction of railways, but this must be borne in mind: that railways constructed under the ordinary system always cost considerably more for the first six months after they are constructed than they do afterwards, and I take it, Mr. Speaker, that in this instance it will be the same. I think from what I have seen of these sleepers that they will really answer the purpose for which we require them. I and several other hon. members, yourself included, sir, went up to Phillips's deviation, and the opinion of, I believe, all of us was in favour of the sleepers and that a railway should be made on trial with them. The drains which the hon. member for Maryborough referred to I did not see. I looked all along the line and I saw no drains whatever. There were a few channels just at the side where water might run away. I know the objection has been made that in what is called "spewy" country this kind of railway will not answer. But a gentleman who knows what spewy country is has informed me that by simply cutting a narrow channel alongside the line it will make the ground perfectly hard and reliable for the traffic that will run upon it. We know that gentlemen like Mr. Stanley stick to—I was going to say anything that is expensive. They do not like anything that is new—they prefer following in the old ruts; and I am not sure, sir, from the experience we have had in days gone by of bringing up gentlemen from the other colonies to give us their opinion upon these

matters, that it has been altogether a wise procedure—whether possibly we might not have got on a great deal better if they had stayed away, and kept their opinions to themselves, and the colony had been saved the money it had to pay them for coming. I am glad to notice that this railway to Croydon is favourably thought of by the Government. I do not share the gloomy forebodings which the hon. member for Mackay has.

Mr. BLACK: Did you hear what the Minister for Works said? There is no foreboding in that.

Mr. ALAND: I do not take it exactly as the hon. member for Mackay did. I think he may rest assured that, as in the past so in the future, there will not be the slightest unfairness dealt out to any Northern interests which may come under the notice of the Government.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—As one of the members who went up to see the small deviation on which Phillips's sleepers are now being tested, I would like to say that I quite agree with the last speaker, that what we saw there convinced us that those sleepers are likely to be a success. We must remember, sir, that they were submitted to the severest trial that they could possibly have been submitted to. The whole of the ground is subject to flood, the crab-holes had just been filled up with clay, and the sleepers laid on that newly made ground. Immediately after its being laid trains were run over it every day for a length of time. There are no side-drains, as the hon. member for Maryborough says there are—none whatever.

Mr. ANNEAR: I did not say there were.

Mr. MURPHY: He said there were drains there, but there are none, unless I am quite blind. A few stray clods of earth were thrown out here and there to let a little water run off, but there was no attempt made to drain the ground on which the sleepers were laid, and I think, considering the great trial to which the line has been subjected, that it is a great success. But supposing that side-drains will have to be cut—and there is no doubt they will have to be put in in many places in order to run the water off—still there will be a great deal in favour of the steel sleepers so far as expense goes. I know from my own experience of the black-soil country, which is the prevailing soil through which the railway will run, and in Western extensions, that if you do make side-drains the ground immediately becomes consolidated, and that when once the rails are laid the rain will never have any effect whatever on the road. The Phillips's deviation now is as perfect a road as I have ever seen. I am sure that these sleepers will be a great success, and especially where we have not much traffic; and there is not likely to be much on the Croydon and Cloncurry lines, or on the Western extensions. One great pull they have is that we shall be able to construct railways more quickly and cheaper. Now, I could not have agreed with this motion of the hon. member for Burke if it had not been that I believe he intends to accept the suggestion made by the hon. member for Townsville, because I do not think the Government are justified at the present time in bringing forward any new railways. I think, considering the financial condition of the country, and the probability that we shall have great difficulty in getting money to carry on with, that the Government are not justified in going on with new railways. In fact, they have said over and over again that they cannot make any lines that are not already authorised, or in the schedule of the £10,000,000 loan, and as I know there are other districts having claims for railway extension, whose claims are not now in the

schedule, and which must be considered along with the claims of Croydon, I would oppose this motion if the money is not to be taken from a sum already authorised. I also agree with what the Minister for Works says, that these two lines should not go on side by side. We have no assurance that the Croydon Gold Field is a permanent one. We have seen many other fields in this and other colonies with just as promising a show as Croydon has at present, and yet, within a few months, the bottom has dropped entirely out of them. We have no assurance yet that the bottom may not drop out of this goldfield. It may be found, when the reefs are followed down to a depth, that they will be pinched right out. That is the history of reefing in all the colonies, and it has been the history of very many as promising goldfields as Croydon. Therefore, I think that this delay will be a good thing for the country instead of being the opposite, as stated by the hon. member for Mackay. In all probability the delay of surveys, and the other delays that are necessary before the Government can call for tenders for the construction of this line, will be to some extent a safeguard to the community.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—I have been very much surprised to hear the unfair way in which the hon. member for Maryborough has spoken of these steel sleepers. I think the common-sense of this House will never submit to such a thing as the employment of professional men from any other colony to come and give their opinions on a matter of this kind. It has nothing to do with professional opinion. It is simply a common-sense matter for any common-sense man to judge of, and no scientific knowledge is required. Any man who is accustomed to travel over country, or who is in any way practical, is quite capable of judging without bringing a professional opinion to aid him. I think it is very unfair of the hon. member to bring forward the expense of maintaining that small line in the way he did.

Mr. FOOTE: What is unfair about that?

Mr. WHITE: I will tell you what is unfair, Mr. Speaker. The trial line was only newly put down. It is usual for contractors to maintain ordinary lines for the first six months, and no extreme test is applied to the ordinary railways; but this Phillips's deviation is objected to by some persons, and especially by the Chief Engineer, and he was determined to destroy it by subjecting it to an extreme test.

Mr. FOOTE: That is not fair criticism.

Mr. WHITE: On every occasion when a heavy downpour of rain came, the Chief Engineer took the opportunity of sending up the heaviest engine he could get and the heaviest ballast-waggons; he made that small line a perfect station-yard, and he tried his utmost to stamp the line out of sight. That was not a fair test, and it was only fair to allow a large cost for maintenance, considering the severe measures that were taken to destroy the line. Owing to fresh clay being put down and the water running over it, the ground became very puddy, and it was very unfair to put the line to such a test. An ordinary train being sent over it would not have caused any damage; but Mr. Stanley tried to destroy the little line altogether. The hon. member for Maryborough tried to show that the line had cost £80 to maintain it for three months; but when once it has had six months' consolidation, half of £80 will do far more than keep it in good order for the whole twelve months. That is my opinion, and I certainly would take the hon. member for Maryborough's opinion the same as I would take the opinion of a professional engineer—I would set very little value indeed upon it.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—If I rightly understand the question, we were discussing the expediency of making a railway from Normanton to Croydon, but we have lost sight of that and gone into a general dissertation on the relative merits of wooden and steel sleepers. So far as my opinion goes I am greatly in favour of a railway to Croydon. I believe it is a great and grand goldfield, and the large population now there, and going there from all parts, will derive great advantage from the construction of a railway to Croydon. I am glad the House is almost unanimous in approving of the motion, and I hope the Government will see their way as soon as possible to make the railway, because I think, as the hon. member for Townsville said, there will not be a more payable line in the whole of the colony. I have seen persons who have returned from the field, and they each and all agree that there is no richer goldfield discovered anywhere in Australia than Croydon is and promises to be; therefore the motion shall have my cordial support.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—There is one thing I would point out to the Government. If the amended motion is carried, and one railway is made half-way to Croydon and another half-way to Cloncurry, we cannot stop half-way, but we shall have to finish them some time; and that will involve the expenditure of a large sum of money, which will have to be borrowed for the purpose. If the hon. member had proposed to divert the money voted for the Cloncurry line from that purpose and employ it for the construction of the Croydon line I should have had nothing to say against it; but if we take away part of the money voted for the Cloncurry railway we shall have to find another sum for that purpose. The estimated cost of construction is £500,000, and we know that by the time the line is completed it will cost another £500,000, so that if we pass the motion we shall be committing the country to the expenditure of £1,500,000 for the two railways. I hope the Minister for Works will take that into consideration.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have not heard the whole of the debate, but I noticed that the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, complained of what he called the unjustifiable way in which the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, condemned a certain work, saying that it was very unfair of him to do so. Now, if any unfair remarks have been made, they have been made by the hon. member for Stanley about the Chief Engineer. I think he went out of his way when he said the Chief Engineer had done all in his power to condemn and destroy Phillips's trial railway by placing heavy engines and heavy trucks on it for a certain purpose. I infer from his remarks that the purpose was to condemn and destroy the railway laid with the steel sleepers. I do not think the Chief Engineer would do anything of the sort; I do not think he would be a party to endeavour to destroy any portion of Government property; but I think he would be failing in his duty if he did not give a fair, good test to the railway, knowing that it is the commencement of a system, and that Parliament and the country are anxious to know whether it will stand the proper test or not. If the Chief Engineer had not done so he could not have made his report, and we could not with any confidence spend a million of money on railways in the North, where it is proposed to use these sleepers. Therefore I think the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White, was rather too severe in the remarks he made. I was one of those who went up the line to look at the railway, and though I am not well up in the subject of railway construction, I am of opinion that in many places those sleepers will require a great deal of attention

before they will remain in position, and I think it is desirable before we go far inland with them they should be tested thoroughly close at hand where they can be seen by the Minister for Works and the department, and any hon. member who may choose to have a look at them.

Mr. PALMER, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I rather anticipated a discussion on the question of steel sleepers, and I am not sorry that it has taken place, because it gives one an opportunity of saying a word in favour of them. They have been very unfavourably criticised by the hon. member for Maryborough.

Mr. ANNEAR: Not the sleepers, but the system.

Mr. PALMER: I think great credit is due to the Premier for having taken up this patent in the manner he has done—for having, I may say, gone out of the usual course to have the experiment tried—and I believe from what I have seen, and from what hon. members have said, that the principle will prove a success. It will be of great advantage to the northern parts of the colony wherever railway construction is extensively carried out. It is well known that the versions and reports in connection with trials made by engineers are not always correct, and I am glad that in this instance the Premier has departed from the usual red-tape routine, because, as he says, a little common sense is very often quite as useful as a great deal of engineering skill. The hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, referred to the enormous cost of that small trial line, and also to the cost of maintenance. Well, there are several matters to be taken into consideration with regard to this trial line. In the first place it is only 0·958 miles long—under a mile—and the total cost was £2,006; but there is not the slightest doubt that that experiment cost £550 more than it should have done, owing to circumstances over which neither the Government nor anyone else had control. The sleepers cost fully 100 per cent. more through having been made in the colony than they would have done if they had been ordered from home, or if the sleepers had been anything else than a novelty. That raised the cost of the sleepers to £400; and then there had to be two sets of points and crossings constructed on the trial line, which added greatly to the cost of such a short line as that. We now come to the maintenance. The maintenance of the line for three months cost £190, of which only one-half is due to the maintenance of the sleepers, the rest being due to the embankments forming the approaches to the trial line having been carried away more than once. That was owing to the heavy rains at the time causing floods, which rushed over the line and carried away the embankments. All that added to the cost of maintenance. There is another point to be considered also, and that is that on lines having metal sleepers the first cost of maintenance is always the highest, and it goes on in a decreasing ratio till, perhaps, after many years, it comes to the vanishing point. But there are disadvantages in a short line of a mile which, in a section of twenty-five or thirty miles, would not occur. In a line of that length the first portion of the line is travelled over frequently in order to construct the remainder, so that it becomes almost a consolidated line before it is a finished one; but on a short line like this the cost of maintenance begins directly it is constructed. There are thus many things to be taken into consideration when we consider the cost of maintenance in so short a line, and there is no doubt that, if a high-level line had been constructed where the present line is, it would have cost about £4,500 a mile. At any rate I think a mile is too short a distance

for a test, and that, considering all I have said, the experiment has been highly satisfactory. I have no doubt that these sleepers will be used in the construction of the Normanton and Cloncurry line and the Normanton and Croydon line, and I believe that all our Northern lines will be constructed with them, so assured am I of the success of the principle. I have an amendment to propose, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the motion before the House, and in doing so I will leave it to the Government to decide how the lines shall be built. The Government are committed to the first section of the Normanton and Cloncurry railway by tenders having been gazetted, although they were temporarily withdrawn, for purposes in connection with these trial sleepers. I consider that that first section should be gone on with at once, as the people of the district are expecting it to be carried out. I have a large constituency to represent and I am anxious to do justice to each and every part of it, and in advocating that a portion of the money voted for the line from Normanton to Cloncurry should be diverted to another purpose, I must take into consideration the interests of the people of Cloncurry as well as the interests of the people of Croydon, whom I am anxious to serve. I am advocating it in my anxiety to see that this promising goldfield is not, as it were, kept back like so many promising goldfields in the North have been before they have had an opportunity of being thoroughly developed. I hope the Government will accept my amendment and see that the construction of both lines is carried on as well as it possibly can be. I have heard a rumour that the money voted for the line extending from Hughenden westward might be devoted to the line from Normanton to Croydon. But that belongs to a line culminating, as it were, at Townsville, and I do not feel that I am called upon to propose such an alteration. Of course, if the Government see fit to propose it, I shall not object in the least; but I think the proposal would scarcely come with a good grace from me, and I should certainly fail to secure the support of the three members for Townsville. Therefore I will leave that matter alone. No doubt it would not be fair to the mining community of Cloncurry, who have been struggling on for many years with good prospects, to deprive them of a railway, and I should be very much disappointed if I thought that by amending my motion I should be in the slightest degree depriving them of the prospect of a railway in the near future. I am in hopes that the Government will enter into the matter with spirit and enterprise, and do the best they can for the two fields. With the consent of the House I will amend my motion to make it read as follows:—

That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a line of railway should be constructed between Normanton and Croydon immediately, and that a sufficient part of the money authorised to be raised by loan for the construction of a line of railway to go from Cloncurry to the Gulf of Carpentaria should be appropriated for that purpose.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member has adopted a suggestion that I spoke of before when I said that if this motion is to be dealt with practically this session he should explain where the money is to come from to make the railway. I believe that the arguments preponderate in favour of carrying the motion in its amended form. I believe that we should do well to make a railway from Normanton to Croydon, and that we might appropriate to that purpose a portion of the £500,000 authorised by Parliament for the construction of the Cloncurry line. I am, therefore, not disposed to offer any opposition to the motion in its present form. With respect to carrying on the two lines together, that is, of course, a very

different matter. The amount of £500,000 would not be sufficient to make a line from Cloncurry to the Gulf, and probably £300,000 out of that £500,000 would be required to construct the line from Normanton to Croydon, which, as I understand from the resolution, it is considered desirable should be constructed first, or at any rate completed first. A part of the line from Normanton towards Cloncurry might, I believe, be constructed with very great advantage as soon as possible—probably to the Flinders River. That would very much facilitate the traffic. Whether the two lines can be proceeded with at the same time will depend on circumstances; to do that it would be necessary to order a great many more rails and sleepers than are available. Another question has been raised by the hon. member for Mackay. He suggested that amending the motion in its present form might lead the Northern members into a trap. I can assure the House that the Government have no intention of leading hon. members into a trap, nor, I am sure, have any members on this side of the House. If there is any intention of the kind it must be looked for elsewhere; it is not anywhere hereabout. I do not think there is any necessity to wait for a long period before commencing the line. My hon. friend the Minister for Works tells me that the survey can be completed in a very short time. In approving of a line of this kind we might adopt the plan of the Emperor of Russia when making a railway from St. Petersburg to Moscow—take a map and draw a straight line on it from one place to the other. After the line reaches the Rocky Crossing, which is about sixteen or seventeen miles out of town, it will go nearly due east through a long stretch of level land. I believe it is quite possible, if not to get the plans ready in time for approval by Parliament this session, at any rate to make arrangements equivalent to it; and if the resolution is passed in its present form, I can undertake that the Government will, if they have the opportunity, bring in during the present session the necessary Bill to enable the construction of the line to be proceeded with.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I must say that I admire the consistency of the Government in one day suppressing all railway construction, and on another actually inviting an extended programme of railway construction. I will not now make any reference to a motion I have on the paper of a somewhat similar nature to this motion before it was amended. I shall not refer to that at present. I do not imagine that the Government intend, in the present state of the finances, to deal with any further railway construction than has been authorised by the Loan Estimates of 1884. I intend to address myself to the matter before us in all seriousness, and I say this: that I should be sorry to see this House on a sudden impulse interfere with what I consider to be a great national line—namely, the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry. That is a backbone railway of the colony, and I should be very sorry to see the construction of that line interfered with, by a sidewind, in the slightest degree. It is of much greater importance to the colony than any line of a local character, such as that from Normanton to Croydon. I do not object to provision being made in due time for a line from Normanton to Croydon, but we have seen some of our oldest goldfields—Gympie, Charters Towers, and others—wait a very much longer time for railway communication with a seaport than Croydon has waited. Croydon has not been fully tested; it is certainly attracting a very large number of miners, and I have no doubt that it will be a very important field, and, I trust, come up to the present expectations we have formed of it. But I say that we ought

not to be hurried in constructing a railway to Croydon at present until we have fuller information before us, more especially as the Government have not formulated a new line of railway policy, in which, I think, Croydon should be fully considered. I do not think it is at all advisable that the money which has been appropriated by Parliament for the construction of that most important line from Normanton to Cloncurry—a line which, I repeat, is a national undertaking—should be in any way interfered with by a sidewind, such as the present. I would rather have heard that there was money available from the Hughenden line for the construction of a line from Normanton to Croydon, though I very much doubt if there will be any available. It seems that railway votes are pretty well exhausted long in advance of the ultimate destination which they are intended to attain. I should, however, as I have just intimated, have been better pleased if it had been shown that funds would have been in hand after the railway had reached Hughenden—although my hon. friend the member for Townsville might not like that perhaps—that might be appropriated for the construction of the line to Croydon. I think the Cloncurry trade very properly belongs to the Gulf, and I do not approve of the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan, endeavouring to secure the full expenditure of the appropriation for the Hughenden line, with a view, perhaps, to move hereafter, as he might be justified in doing, that the line should be extended westward to Cloncurry, and thereby divert the Cloncurry trade to the port of Townsville. However, I feel that it is desirable to consult the members of certain districts in the matter of railway construction, and even in the matter of altering railway appropriations authorised by Parliament. And if the Redistribution Bill is passed, under which increased representation will be given to the North, and the Northern members hereafter to be elected under that Bill were to approve of the alteration of the destination of this money, with a view to taking a part of the vote for the Cloncurry railway to construct a line to Croydon, my objection to the expenditure would be waived. But I say that at the present time—I hope I shall not be considered offensive in saying so—an *effete* Parliament should not interfere with an appropriation which was consented to at the very commencement of the new Parliament, and which was very well weighed and considered by the Government of the day in the first blush of their power. It is, to my mind, subversive of true constitutional procedure, and introduces a most dangerous precedent. I invite hon. members to consider the matter, and though I regret to do anything that may have the effect of thwarting the wishes of the hon. member for Burke, I think, looking at the matter in the light in which I have put it, he will see that I am justified in opposing his motion. After all, if it be adopted, his object will not be very far advanced. I think he said this afternoon that if a railway was not built before the wet season to carry provisions to Croydon the people there would be in a state of famine. I am sure that even if the suggestion now made be adopted, the railway cannot be constructed by the next wet season; so that if the people were in a condition of famine the mere prospect of a railway would not relieve them. However, if it can be constructed under special parliamentary appropriation I shall interpose no objection. This appropriation of £500,000 was made on a matured resolution of the Government, which was submitted to Parliament and endorsed by a decided majority soon after the Government came into power. I repeat that I do not think this national appropriation should be interfered with on the motion of a private member.

I say the matter should receive the consideration of the new members to be of the Northern districts, and if they by a majority approve of such an alteration of appropriation my objections will be greatly waived. I feel justified in opposing this motion on the grounds I have stated, and in order to enable hon. members to answer me—for I do not desire to take the advantage of speaking after the hon. member for Burke who has already replied—I intend to move the previous question. I wish hon. members to have an opportunity of expressing an opinion, and I invite them to consider the undesirability of interfering by a surprise motion with the appropriation for a main trunk line of railway which I consider second to none in the colony of Queensland in its beneficial results upon the future welfare, development, and progress of this great country. I beg to move the previous question.

The SPEAKER: The question was—"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a line of railway should be constructed between Normanton and Croydon immediately; and that a sufficient part of the moneys authorised to be raised by loan for the construction of a line of railway from the Cloncurry to the Gulf of Carpentaria, should be appropriated for that purpose." Since which the previous question has been moved. The question therefore now is—"That the question be now put."

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know that it is necessary to discuss the constitutional question raised by the hon. member for Enoggera, as to whether what he calls an "*effete* Parliament" can alter a vote come to by itself three years ago. I think it is quite within the competence of Parliament to do so. I know it was done before in this House, and I do not see why it should not be done again.

Mr. DICKSON: Is it advisable to do so?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Of course I quite admit the importance of the view of the question taken by the hon. member. As the hon. member says, this Parliament may be *effete*, but I would point out that it is a very usual custom for people when dying to make their wills. This, then, may be advanced as the last will and testament of the present Parliament. To be serious, I quite agree with all the hon. member says of the Cloncurry line. It will be a great line, no doubt, and it is a line which no member of this House wishes to interfere with. I am quite certain that neither the hon. member for Burke nor any hon. member representing a Northern constituency has the slightest hesitation in saying that if this vote was to interfere, or would interfere, with the construction of the Cloncurry line they would not ask for it.

Mr. DICKSON: I am sure it will.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do not believe it will, and I do not see how it can interfere necessarily with the Cloncurry line. Although the Cloncurry line is one of such great importance as the hon. member claims, it is not of such immediate importance as the Croydon line, and it is the immediate importance of the Croydon line which causes this motion to be made. This motion is not made for the purpose of supplying food for the miners at Croydon during the incoming wet season. That was clearly explained by myself and by the hon. member for Burke also. We have no expectation of the line projected supplying the field between this and Christmas, or between Christmas and March next. The hon. member for Enoggera need not think we are led astray in that direction. But why should there be a continuous number of famines year after year until, as he suggests, a new Parliament has adopted a new loan vote? That will take very likely two years at the least, so that

there will have to be dealt with, not only the famine of this year, but of two or three years afterwards, by the miners of Croydon, and very likely the same result may follow at Croydon, rich as it is, as has occurred at other goldfields in the North of Queensland, where the miners were driven away by the difficulty of getting supplies, and where the capitalists also were driven away through not being able to get a sufficient number of miners to work their claims on reasonable terms. That is the case at the Palmer at the present time. I do not think the matter of the survey need interfere very much with this line, as I believe a couple of active surveyors could survey it in almost less than no time. I recollect when I was Minister for Works, asking Mr. Ballard to have a survey made for a line in the North—I forget which exactly, but I think it was on the Charters Towers line. I remember asking him to have a permanent survey of the line made in time for presentation to Parliament. He raised the excuse that it could not be done in time, and that a certain number of months, which would place the date at two months after the rising of Parliament, would be required to complete that survey. I wired back, “I want that survey made within three weeks,” and that survey was laid on the table of the House within the three weeks. I am quite certain if the present Minister for Works would act as peremptorily with the Engineer in charge of Northern Surveys he could get the same thing done. There is a great deal too much time wasted in surveys, and a great deal too much time wasted in construction also. Some hon. members, who ought to know better, have an extremely strange opinion of chief engineers, and fancy that because a man is dubbed a “chief engineer” he is a heaven-born genius. I have a very poor opinion of some chief engineers I have come across. I certainly do not approve of the proposition of the hon. member for Maryborough to consult the Engineers-in-Chief of the other colonies on the subject of Phillips’s steel sleepers, for if it is to be submitted to them for approval those sleepers will never be adopted. I am quite certain the Premier has done right in using his own common sense and submitting them to a test. If the first section of the line laid down with these sleepers is not a success, we might find that it can be improved upon in some way, but there can be no possible use in consulting either Mr. Whitton, Mr. Watson, or Mr. Mais on the subject; and to consult them would be to stop the construction of railways with steel sleepers in Queensland for ever. Those gentlemen are all too conservative, and have imbibed certain opinions from their previous training, and it will take a stronger Ministry than we have in Queensland to remove them. I would rather, as the hon. member for Burke just now suggests, get the opinion of an American engineer upon the subject. They are men whose convictions are always open to something new. I would much sooner even consult Mr. Ballard, as he would be better able to give an opinion than the gentlemen mentioned by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Annear, as he has always been trying to invent something new himself, and does not believe that there can not be any improvement upon the engineering notions in which he was trained. Whether we are to consult the Chief Engineers of the colonies or not, I think the Premier has done rightly, and time alone will tell whether these sleepers will be as advantageous to northern and north-western construction as we hope they will. I do not think we should be at all afraid of entering on the construction of this line on the ground that it is premature. Hon. members no doubt are aware that a line has been constructed, and has already been opened, or is ready to be opened, to a silver-field on the borders of New South

Wales. I speak of the line to Silverton. That line has not been made by the Government of the colony in which the field is situated, but has been made by a neighbouring colony, and, if I am not mistaken, Silverton has not been more than three years in existence. That line has been made by the South Australian Government, and a tramway has been constructed from the border right into the town of Silverton. The contractors’ trains are running upon the line, but I am not sure whether the Government have yet taken over the line or not.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL : The line was made by a private company.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN : No. It is the tramway that was made by a private company. The railway to the border has been made by the South Australian Government, and was constructed by Mr. Miller, a contractor who is now making railways in the northern territory of the same colony. There is an example of a line being made to a rich field by a colony which is not immediately concerned with that field, simply to secure the trade of that particular district, and it will have the effect of taking the whole of that trade to South Australia. When we have such an example before us we need not be at all afraid of this line being too premature in construction. As to its cost, I think I was rather too liberal in my former suggestion when I put it at £300,000. Mr. Phillips, who is well acquainted with that part of the country, and who was in the Gulf country surveying twenty years ago, made a report on the Cloncurry line to the late Government. The line to Croydon from Normanton is quite as easy of construction, if not easier, than the line to Cloncurry from Normanton. In a conversation I had with him about the construction of the line to Cloncurry, he estimated the cost at about £300,000, including equipment. His estimate for that line is somewhere about £2,000 a mile, and the equipment would not cost more than £200 or £300 a mile. As the cost would be even less on the proposed line, I am certain that half the amount voted for the Cloncurry line would bring the line, if not right into Croydon, at least very near it. The other half being expended on the Cloncurry line would not interfere with its construction at all. At the rate of construction that has been going on on the lines in different parts of the colony, the £250,000 would not be all absorbed on the Cloncurry line much before the whole of the £10,000,000 loan is exhausted, when the Government of the day will have to go in for a fresh loan for railway construction. If we are to take the rate at which the money has hitherto been expended on the Cloncurry line it will take a long time to expend the £250,000. The money has been appropriated for three years, and nothing has been spent yet except a certain amount on steel sleepers. What I wish to point out to the hon. member for Enoggera is, that his plan of waiting would simply end in starving the miners out. It is all very well to talk about constitutional principles, and getting the House to go in for a fresh loan two or three years hence, but while the grass is growing the horse will be starving. So will it be with the Croydon miners. They will be starved out unless the reefs are very rich indeed. I know they are very rich; even so near the surface as they now are they have averaged 3 oz. per ton—a higher average than has been hitherto known in Australia. Still, rich as they are, it is very possible that only those who are in those rich reefs would be able to hold out. I do not look upon the proposed railway as a mere local line, as the hon. member for Enoggera stated; it is a colonial work. Every member in the House is more or less interested in it through

his constituents; and next to the people of Croydon itself the people of Brisbane, the people whom that hon. member represents, are most largely interested in it. There is a large amount of trade done at present between Brisbane and Normanton. That trade is generally for Croydon, and it is an increasing trade, and will be an increasing trade; and the people of Brisbane, I say, are as much interested in this line as those of any part of the colony except Croydon itself. Taking these things into account, we may very well agree to the construction of this line, and I hope hon. members will not assist the hon. member for Enoggera by voting against the motion, but will negative the previous question and vote for the motion, as amended, of the hon. member for Burke. I am quite certain that the Government are laying no trap for the North; I never suspected them of it; and I am certain that if the motion is carried the Premier and the Minister for Works will do their best to have this line pushed on as rapidly as possible.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I thoroughly endorse all that has fallen from the hon. member for Townsville, and I cannot see my way to adopt the views of the hon. member for Enoggera, who has moved the previous question. What this House did four years ago is a very different thing from what it ought to do now, with the knowledge we now possess. Four years ago, when the £10,000,000 loan was formulated, no one knew of the existence of Croydon; it had not been discovered. Now it is proving, as fairly as a goldfield in all probability can, that it will be a thoroughly permanent, remunerative, and wealth-producing field. I can see easily that half the money voted for the Cloncurry line might be diverted to constructing the Croydon line without involving the suspension of the former. Both the lines might be made concurrently without any injury, but the reverse, to either. It is only a matter of getting more rails and sleepers there. It would certainly be to the great good of the district and of the colony at large that those two railways should go on concurrently. Before the whole of the money is expended on either of those railways it will be time to ask the English public for another loan, and we shall have better grounds than ever to show to the lending public in London the security upon which we are asking for their money, with the certainty that it will be almost immediately reproductive. No capitalist could object to lending money to make such lines as these. They are, both of them, great national undertakings. In these colonies the progress of certain districts is so extremely rapid that no Government can be so wise as to foretell what is going to happen there four or five years hence. We have here a case of a strong and far-seeing Government coming into power four years ago, but if it had been Argus-eyed it could never have foreseen the immense increase to the wealth of the colony that has accrued from the discovery of Croydon. In matters of this kind constitutional questions should be set aside as far as possible, and we should be prepared to deal with an emergency immediately it comes before us, or, at all events, as soon as we possibly can. In this case, of course, we cannot get the railway to Croydon by the next wet season, and the people there will have to get along as best they can; but unless immediate steps are taken there will be no additional facilities for supplying them with the necessities of life by the wet season after the one that is coming. We all know that a wet season in those Northern districts means a tremendous obstacle to locomotion by drays, packhorses, or anything else. I have not heard a dissentient voice among the Northern members as to this, and I think it is a matter that should be left a good deal to their

advice and to their votes. The Northern members do not agree particularly well on every subject, but on this, so far as I have heard, they are unanimous. They are the people who are to be responsible to their constituents for this matter. It will not matter one penny to the constituents of any of the metropolitan members whether the two lines go on or whether the Normanton-Cloncurry line goes on alone. Hon. members of the Metropolitan group have very little responsibility in the matter. I grant that they would have a right to talk if the money was appropriated from the Valley line, which is really what ought to be done. There would be a howl then—there would be weeping and gnashing among the Metropolitan group; but it would be far better for Brisbane, though no doubt their representatives are too short-sighted to see it. As it is I do hope they will not jeopardise the interests of such a promising goldfield as Croydon, which, in my opinion, is bound to enhance the value of the colony, increase the trade of Brisbane, and be of the greatest value to the whole community at large. I hope they will not jeopardise its interests or postpone getting communication to it at the earliest possible opportunity.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I must admit that I feel in somewhat of a difficulty with regard to this matter. A great deal of weight must be attached to what fell from the hon. member for Enoggera, and I think this House or any other House should be very careful about legislating either through enthusiasm or panic. Now, it may be, with regard to Croydon, that this House is legislating in the way of enthusiasm. Possibly it may be argued that that field has not been so fully proved as to justify the expenditure that is proposed, and it may, of course, be fairly argued that this House should be doubly careful in dealing with the allocation of money which has already been allocated. It must be borne in mind that the plans have been approved for thirty-eight miles from Normanton towards Cloncurry, and therefore the House is so far committed to that expenditure. I would not for one moment, nor do I intend to, oppose the resolution as it stands, because a Bill must be introduced to give effect to this resolution, and the thing will then be brought to an issue; but in the meantime I hope that those who advocate so strenuously the construction of this Croydon line, and the Government, who appear to be in favour of it, will put such information before the House as will warrant the expenditure that is sought. As I have said, I feel great difficulty in expressing an opinion on this subject, because on the one hand we have the Northern members who assure us that this money should be diverted from the purpose to which this House proposed to devote it and applied to another purpose, which I admit did not exist at the time the money was so devoted; then we have the Government agreeing to the proposition; and then we have it set forth in a third position by the hon. member for Enoggera. He points out that the House has deliberately and with fixed intention decided that a certain sum of money should be borrowed for a certain specific purpose; and I take it that that certain specific purpose was also taken into consideration by those who lent us the money. I take it that the whole scheme of the Government was taken into consideration when the money was lent to us by the people of Great Britain. Now, I think most hon. members will admit that the question is altogether a difficult one—one that can hardly be decided till we have before us the Bill the Government have promised to bring in. I think that one thing is clearly proved by the discussion which has taken place on the motion of the hon. member for Burke. It has exposed the fallacy of any Government,

no matter how wise they may be, proposing a gigantic loan, as the present Government did, of £10,000,000, and at the same time deciding how the money is to be spent. I think the discovery of this Croydon Gold Field, which may be one amongst many, has shown that in a progressive colony like this it is impossible for any body of men, no matter how wise they may be, to legislate so far as the expenditure of money in reproductive works is concerned to any very great distance in the future. If this debate does no other good it will go to prove the mistaken policy adopted by the Government. I do not for one moment assume that at the time the Ten-million Loan Bill was brought forward and passed by this House the Government and a majority of the House did not really believe that in allocating the expenditure as they did they were doing the best they could for the colony; but as was pointed out then, and as cannot be too frequently pointed out no matter what Government is in power, they cannot foresee what developments may take place in a colony such as Queensland. This trouble would never have arisen had a different policy with regard to loan matters been adopted by this House. I will content myself in the meantime with voting for the resolution, at the same time giving a great deal of weight to what has fallen from the hon. member for Enoggera; and when the Bill comes before this House, as it must come, if the money is to be expended in the way the mover of this resolution proposes, I hope that not only will the matter be fully considered and dealt with on its merits, but that we shall have a fuller House to deal with it than we have to-night. It is rather awkward that a discussion of this sort should take place on a Friday evening, with a large number of members away. It is almost a pity that such an important subject should have to be, as it were, adjudicated upon in a thin House. However, the opinion expressed by the House to-night will not be absolutely binding, and I certainly reserve to myself the right to object to the Bill for the construction of this railway unless very good and sufficient reasons are brought forward for its construction. It is unfortunately the case that many goldfields in the northern portion of Queensland have appeared at the first blush to be magnificent goldfields.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: How many?

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Hodgkinson, notably.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Yes; that is one.

Mr. MOREHEAD: One will prove my case, if necessary.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: You said "many."

Mr. MOREHEAD: Well, there are the Etheridge, Maytown, and other goldfields in the North. The hon. leader of the Government showed the other night, more clearly perhaps than I can show, how many goldfields in the North have blossomed and faded. I say that sufficient reasons should be given—I am speaking as a member of this House, irrespective of any party—before we plunge into a very large expenditure in a railway to any goldfield unless we are satisfied of the permanence of that goldfield. There are times in the history of a country—of a mining country especially—when a mining fever sets in, when every mole-hill appears a mountain.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: A Mount Morgan.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I was going to say that—when every discoloured or iron-stained mountain appears a Mount Morgan. I say, sir, in times like these, times of feverish excitement as regards goldfields, we should be very careful before plunging the country into large expenditure for the construction of a railway towards any goldfield until we are perfectly satisfied of the

permanency of such goldfield. I say the House should not be asked to vote any considerable sum of money for the construction of railways under such circumstances. A railway is a very expensive work to construct, and if the traffic is not considerable, a very expensive work to keep up, and a very awkward work to abandon. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I shall reserve any further remarks upon the subject until the Bill dealing with it is introduced; and when it is introduced the House should, irrespective of party, or North, or South, or East, or West, be perfectly satisfied that the expenditure is a justifiable one—that it can be justified on the grounds of developing the country, and of the railway paying. Some hon. members said they believed it would pay 10 per cent. I do not pretend to know whether it will or not; but I am perfectly sure of this, that if it is made clear to this House that the construction of this railway will be, although, perhaps, not absolutely of a remunerative character, likely to fix a permanent settlement of people on the soil, and develop the country through which it passes, there will be very few dissentients to the passing of the measure.

Mr. W. BROOKES said: Mr. Speaker,—Last night I had to differ very much from the hon. the leader of the Opposition. Now, on this occasion, and it gives me great pleasure to say so, he has made as sensible a speech as any I have ever heard him make in this House. Hon. members may think there is something subterranean in these remarks, but I am speaking exactly what I think. The subject before the House is, as he properly observed, one of great difficulty. I share in the difficulty that he feels, and I go along with many of the remarks he made. There is one remark he made with which I not only concur now, but with which I have concurred for years, and that is with regard to the cast-iron policy of the Government, when they borrowed £10,000,000 for certain purposes. Now, I have followed the hon. the leader of the Opposition in this matter, and I followed also the hon. junior member for Cook. It is some years since we borrowed that money, and it is very difficult in a rapidly progressive colony like this to lay down any plan which, at the end of five years, shall look as well as it did at the beginning. Things alter so fast that my inclination now is to look to the present, and yet I hardly know what I am to do, because I feel the truth of what has been said about the possible transitoriness of the goldfield of Croydon. I only hope it may realise the wishes of all those who are concerned in it; but when we are asked to make a railway to it I hardly know how to answer it. But so far as any member of this House or any public person can judge, it really does seem to possess some elements of permanence. But then while I hesitate about making a railway to Croydon, from present appearances, I do not hesitate so much on that point, Mr. Speaker, as I absolutely refuse to agree with the proposition of the hon. member for Enoggera, the ex-Treasurer. I consider, sir, that the policy he has presented to this House is really an antediluvian policy. He talks about constitutional principles. Well, of course, there is something in the phrase, something which makes one instinctively go down on one's knees.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. BROOKES: I agree with the hon. junior member for Cook. I see I am hitting it into him. I do not believe so much in this idolatrous veneration of constitutional principles. I believe that we should do just what suits us best. That, on mature consideration, goes without saying. The hon. the leader of the Opposition spoke of the way in which this may be interpreted

by those who lent us the £10,000,000 loan. I think that is a very wholesome and refreshing state of things that we do not often or sufficiently take into account. I would respectfully remind hon. gentlemen that I have an impression—it may be wrong, it very likely is—that the brokers and money-lenders who lend us money really leave a great deal of the way in which it is to be spent to us. I do not believe they follow us into all the details of the manner in which we spend the money they lend us. I do not believe they care very much whether we divert £250,000 to make a railway from Normanton to Croydon from the £500,000 we thought we would spend in making a railway from Normanton to Cloncurry. I think that that is a matter of very little interest to them. If I may pursue that line of remark, I may say that when our creditors in England hear the reports of Croydon, if they are inclined one way more than another, they will think we have done a very wise thing in spending half that money in making a railway from Normanton to Croydon, where there is gold and where there is supposed to be a large amount of gold, rather than a railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, where there is copper, a mineral which has fallen in price lower than I have ever known it to fall. But I would especially caution the House in a very respectful way, because really these are matters in which my opinion might not be very reliable—I would caution them against following the lead of the hon. member for Enoggera, the ex-Treasurer. There is something mouldy in his proposition. I would much rather follow new lights up to the present state of information, and do what seems to be right at the present moment. These are the views I hold. I need not enlarge upon them. I shall have other opportunities of expressing my opinion, and shall certainly vote against the previous question.

Mr. HAMILTON said: Mr. Speaker,—It does seem rather absurd that some members who have not the slightest compunction in committing the colony to an expenditure of £200,000 for the construction of a railway from Brisbane to the Valley, where passengers can get vehicles to convey them on expending the sum of 3d., should at the same time object to the expenditure of a similar sum to make 100 miles of railway into the interior—to a centre of population—who have hardly any other means of communication. This railway will assist in developing one of the industries that is the mainstay of this colony. The hon. member for Enoggera said the appropriation of £500,000 for a railway from Normanton to Cloncurry was the outcome of a matured resolution by the House; that it was voted for a specific purpose, and therefore we should hesitate before appropriating any portion of it to any other purpose. But a precedent for that has been already established by the present Parliament and by the present Government. Money was voted for the construction of a railway from Bowen to a certain place, and was borrowed on that understanding; but I do not know that that railway has been carried out. The money has been appropriated to a line to another place.

Mr. DONALDSON: Another Parliament voted it.

Mr. HAMILTON: Perhaps another Parliament might upset this. Well, I fail to see that these two railways—the line from Normanton to Cloncurry, and from Normanton to Croydon—should not be concurrent, if the motion proposed by the hon. member for Burke is carried, because, before the amount expended on the two lines would be absorbed, the other sums voted for other railways would be absorbed also, and we should be inclined to go in for a fresh loan. Now, the hon. member for Barcoo, Mr. Murphy,

has stated that Croydon has not been fully tested. It is the opinion of experts that it has been thoroughly tested, and, although I defer to the opinion of the member for Barcoo as a scientific squatter, I do not consider him an authority on goldfields. I think there is far more justification in making railways to rich goldfields than in making them to the setting sun—in making lines that will not pay for the grease on their wheels. I do not see what further test can be required of the permanence of Croydon, and I can show, by a telegram which I received yesterday, that there are reefs on that field from 190 feet to 240 feet deep, and at that depth they compare favourably in richness with any other reefs in the colony; and they are increasing in richness and thickness as they descend. By the time the line is surveyed those reefs would be down 300 feet or 400 feet, and if they do not then bear out the promise they have given, the Minister can act accordingly; but there is every reason to believe, on all authorities, that the field is a permanent field, and will prove one of the best in this colony. Now, two fields were pointed to by several gentlemen who spoke against this motion, as proving the undesirability of making railways to goldfields until they were thoroughly proved, and the instances quoted were Maytown and the Hodgkinson. I think those were unfortunate cases to quote. The Palmer was an alluvial field; there were shallow alluvial workings, and no miner would expect for one moment that shallow alluvial workings could possibly be permanent. The reefs have not been developed, but now that a railway is going there that field is going ahead again. Then with regard to the Hodgkinson, the desertion of that field arose through no railway having been constructed to that place. Had a railway been constructed to the Hodgkinson it would have been a thriving field instead of having become comparatively deserted as it is. The last Goldfields Commissioners' report proves that, because it is said that the average returns from the Hodgkinson are equal to the returns from one of the most prosperous fields in this colony—namely, Gympie. The returns from that field average 16 dwt., and the returns from Gympie average the same, the only difference being that between Gympie and the coast there is a railway, but between the Hodgkinson and the coast there is no railway. If the Hodgkinson had had the same facilities, no doubt it would have been just as thriving as Gympie, and the fate of that field is a warning to the Government to make this proposed line as soon as possible.

Mr. PHILP said: Mr. Speaker,—I am very glad indeed that the hon. member for Burke has brought forward this motion, because I think it is one which will commend itself to the whole of this House. There is a sum of £500,000 at present voted for a line of railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, and out of that sum the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Palmer, has suggested that sufficient money be taken to construct a line to Croydon. Comparing the two lines, there is a population in the Cloncurry district of about 600, and at the present moment there is a total population at Croydon of about 7,000. The length of line of railway to Cloncurry will be about 250 miles, and it will take four or five years to build it; but the line to Croydon, I believe, can be built within two years at the outside, and will not cost more than £200,000. The hon. member for Darling Downs has said that we are committing ourselves to an expenditure of a million of money if we agree to the construction of this line; but I think it would be well if the hon. member would be a little less selfish, and would give up that large sum of money which has been voted for the *via recta*, in order that

urgent lines may be constructed in the northern part of the colony, which would, I venture to say, benefit his constituents as much as the *via recta*. They would create populations which would buy the produce which is now grown, and which cannot be sold on the Darling Downs. The Croydon Gold Field, I believe, is one that is likely to be of a permanent character. It does not compare at all with the field that the leader of the Opposition spoke of—Thornborough. It has been opened within the last two years, and to my knowledge twelve or sixteen machines have either been erected or are on their way to the field. Two years after Thornborough was opened it was known to be a “duffer,” and at no time were there more than four machines on the field. Capitalists do not believe all the rumours they see in the newspapers. They do not send up machines by telegraph, but usually send experts or reliable people to see whether they are justified in sending up machinery. It has been said upon the best authority that the machines now going up to Croydon will take at least two or three years to crush the stone which is lying on the ground; and assuming for the moment that the field may not continue to produce gold at the rate it now does, we must remember that the Etheridge field, which has been in existence for sixteen or seventeen years, and which is a field which has proved payable, is in the same direction, and that owing to the long distance from the seaboard, the high rate of carriage, and high wages, mine-owners cannot afford to pay the extreme rate of wages which working men are now demanding. I am informed on the best authority that if a railway were constructed to the Etheridge at the present time 6,000 miners would very soon be on the field, whereas now there are only 600 men there. Why, Mr. Speaker, there is no other field in the colony like the Etheridge, and this railway is a portion of a line to the Etheridge. The hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, talks about the Cloncurry line being a national line, but are not all our lines national lines? They are built by the State for the benefit of the people in the country, and they ought to be built to places where there is some chance of their paying interest on the cost of construction. I have no hesitation in saying that a line to Croydon would pay equally as well as the lines built to other goldfields. Since the line to Gympie has been finished the output of gold has increased 50 per cent., and since the line to Charters Towers has been finished the output of gold there has nearly doubled—in 1883 it was 69,000 oz., and last year it was 141,000 oz.—simply owing to the facilities for getting up heavy machinery at low rates by rail. The wages on Charters Towers are £3 per week, but at Croydon and Etheridge they are £4 per week; yet the miners on Charters Towers are better off with £3 per week than the miners at Croydon and Etheridge with £4 per week. Anyone who knows anything about gold-mining knows that the difference between £3 and £4 per week is the difference between a profit and a loss. I say that if the Government decide to construct this line, and push it on with the vigour the Chief Secretary promised, it will be finished in time to relieve the Croydon people before the end of the next wet season. I have heard incidentally outside the House that the Government had offers to build the Cloncurry line within two years, and if a line 250 miles long can be built in two years, surely a line 100 miles long over the same sort of country, or less difficult country, can be built in one year. I hope the motion of the hon. member for Burke will be allowed to pass, because I am certain that the construction of the line will be of great advantage not only to the Croydon people but

to the whole colony. A number of the people of Brisbane have told me that they would much rather see the money voted for the Valley railway spent on a railway to Croydon than on a railway to Fortitude Valley.

The PREMIER: That is not a good argument to use.

Mr. PHILP: It is what has been said in Brisbane. But we do not ask for any Southern money; we simply ask that some of the money voted for the Cloncurry railway shall be used to build the Croydon line.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—If this was simply a question as to the desirableness of constructing a railway from Normanton to Croydon I would give it my hearty support. I believe a railway is required to develop the resources of that rich district; I have every confidence in the future of the district; I believe the field will prove one of considerable wealth, and that it will support a large population for a considerable time. Therefore I consider it desirable that a railway should be constructed for the purpose of giving facilities for the proper development of the field. But the question is one of diverting money voted for one purpose to another purpose, and I certainly cannot give it my approval. I was strongly opposed to a number of the votes on the Loan Estimates, but even with regard to the most objectionable of those votes I would strongly object to the money being at the present time diverted to construct a railway in another part of the colony instead of that for which it was voted. I have no hesitation in saying that the railway through the Valley was a huge mistake. It will cost a large sum of money, and will never pay; but I do not think even that money ought to be diverted by this Parliament to construct a railway to Croydon. If any money voted on the Loan Estimates is diverted to other purposes than those for which the money was voted it should be done by the new Parliament, which will be elected in accordance with the Redistribution Bill; but I think it is see-sawing too much to take money already voted at the beginning of this Parliament, and say almost at the end of it that it shall be spent where it was not contemplated a line would be wanted at the time the Loan Estimates were passed. If the Government choose to introduce a Loan Bill for the purpose of borrowing money for the construction of a line to Croydon I will support it; but I shall, on every occasion, when an attempt is made to divert money from the purpose for which it was voted to another purpose, give it my strongest opposition. I know that a railway in my electorate is in danger. The money for that line was voted after mature consideration, but on several occasions the late Minister for Works stated that he never had any intention of extending the line beyond Charleville. Not to construct that line would be a breach of faith, because the money was voted by this House in all good faith. I know that heads are counted, and that where there are only one or two members to be considered things are done that would not be done under other circumstances. No attempt would be made by this or any other Government to take large sums of money voted for railways round Brisbane and spend them on railway construction in other parts of the colony, even in places where they might be much more beneficially spent. I have alluded to the Fortitude Valley railway, and there is another—the extension of the South Brisbane Railway to Melbourne street—which, I believe, is as huge a blunder. It will be very expensive, and there is no possibility of the line paying. The money voted for those two railways would go a long way towards developing the interior of this colony; but instead of that it is to be spent on

an extra mile of railway in the metropolis. That, however, is beside the question. My point is, that no attempt will be made—because there is yet a good deal of log-rolling as far as railways are concerned—to divert money voted for railways in districts represented by a large number of members. But where there is only one member, as in the case of the Burke electorate, and that member is in favour of having the money diverted, very little opposition is offered. Heads are counted, and the hon. member is prepared to sacrifice Cloncurry for Croydon.

Mr. PALMER: No.

Mr. DONALDSON: How can there be two railways when money is voted for only one? I repeat that heads are counted, and he is quite prepared to sacrifice Cloncurry for Croydon. He is not singular in this, because many hon. members in this House do the same thing. Wherever a fixed population is there are most votes, and where there are most votes the people receive most consideration. That is why a national line, as pointed out by the hon. member for Enoggera, which was passed after due consideration, is to be put off in favour of another line, when no sufficient reason has been given why that national line should not be constructed. I say it is a great pity that a vote arrived at after mature consideration should be diverted to another purpose, during the existence of the same Parliament, without good reason being shown. If it were a matter of constructing a railway from Normanton to Croydon it should have my hearty support, as I believe that is necessary. But this is robbing another part of the country to get it. I should support a motion to provide funds for it by a fresh loan vote; but good reason should be shown for taking money away from a line that I believe will be a great national line, and one which will develop the resources of the country. It is quite true that this House has already dealt with a line that was projected from Bowen to certain coalfields, but very good reason was shown why that line should be taken, afterwards, in another direction. I believe investigations proved that it was not desirable that that line should be taken in the direction proposed, and the money was diverted to another line. If it had been shown that there was no good reason for a line being constructed to Cloncurry at all, and that we could spend the money better by constructing a line to Croydon, it would have been different, but that has not been shown. I believe the circumstances are the same now as they were at the time we passed that vote. The Cloncurry is a large mineral district, and a large pastoral district, and I believe that the pastoral country will be largely developed by a railway being constructed there. I wish the hon. member for Cook would not keep on interrupting me. His interruptions are very offensive.

Mr. HAMILTON: They are true.

Mr. DONALDSON: I have no hesitation in saying they are not true.

Mr. HAMILTON: That does not prove they are not true.

Mr. DONALDSON: I very often interject in this House; but I do it with some point in it, and not offensively, and I trust that the same courtesy will be extended towards myself. The hon. member for Cook has made some interjections which I think are objectionable, and if he continues to do so I shall sit down and say no more.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—I have not the slightest objection to the line from Normanton to Croydon, provided that the other line is abandoned. As I said before, we are committing ourselves to two lines when we have only money

enough for one. We are asked to start them simultaneously; but where is the money to come from to build them unless we go in for a new loan? That is what I wish to know. The Premier told us a fortnight ago that he is not prepared to go in for any new loans, and the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Philp, has told us just now that there are only 600 people on the Cloncurry altogether. That would condemn the line altogether. The bottom may fall out of the Croydon Gold Field. It may be only a mushroom field, and may not pay at all after a year or two. It is quite possible that may be so, and yet we shall be committed to a million of money to construct lines from Normanton to Cloncurry and from Normanton to Croydon, which may not pay at all. A great deal has been said by hon. members opposite in regard to lines in the Southern districts, and I am surprised that the Government listened to them. Those hon. members condemn the Melbourne-street line, they condemn the *via recta*, and they condemn the Valley line. They would like to see the Southern lines perish, and have no railways where the population is, so long as they could get the money. They say, "Perish the South, so long as the North can drain it of its last shilling." Nothing for the South and everything for the North. The Minister for Works has told us that he is opposed to starting the two lines from Normanton simultaneously.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I have very little to say in reply to the motion of the hon. member for Enoggera. The hon. member for Warrego said I was sacrificing one part of my constituency for another. If I thought that the Cloncurry was to be robbed of what I considered its right to a railway I should not have amended my motion. I could not do it. I am acting in good faith, Mr. Speaker, and this is the only way in which I see that a railway can be built to a goldfield which all hon. members admit should have a railway; that is, by using part of the money voted for the Cloncurry line. So far from the Cloncurry line being abandoned, I am of the opinion of the hon. member for Enoggera, that it is part of a grand national scheme that will unite all the railways of Queensland, and also unite them with those of New South Wales, and perhaps Victoria.

Mr. DICKSON: Then why jeopardise it?

Mr. PALMER: I do not consider I am jeopardising it. If I did think so I should not be here advocating the other line. I should consider that I was not doing my duty faithfully if I did such a thing. The hon. member said so because he only looked at the matter in one light, and there is no earthly reason why the £500,000 should not be used for both lines. We see lots of lines in the South that the original votes would not have completed, and new votes were obtained to finish them. How many lines are there for which large sums had to be raised to finish them? There is not the slightest doubt that more money will have to be voted to finish the Cloncurry line. That was admitted by the Premier and the Minister for Works and every hon. member who has spoken, so that I consider it is merely delaying the Cloncurry line.

Mr. DICKSON: Why should it be delayed?

Mr. PALMER: We have a large population at Croydon, whom it is necessary to encourage to stay in the colony. Life altogether is not so particularly delightful in the North, as I know from living there many years, and I think that it is the duty of the Government, when there is a large population who are desirous of staying there and making the wilderness into a habitable place, to encourage them by every means to continue in that good work. If I thought for a

moment that Cloncurry would be robbed of a line I should not sanction this motion; but I see no reason why both lines should not be constructed. I have reason to believe that the line can be constructed for £1,750 a mile. I am within the mark when I say that £150,000 will build the line to Croydon, and that will leave £350,000 for the Cloncurry railway, which will go a very great way towards completing the line. It will not cost £1,000,000, as the hon. member for Darling Downs stated; the hon. member must have been thinking of the *via recta*, but £1,000,000 would not build that railway. I believe that if the Government will take this matter in hand seriously, and with energy, as they have said they will, the line to Cloncurry will not be delayed one year through building a railway to Croydon. Anyhow, I am the scapegoat if there is to be any; I shall have to suffer; if the people of Cloncurry do not approve of my motion I suppose I shall hear of it before very long. I have brought it forward with the very best intentions, and I am glad to see hon. members supporting it so well. If the Government had offered or suggested that they would advocate or bring forward a new loan to construct this line to Croydon I certainly would have fallen in with it at once, and have allowed the Cloncurry vote to remain as it is. The Premier knows very well that a fresh loan will be required to finish several of our lines, and in that loan there can be a fresh vote to finish the Cloncurry railway.

Question—That the question be now put—put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 30.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Jordan, Rutledge, Dutton, Moreton, Sheridan, Adams, Norton, Chubb, Macrossan, W. Brookes, Fraser, Mellor, Isambert, Campbell, White, Salkeid, Lumley Hill, Buckland, Bulcock, Wakefield, Palmer, S. W. Brooks, Philp, Morehead, Morgan, Aland, Ferguson, Black, and Hamilton.

NOES, 4.

Messrs. Dickson, Bailey, Murphy, and Kates.

Question resolved in the affirmative; and original question, as amended, put and passed.

SUPPLY.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Speaker left the chair, and the House resolved itself into a Committee of the Whole to further consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

THURSDAY ISLAND.

The PREMIER moved that the sum of £2,810 be granted for salaries and contingencies in connection with Thursday Island, and said the amount was exactly the same as that voted last year. He would be glad to give any information hon. members might desire respecting the vote.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had, of course, no intention of opposing the vote, but he would like to know if the Premier could give the Committee any information as to the position of Mr. Douglas at the present time—as to whether, on a change of circumstances taking place in New Guinea, it was likely that Mr. Douglas would return to Thursday Island? He asked the question because there were rumours to that effect, and he hoped they were true.

The PREMIER said he believed that Mr. Douglas expected to return to his position at Thursday Island. He was still police magistrate of Thursday Island, Mr. Milman being only his *locum tenens*, and Mr. Douglas did not accept the position of High Commissioner of New Guinea on any other terms. He had reason to believe that that gentleman had no desire whatever to continue in his present position in New Guinea, and that he would probably return to Thursday Island.

Question put and passed.

1887—3 g

REGISTRAR-GENERAL.—PATENTS.—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton) moved that the sum of £8,513 be granted for the Registrar-General's Department, salaries and contingencies. There was a large decrease in the vote, accounted for by the fact that the sum of £8,000, voted last year for the census, was not required. He must inform the Committee there was a slight error—he believed on his own part—in the vote in connection with the Registrar of Patents Office. There was an extra clerk stated at £100, and it should be £150. He was taken from the Registrar-General's Office and a new clerk appointed there at £100, so that the total amount was not altered. The item for contingencies in connection with the Patents Office was increased by £200, and that sum was to pay the salary of a photo-lithographer to take photographs of the plans of the different patents applied for. It was put down in the item for contingencies because the sum would be required on account of the first crush of work to be got through. He would not be a permanent officer of the department, because probably after a year's work the crush of work would be got through, and then the photo-lithographer connected with the Lands Department would be able to keep up with the work. Those were the principal items, and he was prepared to give any other information that was asked.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he understood the hon. gentleman to say the increase was £200, but the increase was shown in the Estimates to be £320.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I spoke of the main increase.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Will the hon. gentleman tell us what the other increase is for?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said some of it was for examiners' fees. That was the amount which it was anticipated would at least be required during the coming year. The work was daily increasing, and it was the increase of work that required the increase set down for contingencies.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said that in connection with the vote he wished to bring before the Committee a matter referring to the administration of the Patents department of the office. He had had put into his hands a statement of grievances which were suffered mainly by agents, and through them by inventors. The administration of the office seemed to be faulty; absurd obstructions seemed to be placed in the way of inventors and agents, and the protection which inventors sought to acquire by the Act was altogether sacrificed, and the intent of the Act in giving protection to inventors seemed—if the statement he had heard were correct—entirely nullified. He did not know whether that was because the Registrar-General had too much to do, but he was disposed to think that had something to do with it. He was Registrar-General, Registrar of Patents, and Registrar of Friendly Societies; and while he (Mr. Brooks) believed that the gentleman who occupied those positions was an estimable gentleman and highly qualified, it was quite possible to give even a highly qualified man too much to do. They had had that brought before them during that session when a few days ago he asked a question concerning the annual report, which the Act provided that the Registrar should supply to Parliament. They had not the report of the Registrar of Patents for 1886 before them yet, and they were told that when the report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies was quite finished they would get the report of the

Registrar of Patents. The gentleman seemed to have too much to do, and in any case the grievances to which he had referred needed some inquiry. It was hopeless at the present stage of the session to expect to get anything like a satisfactory select committee inquiry into them, and he hoped the Minister in charge of the vote would give them some assurance that those grievances would be attended to, so that inventors should not be handicapped and their endeavours to secure protection entirely nullified.

Mr. NORTON said he had asked a question with respect to the Patents Act some weeks ago, and he thought the answer given then was that there was no provision made in that Act for an annual report by the Registrar of Patents.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, that was not the answer; but I think I told you myself in the office that I thought there was no provision made.

Mr. NORTON said he had heard it so stated somewhere, and had therefore looked up the Act and found it was provided for. He thought such a report was very necessary, not only on the grounds brought forward by the hon. member who had just spoken, but on other grounds also. It appeared that in some cases applicants were enabled to register patents too easily—patents to which they were not entitled; and in other cases it was stated that agents for patentees had very great difficulty in registering patents. He understood that if there was the slightest error made in the form of application the agents were not allowed to correct it, but it must be sent back home to the applicants, in order that the correction might be made. Even if there was a clerical error in the description, he was told the agent was not allowed to alter it. That was carrying the matter rather too far. If those statements were true—and he had no reason to doubt them, because they were reported to him by a gentleman who could have no reason for stating them unless he was certain they were correct—the Colonial Secretary should give the Committee an assurance before the vote was passed that there would be a thoroughly searching inquiry into the way the Act was worked. He believed that, as the hon. member for Fortitude Valley had said, the Registrar-General had no time to attend to it properly himself; and that, no doubt, was partly the reason why they had not yet had a report on the working of the Act. He had nothing whatever to say against the Registrar-General, who, he believed, did his best to see that the provisions of the Act were carried out; but there was something wrong somewhere, and the sooner an inquiry was made into it the better. From what he had heard he was convinced that great hindrances were placed in the way of persons who wished to register their patents in the colony.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the Registrar-General had certainly been very heavily pressed with work during the year. The preparation of the census returns alone had occupied a great deal of his time, and he had several other important reports to make, such as the statistical report, which was very voluminous, the friendly societies' report, the patents report, and, he believed, another, the whole of which was more than one man could do. As to the difficulties, referred to by the hon. member for Port Curtis, that were experienced by some agents in getting their patents registered, and of other agents getting them registered too easily, he had reason to believe that the latter was correct, and that more stringency needed to be exercised than the spirit of the Act required. Questions of that kind that had been brought under his notice he had forwarded to

the Attorney-General, whose opinion he had obtained before a decision was arrived at. There was a certain class of men who made it their business to get hold of inventions outside the colony, and patent them in Queensland, to the detriment of the inventors themselves.

Mr. NORTON: That is what I am told is done.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that in order to guard against persons of that kind the Registrar-General was very exacting, but it was better to err a little in that direction than to admit registrations too easily.

Mr. NORTON said he had been informed by a gentleman of very high position in the city that several cases had occurred where so-called inventions had been registered which had not the slightest claim to be registered. They were simply copies of inventions which were published in books of patents.

The PREMIER: In that case the registration would be invalid.

Mr. NORTON said he was aware of that, but the fact of their being registered did a great deal of harm. The gentleman of whom he had spoken informed him that he wished to buy a certain article which had been registered there improperly, and he was charged a very much higher price for the article than it could be bought for at other houses on that account. In that case the gentleman knew that he could get the article at other houses in town; if he had not, he would have been charged 2s. a foot more for the article than he could have got it for elsewhere, under the seller's pretence that he had a legal right to the patent. In cases where agents applied on behalf of inventors out of the colony, and had satisfied the Registrar-General as to their *bona fides*, they had a right to be treated as if they were the principals themselves. Those men had no personal object to serve; they got nothing beyond their commissions, and no difficulty ought to be put in the way of their registering their patents at once.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the Registrar-General, as everyone knew, was an extremely conscientious officer, and he believed the difficulties referred to by the hon. member for Port Curtis resulted from the extreme anxiety of the Registrar to carry out the letter of the Act as well as its spirit. Some weeks ago he received complaints from agents, who considered they had just cause of complaint as to the way in which the Registrar-General had prevented the registration of their applications for patents. He communicated with the Colonial Secretary on the subject, with the result that the grievances complained of would not be repeated.

Mr. NORTON: Similar complaints were made to me only last night.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said the particular grievances brought under his notice had been removed. The Registrar-General did not acknowledge any man as an agent who did not produce his power-of-attorney, and he was going perhaps too far in his desire conscientiously to carry out the duties which the Act imposed upon him. He believed that gentleman had receded from the position he took up in several particulars, and that now persons who desired to register their patents by means of an agent found no difficulties placed in their way as before. As to the registration of patents that were not really novel, that was a thing that could not be guarded against by the very best system that could be adopted. Any one who desired could apply for registration, and it was quite impossible that even the most competent examiner—and they had one who knew a great deal about the subject—should be able, with all his knowledge, to detect all specifications submitted to him which were not novel.

Mr. NORTON: Are photographs of machinery accepted?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that diagrams and drawings showing the details of objects were accepted, but he did not know whether photographs were or were not. He might add that the Registrar-General was only too anxious to do all he could to facilitate the registration of patents, and the friction that had been experienced was the result of a want of familiarity, for a certain time, on the part of the Registrar with the working of the new Act; but he had since discovered how to obviate many of the difficulties which formerly existed.

Mr. S. W. BROOKS said he could assure the hon. Colonial Secretary and the Committee that there was no desire to impeach the industry, probity, or conscientiousness of the Registrar-General. It was the Registrar-General's ultra-conscientiousness that led him into difficulties, and if he would concede a little of his conscientiousness—let it go—it would be better for inventors and better for the colony. As to the matter of the power-of-attorney, that was one of the cases laid very strongly before him (Mr. Brooks). He thought that in one case a single word had to be altered in the specification; the alteration would not materially alter the sense of the sentence, but it happened to be necessary in accordance with the provisions of the Act, and the specification had to go to England to get that single word altered, although the agent could have produced correspondence which would clearly have shown his agency. Surely if he had power to take every other step in connection with the matter, he might have been allowed to make the alteration of that single word. However, he would pass from that, as he felt sure that changes would be introduced into the method of dealing with those matters. He would like to know when they might expect the report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies. Some of them looked upon that report as one of the most important reports laid before Parliament, and he hoped they would not get out of session before it was printed. The last report was a sort of progress report; it did not propose to deal exhaustively with the subject, and they were promised something very much better this year.

Mr. NORTON said that before the Colonial Secretary answered that question he had a word more to say about the patents. He was told that the difficulty was not only where men tried to register in their own name, but where they asked to register for principals not in the colony. In consequence of some trivial defect in the wording of the application it was not accepted, and the whole thing had to be referred to England and sent back here before it could be registered.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is not the case now.

Mr. NORTON said he had been told so last night. Two of the gentlemen who were taking the matter up had called upon him and asked him to apply for a select committee to inquire into it. He had recommended them to see the Colonial Secretary, and also the Chief Secretary, and told them he was quite sure that if the Chief Secretary undertook to see that the matter was put right, it would be put right as far as the regulations were concerned. That was one of the difficulties complained of; there were many others.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that in accordance with the regulations the agents had to prove to the satisfaction of the Registrar that they were authorised to act as agents.

Mr. NORTON: If they apply for the principals, that ought to be enough. They do not apply in their own name.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said some of the letters were in two or three handwritings. He saw one where the signature was different from the body of the letter.

Mr. NORTON said that was a very common thing. A clerk wrote the letter and his employer signed it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he had seen one in two or three handwritings—the body of it was filled in in one, some of the names written in another, and the signature in another.

Mr. BLACK said he was glad to see that this vote was not quite so heavy as it was last year, but he would like to ask the Colonial Secretary how it was that last year's vote of £16,525 had been exceeded by £2,650? He would also draw attention to the very large amount under the head of "Contingencies," which, in his opinion, was always a very suspicious item in that department. They were split up into three amounts. First of all, under "Contingencies," they had "Extra clerical assistance, postage, and fuel, £680"; then in the Patents Office, they had "Fees to examiners, extra clerical assistance, postage, and contingencies," increased from £470 last year to £800 this year.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I mentioned the reason for that.

Mr. BLACK: And then again, in the Friendly Societies Department, they had "Incidental expenses, postage, fuel, and rent," increased from £155 to £243, making a total of £1,723 in the Registrar General's Department, or one-fifth of the entire vote of £8,513. Now, when such a large proportion of the vote for one department was put under the vague head of "Contingencies," the Committee were entitled to a little more information. £1,723 out of £8,513 was left entirely to the control of the department, and he thought that was rather excessive.

The PREMIER said the district registrars were paid by fees; that was to say, the people who registered paid fees into the Treasury, and a corresponding amount was paid to the registrars. The item was really a cross-entry, because all the amounts paid out of that vote were also paid into the Treasury.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The postage, incidentals, and fuel?

The PREMIER said it was very difficult to say what would be the exact amount required under that head. The amount actually spent last year was £570. Then with respect to patents, of course the fees to be paid to the examiners were fixed, but the total amount varied with the number of patents. It was difficult to say what the general expenses were.

Mr. CHUBB said he had been told a story to the effect that the way a certain department economised was this: Instead of getting their stamps from the Post Office they purchased them from a vendor of stamps who allowed them 25 per cent. discount, which was credited to the department, and retained 25 per cent. commission, the result being that the Government lost the 25 per cent. that the agent made as commission.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he hardly thought such a large discount should be allowed on stamps. If it was he should buy a large quantity and pay his debts with them.

Mr. BLACK said perhaps the Colonial Secretary did not quite understand his question. It was, how was the vote of last year exceeded by £2,560?

The PREMIER said the only item that was exceeded was for the census. On all the other items there was a small saving.

Mr. BLACK asked if the hon. gentleman meant that the only item in which the vote was exceeded was the census?

The PREMIER: Yes; on all the other items there was a small saving.

Mr. BLACK said he would ask the Colonial Secretary if he thought the vote for incidentals was not too much?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Which?

Mr. MOREHEAD: Any of them.

Mr. BLACK said first of all he would take the Registrar-General's Department—extra clerical assistance, postage, incidentals, and fuel, £680. Then under the head of "Patents"—fees to examiners, extra clerical assistance, postage, and contingencies, £800. Then "Friendly Societies," incidental expenses, postage, fuel, and rent, £243. What rent had to be paid?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he could not tell the hon. member whether the amounts were insufficient or sufficient. He had to take the words of the heads of the different departments for that. With regard to the Patent Office, he had already explained that £200 was put down this year for the salary of a photolithographer, which was necessary to carry out the spirit of the Act. That was put down in contingencies because it would only be required for one year. As soon as the back work was done the vote would not be required, as the work could then be done in the Lands Office.

Mr. BLACK asked if there was any advertising included in it?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am not aware of any.

Question put and passed.

REGISTRAR-GENERAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that £7,886 be granted for salaries and contingencies in connection with the Registrar-General's Department.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought that was not an unsuitable place to ask the Premier for some information with regard to the recent alteration that has been made in title-deeds. The statement made by the hon. gentleman the other day might possibly be considered satisfactory by some people, but a large number of people outside did not think it was very satisfactory, more especially as he had seen, as he supposed other hon. members had, a letter in one of the newspapers the other day, from Mr. Cottell, where a reply was given by the Master of Titles with regard to the alteration in deeds of grant now being issued, which was of a very alarming character. He assumed that the Master of Titles was a gentleman whose legal opinion was of value, otherwise he would not be where he was. That gentleman was asked by Mr. Cottell what was the effect of that alteration. He (Mr. Morehead) was speaking from memory, but he was quite certain that he was correct in his quotation. The answer given by the Master of Titles was simply that the holder of that title was a life tenant, and that on his decease the property would revert to the Crown. That was a statement which no doubt most hon. members had read and would remember. If that statement was correct it was utterly at variance with the representation made by the hon. the Premier the other evening, and the Master of Titles ought to be told to alter the opinion he held. If he did not, he should be removed from the office; that was, assuming that his interpretation of the law was incorrect.

The PREMIER said he should be very loth to think that the Master of Titles had said any such thing as had been represented. The first he heard of the question was a few days ago, when he casually met the Master of Titles, whom he had not seen since he had been appointed. That was before any correspondence had taken place in the newspapers. He forgot exactly how the question arose, but at any rate the Master of Titles mentioned the subject to him and asked if the word "administrator" was the correct one to use, instead of "heirs." He (the Premier) said of course it was; that since the Legislature provided that an estate should descend to the administrator, that was the proper word to use. The Master of Titles then proceeded to say something to the effect that he had been under the impression that the word "heirs" was a kind of adjective that was compulsory to be used in order to convey the fee simple. He (the Premier) told him that he did not agree with him. When the word "heirs" was the proper word to signify a fact, no doubt it was the correct word to use; but now that it no longer signified a fact, it was not the right word to use. The proper word to use was the one that did signify the fact. He did not know whether that gentleman agreed with him or not, but he had not the slightest doubt that his own opinion was the correct one, and that the Master of Titles—who he believed was a reasonable person—upon considering the matter would see that it was so. He was sure everybody else thought so.

Mr. DICKSON said the matter had created a great deal of uneasiness in the public mind, and although the information given by the Premier in reply to the question previously raised by the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, had to a certain extent allayed that uneasiness, still there was a feeling—notwithstanding the hon. gentleman's opinion, which no one disputed, because they all recognised his great legal ability, and the public of Queensland were quite prepared to admit that upon any legal question his opinion should be accepted without contradiction—still there was a feeling of uncertainty. The difficulty of the position was this: The Real Property Office had issued a requisition upon titles that had been applied for under a Crown grant on which the words "his heirs" were erased and the word "administrator" inserted. The Master of Titles issued a requisition on one of the conveyances to the following effect: "The Crown grants were not made to the vendors and their heirs, and the words 'fee simple' which are necessary in instruments affecting such estates under the Real Property Act do not appear in those grants. Purchaser had better refer to the Crown Law Department." It would be observed that there was a refusal to register and enter up the conveyance or transfer in the ordinary form until the opinion of the Crown Law Department had been obtained.

The PREMIER: What is the date of that?

Mr. DICKSON: I cannot give the exact date.

The PREMIER: It must have been previous to my conversation.

Mr. DICKSON said it was before the debate on the question had occurred in that House. But at the same time the position remained, to a certain extent, the same.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Mr. DICKSON said he was informed that on application being made to the Crown Law Officers they refused to express an opinion, and informed the applicant that it would be necessary to obtain a judicial decision of the Supreme Court, or else to get a declaratory Act of Parliament to approve of the change.

It was unfortunate that the Crown Law Office should have in any way raised an insecure feeling in the public mind. The Premier ought not to feel annoyed at the question being discussed. No one impugned the opinion which he had given to the House or the country, but at the same time the hon. gentleman was but mortal, and if anything happened to him, and the law courts of the colony declined to decide upon the matter according to the views he had expressed, a great deal of litigation might ensue, and many people might be affected to a very injurious extent. It was very desirable that the matter should be clearly understood. Under the Crown Lands Act of 1876 and the regulations issued pursuant thereto, a certain form of Crown grant was prescribed, and that form of Crown grant had been altered by the Premier, doubtless, on account of the subsequent passing of the Intestacy Act.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Mr. DICKSON said he understood the hon. gentleman admitted he had altered it. He understood him to say that, the Intestacy Act of 1877 having been passed subsequent to the Crown Lands Act of 1876, it was necessary to substitute the word "administrator" for the words "his heirs." What the public looked at was that a certain form was prescribed by regulations authorised by the Act, and that form had been departed from, and that the department had issued a requisition refusing to register, and the matter had been referred to the Crown Law Officers. Now, it was exceedingly undesirable that there should be any uncertainty, and it was with that view that he should like the Premier to express to the Committee very fully that there need be no apprehension in the public mind. It was true that the 3rd section of the Real Property Act said:—

"The describing any person as proprietor, transferee, transferee, mortgagor, mortgagee, encumbrancer, encumbrance, lessor or lessee, or as trustee or seized of or having any estate or interest in any land, shall be deemed to include the heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns of such person."

That, he believed, had been accepted as showing that the uneasiness excited in the public mind was without foundation, but still the fact existed that the Crown grants had been altered, and the question was whether it was right that they should be altered without the authority of Parliament. He trusted the Premier would not think that he was in any way showing any want of confidence in the opinion he had expressed, but it was highly necessary that all uneasiness in the public mind should be allayed, and that there was no chance of the question having to be relegated to the Supreme Court for decision. Laymen did not like law. They did not want to buy land and purchase a lawsuit with it, and he thought it quite right that the security of titles should be fully ascertained, and that persons purchasing land should know that there was no chance of their having to appeal to the law courts to establish their rights.

The PREMIER said he would like first to know from the hon. member to whom the requisition was sent?

Mr. DICKSON: It was issued by the Master of Titles.

The PREMIER: To whom was it sent?

Mr. DICKSON: To Mr. Wise.

The PREMIER said the whole question seemed to be a storm in a teapot. He had heard of a requisition of that kind being sent to a firm of solicitors in town, one of the members of which talked to him on the subject and they had a laugh over it, but he understood that the requisition had been withdrawn, the Master of Titles having seen that he had made a mistake.

He had at first forgotten that the word "heirs" had ceased in Queensland to have any meaning. He (the Premier) believed the Master of Titles understood now that he had made a mistake. That was all; and when he saw he had made a mistake he withdrew the requisition. He did not think, therefore, that because the word "heirs" had no meaning and was left out of the deeds of grant, that therefore there was any cause for alarm. It did not require a lawyer to discover that the word "heirs" was wrong, and he saw no reason why a layman should not understand the question as well as a lawyer. Why, it was like insisting that engineers were the only persons who could form an opinion on the merits of steel sleepers. He thought a layman was just as competent to form an opinion upon the question as a lawyer. There were some questions on which the peculiar knowledge that lawyers had was very useful, but any layman was as good a judge on ordinary questions as a lawyer. The law said that when a man died his land should go not to his heirs, but to his administrators, and surely it did not require more than an Act of Parliament to say that. People said, "You have passed an Act which says a certain thing, and we want you to pass another to say that it means what it says," but the reference he would suggest would be, "Look up the Act and you will see what it means." He believed lawyers were not infallible. A lawyer had made a mistake, and having found it out, it had been corrected. That was the whole question. He did not think it worth discussing, and he found it hard to believe that after all there was so much anxiety on the subject.

Mr. CHUBB said the point was this: A good many hundred years ago when conveying an estate in fee-simple the word "heirs" had to be used. Well, that was not the law now by the law of this colony. The Intestacy Act substituted "administrators" for "heirs," and if a man died and had not devised his lands they went to his administrators. That was the whole question, and there was nothing more in it. Possibly, if the deeds of grant contained the words "an estate in fee-simple" there would have been no trouble at all about the matter.

The PREMIER said he forgot to add that an hon. member had referred to a deed of grant under the Act of 1876. That regulation was made, of course, before the Intestacy Act came into operation; and the form was a proper one then. He was not aware that it had been altered, though it had been very properly altered.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he was rather sorry that the Minister for Works was not in his place, because really that change savoured of the nationalisation of the land question which seemed to be creeping in. They were told by the Premier that the intestacy laws had made the alteration necessary and right, but how was it with the man who made a will, and who did not die intestate?

The PREMIER: It goes to his assigns.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said they were his heirs. They used to be his heirs, and he was a good deal puzzled the other day when he got a new sort of deed which did not mention them. He might inform the Premier that he had heirs.

The PREMIER: The law does not allow you to have any.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it was stated by the Premier that the new phraseology was an improvement on the old; but there were counsel who held a different opinion.

The PREMIER: I do not think so.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said they had told him so. And it would be awkward if anything happened to the Premier, and unfortunate laymen were left stranded on the opinion of the Premier. So long as the hon. gentleman was spared and able to defend his position, he would be able to pull them through; but, for all that, laymen did not like that sudden and violent alteration of the phraseology to which they had been accustomed for ages. Lawyers differed as well as doctors, and another generation of lawyers might arise who knew not Joseph, and would not entirely submit to the dictum of the Premier. He knew that some land agents had been put to great inconvenience and bothered a great deal by their clients on account of the alterations made in titles recently. He had been told by Mr. Cottell that he had had considerable trouble with clients to whom he had sold land, and who complained bitterly that instead of getting titles in accordance with what they expected they only got deeds that gave them a life interest. The Premier, who was acknowledged to be the first lawyer in the colony, said that the Master of Titles, who was also a lawyer, was wrong; but it was possible that another lawyer might occupy the position of Premier at some future time, and he might say that the Master of Titles was right. Then his word would be equally law with that of the present Premier, and he might entertain a different opinion.

The PREMIER: When you become a judge of the Supreme Court the difficulty will not arise.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: I don't want to become a judge.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I wish you were one.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said he certainly should like to see a confirmatory Act passed admitting the validity of the titles, to which exception had been taken. He was content to accept them as correct, always provided that the present Premier was to remain at the head of the State for ever.

The PREMIER: What has that to do with it?

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: You would see that we are all right.

The PREMIER: I have nothing to do with it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said it seemed that the Premier could override the Master of Titles, and do what he liked. When a barrister holding a different opinion was entrusted with supreme power he supposed the titles would be altered again.

The PREMIER: When a very ignorant person comes in he may make troubles which the Supreme Court will put right.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he rose to correct an impression the hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, seemed to be labouring under—namely, that the Master of Titles received his advice from the Crown Law Office. No application was made to him, nor had the Crown Solicitor been consulted on the subject. If the Master of Titles did get information from the Crown Law Officers, he must take the responsibility of accepting advice from the clerk who gave it. He did not see that there was any need for the fuss that had been made in the papers by writers who had got hold of some old rules applicable to a state of law which did not prevail in Queensland. The English law required the use of the word "heirs"; but they had made a new law for themselves in this colony, and a man held land as he held sheep and cattle. If he made a will, the land went to his devisees, but if not, it went to his administrators. He did not see any necessity for what had appeared in the papers in

reference to the condition in which titles had been issued recently, and he thought the explanation given by the Premier ought to have allayed any feeling of uneasiness on the subject. As to another Premier coming in, the Premier did not make the law; the statute made the law, and anybody who thought his title was in jeopardy could settle the matter for himself in the ordinary way.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he had felt a certain amount of uneasiness in regard to this question up the present time, but after the Attorney-General had endorsed the opinion of the Premier his mind was relieved, and he was certain that the legal interpretation of the Premier must be right.

Mr. DICKSON said the Attorney-General had intimated that he (Mr. Dickson) had stated that the Master of Titles had been advised by the Crown Law Office; but what he did say was that a requisition had been issued by the Master of Titles, that the applicant had been referred to the Crown Law Office, and that the answer was unsatisfactory. The Premier stated that any man who was dissatisfied had only to refer to the Supreme Court; but laymen had not that great love for the Supreme Court that lawyers had; besides, the application would have to be accompanied by various fees which would make it a very expensive proceeding.

The PREMIER: Not at all.

Mr. DICKSON said that legal gentlemen appeared before the Supreme Court with greater satisfaction than laymen. He appeared on the side of the laymen—the uninitiated in those mysteries—and he thought when he told them what had occurred there would be quite sufficient foundation to prove that he was justified in raising the present discussion. It appeared that Mr. Cottell waited upon the Master of Titles in connection with the requisition which he (Mr. Dickson) prepared, and he would read what was the tenor of the interview.

The PREMIER: How long ago was that?

Mr. DICKSON said it was within the last six weeks—a comparatively recent period in legal transactions. He wanted to show what was the condition of affairs in those comparatively recent days. Mr. Cottell said:—

"In a conversation that I had with the Master of Titles (in the presence of my son) the following answers were given to me:—'Is it correct, sir, that under the new grants a person only holds a life interest?' 'Quite correct,' was the reply; then, asked I, 'What becomes of the land at the grantee's death?' 'It reverts to the Crown,' was the startling announcement."

While he had the greatest respect, and he was sure the whole country had also, for the Premier's opinion, still they knew that even eminent lawyers, amongst whom he must class the Premier, differed; but he trusted that after an explanation all uneasiness would be set at rest in the matter. To his mind the legal gentlemen in that Committee did not treat the matter with the gravity it deserved. They seemed to think it was a light matter to pay their respects before a Supreme Court judge in Chambers, but he took quite a different view. As a rule they thought matters could always be adjusted satisfactorily by interviewing a judge of the Supreme Court, in cases of perplexity. It was to avoid that interview that he had raised the present question, and he thought after what he had said that the matter would be set at rest. There had been quite sufficient ground for the debate that evening, and he accepted the statement that a great deal had appeared in the public Press which showed that the writers were ignorant of the matter.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he thought that rather a serious question underlaid the matter, and that was that it had been clearly proved by the statements of the Premier, the Attorney-General, and by what had fallen from the hon. member for Enoggera, that the Master of Titles was unfit for his position. The whole of the trouble appeared to have originated from the ignorance of the gentleman who occupied that most important position. Why he was called "Master of Titles" he did not know, unless it was done ironically, because he seemed to know nothing about titles. It was really a very important matter that there was occupying that most important office a gentleman whose incompetency was admitted by two legal members of the Committee.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Then why did you appoint him?

Mr. MOREHEAD said he did not know whether the appointment was made by the present Ministry or not. The Government, at any rate, ought to take some steps to have that most important office filled by a gentleman who, whatever qualifications he might have, should have the qualification of being a lawyer.

Mr. CHUBB said he thought it would be very hard to punish the Master of Titles for one error. The error might never have occurred at all if the Premier, in his desire to be accurate, had not altered those deeds. If the deeds had been left with the word "heirs" in, there would have been no difficulty, and nobody would have been disturbed in their minds. He did not think they should punish the Master of Titles for one error. There were men sitting on the English Bench who had made mistakes, and had admitted that they had been wrong, and it could not possibly be considered that they were not fit to be on the bench. Surely hon. members were not serious in asking the Committee to omit that gentleman's salary.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that had not been asked, but he had suggested it; and he did not think it would be too severe a punishment to remove the Master of Titles from his position, which he was clearly incompetent for. He did not agree with the hon. member for Bowen, when he complained of the Premier making those documents more accurate. He thought such documents could not be made too accurate. The explanation of the Premier seemed to be satisfactory to everyone. Surely the Master of Titles ought to have considered the matter before he raised the alarm he did—an alarm raised apparently by his utter ignorance of the law.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said, of course the hon. member for Bowen would vote for his own lot. They hung together in a sort of "trade-union" way. According to the showing of the leader of the Opposition and the hon. member for Enoggera, if the Premier were right—and he believed he was—the appointment of the present Master of Titles seemed to have been an exceedingly bad appointment, when that officer had raised all that scare and trouble, and caused uncertainty and doubt and want of confidence to crop up. He thought that as the Master of Titles was newly appointed, before taking such a decided step and giving such an extraordinary opinion as he appeared to have done, he should have consulted the Premier and the Crown Law Officers—the Attorney-General—and obtained their opinions. What weighed with him was that the word "heirs" might have been left in.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He did not urge that.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: It was only a little surplusage, and it looked, on the face of it, to be a most important alteration.

Mr. MOREHEAD: He ought to have thoroughly looked into it.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said, if the Premier was going to be so precise as to obliterate the surplusage in all their Acts, as he had done in that case, he would have a great deal of work before him. It could be done away with, without any loss the colony.

Mr. BLACK said he had a complaint to make about that vote similar to that which he had made to the previous one. He hoped to be able to induce the Government not to include such very large amounts in contingencies in future. There was no less than £3,000 for contingencies in that vote, or nearly one-half of the whole vote. There must certainly be a great number of clerks, even for extra clerical assistance. There were at present eighteen clerks down on the estimate, and the total number of officers was twenty-six. Why not increase that number to thirty or thirty-two, so that hon. members might know how many were really employed, instead of including the salaries of some of the clerks in "Contingencies?" £3,000 was too large an amount altogether to put down for contingencies, and he thought the Committee ought to receive some information on the matter.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the amount put down for extra clerical assistance was comprised in the following items:—Two clerks at 9s. 9d. a day, which was £457 16s. 3d. per annum; eight clerks at 8s. 3d. a day, or a total of £1,032 18s. per annum; and ten men on piece-work, preparing certificates and drawing diagrams, at £135 per annum, or a total of £1,350. Those sums amounted to £2,840 14s. 3d., and there was also an amount of £180 for incidentals, which made up the £3,000 referred to by the hon. member for Mackay. Those clerks were necessary to get title-deeds prepared and the plans drawn on them, and that was done by piece-work.

Mr. MOREHEAD said that as the item for contingencies was made up in that way it would surely be very much better that the clerks at 9s. 9d. and 8s. 3d. a day should appear on the staff of officers down on the Estimates, and that the amount "Contingencies" should be cut down to what was really required for contingencies. It was quite evident from what had fallen from the hon. gentleman that those clerks were necessary, at least he assumed that they were, and that being so, they should appear in the Estimates. That would be a much more simple and straightforward way of putting the Estimates before the Committee.

Mr. CHUBB said he had intended to refer to that matter before. He believed there were some of those clerks who had been paid from "Contingencies" for years. If they had been in the office for that time, and had done their work satisfactorily, they might as well be put on the staff. He knew one clerk in the Railway Department who had been seven years in the office, and was not on the staff yet, but was still paid out of contingencies. Men who were employed as long as that ought to be on the staff.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said a great deal of work in the Registrar of Titles' office was done by the piece, and it was found that it could be done more economically that way than by clerks employed at a stated salary.

Mr. NORTON: Do you call for tenders for the work?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No; they did not call for tenders; they put persons on to do the work at certain rates, and it was done more economically in that way than by employing men at fixed salaries. When he was Registrar

General he inquired particularly into the matter, and it was proved to him that a saving to the country was effected by adopting that method; but he did not think that the men who earned the money were well paid.

Mr. MOREHEAD said he believed he took down the figures accurately from the Colonial Secretary. There was a sum of £457 for clerks at 9s. 9d. a day, and a sum of £1,032 for those at 8s. 3d. a day; that amounted to nearly £1,500. Those clerks were not employed on piecework.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then they ought to be paid a fixed salary. With regard to piecework it seemed to him that the explanation of the Minister for Lands revealed a rather peculiar state of affairs. The hon. gentleman stated that to get the work done economically piecework must be given to poor clerks, who would do more work for a less rate of pay than was received by the clerks regularly employed in the office. That was a very unpleasant admission. He (Mr. Morehead) thought it would be very much better to do with as little piecework as possible, and that those men who were regularly employed should receive a salary, even if it were a small one.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS said he quite agreed with the leader of the Opposition that all clerks should be properly paid. He would take that opportunity of saying that for many years a number of persons employed in the Registrar-General's office had been underpaid. He had tried year after year, when Registrar-General, to get their salaries raised. There were gentlemen who had been in the office for years at a salary of £125 per annum. He did not think any office was more profitable to the Government than that of the Registrar-General. There had been a profit in the working of that department, since the Real Property Act came into operation, of about £70,000. The sum of £50,000 was shown in the returns, and besides that there was £20,000 for insurance. For some reason or other, which he could never understand, it had been thought right to give gentlemen employed in that office year after year a very insufficient salary although they did their work well and faithfully. He was so ashamed of it that for years he repeated his application for increases to the Government, although they told him not to do so. At length he got the permission of the Colonial Secretary (Sir Arthur Palmer) to write a special letter to him on the subject recommending that certain salaries should be raised. The Colonial Secretary laid that on the table, and, in doing so, said the salaries in their increased form were so low that he was ashamed of them even in that form, and they were passed *in globo*. They should have been raised long before. The department, as he had stated, was a most profitable one, and it had been very illiberally used. He did not blame any particular Government, but said that successive Governments had treated it very illiberally.

Question put and passed.

POLICE.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the sum of £144,705 be granted for Police—departmental, executive, salaries, and contingencies. Although there was a decrease on the total amount, there were some increases in salaries. Ten additional constables were provided for, and there was a slight increase for the Detective Force. The salaries of 1st class detectives were raised from £180 to £200; of the 2nd class, from £140 to £160; and of the 3rd class, from £120 to £140. The greatest increase was for forage expenses, from £6,000 to £7,000. Those were the main items in the vote.

Mr. NORTON said he believed there were some of the police who were entitled, by a rule or regulation with respect to classification, to increases at the present time. Was that the case?

The PREMIER: Yes.

Mr. NORTON said he would point out that in the Railway Department there were also men entitled to increases, but their increases were suspended. He did not object to the police obtaining the increases to which they were entitled by classification, but he said the railway men were as much entitled to get theirs. The attention of the Minister for Works had been called to the matter by the hon. member for Bundaberg. The hon. gentleman then explained that the increases to which those men were entitled had been suspended for six months, and he meant to suspend them for six months more, and the hon. gentleman closed his remarks on the subject with these words: "I think it only fair that these men should be subject to the rule which applies to all other Government officers in the colony." Well, it did not apply, and he (Mr. Norton) knew at the time that statement was made that it did not apply. He said it was most unfair that the increases to which the men in the Railway Department were entitled, according to classification, should be stopped when similar increases to men in another department were granted. What he wished to point out was the inconsistent manner in which the reductions in the expenditure were made. He did not object to reductions at all, but if made they should be made in a consistent manner, and one class of men should not be singled out.

Mr. CHUBB asked whether the amount, £250, allowance to witnesses attending courts of petty sessions, was for constables who were called as witnesses?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; to other persons.

Mr. MELLOR said he wished to draw the attention of the Colonial Secretary to a communication he had received from the mayor of Gympie, urging increased police protection for that town and district. There were not as many police there in proportion to the population as there were in other towns. Recently there had been an addition to the population in consequence of the railway having been commenced, and there were some doubtful characters about the place. He must say that the Gympie people were a law-abiding people, but now that the railway was commenced they were really not sufficiently protected, and he hoped the Colonial Secretary would see that additional police were sent up.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that the hon. member did hand him a letter, and he had also received a telegram from Gympie, requesting additional police protection. He had instructed the Commissioner of Police to report on the subject; the inspector was sent up from Maryborough to report, and in consequence of his recommendation a number were sent up.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Where from?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: From Maryborough. That is a very quiet place.

Mr. NORTON said he would draw attention to the time, and he would like to know how far the Government proposed to go that evening?

The PREMIER: I have previously stated it will be necessary to pay salaries to-morrow, and it will be necessary, therefore, to pass this vote.

Mr. NORTON: The passing of this vote will not give the Government legal authority to expend the money.

The PREMIER: It has been the practice adopted for many years.

Mr. NORTON: How far do the Government intend to go?

The PREMIER: Not beyond this stage.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he saw there was an increase of ten constables provided for, and he would like to draw the attention of the Colonial Secretary to the necessity for increased police protection in the suburbs of the city, and more particularly on Sunday. He might specially refer to the Hamilton district, which a large number of persons visit on the Sunday, and where there was an almost entire absence of police protection. He had mentioned the matter last year when the vote was before the Committee, but up to the present no attention had been paid to it. There should at least be a mounted patrol there on Sundays, on holidays, races, and regattas.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he understood that many of the police went down there on Sunday in the trams to see what kind of people collected there.

Mr. BUCKLAND said there was another item he would like to refer to, and that was, "Burial of paupers—£500." As the divisional boards had charge, he thought, of the burial of paupers, there was scarcely any necessity for so large a vote as £500 for the purpose.

The PREMIER: It cost £438 last year.

Mr. BUCKLAND: In that case I withdraw my objection.

Mr. BAILEY said there was one matter in connection with the vote to which he wished to draw attention, and that was the present constitution of the Detective Force. In England they had found it necessary to re-organise their detective force. The system formerly was similar to that which still existed in Queensland, but now the detectives were taken from the police force. Men who had shown themselves capable officers in the police force were raised to the rank of detectives. They had a curious detective force here—or rather two or three forces—and, from his own observation, some of them were not of much use. They had some good detectives, and others who were either not truthful or who were very great "muffs." Some inquiry might be made by the department into the conduct of the Detective Force to see if some improvement could not be made in it.

Question put and passed.

WATER POLICE.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that £3,103 be granted for Water Police.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again on Tuesday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER, in moving that this House do now adjourn, said the first business for Tuesday would be the consideration of the Legislative Council's amendments in the Divisional Boards Bill, and after that he proposed to proceed with the Electoral Districts Bill.

Question put and passed.

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