

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

WEDNESDAY, 12 OCTOBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.*Wednesday, 12 October, 1887.*

Messages from the Governor—Assent to Bills.—Question without Notice—Expenditure from the Ten-Million Loan.—Warwick to Thane's Creek Railway—Question of Order.—Messages from the Legislative Council.—Adjournment.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR.**ASSENT TO BILLS.**

The SPEAKER read messages from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that His Excellency had, on behalf of Her Majesty, assented to the following Bills: Local Registries Bill, Australian Joint Stock Bank Act Amendment Bill, Bundaberg School of Arts Land Sale Bill, and the Valuation Bill.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.**EXPENDITURE FROM THE TEN-MILLION LOAN.**

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I would ask the Colonial Treasurer when it is likely that the return I asked for relative to the expenditure

of the ten-million loan is likely to be produced? It is a return that ought not to take very long to prepare.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I had expected to have had the return before now. I have asked about it, but am told there is some difficulty in one of the departments in getting details of the information required, but that it was promised in a day or two.

Mr. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—In connection with this matter, I would refer the Premier to an answer he made this day week very similar in effect to the one he has now given. It seems very strange that this return, which is looked forward to with a great deal of interest by hon. members, should necessitate such very great delay in laying on the table of the House. I believe it could be obtained very easily if the hon. gentleman really took that interest in it which I think he should take. I hope another week will not be allowed to elapse before that return is laid on the table, unless some satisfactory reason is given why it should not be.

The PREMIER said: The fact is that detailed information of loan expenditure is not kept in the Treasury, and has consequently to be collected from the different departments, and in some of the departments the information is not kept, as I understand it, as minutely as I think it should be, so that it takes longer to get this information than might be expected. For a long time now—about thirteen years—it has not been the practice to keep this information in the Treasury.

WARWICK TO THANE'S CREEK RAILWAY.

QUESTION OF ORDER.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek, in length 24 miles 50 chains 50 links, as laid upon the table of the House on the 23rd day of September, 1887.

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

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to a point of order. I do not think you asked whether this motion was formal or not formal. This is a fresh notice of motion given yesterday. I think you have overlooked that.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is practically the same motion, the only difference being that the words "this House will on Wednesday next" have been simply altered to "the Speaker do now leave the chair" for the hon. member's convenience. It is practically the same motion as that of which notice has been previously given.

Mr. MOREHEAD: It is a new motion.

The SPEAKER: If the House thinks it is a new motion, I will adopt that practice and call the motion again.

Mr. NORTON: It is a new motion.

Motion No. 1 called and declared "not formal."

WARWICK TO THANE'S CREEK RAILWAY.

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

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek, in length 24 miles 50 chains 50 links, as laid upon the table of the House on the 23rd day of September, 1887.

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

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—Premising any remarks I may have to make, I must say I should have thought that the Minister for Works—having regard to the fact that this motion is a new one, and not in accordance exactly with the motion brought before the House last session—would have given the House some information as to the point on Thane's Creek which this railway is intended to reach, and out of what vote it is proposed to provide the money.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith): That information can be conveniently given in committee.

Mr. MOREHEAD: As we are asking that the Speaker leave the chair, in order that the House may go into committee, I think it as well before we go into committee that we should know what we are to go into committee for. That is information to which, I think, the House is entitled. The reason I ask the question is this: On a memorandum accompanying the plans of this railway the words "Warwick towards St. George, section No. 1"—for which the money voted was proposed to be spent—are deliberately struck out. That being so, this House is fairly entitled, before we go any further, to some explanation from the Minister for Works as to the cause of this alteration, and from what vote the money for this line is to be obtained. Will the hon. gentleman give an answer to that question? I ask that information from the hon. gentleman, reserving to myself, of course, the right to speak afterwards.

The PREMIER: No, no!

Mr. NORTON: Surely the House is entitled to the courtesy of an explanation.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Do I understand that the position is this: That this House is asked to vote a sum of money for this railway, for which there has been no appropriation?

The PREMIER: It is not asked to vote any sum of money.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Premier is perfectly correct. We are only asked to go into committee; but are we to be asked to pass the plans and sections of a railway for which no provision has been made by this House?

The PREMIER: That will be explained.

Mr. MOREHEAD: That matter should be explained now. The hon. gentleman need not think to prevent my speaking again by not answering my question now, because I can speak to an adjournment. I think this matter is of paramount importance, and I thought the Minister for Works would have given the desired information when he moved the resolution. This proceeding savours to me somewhat of a trick. Even at the risk of losing my right to speak to the main question I will give the Minister for Works an opportunity of giving the information which I think the House should insist upon having.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know what explanation the hon. gentleman can want. The plans laid on the table are part of a line at one time authorised by this House—they form part of the line surveyed from Warwick to St. George. It is on the same route and terminates at the same point at which the first section of that line was originally intended to terminate. As to the question

of funds, that will be a matter to determine after the plans have been adopted by the House. I think that conveys all the information asked for by the hon. gentleman, and it is all I am prepared to give at present.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker.—I rise to a point of order. In 1884 in the Government Loan Act a sum is included under the head "Southern and Western Railway—Warwick towards St. George, £250,000." If the plans laid before the House were stated to be a section of that line from Warwick towards St. George, then we could raise no objection to this discussion going on. I point out that to these plans laid on the table there is attached the following memo. :—

"Friday, 23rd September, 1887.

"Mr. Dutton laid upon the table of the House, plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Warwick towards St. George, section No. 1, from East Warwick station to Thane's Creek; in length, twenty four miles fifty chains fifty links."

Now, sir, I would point out that this memorandum is altered by the erasure in red ink of the words, "Warwick towards St. George, section No. 1, from"—, so that it now reads, "Proposed railway from East Warwick station to Thane's Creek." Well, sir, we know nothing about any money voted for a railway from Warwick towards Thane's Creek, unless it is part of the Warwick to St. George railway. If it is that, why this erasure? I ask you, as a point of order, whether this memo. having been altered, and those words, "Warwick towards St. George," having been erased, it is competent for us to go on with this motion until that memorandum has been brought down in proper form, and the line designated for which the money was voted in 1884?

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I understand that the hon. member has raised a point of order, but I confess I do not know what the point of order is. As far as I can conjecture, it is that the hon. member does not know that Thane's Creek is on the road between Warwick and St. George.

Mr. NORTON: How do I know?

The PREMIER: If the hon. member does not know, surely his ignorance of the geography of Queensland is not a point of order!

Mr. NORTON: We ought to be officially informed by the Minister for Works.

The PREMIER: The Minister for Works has informed the hon. member that Thane's Creek is on the road from Warwick to St. George.

Mr. NORTON: It is not in this motion or on the plans.

The PREMIER: The Railway Act does not require us to state the position of every place mentioned. How does any member of this House know where Warwick is? Perhaps the hon. member does not know, but that is no reason why the House should decline to exercise its functions. There are two things required to be done before a railway is made; one is that Parliament should approve of the plans, and the other that Parliament should provide the money. Sometimes one is done first, sometimes the other. The attention of the House was called the other day to the case of the Maryborough branch line to Kilkivan, where the plans were approved of when no proposals up to that time had been made to vote any money for the purpose.

Mr. NORTON: There was no attempt at concealment.

The PREMIER: The hon. member talks about concealment. The hon. member puts his own head in the sand and says, "I do not know

where Thane's Creek is, therefore it is an attempt at concealment." Does not everybody know where Thane's Creek is?

Mr. NORTON: I do not.

The PREMIER: Well, hon. members who do not know where it is will be quite justified in asking for the information when we get into committee. This is a matter which need not be done in committee at all. Until about two years ago the practice was not to go into committee. It was only as a concession—perhaps a weak concession—to hon. members opposite, that that practice was not adopted in this case. It was thought more convenient that these matters should be discussed in committee, because they seem to be matters on which questions may very properly require to be asked and answered before a decision is come to. The motion now is that the House go into committee in order that the motion for approval of this line may be dealt with on its merits. There is no point of order whatever in the case. It is perfectly competent for the Government to bring down a proposal to construct a line of railway from Burketown to Camooweal to-morrow. Hon. members might not know where Burketown is, or where Camooweal is, but that is no point of order. The only question that can be raised on a point of order is whether the motion is in accordance with the rules of the House.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker.—I think a point of order does arise. According to a Standing Order of the House, the plans must lie on the table for a certain number of days.

The PREMIER: No; that is in the Legislative Council only.

Mr. NELSON: Well, we are asked to approve of the plans of this line. These plans purport to be one thing, and the vote passed by this House is another thing altogether. The plans are described as the plans of a railway from Warwick towards St. George—that is printed on them—and in the memorandum attached to them they are described as plans of a railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek. There is a considerable difference between the two things. If this House approves of a section of a railway from Warwick to St. George it means that the House intends to go on with the railway from Warwick to St. George; but if we only approve of the plans of a railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek, it means that we are constructing a branch railway—which the hon. member for Darling Downs, I believe, said it was the other day. Now, this House has never voted money for that branch railway. A branch railway and a main line are two totally different things. On many occasions the House has voted money for a main line, or part of a main line, when it would certainly not have voted money for a branch line. On those grounds I think the point of order is worthy of all consideration.

The SPEAKER said: I do not think much importance can be attached by the House to the memorandum which is attached to the plans, because it is simply a memorandum which has evidently been attached by the secretary of the department for the Minister himself to read when he laid the plans on the table of the House. The reason why it was not removed was simply this: that after it had been laid on the table of the House an erasure was made by a member of the Government, and for the safety of the officers it was not touched, for fear of a question being raised hereafter. I take it that the plan the House will deal with is this plan, and this plan is—

"Plan and section of proposed railway from Warwick towards St. George, section No. 1, from East Warwick Station to Thane's Creek, in length 24 miles 50 chains 50 links."

A motion moved by the late Minister for Works, and passed by the House on the 20th October, 1886, read as follows:—

"That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Warwick towards St. George section 1, commencing at 168 miles 48 chains, near East Warwick Station, and ending at Thane's Creek, 193 miles 70 chains 44 links, in length 25 miles 22 chains 44 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 12th day of October instant."

In the motion now moved by the Minister for Works, the words "from Warwick to St. George," which are embodied in this plan laid on the table, are omitted, and the question is, "That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek." Now, it is for the House itself to determine whether this is the plan in question; it is scarcely within the province of the Speaker. There is a wide divergence indeed between the approval of the plan and section of the proposed railway from Warwick to St. George, and the motion, of which the hon. Minister for Works has given notice, but it is a question for the House itself to decide, not for the Speaker.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I will not refer further to the point of order that has been raised and decided, but I think a grave irregularity has been committed with regard to the plans that have been laid on the table and the way in which this motion has been framed. I do not think it is advisable to delay the discussion on this matter, as it has already been delayed for some time, though not by the action of any members on this side of the House; and I shall therefore throw no impediment in the way, but will come back at once to the main question contained in these resolutions. I believe it will be quite within my province, and possibly I shall be supported by a large section of the House, if I take a constitutional objection to these resolutions being put on the ground that a Government in the position of the present Administration—a position admitted by themselves, not one asserted by this side of the House—is not only not justified in carrying on any business of this sort, but it ought not to have the hardihood to attempt to carry it through Parliament. But I do not intend to raise that question, however strong the arguments in favour of it may be. We may possibly be inclined to make precedents for ourselves, and not rely on the precedents created on the other side of the world. I take exception to further proceeding with this resolution on more than one ground. The first is the present position of the Government. I maintain that the Government are a defeated Government, and that the present House is not only a moribund House, but a moribund House placed in an exceptional position, as respects an ordinary Parliament proceeding towards the termination of its existence. It has been admitted by the Government, and proved by the introduction of a measure called the Redistribution Bill, that the present House does not represent the constituencies of the colony. Therefore, I think these reasons are very strong reasons why we should not be called upon to come to such a very important decision as is contained in these resolutions. But there is a third and even stronger objection that I have to proceeding with any such motion as this, and that is the financial position of the colony, and I think that objection will be shared by most members of the House. The financial position of the colony at the present time has not, I admit, been revealed to us by the Colonial Treasurer. The hon. gentleman has from time to time told us that he would give the House and the country a statement with regard to the

position, at any rate, of the Loan Fund of the colony. He told us that somewhere about two months ago.

The PREMIER: I never did.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman stated that later on he would make a statement with regard to the position of the Loan Fund, but that he was not then in possession of sufficient information.

The PREMIER: I said I could not answer a question I was asked, because I wanted further information about the state of the Loan Fund.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman may qualify it in any way he pleases.

The PREMIER: That is what I said.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The impression produced on my mind was that we should have an explanation of the position of the Loan Fund. That we have not got. But whether we were promised it or not I think we should demand it before we go in for any further expenditure, before we pledge ourselves to the expenditure of another shilling of the people's money. We are aware—every hon. member is aware—that when this vote came on during last session it was carried by a majority of one.

The PREMIER: Four or five.

Mr. MOREHEAD: By a majority of one. The votes were twenty-six to twenty-seven, and one of those votes, as far as I can remember, was given by a gentleman who at the time was in a very ticklish pecuniary position. At least so I have heard. I only regret that I was not present at that debate. If I had been it would have been left to the Chairman of Committees to give his casting vote as to the expediency or otherwise of making this proposed railway. The vote in favour of this line, although only carried by a bare majority, was arrived at by the House at a time when we were not aware of the present terrible financial straits in which we are in. At that time every member of the House, I believe, thought, and possibly properly thought, that the colony was in a sound pecuniary position. Will any hon. member say this afternoon that we are now in a satisfactory position as regards the public funds? I do not suppose that any hon. member will make such an assertion. Therefore, I say that, financially, the circumstances are entirely changed between our position last session, when the vote was carried only by a bare majority, and our position at the present time. I do not wish to be a prophet of evil, but I must say that during all the years I have been in the colony, I have never seen a much more gloomy outlook than we have before us at the present time, an outlook which might be made less gloomy by proper management. The clouds night, I think, be dispersed by judicious management, but if we are to go on getting deeper and deeper into debt we shall involve ourselves in liabilities which I do not see any near prospect of our being able to meet. I think it behoves every one of us, irrespective of party or of any selfish desire to make special railways which our individual constituencies may require for their own benefit, to say, "No, we must retrench; we must pull in and stop the terrible trouble that is inevitable if such expenditure as this and other expenditure of a similar character is to go on." It has been argued that the House is pledged to devote a certain sum of money to this particular work under that wretched, abominable, and, I had almost said, cursed £10,000,000 Loan Act which was passed by this House. I deny that contention altogether. I admit at once that a certain sum of money was at that time allocated for a certain purpose, but it must be

borne in mind that our course of procedure with regard to appropriations of this kind is surrounded with safeguards in order to prevent reckless appropriations. One of these safeguards is that the plans and specifications of every railway must be approved by this House and then passed on to the other Chamber to be approved by it. That salutary provision was no doubt put in the Standing Orders by the Legislature for the purpose of preventing any hurried legislation in authorising the construction of railways, and to provide for cases where, from the falling-off of population in a district where a railway was intended to be constructed—as, for instance, a goldfield from which the population, or the greater part of it, has removed—it is found undesirable to use the money for such purpose. Of course, we know that over and over again money allocated for a specific purpose in the loan vote has afterwards, on good and sufficient reasons, been diverted in another direction. If such a power can ever be properly exercised, surely it is at the present time. We find that a time has arrived in the history of the colony when the revenue has diminished and the finances have become depreciated, and the country is in the position that it cannot afford to carry out certain works—that under the circumstances promises which have been made cannot at present be fulfilled—and now, if ever, is the time for the House to put its foot down, and say, “This railway cannot be constructed.” I do not say for a moment, and would be the last man to say it, that either this or any other railway that may have been projected under the Loan Act is not a railway that at some time or another should not be made; but this I do maintain, that under existing circumstances, having regard to the financial position of the colony, and having regard to the credit we wish to stand in on the other side of the world, where are the lenders of all the money we have borrowed, we should not only oppose this expenditure, but put down our foot and say that for the present this shall not be; no matter whether it may have the effect of alienating from the leader of the Government a number of his staunchest supporters, or even of his leaving office honoured and respected by the country, although possibly deserted by some of his supporters. It would be much better for the hon. gentleman to go out of office honoured and respected by his country than to remain in power and to leave afterwards an impoverished Treasury and a discredited colony. No one knows better than the Premier and his colleagues—as indeed we all know—the wretched condition our finances are in at the present time. We on this side have gone very carefully into the subject and made it our study. The Premier laughs, but it is no subject for laughter. It is not a question of party, and should not be rushed through to please any side or section of the House. The time has come when we must exercise the most strict and rigid economy, treating the State in the same way as we should have to treat ourselves when hard times come unless we are reconciled to the idea of going into the insolvency court. We are hurrying on a great deal too fast with this loan expenditure, and I hope the House will not pass this resolution, for the reasons I have attempted to give. I will further say,—and I do not hold it out in any way as a threat, or anything approaching a threat—I am only expressing the views of those hon. members who are supporting me, views which they hold strongly,—that the Opposition are determined, holding the views which I have expressed as to the financial condition of the colony, to do their utmost to stop such expenditure as this at the present time, either in the House or in Committee.

Mr. KATES said: Mr. Speaker,—The speech of the hon. gentleman has confirmed a rumour that was going about this afternoon, that the Opposition had held a caucus meeting this morning, and had decided to “stonewall” or obstruct the passage of this resolution. It is certainly unworthy of hon. gentlemen opposite to resort to such tactics. Here is a railway proposed that has been promised for years. On the loan vote there is a sum of £500,000 for the *via recta*, and £250,000 for a railway from Warwick towards St. George, and we are now only asking for the paltry sum of £100,000 for the construction of a line from Warwick to Thane's Creek, and yet the Opposition have made up their minds to prevent us getting it. I do not know their reason, though perhaps I am not far wrong when I state that the reason is that they think that by obstructing this line they will force the constituencies of Darling Downs, Carnarvon, and Warwick to throw themselves into the arms of the Opposition. If they think that they are very much mistaken, for that those constituencies will never do. As to the financial position of the country, there is every reason to believe that the tide has turned. The Customs returns for last quarter alone show an increase of £60,000, and this proposed railway will considerably increase the prosperity of the colony. It is a line that ought to have been constructed years ago, and now, when a start is about to be made, we find the Opposition opposing it. I hope wiser counsels will prevail. They tried to obstruct first upon a point of order, and I am very glad, Mr. Speaker, that you did not agree with them. Now they are trying the constitutional dodge, and I hope they will not succeed in that. Right is right, and I hope the right will conquer. If the Opposition wish to obstruct, let them obstruct in committee, where they will have far better opportunities. I hope the Government will take a firm stand, and show the Opposition that, for the present at any rate, they can carry on their own business. If they do not they will be unworthy to sit on the Treasury benches.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Where is the money?

Mr. KATES: £250,000 has been voted for the Warwick to St. George line, and we are only asking for £100,000, and it is for the good of the country. I hope the Government will take a firm stand on this matter, and show the Opposition that they are still in power, and still have a strong hand to carry out their railway policy.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I want to say a word in reference to what fell from the hon. member for Balonne as to the constitutional aspect of this question. The hon. gentleman's first contention was, that as this is a moribund Parliament, with a Redistribution Bill under consideration, it is not competent to deal with such a question as this. But we are just as competent as any other Parliament to deal with this or any other resolution that may be brought before us. It is clear that there is no constitutional question there. The hon. member also says that the Government are in the position of a defeated Government, and therefore should not bring anything forward. The position of the Government is as I explained at an earlier period of the session when I stated the business the Government proposed to deal with before appealing to the country, and the matter now under consideration is one of the matters I mentioned on that occasion. We have just as much right to propose to go on with this business as we have to propose to go on with the Redistribution Bill, or the Divisional Boards Bill, or any other measure, involving the expenditure of money or not. Whether

it is desirable that the resolution should be accepted by the House is another thing; but we have a perfect right to propose it. The hon. gentleman seems to be labouring under the idea that it is unconstitutional for any Parliament when a Redistribution Bill has been introduced to deal with any other business of any importance during that session. He will not find any such rule laid down anywhere; certainly it is not the practice in any Parliament that I know of. Since the hon. gentleman spoke I have sent for the Acts passed by the Imperial Parliament in 1885, when the last Redistribution Act was passed, and I find that during that session some very important business was transacted. They passed the Country Franchise Act—a most important measure; they appointed a Secretary of State for Scotland.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: That is all part of the same thing.

The PREMIER: The administration of the affairs of Scotland has nothing whatever to do with the extension of the country franchise. They remodelled altogether the management of that kingdom. The Criminal Law Amendment Act was also passed that session, and a very important law relating to Ireland. The Irish Purchase of Land Act was passed that session after the Redistribution Bill. It is absurd to say that any such rule has never been laid down anywhere. The rule is not supported in practice any more than it is in theory by any authority. Of course, it is convenient for hon. members to say so, but it has not been the practice of this Parliament. I have been here when three Redistribution Bills were introduced, and have taken part in the discussions, and it certainly was not the practice on the two previous occasions.

Mr. DONALDSON: Had the Government announced their intention of appealing to the country after passing the Bill?

The PREMIER: As a matter of course, when a Redistribution Bill is passed, the earliest possible moment afterwards is taken for an appeal to the country.

Mr. DONALDSON: It might be passed in another session.

The PREMIER: It is always understood that at the earliest possible moment after a Redistribution Bill has been passed an appeal should be made to the country. That is an axiom always admitted. It is the very principle involved in the passing of a Redistribution Bill. The first Redistribution Bill was passed in 1872, and after it was passed a lot of work was done, and contentious work too. Parliament met again in 1873, but did little more than pass the Estimates. The rolls were not ready in time for an earlier dissolution. In 1878 a Redistribution Bill was passed, and became law early in July, and after that the House passed a lot of very important Bills indeed, and the session ended the middle of September. I am speaking from memory, but I do not think I am far out. That has been the practice of this Parliament, and the practice of other Parliaments also. The hon. member is therefore quite mistaken. Somebody gets up and says a thing of this sort, which would be a convenient argument if it were founded on fact. Somebody says so, and hon. members think it is a very convenient argument for their purposes, and adopt it without pausing to inquire whether the facts justify it or not. These are no reasons for not proceeding with the motion. As to the financial position of the country, that is another matter altogether. That is an argument the hon. member is quite justified in bringing forward, and upon which he is quite justified in asking for

information from the Government. I do not dispute that for a moment. I think every member of the House ought to bear in mind the financial position of the country when they are called upon to pass any vote involving the expenditure of money. I only wish we had that always more present to our minds than we have. In that I entirely concur with the hon. member. I am in a position to give full information as to the Loan Fund of the colony and the finances of the colony generally, and in committee I shall be prepared to give such information as it is desirable to give.

Mr. NORTON: Desirable to give?

The PREMIER: Yes.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: You mean such information as you desire to give.

The PREMIER: Such as any member of this House who desires the welfare of the country would wish to have. That is what I mean by "desirable to give." There are some questions that no one would think of asking if they do not desire to injure the credit of the colony. Suppose any member asked me when the Government are going to place the next loan on the market, I should decline to tell him.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Because you do not know.

The PREMIER: I should decline to tell him if I did know, because it would be simply giving an opportunity for the "bears" to depreciate our stock. Short of questions like that, I say I am prepared, when in committee, to give hon. members every information that they desire.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker, — I thought that when the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, got up he would have given us the information whether this is a branch line or a portion of the Warwick to St. George line. When the Government failed to do so I thought he would have done so. I should like to point out that if this is the same plan that was laid on the table last year, and is not intended for a branch line, that it is a great mistake, because it skirts or leaves out all the good country to the north-west, so as to enable the line to reach the foot of the ridges that lead on to St. George. There is not the least doubt in my mind that it is part and parcel of the Warwick to St. George railway. It was never intended as a branch line, and if that is so I think before we get out of committee I shall be able to show conclusively that this is the wrong route to take to Inglewood, Goondiwindi, and St. George. I think I can see a much better route, and I believe it would be well worth the time of the Government to make a flying survey, which, I am sure, will prove conclusively that you can go through better country, a shorter distance, and do away with all the inconveniences to which the proposed line from Warwick to St. George is subject to. I was very pleased indeed to hear the leader of the Opposition point out the financial difficulties this railway would involve us in if we were to proceed with it at the last moment in a dying Parliament. As is well known, we are in the last stage of our existence, and it is only fair and just to the country that such an extravagant and expensive line as this should be left to the new Parliament to deal with.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker, — I have not the least doubt whatever that the hon. member who has just sat down will point out what in his mind would be a very much better route to Thane's Creek, and I feel perfectly sure that his starting point would be Pittsworth, and wherever he "gerrymandered" across the country to the ultimate goal would not be a matter of very much consideration to him so long as he secured

that as his starting point. That, however, is a matter that can be much better dealt with in committee, if ever we get there. I should like to make a few remarks in reply to the hon. the leader of the Opposition, who raised the point that, because this is what he called a moribund Parliament, it has no right to deal with such a matter as this. Now, sir, in the year 1878 a Redistribution of Seats Bill passed this Chamber. It was introduced by the then Premier, Mr. Douglas, on the 30th April, 1878, passed the second reading on division by 22 to 14, on May 14 of the same year, and was read a third time on June 18 of the same year by 32 to 2, Messrs. Walsh and Foote forming the minority. After that Bill became law the Government introduced a railway which was carried unanimously, that railway being the extension of the Northern line from Emerald to Retreat Creek. The present leader of the Opposition was in the House at that time, and he supported that line. Not a word was said about the constitutional question then, Mr. Speaker. It did not affect the constitutional question then, and it does not affect the constitutional question now whether this line is made from Warwick to Thane's Creek or Warwick to St. George or anywhere else. They not only passed that line of railway, sir, but they passed the Local Government Bill, a very important measure. They also passed the Land Resumption Bill; a motion for the rescission of the Highfields railway vote; and you, sir, carried a motion for a trial survey of a line of railway between Toowoomba and Cambooya *via* Drayton. There were quite a number of important measures passed in that Parliament long after the Redistribution of Seats Bill became law.

MR. MOREHEAD: Was the constitutional question raised?

MR. MORGAN: No. The hon. member who has now raised it was then in his place in the House and did not raise it.

MR. MOREHEAD: I was not leader of the Opposition then.

MR. MORGAN: It is true, the hon. gentleman was not, but if he refers to *Hansard* of 1878 he will find that so far from raising the constitutional question he gave hearty support to that railway. The point I wish to raise is that if the constitutional question which the hon. gentleman has raised now holds good—

MR. MOREHEAD: I have not raised it; I said it might be raised.

MR. MORGAN: The hon. gentleman laid aside the constitutional question in one form, but he has raised it in another by contending that this Parliament is moribund, and has therefore no right to deal with questions of this kind. But, sir, this Parliament is no more moribund than the Parliament of 1878 was when it passed the railway from Emerald to Retreat Creek—which was passed unanimously—and passed the other important measures which I have mentioned.

MR. MOREHEAD: The present Government admitted that they are here on sufferance.

MR. MORGAN: No! I hold that there is no argument in the point raised by the hon. member.

MR. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I intend to oppose this railway, which I consider a regular political railway. I have thought so before, and certainly no sufficient case has been shown for it. It is not a national question at all; it is merely the interest of one portion of the Darling Downs as against the other. We admit we want to get to St. George, and the colony can get there by a line from Dalby twenty-four miles shorter than that from Warwick to St. George. This Thane's Creek business

is only a "blind." It is the thin end of the wedge, as anyone can see, of a line towards St. George from Warwick, and after that the *via recta*. We are simply going on in a sort of "cart-before-the-horse" manner. It is a stalking-horse. The variation of levels in the Warwick to St. George line is 1,326 feet, whereas by Dalby the variation of levels is only 269 feet. The country in the former route is more mountainous, and greater engineering difficulties will be met with than by going from Dalby to St. George. On both lines I believe the country is inferior, and not really worth taking a railway through except for the ultimate purpose of reaching St. George, where it would tap a district with a considerable area of good and rich land, but there is very little good land between Warwick and St. George, or between Dalby and St. George. I consider, myself, that the questionableness of this railway line was amply shown last session, when the Government only carried it by a majority of one after having used their full strength. It was carried by 27 to 26, and it was found that there was a very great difference of opinion even among the Government supporters as to the advisability of this line. They had the alternative of the Dalby line, which would be very much cheaper, and would go through rather better country, and a shorter distance. But, of course, it is perfectly obvious that this is part of the scheme to bring forward the importance of Warwick, and to necessitate, if possible, the *via recta*. I do not myself at all believe, and never have believed, in a *via recta* by Warwick, because I believe the shortest way from Brisbane to Sydney is by Beaudesert crossing over the range by Wilson's Peak, and joining with the proposed New South Wales line to Casino; and I consider the representatives of South Brisbane, instead of supporting this line, should insist upon the *via recta* terminating at South Brisbane. The extension beyond Beaudesert will ultimately become absolutely necessary as a coastal line, and for the defence and mutual convenience of the colonies in case of any foreign invasion. Therefore I really consider that this House would do well to abandon the idea of having the *via recta* permanently by Warwick. This line to Thane's Creek is simply a blind and a political trick put forward at the last moment, when that Parliament is, as has been said, in a moribund state. Hon. members coming from the Warwick locality will have nothing to go before their constituents with if this line is passed. But if we reject it they will be able to go and promise it again, and I think it would be doing a great injustice to the colony if we involved ourselves in an expenditure of this kind at the present time when we do not see our way to make the line at all reproductive.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I quite agree with the hon. the Premier as to the constitutional part of this question. I think that we are quite able to establish precedents for ourselves, and so far as that question goes, I am certainly with him; but he was slightly mistaken in quoting the case of the English Government in 1885 as being in any way a strength to the contention which he sets up as to a Government being able to do what it likes, even after bringing in a Redistribution Bill, and when the Government has been defeated on the principal part of its policy. Now, the Government in England in 1885 was a powerful Government. The question of redistribution was not a party question. It was one that had been agreed to by both sides; it was actually a matter of compromise between the gentlemen sitting on the front benches on both sides of the House. So that really, bringing up the matter of 1885 to show that that Government proceeded with important measures, has nothing whatever to do with th

question. At any rate, I am with the Premier as far as establishing precedents is concerned. I do not think we should be too slavish in following the precedents set by the English Parliament, or even by colonial Parliaments. I think we have a right to discuss this question on another ground, outside of the constitutional one. But I am not going to discuss it as the comparative merits of Toowoomba and Warwick. I am not going to take it upon the matter of route, although I think the Government have been guilty of some mistake in laying the plans on the table this session. I admit that this is part of the Warwick and St. George scheme, but why did the Government not stick to the Warwick and St. George scheme throughout? Why have they varied their resolution to read so that any person who did not know that there was a Warwick and St. George scheme would not be able to detect that it was a portion of it? The plan that we are asked to pass is simply a railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek. It may be a portion of a main line leading anywhere, or it may be a branch line from the main line to Warwick, but it is no use discussing that question. We have the plans before us, but I think it would conduce to better order and better government if the Government had simply carried out the original plan and allowed the Thane's Creek line to go by the board. Now, I object to this on the broad financial ground mentioned by the leader of the Opposition. I believe if I sat on the other side of the House at the present time, and saw the state of the country as clearly as I believe I see it now, I would not support this railway; and I hope hon. members will consider carefully what I am going to say upon the question. I believe the statement that I am going to make in regard to our financial position can be proven. In fact, I will try to prove it, and I think if I do, even the Government will pause before they go any further. Of course, I assume that if we pass these plans the Government will call for tenders. I do not assume for a moment that we are going through a farce; that we are simply doing a little piece of burlesquing, as the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government accused the hon. member for Fassfern last night of being guilty of. I assume that the Government will call for tenders for the line if these plans and sections are approved of. Therefore I am taking up the objection that we are not able in our present financial position to go on with this line. I am taking up that objection on general grounds, and I will take the objection on particular grounds after I have done with that one. I will go to the Auditor-General's report to begin with. On the 30th June, 1887—the beginning of the present financial year—the loan cash balance amounted to £2,734,000—leaving out the odd hundreds, as I intend to do in all these figures, because it is inconvenient to be always quoting the hundreds, shillings, and pence. That was the cash balance, the sum on which we could draw to carry on our contracts and pay all our expenditure, and also to use when necessary for the consolidated revenue, as, no doubt, it was used during a certain part of last year, and this year also. In addition to that we had remaining, of the £10,000,000 loan, unsold inscribed stock amounting to £3,230,000. Of course, we could not use that until we placed it on the market. That was simply a piece of paper, but we had in addition to that £2,734,000, money due on the balance of loan floated last February, an amount of £490,000, which has since been paid, I believe. That and the inscribed stock unsold amount to £3,720,000. Now, that was the total of our real assets. Of course, we have here put down by the Auditor-General, as an asset, Treasury bills unsold. We know

how the Treasury Bills Act was passed last year. Certain railways had been constructed out of expenditure unauthorised by Parliament, and the Treasurer, to protect himself and the Treasury, got a Bill passed through this House authorising him to hold or to issue £123,000 in Treasury bills, which, I believe, are now in the Treasury. These are unsold; and the total amounts, therefore, to £6,577,000. Then there are expenses incurred in the sale of inscribed stock, which are not yet provided for—which will also have to go into a new Loan Bill, and go on the English money market—amounting to £128,000. Then there is the loan expenditure of a similar character, which must go into a new Loan Bill, being in anticipation of parliamentary sanction, amounting to £313,000, making up a total of £7,019,000, or exactly balancing our liabilities under the £10,000,000 Loan Act. Now, let us see how we balance. Hon. members, I hope, understand that the £7,019,000 are still unexpended of the £10,000,000 loan, but that the Government are liable to that amount, a portion of which, I believe, is for this plan and section we are now discussing. For that we have, as I have said, £2,734,000 cash in hand, and that is the only real tangible asset we have at present to use. No other asset set down here by the Auditor-General is one over which we have any complete control. We certainly can go into the English money market at any time we like, if we choose to run the risk of failure, or of being obliged to borrow money at a very bad rate for the colony. But I appeal to the present Treasurer and to the late Treasurer whether it would be an advisable thing to do so during the present financial year. When we went into the money market in last February—of course, I need not tell the Colonial Treasurer how that loan was floated. He knows well the difficulty under which it was floated and the risk run in floating it. I am quite certain, although he is rather reckless sometimes, he would not be so reckless as to rush a loan into the market before he was perfectly satisfied that he could do so without much loss. And, especially after having floated this year already a loan of £2,500,000, and seeing the position which some of the colonies occupied on the money market, and the dangerous position which we occupied ourselves, I ask him if it would be a safe thing for the Government to go into the market to borrow more money, at least during the present financial year? Now, the £3,230,000 is all we have to go upon—that is, the unsold portion of the inscribed stock, for the Treasury bills unsold have actually already been drawn on, as have the expenses incurred in the sale of inscribed stock; the loan expenditure to the amount of £313,000 has also been drawn on, making an amount of £564,000 of these assets, which has already been spent, though it is put down as assets by the Auditor-General. So that in reality we have only the cash balance, and the unsold portion of the inscribed stock, £3,230,000. Now, let us see what the cash balance really amounts to. I am quite willing to admit that there has been a considerable improvement in the state of the revenue during the past quarter. We all know that from the Treasury returns published quarterly; but I do not think we should be justified in taking the increased revenue during the past quarter as a guide for the whole of the year. I believe that a considerable portion of the increase in the Customs revenue was caused by the uncertainty of mercantile people as to the intentions of the Government in the direction of taxation. Of course that is problematical, but I think it is the opinion generally held outside—that there was a larger purchase of dutiable goods than usual, through fear that the Government intended

to increase the *ad valorem* duty another $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. So that we would not be justified in taking the increase in revenue through Customs as one likely to go on at the same rate—£60,000 each quarter—during the whole year, which would give £240,000. Then, again, the past quarter showed an increase through the receiving of the pastoral rents paid in September, and that is not to be repeated until next September. In addition to that there was the loan expenditure during the quarter to be considered, because the interest which has been running on since the beginning of the financial year, and a quarter of which is due, is not paid until the end of this year, as the interest is paid half-yearly. Therefore, in the succeeding quarter there will be a much larger expenditure and much less revenue. Now, I will take the Treasury return issued on the 7th October. The last page gives the debit balance on the 30th June at £410,000 with odd hundreds, and the expenditure for the three months at £386,940, making together £997,000; the revenue for the three months being £937,000, leaving only a debit balance of £60,000, or wiping out apparently £350,000 of the debit balance which was against us on the 30th June. It is only apparent; it is not actually wiped out. Now, I will take what will probably be the revenue return on the 31st December next, and I will put it against this. This leaves the loan cash balance in credit £2,709,000—that is the amount we actually have to work on at the present time. Now, I put down on the 31st December the debit balance of £60,000, and instead of the expenditure being £586,000, I put it down at £1,039,000, and I will show how it is arrived out. I take the expenditure of the corresponding half of the last financial year—that is the year ending 31st December last—and to that I add the increase in the public debt, £50,000—the expenditure for the last half of last year with the increase of the present half-year—and £31,000 of increased expenditure, which I take also as being the amount of increased expenditure of the last quarter over the corresponding quarter of the previous year. The Government, in spite of their retrenching, have not got to that stage of retrenchment where the expenditure is actually less than the revenue—of course the hon. Colonial Treasurer will not contradict that. The surplus of expenditure over revenue during the current quarter was £31,000; during the last year it was £173,000; I add those amounts together, and hon. members, I think, will agree with me that it is perfectly fair to do so. In fact the only problematical thing is the £31,000 of increased expenditure, the others are a certainty. That makes £1,099,000 odd—I may say £1,100,000. Now the revenue during the last quarter of last year—that is the quarter ending 31st December—was £620,000, and to that I add a corresponding amount of increased revenue for the next quarter of £84,000. Of course hon. members will recollect that a large portion of the increase during the quarter ending September last was caused by the pastoral rents, which cannot be repeated until next September. I am giving the Government—or the country, rather—the benefit of a supposed increase of revenue of £84,000, which, I think, is very liberal, and that will make the revenue on the 31st December £694,000. Now, the £60,000 of deficit at the beginning of this quarter, and the one million and odd thousands of expenditure, together make £1,099,000. From that I subtract £694,000, leaving a debit balance at the end of this present quarter of £405,000. That will be the debit balance as near as it can be arrived at by conjecture. Now, sir, let us see how this will work in with our present loan cash balance. The loan cash balance is £2,709,000.

Our loan expenditure, I take it, will be about the same as in the last quarter of last year, when it was over £500,000. In the quarter just past it was £482,000, but I know as a general rule that the quarter immediately preceding the new year—the Christmas quarter—is always larger, because the contractors like to have a big draw. I am taking it at a little less than it was last year, and more than it was last quarter—£500,000. I deduct that from the cash balance—£2,709,000, and it leaves £2,209,000 at the end of this year, that is at the end of the civil year—at the end of this quarter. Now, from that I also subtract the £405,000 of deficit. Of course, the Government must use this money; I assume they will not be so dishonest as to use the Trust Funds—I take that as a certainty—so that they will use the loan cash balance, which, I believe, is always used in a similar case. Now, from that £2,209,000, taking the probable deficit at the end of this quarter—£405,000—it leaves £1,804,000. The Colonial Treasurer told us yesterday, in answer to a question by the hon. member for Mackay, that we were liable to an amount of £1,200,000 on contracts not completed.

Mr. CHUBB: Approximately.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes, approximately. That word "approximately" should not be there. The hon. gentleman should know exactly what amount of work is incomplete up to the contract price. The only approximation is how much beyond the contract price the contract will come to. The word "approximate" should not be there in connection with that answer. It was a vague answer, but I take it as it stands—£1,200,000. Now, what has been our experience in contracts? Have the contracts been carried out at contract price? Have they been carried out at 20 per cent. beyond contract price? No, I say they have not, and I have only to take our experience of the last year or the last year and a-half to show it. I need not go beyond that, though every year beyond would show the same thing. Now, I will just show what our experience at the present time is in regard to contracts that are actually uncompleted, or were uncompleted at the time the returns were furnished. I want to prove my position step by step, so that hon. members on that side of the House may be able to make up their minds definitely whether they are going to sacrifice the country for the sake of their party. Take, for instance, page 8 of the last report of the Commissioner for Railways. Under the heading "Construction," the Commissioner says, "The following contracts for the construction of new railways, and the extension of existing lines, were entered into and in progress during the year 1886." That is during last year. The first railway mentioned is the "Northern Railway, section 8; contractors, McKenzie and Sutherland; date of contract, 7th January, 1886; time for completion of contract, 7th July, 1887; length of line, 33 miles 20 chains; amount of contract, £48,186." What was actually expended on that contract at the end of the year—that is, six months before the contract was completed? I am speaking now to the Colonial Treasurer. The amount expended will be found on page 7 of the Commissioner's report. The contract price was £48,186, and the amount expended at the end of the year was £105,485.

The PREMIER: On what?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: On No. 8 section of the Northern Railway.

The PREMIER: That includes the permanent way.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: What would the cost of thirty-three miles of permanent way come to? I appeal to any hon.

member who has been in the Works Office—to the hon. member for Port Curtis or the present Minister for Works—whether the cost of the permanent way will make the difference of £57,000. And when that sum of £105,485 was expended, six months of the contract was still uncompleted. That accounts for the money which has been voted by this House for Northern railways being drawn upon and expended on works for which it was not intended. Through the blundering of the Government and the blundering of the engineers, there has been an over-expenditure of £57,000 on that one contract. The money appropriated for the extension of the line beyond the Hughenden railway station has actually been drawn upon for the completion of this contract. Take another case: There is the "Cooktown Railway, section 2; contractors. W. J. Blunt and Company; date of contract, 19th March, 1886; time for completion of contract, 19th April, 1887; length of line, 19 miles; amount of contract, £52,966." The amount expended on that line was £61,846. At that date, three months within the contract time, the difference between the amount of the contract and the sum actually spent was £9,000. Let us take another case—the "Cairns Railway, section 1; contractor, P. C. Smith; date of contract, 7th April, 1886; time for completion of contract, 7th January, 1887; length of line, 8 miles; amount of contract, £19,512." I believe the contract is finished now, but it was not finished in January last. The amount expended at the end of the year on the railway from Herberton to the coast, which is the same line, was £63,534.

The PREMIER: That includes all the rails.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I admit that it may include the cost of the surveys, but it ought not to do so, as there is a special vote for that purpose.

The PREMIER: I said it includes the cost of the rails.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I know there is a cargo of rails there. Rails are £5 per ton; the rails and fastenings are about seventy tons a mile, and the hon. gentleman can easily make out what those cost for himself. Having got so far, I say I am perfectly justified in my contention. I may further refer to the Ravenswood line; it also cost more than the amount of the contract, and so did the Mackay railway. I cannot understand how the blundering came about. Look again, the blundering in the duplication of the line between Brisbane and Ipswich. There is blundering all over, and the additional cost of the railways being from 50 to 80 or 90 per cent. I think, therefore, I am perfectly justified in adding 20 per cent. to the £1,200,000 which the hon. gentleman told us yesterday, in answer to a question, is the approximate amount of liability under uncompleted contracts. I maintain that I am quite justified in doing that after what I have shown to the House. By adding that our liability under uncompleted contracts will be increased to £1,440,000, as against a cash balance, which we will have at the end of this quarter, of £1,864,000, leaving an actual cash balance, which we can use as our own and apply to any special purpose as emergencies may arise, of £364,000. That is at the end of this quarter. I ask hon. members, I ask the Colonial Treasurer, is that a safe thing?

The PREMIER: You are assuming that all that money is going to be spent during the current quarter.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The greater part of the contracts will be finished during this year. But we cannot touch that money, as it is

money for which we are liable. I do not assume that the contracts will be completed at the end of this quarter, because I have only to look at the report of the Commissioner for Railways, that the contracts that have been let will not all be finished by that time. I assume that the money voted for the different contracts, in respect of which there is at present a liability of £1,200,000, should be kept intact, and applied to no other purpose than that for which it was voted by this House. And at the end of the present quarter, that is in the middle of the financial year, the only amount we shall have to draw upon, if we do not infringe upon other votes, will be this balance of £364,000. We will still have six months more of the financial year, and with an expenditure at the rate of £2,000,000 a year—

The PREMIER: You are counting it twice over.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: No, I am not; but I say we still have half a year, and another million of money to be expended, between the 1st of January and the end of June.

The PREMIER: Not on account of these contracts. You are counting it twice over.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Not at all. The hon. gentleman is now about to enter upon a fresh contract. He entered upon one the other day which I consider was a crime. I do not call it a blunder, but a crime. Any man may make a mistake—the best man may do so—but the hon. member did this the other day with his eyes open as Treasurer, knowing thoroughly well the state of the money market, knowing the difficulty we had in floating our last loan, knowing also the difficulty we may probably have in floating our next loan, knowing that the floating of our loans depends entirely upon the state of Europe—I say that knowing all these things he entered into a contract for a railway which is not required—the railway to Fortitude Valley. If it was a railway really necessary, one required for some special purpose, I would not find fault with him, but he entered into a contract for £175,000, which could very well be left over till some more convenient time. I do not say that the railway should never be made, but that its construction should be deferred to some more convenient period, the land, in the meantime, being resumed. I say the hon. gentleman has committed a crime. We could not prevent him doing that, because the plans were passed by the House last session, when, as the hon. member at the head of the Opposition has observed, no one knew for a positive certainty the financial position of the Government. Many of us suspected it, but none of us knew it for certain. The plans were passed then; but when the position was thoroughly well known the hon. gentleman, with his eyes open, entered into the contract for the Fortitude Valley railway. Now he is going to enter into a contract for two other lines; this, I think, we may be able to prevent him doing. I think I have shown good grounds why we should pause before going on with this line, and that it will be unsafe to commit ourselves to any further expenditure until we are perfectly certain of our position, and then only on lines that are really necessary for the country—lines that are really wanted. I do not say that this particular line is absolutely bad, but that we ought not to go on with it until we are in a position to go to the money market to float a fresh loan, which I am certain neither the late Treasurer nor the present Treasurer will say will be during this financial year. I will now oppose the line upon special grounds, although I think I have already shown sufficient to convince any member who really has the good of the country at heart, and who is not willing to run risks, that we ought to

pause before committing the country irretrievably to it. Of course, we have to run risks sometimes. The floating of the last loan was a great risk, but it was a risk which will not be repeated, I believe. The hon. gentleman understands me quite well, and I do not think he will feel himself justified in running such a risk as was run on that occasion. I will take exception to this expenditure on the ground that it will be unfair to other portions of the colony, which have votes for railways placed on the £10,000,000 loan which are still unexpended, and likely to remain unexpended. We expressed our conviction years ago—when I say “we,” I mean myself and some others on this side—that the railways lowest down on that £10,000,000 loan would come out worst—that the railways first made would have the benefit of the expenditure, and that those which came last would have to wait until more money was got by going to the money market; that is, that there would have to be an addition to the £10,000,000 loan. Some went so far as to say that £2,000,000 more would be required to complete the railways which were then going on. I have shown already that there is now £564,000 waiting to be put into a fresh Loan Bill, although there has been only a little over £3,000,000, so far, expended out of the loan.

The PREMIER: Not nearly so much as £564,000.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There will be required for Treasury bills £123,000, and for loan expenditure incurred in anticipation of parliamentary sanction £313,000—I am quoting from the Auditor-General's report, page 6—making together £436,000. Then we have the expenses incurred in the sale of inscribed stock, £128,000, making a total of £564,000.

The PREMIER: But those expenses are deducted from the actual amount received.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Then there is less money to receive, that is all. But that is always made up in another Loan Bill. The hon. gentleman knows very well what is done; he knows that one loan makes up for the depreciation of a previous one, and so on *ad infinitum*. The special position I take up is this: that the northern portion of the colony is not receiving its fair share of the loan expenditure. Out of £1,625,000 voted for the North in the £10,000,000 loan there has been only £95,000 expended. Perhaps the hon. gentleman will say that that is not correct. I have here the unexpended balances for all the different districts, taken from the tables laid upon the table of the House by the Colonial Treasurer this year, and from the *Gazette* containing the last quarterly returns. The unexpended loan balance on the Southern and Western line, on the 30th June, was £2,149,000, and there was expended during the past quarter £176,000, leaving £1,972,000 unspent. Wide Bay had £512,000 unexpended on the 30th June, and £17,600 has been spent during the quarter, leaving £494,400 unspent. The Central Railway had £405,000 unexpended on the 30th June, and £33,000 has been spent during the quarter, leaving £373,000 unspent. That is out of the £10,000,000 loan and the balances which were in existence at the time the £10,000,000 loan passed the House. On the same date, the 30th June, the Northern Railway had an unexpended balance of £302,000, although £300,000 were voted for the extension beyond Hughenden, and there was spent during the quarter £17,282, leaving a balance of £285,000 unspent. And yet the works on the Northern line to Hughenden are not completed, so that £15,000 has been taken out of the money voted for carrying the line 100 miles beyond Herberton. That is the balance remaining of the loan for the

Northern line. I am not certain, but I believe it includes the deviation and the Burdekin Bridge; so that actually there has been a tremendous over-expenditure upon that line. That is all money that should have been spent on the extension. I do not know whether this has occurred through some blunder, but when there should be actually £300,000 of a balance for the extension of the line beyond Hughenden there is only £285,000 for the whole lot. The money has not been profitably expended, I am quite certain. Bowen had an unexpended balance on the 30th June of £235,000, and during the quarter £8,000 has been spent, leaving £227,000 unspent. Cooktown had £92,000; nearly £17,000 has been spent, leaving £75,000. Where the third section of that line is to come from I do not know. The people of Cooktown and that part of the colony are anxiously looking forward to the Government calling for tenders for the third section, but I think that with the amount of money left they will have very little chance of getting the third section out of it.

The PREMIER: The third section has been let. You mean the fourth.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Yes; the section that is unlet at present. What is the amount of the third section?

The PREMIER: The amount due in July was £39,000.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: What was the contract price?

The PREMIER: I do not know.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: There is only £75,000 left altogether. Then the Herberton line to the coast. At the end of the year there was close upon £500,000; during the quarter, £40,000 has been spent, leaving £459,000 at the end of September. The Cloncurry line, £485,000 at the end of the year; during the quarter £2,100 odd has been spent, leaving £483,000. Total of all the votes remaining unspent out of the £10,000,000 loan, £1,529,000. That is, that £95,000 has been spent out of the £10,000,000 loan, while there have been £1,167,000 spent out of the Southern share of that loan, or twelve or thirteen times as much as has been spent in the northern portion of the colony. There has been £158,000 spent out of the Wide Bay and Burnett share—not double, but once and a-half as much as has been spent in the North; and in the Central division £263,000 has been spent, being more than double—two and a-half times as much—in fact, as what has been spent on the Northern lines. I take exception to this expenditure, because I know that if the expenditure in the South is allowed to go on at the pace it has been there will be no chance whatever for the Northern lines, because the Government must draw upon the money voted for those lines. They must draw upon that, because it is positively certain that when they commence a line they must complete it. Take, for instance, the line from Gympie, which, I believe, is being made at both ends. That line must be completed, no matter at what cost, because the whole of the money expended upon the completed portions would be thrown away—be perfectly useless—until the portion in the centre was finished. And they must draw upon the northern portion of the £10,000,000 loan to build it if this rate of progress is to go on. That is what they have been doing. Twelve or thirteen times the portion of the £10,000,000 loan spent in the North had been spent in the South, when according to the ordinary rate of progress it should not be more than four times as much, certainly not five times as much. It should not be more than four times according to the amounts voted and according to the amount of taxation. Upon that ground I take exception to this line, as well as upon the general

ground of the financial position of the colony not warranting us in running such a risk. The people of Herberton had been waiting—how long? It is five years since the first money was voted by this House for the line to that place, in 1882.

The PREMIER: Until plans could be submitted to Parliament.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am not going to discuss that question over again. I know all about the plans being submitted as soon as possible. It is five years since the first money was voted for that line, the second section of which was let last January to Mr. Robb. Eight miles is completed, a portion nearly as level as this floor; where there is very little work to be done at any rate; and the people of Herberton are anxiously looking forward to railway communication. Several influential people up there—such as chairmen of divisional boards and so forth—have written to me upon the subject, asking me, although I am not their member, to urge the Government to call for tenders for the third section, so as to have the work completed as soon as possible. But how is it possible to get the third section out of the money voted for that line if the Government are allowed to draw upon it just as they please? Then with regard to the Bowen line. It is about five years since the first money was put on the Loan Estimates for that line—it was at the same time as the money was voted for the line from Herberton to the coast—five years ago. But there is not the slightest appearance of that line yet. There can be no difficulty in that line with regard to the plans and sections. The hon. gentleman cannot urge that as a reason. He gave an answer to the hon. member for Bowen the other day, that he would not go on with any lines until he had satisfied himself as to the financial position of the colony. Now, he seemingly is satisfied as to the financial position of the colony, because he comes down with two separate plans for railways, and the Bowen line is passed over. Not a word about that line, which ought certainly to come before either of these lines, as the money was voted for it two years before the £10,000,000 loan was ever thought of.

The PREMIER: Who says it has been passed over?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The action of the Government has passed it over. There is no need to say.

The PREMIER: Plans approved last session.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Why not call for tenders?

The PREMIER: Because the permanent plans are not completed.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Because on paper there is £227,000 for that line, but in reality there is nothing. That is the reason.

The PREMIER: Oh, no!

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I say, oh, yes! On paper there is that amount, but in the Treasury there is practically nothing to make the Bowen line. That is one reason why it has not been made, and one reason why the Northern railways have not been pushed on faster than they have been is because the money has been expended upon Southern lines. It is necessary for the hon. gentleman to do so to live. He could not live as head of the Government unless he did so. His followers would turn round and rend him like the dogs rent Acteon if he did not do so, and at the same time he pretends to be dealing fairly with the North. I object to this as a Northern member; I object as a member of this House also, who has the good of the colony at heart; I object because the financial position of the colony

will not allow us to go into such an expenditure blindfold as we are doing; and I object because it is drawing upon the northern portion of the £10,000,000 loan, which should be spent in the North.

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—Of course I cannot follow the hon. member who has just sat down, altogether, but I think the House may gather from his speech this fact—a fact which I do not think the Ministry or any member of the House will dare to dispute—that the finances of the colony are not in such a satisfactory condition as we should wish them to be. They are not in that satisfactory condition which would authorise us in going in for any fancy schemes of railway construction such as those which have been placed upon the table of the House. We know very well, sir, that when those two lines were first submitted—that is, that when the Loan Estimates were before the House—these two lines received a sort of passive assent. They were not carried by very large majorities. Indeed we all know the conditions under which the £10,000,000 loan was passed in this House.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Four o'clock in the morning.

Mr. ALAND: One hon. member says part was agreed to at 4 o'clock in the morning. I know it was towards the extreme end of the session when we were all waiting to pack up our portmanteaux and get away home to our families. That the loan vote received a great amount of attention on the Opposition side of the House, I admit, but it did not receive the consideration it was entitled to. There is another matter in connection with the loan vote when these two lines were passed that deserves consideration, and that is that the colony then was in a far sounder, or, at all events, an apparently far sounder financial position, and we had the prospect held out to us—which prospect has not been realised—that, with certain legislation on the part of the Government, no additional burden would be placed upon the taxpayers of the colony. Well, sir, we know very well that that result, at all events, has not been carried out, because we had the Treasurer's own admission that it is through the construction of our public works that the burden of debt is now upon the colony. If that is the case are we justified in going on with two lines of railway that—I was going to say for ages—but for years will not pay one-tenth part of their expenses? I say are we justified, seeing that our burden of indebtedness is owing to the public works we have been carrying out—are we justified in going on with these works at the present time? The House knows very well, Mr. Speaker, that this is not a sudden objection on my part. I have spoken in this way on more than one occasion, although perhaps not in such an emphatic manner; and even at the time the £10,000,000 loan was issued, I was one of those who held the opinion that this was one of the mistakes that the Parliament and Government were making. Now, there are one or two things connected with this railway that I do not altogether like. First of all I have noticed that on the notice-paper there has been a sort of shuffle of the cards. One day one notice of motion was first, and on another day it was misplaced, and that which was last was placed first; and then we have the manner in which the plans have been brought down. I cannot but think that there is either a trick on the part of the Government or a want of sincerity. Why was not that railway which we are now asked to go into committee upon—the line from Warwick to Thane's Creek—why was it not put down as part of the Warwick to St. George line and as a part of the *via recta*? Now, if that had been done I do not suppose it

would have made much difference among hon. members, but it would have looked better on the part of the Government. I hope that this line of railway will not pass. I shall do as I have done for years past. I have on three occasions given the line what opposition I could, and I shall give it the same opposition on this occasion.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not rise to reply to the financial statement made by the hon. member for Townsville, who has evidently prepared himself for this debate concerning the financial position of the Loan Fund. I only rise to say that nothing has as yet occurred in this House or during the debate to justify me in the impression that the Loan Fund is in such a very desperate condition, or that such startling revelations have recently been made in the House to shake our confidence in the borrowing powers of the colony or the resources we possess within the colony. I am rather curious to hear from the Premier if, during his recent investigation of the Loan Fund, he has found anything to justify him in an apprehension that we are on the verge of a financial crisis, or that our position, either concerning the funds we possess or our credit as a nation, has been in any way jeopardised by the administration of the Loan Fund. We have borrowed money for the purpose of expending it; but if the argument of the hon. member for Townsville is to hold good, we are to lock the safe of the Treasury. We are to draw no more cheques, and stop all construction, whether of railways or other works to be constructed out of loan moneys; but I think I caught the true meaning of the speech of my hon. friend the member for Townsville. It is to the effect that he is dissatisfied with the expenditure of money in the North. That is the interpretation of his speech. Had this proposed expenditure been in the North—had it been for making a railway from Normanton to Croydon—the same strictures, the same criticism of our financial position would not have been addressed to us on this occasion, nor would it have been attempted to be shown that we are in such a depressed condition that we must rest on our oars, and not attempt any further progress. The position the hon. gentleman has taken up, to my mind, is this—that we have a right now to cease all further railway construction until the colony attains a more flourishing condition. But, Mr. Speaker, I say that if we were to rest at the present time we should be doing a great deal more injury to the colony than by proceeding with construction of railways authorised. I have not the slightest sympathy with the old motto, "Rest and caution." I advise caution, it is true, but at the same time this colony is progressing and must proceed, and I, therefore, contend that we have a right, when the Government have made up their mind to a certain line of railway policy, when the gentlemen who have supported that policy at a preliminary stage are called upon to re-affirm it—we have a right to consider whether the Government of the day did not take the matter fully and seriously into consideration before they presented it to the House and received endorsement of their policy. I was a member of the Government at the time the loan vote was allocated, and I am not now going against the policy which I then approved of. I am aware that this question is one which raises animosity between the rival communities of Toowoomba and Warwick. I regret that it should be so. As I said last year, I cannot serve two masters, and if I believe one I am bound to offend the other; but I look at the question in this light, that it is not a railway to benefit Warwick or St. George, or to injure Toowoomba. It is not intended to be a railway to attain the objective point of St. George

only. I do not think that St. George itself demands a railway or merits a railway simply as the town of St. George, but I say that the line must be regarded from a wider point of view. It is a line, I say—and I have contended on former occasions the same thing—it is a line to guard and protect the trade of the colony within our own territory. I believe there is great leakage of our trade owing to our having no such railway as this extended along our southern border to the West. I am sure that our trade will be filched from us by the competition of southern railways if we do not protect ourselves, and it is in that light I regarded this railway both as a member of the Government and as a private member. I regard it as a national undertaking, and one that is necessary to protect and guard the trade of Queensland. I regret very much that it should be regarded as a question of pre-eminence or rivalry between the communities of Toowoomba and Warwick. I do not think that in that light it should be regarded, and if St. George was simply to be the objective point, I would at the present time go with my hon. friend the member for Townsville; but it is a line in reality to protect our trade by running along the southern border of the colony. It is in that light that I approve of this line, and I shall certainly support it as I have done in the past. Figures can be made to prove anything, and if we look at our railway returns alone and accept them as a lesson for our guidance we should perhaps feel ourselves justified in stopping all railway construction for the present. It will be seen from the Commissioner's report for last year that we are annually losing about £400,000 in interest and working expenses, and that might be regarded as quite as strong an argument as any the hon. member for Townsville has introduced why we should not proceed at the present time with any further railway construction and why we should at once rest and be cautious. But I maintain that we have no right to be alarmed at that, which I trust is but a transient position of affairs, because our railways are now beginning to pay, and to pay satisfactorily. I do not know that this line will pay directly as a railway, but I am convinced that as a matter of national policy, whether carried out by this Government or not, it will certainly be carried out by a future Government of this country. I think the Government are only acting straightforwardly and honestly in bringing this line forward, and if they had not done so they would have laid themselves open to a charge of disingenuousness, and of a withdrawal from the position they took up last year. I trust this proposal, having already received the preliminary approbation of the House, will receive a further amount of confirmation now than it received last year. I chiefly rose to express my opinion upon the reiterated statements about the confused condition of the Loan Fund. I have heard nothing yet to give me any further information than that placed before the country by the Auditor-General, and I should be glad to hear from the Treasurer, at an early time, in what condition he has discovered the Loan Fund to be. Whether it has drifted into such a chaotic condition as to justify the Government in declining to continue further expenditure, or whether there is merely a desire on his part to reduce the annual expenditure with a view of not pressing upon the English money market a further instalment of the loan until a more opportune time arrives for its presentation. I believe that is the desire—to nurse the fund so as not to force unduly another instalment. I may say, however, that no promise was given when the last loan was sold as to the time when a future operation would take place.

Mr. NORTON: Was there not an implied promise?

Mr. DICKSON: There was no promise implied or direct. I do not blame the hon. member for Townsville for making the best of his argument by showing the jeopardy and the "close shave," I might say, which attended the last loan. However, we all know that, while great patriotism was shown, that patriotism has since been rewarded substantially by the stock then taken up having been sold at a very handsome premium upon the price at which it was allotted. I have no fear at all that our borrowing powers, when we find it necessary to exercise them, will not meet with even better encouragement. I take up the position that we have held out certain representations to the country: that the plans for this railway have already received the sanction of this House, and that we should not now go back upon our action; and any Government that would do so would merit the condemnation of the country. I trust that this line will not continue to be viewed in a parochial spirit, and I give my vote for this railway because I believe both communities which have been mentioned as rivals on this question will prosper whether this line is granted or not; and I view it as a line the construction of which will maintain the true commercial prosperity of the country within its own territory.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I was glad to hear the way in which the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Aland, spoke of the manner in which this motion has been brought before the House, because of the apparent trickery connected with it. I raised the point of order at the commencement of this debate to protest against this trickery being practised on the House. I still think that the manner in which these motions are put forward is a piece of trickery. I think the alteration in the memo. attached to the plans is a piece of trickery, and I think the object of it is at any rate partly apparent. The intention of the Government was, I think, to conceal as long as possible from the country that they were going on with this line from Warwick to St. George. Of course after the discussion which has taken place to-day it will be known throughout the country exactly what this proposal is. If the motion had been tabled in the ordinary form, and the plans brought forward as a portion of the railway from Warwick to St. George, the public would have known what was being done. That was concealed from them, however, and I believe it was concealed with a purpose—in order that the protest of those objecting to it might be kept back until the approval of the House was obtained for it. I am also glad that the hon. member for Toowoomba referred to the manner in which the £10,000,000 loan itself was passed. It was passed under a misapprehension of the facts of the case—under a misrepresentation—I will not say an intentional misrepresentation, but under what turned out to be a misrepresentation of the very grievous condition of affairs under which the country would be placed at a later day. That Loan Bill was brought in in the evening and passed in a few hours; most of the hon. members on the other side sat still and said nothing. Some few—and among them I believe the hon. member for Toowoomba—protested against these lines, but we all know that hon. gentlemen supporting the Government were paralysed by the influence of that deadly political upas tree which overshadowed them at that time. I am glad to think they are now, late as it is, beginning to free themselves from the influence which at that time prevented them from expressing their opinions. I have great respect for the opinions expressed in this House when they are ex-

pressed without influence, and if that had been done in the first instance I should not have objected to the construction of this line or to the plans when placed on the table of the House last year. We all knew, and the country at large generally understood, that this railway was a mere political railway for an express political purpose, and we believe now that the object of bringing in these plans at the present time is for another political purpose—to gain political influence at the general elections about to take place. I do not suppose that the Government would dare, in the present state of the finances, to call for tenders, or if they did call for tenders, to let the contract. The hon. member for Enoggera, the late Colonial Treasurer, referred just now to the speech of the hon. member for Townsville as if he had advocated a cessation of all public works. He did nothing of the kind. What the hon. member for Townsville advocated was such a judicious expenditure of loan money as would enable the Government of the day to go on with public works, and not be cut short through some unfortunate mishap on account of extravagance. There is one other matter to which I ought to have referred before—the fact that the hon. the Minister for Works, when he moved this motion, although he had opportunities of doing so, had not the courtesy to give any information to the House in regard to the plans or in regard to the alteration that had been made—his motive for dodging backwards and forwards—giving notice of one motion one day and another the next; nor did he give one item of information in connection with the works he proposed to ask the House to give their approval of. It appears to me to be a most humiliating position for the Government to be in—to bring forward an important motion like this, involving the expenditure of at least £100,000, without deigning to give the House one word of explanation. Is there any Parliament in Australia in which such a thing has been done before? I do not believe there is. I can only express my surprise that the hon. Minister for Works, who is a gentleman of independent character, should not have felt bound in all courtesy to give some information to the House, in order that those at any rate whose minds are not already made up might be in a position to judge whether they should vote for this line or not. The matter has been made a party question, and I say it is a most unfortunate thing for the country that large sums of money are voted as party votes on lines which cannot be remunerative. I do not intend to follow the hon. member for Townsville in the figures he made use of, but I think that not only is the hon. member right in what he said, but that he has understated the case. I have looked over the figures for months, and I believe that instead of the balance against which there is no liability being as the hon. member put it, it is very much less. I doubt whether at the present time, if no further public works were carried on, we should have £250,000 left when the present works are completed.

The PREMIER: When will they be completed?

Mr. NORTON: I do not care when they are finished, they will have to be paid for. They must be paid for out of the £10,000,000 loan, or another loan must be floated to pay for them. I protested years ago, when the plans of another line were before the House, against the action the Government were taking, on the ground that money would be expended in excess of the votes for the different lines, and that in consequence of that it would be impossible to carry out lines for which money had been voted until a further loan had been asked for, approved, and floated.

I have no hesitation in saying that, however anxious the Government may be to limit the loan expenditure on particular items to the amount voted, they are almost never able to do it. In regard to railway lines where contracts are given at schedule prices, it is impossible to say what the cost will be; and, as the hon. member for Townsville has pointed out, in some cases the actual expenditure is more than double the amount of the contract. I believe that on some of the lines being carried out now the actual expenditure will be more than double the apparent contract price. It would be invidious to refer to particular lines; but I believe there are lines on which, when the contractors have been paid the balance due after completion, the nominal contract price will be found to be less than half the cost of the line. Now, how is it possible, under these circumstances, to go on carrying on public works at the rate we are doing, and still go on borrowing money? The hon. member for Enoggera very truly said that our borrowing powers are not exhausted, nor are they; but what about our powers to raise the revenue to pay the interest on the money we borrowed? That is what the taxpayers look to. Now, your hon. colleague, sir, referred to the fact that at the time that Loan Bill was brought in the House was advised by the leader of the Government that we should have certain revenue from certain sources, which would more than make up for the whole interest required on this money when it was borrowed. But that is not the case. The revenue derived from the Land Act, instead of enormously increasing, as the House was assured it would, has enormously decreased. Fresh taxes have been imposed almost every year this Government has been in office, since 1883, and even this session the head of the Government intended to carry a motion for the imposition of a class of taxation altogether new to the people of this colony, which was not only opposed in this House, but has been opposed outside the House, and, as far as the country has been able to give expression of its opinion, has been condemned. Since that proposal to levy a land tax has been put before the House there has been an election near Brisbane, at which that point was prominently brought forward. The hon. the late Colonial Treasurer resigned in consequence of his opposition to the land tax, and all the influence of the Government was used, when he went before his constituents, to keep him out of the House. It was partly, no doubt, from his own popularity that he succeeded in defeating his late colleague; but, sir, it was largely through the objection of the people to that land tax that he succeeded in getting back to his seat by a very large majority. Now, sir, we must look forward to the time when the people of this country will refuse to give any more taxes at all; that is, they will refuse to give any more taxes to pay interest on money borrowed for the construction of works which will not give a moderate amount of revenue when they are completed. Now, in regard to this line, the late Colonial Treasurer has argued that it is a desirable thing to run a line along the border which will intercept the trade which, as he expresses it, is being filched from the country; but how many miles will this line go to the westward before it will intercept the traffic that is going into New South Wales? This short line to Thane's Creek will not do it, nor will it do it when it is 150 miles beyond that. Until that line is extended 200 miles it will do almost nothing to intercept the traffic that is going to New South Wales. We all know that; we know that through this barren country there is almost no traffic. I do protest against the manner in which this motion has been put before the House, and I protest against the silence of the Minister for

Works and of the Premier in regard to the peculiarities connected with what really looks like a piece of trickery, which the Government ought not to have attempted. I do not intend to detain the House by further arguing this question now; but I do hope the Minister for Works, before the motion is put, will say something on the subject, in order that the House may be made aware of the reasons for the construction of this railway. I do not believe the hon. member believes in this railway any more than I do—not a bit more—and I take it that because it was his place to make the motion he introduced it, and does not intend to say one word about it. I give the hon. gentleman credit for not wishing to carry out the line when he introduced the motion; but I would merely point to the fact that, both inside and outside this House, members of this House and the general public were given to understand, when the £10,000,000 loan was submitted, and before and after it was submitted as well, that the revenue to be derived from the land would be sufficient to meet all the interest required in consequence of the proposed loan. Has that come to pass? Has the land given that revenue, or is there any prospect of it giving that revenue? If not, and if it has become necessary at the beginning of this session to ask the House to consent to a tax upon land of 1d. in the £1, how is the interest to be paid on future portions of that loan, and on the loans to be raised hereafter? We know that this particular railway cannot pay interest on the cost of construction. We know that it is of no value, except the line be carried from Warwick to Brisbane. It is part and parcel of the one line, and we know that the cost of that line will be so great that no reasonable man can say that we are justified in carrying it out in the present position of the country. I do not say that it will not be necessary at some time to construct a straight line to Warwick, but I do say that the time when it was proposed to vote a sum of money for that railway was not the time to ask for the money, and that the time has not yet arrived when the money should be expended. I put the matter before the House in this way, and point out to hon. members that the conditions which we were led by Ministers to expect would be realised have not come to pass, and that the interest on the cost of constructing this railway will have to be paid by increased taxation of the people. I contend, that in the present state of the labour market, and the condition of the country generally, apart altogether from the mere question of the public finances, this is not the time to impose fresh taxation, and I do regret that the Government have thought it necessary to press this matter forward at a time like the present. It is not necessary for me to detain the House any further, but I do hope that if the matter comes to a division there are enough independent members on the Government side of the House to vote in accordance with their conscientious convictions, and that they will not be induced to vote by the same influence that induced them to vote for the £10,000,000 loan.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member for Port Curtis has expressed a wish to hear what I have to say on the matter, but I would remind him and the House generally that this is only a preliminary discussion and does not affect the real question. One would suppose from the remarks of the hon. gentleman that the Government had attempted by some insidious method to introduce this motion and get it through without discussion though it is well known that the real question must be discussed when the matter is in committee. It seems to me that the hon. member and others on his side of the House are afraid of discussing this question on its merits. If they

will allow this motion to go into committee there will then be the freest and fullest discussion that can possibly be desired, and that will be the time when the Government will be prepared to defend their proposal for the construction of this railway from Warwick to Thane's Creek. Ever since I have been in the House motions of this kind have always been allowed to go as formal, and the real discussion on the matter has taken place in committee, and there is no doubt that that is the time when it can be looked into closely, when objections can be made and questions asked and answered. When we go into committee I will give the reasons why the Government have brought forward this motion, and why they propose to construct the railway as soon as they get sufficient funds to do it, but not at the present stage. I do not feel disposed to go into the merits of the question now. The hon. member will have ample opportunity of discussing it in every direction in committee, and the Government will be called upon to answer him or any other hon. member who objects to the motion, and no member will be tied down to one expression of opinion. So far the speeches made on the other side have dealt rather with generalities than the question involved in this resolution. I do not propose, as I said, to deal with the question on general principles, but I am fully prepared to discuss the question on its merits in the proper way.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker, — The Minister for Works does not seem to be able to discriminate between cases. We are quite prepared to discuss this particular line on its merits when it gets into committee; but what hon. members on this side are urging is that, considering the present state of the finances of the colony, the Government ought first to satisfy the House that this is the proper time to go into committee to discuss the propriety of adopting the plans of this line. I shall not attempt to follow the figures or the arguments adduced by the hon. member for Townsville with regard to the state of the finances of the colony. I think he has conclusively proved, to the satisfaction of every hon. member, that, as the finances of the colony stand at present, there is no justification for going on with any additional railways until the Government have gone into the money market and arranged for a fresh loan.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: For the Bowen line?

Mr. CHUBB: The Bowen line will stand on its own bottom. I have no fear about the Bowen line. Other hon. members may perhaps have a fear about the particular lines in their own districts. I speak on this subject without any regard to the Bowen line, without any *arrière pensée* whatever; and I cannot help it if the Government choose to punish Bowen by not going on with that line because I may happen to object to this motion. At any rate, so far, they have not shown any particular anxiety to push on with that line. That line, Mr. Speaker, now that the Minister for Works has brought it up, was, I may say, authorised by a former Parliament and the money was voted for it; which money, I believe, has been used by the present Government for carrying out some of the lines that were included in the £10,000,000 loan. I prefer to deal with this question, not upon the petty grounds suggested by the hon. member for Darling Downs, but upon the broad ground that, as the finances of the colony are at present, we are not justified in wasting the time of the House by going into committee to discuss this line. I do not intend to discuss it on its merits, or to go into detail; I shall have opportunities of doing

that when we get into committee upon it. The hon. gentleman who lately occupied the seat of the Treasurer said he did not believe in the old time-worn policy of rest and caution; he thought that was an exploded idea. Judging from the hon. gentleman's speech, and also from the speech he delivered when he introduced the Loan Estimates, I should say he was rather in favour of a policy of extravagance and national insolvency. He wants to go ahead at break-neck speed, and end, as we have done, in a large and probably an increasing deficiency in the revenue. By way of contrast I will refer to some remarks made by that hon. member in 1879, when the then leader of the Government, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, proposed that the colony should go in for a loan of £3,000,000. That proposition was opposed by the present Chief Secretary and the hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, most strenuously, and they used almost the same arguments that we are using now. The hon. member for Enoggera said, referring to the proposition then made:—

"The hon. gentleman's remarks chiefly go to show that he considers there exists a necessity for borrowing money at the present time for the purpose of keeping up the credit of the colony—or, in other words, to provide against the stoppage of public works through want of loan funds. He objects, however, to borrow such sums as may be conveniently obtained from time to time, but prefers to go in for what he terms a comprehensive loan policy, covering a sufficient amount for all purposes during the ensuing three years. But he shows no necessity for adopting this course. He says he is only following the example set by previous Treasurers, who asked, from time to time, for such money as was required; whereas he intends to ask in advance for the same amount of money as would be required by other Treasurers at annual periods. I cannot observe that he has advanced a single argument to show that any saving or benefit to the colony will result from borrowing so large an amount of public money in one estimate."

Then, with reference to the question of interest on the railway just constructed, the hon. gentleman went on to say:—

"Those are the two main questions, and the Treasurer need not imagine he is answering this objection when he says that he will be receiving 3½ per cent. interest from railways. He may receive that return when they are constructed; but the present loan is to extend over three years, and the several lines proposed, even if sanctioned, will not be completed within that time. Where is the interest, meanwhile, to be found to pay for the money not employed or being employed in the construction of these lines? That is the whole gist, or a very important part of the present contention."

"At this stage I enter my protest against this system of borrowing money. I say that this system must have a termination sooner or later. If we are simply to go on borrowing money for the purpose of keeping up our loan balances, depend upon it it will soon have a disastrous conclusion. We are endeavouring to extend our credit far beyond the gradual increase of our capital, and there can be but one termination to such a disastrous procedure."

"I do not deprecate borrowing, but we ought to take warning by our present position to borrow only for reproductive works. That should certainly be the keynote of our further loan proposals. In the past we have been borrowing, if not too largely certainly not wisely, and we ought to be warned by the errors of the past; and the Treasurer of the day, to whichever party he belongs, should take care that the country is only committed to loan obligations which will be re-invested in works of a sufficiently reproductive character to provide interest upon such increasing obligations."

Now, we have already spent a large portion of the £10,000,000 loan. Has that money been invested in reproductive works? Up to the present time, I believe, none of them have been reproductive, and it will be very many years before some of them are. Our present objection from this side coincides almost entirely with the remarks made by the hon. member for Enoggera in 1879. We are simply insisting that Parlia-

ment should not authorise the Government to borrow money unless it is to be invested in reproductive works. Another objection raised at that time to the borrowing of £3,000,000 was that the Government did not show any means by which they were going to meet the interest upon it. The Government replied that the interest would be met by an increased population, and that was fully proved in the end. There was an increased population, and the interest was paid. And not only so: That Government came into office with a large deficit; the deficit was wiped out, and they went out of office leaving behind them a very large surplus. The present Government, too, when they asked for their £10,000,000 loan, said they also were prepared with a means to meet the increased interest, and that was the new Land Bill. In introducing the proposition to borrow that large sum of money, the then Colonial Treasurer said this:—

"These estimates embrace an amount surpassing in magnitude any previous loan proposal; but which is, I confidently assert, such as the circumstances of the colony demand and its financial position and credit enable it to sustain. This colony may be likened unto a man commencing business with small means, who has inherited large sources of material wealth, undeveloped through lack of capital, mistrust of investors, or want of a market, having but a small amount of ready money, and equally restricted credit, has at length surmounted preliminary difficulties, and having wisely conserved his credit, and duly discharged, as they matured, his obligations, finds himself in a position to make unwonted use of his good name, and with such extended credit to afford unprecedented encouragement to the further and fuller development of his great natural sources of wealth."

Then the hon. gentleman referred to the means by which the interest was to be provided—namely, by the operation of the Land Bill, so that there would be no burden upon the country if the House adopted the proposals of the Government and passed the Loan Estimates; and that was done. But, sir, we now find that the Government have spent nearly half their loan; they have in hand a little over a million, but they have very large liabilities under uncompleted contracts, and several of the railways which are on that estimate have not even been commenced, and probably cannot be carried out without a very much larger vote by Parliament. Now, sir, with regard to this particular line, we are asked to go into committee to consider the plans of the first section, and, if we once do that, we are committed to the initial stage of a line which will extend from Ipswich to St. George. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this is the first step in the construction of a line which is supposed in the future to unite Ipswich and St. George. Therefore, if we once allow this to go we shall be committed to the first section of a line to St. George, and the result will be this: that as soon as the first section is underway there will be tremendous agitation—it will be said that the line from Warwick to St. George will be of no use until it is connected with Ipswich by the *via recta*: therefore there will be strong agitation commenced for a direct line from Warwick to Ipswich, and the country will then be committed to three portions of that line at once. I will remind you, Mr. Speaker, and the House, that the £10,000,000 loan provides only £250,000 for the line from Warwick to St. George, which is 220 miles long. At the very smallest calculation we may estimate that that portion of the line will cost a million; then there is half-a-million down for the *via recta*, which has already been described by the engineers as much more difficult than the line over the Main Range to Toowoomba, some portions of which cost £28,000 per mile. Estimating that line at £500,000, if Parliament consents to the construction of this line, we

shall be committed in a way to the expenditure of a million and a-half of money for the construction of a line between Ipswich and St. George. I say that the finances of the colony do not justify any such expenditure. Let the Government finish those lines that are now under construction; and let contracts for the lines of which Parliament has already approved of the plans. Then if they wish to go on with this proposed line they should do so, if they have to go into the London money market and raise another portion of the loan to provide the funds for doing it; but in the meantime I say let the loans remain for those works which have been approved, and for which, according to the answers given by the Chief Secretary from time to time, money is now available. The hon. member for Townsville has shown that after deducting outside liabilities a very small sum of money will be available for the construction of this line and other lines that may be proposed. I assume that when we are asked to pass these plans the Government will take upon themselves the earliest opportunity of calling for tenders and letting the work. No doubt we shall see, with regard to these lines, what we have seen with regard to others. The Fortitude Valley line was passed last session, and the contract is now let, and it would have been let long before now, had it not been for a difficulty with regard to the resumption of land. The value of the land to be resumed was, I believe, so great that the Government postponed the matter for a considerable time until a more favourable opportunity arose for securing it. I am told that the value of land has fallen recently by a good many per cent., otherwise had the value of land now been as great as it was when the valuations were made by Mr. Martin and others, there would not have been enough money to have enabled the Government to let that line even up to the point that has been let in the present contract. I say that having that line before us as a guide, we may reasonably expect that this line, being one in the direction desired by supporters of the Government, will be let at the earliest opportunity, and therefore it will be unfair, not only to the North but to other lines generally which have received the approval of Parliament, that they should run any risk of being postponed, while the money in hand is not sufficient to go on with the work. It is no doubt true, as the Chief Secretary told us, that the money will not be all spent immediately, but I anticipate that it will not last more than next year. There will not be enough to carry on the work over next year, and the Government will be bound to go into the London money market some time next year and raise another portion of the loan. Then I say it will be time enough to bring forward these proposals; at any rate, they should not be brought forward this session. I understood the other day, when I asked the Chief Secretary a question with regard to the Bowen line, that they did not intend to call for any tenders at all, or to proceed with any more railway works, until they had ascertained exactly how the finances of the colony stood. This is what the hon. gentleman then said. Language could not be plainer:—

"Before the Government call for any more tenders for railway works they intend to know exactly what the condition of the finances of the colony is. The Government intend to see exactly what money will be wanted during this year. We have a certain amount of money to our credit on Loan Fund, and a certain amount only. We have already a considerable number of contracts let, involving serious liabilities, which will fall in during the present year; and it is a very serious question when we should go to the London money market for money. Before the Government commit the country to any further expenditure of that money, they intend to have a very thorough

knowledge of the present condition of the finances. The first thing I did when I went to the Treasury to take charge of that department was to inquire what were the outstanding liabilities to come in during the year against the Loan Fund, and I regret to say the information was not then available. I believe it is all available in the office to-day, but I have not yet had an opportunity of seeing really what is the amount of obligation outstanding, and until I know that, and have had an opportunity of consulting my colleagues on the subject, I decline to make any promise committing the country to further expenditure. I hope to-morrow to be able to get a complete knowledge of the whole position, but I am sorry to say that up to the present time I have not got it."

That was on the 8th September last, and up to to-day the House has not been informed what the state of the Loan Fund is.

The PREMIER: I said I would give the information in committee.

Mr. CHUBB: The only information we have is in an answer given by the hon. gentleman yesterday to the hon. member for Mackay, that the balance of the Loan Fund—which, I am told, is not correct—amounted to £2,709,147, and that the approximate amount of liability under uncompleted contracts was about £1,200,000. After that answer, some reason should be given for asking the House to go into committee; in fact, we should be shown by the Colonial Treasurer that there are funds available, because I assume that asking us to adopt the plans does commit the country to further expenditure; and until we are shown that the Government are in possession of funds to enable them to construct the line we should not be asked to go any further. That is the first step; then we should be asked to go into committee to discuss the matter in detail; but until that is done I feel bound to oppose the motion.

Mr. ALLAN said: Mr. Speaker,—This line and the lines connected with it have been spoken of by some hon. members as fancy lines, and by others as political lines; but I do not think there ever was a line less political than this. I recollect five years ago, when I first proposed the *via recta* in this House, that it met with very little opposition. The only word said against it then was said by yourself, Mr. Speaker, and your reason was that if the line were made it might cause the collapse of Warwick. We have to thank you, therefore, for having done your best to prevent the collapse of Warwick from that cause. On the other hand the late Mr. Low proposed the border line, and the present Government have taken steps to carry them both out. I think that shows they are not political lines. Neither are they fancy lines; in fact, I do not think any lines in the colony are more national than these. We are connecting our railway system with those of the other colonies as much as possible, and this *via recta* when carried out will shorten the journey from Brisbane to Sydney by 57½ miles, which is a matter of consequence in these days, considering the amount of traffic and number of people travelling from one colony to the other. It will do more than that, because it will tap the district about Tenterfield and Glen Innes, whose produce will naturally be carried by this line. Again, a line along the route proposed will open up the country about Spicer's Gap, Freestone Creek, Maryvale Flats, and go within four miles of Fassifern, passing through beautiful land nearly all the way. Even on the top of the range seventy miles from here, 2,500 feet high, the land is a deep rich chocolate soil, fit for vineyards or anything else. I speak on this matter with authority, and I am not saying anything I do not know from the very best information to be absolutely correct. The whole of the distance the line opens up new country that is badly wanted for settlement, and that country, as you are aware, is

covered with magnificent timber, and contains valuable minerals. Then again, presuming that this Thane's Creek line is made it will have the double advantage of forming part of the border railway, and also of being a most necessary branch line. It will form part of a line which, I hope, will be constructed due west along the 28th parallel, a line which has to come sooner or later, and the later it is the worse it will be for us. I recollect some ten or fifteen years ago, in Riverina, we looked with equanimity at the Victorians pushing on their lines to Echuca and the border until they took the whole of the trade of Riverina from New South Wales. The people of that district had no expense in making the lines or anything else, and their wool went down to Victoria. Some time after an energetic and intelligent Government came into power in New South Wales; they saw the disastrous policy pursued by the colony, and they pushed out railways in all directions as fast as possible to Albury, Hay, Hanging Rock, and other places. They had enormous difficulty in getting the trade back which they had lost, but they have now recovered it by their spirited policy, and people now send their stock, wool, and everything to Sydney, which formerly went to Melbourne. Victoria had got the trade into its hands, and it was a very difficult thing to alter that; but it has been altered, and as it was with them, so it will be with us, the longer we put off this line the more difficult it will be for us to regain our trade. Nature seems to have placed nearly all the towns of the southern portion of the colony along the 28th parallel; and it is a most extraordinary thing that from Leyburn we see Goondiwindi, Inglewood, St. George, Bollon, Cunnamulla, Thargomindah, and Eulo due west on that parallel. The proposed railway line would go to these towns that natural advantages have placed on that line. Nature has placed good land and plenty of water there, and the towns are all on that line, just as if it had been drawn by a ruler. I take this to be a long way from a political line, and a long way from a chance line, and if any more national line has ever been brought forward I do not know of it. To go from that, however, to this branch line—we will suppose it is only a branch line, though I trust it will be only a part of the system—I say its construction is fully justified even as a branch line. There are enormous quantities of land available along it, enormous quantities of timber and minerals, and stock. The line itself can be easily made, as it will go through good, sound, dry land, will have few curves, and will, I think, cost less than the £4,000 per mile estimated. I believe if we could get £100,000 of the £750,000 voted, that before this branch line is completed, that sum can be obtained from the land that would be sold along the line.

Mr. MOREHEAD: This Government cannot sell land.

Mr. ALLAN: They can lease it, and they can sell it if they like. There was evidence given before a select committee last year by a gentleman thoroughly acquainted with the country that 800,000 acres could be sold on that line at an average of 15s. or 20s. per acre. That is what is calculated. Everything has been taken up round there that has been thrown open, and before long the line would soon pay for itself, and provide something as well to meet the deficit. That is the line that has been spoken of so contemptuously. It is true that farming around there has not been carried on to a great extent, but that is because of the difficulty of carting produce to market; but if a railway were made to the district it would be the most successful wheat-producing district in the colony.

state now what I know to be a fact, and of which, in committee, I will give evidence, that wheat grown round about Thane's Creek fetches 6d. a bushel more than the wheat grown round Warwick, and that the farmers get 6d. a bushel more for it than for the wheat grown on the black soil. That is a fact which I can prove. All other produce grows there rapidly and abundantly, and the farmers who are there have been most successful; more people are settling there, and the farmers are adding to their holdings year by year even with the disadvantage of not having railway communication. Fruit grows there in great quantities. Apples are very plentiful round about Leyburn, and are as fine as any I have seen in my life. Mining has been for many years a flourishing industry, and within the last year has become strengthened. For many years past there has been from that part of the country something like £12,000 worth of gold sold in Warwick every year, and there is coal and iron there which the railway will develop. I may remark also that there is no finer timber in the whole colony than on this line. The hardwood there is unsurpassed anywhere in the colony. One mill alone for the last eleven years has been turning out an average of 200,000 feet of timber a year, which represents 600 tons of hardwood timber, and if railway communication were given that quantity could be trebled and quadrupled without any trouble. Cypress pine, spotted gum, and other timber is abundant, and there is a large amount of traffic, which at present is untouched, consisting of wool, skins, hides, and agricultural produce. I will not detain the House longer now, but I wished to give some facts to show that this is a scheme which will eventually be, as I trust, an honour to the colony; but, in the meantime, it will be a line which will amply repay the cost of construction. I am certain of that, and certain that if these railway schemes were taken from the ministerial head and placed under commissioners as in Victoria, they would receive that attention which they ought to have had years ago, and that, instead of their being discussed in this House now, they would be by this time in full working order.

MR. BLACK said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it is just as well for me to offer a few remarks on this measure before it goes into committee. It may of course go into committee, but whether it will come out safely is quite a different thing. Now, I have listened attentively to what the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, has said on this question, and I am quite prepared to admit that the wheat, and cypress pine and apples and gold and everything the hon. member has dilated upon, exist. I have no doubt that there is a considerable amount of settlement in the district, and that the timber supply, as has been remarked in connection with many other projected railway lines, is unrivalled in the colony. I admit all that, but the grounds on which I take exception to the Government going on with this particular line are very much the same as those laid before the House by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan. I consider, briefly, that in the present financial state of the country, the depression which exists in most of our producing industries—in fact, in all with the exception of mining—that the state which the Premier has admitted the Loan Fund to be in—

The PREMIER: I have made no admission about the Loan Fund.

MR. BLACK: The hon. gentleman has told us that there are outstanding liabilities on contracts alone amounting to £1,200,000, and we know, besides, that there are other liabilities not on contracts, liabilities on immigration, telegraphs, roads, and loans to local bodies which

will certainly absorb another half-million during the current half-year. That is tantamount to admitting that the state of our Loan Fund is such as to cause us to view the financial condition of the colony with the greatest alarm. But I consider, as a Northern member, I have an additional right to protest, and shall only be doing my duty in protesting against the Government involving the country in what is at the present time an undoubted piece of unnecessary expenditure. I am quite prepared to admit that this line, in connection with the *via recta*, may be a very good line at some future time when we can better afford to go on with it than we can at the present time; but I do consider that at the present time it is nothing more nor less than a political line. I doubt very much, even if the railway passed through committee, whether the Government would be prepared to go on with it; and I do not consider it at all right, on the eve of a general election, that any Government should commit the country to a line such as this, which is not absolutely necessary to the welfare of the colony. The hon. member for Townsville referred briefly to the act of the Government in accepting tenders a few days ago for the Valley railway. I consider that was a most unfair thing to the country, and I cannot but think that the Premier in doing that did it in order to secure certain support in the metropolitan constituency of Brisbane. It is an unfair line. It is an unnecessary line to construct at the present time. My chief objection to this line, or any other line similar to it, being passed through this House at the end of a Parliament is, that it is decidedly unfair to the rest of the colony, and more especially to the North. Now, the figures which we have heard quoted to-night, which I shall not refer to in detail, seem to amount to this: that the southern part of the colony—that is, as far as the proposed dividing line, in the event of separation taking place—has had allotted to it out of the £10,000,000 loan £4,429,000 for railways alone. Out of that they have already spent 36 per cent. of their money, while the northern portion of the colony having had £1,625,000 voted, has actually only had 6 per cent. of that vote encroached upon. I repeat here now, Mr. Speaker, that until a more equitable expenditure between the different divisions of the colony takes place, I, for one, am prepared to oppose any unnecessary extension of the railway system in the South. The late Treasurer identified himself with the action of the Government in the speech he made earlier this evening on the ground that he had committed himself to their policy during the passage of the £10,000,000 Loan Bill through the House, and he considered himself bound to uphold that policy on the present occasion. But I would remind that hon. member that he has very recently departed from that policy of which he was one of the most ardent supporters in the earlier part of this Parliament, and I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I should have preferred to see that hon. member go down with the Government with which he had been so long connected rather than abandon the party when he saw that they were getting into difficulties. That is my opinion. The Premier, when in England lately, in replying to the petition for the separation of the northern part of the colony, made these remarks.

The PREMIER: I replied to the petition from Australia—not when in England.

MR. BLACK: The hon. gentleman was in England. The reply is dated January 19, 1887.

The PREMIER: That was written in Brisbane. I went to England afterwards.

Mr. BLACK: Yes, the hon. gentleman went to England, and he was there when the reply was presented to Sir Henry Holland. Did not the hon. gentleman take it home with him?

The PREMIER: No, certainly not.

Mr. BLACK: Was he not there within a week of it? There is no use splitting hairs upon that. The hon. gentleman knows perfectly well what I mean. He was actually in England at the same time I was, although the objects of our visits were, perhaps, not altogether the same. I shall again refer to that celebrated reply to the separation petition, because his action strengthens my argument and that of the Northern members as to the inaccuracy of that report. On page 9 of that correspondence, the hon. gentleman said:—

"Before concluding this report I desire to direct Your Excellency's special attention to one aspect of the question which has not hitherto been adverted to.

"The colony of Queensland is now indebted, in respect of loans raised on the security of the general revenue and assets of the colony, to the extent of nearly twenty-one millions of pounds, of which (as will appear by reference to the note on page 23 of Appendix B) more than £3,550,000 has been raised for the benefit of the Northern districts"—

And this is what I particularly wish to call attention to:—

"while further outlay from loan to the extent of £1,375,000"—

which sum is inaccurate; it ought to be £1,625,000—

"has been already authorised for those districts, and is now in course of expenditure."

Now, Mr. Speaker, until this last quarter not one pound of the Northern share of that £10,000,000 loan had been encroached upon; and up to the present time, out of our portion of that loan for railway purposes—namely, £1,625,000—the sum of £95,117 is all that has been expended; and yet the hon. gentleman, in the report which I have quoted, states that at that time, the 19th January, 1887, at which time not one single sixpence had been spent—"the sum authorised was now in course of expenditure." This is only one of many inaccuracies contained in the report sent to Sir Henry Holland. I regret that I should have so often to point out the very serious inaccuracies that were in that report.

The PREMIER: That is no inaccuracy. It is strictly correct.

Mr. BLACK: It is by drawing attention to these inaccuracies, and I shall do it over and over again as opportunity arises, that I hope to prove to the people of the colony that the cause which I and others have so much at heart is really founded upon facts, and is not going to be upset by statements such as the hon. gentleman made in that report to the Home Secretary in England. I should have been much more pleased if the Premier, in stating that these contingent liabilities against the Loan Fund amounted to £1,200,000, had also given us some schedule showing how much of that belonged to the different railways of the colony.

The PREMIER: I answered your question.

Mr. BLACK: I know the hon. gentleman answered my question, and he is laughing in his sleeve at the very courteous way he did word that answer. But, Mr. Speaker, we did not get all the information out of the hon. gentleman that we want.

The PREMIER: I will give you the information as soon as we get into committee.

Mr. BLACK: This return was asked for on the 15th or 20th of last month, and the Premier has evaded supplying that information over and over again. Why should we have to wait until

this motion gets into committee? If the hon. gentleman believes that he has really sound grounds for asking this House to go on with this railway, and with another railway which comes on later, why should he not, in an open way, supply the whole information to this House? But we are in the dark to a great extent; we are alarmed lest our borrowing powers are likely to be impaired by rash and reckless expenditure. The hon. gentleman knows all about it, and he admits that he has information which he withholds from this House. When this motion gets into committee we shall decline to allow it to go one single step further until we get information. I, for one, shall insist upon having a little more information than the Premier has given us in that very brief reply which he gave to me yesterday. There is another matter which, I think, hon. members should take into consideration before they sanction what, I think, may be unnecessary expenditure at the present time, and that is the very heavy loan indebtedness of the country, involving, as it will this quarter, something like £485,000—almost half-a-million—interest. Mr. Speaker, that is really a most serious question for us to consider. It is true that the revenue, I am happy to say, has improved somewhat during the last year, and that improvement amounts roughly to £100,000, which added to the rents paid at the end of last month, no doubt, made the finances of the country appear on paper to better advantage than they were three months ago. But what will it be when we have to pay £500,000 of interest during this quarter? How is that sum to be made up? Cannot hon. gentlemen see as plainly as possible that in three months' time, when we have the quarterly Financial Statement made out, the deficiency in the consolidated revenue will be greater than it was three months ago? That is inevitable. The revenue will not revive sufficiently to make up that £500,000; and how is it to be paid? Is it to be paid out of loan; it cannot be paid out of revenue. Is it to be taken from some of our trust funds, or is it to be taken from the savings bank? It was never contemplated that such would be the case. The hon. the ex-Colonial Treasurer himself, in advocating this £10,000,000 loan, led us to believe that he had good grounds for thinking that the increased revenue from land and other sources would justify us in going to the English market for such a large amount. We opposed the passage of that £10,000,000 loan, and we anticipated financial disaster would sooner or later be the outcome of it. We were almost abused by the opposite side, and were told we were obstructing and doing all we could to embarrass the Government; but almost every word said from this side of the House on the occasion of the passing of that £10,000,000 loan has been justified, and has been verified by subsequent results. Knowing as hon. members must do, the financial difficulties which this enormous borrowing has already plunged the country into, I say we should pause until we see the necessity for this railway more urgent than it is at the present time. Though it may prove a good line, on account of the conditions of the country through which it will pass, I maintain it is not necessary at the present time. Above all things, I repeat we have no right at the end of a Parliament like this, and on the eve of a general election, to pledge the incoming Government to this expenditure. I believe the Premier and the Minister for Works would not be at all sorry to see this line shelved, at all events, until a more opportune time. The Ministry will, no doubt, be able to say to those of their Darling Downs constituents who are in favour of this particular line, "We, at all events, have done our best."

I am quite prepared to give them that amount of credit; but I say they should be more candid, and should say to this House and to the part of the country specially interested in this line, "We do not consider the present an opportune time for incurring additional expenditure." I think it is the pretty unanimous idea that this line is not going to pass, and that the House will not allow it to pass. I do not wish to say anything, or hear anything said, which would be likely to jeopardise this line in the future. I am satisfied this line, and even the *via recta*, will be constructed at some future time.

THE PREMIER: But you must have the credit of proposing it.

MR. BLACK: I agree with the hon. gentleman thus far: that when the financial condition of the country is such as to justify its construction I shall be very proud to propose it. I cannot say any more than that. The hon. gentleman, however, is proposing to this House a line of railway which, I think, I may safely say he does not wish to see passed at the present time.

MR. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—The last remarks which fell from the hon. member for Mackay, to the effect that he should have great pleasure at some future time in proposing such a railway as the *via recta*, I thought were rather good. I have no doubt that if the Opposition party come into power at some future time one of the first lines they will put upon their programme will be the *via recta*. I am satisfied of that from my knowledge of the intelligence of many of those gentlemen, because it is well known that not only is it advocated by the people of the southern portion of Queensland, but also by the people of a large portion of New South Wales, who are anxious to belong to Queensland, as they can do their business better with Brisbane than with Sydney. Hon. members opposite will no doubt propose this *via recta*, which they now traduce so much, as one of the first railways on their programme. The subject before us, I think, is the Thane's Creek railway, but the speech of the hon. member for Mackay was simply upon Northern grievances. It was only in finishing up his remarks that he mentioned this line at all. I should have thought that his speech was made in committee, and seeing you, sir, in the chair, and not Mr. Fraser, I thought you might have drawn attention to the fact that the hon. member was going outside the subject. However, you apparently did not think it necessary to do so unless someone called your attention to it; and hon. members on this side thought they might as well let him go on, and certainly the closing sentences of the hon. member's speech, in which he said he should be glad at some future time to propose the construction of the *via recta*, were worth waiting for. The hon. member told us that they had had no money spent in the North except during the last quarter. Why, there are fifteen miles of the Cairns railway constructed at a cost of something like £300,000, and the sod for that railway was turned in 1886.

MR. BLACK: What vote did that come from? Not from the £10,000,000 loan.

MR. KELLETT: In another part of the hon. member's speech he had a knock at the late Treasurer, when he said he should have thought better of him if he had gone down with his party. Possibly the late Treasurer's party is not going down at all; how will it be then? I think it is within the bounds of probability that the party will not go down. However, I will go further and say that the late Treasurer, in leaving the Government, did the best thing he could do for the party, because he brought them to their senses

upon the land tax. The reason the hon. gentleman gave for leaving the Government was that he thought that in a hasty moment they were going in for a new tax, which he in his wisdom saw plainly would not be advantageous to the colony, and was not favoured by the general body of the electors of the colony. There is nothing the hon. gentleman has done since he joined the party which has assisted them more than his action in that instance. I think he is as good a friend and supporter of the party as he ever was while he was a Minister. Coming back to the Thane's Creek railway, I think myself people will admit that this is a railway which should be constructed. I will not go into it as only the Thane's Creek railway, but will deal with it as a part of the railway to St. George, and I am satisfied that the border line to St. George is an advisable line to build. This is the first section of that line and it goes through agricultural and mineral country. It will be twenty-four miles in length and will, I believe, be a great advantage to the colony. I look upon it as being the first step towards our border line. It will tap a great deal of traffic we have not hitherto been able to get, and if, as I hope it will be, it is extended to Cunnamulla in the future it will, no doubt, be one of our most valuable lines. I am not afraid, at the same time, to approach the question of the *via recta* in connection with this line, though it may be objectionable to some. Hon. members on the other side say that the time will come when it ought to be constructed, and I am sure, if they get the opportunity, it will be one of the first railways on their programme. They will throw Toowoomba itself out in the cold then; there is no doubt about it. There may be possibly one or two Northern Downs men who will object to it, but I am certain the majority of the members of the Opposition will go for it, being satisfied that it will be advantageous to the general interest of the colony. I am satisfied that by its construction we should annex the greater part of New England, which is admitted to be a very fine district. I say that as soon as we build it—and I hope that will be very soon now—one of the first results will be that New England will ask to be annexed to Queensland, as they are already moving in that direction. Hon. members opposite may laugh, but the laugh will be the other way. The people in that district have sent in petitions asking to be annexed to Queensland. I am satisfied that we shall have not only Tenterfield, but right up to Glen Innes. All the produce of the district will come to Brisbane, and then, of course, they will deal in other ways, and that will be a great assistance in making our railways pay. There are also a great number of people who do not believe in travelling by sea if they can go by railway, and they will come in numbers to see this fine city, and then travel to see the Northern mines. It will be a great advantage to Queensland when this *via recta* is built. One hon. member has said that there was no good land along it, but that hon. member knows nothing about it. It is all good land—even the slopes of the range are good. From the railway station to where it joins the Warwick line it is good agricultural land all through. There is settlement all along, and it will be close agricultural settlement when the line is built. I believe that in the interests of the colony the sooner we can get some party, even if it is the Opposition, to come in and build this railway the better. I also believe that the railway along the border will be a great advantage to the colony. It will bring Cunnamulla and Thargomindah within reasonable distance of Brisbane, which they are not at present, and it will bring to its proper place the trade which is now going

to New South Wales. It ought to be the object of all Queenslanders and all members of this House to try and improve our own property, instead of driving trade away out of the colony. Unless we do something of this kind to shorten the route we shall not improve the revenue from our railways. I hope the new Minister for Works will study this question very carefully, and by improving the facilities to travellers on our railways, and fixing freights at reasonable rates, induce more people to settle along the line, so that the railways will pay better than they do at present. I shall have great pleasure in supporting this motion to go into committee, and I believe the more forcibly the question is argued in committee the more forcibly will it be brought out that the construction of this line will be a great advantage to the colony.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. Jordan) said: Mr. Speaker,—When hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House see a section on this side opposed to a line of railway which forms part of the railway scheme of the Government they see very strong reasons in supporting them in their opposition. I suppose they act on the principle that anything is fair in love, war, and politics. Now, the hon. member for Townsville made a very able speech to-night. He never makes any other than an able speech, and he has such wonderful powers of argumentation that he could almost prove black was white. He has such facility in marshalling his figures, without departing from the figures, that he can prove anything he likes. He never handles a subject but he proves his mastery of it; he has a wonderful facility in presenting things in such a form as to suit his own interests—I mean of course the interests of the North. Now, take those figures the hon. member used to-night. Suppose it had suited the hon. member's purpose to advocate a railway from Normanton to Croydon. Could he not have used those very same figures in a most masterful way to show beyond question that it was quite feasible for the Government to undertake a scheme that would cost any amount of money to build a railway to that grand goldfield at Croydon? He could have proved that from those figures just as easily as that to make the commencement of a railway which is to go to the southern and western corner of our colony, *via* Warwick and St. George along our southern border, would be not only a blunder but a crime. I will give an illustration, Mr. Speaker, still referring to the hon. member's wonderful mastery over figures, so as to make them support his own views. The other night he proved conclusively that the increase of population which had taken place in this great colony since the census was taken had been almost exclusively in the North. He claimed that there had been an increase in the North of 10,000, and that there had been no increase except in the North, and to prove this he produced the figures of the Registrar-General. He proved from those tables most satisfactorily to his own mind, I believe—I believe he is sincere—that the population in May, 1886, was 334,000, though the Registrar-General said it was 342,000.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: An assumed estimate.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: I could not follow the figures the hon. member gave to-night—I do not understand them; but I do understand the figures about the census, and I saw the hon. member's mistake immediately. The Registrar-General was right as a matter of course, and the hon. member for Townsville was wrong. I will not say any more about it now; but I can prove it to the satisfaction of the hon. member for Townsville himself. He is a fair man, open to conviction, and if you convince

him he will admit it. I will satisfy that hon. gentleman that he was mistaken the other night. He was persuaded that the Registrar-General had fallen into a great error—that he had blundered about 16,000 in his estimate of the population.

THE HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: You admitted it to me yourself, and said you did not estimate the population in that way.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member for Townsville simply left out one line in the Registrar-General's statement which involved only a small number of people of course—about 8,071. The hon. gentleman took the figures in detail, no doubt; but he omitted the $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. that is ordinarily added to the bare numbers given by the enumerators when the census is taken. Now, touching this railway, it is to be part of a direct line from Brisbane *via* Ipswich, Warwick, and St. George along our southern border to the southern and western corner of the colony, to intercept the trade that is now going to Sydney. I have a case in my mind bearing upon this subject, and I will state it to the House. Supposing anyone were to propound a scheme for the construction of a railway from the Gulf of Carpentaria southward, splitting the colony into two portions from north to south, cutting the termini of our three great western railways, and passing through the most valuable country in this colony or perhaps in any of the Australian colonies, and suppose such a railway would divert all the trade from our great western ports to Sydney and render useless the railways running to the west, or to the setting sun, as it was once said, upon which we have expended enormous sums of money, what would be said by members of the Opposition? Suppose that railway was to be built by a gigantic syndicate—of course, I am only imagining a case, Mr. Speaker—they would give over to this syndicate 11,000,000 acres of land along the line, and a vast quantity of land also in the Gulf of Carpentaria, and the syndicate would divert the trade from all the great cities on the eastern seaboard of Queensland to the Gulf of Carpentaria. The party represented by the present Government did not approve of that scheme, and the supporters of the Government thought it was an outrage on propriety. The present Government have propounded a different scheme. We believe that the construction of railways should progress, and that they should not be brought to a sudden stop. We did not believe three years ago that the credit of the colony was exhausted in England. We believed that the people of England would lend us money to spend on reproductive works. The Government, therefore, propounded a land scheme by which they invited the pastoral tenants, who held about 400,000,000 acres of land, to give up half their land for close settlement in consideration of receiving certain advantages which they should be entitled to enjoy for a quarter of a century. It was proposed that instead of leasing 400,000,000 acres of land at three-fourths of a farthing per acre, which was about the average, we should have a scheme under which the pastoral tenants should give up for close settlement one-half, one-third, or one-fourth of their land, according to the number of years the lease had to run; and that we should establish a system of pastoral occupation on the most approved lines, as learned from the experience of many years in this colony. It was provided that persons should be enabled to take up from 2,500 to 20,000 acres, and fence it in and carry on pastoral pursuits on the most economical principles, and that the State should receive, instead of three-fourths of a farthing per acre, 1d. or 2d. per acre; and this

rental was to go on increasing, gradually of course, until by-and-by it would bring in a large revenue and pay for our railways. Of course that would take time. There is power in the Act to extend those provisions to the whole of the colony, but at present they only apply to a limited portion. In that portion, however, is included a large quantity of valuable agricultural land on which we could settle hundreds of thousands of people. If we can induce persons to come here from Great Britain with capital and settle on that land, we shall soon establish a great agricultural industry in the colony. In connection with that land policy a scheme of public works was propounded, and whereas it was stated that we could borrow more money in the home market, the Government proposed to borrow £10,000,000 to test the credibility of the people of Great Britain in the value of these Australian colonies. The English capitalists have readily lent us money, and this it is proposed to expend on reproductive works. If the pastoral tenants give a portion of their runs and we can get people from Great Britain with capital, then we can populate the colony and build up a great agricultural industry, and a pastoral industry as well, and in that we shall derive a large revenue from the land. A part of the public works scheme to which I have referred was this railway direct from Brisbane by the shortest route to St. George, saving, as I understand, about eighty miles. It will pass through some very fine country with great agricultural capabilities, which will grow all the wheat that we require. When that country is settled we shall not have to import £600,000 worth of breadstuffs and other agricultural produce every year as we have to do now, but we shall be able to grow our own, and we shall also divert to this colony the trade which is at present going to New South Wales. I do not wish to say anything about New England. I would only say that I should like to see it annexed to this colony, as we should then be recouped for the loss of the Richmond and Clarence, which ought to have been annexed to Queensland. We have had, Mr. Speaker, a drought which has lasted three or four years, and which has been almost unparalleled in the history of this colony. That was followed by destructive floods, and then unseasonable rains came, and we have got into the precise position in which we should have been if the members opposite had been managing the colony, only in that case it would have been worse. I do not know whether they are aware of a circumstance which occurred a good many years ago, when I was a young man. There was a man who was very clever. He could tell you every day when it would rain, when it would shine, when it would freeze, and when it would thaw. He published an almanac, and predicted that the winter that year would be the coldest winter which had been known in England for a century. He predicted the very day on which the thermometer would fall below zero, and it came to pass as he stated. Then he told us what day the frost would break up, and so it did on that very day; then when we would have rain, and so we had it on that very day. That man's name was Murphy, and his almanac was so popular that the office where it was sold was rushed to that extent that the police had to guard it. To return to the subject: A very essential part of that scheme was this railway to Warwick. But the drought has come, and the loss of revenue has come, and this financial difficulty has arisen; and it would have come all the same if the leader of the Opposition had been managing the affairs of the colony, though I do not think he would have had the pluck to navigate the barque of the State so courageously through the breakers and

the storm that the Premier has shown. At this terrible crisis he is as strong in the favour of the people of Queensland as ever he was, and stronger, and it will be a long time before anybody else goes down with the people, I fancy. Although the grand railway policy has not as yet been a great success in settling the people on the land, I say, as I said the other day, that the land scheme has been a success, and that we are greatly indebted to my hon. friend and colleague the Minister for Works for having initiated such a scheme.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Then why did you displace him?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Are we not ashamed of ourselves that after twenty-five years we have a population of only 330,000, when we ought to have had a population of 3,000,000? And that is owing to the fact that the Conservative party have been generally in power. They have mismanaged this colony for nearly twenty-five years, and the Registrar-General tells us now that the population of the colony is only about 330,000. It is all their fault. I say that the railway policy of the Government must be kept intact. The Government are bound in honour to carry out every part of it as soon as they can, and without violating any principle, without making any blunder or committing any crime, they can carry out the whole of the railway policy which they have propounded to the letter. It may be said that I am an enthusiast, and I am an enthusiast about the grand capabilities of Australia, and especially of Queensland and about its future, if it can only be managed by the Liberal party; if we can only keep out—what shall I say?—the party opposed to the Liberal party. Nearly all the hon. gentlemen on the other side think exactly as we do, but they do not like to say so, and they know that this is a grand scheme of railway policy. In spite of the drought we can carry it to a successful issue, and we shall. The present leader of the Liberal party will retain the reins of power for another five years, and he will so manage the affairs of the colony that it will be populous and prosperous. The Premier has proved himself equal to the most trying period a colony can know, and in spite of droughts and floods we shall prosper yet. I say the Government must adhere to their policy, and every one of those railways must be carried out. I am inclined to agree with my hon. friend, the late Colonial Treasurer, that this question to-night has assumed a very small shape; it is Toowoomba *versus* Warwick. It has certainly tended rather too much in that direction. But Toowoomba has had its fair share of the railway expenditure, and it was fortunate in getting its little lines constructed first. The Beauaraba line, the extension to Highfields and Crow's Nest, and the deviation to Drayton have all been completed; and it would be very sad if my hon. friend, Mr. Aland, were to get up and say we should not have our little line extended to Melbourne street. When we have carried out this scheme of a direct line from Brisbane to the southern border it will be the grand highway, and thousands of people coming across the Pacific from Europe and America will make their way to the cities of the south *via* Brisbane and Warwick. I will only say, in conclusion, that this scheme must be kept intact, and I feel sure that we shall not only pass this railway, but also the extension of the South Brisbane Railway to Melbourne street.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The Minister for Works, in proposing this motion, said very little; and in a subsequent speech he seemed to deprecate any discussion on this question at all. It seems to me that the further the

debate proceeds the more useful it is becoming. It is evident, from what the last speaker said, that it involves the whole policy of the Government. It is defended simply on the ground that it was proposed by the Government, and is a part of the grand scheme which they propounded over three years ago. The Minister for Lands says that this railway policy of the Government must be carried out in its entirety. But the question arises, I think, even assuming that the policy was a thoroughly good and sound one when it was first announced, whether it is a good one now? Are the circumstances of the colony the same at the end of 1887 as they were at the commencement of 1884? That is a matter that the last speaker never seems to have taken into account. He seems to say that whatever the circumstances, whatever the state of the finances, in spite of everything, the policy of the Government must be carried out—even if the colony is going to be ruined by it, it must be carried out. Let us take a short retrospect of what has happened since then. In the year 1883, the late Administration went out. They seemed to have had no difficulty in making ends meet; on the contrary, they not only made ends meet, but left a substantial surplus in the Treasury. Then this Government came in, and they were so carried away with the flourishing state of the Treasury that they almost lost their heads. The then Treasurer began by telling us that the indebtedness of the colony was a matter for congratulation; that the more debt we incurred the more interest we should be able to pay; that by the mere incurring of debt we should be able to get still further loans. Well, what has been the result? The condition of affairs is simply this: that, so far from being able to make ends meet, we have a very heavy deficit in the Treasury; and not only that, sir, but the present Treasurer cannot see his way to make ends meet for the present financial year. That is a very serious matter. He is not able to make out a balance-sheet, and show how he can bring his expenditure and his revenue to an equilibrium. Well, the policy of the Government has been carried out so far. The Loan Act was passed, and we were led to believe that the colony was going to be launched on a sea of prosperity, and become the envy of all the other colonies. So we were told three or four years ago. That has not been fulfilled, and we are told that the reason of it is on account of the drought. We were told that this policy was an extremely wise one—an extremely prudent one—but that it was frustrated by circumstances over which the Administration had no control—that we were subjected to a serious drought. Well, sir, that would be a very good excuse if the drought came after the announcement of the policy, but surely anyone who carries his recollection back—even those who were not immediately concerned in the drought, the same as myself and others were—must know that the drought was an existing factor in the year 1883. And, sir, it will be extremely easy for me, if anyone forgets that, to remind them that in the very first Financial Statement we had laid before us by the present Administration, this passage occurs:—

“I might have presented to the Committee with apparent justification a larger estimate of Ways and Means; but having regard to the dry season through which we are passing, the effects of which, if of further continuance, it would be folly to ignore”—

There I stop. That is the way we have always been treated. The Treasurer at that time candidly confessed that it would be folly to ignore the drought, and having told us that, the first thing they did and continued to do was to ignore it all through, because they never took it into consideration either with regard to revenue or with regard to the expenditure of the Loan Fund.

As I said before, the drought was antecedent to the announcement of this policy; it existed when this policy was framed; consequently they cannot now go back to the drought and say that it upset their calculations. Well, sir, how have they proceeded since? Every year we have had indications that the revenue was getting less and less. We have had warnings of that on all sides, and of course the interest and expenditure were growing more and more. And yet we see no change in this policy. In fact, we have had it pointed out just now that the Government are going doggedly to stick to it—that with the most absurd obstinacy they will follow out the policy they announced three or four years ago. But, sir, I have always maintained that their policy, however good it might appear to them, was radically bad. Even if there had been no drought it was inherently bad and would have failed from its own weakness, for the simple reason that it has to depend for success upon a great spurt in the prosperity of the colony, such as we have never been warranted in expecting by previous experience. It was an essential part of their policy that that should take place, and without that their policy could not be carried out. The then Treasurer, Mr. Dickson, in announcing his policy told us that the interest would be provided without imposing any additional burdens upon the people. That was the pillar upon which their whole policy rested. That was the assurance upon which hon. members accepted that policy. Not only were we assured of it, but the people of England who lend us money were assured of the same thing. And that, sir, is very important to them, because notwithstanding what the Minister for Lands may say with regard to our vast extent of territory it is not the lands of the colony that are mortgaged; it is the labour and the skill and the intelligence of the people that are under mortgage to the money-lenders at home. It is to the people they look, not to the land. What do they care how many million acres of land we have? They would not foreclose on them. Why, only the other day there was the greatest difficulty in getting them to take some millions of acres in New Guinea by the mere issuing of a proclamation. It is not the land of the colony they look to at all, but the people, whether they are a prosperous and industrious and well-doing people, or the reverse. And they also look at the way in which we manage our financial affairs. Well, how is this interest to be provided for? Perhaps it will be safer to read what we were told as to the method in which the interest was to be found. The last statement I read was from the Financial Statement made in January, 1884, and this is what the Treasurer said on the 10th of September of the same year:—

“I may be challenged to point out how the interest on such a sum is to be paid. In reply, I may state that such a loan, if authorised, would not all be sold simultaneously; its disposal would be a matter of time; but of the ability of the country to meet the interest especially under the new Land Bill there cannot be the slightest doubt, even assuming the proposed loan to increase our indebtedness to £26,570,000. If the area of our lands held under pastoral lease, at present exceeding 311,000,000 acres, were only to contribute 1d. per acre per annum—not, Mr. Fraser, a sum of 1d. per acre in addition to present rentals—but to average an annual rental of 1d. per acre, not only would the whole annual interest to the public creditor be provided on a loan indebtedness of £26,570,000 at 4 per cent. per annum—an annual charge of £1,062,800—but a surplus of £233,033 would annually accrue to revenue; a sum but little under the whole amount of pastoral rents received by the Treasury during the past financial year.”

Now, the revenue for the lands during the past five or six years, instead of getting larger, has been falling away. I am referring to the net revenue after deducting the expenses of the

Lands Department, not the gross receipts. In the financial year 1883, the net revenue from lands was £615,000; in the following year, the first year of the present Administration, it fell to £528,000; in 1885 it fell still further to £495,000; and in 1886 it fell to £472,000. What it was last year I cannot tell, because we have not got the Auditor-General's accounts, but I know that the gross receipts for the year ending on the 30th June last were about £50,000 less than for the previous year. The other source from which we were promised the interest would be derived was increased population—trade, that is to say, from increased Customs duties; but we know that that expectation has not been realised. From the tables presented by the Premier, we find that the Customs receipts for 1883-4 were £1,035,000; for the following year, £1,125,000; and for last year, notwithstanding the increased taxation, they only amounted to £1,260,000—a very small increase considering the increase of population and increase of taxation; so that if anything the revenue from taxation, instead of progressing, is going backwards. We have, therefore, seen nothing yet to justify using on with this policy. On the contrary, we have every warning to halt and ponder the situation before we rush into any further expenditure. I think I may as well here quote what the Premier himself said on this point in his Financial Statement. After dealing with loan expenditure, he proceeds to say:—

"Now, the works actually going on at the present time, as far as I can ascertain, unless the rate of progress is reduced, are likely to involve an expenditure of £1,550,000. It is a matter of very serious consideration whether the Government should continue to prosecute at that rate the works paid for out of the Loan Fund, for two reasons: First, because of the rapidly increasing addition that is made to the charges on the revenue, and, also, because some regard must be paid to the state of the money market in London."

I think he could not have given better reasons. The first refers to the serious charges on the revenue; and I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that although we have an ostensible revenue, as estimated by the Premier, of £3,100,000 in round numbers, that is not revenue, but the gross receipts going into the Treasury. A great part of it consists of receipts from railways, the Post Office, and other services; but we know that the Post Office, for instance, instead of being a revenue-producing department is a source of large expenditure, yet all the receipts of the department are entered up as if they were revenue. Out of those gross receipts, amounting to £3,100,000, we have actual fixed charges—which we have no right to discuss on the Estimates, and which we must pay unless we are prepared to advocate a policy of repudiation—amounting to about £1,300,000. At present the amount is about £1,280,000, but before the accounts are made up for the year it will reach £1,300,000, because some items are invariably underestimated, such as the endowments to local authorities, and if another loan is floated before the end of the present financial year there will be some charge on the revenue connected with that. So that we can reckon on over half of our net revenue being already engaged for an expenditure that is not optional. I would like hon. members to consider also the real price we are paying for carrying out this policy. We know it is involving us very seriously and putting a stop to progress in all other directions. We hear calls for a university; we want schools, schools of mines, schools of agriculture, technical schools; we want a better system of police; we want an improved gaol system; we could do with some scheme of irrigation, and drainage, and many other things; but we have to deny ourselves. It is only a piece of tomfoolery at present to talk about a

university, when it is as much as we can do to simply pay our way. The Premier has frequently told us that the first duty of a Government is to make both ends meet; he has also told us that he cannot pay money out of the Treasury unless it first goes in; also that the Treasury is only a public fund into which the contributions of the people are paid, and from which they are distributed for the benefit of the people. In point of fact there is not a sixpence of the expenditure which does not come out of the people's pockets. I was very pleased to hear the Premier make those statements. They are very trite and axiomatic, and they are true, and it is necessary that we should be reminded of them. But are the Government carrying out that policy? Are they acting up to their professions? Are they trying to make ends meet? Are they fully sensible of and do they appreciate the fact that they cannot pay money out of the Treasury unless it is first paid in there? Apparently not. We are going to pay money this year which the Government have not got. They do not profess to be able to know that they will make ends meet before the end of the year. There is no appearance now of an improvement in the revenue. Take the gross receipts of the railways. They have increased certainly, but I notice that the Premier's estimate of revenue from the railways during the present financial year is £105,000 more than last year. Well, the last quarter only accounted for £10,000 more; so that there is a long headway to pull up. I am looking now at the revenue; that is what we have to deal with. Last year the net revenue was £129,000 from all our railways. That we have from the tables. These are very instructive tables in considering a matter of this sort. On page 18 of the tables the net revenue from railways for 1883-84 is set down at £263,000. Last year it was £129,000. The Premier reckons this year to get about £105,000 more. Whether he will get it or not we cannot say. It does not seem likely in the meantime, and I may point out, according to this table, the immense charge there is upon the people of the colony on account of railways. Last year the charge for interest on the consolidated revenue was nearly £400,000, or considerably over £1 for every man, woman, and child in the colony whether they use the railways or not. I may mention that that does not represent the full evil because the interest is simply calculated upon the actual expenditure. It takes no account of what it cost to raise the money. We know there is a large deficit in the Loan Fund; that the Auditor-General cannot make the Loan Fund account up without showing a deficit of about one and a quarter million.

The PREMIER: Make another shot at it. Take another guess.

Mr. NELSON: Do you mean to say that is wrong?

The PREMIER: Yes; entirely wrong.

Mr. NELSON: Well, I am prepared to make a bet on it. On the 30th June last the amount of deficit on the Loan Fund was £1,240,777.

The PREMIER: What are you quoting from?

Mr. NELSON: The Auditor-General's Report.

The PREMIER: Where?

Mr. NELSON: Appendix A.

The PREMIER: The gross deficit since the colony started?

Mr. NELSON: Yes.

The PREMIER: We should understand your words to mean that.

Mr. NELSON: The deficit on the Loan Fund of 1884 was somewhere about £85,000, previous to the instalment of February last.

The PREMIER: No one would what know you were talking about.

Mr. NORTON: He made a very good shot anyway.

Mr. NELSON: I am talking about the railways in general. I was referring to one of the tables here, which gives the cost of railways from the start, and I was referring to the actual expenditure upon railways, and the accumulation of the interest thereon, and I say that that table does not represent the full evil, because the interest is only calculated on the actual expenditure, which I may quote as £12,633,863. Well, I say that the railways are chargeable with a very large proportion of the deficit, on which we are paying interest.

The PREMIER: Where are the figures you are quoting from?

Mr. NELSON: Page 18 of the tables; not the Auditor-General's Report, the Treasurer's tables.

The PREMIER: No doubt they are correct.

Mr. NELSON: Well, that is how the account stands; at any rate the interest is simply charged on the actual expenditure on railways; and I say that they are chargeable with a very large amount of the deficit on the loan, which deficit amounts to nearly one and a-quarter million. If that were added to the actual expenditure, the increased charge for interest on the consolidated revenue against the railways would be very much greater. Anyone can see that the net revenue would be proportionately decreased, so that we do not actually get the amount of revenue stated in the table. If that proportion were added on to the actual expenditure and interest charged upon that, the net revenue from railways would be shown to be very much less than that. In other words, it might be put this way: If the interest was charged upon the debenture capital, and not on the actual expenditure but the debenture capital which the railways represent, then the charge for interest would be very much larger than appears in these tables. That a diminution of revenue is an essential feature with regard to our railways we know from experience. We see that the more railways we build, by so much the more will the annual revenue from railways be decreased, and it is that which we have to face. Our railways are not made, like the railways in older countries, from one large centre of population to another. They have not traffic already created for them, but they have to create it. That is the difficulty, they have to create traffic; but the interest is chargeable from the time we spend the money. Therefore, I consider the Premier is wrong when he assumes that because several new lines are going to be opened his net revenue from railways will be increased. Such is not our experience in the past. Our experience in fact is quite the contrary, and I think there will be little or no increase in the net revenue from railways this year. I think, therefore, on these grounds, we may very fairly pause a while before we rush any further into large expenditure for railways. There is no doubt that what the late Treasurer said is perfectly correct—if railway-making is suddenly stopped, there may be a serious collapse in the colony, as hundreds of men will be thrown out of employment; but it should not be done all of a sudden, it should be brought about gradually. It will have to come about some time or other, and the sooner we make a start the better, and the sooner we shall get the position of the colony into a normal and prosperous state.

The PREMIER: Before you sit down, which table is it you refer to? The amount expended including depreciation?

Mr. NELSON: You will find the depreciation in the Treasurer's balance-sheet.

The PREMIER: Is it page 18—"Loans, including depreciation"?

Mr. NELSON: That is on the left-hand side; the interest is not calculated upon that. Some of it is not floated yet. You must look in the middle column—the expenditure to the 30th June, 1887. There is not £17,000,000 floated for railway purposes yet.

The PREMIER: There is £12,000,000 including depreciation.

Mr. NELSON: You will find that I am right. The interest upon the expenditure does not mean the interest upon the deficit.

The PREMIER: The figures are carried on. Take the Southern and Western Railway. The expenditure is, including depreciation, £6,715,000. The interest is calculated upon that amount.

Mr. NELSON: That does not include depreciation.

The PREMIER: Yes, it does.

Mr. NELSON: I would like to see it explained. That is how I read it, and I believe I am correct.

Mr. JESSOP said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish to say a few words before the question goes to a division. I really thought this matter was done with. I did not think we were to hear any more about the Thane's Creek or Warwick and St. George railway this session. To-morrow week will be just twelve months since we had that division of 27 to 26 on the question, when the Government carried the motion under what I may at the very least call peculiar circumstances. As that division was so close, I thought the Government would abandon the scheme altogether. The division showed the House did not appreciate it, and the majority was not sufficient to justify the Government in proceeding with the railway. Now, the hon. member for Aubigny this afternoon asked the Government what was their scheme. Last year when the railway was before the House, it was the Warwick and St. George railway, and this was to be the first section to Thane's Creek. Now it is dangled before us as a branch railway. But the Minister for Lands let out the secret that it was the beginning of their great scheme—the Warwick and St. George railway, *via* Goondiwindi, and the *via recta*—showing that this line from Warwick to Thane's Creek is the thin end of the wedge. It shows that if the Government start it they will carry it on by saying, "You have gone so far, why not go further? This short line will not pay." We have heard that over and over again. "The longer you make a line the better it will pay." That will be the argument for continuing it. The figures quoted by the hon. members for Northern Downs and Townsville and Mackay, I think are quite sufficient to convince hon. members that the time is not yet come when this railway should be started. In fact, it is patent that the colony is not in a financial position to go on with it at present. I intend to go into figures in reference to it. The distance by the route surveyed by Surveyor Phillips is 235½ miles. Now, if a railway is wanted, I take it that it is the duty of the Government to construct it on the best route; and if a better route than this can be found, and it has been found by the surveyors, I hold that it is the duty of the Government to take the line by that route, with a view of saving all the expense they can. The distance from Warwick to St. George is 235½ miles, while from Dalby it is 181 miles, therefore, there is 54½ miles less line to construct by going to Dalby. Then Dalby is 16 miles nearer than Warwick, making altogether a distance of about 70 miles. There is only about 6 miles difference in the distance between

St. George and Brisbane *via* Warwick, and the *via recta*, and the distance *via* Dalby. About £400,000 of public money would be saved at first, and no one knows where it may end. This is what Mr. Phillips said:—

"The Weir River (852 feet) is crossed at 139½ miles, not far from Welltown station; hereabouts a good deal of low country subject to floods is met with, and must be crossed."

Nearly one-half of the country is low. I have seen people since the floods who have told me that for ten or twelve miles at a stretch there were flood-marks on the trees over their heads. What does that mean in railway-making? The hon. member for Stanley, Mr. Kellett, referred to the benefit we should receive from the border traffic. I do not see what benefit we get from the line, which has tapped New South Wales. We have received none whatever. The revenue from the Wallangarra line is nothing; it does not pay for the grease on the wheels, to use an old saying. I shall oppose this line as strongly as I can when it goes into committee.

Mr. ADAMS said: Mr. Speaker,—I have a few words to say upon this question before it gets into committee. After sitting here last night, and sitting here to-night, I ask myself, "Are they the same hon. members who stonewalled last night who are supporting the Government in this proposal?" It appears to me that those gentlemen who went in for stonewalling last night want, not only the lion's share of representation, but also the lion's share of the £10,000,000 loan. This line is almost a *fac-simile* of the line passed last session, and carried in this House by a majority of only one vote. I may say also that the question was asked whether the Government had not at that time the resignation of one gentleman who voted for the line in their hands. That was denied, but it is a strange thing that not long after that gentleman had to go out of the House, and he had not attended for seven days previous to the day on which that line was passed. This motion may get into committee, but I do not think it will ever get out. Hon. members say this is a national line, and that may be so; but there are other national lines besides this, and it has been conclusively proved by the hon. member for Townsville, and by the hon. member for Northern Downs, that the country is not at the present time in a position to enter upon such a contract as is involved in the plans laid on the table in connection with this motion. It is not only this which has to be looked at, because this is the thin end of the wedge for an extension to the New South Wales border, and, as we were told to-night, for a direct line right through from Ipswich. If the figures which have been quoted by the hon. member for Townsville and the hon. member for Northern Downs are correct—and though the Minister for Lands stated they were not correct he has not proved his statement—I ask what is to become of the other lines passed last year? The Bundaberg to Gladstone line is a national line, and it has been stated here several times that it is to be the main coast line, more particularly for defence. As we are paying so much for the defence of the colony, and it is anticipated that this line is to be constructed mainly for that purpose, I would like to know where the money is to come from for its construction. I take it that is more of a national line than the Thane's Creek line. Last year it was stated during the discussion on this line that the country through which it would go is not such as a private company would carry a line through, and the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, distinctly stated that:—

"He was assured on all hands that, with the exception of a few small oases, the line would pass through wretchedly poor country indeed, abounding in brighalow, bende, and oak scrubs."

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I was not satisfied with that, and when I knew this motion was coming on I asked gentlemen who have been in the colony for over thirty years and spent a lot of time in and around St. George and along that route, for their opinion, and they have distinctly told me that every word stated there is positively true. If that is the kind of country through which this line is to pass I think, in the present condition of our affairs, we shall not be doing justice to ourselves or to the country if we allow a motion of this description to pass. The welfare of the country is apparently lost sight of by hon. members, as it appears now to be every one for himself, each trying to get as much as he can out of the £10,000,000 loan. It is our duty under the circumstances to show the Government that they are making, if not a great mistake, at all events a very grave error. During the debate last year there was a great deal said about hon. members not having the interest of the country at heart if they voted against the line. Hon. members on both sides come here I believe to do justice, not only for their own constituents, but for the country generally, and so far as I know they carry out that principle. I do not think it wise in anyone to impute motives during a discussion, and I find the late Minister for Works said:—

"They could not expect much less from the hon. member for Aubigny. Whatever tittle-tattle the hon. member heard outside, he came and reported it to the House, and the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, did just the same. That hon. member had told them that he had heard this and that, and was told so-and-so."

When a motion wants propping up by the imputation of motives to any member of this House, it must be a very bad one indeed and wanting in substantiality. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, has told the Government to-night that if they do not carry this railway they are not worthy of the seats they occupy. I am under the impression that if not all, some at least of the members of the present Government would rather see it cast out altogether, and it would be for the good of the country if that were done. It is all very well to say we should extend our railways, but there are other places besides the Darling Downs where railway extension is wanted, and there are other railways to be constructed besides the *via recta*. I brought forward the other day a motion that would have given a handsome return to the Government, and the only answer I could get was that I had the sympathy of the Government. Well, all I can tender to those hon. gentlemen who desire to have this line constructed is my sympathy, and they are at liberty to tender that to the contractor as part payment of the contract for this line. It has been said outside that the Government will be good to their friends. I must say I never heard one word uttered by Ministers that would lead me to believe such a statement; but I have heard such remarks from hon. members on the other side, and they, at any rate, give some colouring to the circulation of a report like that outside the House. The hon. member for Darling Downs said the other night that only two gentlemen in the House were able to give them that line, and one of them was sure to give it for no other purpose than a political purpose. I think even that would be quite sufficient to warrant outsiders in saying we are good to our friends; but as long as I have been in the House, I must exonerate Ministers from that. I have not heard one solitary word that they intended to do that. I must certainly vote against this motion even to go into committee. We are only losing the time of the country. We have a Redistribution Bill before us, and we should get it through and go to the country at once. If the present

Government come back with an overwhelming majority, then they can show the House and the country they are right; and they ought to construct the line forthwith if they can only find the money. I know if this line is carried out other parts of the colony will have to suffer. The Bundaberg and Gladstone line is more of a national line than this, and if any lines are to be carried out, that one should have first consideration. I am sure that if this proposed line were in my own electorate, and I saw it in the same light as I see it now, I would vote against it just as freely as I vote against it now. I shall do everything in my power to stop a reckless expenditure of public money such as is represented by this vote.

Mr. DONALDSON: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

The PREMIER: This is pure obstruction. There are only two or three more members to speak.

Mr. MOREHEAD: At what time is the hon. gentleman prepared to adjourn?

The PREMIER: I want to speak myself.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. gentleman has an opportunity of speaking on the adjournment.

The PREMIER: I want to speak in committee.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Mr. Speaker,—I should have thought that the hon. the Premier, having regard to the importance of this debate, and having regard to the changed conditions of this debate—for it has changed from the purely parochial discussion that took place last year into a question of large State policy—I should have thought that the Premier would have seen his way to grant the adjournment that has been asked, more especially as a considerable number of members on this side of the House, and on that side also I believe, desire to speak. The hon. the Premier himself has stated his desire of making a statement with regard to the financial position of the Government so far as relates to the Loan Fund; but from an expression which has fallen from him I understand he does not wish to make that statement until we get into committee. Now, sir, I traverse the objection of that hon. gentleman; for if he can show good and sufficient reasons why we should go into committee he will probably carry the motion. Possibly as it is, he may get a majority that will be ready to vote in the dark; but I think his proper course if he has anything to say would be to state it to the House, and not wait till we get into committee, because the main objection we have raised to going into committee is what we conceive to be the unsatisfactory position of the finances of the colony. That objection has been raised in the House, and it should be replied to in the House. What particular object the hon. gentleman has to serve—and, no doubt, he is desirous of serving some particular object in waiting until we get into committee—he has not deigned to inform this House; but I do trust that, having regard not only to the importance of the discussion itself, but also to the gravity of the situation—this debate being one of supreme importance to the Government itself—he will see the propriety of assenting to the adjournment at the present time. It is now nearly 10 o'clock, and I have seen the hon. gentleman over and over again adjourn at that hour, very seldom much later. Last night, in the face of a very hostile flank movement on the part of some of his own supporters, he moved the Chairman out of the chair at half-past 10. To-night a much greater matter is at stake; the whole fiscal policy of the Government is under review. We have had a speech made by the hon. member for Townsville, bristling with figures and statements, that should be

carefully considered by every member of this House before we go to a division. I do not think any member of the House has had time to grasp them or deal with them, and they have not been answered. Having these facts before us, the Premier will be foolish, in his position as leader of the House and Chief Secretary of the colony, in refusing to assent to the adjournment. Many hon. members on both sides, I am sure, are anxious to read those figures and check them, because the case, as made out by the hon. member for Townsville, seems to me, on the face of it, to be overwhelming, and the figures require to be carefully gone into and considered. I do not think that any reasonable man in this House—and I am sure the Premier himself is a reasonable man, especially in matters of high State policy—can possibly object to such a course being adopted. I defy any hon. member of this House to grapple with the figures, so far as the information is before us, that were brought forward by the hon. member for Townsville, Mr. Macrossan. The Minister for Lands, who is an ex-Registrar-General, and who is an authority on the census—at least I take his word for it, and I do not believe he would say he was an authority if he was not—admitted that the figures brought forward by the hon. member for Townsville were of such a nature that they required the fullest consideration.

The PREMIER: He admitted that they were all wrong.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The Minister for Lands did not assert that they were all wrong.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Only the census figures.

Mr. MOREHEAD: I admit at once with reference to one particular set of figures which were used by the hon. member for Townsville, having regard to the census, that the Minister for Lands joined issue with the member for Townsville. We do not yet know who is right. There is a strong difference of opinion between the hon. gentlemen, but beyond dealing with those figures the Minister for Lands did not go any further. The figures of the hon. member for Townsville, however, went very much further than the census returns; they touched matters of very much more serious import to the colony than any census returns. So far as the figures were correct, and I have no reason to doubt them until they are proved wrong, they dealt most exhaustively with the present fiscal position of the colony, and I think that hon. members who are really desirous of dealing seriously with this matter will put it beyond a party question. It is a thoroughly national question; it is a question as to whether we are justified in going into this expenditure or not. The Government have not shown us that we are justified, and so far as I have heard, the hon. member for Townsville has shown we are not. That is exactly the position at the present time, and the figures which have been adduced have not been refuted. As they stand they bear a very sinister aspect, and if not refuted they will have a most damaging effect. I therefore consider that the Premier will be unwise, and hon. members will be unwise, if they insist upon this debate being continued to-night without an opportunity being given to us to go thoroughly into the financial question as raised by the hon. member for Townsville. I have only to repeat what I said at first, that a large number of members on this side of the House are anxious to discuss the matter before going into committee, and I take it that there are also a considerable number on the other side of the House. Having regard to that fact, I ask the Premier as an act of propriety in dealing with such a large question to consent to the House being adjourned at the present time, as it is now nearly 10 o'clock.

The PREMIER said : Mr. Speaker,—The motion made by the hon. member for Warrego was made without any reason assigned, and coming at the hour it did it looked very like an obstructive motion.

Mr. DONALDSON : I did so because there are five or six members on this side who wish to speak.

The PREMIER : The hon. member's manner and the time he chose to propose the motion certainly suggested the idea that it was an obstructive motion. A motion for adjournment for the purpose of continuing the debate in a serious spirit is a very different thing, and would be accepted by the Government in a very different manner. I said, when I spoke early this afternoon, that I desired to speak on the financial aspect of the question, but that I proposed to do that in committee. I said that, early in the afternoon when following the hon. member for Balonne. Since then a good deal has been said, and some things have been said that it is not desirable to pass even till to-morrow without comment. I propose, therefore, to take the opportunity of saying, not all that I intended to say in committee, but what I can conveniently say this evening before the House adjourns. There are two or three things which have been said that may be disposed of very briefly. I should like to say a word with respect to the speech of the hon. member for Mackay, Mr. Black. He told us as plainly as possible, although not exactly in such bald and ugly words, that he would support this railway when he could see that he would get political support by doing so, but as long as he saw no chance of getting political support by voting for it, he would vote against it; that is what he said, boiled down. I have nothing more to say to that. That is the manner in which the hon. member, and many other Northern members, approach subjects of this kind, and that is the very thing which deprives them of a great deal of sympathy they might otherwise receive. The hon. member for Northern Downs referred to some of the Treasurer's tables, particularly to Table T, and criticising the amount of interest debited there against the railways, said it was entirely inaccurate, because it was debited simply on the amount actually expended, and not on the amount which might be fairly charged against the loans on account of railways, because it is well known that most of the earlier loans—all indeed except the present loan—were sold at a loss. Now, as a matter of fact, if the hon. member had taken the trouble to look at the tables in the paper he quoted from, he would have seen that the amount stated there is the gross amount for which the colony is liable, including the deficits on the different loans which have always been apportioned to them. At page 18 he will see the amount of the loans, including depreciation; also the expenditure to 30th June, 1887, and the balance unexpended, which come together to the same amount as the amount under the heading, "Loans including depreciation." There is an item of say £1,000,000, and the loan has been sold at 10 per cent. discount; then the amount of £900,000 actually spent on the railways has been treated as £1,000,000, and the interest calculated on it accordingly. That appears by turning to page 19, where it will be found that the amounts on which interest is calculated exactly correspond with the amounts of the loans, with the depreciation added, so that all the speech of the hon. member went for nothing.

Mr. NELSON : I am not satisfied yet.

The PREMIER : The hon. member is not satisfied; the figures are in the tables from which he quoted.

Mr. NELSON : No, they are not there,

The PREMIER : The hon. member says they are not there. If he will take the first line, "Loans, including depreciation, railways, Southern and Western," he will find that £8,640,000 is the total amount borrowed, or rather the total amount for which the credit of the colony is authorised to be pledged. The expenditure up to 30th June, 1887, was £6,715,000, and the balance unexpended was £2,149,000. If these two are added together we shall get the total for which the credit of the colony is authorised to be pledged. In each of these items, £6,715,000 and £2,149,000, the depreciation is added. If he will turn to the other page he will see that the interest is calculated upon £6,715,000, that is the amount actually spent.

Mr. NELSON : Look at the bottom of the page, and you will see that the interest is on the actual expenditure to the 30th June, for various years.

The PREMIER : What is stated is, "Loan expenditure to 30th June, £6,715,000." That is the estimated expenditure, including the discounts. But not much turns upon that. I only point out that the strictures of the hon. member are entirely beside the question, which I regret, because the hon. member takes an intelligent interest in the subject of finance, and I am always glad to hear his criticisms on any point. There is not nearly enough attention paid in the House to finance; I wish there was a great deal more.

Mr. MOREHEAD : Hear, hear !

The PREMIER : I do not think the hon. gentleman opposite takes as much interest in it as he might; he does not know nearly so much about it as he ought. I will now refer to some statements made by the hon. member for Townsville. First of all, I will remark that in a great part of his speech he proceeded upon two very obvious fallacies, or rather on two branches of the same fallacy. One was that the £10,000,000 loan was an entirely distinct fund opened at a different bank, and with respect to which a different account was kept from the rest of the Loan Fund; and the other that, by charging all the money that is being expended to the previous loan, and to the supposed separate account kept in an entirely different bank, he brings out that only £95,000 have been spent out of the £10,000,000 loan on the Northern railways. As a matter of fact, the Government which preceded the present Government, although they authorised the borrowing of a good deal of money for Northern railways, did not spend it. They left it lying idle in the Treasury to be spent, and the present Government have been going on spending it; so that if we compare the expenditure in the northern part of the colony during the past four years with the expenditure in the southern part, the ratio will be perfectly right. It is only by making mistakes of that kind, which could be detected at once by those who knew the facts, that the hon. member was able to make out a plausible case. He told us, for instance, that no money had been spent out of the £10,000,000 loan on the Cooktown and Maytown Railway. That is not correct. Nearly all the money authorised for that railway has been spent, and nearly all, by the present Government. As to the line from Herberton to the coast, it was impossible to spend money upon it until it was determined where the railway should be made, and although hon. members opposite when in office put the vote on the Estimates, they took good care not to fix where it should go to. That question took a long time to determine, but when the route was at last decided upon, expenditure was commenced upon it by the present Government without any delay. In fact, if there was any mistake, it was that it was begun too

quickly. And yet hon. members on the other side say it ought to have been spent years ago, using whatever argument happens to suit the occasion. Consistency is a great thing, but hon. members opposite use one argument one day and quite a contradictory one the next, if it suits them. As I said on a previous occasion, inconsistency does not consist in changing your opinion, but in advocating two opinions at the same time. Hon. members on the other side of the House advocate two different opinions at the same time. They use one argument to-day and quite a different one to-morrow, and on the day after that they return to their original argument.

Mr. MOREHEAD: But how can that be using two arguments at the same time?

The PREMIER: I did not mean at the same instant of time. The hon. member is really very clever, but I anticipated him by referring to the advocacy of the first opinion on the third day as well as on the first. I thought some foolish criticism of that kind would be made, and I was prepared. With regard to certain hon. members making a Northern grievance out of everything, I have only to say, using a somewhat colloquial expression, that we are about "full of it." If the arguments of the hon. member for Townsville have any weight, as to the financial state of the colony, they are particularly appropriate to the proposition brought forward the other day, which the Government were desirous to give effect to—that is, the railway from Normanston to Croydon. If the arguments of the hon. member for Townsville are sound, the Government would not be justified in making that line. What the hon. member said as to the position of the Treasury at the beginning and at the end of the last quarter is quite correct, and I do not differ from him very much as to what will be the probable result at the end of the year. I am referring to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I do not think that by the end of this financial year we shall have reduced the overdraft at the beginning of the year very much. The revenue is increasing; but I do not think it is increasing so fast that, with an additional appropriation which we shall have to ask the House to sanction in the form of Supplementary Estimates, particularly with respect to the rabbit fence, there is any probability of the debit balance at the end of the current financial year being less than £400,000, or perhaps a little more. But that is a matter which must be dealt with by itself; and the Government will feel bound, before the close of the session, to submit a proposal for dealing with that debit balance. The proposal to be submitted will be a practicable one, and will relieve the Government from any difficulty in that respect. With respect to the loan vote, I must repeat what I said at an earlier hour, that it would be a very wrong thing for the Government to say when they proposed to again go to the London money market. The hon. member for Townsville was, of course, correct when he said that the available balance at the end of September was £2,700,000. He then took the figures I gave yesterday, £1,200,000, as the amount of contracts already let, to which he added 20 per cent. for extras, making £1,440,000. There may be extras to that extent, and so far the hon. member was going on all right. He then assumed that we were going to spend £500,000 this quarter, £500,000 the next quarter, and £500,000 the quarter after that—or £1,500,000 altogether. Then he added that to the £1,440,000, and came to the conclusion that we have exhausted the loan vote. But the mistake he made was in counting the expenditure twice over, as is obvious at a glance. That was the error he made. His estimate of the expenditure during the first quarter—£500,000—is a

much greater amount than I think will be spent, and I have a tolerably accurate knowledge of it. His estimate of the two succeeding quarters is also greater than will be spent.

Mr. BLACK: Start fresh contracts.

The PREMIER: Will the hon. gentleman allow me to explain how we propose to start fresh contracts, and what fresh contracts we wish to start? As I said, that is the mistake the hon. gentleman fell into. He reckoned the expenditure for the remaining three quarters of the year at £1,500,000, in addition to the existing contracts, although the greater part of it will be in respect of those very contracts. Without going into details, of course the amount to be expended on contracts already let is no test of what the condition of the Loan Fund will be at the end of the year—first, because the greater part of the money falling due under those contracts will not come in course of payment during the current financial year, so that the amount of that expenditure must be reduced; and on the other hand a great deal of money must be spent out of loan, irrespective of contracts already let, for works going on from time to time, such as dredging, and things of that sort. On the whole the result will be this: I think I may say without any hesitation that at the end of the current financial year there will not be less than a million of money at the credit of the Loan Fund. Upon that I have the fullest information, and hon. members may accept it without any hesitation at all. And that is allowing for the inception of works tenders for which have not yet been called. In that estimate the Government have allowed for a reasonable expenditure in respect of some works that have not, as I say, yet been commenced. The railways now going on in the southern portion of the colony are the extension from Roma to Charleville, which will be finished before the end of the financial year, and it is not proposed to start any fresh works in that direction. Then there are the extensions to Southport and Beaudesert, upon which considerable liabilities are already incurred. A large sum will be expended during the financial year in respect of those lines. They will be nearly finished by the end of the financial year. Then there is the North Coast railway, in respect of which there will be considerable expenditure, but the greater part of the existing contracts will not be completed during the financial year; something like £40,000 or £50,000 will be carried forward to next year. Then there is the city extension. There is also some money to pay on the Beauraba branch. These are practically the only railways going on in the southern part of the colony—that is, the Gympie line, the Southport line, and the city branch. In the Wide Bay and Burnett district there is the Burrum and Bundaberg line going on, on which a considerable sum of money will have to be spent during the current year, and the Maryborough and Gayndah line, tenders for which will possibly be accepted in the course of a day or two. That will involve considerable expenditure, of course. In the Central division there is no railway going on except the Emu Park line, which is estimated to be nearly finished by the end of the year. In the Northern district the extension to Hughenden is practically completed, and the only other work going on there is on the Main Range and some works about Townsville. Further north than that there is the Cooktown line, the greater part of the contract for which will be completed during the year. Of the Cloncurry and Carpentaria line I shall say nothing at present. Then there is the Herberton line, in respect of which a very large sum will be expended, but the contract will not be completed until after the end of the current financial year.

These are the railways going on now, and in considering what the expenditure is likely to be the Government have come to the conclusion that it is desirable that some additional works should be started. And here let me say that the principle we have hitherto gone on in borrowing money for the construction of public works has not been borrowing the whole of the money first, paying it into a bank and then letting the contract to be paid out of it. We have conducted our business much in the way in which a merchant does—looking forward from time to time, incurring certain liabilities, and intending to spread the cost of the works over a series of years; trusting that our credit this year will enable us to spend so much, next year so much, and we trust that we may, so long as we act with prudence, go to the London money market and borrow money as we require it. We have never felt ourselves bound to make no contracts until we have the money actually in the banks. If we did, of course we might be placed in the somewhat inconvenient position of having to draw all our money out of the banks, which no doubt would cause temporary inconvenience in the financial world. That is the principle we have hitherto gone upon. In calculating what is likely to be expended during the current year, leaving, as I say, to the credit of the Loan Fund at the end of the year not less than £1,000,000, the Government have taken into consideration that they would be justified in calling tenders for certain new lines; and, although I should have preferred saying it in committee, I take this opportunity of mentioning what lines we have taken into consideration—lines for which tenders may properly be called. In the Southern district we have thought it will be proper to call for tenders for a further extension of the North Coast line—that is if we can get the plans approved by Parliament. We propose to call for tenders for the construction of the Cleveland line, in respect of which special arrangements have been made with the landowners, who have surrendered their land. It is also proposed, if practicable, to do small work at Sandgate, which is, however, not of much consequence either one way or another; also to proceed with the South Brisbane line, if the plans are approved of by Parliament, to the extent of acquiring the land, but not going any further than that, because the money authorised will not cover it. In addition to that we propose to call for tenders for the first section of the Warwick to St. George line, as it is called, which, whatever name it is called by, is now under discussion. Those are the lines in the Southern district. In the Wide Bay and Burnett district it is not proposed to call for any additional tenders, beyond the line between Maryborough and Gayndah, during the current year. In the Central division the Government desire, as soon as they possibly can, to call for tenders for the extension of the line to the Thomson in one lot. In the Northern division they do not propose to do anything with respect to the Townsville line. There are no works there for which tenders can be called at present, but there are two matters in that division with respect to which they do propose to call for tenders as soon as the plans are ready. That is the Bowen railway, the plans of which have been approved of by Parliament; and also the line from Cloncurry to Croydon. Those are the matters which the Government have taken into consideration in making the estimate. Those are the matters upon which money is likely to be spent during the year, if, as is intended, tenders are called for them, and which will leave, as I say, a balance to the credit of the Loan Fund of about £1,000,000.

Mr. MOREHEAD: Without any contingent liabilities?

The PREMIER: Of course there will be contingent liabilities, as I pointed out. We have always gone on the principle of carrying on our liabilities from year to year, not borrowing all the money before the line is commenced. That might be a desirable principle to introduce as a new principle, but it is not the principle we go upon. If a line will cost £500,000 we do not wait to begin it till we have borrowed the £500,000 and lodged it in the bank to the credit of the line. That would be a new principle. The Government contemplate that the borrowing of the colony will not be suddenly stopped. The obligations for the succeeding year will be about the same amount as for this year. In both years it will be materially less than during last year. These matters have been carefully considered by the Government, and there is no occasion for alarm or for any fear of the financial credit of the country being endangered. The Government have devoted a great deal of time and consideration to the matter, because it was impossible to say what we could propose till we were in possession of full information as to the state of the public funds; and as the particulars of the Loan Fund are not kept at the Treasury it has taken some time to get the information together. I think it right to add that the balance of £1,000,000 at the end of the financial year to the credit of the Loan Fund is of the Loan Fund proper, and I have said before that we propose to deal with the floating deficit separately. With respect to the small liabilities against the Loan Fund to which the hon. member for Townsville referred, those are mere items on paper and do not reduce the amount of cash available though they may diminish the apparent credit balances. There are several items that may be called loan credits which are exceeded. The hon. member pointed out some, and I am sorry to say that I have become acquainted with a few more during my experience of the Treasury, though they are not very large.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is the general rule.

The PREMIER: I am afraid it is, but I do not think it is likely to be so much the rule in future as it has been. I have said all I wish to say on the point.

Mr. MOREHEAD: You have not disclosed the contingent liability, which is the backbone of the whole thing—the liability under the contracts of which you spoke.

The PREMIER: If those contracts are made the loan expenditure of the succeeding year will be an amount nearly equal to that of this year. You cannot enter into a contract for a railway from Normanton to Croydon, for instance, without paying for it at some time; you cannot construct railways without paying for them. If the hon. member thinks he can, it is a mistake. The line in the Central district will cost £150,000, and 100 miles in the Carpentaria district will cost £300,000—we all know that. I have pointed out what the liabilities will be, supposing fresh contracts are let and a reasonable amount of expenditure goes on during the year in respect of them, and I have also stated the liabilities for the succeeding year, which will probably be about the same. The expenditure on harbours and rivers will not be diminished, because the cost of dredging depends principally on the number of dredges at work, and there will be some harbour improvements. We have been waiting for Sir John Coode's reports, but those improvements have been taken into consideration in my estimates. I shall not speak longer now, and probably, under the circumstances, it is just as well that the debate should be adjourned.

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put and passed.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR WORKS, the resumption of the debate was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

MESSAGES FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

The SPEAKER said: I have to report to the House that I have received the following messages from the Legislative Council:—

DIVISIONAL BOARDS BILL.

“MR. SPEAKER,

“The Legislative Council having had under consideration the message of the Legislative Assembly, dated the 4th instant, relative to the amendments made by the Legislative Council in the Divisional Boards Bill, beg now to intimate that they insist on their amendments in clause 15, line 30, and clause 28, lines 36 and 37, because it is necessary to provide for the preparation of a complete voters' list before the day of nomination; insist on their amendment in clause 28, line 38, because the non-payment of rates by an occupier or tenant does not render the owner liable for such payment; agree to the amendment on their amendments in clause 95, and to the amendments made by the Legislative Assembly in the new clauses 246 and 247; and insist on their amendments in clause 207 and the sixth schedule, because the revenue of the local authority is sufficiently protected by the other clauses of the Bill—because cutting standing timber would frequently involve waste in excess of the annual value, and the loss of any of the indigenous forest trees is greater than the gain to the local authority of the rates that would be recovered by this mode of procedure.

“A. H. PALMER,

“President.

“Legislative Council Chambers,

“Brisbane, 12th October, 1887.”

On the motion of the PREMIER, the message was ordered to be taken into consideration to-morrow.

QUEENSLAND FISHERIES BILL.

“MR. SPEAKER,

“The Legislative Council have this day agreed to a Bill entitled ‘A Bill to make better provision for regulating the fisheries in Queensland waters,’ with the amendments indicated in the accompanying schedule, in which amendments the Legislative Council requests the concurrence of the Legislative Assembly.

“A. H. PALMER,

“President.

“Legislative Council Chambers,

“12th October, 1887.”

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Council's amendments were ordered to be taken into consideration to-morrow.

IMMIGRATION ACT OF 1882 AMENDMENT BILL.

“MR. SPEAKER,

“The Legislative Council having this day agreed to a Bill entitled ‘A Bill to further amend the Immigration Act of 1882,’ beg now to return the same to the Legislative Assembly without amendment.

“A. H. PALMER,

“President.

“Legislative Council Chambers,

“12th October, 1887.”

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. I propose to-morrow, probably, to introduce the New Guinea Bill, and after that to proceed with the debate which was adjourned this evening.

Mr. MOREHEAD: When does the Premier intend to go on with Supply?

The PREMIER: Probably next week.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 10 o'clock.