

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

THURSDAY, 13 OCTOBER 1887

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, 13 October, 1887.

Motion for Adjournment.—Mr. Railway Surveyor Delisser
 —Reductions in Railway Department.—Branch Railways near Toowoomba.—The late Railway Arbitrator.—Marsupial Board Funds.—Railway Construction by Private Enterprise.—Queensland Trustees and Executors Society, Limited, Bill—second reading.
 —The British New Guinea (Queensland) Bill of 1887.
 —Warwick to Thane's Creek Railway.—Adjournment.

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

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

MR. RAILWAY SURVEYOR DELISSER.—REDUCTIONS IN RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.—BRANCH RAILWAYS NEAR TOOWOOMBA.—THE LATE RAILWAY ARBITRATOR.—MARSUPIAL BOARD FUNDS.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I received a letter this morning which I think, in justice to the gentleman who wrote it, I should read to the House, and I shall conclude with the usual motion. On a recent occasion I referred to the survey of the line from Gladstone to Bundaberg, and to Mr. Delisser, who was the surveyor. In doing so I pointed out that I had been told upon high authority that that gentleman could not get employment from Mr. Hannam, the Chief Engineer in the Northern division. In justice to Mr. Delisser, I think I should read the letter which I received from him to-day, together with some short correspondence connected with it. The letter is addressed to myself, and runs thus:—

“DEAR SIR,

“I have the honour to enclose copies of two letters—one from myself to Mr. Hannam, Chief Engineer of the Northern and Central division of Railways, the other from Mr. Hannam in reply—both letters referring to a statement you are reported to have made in the House on the 10th of August, to the effect that you had it on good authority that Mr. Hannam had refused to have me in his division, and from thence you drew conclusions most hurtful to my professional character.

“As the whole of your statements appeared to me to be based on this authority, I wrote as soon as I saw the report to Mr. Hannam, requesting him to give me a short note to show you were lying under a mistake. This he has done, and you will see by his letter he most emphatically denies that he ever refused to have me in his division.

“Of course your statements have done me a most grievous wrong—none the less, perhaps, that the authority on which you based them was false.

“I have been assured by one of your friends in Gladstone that if you knew the true case you would immediately do me the justice of publicly denying the assertion of your authority. I therefore trust in you to do so, and as I do not intend to leave Gladstone before some public contradiction is given to your authority, I hope you will take an early opportunity of rendering me the slight reparation I now ask of you.

“I am, sir,

“Yours faithfully,

“E. A. DELISSER.

“I have sent copies of these letters also to the Commissioner for Railways.

“E. A. DELISSER.”

The correspondence referred to is only short. The first letter is addressed to Willoughby Hannam, Esq., Chief Engineer, Northern and Central Division:—

“DEAR SIR,

“I enclose a slip from the Parliamentary Debates of Wednesday, 10th August, in which Mr. Norton's speech *re* Gladstone and Bundaberg survey is reported. In it he attacks my professional character, and the tenor of his speech is that you would not employ me in consequence of your low opinion of my capabilities as a surveyor.

"Now, as I am convinced this was not the reason why I objected to go north, and knowing your love of fair play, I beg you will give me a short note, that I can make use of it if I think proper, to show that Mr. Norton has been lying under a mistake.

"This matter is of very great consequence to me. It means that my professional career is to be damned and blasted after thirty years' hard work, during which time I have worked honestly and true—always to the satisfaction of my chiefs, and from whom I have ever received first-class testimonials, among which is one from yourself, which I prize very much.

"I am, yours truly,

"E. A. DELISSER."

This next is Mr. Hannam's letter to Mr. Delisser, dated Cairns, September 27, 1887:—

"DEAR SIR,

"It has only lately come to my knowledge that some very nasty and untruthful statements have been made in the Legislative Assembly with regard to you and me—to the effect that I had refused to employ you in my district.

"Nothing of the kind was ever said or written by me, except the correspondence you have already seen, which was to the effect that one of the Northern surveyors would have to be sacked to make room for you.

"Yours &c.,

"W. HANNAM."

Then, on the other side of the sheet—

"Since writing the above, I have received yours of the 28th August. I have torn open the envelope and hasten to assure you that I never dreamt of the trouble involved in the statement of your political friends.

"If you will indicate to me the best course to pursue I am at your service to publicly contradict the infamous assertion made in the House. I am willing to put a letter in the *Courier* or any other Brisbane paper to contradict Mr. Norton's authority if you wish.

"W. HANNAM."

Well, sir, I do not wish to do Mr. Delisser any harm, and I think it is right, as he has written to me on the subject, that I should give the authority upon which I spoke. The gentleman who informed me that Mr. Hannam had refused to employ Mr. Delisser in his district was the late Minister for Works, Mr. Miles, and I am quite sure that if he were present to-day he would support what I say. I am quite sure that hon. members of this House will not discredit me when I say that is the case. Of course I do not know whether the statement made was true or not; but as it came from a gentleman holding the position held by the late Minister for Works, I assumed that it was correct, notwithstanding what Mr. Hannam wrote. I can only say that I accepted it in the terms upon which Mr. Delisser writes, that Mr. Hannam did not wish to employ him in his district because he thought he would rather employ a surveyor who was more capable. That was the light in which I made the statement, and if I had had any doubt on the subject I should have been supported in that view by the fact that for many weeks Mr. Delisser was on the Gladstone and Bundaberg line without doing any appreciable permanent work. It appeared to me, and not only to me, but to others who know more on the subject than I do, that a great deal of time was wasted in making trial surveys of no value whatever. I only say I regret to have said one word which could do any harm to Mr. Delisser or to Mr. Hannam. But, under the circumstances, I felt bound to my constituents to speak as I did, and having said so much in justice to Mr. Delisser, I beg to move the adjournment of the House.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. C. B. Dutton) said: Mr. Speaker,—The statement of the hon. member for Port Curtis seems, to a certain extent, to impugn the correctness of what he states he was told by my late respected friend and colleague, Mr. Miles. I think it is only

right I should say something about it. Now, there has been some disagreement between Mr. Hannam and Mr. Delisser; whatever it is I do not know. It may have been a personal matter, and not arising from any low opinion of his professional capacity which Mr. Hannam may have had. But he did not get on very well with him. I am rather surprised that the hon. member having heard that, or something of the kind, from the late Mr. Miles, when he was advocating the line from Gladstone to Bundaberg, should have denounced a man like Mr. Delisser being put on the survey, and stated that the late Minister for Works had told him he was a useless man and Mr. Hannam could not have him in his district, and consequently he was put on to do the work in his (Mr. Norton's) district. It is not quite fair for him to come here and denounce public servants in that way because a work is not going on as rapidly as he might wish. If he could have shown that the work was not going on as quickly as it ought, owing to Mr. Delisser, and that the Government should dispense with his services, there would have been something in it; but to make Mr. Delisser a sort of scapegoat because of his own impatience is anything but fair. It is not a thing I should do under any circumstances, and I am surprised that the hon. member for Port Curtis should have done it. The staff had to be reduced, and it was reduced in the directions in which services could be best dispensed with. Mr. Delisser had finished the work on which he was engaged, and his services were no longer required on that line, so they were dispensed with. Whether he is a good railway surveyor or not I do not know. I do not wish to say one word as to his professional capacity or incapacity—he may be as able a man as there is in the service for all I know; but there was no work for him to do, and on those grounds we dispensed with his services.

BRANCH RAILWAYS NEAR TOOWOOMBA.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—I take advantage of the motion for adjournment to point out a little error into which the Minister for Lands fell last night while addressing the House, as I think it only fair that he should correct what he said. The hon. member said this:—

"But Toowoomba has had its fair share of the railway expenditure, and it was fortunate in getting its little lines constructed first. The Beauraraba line, the extension to Highfields and Crow's Nest, and the deviation to Drayton have all been completed."

Of course hon. members know that the plans and sections of the Drayton deviation have not yet been laid on the table of the House. I do not know why; but I know that they were prepared long before the plans of the Thane's Creek railway. I may point out also that the Beauraraba line has no connection with Toowoomba. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, was the author of it, and it was made at the suggestion of the late Minister for Works and his colleague, Mr. Kates. Toowoomba does not benefit by the railway, and we do not wish to be saddled with it. I think it only fair that this correction should be made, because the general public might think that the Drayton deviation was already constructed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. Jordan) said: Mr. Speaker,—I am rather glad the hon. member has called attention to this matter, because I believe I did inadvertently fall into an error in mentioning the Drayton deviation in connection with the other two lines near Toowoomba; but I do not think I said they had all been completed. I said that I understood the Beauraraba line and the Highfields and Crow's Nest line were completed, and

I did mention the other, but I do not think I said it had been completed, but that I was under the impression that it was in course of construction. I admit that I fell into an error, and I am glad to have had an opportunity of saying so.

THE LATE RAILWAY ARBITRATOR.

MR. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—In connection with what has fallen from the hon. member for Port Curtis, I take the opportunity of saying a few words in regard to the services of certain other members of the railway staff having been dispensed with by the Minister for Works. Three young men, natives of the colony, brought up to the profession of railway surveyors, and officers who have proved themselves competent to perform their work, have almost at a moment's notice had their services dispensed with on the ground of retrenchment. On the other hand, I find that a proved incompetent Civil servant, whose incompetence is so great that it will entail a considerable expenditure on the part of the State to remedy the gross errors he has committed—errors arising from incapacity and other causes—I find that gentleman, if a statement in this evening's papers is correct, has been appointed clerk of petty sessions at Clermont. This transaction—if the papers are right—is altogether of a very shady nature. This gentleman has often been referred to in this House, and, fortunately or unfortunately, he is a near relative of the Minister for Works. On the one hand we find these three gentlemen—of admitted competence, of unblemished character, natives of the colony—turned out of employment at a moment's notice, and on the other hand a man, whom I may call a disgraced official, given a position of considerable emolument under the Crown, instead of being got rid of as he ought, and as I think later on this evening it will be proved he ought to have been. If that is to be the reward of incompetence, and dismissal the reward of competence, at the hands of the Minister for Works, I think it is a very bad thing for the colony.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know anything about the case of Mr. Delisser, but I take the opportunity of saying that I think Mr. Hannam deserves to be severely censured for the manner in which he referred to the hon. member for Port Curtis in the letter he wrote to Mr. Delisser, and I hope my hon. colleague, the Minister for Works, will censure him accordingly. I rose to reply to a statement made by the hon. member for Balonne, referring to a statement in this evening's papers, that Mr. Thomson, the late Railway Arbitrator, has been appointed clerk of petty sessions at Clermont. That statement is perfectly correct. The hon. member says that Mr. Thomson ought to have been dismissed from the public service. I do not think so. Probably the hon. member thinks so because Mr. Thomson is related to the Minister for Works; if he was not, the hon. member would have no objection. But the Minister for Works is to him like a red rag to an infuriated bull, and anything connected with him, however remotely or however closely, is highly objectionable, and ought to be got rid of and sent out of the colony, if possible. I believe, from what I have learnt lately, and from what has been said in this House, that Mr. Thomson was not a good railway arbitrator. I said last week that, between Thursday and to-day, the Government would take into consideration what they proposed to do with him, and they have kept their word. At the last meeting of the Cabinet I suggested to my colleagues that Mr. Thomson should be appointed clerk of petty sessions at Clermont; that had not occurred to any other member of the Cabinet before I made the suggestion. I believe it is

the proper thing to do. It is not desirable that he should be dismissed. He was in the public service; his honesty and integrity were not attacked, nor was his competence, except for the particular office he held; and under such circumstances the ordinary way to deal with Civil servants is to transfer them; that is the ordinary rule, and I took it upon myself to suggest to my colleagues more immediately concerned in the matter—the Minister for Works and the Colonial Secretary—that the transfer would be desirable. They accepted that view, and the appointment was made to-day.

MR. MOREHEAD: Has he been relieved of his duties as Railway Arbitrator?

The PREMIER: I do not know whether he has been informed of the transfer yet or not. I have kept my word, and brought the matter under the notice of the Government during the week as I promised, and I think we have treated a Civil servant, who can only be charged with a want of discretion in performing a duty of a peculiarly difficult character, in the ordinary and proper way. As to the surveyors who have been dismissed, I know nothing about them. One of them we have heard something about this afternoon, but it is not necessary to say anything further with respect to that case.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not know anything of this personal matter that has arisen between the hon. member for Port Curtis and Mr. Delisser and Mr. Hannam, but I quite approve of the course the Minister for Works has adopted. I am positive if I had been in the place of the Minister for Works, and was about to reduce the staff in the Central district, I should have allowed Mr. Delisser to go. As to the other three surveyors mentioned by the leader of the Opposition, I know nothing about them, but I presume that they are competent for their work, and I think that if there is an opening for them in the public service they ought to get it, more especially as they are natives of the country. I think that natives of the country should have a preferential claim, everything else being equal. As to the matter of the Railway Arbitrator, I know nothing of that officer personally. He is a man I have never seen, and I have no objection to make against him because he is a relation of the Minister for Works; but I have a strong objection to him after having read the evidence in the Corser case. No man could display greater incapacity and incompetence than he did under examination by the Attorney-General. If a man is to be transferred to a higher position because he is incompetent, that is rather a strange way of increasing the efficiency of the public service.

MR. MOREHEAD: What is the difference in the pay of the two officers?

The PREMIER: £35.

MR. MOREHEAD: £32.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I am told that the salary of the Railway Arbitrator is now £450 per annum. When Mr. Macpherson occupied that position the salary was £400. The salary of Mr. Thomson, as clerk of petty sessions at Clermont, will, I believe, be £482.

The PREMIER: No, it will not, indeed.

MR. NORTON: Yes, it will, according to the Blue Book.

The PREMIER: According to the Blue Book I looked at, it will not.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I think that when the Government have seen fit to move him from the position he held, he should not at any rate, have an increased salary.

The PREMIER: He does not; he gets a diminution in his salary.

Mr. MOREHEAD: A diminution of £1.

The PREMIER: No; a good deal more than that.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not want to harshly criticise the late Railway Arbitrator, who has been universally pronounced utterly incompetent for the position which he held—an incompetence so obvious that he had to leave it. I really do not see why a man who has no claim upon the Government of the country as being an old Civil servant, having been only taken up during the last two or three years and put into a position for which he was manifestly unfitted, should be provided with another billet, when at the same time no consideration is being shown to those young men, natives of the colony, who have been trained up, I may say, in the Government service. I think it is obviously unfair that those young men should be turned adrift, and that old pensioners who are found unfit for one billet should be hoisted into another. I regret to say that probably Mr. Thomson will be found unfit to occupy the office to which he is now to be appointed, at least if there is any intelligence required for performing its duties. I do not wish to say anything personal in this matter, but it does seem queer that a man who only got into the service in his old days, and who has proved an utter failure in the first situation he has occupied, should, as soon as that is exposed, have another position discovered for him. I do not think it will be satisfactory to the taxpayers of the colony who have to "pay the piper" if they find that an incompetent old man is shoved about from one billet to another; while at the same time smart, able-bodied, active, competent young men, trained up in the Government service, are dismissed and sent to the right-about on the ground of retrenchment. For my own part I think the police magistrate can do all the business at Clermont without a clerk of petty sessions, and then he would not be overburdened. If the Government are inclined to retrench they have an opportunity of doing so in that direction, by saving the salary of a clerk of petty sessions. I do not see the slightest use of a clerk of petty sessions at Clermont.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B. B. Moreton): The police magistrate visits Emerald and Springsure.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: The Colonial Secretary says the police magistrate visits Emerald and Springsure, but he can do that and be back in a very short space of time. I am very well acquainted with the kind of work that has to be got through in those up-country county courts by benches of magistrates; and I am quite certain that with a police magistrate at Clermont, even if he has to visit Emerald and Springsure, there is not the slightest necessity for a clerk of petty sessions. It is merely creating billets as a sort of refuge for the destitute, and the taxpayers of the colony are the people who have to "pay the piper."

Mr. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—I understood from the remarks of the Premier last Thursday, that he would take into consideration the system of dealing with resumptions of land for railway purposes. I do not know whether I misunderstood him or not, but I do not think there is any hon. member in the House who is not dissatisfied with the present way of dealing with those cases. The Corser case is an example in point, and the compensation cases which I brought up in connection with the Logan Railway also prove that the system is a very bad one. It is scarcely possible, I think, that a thoroughly qualified man can be got to act as arbitrator under the present system. I may have

misunderstood the Premier, but I hope he will consider this matter as well as that of the railway arbitrator, and I would like to ask him, without notice, whether the Government have considered it?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. PATTISON said: Mr. Speaker,—I have no intention of saying a word about Mr. Thomson as Railway Arbitrator, but from my knowledge of that gentleman I must say that I think he is a man quite qualified for the position to which he has been appointed. He is a very painstaking officer, and in intelligence will certainly compare favourably with any member of this House. I speak of the gentleman with a knowledge of twenty years. As a magistrate he was certainly one of the most painstaking men we had in our district, and I am sure that he will do justice to the position to which he has now been appointed. Possibly it would have been better if he had been appointed a police magistrate, and I am sorry to see he has to accept the inferior position of clerk of petty sessions; but I am quite certain that he will justify the confidence the Government have reposed in him. We must all admit that he is unfit for the position of Railway Arbitrator. I was one of the committee on the Corser claim—although I was unable to attend all its meetings—and Mr. Thomson confessed his mistake to me in a very manly way. I am sure he is now appointed to a position which he is competent to fill, and that he will fill it with credit to himself.

Mr. ANNEAR said: Mr. Speaker,—I think this will be the proper time to refer to the treatment that the Minister for Works would like to mete out to other people in whom he is not interested. I refer to the remarks made by the hon. gentleman last Friday night when this question was under discussion. I suppose that Mr. Thomson is dead so far as his being Railway Arbitrator is concerned, and that the country will be rid of him. But the hon. gentleman, on Friday last led the House and the country to believe that Mr. Corser purchased a property for the sum of £1,000, knowing that that property—

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not discuss a motion which is already on the business paper. That can be discussed at the proper time.

Mr. ANNEAR: Well, I will put a problematical case. A certain gentleman was supposed to have purchased a property for £7,500, and another gentleman stated that that sum was not paid for it, but that only £1,000 was paid for it.

The PREMIER: We shall be in committee on that question soon. You can discuss it then.

Mr. ANNEAR: I think this is the proper time to discuss it. If the Minister for Works commits himself he is surely not afraid to hear what he has stated. If I commit myself the country will very soon know that I have done so. What do I find? That there is not a word of truth in what has been stated. The property the hon. gentleman referred to was not purchased for £1,000. It was purchased for £7,500, and a copy of the registration of the title I now hold in my hand signed by Mr. Thomas Mylne. However, I sincerely hope, now that the Government have got rid of Mr. Thomson, that they will take into their serious consideration the appointment of a competent person or persons. A gentleman holding that position has to adjudicate upon thousands and thousands of pounds. It is an office that should be held by a gentleman who will not take the evidence of thirteen witnesses and then utterly disregard it. I should like to see a gentleman like Judge Paul occupying a position of that kind. He is of the class of men who should try these cases. We see at the present time, in the case of the

Fortitude Valley line, that every one of the persons through whose property the railway will pass is dissatisfied with the amount of money offered to him. In most cases they are offered less than one-half of what they are willing to receive. However, as we shall have another opportunity of discussing this matter, and as I am somewhat out of order in going on now, I will deal with it fully when we are discussing Mr. Corser's claim in committee.

Mr. SHERIDAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I will not make any reference to Mr. Thomson's competence or incompetence as Railway Arbitrator, but I feel bound to say this: that I have known him for considerably over twenty years, and during that time I have known him intimately. I am exceedingly pleased that the Government have provided for him. A man who has devoted the whole of his life to the best interests of the country, as Mr. Thomson did during his residence at Rockhampton, deserves well of the country, and I congratulate the Government upon the appointment.

Mr. STEVENSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I hope the reason for appointing Mr. Thomson as clerk of petty sessions is not the reason given by the hon. member for Maryborough, Mr. Sheridan, that he had to be provided for. I should be sorry if the Government gave him the appointment for that reason. I am not going to say anything against the appointment; but I think the Premier ought to justify the appointment instead of imputing motives to the leader of the Opposition. I think that Mr. Thomson is as closely related to a member on this side of the House as to the Minister for Works, and I am satisfied it would be a matter for congratulation if he had proved a competent railway arbitrator. This side of the House would have been much better pleased if Mr. Thomson had proved a success; so that there is nothing to be gained by imputing motives. Referring to the suggestion of the hon. member for Cook, Mr. Lumley Hill, that Clermont could do without a clerk of petty sessions, I do not think it could. I think there is far too much business there to enable the Government to do away with the appointment, and I hope that no such suggestion will be acted upon. I hope that Mr. Thomson will prove a success as clerk of petty sessions at Clermont, but at the same time I think that it was rather unfair that he should have been put in that position over the heads of other officers in the department. He is removed from one department and put into another, which he knows nothing at all about, whilst other officers in the department are waiting for promotion. I think the appointment is unfair on that ground.

The SPEAKER said: It is my duty to point out that I have allowed a somewhat irregular discussion to take place, and I am bound to call attention to it now. I was not exactly aware of the purport of the letters which the hon. member for Port Curtis proposed to read until he had completed reading them. I then asked him to kindly let me look at them, and I at once discovered that I ought to have at once stopped him in reading them. It is quite contrary to parliamentary practice for hon. members to refer to previous debates themselves, unless in reference to any particular Bill or motion then before the House, and it is still more irregular to read letters which are written by persons outside referring to anything which has taken place inside the House. In "Bourke's Decisions" I find the following case in point:—

"Mr. Ferrand said he held in his hand a letter from the clerk of the magistrates and board of guardians saying 'I have read with astonishment the reply of the Right Honourable Baronet, the Secretary of State for the

Home Department, to your speech on the second reading of the Poor Law Bill in the House of Commons on Friday last.'"

"The SPEAKER immediately interrupted him and said:—

"The hon. member cannot read a letter in which a reference is made to anything which has taken place during a debate in this House."

The letter which the hon. member read referred to a statement which had been made in the House, and the writer of one of the letters went even much further and criticised the statement made by the hon. member for Port Curtis as "an infamous assertion." That is a disorderly expression when used in the House, and much more disorderly when used by a person outside the House. In "Cushing's Legislative Assemblies" the practice is laid down more clearly:—

"Letters and other communications, whether written or printed, emanating from persons out of the House, and referring to, or commenting on, or denying anything said by a member, or expressing any opinion as to any proceeding within the House, cannot be read by a member in debate. The only occasion upon which such communications could be brought before the House would be in moving for a committee on the subject, or in examinations before such a committee. Where the language of the document is such as would be disorderly or unparliamentary, if spoken in debate, it cannot be read."

Our own Standing Orders say:—

"No member shall allude to any debate of the same session upon a question or Bill not being then under discussion, except by the indulgence of the House for personal explanations."

If the hon. member had asked the indulgence of this House to make an explanation in regard to this matter, possibly the letters might be read; but I do not think it is in accordance with the rules of Parliament that the letter should have been read under the circumstances, more especially as it referred to a previous debate, to which hon. members themselves cannot allude without the indulgence of the House; and further, because it alluded to that debate in words which are in themselves very disorderly, and which, I think, should not have been used by a Civil servant.

Mr. NORTON, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I am sure you, sir, and the House will acquit me of any desire to infringe the rules of the House in bringing the matter forward in the way I did. I received those letters before the House met, and I thought that in justice to Mr. Delisser I was bound to read them. I confess I may not have been strictly in order in doing so, but I am sure the House will acquit me of any desire to act in opposition to the rules of the House in doing so. I am afraid some others have read letters which ought not to have been received, and perhaps I had better not refer too pointedly to the other occasions when others should have been checked in reading letters, if it is thought desirable to strictly enforce the rules of the House in that respect. I rise more particularly now to refer to some remarks which fell from the Minister for Works. The hon. gentleman said I cast some doubt upon the statement made by his predecessor. I cast no doubt upon the statement, but I said distinctly that, notwithstanding Mr. Hannam's letter, I still preferred to believe what was said to me by the late Minister for Works, Mr. Miles. I do not know whether Mr. Hannam intended his refusal to employ Mr. Delisser should be taken to be on the ground of incompetence, but I believe the late Minister for Works took it to be a refusal on that ground. As the matter has already gone so far, I will go a little further with it. The Minister for Works expressed his surprise that I should make use of Mr. Delisser's name simply because the work upon which that officer was employed was not going on fast enough. I did not make use of Mr. Delisser's name on that account, and I do not know

whether he is competent to fill his position or not I do know this, that before I went up to Port Curtis, some months ago—he had then been up there some weeks—the Chief Engineer told me he believed he had been delayed by the wet weather. Long after that, when I came back, and when I thought he was going on with the permanent survey, the Chief Engineer told me that all that time he was going on with the trial survey, and he had hardly begun the permanent survey. That proved to me, what I suspected from the first, that Mr. Delisser, however competent he might be to do that kind of work in open flat country, could not get on very well with it in the kind of country in which he was then employed. He may be a very capable surveyor in open flat country, but the late Minister for Works on two occasions told me the same thing, that Mr. Hannam refused to give him employment on the Northern surveys, and he said further if he did not put him on the Bundaberg to Gladstone line the old fellow would have to go out of the service altogether. I did not wish to mention that, but I am forced to mention it now. The Minister for Works expressed surprise at my speaking of Mr. Delisser as I did, and the hon. gentleman is the last member in this House who should express any surprise, even if I did go beyond what I should have done. Is any man's name safe in the hon. member's hands? Does he forget already the remarks he made about the first railway arbitrator, Mr. Macpherson? No; the hon. member is a mass of contradictions. I regret to have to speak in these terms of a gentleman occupying the position held by the Minister for Works, but I can only say I was forced to do so by his references to the action I have taken. I think the action I have taken in this matter is perfectly justified by the interest my constituents take in it. My action was also taken with a desire to give the gentleman to whom I have referred all the fair play that could be given him. With the permission of the House I will withdraw the motion.

The SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion be withdrawn?

The PREMIER: No.

Mr. CHUBB: I hope the Premier will allow the motion to be withdrawn.

The PREMIER: So that you may move it again.

MARSUPIAL BOARD FUNDS.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker,—Then I will take this opportunity of referring to the matter I intended to refer to. My object in wishing to adopt the other course was to give the Premier an opportunity of speaking in reply, which he has not got on this motion. I have received a telegram from the Bowen Marsupial Board, requesting me to ask in the House a question having reference to the anticipated expiration of the Marsupial Act. The Act will not expire until the end of next session, but next session may be a very short one. This is the telegram I received:—

"Bowen Marsupial Board have £1,100 to their credit in the Treasury derived from assessments under Marsupial Act. In view of expiration of Act board wish to know if they can use the amount unexpended after the Act ceases in paying for marsupial scalps. They instruct me to ask you to be good enough to inquire in Parliament about this."

I shall be glad if the Premier will say something upon the matter to set the minds of these gentlemen at rest.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. A. Rutledge) said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not think that it is desirable to formally answer the hon. gentleman's question. The Act has not yet expired, and until the occasion arises it is probably unnecessary to discuss it. It is a purely speculative question.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION BY PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

Mr. ISAMBERT, in moving—

That, in the opinion of the House, it is desirable that the Government should introduce, during the present session, a measure for the purpose of facilitating railway construction by private enterprise on the guarantee principle—

said: Mr. Speaker,—I am aware that the present Government, as representing the majority of the population of Queensland, as well as the majority of the population of the whole of Australia, are opposed to anything that may tend to create a dangerous monopoly in the State. Animated by this spirit, the people and their leaders, during the late administration, were opposed to the transcontinental railway syndicate on the land-grant principle, on the ground that it would create a dangerous monopoly in our community. We all remember how Sir Thomas McIlwraith, the leader of the late Government, brought forward his scheme for a transcontinental railway; but thanks to the head of the present Government, Sir S. W. Griffith, that scheme was nipped in the bud, and railway construction in Queensland was carried on on the highest social or communistic principles that society knows of. We are all aware how apt, or how anxious, *plus-making* capitalists are to occupy or to monopolise industries which are indispensable to a community, and wise statesmen have ever opposed those tendencies; and where monopolies could not be avoided, they have secured the same to the State in the shape of national institutions. For instance, what better means of monopoly could there be than the postal system—the transmission of intelligence from one person to another, and from one country to another? But as it would be particularly liable to abuse, Governments, very wisely, have made postal communication a State institution. The same has been done with regard to telegraphic communication; wherever that has been instituted it has been more or less adopted by the State and removed from the hands of capitalists. In America, railway communications are in the hands of private companies, and the evils of the system are so severely felt in that country that the foremost men are very anxious to bring about what they call the nationalisation of their railway and telegraphic system. Nearer to us, in Victoria, where telephonic communication had fallen into the hands of a private company, we see that the State has been obliged, through the force of public opinion, to convert it into a public institution. On the Continent, Germany found it advisable, in the interests of the people, to nationalise its railway communications. In France, the same is the case, and not only that, but even tobacco has become a State monopoly. In Germany lately Bismarck attempted to make brandy a State monopoly, but did not succeed, although Switzerland has succeeded in doing so. It is but natural that there should exist a very strong antipathy to anything in the shape of railway construction by private enterprise. My proposition, Mr. Speaker, will be free from such a danger to the State. When the hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, brought forward his motion for the construction of a railway through his electorate, and when I spoke on the subject, he quoted Tasmania as a warning example against having anything to do with railway construction on the guarantee principle. But because they have made a mistake there, because it has not been a success there, it is no reason why we should not adopt the system in a better form. The railway construction from here to Toowoomba cannot be called a success. In many other instances our railways have been badly constructed, and excessive expenditure upon them has been incurred. But that is no reason

why we should not construct our own railways. So with railway construction by private enterprise in the way I intend to propose. I feel convinced that this or any other Government can entertain the construction of railways on the guarantee principle by private enterprise, and at the same time provide against those monopolists, who are so much and so justly dreaded. As there is socialism and socialism, so there are capitalists and capitalists. There is a socialism of love and mutual help, and there is a socialism of hatred and violence. There are capitalists who are anxious to employ their means for the benefit and advancement of their fellow men, and there are capitalists who, to use Carlyle's words, look upon society only as a lemon, to try how much they can squeeze out of it. Also, there is railway construction by private enterprise, and railway construction by private enterprise. The way I propose is to introduce the guarantee system. Certainly, if the guarantee amounted to 4 per cent. or 5 per cent., there would be the danger that capitalists would be anxious to enter upon the work on such terms, just as, some years ago, they were anxious to invest their money in the Government Savings Bank, and get 5 per cent. for it; and the Government had to restrict the amount of deposits received. I feel confident that if the Government would, with proper safeguards, introduce a measure guaranteeing, say, 3 per cent., many railways which are necessary, and which would be paying lines, but which the Government cannot entertain on the ground of having too many lines in hand, and embodying too great a liability for larger loans, would be undertaken by companies. For instance, the railway that the hon. member for Enoggera has proposed: I feel confident, if a guarantee of 3 per cent. was given, that at once a syndicate would be formed, would buy a large amount of land in that direction, subscribe the money for building the line, and they would be sure that at the worst they would have 3 per cent. for their money, while they would also have the prospect of making 5, 6, or more per cent. And if the Government had the power to buy it back again at any time they thought proper on definite terms, there could be no danger whatever to society. Such a company would make a handsome profit out of the land speculation, and would get their own money back again by selling the line to the Government, and the Government would recoup themselves from the Crown lands which they could afterwards sell in those districts. Such a scheme is not at all new. In 1886 I addressed a memorandum to the Government, at the instance of a party anxious to build a railway through the Rosewood district from Marburg. We all know that a Liberal Government is very apt, and has been so ever since there has been a Liberal party in this colony—whenever a Liberal party have been in power they have been very anxious to give golden bridges to their opponents, but their own supporters they have treated very shabbily, and that is the way Rosewood was treated when the £10,000,000 loan was concocted. It is so in the nature of things. The people of Rosewood repeatedly interviewed the present Government and the late Minister for Works on the subject. They asked the Government to build a railway and said they would guarantee the interest, and when the Government would not entertain that proposition they offered to build the railway themselves if the Government would guarantee 4 per cent., and that they also refused. Why they did so in their wisdom I cannot understand. On that occasion I addressed a memorandum to the Government, which I believe embodies all the arguments, or most of the arguments, that can be advanced in favour of the proposition

and also suggests the necessary safeguards, so that no danger should arise to the community. With the permission of the House I will read this memorandum:—

SIR,

I have the honour of again drawing your attention to the imperative necessity existing to amend the railway policy of Queensland by some comprehensive measure which will facilitate the construction of railways by private enterprise without departing from the fundamental principles of our railway policy, viz.:—That our railways, the same as our post and telegraphic systems, should remain in the hands of the people, i.e., the State, for the very weighty reasons that these all-important means of traffic and communication should not fall into the hands of companies or private parties, who, according to experience, would certainly apply to such railways as instruments of exploitation and extortion on the people, a contingency to which the majority of the people of Queensland, and its present Government, particularly the hon. the Premier, are so decidedly and so wisely opposed. But owing to the great extent of the territory of Queensland, its immense natural wealth and resources, and the consequent spread and settlement of the people on its surface, it is almost impossible for administrative development and the extension of our railways to keep pace with the progress of the colony. This inability on the part of the Government to meet all the pressing demands for railway construction, and the consequent monetary difficulties arising therefrom, was taken as a pretext by the late Administration to completely reverse the established railway policy of the colony. These premises, I believe, are amply verified by the experiences of your Government, inasmuch as your Government, on its advent to power, took the railway and works policy of the past as their base line, and projected therefrom what was then generally considered 'a bold and comprehensive works and railway policy,' for the term of five years, involving a loan of not less than ten millions. Yet soon after this policy had received the sanction of Parliament demands for more railways were made on all sides that would require another large loan. Admitting that some of these demands may be frivolous—instigated by interested motives of land speculators—it cannot be denied that many of the railways so demanded are more urgently required and would prove more remunerative than hundreds of miles of railways included in the ten-million loan. Before suggesting the nature of the amendment of the colony's railway policy, pleaded for in this memo., I may state that I am conscious of the necessity to carefully discriminate between the nature of such railways as might be effected by the alteration sought for and those railways that should remain intact under the policy of the State hitherto prevailing. The main lines to the but thinly populated far West certainly could not have been demanded by as many people as some small branch lines are in thickly populated districts, and, as the returns show, are worked with a loss; yet there are important State reasons why they, like our postal and telegraphic institutions, should be built by and remain in the hands of the State. The same applies to what is denominated the 'Transcontinental Railway,' connecting in the interior our several trunk lines, and to the coast lines for additional strategical reasons. But, as already stated, the rapid increase of population and the great progress of settlement in the various parts of the colony are causing such a demand for more railways and branch lines as will be impossible for any Government to meet, although such lines may offer the best guarantees for profitable investment. It is in order to meet difficulties of this nature that I have the honour of making these earnest representations to the Government, and I sincerely trust that the Government in its wisdom may see the force of the necessity for submitting to Parliament during the next session a measure that will facilitate the construction by private enterprise of such railways thought necessary, the immediate building of which, however, the Government may not be able to entertain. A measure encouraging the building of railways by private enterprise, by guaranteeing a certain amount of interest, say 4 per cent., with proper safeguards for the faithful and economic construction and working lines of this description, the Government also reserving the right for purchasing the same at any time on definite conditions, could scarcely be described as a departure from the established railway policy of the colony. It would not only relieve the Government and the country from agitations for useless political railways, but would ensure the building of railways where actually required, and would simply amount to extended contracts, including also the procurement of money for constructing same.

A striking instance in proof of these contentions is the branch line to Mount Esk, *via* the Pine Mountains. This line ought to have branched off somewhere about Walloon, and passed through the centre of the Rosewood—one of the most prosperous and densely populated farming districts in the colony—thereby affording the much-needed transit facilities, and consequently would have proved a profitable investment from the very start. Instead of this, the line in question, under the late Administration, either through political influence or error of judgment, was built *via* the Pine Mountains, passing through an arid and uninhabitable country, and the only traffic afforded to it is derived from the last few stations touching the Rosewood district. That the correction of this serious error is a most legitimate object for the present Administration to entertain, I have repeatedly brought under the notice of your Government. Several deputations which I had the honour of introducing to you laid before you their just claims for this branch line *via* Marburg. The last deputation of these, a most influential one, when receiving an unfavourable reply, offered to construct the line in question by private enterprise if the Government would assist them with a guarantee of a moderate interest, say 4 per cent., on the cost of construction, the Government to retain the requisite right of supervision and control, to ensure the working of the line in the interest of the public, and also to retain the right of purchasing same at any time on definite terms. This proposition evidently must have appeared to you as fair, inasmuch as you then expressed yourself somewhat to this effect: that you would not care to remain a member of a Government that would not entertain such reasonable propositions to assist a people anxious to help themselves if the Government for certain reasons would not or could not carry out such works of their own accord. The propositions just stated were repeated in writing and submitted to your Government; yet, after all, blank denial is the only consolation vouchsafed to one of the most deserving districts of the colony. These propositions also appeared to me so reasonable that it is impossible for me to conceive why they should not be entertained by the Government. Even if such guaranteed branch lines through populous or rich agricultural districts were not payable at first, but would require for some years the payment of the whole interest guaranteed, the country would be amply compensated for this seeming loss by the increased value of the land, affected by such railways, which, collectively speaking, is also increase of national wealth. Besides this, the progress of settlement and the consequent increase of population is a most important factor not to be overlooked, inasmuch as every European inhabitant as a taxpayer is at least of seven (7) pounds sterling annual value to the Treasury. The more I see of the North of Queensland, the more am I impressed of the immense importance such closely settled farming districts as the Rosewood by European settlers are to the State. The Government have proposed, and Parliament has approved of, a loan vote of £50,000 for the purpose of disproving the palpably interested assertions of monopolising capitalists, and to prove the possibility of profitable farming and settlement on small selections by Europeans in the North. But in East and West Moreton, particularly in the Rosewood, settlement has been effected, better than which could not be desired; and all this has been accomplished, not only without Government assistance, but actually affording at the same time an ample source of revenue to the Treasury. In presenting herewith the claims of the central district of the Rosewood to better means of transit facilities, I may state that I have been again reminded to act in the matter, and that I have been requested to obtain a definite reply, as the parties interested in this branch line were ready with the necessary funds for building the same, provided the Government offer reasonable assistance.

I really cannot see why the Government should have the least objection to bring in a measure to facilitate the construction of railways by private enterprise, and guarantee a certain amount of interest. Here I proposed a 4 per cent. guarantee. I will recede from that, and say that even 3 per cent. would do, so as to ensure that the Government will not be made instruments of speculation by guaranteeing a high interest. There is a general impression that money is very scarce now in the colony; but it is just as plentiful as ever for profitable investment. It is very scarce in the hands of the working population on account of the

tightness of employment, but it is very plentiful in the hands of speculators. There are any amount of capitalists who are at their wits' end to find profitable and safe investments, and I believe half-a-dozen railways might be constructed within the next three or four years, provided the Government gave a reasonable guarantee. There is no one more opposed to monopolising companies than I am, but in this case, instead of allowing companies to monopolise to the injury of the people, I would make use of the capitalists for the benefit and advancement of the colony. I have no objection to capitalists; they are as necessary as labour. With these few remarks, I beg to move the resolution standing in my name.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—It is, of course, quite impossible for the Government, during the present session, to introduce a Bill for this purpose. In the present state of public business it would be quite idle to attempt to make this proposed radical change in our method of constructing railways. I believe myself that the best way of constructing railways in this country is for the State to construct them. I believe the worst way is by the land-grant system; and I believe that a way not quite so bad as that, and not so good as the State constructing them, is the guarantee system. In many cases there might be no serious objection to adopting that system.

Mr. NORTON: It has not answered elsewhere.

The PREMIER: It has not been a success I know, and I can see reasons why it has not been so. The operation of the system in Tasmania has not been a success. By some singular accident, or coincidence, it has happened in Tasmania that the net profits on that line vary from about £5 a year to about £50. The Government guarantee 4 per cent., and of course the profits have to go in reduction of the guarantee. I think that last year the net profit was £6, and the previous year £48—or figures like that. The profits somehow are so managed that the Government have to pay exactly 4 per cent.

Mr. NORTON: It is the same in India.

The PREMIER: In most cases it is like that. They always manage to receive their 4 per cent., and what might otherwise be profits are spent in paying what are called working expenses, but in reality in improvements, or else the work is not carried on as profitably as it might be. I do not know that it is worth while seriously to discuss the matter this afternoon. We cannot do anything with it during the present session. On various occasions I have been communicated with by persons willing to construct railways on the guarantee principle, and I have asked them to put their proposals in a concrete form in writing, and I would see what could be done with them. But very few have made any further approach on the subject. Now, the hon. member mentioned a railway at Rosewood; I believe that is a place where a railway constructed on inexpensive principles might be made to pay—an exceedingly light line with steep gradients, something of the character of some of the tramways they have in Sydney—the steam tramways.

Mr. NORTON: It ought to pay the Government to construct them.

The PREMIER: It might. I do not know whether it would or not. We cannot propose during the present session to do so. It has been suggested by the hon. member for Rosewood that the guarantee system might be applied to a railway in that district. If any proposition were made by the promoters of an undertaking of that kind it would receive very serious consideration.

I do not see the same objection to allowing branch railways to get into private hands that applies to main trunk lines; but I do not think, Mr. Speaker, at the present time it will be any use discussing the matter any further, as, of course, the Government cannot introduce the necessary Bill this session. As I have said on previous occasions, the Government may at some time have to adopt some modification of the system, but they cannot at the present time.

Mr. NORTON said: Mr. Speaker,—I believe this guarantee system has proved to be a bad one, not only in Tasmania, but elsewhere. Lines were guaranteed in India and in Canada; but I know they are not regarded in any way as successes. Now, there is one objection that stands out very fatally, and that is, that if the Government can afford to guarantee the 4 per cent. upon such lines, they can afford to do the work themselves and borrow the money at 4 per cent. Surely they ought to be able to do that, because, then, if there are profits over and above the 4 per cent. the Government will have them, and if there are losses, the Government will have them also, under the guarantee arrangement; so that if they are to have the losses they might as well have the chances of the profits. I do not wish to say anything about this particular line, because I believe if a short line would pay this is the one that would. But I do not think that any of these short lines ought to be built under the same system of construction which our lines generally are. If there are to be, in future, agricultural lines purely, then they must be of the cheapest character that can be constructed; because we all know very well that agricultural lines, built at the same cost which we now pay, are not remunerative. The farmers wish that their produce should be carried at the lowest possible rates, which is natural, and the Government will have to bear the burden, and cannot make a profit out of the undertaking. I know the hon. member for Rosewood has been interesting himself in this subject, sir, for some three or four years. I remember his agitating in this House certainly two years ago, perhaps more than that, and from all we hear there is a great deal to justify the construction of a line by the Government to Marburg, if it were to be constructed on economical principles. I think that is one of the points which will have to be considered in regard to branch lines. I say that, partly as the result of a conversation which I had lately with a gentleman of great experience in the traffic management of railways, who told me that he believed the right principle to be adopted in these colonies, if we wish to carry out agricultural lines and branch lines, is that which I have referred to. They must be made as cheaply as possible and then they will be remunerative; but if they are not made cheaply—if they are made as we make ordinary trunk lines—it will be impossible for them to be remunerative. Of course there are certain advantages which the country gains by the construction of lines of that character; but we have to consider in discussing these matters, not merely the general advantages, but that we have to pay the interest on the money the Government borrow. For my part I cannot agree with the hon. member's proposal, which he has taken so much trouble over, in any case. Of course there are exceptions to every rule, and there may be some exceptions to this; but so far as I have had an opportunity of judging, sir, and I have read a good deal in connection with these guarantee lines, I believe there are no cases where a Government which can borrow money for railway construction can be justified in guaranteeing interest to a company to construct a line for them. I do not mean to discourage the hon. member, because I know he has the interests of his constituency at heart in

bringing the matter forward. If ever a proposal of the kind is made in the House while I hold a seat in it, I can only say that, as a general principle, I shall oppose the construction of guarantee railways.

Mr. MACFARLANE said: Mr. Speaker,—I think a great deal may be said in favour of railways built on a 3 per cent. guarantee, or even a 2½ per cent. guarantee. Of course, if the Government did pass a Bill in that direction, they would not be compelled to build such railways. They would have to be allowed to exercise their own discretion as to whether a railway would be likely to pay where it was applied for. Under the present financial circumstances of the country, a proposition of this kind might be very well entertained. If a private company were willing to build a line of railway through a thickly settled district such as Rosewood, and to borrow money to do it, and that money were to be supplied by the shareholders, the Government only guaranteeing 3 per cent. interest, then I think it would be a very fair way of making a short railway. The only argument I see against it is the shortness of time during the present session for bringing in such a Bill. I think the hon. member should not be discouraged, and hope he will not lose sight of the matter should he be in the House another session. If I am here I shall be very glad to help him to pass a Bill through the House for the purpose of making short lines in agricultural districts. I do not think it is very likely the system will work for large lines; but in the cases of branch lines, I do not think the Government will commit themselves very much in passing such a Bill, and giving encouragement to small companies by guaranteeing interest in this way.

Mr. BAILEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to draw attention to the fact that it is now 5 o'clock, and we shall have no opportunity of discussing private members' business after 6 o'clock. Nearly the whole of the afternoon has been taken up in discussing matters which are certainly of great public importance, but which might have been brought forward on Government days.

The PREMIER: And block Government business!

Mr. BAILEY: I consider that private members' business is of equal importance with Government business, and I hope that private members will have more time given them for the consideration of their business than they have at present. I am speaking as to the rights of private members, and I say that our business should take precedence on a private members' day, instead of being blocked in this way with questions which are rather of public importance, and do not so much concern private members. Private members concede a great deal to the Government, and even if the Government find themselves blocked now and again, they need not object to private members having the whole of the time allotted to them to which they are entitled.

Mr. KELLETT said: Mr. Speaker,—I think that as all our lines have been built by the State with borrowed money, it would hardly be advisable to make provision for the construction of even small lines by private companies. I think that where settlement can be effected by means of a branch line, and where good country can be opened up for settlement by means of railway construction, it should be done by the Government. And in order that these branch lines may pay they should be constructed as cheaply as possible; but as I said before, I do not think it advisable that they should be made on the guarantee principle by private companies.

Mr. ISAMBERT, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker, —I believe I went fully into the dangers arising from building railways on the guarantee principle, and that is the reason I proposed the very small rate of interest of 3 per cent. The hon. member for Ipswich, Mr. Macfarlane, suggested that the rate should be $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and probably that would be a sufficient guarantee. There is reason to believe that even with that guarantee companies would be formed for building railways and making them remunerative, and the Government could make provision for buying such railways at any time and incorporating them with our railway system. With such a provision and a low rate of interest I cannot see where any danger could arise. Instead of borrowing money for the construction of railways the Government would simply have to guarantee a low rate of interest, while those who constructed the railways would have to borrow the money. The Government might also reserve the right to supervise the construction of the railways as well as the working of them. I cannot see any objection to such a principle, and I hope that whatever Government may be in power next session they will introduce such a measure as I propose, or else make provision for a branch line through the Rosewood district.

Mr. FOOTE said: Mr. Speaker, —The object the hon. gentleman has in view I have no doubt is a very good one—namely, to facilitate the construction of railways to centres of population where progress has been rapid, more especially in such a case as that referred to by the hon. member—Marburg—in the centre of the Rosewood district. But I do not see how the Government can introduce it. They certainly cannot undertake it without bringing in a Bill for that purpose. The result of introducing such a measure would be a regular rush of railways to be constructed; and if one party got theirs, another would put in a claim, and a state of financial disaster would ensue, as the Government would not be able to find money enough to carry out the whole of the lines. But I do believe a railway in the direction named by the hon. member for Rosewood is very necessary, though I am of opinion that the Government should undertake it. Failing that, it might be possible for the divisional board to undertake the construction of the railway, the Government lending them the money at a fair rate of interest. Of course, we cannot expect that the Government should do it this session, though the next Government might attempt it, as it is only a short line of seven miles, and would not require a great deal of money to complete. It might be constructed upon the new principle—steel sleepers—and not be a very costly affair. I hope that there will, as hon. members expect, be a great saving in railway-making in consequence of that discovery, as it is possible, in that case, that many places that are now very desirous to have railways will be able to obtain them at no distant date. The House, last session, approved of the construction of a railway to Laidley Creek. The railway which the hon. member proposes should be made through the Rosewood district, is another that is wanted, and it will only be a short line. The district is a very flourishing one, as you know, Mr. Speaker. It is one of those districts which will require attention in regard to railway communication, and I have no doubt that it will receive attention from the Government. I cannot, however, see how the Government can adopt the principle involved in this motion without bringing in a Bill for that purpose, and if that were done it would have to be on a limited scale, and if it were left to the Government to say what railways should be introduced, we should go back to the old system which prevailed before we had divisional boards, when every

member went in for roads and bridges for his own particular electorate. I think, however, that the matter should be left in the hands of the Government as it is at present, and I have no doubt that in the course of time, perhaps not so long a time as under the method the hon. member proposes, probably in a year or two, a railway will be constructed in the Rosewood district.

Mr. ISAMBERT said: Mr. Speaker, —I see that hon. members are not in favour of the guarantee principle, and with the permission of the House I will withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

QUEENSLAND TRUSTEES AND EXECUTORS SOCIETY, LIMITED, BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. CHUBB said: Mr. Speaker, —In moving the second reading of this Bill, I desire to inform hon. members that the objects of the Bill are briefly stated in the preamble, which I will read. It is as follows:—

“Whereas from the uncertainty of human life and other causes great difficulty often arises in securing the services of suitable persons for the office of trustee, executor, and other similar offices, and whereas in order to secure the more certain discharge of the duties of such offices a company has been formed and incorporated under the Companies Act, 1863, by the name of ‘The Queensland Trustees and Executors Society, Limited,’ with the object among other purposes of affording persons the opportunity of obtaining the services of a permanent corporation for the performance of the duties of such offices, and thus to remove much of the uncertainty and insecurity which attend the appointment of private individuals: And whereas it is expedient to enable the said incorporated company to act as executor, administrator, and trustee, and to perform and discharge all the duties of such offices, and to receive remuneration for such duties and also to act as receiver and as committee of the estate under the Insanity Act of 1884, or other law for the time being in force relating to the management of the estates of insane persons, and as agent under power of attorney, and to perform and discharge all the duties of such offices, and to receive remuneration for such duties.”

Those are the objects for which the company ask Parliament to confer on them the powers which are provided in this Bill. I may say in commencing that the Bill has been carefully drafted by a member of the Bar, who has been employed by the Premier to draft Bills, and who has considerable experience in drafting Bills. I regret that I was unable to secure the Attorney-General on this committee, because I would like to have had his valuable assistance and criticism, as this is the first measure of the kind that has been brought before this House, although similar measures have been in force in the colony of Victoria and other places for some time. I therefore invite the serious criticism of my learned friends the Attorney-General and the Premier, both generally and legally, and also of all members of the House. I think it will be admitted that the question is one of some importance. The object of the Bill is mainly this: to enable the incorporated company—and of course there is no objection, if Parliament approves of a Bill of this kind, to other companies, having the same object, being hereafter formed—to discharge the duties of executor, administrator, trustee, and agent, just in the same way as ordinary individuals now do. It does not require a lawyer to know that great difficulties are often experienced in obtaining suitable persons to act in the administration of estates of deceased persons, and not only so, but great inconvenience arises through the circumstances under which those persons are appointed. Take this case: A man in his will appoints a friend executor; well, that friend dies before the testator, or after the death of the testator the person may become insane. He may leave the colony or he may refuse to act; or his business

arrangements may be of such a nature that he is not able to give the time and attention necessary to the effective discharge of the fiduciary duties. So that I think it will be admitted that a permanent society such as this, or similar societies, are no doubt well qualified to perform these duties, always providing that due care is taken to see that the interests of the estates committed to their hands are well protected. Now, evidence was taken by the committee, and it will be found in the papers in the hands of hon. gentlemen. The evidence of Mr. Rüthning, a solicitor of experience in this colony, and also of Mr. Brown, one of the directors of the company, was taken, and they concurred in saying that the powers proposed to be given will be beneficial to the administration of estates. Mr. Rüthning in his evidence refers to a number of similar statutes. I think there are three in Victoria dealing with similar companies. This Bill is drawn upon the lines of the Victorian Acts, and regard has been had to the alterations that have been made in the later Acts, and to embody the most beneficial provisions which can be found in them. The advantages that a person appointing a company to act would have would be that the funds of the company and the shareholders would be liable to make good any deficiencies. At present if a man appoints a person as executor under his will he is required to give no security. He may possibly be a man of straw, and there is nothing to prevent him, if so minded, from making ducks and drakes of the estate. True, he is liable to punishment, and his estate may be used to make good his wrongdoing, and the same may be said of trustees. Administrators of course have to give bonds to the court for the due administration of the estate. The bonds are required up to a certain amount, and they have to be given by responsible persons; but having a company to deal with, and assuming it to be sound and solvent, of which we have good indication in this case, their funds would always be liable for the full value of the estate which came into their hands. We should have a permanent company who would administer estates in such a way as to give the greatest benefits to the persons interested in estates. There is another point which I would like to make prominent. Many persons who are appointed as executors under wills, and persons who obtain administration, are relatives of the deceased persons, and are ignorant and uneducated, and not capable of keeping accounts. Consequently estates at times get into inextricable confusion, and it is extremely difficult to get the accounts made out properly. Many of those cases have come under my notice where no accounts have been kept, and there is nothing to show how the estates have been administered. I will now deal with the provisions of the Bill. The 2nd clause is the first important provision which I need direct attention to, and I do not think there will be any objection to that. It provides that the company may obtain probate and act as executor to wills where they have been named in the will as such executor. I need not dwell upon that clause; it seems to be reasonable that, if the testator names the company as executor, there should be no objection to the company so acting. The next clause provides for the case of what is called "letters of administration with the will annexed," and to non-legal members I will explain it in this way: A man makes his will, and forgets to name any person as his executor. He dies *quasi intestatus*. He has made a will but not appointed any person to carry out the trusts. Also in cases where the executor refuses to act, or dies during the lifetime of testator, or before probate is obtained, or becomes incapable by reason of insanity; in those cases the grant would be made by letters of administration with the will

annexed. Now, the rule of law is this: that in that case the court gives the administration with the will annexed to the person who has the greatest interest, the right of administration following the right of property. In that case, unless there is special objection, the residuary legatee is the person who is appointed administrator with the will annexed, but in many cases of course it would be the next of kin. Well, I think, then, there can be no objection to allowing the 3rd section to apply in this way: that is, that a person having died under the circumstances I have described, having made a will but having named no executors, or having named executors who refused to act or who had become incapacitated from acting, then the person who would be entitled to apply to have administration granted to him may authorise the company to apply for and obtain administration of the estate. Then clause 4 provides for another case—that any person who is named as an executor according to the tenor and who would be entitled to probate of the will may apply to the court and obtain probates in cases of that kind. "Executor according to the tenor" means this: where no person is named as executor, yet there are expressions in the will which point to a certain person as the person intended to be executor, he is then called "executor in tenor." This provision is to meet a case similar to the last, but under slightly different circumstances, and is to apply unless the testator shall, by his will, have expressed his desire that the office of executor should not be delegated. Then the 5th section provides similarly for letters of administration. It says:—

"Any person entitled to obtain administration to the estate of any intestate dying either before or after the passing of this Act may, instead of himself applying for administration, authorise the company to apply for administration to such estate, and administration to the estate of the intestate may be granted to the company upon its own application when so authorised, such authority to be verified in such manner as the court may require."

That, of course, is of importance, because, where there is no will, it gives, in intestacy, powers to the company the same as in the 3rd and 4th sections. The committee thought it advisable to introduce the 6th clause to put a question raised by the three preceding sections beyond a doubt. It was suggested that possibly these sections might be deemed to exclude persons who might have a right to be heard, and the committee inserted this clause to provide for that:—

"Nothing in the third, fourth, and fifth sections hereof shall prejudice or affect the rights of any person or persons interested in the estate of any deceased person, other than such persons as are mentioned in the said sections, to apply for and obtain probate or letters of administration with or without the will annexed in any of the cases therein mentioned."

The effect of that clause is this: that while the persons who are primarily entitled to apply for probate or administration, as the case may be, may nominate a company to discharge their duties, yet other persons who may have perhaps equal rights, or rights secondary to those persons primarily entitled, may still go to the court, and may apply, or show grounds why the company should not receive the probate or letters of administration. The next section provides that the court may act upon the affidavit of the managing director or the general manager, or acting general manager, in applications for probate or administration; that is, the managing officer of the company makes the necessary affidavit accompanying the application for the grant. The 8th section is one which received a considerable amount of attention from the committee. It deals with the question of security.

I have before said that administration bonds are required from persons obtaining letters of administration. The rule now is that the administrator has to give security to double the amount of the estate; but where the estate is very large, or there are special circumstances, such as the estate being practically realised, mostly money in the bank, or very little trouble in winding it up, the court will, upon application and upon proper grounds being shown, authorise a less amount of security to be given. For instance, it has been reduced in some cases to one and a-half times instead of double the amount of the estate, and other ratios according to the circumstances of each case. This clause does not at first take away the duty imposed upon the company to give bonds in the same way as an administrator has to give bonds on obtaining letters of administration. The provision is that so soon as the company—

“Shall possess a paid-up capital of not less than twenty thousand pounds, of which paid-up capital ten thousand pounds shall be invested in the purchase of debentures or inscribed stock in such of the public funds of the colony as the directors of the company may select in the name of the Treasurer of the colony in trust for the company, but transferable only upon the joint consent of the Treasurer of the colony and the company, or upon the order of the court or of a judge thereof, the said liability of the capital and assets of the company shall be deemed, in case of letters of administration granted to the company, to be sufficient security in place and stead of the bond taken in the case of private individuals to whom letters of administration may be granted.”

Reference has been made to this clause outside the House and in the Press. The Bill as it stood provided for a paid-up capital of £5,000 and invested capital of £3,000, while all the Victorian statutes had the amounts which the committee inserted in this Bill—£20,000 paid-up capital and £10,000 invested capital. It was suggested that if the committee insisted upon this amendment it would have the effect of hampering young companies just started, and would almost prevent them doing business. One ground urged was this: that £10,000 was a large sum to require a company to have invested at a low rate of interest. However, it was pointed out that the company is not debarred from doing business if they have not that amount of capital invested. They can still carry on business, but they will have to find security for administration in the same way as an ordinary individual has to find security. These provisions only come into operation when they have a paid-up and invested capital of the amount mentioned. By the time they have reached that position I think it probable they will be in such a flourishing condition that they will have large estates in their hands, and it is only fair and right that they should have to provide ample security for the funds entrusted to their administration. Of course there are other assets which would be available, and to which I will refer later on, but the committee were generally of opinion that it would be right to insist upon this proviso, and the amendment was consequently made in accordance with the provisions of the Victorian Acts. The 9th section provides for the appointment of a company as trustee, receiver, or committee of an estate under the Insanity Act. There is in that matter deserving of discussion with regard to the liability of the company on matters connected with their action as a committee, trustee, or receiver, under the Insanity Act. Hon. members will observe that the section states that—

“The capital of the company, both paid and unpaid, and all other assets of the company, shall be liable for the proper discharge of the duties committed to the company, and so soon as the paid-up capital of the company shall amount to five thousand pounds, such liability of the capital and other assets of the company

shall be deemed sufficient security for the discharge of such duties in place of the bond required from private persons when appointed as receiver or committee.”

There is a difference in the capital here, because, probably, they would not be appointed a committee in many cases; at any rate, not nearly in so many cases as in the case of ordinary administration. It was thought that the House might think it desirable to alter this amount of £5,000 to £10,000, the same as in the 8th section. The question of what is the proper amount is a matter, therefore, for hon. members to decide, and they will have to say what they think is a necessary amount to insure safety. The 10th clause enables the company to act under a power-of-attorney by the managing director, or general manager, or the acting general manager, or two directors. There seems to be no objection to that, and I think if one individual may appoint another to act as his attorney, there can be no objection to a company being appointed in the same way. The 11th section provides for the appointment of a company to act as temporary executor, administrator, or trustee. This clause was amended by the committee, and I therefore draw hon. members' attention to it. As it stood it was doubtful whether the executor or administrator should apply to the court for probate of administration before he delegated his authority to the company, and the committee thought it was inadvisable, at any rate, to let him have that authority. As the executor need not necessarily prove the will, and the committee were of opinion that delay might take place, they thought it advisable only to allow those powers after the probate or letters of administration had been obtained from the court; then the executor might appoint the company temporarily to discharge his duties. The provision is, after stating that the company may be so appointed to act as executor, that—

“The company if so appointed by deed filed in accordance with any law now or hereafter to be in force providing for the filing of powers-of-attorney may act within the scope of the authority conferred upon it as effectually as the executor, administrator, or trustee could have acted, and may exercise all discretionary and other powers delegated by the principal as fully as the principal could have exercised them.”

I am not aware that there is any law in force here requiring powers-of-attorney to be filed in the Supreme Court, although they are filed in the Real Property Office; but there may be at some future time, and therefore I think there can be no objection to the adoption of the clause. The 12th section enables executors, administrators, trustees, receivers, and committees to appoint the company to discharge duties for them, and the 13th section provides this authority by motion on an application, which requires to be advertised; then the motion comes before the court, and the court may make such order as it thinks fit, and direct as to the cost of the proceedings. The 14th section provides that the managing director, or general manager, may attend the court or elsewhere on behalf of the company, and that the directors shall be personally responsible to the court; the concluding part of the clause stating that—

“Notwithstanding such personal responsibility of the said managing director, general manager, acting general manager for the time being, and directors, the capital both paid and unpaid and all the assets of the company shall remain liable for any pecuniary loss which may be occasioned or which may happen through the imperfect or improper discharge, or through the neglect of the company or any of its officers of any act or duty in respect of any office, appointment, or engagement held or entered upon by the company.”

The 15th section provides for the amount of commission to be paid to the company. Upon this section there is a good deal to be said, and I should like hon. members to consider the effect of it. It provides that the company are to

receive commission not to exceed in any case £5 for every £100 of the capital value of any estate committed to the management of the company as executor, administrator, trustee, or committee, and £5 for every £100 of income received by the company as executor, administrator, trustee, receiver, or committee, or of capital or income received by the company as an attorney acting under power-of-attorney. That is, that on administering, the company may charge up to 5 per cent. on the capital value of the estate; and where they have the management of an estate afterwards, they may charge not exceeding 5 per cent. on the annual income, for management. This section was especially referred to in the committee. It was pointed out by one member of the committee—I think, myself—that in cases of large estates it seemed rather a large amount of remuneration to give the company, when the courts in many cases only allowed $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in some cases even less. Where the estate is very large, and the trouble comparatively small, the court will not allow 5 per cent., which is the highest amount of commission sanctioned by the court. In answer to that, it was pointed out that the company had framed a general schedule or scale of their charges, and that it was unlikely they would charge the full amount in large estates, in the same way that commission agents, selling large properties, do not charge the ordinary 5 per cent., because if they did, they would not do so much business; there would be competition, and the charges would be reduced. In addition to that, there is a proviso in the section, that if in any case the court or a judge thereof shall be of opinion that such commission is excessive, it shall be competent for such court or judge to review and reduce the rate of such commission. Of course, this case may happen: A testator may, in his will, appoint the company executor, and he may name the amount of remuneration. There is nothing to prevent his doing that. At any rate, he can provide that if the company exceeded a certain rate of remuneration they would not be authorised to administer his estate. It was suggested that where a man with a large estate appointed the company his executor, and said, “If you take this work you are to have so much per cent. and no more; if you do not take it on those terms you shall not have it at all,” it would go in the ordinary way. But it was not thought necessary to provide for that, because millionaires would take all ordinary precautions to see that their estates were not overcharged. The 16th section provides that the court may remove the company from the office of executor, trustee, receiver, or committee, and may make an order with respect to any acts of omission or commission committed by the company or its officers. The 17th section provides that any person entitled may obtain an account upon application to the trustee, and provision is made for enforcing the production of that account if any difficulty is experienced in obtaining it. If no sufficient account has been rendered by the company the court may order sufficient account to be rendered, and may make the company pay the costs of their refusal. The 18th section provides that the Supreme Court or a judge may order audit in any estate committed to the company; a very useful provision. The 19th section provides for the voluntary winding-up of the company, and the 20th defines the liabilities of shareholders and directors. This section provides that the capital of the company is to be divided into shares of £10 each. Not more than half the share money shall be called up, except in the event of and for the purpose of the winding-up or dissolution of the company, and then every present and past member of the company shall, in addition to his

liability to contribute to his assets of the company under the Companies Act of 1863, be liable to contribute to the extent of £5 upon each share of which he is or shall have been the holder within one year, or, in the case of a director, two years preceding the commencement of the winding-up or dissolution of the company. Sections 21, 22, and 23 apply to the method of dealing with unclaimed balances, the provisions of section 21 being that at the end of five years all such money is to be paid into the Treasury, and they impose upon the Treasurer what I think is the onerous duty of keeping separate accounts for each estate, and investing the money in stock from time to time. Section 22 provides the manner in which unclaimed moneys can be obtained; that is by petition to the court, similar to the applications under the Trustees and Incapacitated Persons Act of 1867. According to this section no person is entitled to make application after six years; that is to say, that after six years he is barred by statutory limitation, and loses his claim. The committee thought that was rather cumbersome, and as it imposed certain duties upon the Treasurer, they considered that the system provided by the Intestacy Act might be adopted with, if necessary, some modifications, instead of such a system as this; but as it was a question affecting the internal management of the Treasury, they preferred to leave it to the House, or to the Minister in charge of the department, to suggest such improvements in committee, if the Bill pass the second reading, as may be thought desirable. The scheme of the Intestacy Act is that the Curator shall pay all moneys that have been in his hands for six years into the consolidated revenue, to be applied to such purposes as Parliament may determine; and at any time upon a claimant satisfying the Governor in Council that he is entitled to the money, he gets an order upon the Treasury for it without interest. We thought that much simpler and much fairer than the provisions of the Bill, but, for the reasons I have given, the committee deemed it advisable not to make any alterations, but to allow the clauses to stand as they are, and draw attention to them in our report as we have done. Section 23 provides that the Treasurer may obtain an account from the company if they do not give a proper statement. The next section provides that the returns made by the company shall be lodged with the Registrar-General. This deprives the company of any monopoly, and the following clause provides that when testators may nominate their own solicitors, the company shall not be liable for any loss occasioned by the negligence or misconduct of such solicitors unless such loss could have been prevented or avoided by the exercise of due care on the part of the company. The clause was amended by the committee in that way. As the clause stood originally, it provided that in the case of a testator appointing his own solicitor the company should not be responsible for any loss arising from his negligence or misconduct; but the committee thought that if the loss was attributable to any negligence on the part of the company they should be responsible for their own negligence. These are the provisions of the Bill, which I commend to the consideration of hon. members. I hope it will receive favourable consideration at their hands and be passed into committee. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall leave my hon. colleague the Attorney-General to refer to this Bill so far as details are concerned; I wish to call attention only to what I conceive to be the main question involved in it, and that is the risk, the great risk, that the families of deceased persons would run by

the adoption of a scheme of this kind. I fully admit that it would be extremely convenient for many purposes to have a company or some public body, more or less widely known, which it was understood would be available to be called upon by trustees and executors to perform duties of this kind. That has been done in some places by the appointment of a public trustee, for whom, of course, the Government would be guarantee, which I believe is a very good principle too. That, I believe, is better than this experiment which has been tried in some of the other colonies. I am aware that it was a long time in Victoria before they were allowed to try the experiment, and up to the present I believe no evil has followed. But this is what I do not like: This is to be a company of limited liability, and although the shareholders at first will no doubt be men of standing—men whom anyone would be glad to have as executors—they may not be always shareholders. You cannot tell to whom they may transfer their shares, nor can you prevent them from doing so. Moreover, when liabilities are incurred by the company or there is danger of something going wrong, there is nothing to prevent the shareholders from selling their shares to dummies, and by the time the liabilities become due—perhaps it would be a couple of years before the liability was found out—they would be perfectly free. The dummies would be there, and although the unfortunate widows and children might proceed against them, they would get no money out of them.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: That applies to any company.

The PREMIER: Yes; but this Bill proposes to entrust the property of helpless people to a limited liability company. It is a very dangerous thing indeed, and unless some better safeguards are devised than are shown here I shall hesitate a great deal before giving my approval to it. I think a company of this kind should be an unlimited liability company. Even then it would be dangerous. It should be an unlimited company, and any obligation incurred while a person was a member of the company should continue. He should not be able to get rid of it by selling his shares. If something of that kind could be done it would be a great convenience.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: It would not work in practice.

The PREMIER: The fact that it would not do in practice shows that people would not care to incur fair liabilities in entering upon a business of this kind. Possibly the risk might be applied to the directors; then the directors would cease to act. The matter requires very careful consideration. I fully admit the convenience of it. I know that in South Australia there has been a company of the kind for a long time—not an executors' company, it is called an agency company. There are agency companies here now, doing large business, who act under power-of-attorney, and so on. But they are acting for the persons who appoint them, and if they appoint bad or foolish agents that is their own look-out—they must take the consequences. Rightly or wrongly, we always consider it part of our duty to try and protect the interests of widows and children, and that is where I find the great difficulty in this matter. I need not say any more upon the subject now. There are a great many details in the Bill that will require consideration, as the hon. mover of it has pointed out, but underlying the whole question is the difficulty to which I have called attention. If the House think it undesirable to run such a risk they should negative the second reading, and if they think it is right to pass the second reading, we can then deal with the details in committee.

At 7 o'clock,

The SPEAKER said: In accordance with the sessional order, the business under discussion when the House adjourned at 6 o'clock now stands adjourned till after the consideration of Government business.

THE BRITISH NEW GUINEA (QUEENSLAND) BILL OF 1887.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that you do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make provision for the indemnification by the colony of Queensland of Her Majesty's Imperial Government against the expenses of the government of British New Guinea. I have it in command to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor, having been made acquainted with the provisions of this Bill, recommends to the House the necessary appropriation to give effect to it.

Question put and passed.

The PREMIER said that hon. members were no doubt aware of the previous history of the New Guinea question. They were aware that in April of last year certain proposals had been agreed to by the Governments of the three colonies of Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria for the future administration of British New Guinea. Those proposals had been communicated to the Imperial Government, and the matter then remained in abeyance until the Conference in London last April. At that time the Imperial Government were willing to accept the proposals with practically only one modification, and that was that Queensland should guarantee, on behalf of the other colonies, that the £15,000 should be paid for ten years instead of five, as provided in the draft proposals. There was another modification, which consisted in the Imperial Government defining exactly what their contribution to the initial expenses of the government of New Guinea would be. He did not think he need refer in detail to the proposals of the three Governments, because they were fully explained last year, and the House then adopted a resolution pledging itself to indemnify Her Majesty if she were pleased to give effect to those proposals in anticipation of an Act of Parliament being brought in. When he was in London, on those proposals being accepted by the representatives of all the Australasian colonies, he undertook to introduce the Bill at the earliest possible moment after the meeting of Parliament. On his way from England to Queensland he met Sir Henry Parkes, the present Premier of New South Wales, but who was not the head of the Government which had agreed to the proposals in April, 1886. On his (the Premier's) way to England he had communicated with Sir Henry Parkes on the subject, and had asked him to express his assent to those proposals as far as he could, or his dissent if he did not agree to them. He pointed out that he (the Premier) had been the spokesman of the three Governments, and he wished to know how far he could continue to be so. Sir Henry Parkes promised to let him know by the first mail after he left Sydney whether the New South Wales Government would agree to abide by the agreement of the preceding Government, or to what extent, if at all, they dissented from the proposals. He received no communication from Sir Henry Parkes in London. He did not know whether Sir Henry Parkes instructed the representatives of New South Wales, but he knew that he (the Premier) particularly asked him to give them instructions on the subject; and he knew that the representatives of

New South Wales in London at the Conference assented to the proposals in the form agreed to by the Imperial Government. On his way back he saw Sir Henry Parkes, and asked him to state whether the Government agreed to the Bill being introduced in the Queensland Parliament in the form accepted by the Conference. He asked for a formal answer, and it was arranged between them that as soon as he (the Premier) arrived in Brisbane he should send Sir Henry Parkes a copy of the Bill, asking for his formal concurrence in its introduction. He accordingly, on the 7th July last, wrote a letter—which he would read to the Committee—to Sir Henry Parkes and also to Mr. Gillies, the Premier of Victoria:—

"Sir,

"I have the honour to enclose a copy of the Draft Bill proposed to be introduced into the Parliament of this colony to give effect to the joint proposals for the administration of British New Guinea, made in April of last year by the Governments of Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland.

"You are aware that these proposals have been accepted by Her Majesty's Imperial Government with the following modifications:—

- (1) The term of guarantee given by Queensland is to be ten years instead of five;
- (2) The extent of the Imperial contributions is defined.

"The Draft Bill now enclosed is printed from the draft submitted by Sir Henry Holland to the Conference recently held in London, and accepted by them.

"It is proposed to introduce the Bill in the Legislative Assembly of this colony immediately on the meeting of Parliament, which is summoned for the 19th instant.

"I have, therefore, the honour to inquire whether I am right in assuming that your Government accepts the proposed modifications of the original proposals. I shall be greatly obliged if you will favour me with as early a reply as you may find practicable."

That was on the 7th July, and the Bill was enclosed. On the 21st July he received a letter from Mr. Gillies acknowledging the receipt of that letter and promising an early answer. He received no answer from either colony, however, up to the 18th of August, when he sent the following telegram:—

"When may I expect answer to my letter of 7th ultimo as to New Guinea?"

On the 24th of August he got the following answer from Mr. Gillies by telegram:—

"New Guinea This Government has its proportion on the Estimates for this year viz. £4,694 and it is intended to inform Parliament at the time the vote is taken that the Government approves the proposals of the London Conference and intends to provide an annual payment of five thousand pounds for a period of ten years."

He replied the next day as follows:—

"Thanks for your telegram May I assume that your Government concur in the introduction into this Legislature of the New Guinea Bill in the form assented to by the Conference in London?"

and received this telegram from Mr. Gillies:—

"Yes this Government concurs in the proposed New Guinea Bill."

In the meantime he had received no reply from Sydney, so on the 6th September he wrote again—two months after the previous letter—to Sir Henry Parkes:—

"Sir,

"I have the honour to invite your attention to my letter of the 7th of July last on the subject of the future administration of British New Guinea.

"I have received from Mr. Gillies an answer expressing the concurrence of the Government of Victoria in the introduction in the Parliament of this colony of the Draft Bill as settled at the London Conference, and am only waiting for your reply to enable me to introduce the Bill. The Queensland Parliament has now been in session for a considerable time, and the session is not likely to be much further protracted.

"This Government, however, feels that its honour is pledged to the introduction of the Bill during the session, either in its present form, or with such modification as may be necessary if by any unfortunate chance the concurrence of the Government of New South Wales in the proposed scheme is withheld.

"I hope to be honoured by a reply from you at as early a date as possible, and I need hardly say that it would be an occasion for much regret if you should not concur in a scheme which has now for some months been treated by the Imperial Government as a settled matter, and has, I believe, been so regarded throughout Australasia."

He still received no reply, and, on the 26th September he sent the following telegram to Sir Henry Parkes:—

"When may I expect to be favoured with a reply to my letters of seventh of July and sixth of September with respect to the New Guinea proposals. The delay is causing this Government serious embarrassment."

He might state that the Imperial Government had telegraphed to His Excellency the Governor here inquiring whether the Bill had been introduced; and no wonder! The Queensland Parliament last year gave its approval to the proposals, and though he had promised that the Bill should be introduced as soon as Parliament met, it was not yet introduced. They had waited now three months. Since the 26th of September he had taken every means to endeavour to get an answer from Sir Henry Parkes, but in vain. On the 10th of the present month he sent the following telegram to the Premier of Victoria:—

"I am unable even to get an acknowledgment from the New South Wales Government of my letters and telegrams respecting the New Guinea proposals. Having exhausted every means of getting a reply I propose to introduce Bill at once with following modifications in draft as sent you in my letter of 7th July last."

He would state what those modifications were afterwards. On the same date he telegraphed to Sir Henry Parkes:—

"I propose to introduce New Guinea Bill at once with following modifications in draft as sent you in my letter of 7th July last."

Now, he thought they were not justified in waiting any longer for the concurrence of New South Wales. He could not understand the conduct of the Government of that colony. It was a most extraordinary thing to him. He had not even had the ordinary courtesy of a formal reply to those communications.

Mr. NORTON: Have you had no acknowledgment?

The PREMIER: No; not even a formal acknowledgment. Besides the official communications he had read, he had sent private communications, which he thought ought to have met with some response. For some extraordinary reason, which he could not even conjecture, there had been absolutely no acknowledgment, and he thought this colony was not justified in waiting any longer. He therefore now proposed that the Bill should be introduced. The Bill, as adopted by the Colonial Conference, had this preamble:—

"Whereas the Governments of your Majesty's Australasian Colonies have requested your Majesty to assume sovereignty over the territory comprising those portions of New Guinea and the adjacent islands which are now under your Majesty's Royal protection, and to make provision for the administration of the government of that territory in accordance with certain proposals agreed to by your Majesty's Imperial Government and the Governments of the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, which proposals are set forth in the Schedule to this Act: And whereas your Majesty's Australasian colonies cheerfully recognise and acknowledge the obligation to indemnify your Majesty's Imperial Government against the necessary cost of the administration of the government of the said territory, in accordance with the conditions of the said proposals or such other conditions as may be mutually agreed to by your Majesty's Imperial Government and the Governments of the said colonies and it has been agreed that the colony of Queensland

on their behalf shall formally recognise and give effect to such obligation: And whereas your Majesty's Imperial Government have agreed with the Governments of the said colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, that upon satisfactory provision being made to give effect to the aforesaid obligation, they will advise your Majesty to assume sovereignty over the said territory."

Then it stated the desire of Parliament to make the necessary provision. That of course would be a perfectly correct preamble if the three colonies adhered to their word. But the Government of New South Wales had done nothing—they would not say "yes," or "no." He proposed, therefore, to move the preamble in the way of which notice had been given to the two colonies:—

"Whereas the Parliaments of Your Majesty's Australasian colonies some time since requested Your Majesty to assume sovereignty over the territory comprising those portions of New Guinea and the adjacent islands which are now under Your Majesty's Royal protection, and to make provision for the administration of the government of that territory,"

leaving out the words—

"in accordance with certain proposals,"

then reciting the original proposals of the three Governments in the first schedule; then reciting that those proposals were agreed to by the Imperial Government with certain modifications, and setting out the amended proposals in the second schedule of the Bill; then reciting that the amended proposals were agreed to by the representatives of the Governments of the Australasian colonies at the Conference, and had also been accepted by the Governments of Victoria and Queensland; but that the Government of New South Wales had not signified its approval; and then reciting the obligation in the terms agreed to. Otherwise the Bill stood as it was drawn up. He had no doubt that the great colony of New South Wales would not repudiate its honourable obligation in the matter. Of that he had the strongest reasons to be assured. But he did not think that the extraordinary delay of the Government for the time being of that colony, ought to be any reason for the colony of Queensland remaining any longer under the slightest imputation of endeavouring to evade its honourable obligations. He therefore moved that leave be given to introduce a Bill to make provision for the indemnification by the colony of Queensland of Her Majesty's Imperial Government against the expenses of the government of British New Guinea.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution, and the report was adopted.

FIRST READING.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the Bill was read a first time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I omitted to say that a new clause has been introduced into the Bill to repeal the present New Guinea Act, as, of course, the two cannot stand together. I move that the second reading stand an Order of the Day for to-morrow. I may state that I wish to get on as fast as I can with the Bill, so that we shall not be any longer under the imputation of unnecessary delay.

Question put and passed.

WARWICK TO THANE'S CREEK RAILWAY.

On the Order of the Day being called for the resumption of the debate on Mr. Dutton's motion—

"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. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—The Government have introduced this motion for making the Warwick to St. George railway in a new form to what it was introduced last year. I suppose that was done at the instance of some members representing that part of the colony—Darling Downs or Warwick—because they wish to try and dissociate this line from the *via recta* in the minds of hon. members of this House. An hon. member says they do not; but still there must have been some reason for altering the title of this motion, otherwise it would not have been done. Last year it was called the "Warwick to St. George" railway, and now we find it is the "Warwick to Thane's Creek" railway. There is evidently an intention to try and persuade this House that this is simply a branch line. Now, we know that the late Minister for Works, Mr. Miles, distinctly said in his speech, in introducing this motion last year, that it was introduced by him as the first section of the *via recta*, and he then went so far as to say that the Government staked their existence upon the passing of this railway. Now, sir, I think the Government are not justified in introducing a contentious motion of this kind in a moribund parliament such as this is. It has been contended, sir, that many parliaments in the same position with regard to their life as this one is, have passed many very important measures, and there is no doubt that they have. But I think when a measure like this only passed in this House last year by one vote, and was defeated in the Upper House by one vote—that fact should show the Government that such a contentious motion, upon which the voices of both Houses were so evenly divided last year, should not have been introduced at such a late hour in the life of the present Parliament, more especially as it is very evident to everybody that the Government themselves are not very secure in their position. We find their own side turning round upon them more and more every day. We see stone walls erected across their measures by members sitting upon their own side of the House, and all this goes to prove that the Government are losing even the confidence of their own supporters. I think that, seeing that they are drawing to the close of their political life as a Government, it would be unwise of them, and certainly unfair to the country and to their successors, to commit the country to such a large expenditure as it will be committed to if we give our consent to this *via recta*. But, sir, I wish to consider this question from another point of view—from its financial point of view. The Premier laid before us last night a statement of the condition of the public debt account, and he assured us that even after sanctioning a large number of other lines he is going to introduce this session, there will be a considerable balance left of the loan vote—sufficient to commence those lines. I am not at all satisfied, however, that we have had the whole truth with regard to the state of the public debt; otherwise, why should the Premier have been so anxious to keep that information from us? He gave it very unwillingly; and why should he have been so unwilling if, when he did give us the information, the account was not in such a bad state as we were led to expect? Being unsatisfied, as I am, with regard to the state of the public debt, I think the Government are still more to blame

for having brought such a large railway proposal as this before the House and before the country. I also think that in introducing a motion of this kind the Minister for Works should have given us a little more information. It is all very well for him to say that he will give us that information when in committee; but why should we let this motion go into committee without that information? I think we should have had a description of the country through which the railway will run, some information as to the resources of the country, as to the amount of settlement, whether the land is fit for grazing only, or for agricultural settlement, whether, as many hon. members argue, it is all pine scrub and brigalow, or whether there are minerals, including gold, as my friend, the member for Fassifern, interjects. There may be minerals, and gold amongst them, but we have had no information on the point; we cannot tell whether there is any gold unless we go to look for ourselves; we have had no information from the Minister for Works on the point. I also think that the Government are only half-hearted in the matter after all. I think the Premier let the cat out of the bag when he said the Government would make the line when the money was available.

The PREMIER: I said the money was available, and that part of the amount involved in the motion was proposed to be expended during the current year.

Mr. MURPHY: I am sorry I cannot accept the explanation of the Premier, because I remember perfectly well that he said last night he would make this railway when the money was available.

The PREMIER: I said nothing of the kind; the money is available.

Mr. MURPHY: The money was available once perhaps, but it is not there now. If the money is available for this line, why is it not available for other lines? Have we not been told that there is no more money for lines already in course of construction, but which require to be pushed out still further? In reference to the extension of the Central Railway, and the construction of the Cleveland line, the reply over and over again has been that there is no money.

The PREMIER: No; the plans are not ready.

Mr. MURPHY: The plans of the Central extension have been ready for the last twelve months.

The PREMIER: The working plans are not ready for calling for tenders.

Mr. MURPHY: They were ready last year.

The PREMIER: They are not ready yet.

Mr. MURPHY: I am quite sure, at any rate, that the Government do not mean to go on with this line. I am sure they are only holding it out as a bribe to the members for Darling Downs and Warwick; I am satisfied of that, as sure as I stand here. I have always looked on the line as a political line, and the Premier's remark last night convinced me that it is a political railway.

The PREMIER: Which remark?

Mr. MURPHY: That the money was not available.

The PREMIER: I did not make any such remark.

Mr. MURPHY: A number of members round me heard the remark, and I took the words down last night when the Premier uttered them.

The PREMIER: I was speaking of the South Brisbane railway.

Mr. MURPHY: We know that the Premier was even threatened by one of the members for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, that he would not any longer support the Government unless they brought forward this railway.

The PREMIER: Did he tell you that?

Mr. MURPHY: I knew that was said. And in order to save themselves from losing the support of the members of the district, the Government brought forward this motion. They have no real intention of going on with it, and I am as satisfied as I stand here that it is nothing more or less than a political line. The hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, last evening gave as one of his reasons for supporting the line that it would be part of a border line, and by that means would attract trade from New South Wales. I do not think it wise for this colony to enter into a war of railway rates with New South Wales. We have seen the disastrous results that have followed a similar war between New South Wales and Victoria. New South Wales has run her railways into Riverina for the purpose of taking the trade that properly belongs to Victoria. The Victorian lines reach the New South Wales border in about half the distance that the New South Wales lines reach the same border, and the consequence is that they have to bring their rates for going over double the length of line down to the Victorian rate—in fact, under the Victorian rate—and it has been ruinous to the revenue of the New South Wales railways. Still they do not get the trade, but they hope they will. It simply amounts to this: that what they do get goes to Sydney and round by sea to Victoria, the inhabitants of that part of the colony taking advantage of the cheap railway freights to send their produce through Sydney to Melbourne. The Victorian trade with Riverina has never fallen off in consequence of New South Wales pushing her railways into Riverina; they have held their own all the time and will continue to do so. Their railways are paying very handsomely, and the New South Wales railways are worked at an enormous loss, principally because of the keen competition of the Victorian railways on their borders. There is no doubt in my mind that, if we are going to enter into a war like that, we shall come to grief in the same way as New South Wales has come with her railway. With regard to drawing produce from New South Wales, we know that the country immediately across the border is very much finer than any country we have on the border of Queensland. Is this railway really designed to bring wheat from about Moree, and Narrabri, and those parts, into Queensland? I should like to know how the Warwick farmers would like that.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The line is only to carry wool.

Mr. MURPHY: Only to carry wool! I think we shall very soon have to erect a fiscal barrier along the border to keep out the produce this railway is designed to carry.

Mr. BULCOCK: You are a protectionist.

Mr. MURPHY: Yes, I am a protectionist, and I contend that it is only a proper thing to protect the farmers here from the farmers on the other side of the border. At the same time I do not see how we are going to attract very much produce for this railway if we do that. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, said something about the gold produced in the district where the railway is to be constructed. There is a very nice little bit of evidence on that point in the report of the select committee of the other Chamber on the railway from Warwick

to St. George. Mr. Kenneth Hutchison, on being examined with regard to the gold-mining that goes on in that part of the country, was asked—

"Have the reefs been worked to any extent? Not the deeper levels; only the surface, in most cases. In fact, to go to a depth of reef below 50 feet requires the aid of capital. Machinery is wanted for pumping and winding. There has been no capital put into the reefs on any of those goldfields.

"Did what was worked produce gold? Yes. I myself have sent over £20,000 worth of gold away. I know of one crushing of 90 tons of stone that gave a return of 1,100 oz. odd of gold. That reef belonged to four working men."

Mark what follows :—

"Two of them went home to Germany, the third went to Gympie, and the other broke his leg."

I do not know whether it was astonishment at the enormous yield of gold that drove two men back to Germany, sent another to Gympie, and caused the fourth to break his leg, but this is the kind of evidence we have from Mr. Hutchison. He further says :—

"I crushed myself some few tons of stone that gave 11 oz. to the ton. On Thane's Creek I crushed only 1,000 tons for over 1 oz. to the ton—as near as I recollect, some 21 dwt. to the ton."

If this goldfield is as rich as this, what is the use of people rushing away to Croydon? And that is the kind of evidence that is given before select committees! It is utterly valueless. Nevertheless, upon such evidence the committee recommended the railway to the approval of the other Chamber. I only take this as a sample of the evidence given. Here is a magnificent goldfield on Thane's Creek, twenty-five miles from Warwick, and it is deserted. Still they can get 1,100 oz. of gold from 90 tons of stone. In another place the witness is asked the question :—

"You told us there had been nothing startling about the gold-mining of the district. Do not you think that 11 oz. to the ton is a fair show in quartz reefing? Yes; but it is not sensational.

"How many tons crushed for 11 oz. to the ton? I mentioned 90 tons, which gave a return of 1,100 oz."

The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, told us that nature had been very good to this district, and had actually, on the twenty-eighth parallel, built four or five flourishing towns. It is the first time I ever heard of nature being so good to mankind as to make towns all ready for people to live in. But although nature has been so good to the district in that respect, still I have such a good opinion of nature that I do not think she will be so kind as to make them a railway through the district. I think it will take a still greater convulsion of nature than that which made those towns to make the railway, and I am quite satisfied that the House will not assist nature in that respect—at least I hope not. I am very sorry indeed for those gentlemen who are advocating this railway. We saw a very pretty little play here the other evening, enacted by the three members for Darling Downs and Warwick, and it remained very vividly impressed on my memory. We saw the member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, get up, and, in a tremulous voice and with tears in his eyes, upbraid the Government—not in anger, sir, but in sorrow. We then saw my hon. friend, the other member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, get up thoroughly disgusted with the whole thing. He was disgusted with the Government, disgusted with the House, and disgusted with himself. We then saw the hon. member for Warwick rise in his wrath and denounce the Government by all his gods, and then he sat down. Well, I think myself that this little farce was well rehearsed before the members came into the House. They had a little caucus over it in one of the committee-rooms, and

they carefully rehearsed the farce which they played here for our benefit. But, notwithstanding the rehearsing, I do not think this clever little farce had very much effect on this side of the House. I think it utterly failed in its object. I maintain that we are perfectly justified, as the leader of the Opposition said the other night, in using all the forms of the House to prevent this motion passing, and I, for one, when it goes into committee, will do my utmost to prevent it getting beyond that stage.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—I join issue with the hon. member for Barcoo in taunting the Government with losing the support of their followers. It is the fate of every Liberal Government to lose the support of many of their constituents occasionally. Their supporters have no interest in common; they have no community of interest. Therefore a Liberal Government is always patriotic. They have nothing else to sustain them but patriotism, and therefore I may say that the leader of the present Liberal Government is the people's champion. But I am very sorry that the Government should have been so ill-advised as to bring this railway forward at this present time, just on the eve of a great reform in our system of railway-making in this country. I look upon it that, if this railway could be delayed for only a little while, a different system would be adopted, so that it would not be such a fearful loss to the country as it would be if constructed now. It appeals me to look at the enormous amount of money that will be squandered in that dreary part of the world. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, talks about the paltry sum of £100,000 to be expended on this little piece of a line, twenty-four miles in length. Well, has he told us what freight there is in reserve for it when it is built for that paltry sum of £100,000? He has not told us what freight is awaiting there to repay the enormous cost. And how is it proposed to pay interest on the sum of £500,000 that will be required for the whole line, together with the interest on £100 a mile for maintenance? Well, I think that this railway should be delayed for the present. The new system that I am so much built up in is just adapted to that part of the country; there is no question about that. There are so many miles of flooded country that under the present system, if we try to keep the line above flood-mark, the consequence will be that whenever a flood occurs the cost of repairing it from time to time will be enormous. Now, under the new system of low-level lines the flood would pass over it. There will be no repairs to speak of when the floods subside.

Mr. JESSOP: There will be no line.

Mr. WHITE: Well, as hon. members opposite are so determined to take up the time of the House I may as well occupy a few minutes myself. I am wholly dissatisfied with the present system of railway-making. I am convinced from what I have observed that our Chief Engineer for Railways has not economy in his book, and I believe he is spoiling all the fine young engineers who have been in training in the department. They are sent out to survey certain portions of railway, and a question arises upon which they want information. They want an inspector to decide a certain question that arises, and they are kept waiting and waiting; they are kept idle for days, and weeks, and months, by the absence of the inspector whose decision is wanted in a certain point, and they find that whatever energy or desire they may have to do their work and earn their money they cannot do so. They are obliged to succumb to circumstances, and wait patiently and enjoy

themselves whilst they are in the lonely position in which they are left, without anything to do. Well, what are the consequences? We find that instead of our railway surveys costing something less than £20 a mile, they cost from £80 to £100 a mile. Now, I think the sooner such a thing as that is done away with the better, and the surveys accomplished for something reasonable. We find, on this side of Ipswich, a branch line of railway, a private line, constructed on the present expensive system; but the cost of survey and making did not amount to more than £1,300 a mile. Certainly the rails were obtained for £3 a ton, but that is nearer what the cost of construction should be. But here we think nothing of £4,000 or £5,000 a mile right away through moderate, common country. The thing looks to me really preposterous, and I think that the sooner we consider the circumstances of the colony, and try to go on a different system and practise economy, the better. If we squander £100,000 on the little line, twenty-four miles long, to Thane's Creek, what shall we have for the money? We shall have nothing. The fact is it will pauperise the Warwick people and all connected with them. We shall all have to bear the burden of it. Evidently we shall all have to help to support them and contribute towards the maintenance of that little line. I opposed a little line that was to benefit myself, because that extravagant system was going on, but now that the cheap system may be adopted I think it should be a great inducement to the Government to provide for my little branch line up Laidley Creek. If the Government were cognisant of the difficulties the highly deserving and struggling farmers in that district have to contend against in getting to the railway, they would be very ready to put that line before Parliament now that a cheap system can be adopted. There are contractors now willing to construct that railway, according to quality, for from £1,200 to £1,500 a mile. One contractor told me that he could lay down that railway so as to allow the train to be run on it at the rate of twenty-five miles an hour, for £1,500 a mile, and it could be constructed much cheaper than that if a slower speed was required. If that line was put down on this system it would pay handsomely. The produce is all there to make it pay, and it would be a great boon to the farmers and make them a prosperous community. If the Government recognised the difficulties the farmers have in getting their produce to market, they would bring this line forward, and I am convinced the House would now be in a temper to unanimously approve of that railway. I think the Government must see that they are ill-advised in proposing to continue this enormously expensive system — this unnecessary waste of money, I must call it. I will now let hon. members opposite do the rest of the talking.

Mr. DONALDSON said: Mr. Speaker,—After the very intelligent criticism we have had from the hon. member for Stanley, I have considerable diffidence in approaching this subject at all. I intend to oppose the motion and I am certainly consistent in my opposition to this line, because it has not had my support either on the passing of the Loan Bill or when it was before the House on a previous occasion. It has always met with my opposition, because I believe it would not be conducive to the welfare of this colony. Whatever views I may have held upon this line, the Government or the Minister for Works for the time being has taken no steps to supply information that might have the effect of inducing me to change my views.

The PREMIER: We propose to do that in committee.

Mr. DONALDSON: I think that when the motion is before the House is as good a time as any other to supply this information.

The PREMIER: It has never been done before.

Mr. DONALDSON: It is done in other places.

The PREMIER: They do not go into committee at all except here.

Mr. DONALDSON: I know that such measures are brought before the Legislatures of other colonies, and all the information is then furnished to the House.

The PREMIER: Yes; but they do not go into committee at all except here.

Mr. DONALDSON: If we take a different course here, that is no reason why we should not have the information furnished to us the first time the matter is brought before the House. It might have the effect of preventing a long debate, because, if the figures are satisfactory and convincing, the probability is, the line will be carried; and, on the other hand, if it can be proved that the line will not pay, this would be the best time to reject it without any further waste of time. We have had, I think, a very intelligent criticism of the financial position from hon. members who spoke last night, more particularly the hon. member for Townsville, although I believe he fell into a slight error; and also, I believe, the Premier fell into an error in his refutation of that hon. gentleman's figures. But whatever the position may be, we have not to look back very far to the time when the Financial Statement was made in this House by the leader of the Government. At that time I remember the imploring look he gave round the House when he said that he trusted hon. members in future would not press for further railway construction. He did that with a most imploring voice—I do not think I ever heard him speak more feelingly than he did on that occasion. Not many days afterwards he paid a visit to Warwick, and what was the result of that visit? He promised that this railway should be brought forward this session. I believe there was a certain amount of coercion in the matter, and that is the reason it is now brought forward. It is not because of the merits of this line it has been introduced. I do not think it has any merits about it although it has many objections, and is a line which will go through almost valueless country, and forms a portion of a large expenditure to which this country would be committed.

Mr. KATES: You are wrong.

Mr. DONALDSON: The hon. member for Darling Downs says I am wrong, but I am perfectly satisfied that it does form a portion of a very large expenditure, and of the hon. members who spoke in favour of the line last night the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, was the only one who candidly admitted this was a part of the whole scheme. Everyone else spoke of the merits of the line as a branch line, and that it was a part of the whole scheme was avoided by them all.

Mr. DICKSON: Not by me.

Mr. DONALDSON: I shall speak of the hon. member for Enoggera directly. I have a small reference to make to his speech. The late Treasurer of the Government, I know, strongly believes in this line. He not only on a previous occasion, but last night, referred to the fact that it was very necessary to construct this line to stop a certain amount of leakage in the Customs going away from this colony. Now, if the hon. gentleman had only looked at a return I called for, and which was furnished to this House last

year, he would have been able to give the information as to the amount of leakage going from this colony. It is for hon. gentlemen to judge whether we should spend £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 in stopping this leakage. I say this line is only a portion of the scheme for the construction of the line from Warwick to St. George in the future. That is the idea of the Government. Last year they intended to make this line much longer, and it appears to me that the action of the Opposition in preventing it then is now fully verified, because they have come down with a different scheme this year. I will read the return of duties collected borderwise during the years 1885 and 1886, on goods coming from New South Wales into this colony. At Swan Creek, the amount of duty collected during the year ended the 30th June, 1885, was £33 2s. 6d. on an estimated value of the goods of £350; during the year ended the 30th June, 1886, the amount of duty collected there was £257, and the estimated value of the goods was £2,247. At Stanthorpe—which, as we are all aware, has a railway, so that this line, or any extension of this line, would not have the effect of saving the trade there—the amount of duty collected up to the same date in 1885 was £234 19s. 1d., and the estimated value of the goods £3,944; in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £348 9s. 7d., and the estimated value of the goods was £4,199. At Texas, the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £3 13s. 6d. on an estimated goods value of £50; and in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £10 10s. 6d. on an estimated goods value of £119. The Texas trade might be saved by the construction of this line. At Goondiwindi the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £20 19s. 4d., and the estimated value of the goods was £344; in 1886, the amount of duty collected was £63 6s. 6d., and the estimated value of the goods was £457. At Mungindi the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £2,153 14s. 11d., and the estimated value of the goods was £9,599; in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £965 3s. 6d., and the estimated value of the goods was £2,972. At Hebel (formerly Curriwillinghi) the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £2,184 8s. 9d., and the estimated value of the goods was £8,608; and in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £1,001 3s. 8d., and the estimated value of the goods was £3,026. It is quite possible that by a very long extension of this line that trade might be saved to the colony. At Wooroorooka, a new township on the Warrego River, the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £7,613 17s. 6d., and the estimated value of the goods was £25,185; and in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £5,975 12s. 6d., and the estimated value of the goods was £17,781. At Hungerford the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £6,596 5s. 7d., and the estimated value of the goods was £24,448; in 1886 the amount of duty collected was £8,955 2s. 11d., and the estimated value of the goods was £34,470. At Wompah the amount of duty collected in 1885 was £724 16s. 8d., and the estimated value of the goods was £4,375; in 1886, the amount of duty collected was £1,482 5s. 9d., and the estimated value of the goods was £5,379. If the hon. member for Enoggera had been candid enough to refer to these figures last night, he would have shown the House how very few of these duties were collected on the proposed line to St. George. The places where all the larger amounts are collected are far beyond the reach of this proposed railway. The line would have to go as far as Cunnamulla before you could stop the gap at Wooroorooka and Hungerford. If the Government really wish to secure the trade that is going over the border, how is it they will not make any differential rates on the railway to try to secure it? Why do they not push forward their

Western railway in such a direction as to secure it? On the one hand we find the Government making no attempt, with the means already in their hands, to secure the trade that is going over the border; and on the other hand we see them quite prepared to spend three or four millions of money to secure the few paltry pounds that now leak over the border. I was surprised that the hon. member did not make use of these figures last night when he spoke in support of this resolution. But no, Mr. Speaker, he had either forgotten their existence or else he knew that if he had used them it would have greatly weakened his argument. Looking at the line proposed, on the map it certainly is very pretty; and anyone not possessing a knowledge of the country it passes through would be under the impression that it would open up one of the richest parts of the colony.

Mr. KATES: So it will.

Mr. DONALDSON: I am surprised to hear the hon. member make such an assertion. If the hon. gentleman thinks so he is certainly ignorant of that part of the colony. Looking at the map of this colony and New South Wales together, we see that the railways of New South Wales are being extended in such a direction that they must in the future have a large amount of our trade, whereas we are not in a position to take any of theirs, or, if any, very little. On that point I am thoroughly satisfied, because I have a considerable knowledge of the country. The country beyond St. George is, I suppose, some of the poorest in the entire colony. For a distance of about ninety miles it is hardly occupied at all. It is almost a desert, and there is no possibility of its ever being used for cultivation. It is not used at present even for pastoral purposes. And yet we are asked to spend millions of money to bring down the few bales of wool that may be grown in that desolate country. It was one of the great arguments of the hon. member for Enoggera that we should be able to keep the whole of our trade within our own colony. I feel a little sore about this, because the Government are making no efforts to try to secure the trade that we have already got. The Minister for Works laughs; perhaps I may be able to turn the laugh against him. It is not very long since I introduced a deputation to that hon. gentleman, and we brought before him certain proposals which mercantile men in this city believed would have the effect of at least diverting a lot of the border trade towards Brisbane. After listening to the arguments, he said he saw certain objections to them, but if he had his own way he would take very good care that the wool did not go over the border into New South Wales; he would put a tax upon all wool going borderwise, whether in bale or on the sheep's back. Now, I think no sane man would ever dream of doing anything of the kind. I asked him if he was joking, and he said he was not joking, but was in sober earnest.

Mr. BULCOCK: Reciprocity!

Mr. DONALDSON: Where is the reciprocity? Some hon. members are not at all happy in their interjections, and one of those members is the hon. member for Enoggera. I have already pointed out, Mr. Speaker, the objection I have—because certain information has not been furnished. The Premier says the time has not arrived for giving that information, but I think that when any measure is brought before the House, and is being discussed, then is the time for giving the information. I enter my protest, not only on account of this line, but other lines that may in future be introduced without having that information. I insist upon having it. I know it has been the practice in the past to throw

papers of this kind down upon the table of this House and almost take a vote upon them at once. No information has been given by the Minister in charge of these matters. We must either swallow them or reject them. There is no doubt that it is entirely owing to the majority behind the Government that the railways passed up to the present time have been accepted. It is true that this motion would not have got through last year had hon. members—one member in particular—been then of the same opinion that he is to-night. The division was a very close one, and I do not see how that hon. member can reconcile his position now with the position he took up at that time. I refer to the hon. member for Stanley, Mr. White. I believe he had given pledges to a number of his friends not to vote for the railway on that occasion, and, to my surprise, he voted with the majority; but I believe that if he votes to-night it will be with the minority—that he will vote with the opponents of the measure, who, I am confident, are going to be in a minority; but that will not prevent me from expressing my opinion now as to the merits of this line—of the whole scheme rather. It is one that is premature, and I believe that in the future it will bear out the words of the hon. member for Mackay last night. He said that probably in the future he would be happy to support this line. I believe that has been tried to be twisted round to the effect that if he was a supporter of the Government he would vote for it, but I do not believe anything of the kind. His idea is that when the requirements of the country demand it, and its finances are in a position to justify it, he would offer no opposition to it. I am in exactly the same position. I believe that in the future that line will be constructed from Warwick, and if I have the honour of a seat in this House some years hence it is possible I may be in favour of it. But I am certainly not of opinion that it should be carried out at the present time. I shall give it now, as I have done in the past, my most strenuous opposition. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that this is what may be termed a political line. If it was not a political line the extension of the Western line would meet the very purpose that this is asked for—that is, to secure the south-west trade. That has been warmly advocated by the late Treasurer last session and this session. I believe that if he took a trip into the interior of the colony along this particular line he would certainly alter his opinion. I think he would find that a better route can be found for saving the far western trade, and that there would be no necessity for constructing a line from here to Warwick when the traffic is not sufficient to pay—certainly not the interest on the cost of the construction of the line that already exists there. But there is another aspect of this question, and I certainly do not wish to refer to it in any offensive sense. That is the constitutional point. We all know the position that the Government are in at the present time. They have had already to abandon one of the chief planks in their—I should not say “platform,” but one of their chief measures relating to the finances of the colony. They had to recede from that, because a majority of the House was certainly opposed to the passing of their land-tax scheme. Therefore, through the action of the Opposition on that occasion they are now—I should almost say—retaining their position in this House upon sufferance. I do not think any Government occupying such a position, more particularly when they have declared their intention of passing a Redistribution Bill and going to the country, are in a constitutional position to introduce measures of a contentious nature. I

believe that has been laid down and verified by the greatest political authorities we have. It is a question which I am not going into at length—in fact it is one which probably I am not capable of dealing with as well as it should be dealt with, and as so little reference has been made to it by the leaders of this House I shall pass over it just now. But I cannot help expressing my belief; and that is that there is a certain amount of political trickery about this motion—a great amount of political trickery I ought to say—because I do not think the Government themselves have the slightest idea that this line is going to pass. They know that the amount of opposition given to it will have a certain damaging effect upon those who oppose it. I am quite well aware of my opposition, Mr. Speaker. I know that it may do a certain amount of discredit to the Opposition in this House. I am perfectly well aware of that. I am not blind to my position, but, at the same time, I think the Opposition have certain functions to perform, those functions being to try and protect the funds of this colony as well as the Government. I think it is part of their duty to see that the country is not extravagant—that the Government are not allowed, in order to placate a few of their supporters, to spend a larger amount of money than the colony is justified in spending. I think the Opposition are perfectly justified in offering opposition to any such proposals. The proof of that is that those members would not support the Government unless they got this. This is their price for their support. The Opposition have nothing whatever to gain by this, except the good of the country. Now, I can go a little further, and point out the position that this House is in at the present time to deal with any such measure. I think it will be within the minds of hon. members who saw the railway measures pass through this Chamber and the other Chamber last session that there was a combination amongst hon. members which is commonly called “log-rolling,” for the purpose of getting railways for the construction of which there was no justification whatever. Those hon. members formed themselves into a compact body and carried through this House last year railways of a most objectionable nature. That compact is not ended yet. They entered into that compact then, and those who were benefited last year are now prepared to show their gratitude by giving their assistance to the others now. I think that before this matter is dealt with there should be a general election. We should go to the country and come back here fresh to deal with such a large question. I shall certainly enter my protest against any such scheme, and even if there is a large majority of the House in favour of it, I do not suppose it will alter my opinion. I am determined to take no action of an unconstitutional kind—or rather of an obstructive kind—but I am prepared to offer the most strenuous opposition I can to this measure, or to any other measure calling for large expenditure until we know exactly what our financial position is. That has not yet been placed clearly before us. We have in the immediate future the promise of a dissolution. Let us have the dissolution first. It will not hinder this or any other railway for any length of time, and if hon. members come back to this House and approve by majorities of the railway expenditure of the Government, then let it go by all means. The constituencies have had no opportunity of expressing their opinion with regard to this scheme, because they knew nothing about it at the last general election. The whole of these schemes have since been put upon the table of this House, and the outside public

have had no opportunity whatever of being able to offer an opinion as to the advisability of constructing these lines or not. I know there is great dissatisfaction in some parts of the country with regard to our extravagant expenditure on railways. Since last session I have had an opportunity of travelling over some parts of the colony, and I have seen railways that do not pay now, and which have no prospect of paying in the future. They were no doubt political lines.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Charleville line?

MR. DONALDSON: I believe the Charleville line will be a good paying line in the future. I do not ask that it should be extended beyond Charleville. I am quite willing that it should stay there and prove that it will pay before asking for its extension farther west. It must be borne in mind that lines taken into the interior are developing country there, and enabling it to be put to profitable uses of which it would not otherwise be capable. There are many stations in the interior on some of the finest pastoral runs we have, which are at present only used for cattle-grazing, because it would not pay to grow wool there. With the extension of this railway almost all those stations will be turned into sheep runs, with the effect that they will employ a great deal of labour, while the wool produced will add to the national wealth. I believe there is some justification in building a line of that kind, even if it did not pay full interest on the cost of construction, because it is developing the national property. There are no private estates in the interior to benefit by the construction of railways; it is all Crown land, and any increase in their value the State gets the benefit of. However, I am quite prepared for the present to let the railway stay at Charleville, and not to advocate its extension beyond there, because I believe a great number of hon. members are under the impression that that line will not pay. I am of a different opinion, and I am quite prepared to let the future decide who is right. But with regard to some other lines that will come before the House, and upon which I shall have a few words to say, there is no argument in favour of constructing them. They are costly, and there is no possibility of their paying. Take the Valley line that was passed last year. I am perfectly satisfied that it is one of the greatest political blunders ever perpetrated in this colony. It cannot possibly pay. It is all very well for hon. members to say "Oh!" Let them do as I have done. I say I am prepared to abide by the decision of the future. I do not think that anyone can believe—I do not speak offensively—that that line will pay.

MR. S. W. BROOKS: Yes, of course.

MR. DONALDSON: Well, if the hon. member believes it, he is more easily gulled than I gave him credit for. I gave him credit for a great deal of common sense, and I am sure that if he was spending his own money he would never have been so foolish as to construct a railway through that place. The amount of money spent on that line would have done a great deal towards developing some parts of this country where the expenditure would have been justifiable. I have a good deal of sympathy with the hon. member for Stanley, who advocated a branch line which would enable the farmers to bring their produce to market, where in wet weather they are almost unable to cart it. He had the honesty to admit the line would not pay; although he said it would be very useful to the people who would use it. I cannot say the same for some other

railways, more particularly the line through the Valley. I shall certainly take care that on this occasion we are not so nicely tricked as we were last year. On that occasion we lost the motion through an hon. member being kept out of the House; and it would have been a great saving to the country if he had voted. I had no idea that that line would pass through the other Chamber; and we shall act wisely now if we act on our own behalf, and do not depend upon others to relieve us from our difficulties. On that occasion we rested upon a rotten reed. There was a combination formed there the same as there is here for the passing of that line—there is no doubt about that; and on account of that combination I say that before constructing any more railways we should go before our constituents and give an account of our stewardship. If, when we come back, there is a majority of hon. members in favour of this or any other line, I shall go no further than entering my protest against it. Until we do that I feel justified in offering every opposition that I possibly can to the construction of this railway.

MR. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think that by this time the Government have come to the same conclusion that I have with regard to their railway policy—that it would be a very good thing for them if they had no railway policy at all.

MR. S. W. BROOKS: What about Croydon?

MR. PALMER: The Croydon railway is not the question under discussion. That question was before the House the other day, and I then asked hon. members to state their opinions upon it. I think that, after the discussion which has taken place upon the proposals now upon the table of the House, the Government must feel themselves that their railway policy is very unsatisfactory and disappointing. They have been attacked alike by their friends and their opponents for their railway policy. Now, the principal matter in connection with this railway is with regard to the Loan Fund—the means for carrying it out. I know very well that the money to build this and other railways will have to come from home, and the people who lend the money are very particular in finding out—and their knowledge on these matters is pretty accurate, as you know, Mr. Speaker—how the money they lend is distributed, and what return comes from it. The report of the Railway Commissioner is before the House, for hon. members to investigate, and it is very interesting reading. A great deal of the information which the Minister for Works should have put before the House in bringing forward this motion can be obtained from that report, but at the same time the Minister for Works might very well have placed that information before us; and he should have been in possession of it if he was not. I wish now to show the different phases which the Loan Fund presents in the three different reports which are before the House. Here is the annual report of the Commissioner for Railways for the year 1887, which states that the capital account of railways is £16,748,000. Turning to the Auditor-General's report, Appendix A, we find the total appropriation for railways is £16,795,000. Again turning to the Treasurer's tables we find, on page 18, that the amount for railways, including depreciation, is £17,483,000.

THE PREMIER: One return is up to the 31st December, and another to the 30th June.

MR. PALMER: Even then they do not tally. These are matters that make it very puzzling for one who is anxious to find out the different amounts. I do not see why the difference should arise. This is the total fund

available for railway construction, and it differs in the three reports. Now, I have a very distinct recollection that when this railway policy was enunciated, hon. members, one and all, asserted that the Land Bill before the House in 1884 was to provide the funds to pay the interest on the railways included in the Loan Act of that year. That land revenue is visible to anyone, in the Treasurer's tables. I look at them and find that in the year 1882-3 the contribution per head from the land returns was £2 16s. 9d. In 1883-4 the amount contributed per head was £2 4s. In 1884-5 it fell to £1 18s. 9d.; in 1885-6 it fell to £1 17s. 5d.; and in the year 1886-7 it was still further reduced to £1 12s. 4d. per head. That was with an increasing population which, in 1882-3, was 248,000, and in 1886-7, 342,000. With an increasing population we have a decreasing land revenue, and yet the land is one of the sources from which the interest on those railways was to be met. There was further information also which the Minister for Works did not give us, which we find in the papers before the House, and that is in regard to the available traffic in the country through which this railway is to pass. I know that the chief article of produce in that country is wool. The railway returns show that wool is the largest item. But there is a peculiar phase of the wool trade in that district, or in the districts which feed the Southern lines, and that is in regard to the extraordinary falling-off in the freight of wool. The decrease is not owing to the decrease of sheep, because I find that in the Southern division there is an increase of 1,113,000 sheep; in the Central division we find a falling-off, certainly, of 500,000; but in the Northern district, again, there is another increase in sheep. The increase of sheep in the Southern division would imply that there would be a certain increase in the traffic on the railways, but, instead of that, we find an alarming decrease. The answer to that may be that it went border-wise—that it went to Sydney. However, I find in the return for New South Wales that there was no extraordinary advance in the year 1885-6 in the export of wool from Sydney to account for the decrease on our lines. There is a decreasing revenue from the country through which it is proposed to make this railway.

Mr. ALAND: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to call attention to the state of the House.

Quorum formed.

Mr. PALMER: I was referring to the sheep traffic on the Southern line, and this in the face of differential duties, or the reduced rate which the Commissioner for Railways had instituted in order to draw the traffic to this line. In the year 1885 the amount received from wool was £86,000, and in 1886 it fell to £51,000, notwithstanding the increase of a million of sheep. The hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, referred to the wheat produce in this country through which the line is to pass. In the statistics of Queensland we have some interesting returns as to what the wheat prospects of the colony are, and in this I am quite certain that the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, who professes to be an authority on wheat, will contradict me if I state anything not in accordance with fact. The total area reaped for grain in 1885 was 5,274 acres, but in the following year that quantity fell to 1,759 acres. In 1885, 903 acres were affected with rust, but in the following year, 1886, 8,734 acres were affected; so that we may almost say, so far as wheat is concerned, that our prospects are doubtful. I know what the effect of rust in wheat has been in New South Wales. What was the finest wheat-growing district in New South Wales is now utterly ruined, so far as

wheat is concerned. Districts which produced wheat which took prizes at the first exhibition held in London have since remained utterly barren so far as regards the cultivation of wheat. I do not say that the crops affected with rust were an absolute loss to the growers, because they were utilised for hay. One hon. member said the district would grow more wheat than Queensland would consume, but I should be very sorry to wait for wheat till the Darling Downs grew sufficient for our consumption. The grain operated on in the colony last year is shown in the statistics to be 33,500 bushels at the five mills working in Queensland. Of this, 21,000 bushels were grown in Queensland, leaving 12,000 bushels of imported wheat. We find by the Treasury returns that 19,000 bushels of wheat paid 6d. a bushel duty; and I suppose the difference between the 19,000 bushels and the 12,000 bushels was utilised for seed and other purposes. If it were not for the importation of wheat some of the mills would be idle.

Mr. KATES: It will be different this year; we expect a good crop.

Mr. PALMER: Thinking, of course, that a gentleman who went so far as to advocate that a larger tax should be placed on the imported wheat had some grounds to go upon, I looked up these statistics, and I found it would be a delusion for us to adopt such a tax with the view of producing our own food supply. I think, Mr. Speaker, we should pause before we proceed with unprofitable or unremunerative branch lines. The Commissioner's report shows a gradually decreasing rate of return on the invested capital, and that is enough to make hon. members pause before they consent to the starting of other lines. We find that in 1883-4 the rate was £3 1s. 5d. per cent. on the capital invested. In 1884-5 it was £2 12s. 5d. per cent.; in 1885-6 it went down to £1 15s. 4d. per cent.; and in 1886-7 the return on all moneys invested in our railways was £1 0s. 6d. per cent. That is an indication that the rate is downwards, and that some alteration will have to be made in the management of our railways. I believe that the system is wrong in connection with the political head of our railway system, and that it should be under a board of commissioners, as in Victoria. The railways should be worked on strictly commercial principles, and unless so worked I believe that the money-lending public in England will very soon discover that they will have to ask a higher rate of interest for the money they lend, or stop our loans altogether. One hon. member stated that the railways of New South Wales were carried on at a very great loss as compared with the Queensland, but I find that the railways there paid 3·27 per cent.—that is the whole system, trunk and branch lines—and we know that trunk lines pay better than branch lines. That was for the year 1886. The subject is one that concerns every one in the country, because the people of the colony will have to find the means to make up the deficiency on the railway returns, which we find amounts, according to the Commissioner, to £269,167. Taking working expenses from earnings the balance is £216,122, and deducting that from the amount payable as interest at the rate of £4 10s. 8d., which is the interest payable on the money invested in our railways, leaves a debit balance of £269,167, which has to be provided from the consolidated revenue. We should not increase a burden like this year by year when our land revenue, which is the principal source of income from which we expect to pay the interest, is falling, and the railway revenue decreasing. We should take a firm stand, and not increase our difficulties in that direction any further. I beg to move the adjournment of the debate.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. member has not given any reason for adjourning the debate, and I should think from the point of view of hon. members opposed to the motion that they have pretty well discussed the railway in all its phases. They seemed to have pretty well exhausted themselves over it, and I do not think there is any object to be gained in adjourning the debate further. Why not at once allow the motion to go into committee, when they can discuss it again point by point? I presume they will take that course if they wish to have the whole question thoroughly ventilated, and I, for one, do not feel inclined to go into any further discussion of the question in its present condition. When we are in committee the matter can be argued point by point, and the Government will be able to answer all the objections brought forward, and will, I think, be able to justify themselves in asking the House to deal with the matter and approve of the plans, so that the railway can be commenced when the Government are prepared to call for tenders. I cannot see the object of adjourning the debate after two nights' discussion.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I will take advantage of the motion for adjourning the debate to make an explanation and some corrections, which, I think, is not an unusual thing to do. I quite agree with the Minister for Works that we have had a pretty fair discussion, and I have no doubt that we shall discuss the question still more in committee; at the same time, it is necessary, I think, that any misapprehensions or errors made during the debate should be corrected before the debate closes. Therefore I take advantage of the motion for the adjournment of the debate to make an explanation, and to make a correction also of some statements made on behalf of the motion to go into committee by members of the Government, and by the late Colonial Treasurer, Mr. Dickson. He seemed to be labouring under the misapprehension when he spoke that I, by my argument, had closed myself to the possibility of supporting the making of any railway because I opposed going into committee on this line, or rather because I disapproved of constructing this line from Warwick to Thane's Creek under present circumstances. I carefully guarded myself against any such position, and the hon. gentleman must certainly not have heard what I said. I stated distinctly that we should be careful, owing to our financial position, not to go into the making of railways recklessly, and that we should only make those lines which were wanted and were likely to be reproductive. If the hon. gentleman reads my speech as reported in *Hansard* he will find words to that effect, so that his fear is utterly groundless. Certainly from my previous conduct in this House it cannot be supposed for one moment that I am opposed to the making of all railways, simply because I oppose this railway, chiefly on the ground of the present financial position of the Government. Both the hon. member for Enoggera and the Premier are under the misapprehension that because I and some other members on this side of the House advocated the making of a railway to Croydon therefore we should advocate the construction of the line now before the House; or, opposing it, we should stultify our advocacy of the Croydon railway. There is no comparison between the two lines of railway. If the Government do not make the railway to Croydon, which they need not do, that railway will be carried out by private enterprise, if the Government give the necessary permission for that to be done. Could any private individual or syndicate be got to make this line of railway now under dis-

cussion? Would it be possible, by giving a substantial guarantee less than the usual interest, to get any company to make this railway? But a company can readily be got to make the railway from Normanton to Croydon, and I say that there is no comparison between the two railways, and that my advocacy of the Croydon railway stands as strong and as firm as ever, notwithstanding that I am opposed to the construction of this line at the present time. The hon. member for Enoggera gave two reasons why he advocated this railway, from Warwick to Thane's Creek. One was to secure the border trade, a reason which the hon. member for Warrego destroyed by the return which he moved for last year, and read to-night to the House. The other reason given by the hon. gentleman was that he supported this proposal because he was a member of the Government which advocated a railway policy containing this particular line, and he would not retreat from that policy. That is a very poor reason. There might be something in the border trade reason, if it could be proved, but the hon. gentleman must first prove that there is a border trade of sufficient value to protect by the spending of so much money as this line will cost; and then he must further prove that this line will be the means of protecting that border trade. But the hon. gentleman has not done that, nor attempted to do it; I hope he will try to do it in committee. As for the other reason, that he was a member of the Government which advocated the railway policy in which this line is included, and therefore he should not change his opinion but should still advocate this line, that is no reason at all; the less so, seeing that it comes from a gentleman who is looked upon as a man of sound common sense. When he proposed this railway, did not he consider the country to be in a flourishing condition? Did he not expect from the statements made by some of his colleagues that there would be no difficulty in finding the money to pay the interest on the cost of its construction, and also to pay for the interest on other lines included in the £10,000,000 loan? Did he not expect that there would be sufficient revenue under the Land Act for that purpose? Have his expectations in that respect been realised? Has this increased revenue been received by him as Colonial Treasurer? Of course we know that it has not; we know that the revenue has fallen off instead of increased. The reason, therefore, that the hon. gentleman should support this railway now, because he advocated it before in a general railway policy, is utterly groundless. I do not think he would have lent himself for a single moment to the production of such a railway policy as was introduced in 1884 unless he was perfectly satisfied, as he said at the time, that there would be no difficulty in finding the interest on the railways, and that there would even be a surplus which would go far to benefit the Government in other directions and to reduce unnecessary taxation. Those were the expectations of the hon. gentleman at that day. Can he say that these are his expectations now? I leave him to think over the matter, and tell us more about it when we get into committee. The hon. member for Barcoo, Mr. Murphy, referred to the statement made by the Premier last night as to the railway being made when money was available. Of course the hon. gentleman denies having made that statement, and I am quite certain that if he thought he had made it he would not deny it; but he did make a statement of the kind, and a similar statement was made by the Minister for Works. I will read the statement made by the Minister for Works, and it will perhaps strengthen the assertion made by the hon. member for Barcoo. I heard the Premier make the statement, and so did the hon. member for

Warrego; we both remarked it to each other at the time. I will read what the Minister for Works says upon that particular point, which, to my mind, throws very great doubt upon the sincerity of the Government in trying to pass the plans of this railway. The Minister for Works said:—

“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.”

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not the Treasurer.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Is not that plain enough? The hon. gentleman is the mover of this motion, and it is he who will have to put this motion into operation if it is carried. He says he is not the Treasurer! I know he is not; but that strengthens the position that was taken up by the hon. member for Barcoo and the hon. member for Warrego, who, along with myself, heard the Premier make a similar statement.

The PREMIER: I cannot remember it. I made a statement quite inconsistent with that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It was a slip, no doubt. What the Minister for Works said was probably not intended either, but whether it was intended or not, it was caught by the gentlemen in the gallery.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: You have got one statement there, where is the other?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: The other was not caught, but yours was.

The PREMIER: I could not have said it, for I had a very different thing in my mind.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Well, I have grave doubts about the sincerity of the Government. I certainly do think that they are sensible men, and, that being so, they would not make this railway at the present stage, as the Minister for Works says, even if the plans were passed; and I think the same also of the other railway which is to be proposed after this. In fact, I think the Premier will not deny having said so in connection with the South Brisbane extension. Now, sir, at the time that this railway was first mooted, a good many years ago when the surveys were first made by the late Government, it was entertained rather favourably for a few months because it was looked upon as a line that would be a very much shorter route in going to New South Wales. Since then a great deal more has been learned about the difficulty of making the line through the first portion of this grand railway scheme, because it is all of one piece. It is all one scheme. The *via recta* and this Warwick to St. George line is all one railway. The one is a complement of the other, and this Thane's Creek line is the beginning of the line. Of course the Government know very well, and the members who advocate the line know very well, that if they get the Thane's Creek line made as far as Thane's Creek it is only a matter of time to have it continued at both ends, both west and east. But since the time I speak of, there have been other railway surveys made in a direction which seems to me to be shorter and better. I refer to the route, *via* Beaudesert, across into New South Wales, so that it is really a very serious question whether we should commit ourselves to this line—leaving out of consideration the financial question—until we have ascertained for a positive certainty whether the route from Beaudesert onwards towards Casino would not be shorter and less expensive. That is a matter which can be found out only by surveys, and, in connection with that, the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, I

think rather unfairly, accused the member for Mackay of anticipating the pressing on of this line as soon as he changed seats and got on the Government benches. Now, I do not think the hon. member contemplates anything of the sort. If he did he would encounter a great deal of opposition from the gentlemen who would be sitting around him. Now, the member for Enoggera seemed to be under the impression that because the Government had passed a certain line of railway policy, therefore he should stick to that line of policy, but he seems to have forgotten that that line of policy has been altered a great deal. If this line is not passed, it will not be the first alteration that has taken place, for one railway put in the £10,000,000 loan vote was completely wiped off and the money appropriated to another line going from Bowen, *via* Ayr, towards Townsville. On the £10,000,000 loan vote there was a line from Bowen to the coalfields going straight out west from Bowen, but now the money is appropriated to a line going northwards towards Townsville. Therefore the hon. gentleman's argument about sticking to an unreliable line of policy is futile. It is childish as coming from a man of his years and common sense. Now, I come to the explanation I intend to make about the statement of the financial position. I admit that I made a mistake in one portion of my statement, and the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, in correcting it, made a bigger mistake still, so that in explaining the one I shall be able to correct the other. Hon. members may recollect that the hon. gentleman, in making his explanation last night, admitted, though I did not hear it, but I have since read it in *Hansard*, that the deficit which I stated would accrue in the consolidated revenue at the end of the quarter was correct—that it would be at least £400,000. He admitted also statements which I made, up to a certain point, as being correct, that point being the end of this present quarter—the financial end of this present quarter—both in relation to the Loan and Consolidated Revenue Funds. I stated that I would place the £60,000 of deficit existing at present alongside the expenditure for the quarter, the expenditure being, in round numbers, £1,100,000, and deducting the revenue with the increase which I gave from that £1,100,000, there would be a deficit left of £405,000, which must certainly be made up out of the loan vote. The money must come from somewhere. The services being performed, the money must be found for the payment of the services, and the money not being in the ordinary revenue, it must come out of the available balance which the Government have in hand, which is the loan cash balance.

The PREMIER: I admitted all that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Well, I say the hon. gentleman admitted all up to that point.

The PREMIER: That will be the case if we did nothing to alter it.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I may deal with that afterwards. Then occurs the point where I made the mistake. I should have taken that £500,000 of loan money which I said would be expended at the end of the quarter, from the £1,440,000. Hon. members will recollect that the answer given by the head of the Government to the hon. member for Mackay showed liabilities, £1,200,000, to which I added £240,000, by way of extras, making £1,440,000. Therefore, in dealing with that £1,440,000, I made a mistake. I should have taken from it the £500,000, which is a portion of the £1,440,000, and that was the only mistake I made. Now, taking that £500,000 from the £1,440,000 leaves £940,000, which will

be available clear of liabilities. That £940,000 will be available. But I take it in another way, and I take it upon the hon. gentleman's own admission. That £940,000, taken from the £1,804,000—that is the £405,000, and £500,000 of the loan, taken from the £2,709,000, would make £1,804,000 available at the end of the year. But I take £940,000 out of that as being contracted for already, and liable to be spent according to the hon. gentleman's statement, leaving £864,000, instead of £364,000, as I said last night, making an error, as I stated just now, of £500,000 for the quarter. Now, the hon. gentleman thought I went on and doubled the expenditure afterwards, and perhaps the way in which I spoke justified him in thinking so, but it was not so. I said, spending money at the rate of £2,000,000 a year, that only the small balance of £364,000 would be available, but it is £864,000 that will be available at the end of the quarter. Now, I will place it in another way, so that the hon. gentleman cannot cavil at it.

The PREMIER: The present financial year you mean, surely?

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: No; I mean the end of the present quarter, not the end of the present financial year.

The PREMIER: If there are no more obligations in the meantime, it comes to the same thing.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: In replying last night, the hon. gentleman stated in relation to the loan expenditure:—

"The Government contemplate that the borrowing of the colony cannot be safely stopped."

The PREMIER: That is a curious mistake. What I actually said was "will not be suddenly stopped."

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: I do not mean to take advantage of the words "safely stopped." I quite admit that the borrowing cannot be suddenly stopped. I admit that, and every member of the House who has the slightest inkling of finance must admit it also. However, I am quoting the exact words of *Hansard's* report of the hon. member's speech:—

"The Government contemplate that the borrowing of the colony cannot be safely stopped, and that the obligation for the succeeding year will be about the same."

That is, about the same as last year.

"In both years it will be materially less than during the present year."

That is, meaning the expenditure of the Government in loan money will be about the same during the present year as it was in the past, but that during the succeeding year and the year after some attempt will be made to reduce the expenditure out of loan.

The PREMIER: I said the expenditure for this year and next year will be less than that for last year. I did not speak very distinctly last night, I admit.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The expenditure in round numbers—it is better to speak in round numbers, as it is easier, and they are more safely reported—was £2,000,000, or very little under it.

The PREMIER: More than £100,000.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: No; £1,943,585 was the amount of the loan expenditure for last year. That expenditure was not alone upon railways, for as hon. members know, a large expenditure has been going on out of loan upon other public works, as well as railways—on harbours and rivers, and dredging; some has been going on in immigration, on electric telegraphs, and public buildings in different parts of the colony. Rolling-stock, of course, also takes up a very large portion of the expenditure. But the

whole of this must go on, being as much a necessity to our existence at the present time as the making of railways, and probably a little more, especially the expenditure on harbours and rivers, immigration, and telegraphs. I think they are a little more necessitous to our present state of existence as a successful colony. We have got three quarters yet to run of this financial year, and these three quarters will average one and a-half millions of loan expenditure.

The PREMIER: No.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The hon. gentleman says "No." I am taking the returns as I find them, and the statements as I find them here.

The PREMIER: I take the actual contracts let and the works contemplated.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: If the hon. gentleman carries out what is contemplated, I am afraid it will be even more. The hon. gentleman must, as he proposes, curtail a great deal if he wishes to keep within one and a-half millions. In addition to that there will be a deficit at the end of the quarter of £405,000, and that money, as I pointed out, must be replaced, and it must come from somewhere—making a total expenditure at the end of the year of £1,905,000, leaving an available loan balance of £804,000 at the end of the financial year—that is, allowing that there are no fresh contracts entered into. This has all to be looked at, and that is the available balance that will be on hand if no other contracts are entered into; but the hon. gentleman asks us now to go into other fresh contracts, which will render us liable for an amount of £225,000 to the extent of the length of railway asked for. Taking that from the £804,000, there will still be £579,000 left. Now, what are all the other fresh contracts to come out of, the beginning of which, at least, must be paid out of that £579,000, which will be available as the surplus balance of loan money at the end of the financial year? The hon. gentleman will tell us, no doubt, he means to curtail all that, but he also told us it was not safe to suddenly stop the borrowing. It is not safe to suddenly stop the spending. It is the spending that it is not safe to suddenly stop, not the borrowing. Of course the borrowing is difficult, but we all know there are thousands of men whose bread depends upon the spending of money—every man in the House knows that. We have no means at present—though I had when in office the means—of knowing, and did know, the number of men actually earning their bread from the spending of borrowed money. At that time the population was several thousands less than now, and the number then was many thousands. The loan expenditure was only one-half what it is now, and we must conclude that the number of men depending upon the spending of this loan money is now nearly double what it was then. Therefore I say it is the spending that must not be suddenly stopped, and cannot safely be stopped. If we continue to spend without trying to retrench very carefully, where shall we find ourselves if we have any difficulty in going upon the market to borrow money? We shall be obliged to withdraw the money now lying in the banks here, which amounts, I suppose, to £800,000 or £900,000—probably more, but I could tell by looking at the last returns. We shall have to draw upon that money lying in the National Bank in London, or to the credit of the Agent-General. We shall have to draw upon that to prevent difficult times caused by the banks hardening with their customers through the want of money. Those are things the hon. gentleman knows he must take into account. Therefore, I say we are not justified,

for that reason alone, in going on with this expenditure of money. What will this expenditure commit us to is the next question we have to ask. It looks very nice to be told that "all we want is a railway to Thane's Creek." Some hon. gentleman told us that last night, that only £100,000 was wanted; but that £100,000 will be a million. The distance from Warwick to St. George is 235½ miles by Mr. Phillips's survey. Can we expect that line to be made at a less cost than our other main lines of railway have been made for? I think not. Let us see what the cost of our main lines is at present—lines which came before this House with a far better prospect of cheap construction than this line has, because it goes through a very large extent of flooded country. There were lines introduced by myself, believing thoroughly that they would cost no more than £3,000 per mile; but what do I find by the Commissioner's report? I find they cost a-half more than £3,000 per mile—the very cheapest of our main lines. The line from Maryborough to Gympie, introduced by the Government which preceded the McIlwraith Government, has cost £7,325 per mile. That is a main line being continued to Brisbane, and, of course, the part of that line from Gympie to Brisbane will cost much more than £7,000 per mile. The Bundaberg to Mount Perry line—a line which was built as a cheap line, and has been maintained as a cheap line—cost £5,316 per mile; Rockhampton to Barcaldine—a large portion of that line was built on the cheap principle of less than £3,000 a mile; and now I find that, after all my assertions that that line could be made for £3,000 a mile, it has actually cost £5,460 a mile.

The PREMIER: Is that for the whole line, or only for a part of it?

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: That is for the whole line. I know that the first section of that line cost £10,000 a mile and that the next section, to Emerald, cost £6,000 a mile. From Emerald onwards I made a very large portion of it, and when I brought the plans down to the House I stated distinctly on several occasions that the section could be made for less than £3,000 a mile. Now, let us go to the line to Charters Towers, which I also made, and upon which I can speak with authority. Mr. Ballard assured me, time after time, that the line could be made for less than £3,000 a mile. He even offered to leave the Government service and take contracts himself for making the line at that rate if the Government would guarantee him a certain number of miles. Townsville and Torrens Creek cost £4,585 a mile, and that is the cheapest main line we have got. Can we expect this line we have now before us to be made cheaper? Certainly not. There is no such country on the Charters Towers line, or the Townsville to Torrens Creek line, as that through which this line goes; and I assert that the 235 miles to St. George will come to nearly £1,100,000. The interest on that amount at our present rate of borrowing—4 per cent.—will come to over £40,000, and the maintenance of those 235 miles will cost £32,000 per annum. Thus we should be committing ourselves to an expenditure of £72,000 per annum to get an imaginary border trade—a trade that we shall never succeed in getting. I think I have said quite enough about the railway. I want to make some explanation on another point. The hon. gentleman seems to have misunderstood me when I was talking about the unexpended balances of the previous loan votes, and of the £10,000,000 loan vote. He seems to be under the impression that I forgot that there were other funds unexpended. If he looks at my speech he will find that I carefully guarded myself against

that. When a man speaks in this House he speaks to the capacity of his audience, and does not stop to explain everything as a schoolmaster does to his boys, and I certainly did not think the hon. gentleman would have misunderstood me. But the idea struck me at the time that I might be misunderstood, and I explained that that included the balances of previous loan votes as well as the balance of the £10,000,000 loan vote. The hon. gentleman will find that recorded in *Hansard*. I never made any reference to any particular line of railway in the northern part of the country further than to show the amount expended at the end of the last financial year, and the amount expended during the last quarter, showing the total amount now remaining unexpended out of this £10,000,000 loan money. The hon. gentleman alluded to the Cooktown railway; I did not say there had been no money spent on the Cooktown railway except from that £10,000,000 loan vote. The hon. gentleman knows very well that the McIlwraith Government passed a very large amount of money for the Cooktown railway; that has all been spent. What I stated, and what I state again now, is that out of a total of £1,625,000 of the £10,000,000 loan vote, after all the previous balances had been expended, there has been only £95,000 expended on Northern railways. That is a fact which the hon. gentleman can as easily find out himself if he takes the trouble, or gets one of his clerks to do it for him, as I have done. Such, I say, is the case, while at the same time, and I stated distinctly and repeat now, twelve or thirteen times the Southern portion of that £10,000,000 loan vote has been expended, and several times the portion of the other districts has been expended also. I think, Mr. Speaker, I have shown that it is not safe for us to go on as we are going, because this is a certain part of the Government policy. The Government themselves cannot now defend the policy which they proposed to this House in 1884, nor have they attempted to do so. The only excuse they have ever given for not being able to get the interest to pay upon this £10,000,000 loan has been Providence; they throw all the blame upon Providence. First Providence sent drought, and then Providence sent floods. Well, we have had neither floods nor droughts for many months; we have had good seasons; and still the interest does not come in from the Land Act. The Land Act and the railway policy are part of the same policy, and, one part having proved a failure, it is time for the House to reconsider the decision it came to on the railway policy; and I maintain that we are not in a fit state to reconsider it, because those hon. gentlemen on the other side of the House are ashamed to go back upon themselves. They are ashamed to admit that they have made a mistake. We see the late Colonial Treasurer staunchly advocating this policy because he voted for it in 1884; and yet he knows that the Land Act has been a failure. In fact, he left the Government partly because it was a failure; he could not get his own way to amend it and make it a success. That there are conveniences in this House to carry on log-rolling is a thing nobody can deny; and I believe the most honest thing to do with these two lines of railway is to remit them to the new Parliament, and if the new Parliament says, in its wisdom, that they ought to be made, then it will be time enough to make them. The country will lose nothing in the meantime. There is no trade being lost; that is simply imaginary; and such being the case the sooner we end this discussion the better for the House and the better for the country.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I only wonder, if the hon. member thinks it so desirable to close the discussion, that so many efforts have

been made to prolong it by hon. members on the other side. However, I feel called upon to say a few words in answer to what the hon. member has said. He has not at all cleared up the mistakes he fell into last night. I will deal very briefly with a few of the things he has said. The hon. member's argument is really against the construction of any lines of railway at the present time; the finances of the colony are in such a deplorable condition, according to him, that it would certainly be wrong to enter upon the construction at present of a certain line involving an expenditure of £300,000 which the hon. member wishes us to do. The hon. member said last night, and he tells us again to-night, that out of the money voted in the Loan Act of 1884 for Northern railways, only £95,000 has been spent. I am sorry that last night I was not able to speak very loudly. I was extremely tired, and I am afraid that many things I said were not heard by the reporters. There were several mistakes in the report. I dare say my voice was not heard so clearly as it might have been, and I am afraid I shall not be much better heard this evening. In the Loan Act of 1884 there were five Northern railways mentioned. The first was the railway from Townsville to Hughenden, and extension westward. The vote for that was £420,000, which was in respect of the whole line from Townsville westward—not, as the hon. member said last night, from Hughenden westward. Of that £400,000 over £200,000 had been spent before the 1st of July of this year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Spent out of previous votes.

The PREMIER: Of that £400,000, upwards of £200,000 had been spent on the 1st July last. The amount to the credit of the vote then was less than £220,000. The next item was Herberton to the coast, for which £400,000 was voted. In consequence of it being impossible to begin the expenditure of the earlier vote for a long time, owing to circumstances perfectly familiar to this House, none of that £400,000 had been spent, but a very large portion of it had been appropriated and pledged.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Do you say that has been spent?

The PREMIER: I say it has not been, but a very large portion of it is now pledged under existing contracts. There was £200,000 voted before, the expenditure of which could not be begun until the route was determined upon.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: There is £50,000 of that still.

The PREMIER: There was on the 1st July, or more than that. There is about £50,000 now probably. The next item was "Cooktown towards Maytown," for which £150,000 was voted, of which over £60,000 had been spent on the 1st July; so that instead of £95,000 only having been spent the amount is nearer £300,000. The Bowen and Carpentaria lines I need say nothing about now, because everybody knows the reason why no money has been spent on the line from Bowen to the Coalfields, and why the Gulf or Carpentaria line has not been commenced. So much for that. Now, with respect to the other mistake of the hon. member with respect to the state of the Loan Fund. He has corrected himself now so far as the current quarter is concerned, but still falls into the same mistake as to the remainder of the year. He assumes that we are going to spend all the money under existing contracts during the current financial year. We are not going to do that.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: I assumed that the version you gave was correct.

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The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman has got very much mixed over that. He insists that he knows what the expenditure during the current year is going to be. I have made it my business to find out; I have made very careful inquiries, and I may say have cross-examined the information I have got; and from the information I have got I am satisfied that the expenditure during the present financial year will be considerably less than during the previous year. That is what I said last night, but I am reported to have said "about the same." According to the best information I can get, which I assume is correct, I anticipate that the loan expenditure of the current year will not be more than £1,800,000. When making my Financial Statement I estimated it at £1,550,000, but I had not then the accurate information that I have now. That makes a difference of £250,000 in the hon. member's figures, and as I have said, there will be at least £1,000,000 available in clear cash at the end of the current financial year. That is the important point that I desired to make clear last night. That is allowing for the additional contracts I spoke of last night.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Utterly impossible!

The PREMIER: It is as I state. I have before me the particulars of all the contracts that are let, and of all the expenditure that is being carried on. And that I have estimated considerably more than is likely to be spent under the contracts. The expenditure certainly will not be more than that. I do not think it will be so much, and I make liberal allowance. If less than £1,800,000 is expended by the end of the financial year there will be something over a million left. In that I have allowed for all the new works I mentioned last night, and also for the commencement of the work under discussion. That is what the position will be. Then the following year I anticipate that we shall spend about the same amount, but in estimating that we shall spend about the same amount next year as during the present year, I have allowed £300,000 for the Croydon railway, or the Cloncurry railway, or whatever it may be called. We are allowing for the expenditure of £300,000 in that one spot. If that was not done—if, yielding to the pessimistic arguments of the hon. member for Townsville, we refused to make more contracts, then the expenditure on all the railway works and other works in the colony at present contemplated for the financial year next after this, would not be much more than a million. I have had the advantage of going into this matter thoroughly and carefully during the last few weeks, but the hon. gentleman has been reasoning *à priori* without any definite information.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Look at page 8 of the Commissioner's report, at the contracts that were let last year and will fall due this year.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman refers to the contracts that were entered into and in progress during the year 1886. I will take them one by one. Northern line, finished.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It is not.

The PREMIER: Practically finished.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: It should be, but it is not.

The PREMIER: If it is not it will be before the end of the financial year.

The Hon. J. M. MACROSSAN: Which financial year?

The PREMIER: This financial year. These are the figures we have taken into consideration. Western line; that will be finished before the

end of the financial year. North Coast line; that I referred to in detail last night. Isis line, finished. Cooktown line; that will be nearly finished before the end of the financial year. Cairns contract; that is finished. Beaudesert line, finished; Beauaraba line, finished; Emu Park line, nearly finished—will be finished before the end of the financial year.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Are these lines finished before the contract time?

The PREMIER: The Emu Park is nearly finished.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: The contract time is not up. What about the Beaudesert line?

The PREMIER: The contract time is the 28th December, 1887. Surely December, 1887, precedes June, 1888. The Emu Park line will not be finished until April, 1888; that is before the end of the financial year I take it. The Southport and Nerang line will not be finished until after the end of the financial year. That is the only line that will not be finished before the end of the financial year.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: If they are finished I presume they must be paid for.

The PREMIER: Of course they will be paid for. In the figures I gave I said they were provided for.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: And the extras?

The PREMIER: And all the extras, all the rails, the rolling-stock, and everything else.

The HON. J. M. MACROSSAN: Have you all the extras?

The PREMIER: Yes; all made up separately. As I told the hon. member, I have cross-examined all the information I got; and when I was not satisfied that all the items were there, I sent them back for further information, until I got the information. The fact is our contracts have nearly come to an end, and unless we make some new ones we shall suddenly have that result the hon. member deprecates—having all our men thrown on our hands at once.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: Hon. members who have spoken a great deal seem to object to any hon. member speaking a second time on this question. I did not take up the time of the House ten minutes on the question before—

The PREMIER: And you are going to make up for lost time now.

Mr. LUMLEY HILL: If the Premier is anxious that I should make up for lost time I am quite willing to do so. I have not as yet shown any disposition to stonewall or obstruct this railway, and I would remind the hon. member that I have seen him resort to obstruction himself in his time. He kept me, as well as many other hon. members, on the floor of the House night and day, for I am afraid to say how many weeks, over the British-India mail contract. He and his following obstructed that, though the majority of the House in their wisdom would have carried it without any hesitation. The obstruction there was not justifiable—here I maintain it is; and if it were resorted to I should feel much inclined to take a hand in the business myself. What I take exception to is the Premier saying that these arguments would apply to any line of railway. I say that any line which could show unmistakable grounds of necessity, and unmistakable evidence of paying directly, would be immediately passed by a two-thirds or three-quarters majority in this House, as we saw the other night in the diversion of portion of the Normanton-Cloncurry vote to the Croydon line. The Premier twits me

with supporting anything because it is Northern; but that line had nothing to do with my constituency. It was eminently not a political railway as there is only one representative for Burke. I claim that I support any national undertaking that is good for the whole colony, and I supported that diversion of money because I saw the necessity and advisability of opening up quick and speedy communication with that important goldfield. I am not solely a Northern member; I am not allied with the bulk of the Northern members in opposing the Government. I am willing to assist them in any good measures they bring forward. The Government ought to be thankful to have some independent members to save them from the outrageous claims of a certain bunch for unjustifiable railways, which are merely means of hauling in votes. I have been at considerable trouble to ascertain what kind of country this line would pass through, both last year, when it was before us then, and also this year. Anybody can see by the map the amount of close settlement going on in that direction. There is no population there, and there never will be any. The land is poor, hungry, granite soil, overgrown with brushwood, and is merely second-class pastoral. It is far from being agricultural country; it is not even first-class pastoral. There is only a certain section of the House banded together in a sort of log-rolling group, who are forcing this line upon the country at a most inopportune time. I congratulate the members for the district on the gallant stand they have made. They will be able to go and dangle this line once more before the noses of their constituents—at least that is what I hope. They would not know what to say if they got this railway. I think they would probably be all turned out at once for the iniquitous imposition they have succeeded in palming off on the country. They will be sent back, no doubt, to try and get it again. I hope the House will not pass a line of this kind, which has not the approbation of the Assembly, though it may pass as it did last year by a majority of one or two. It would be far better if new lines had to be passed by a two-thirds majority, and not made a party question at all. I doubt whether that could be carried out, and if not I think every line should be referred to a committee of this House, who would have to travel over the line and see the country for themselves. If the country through which this line is to pass is anything like what I have heard it is from unprejudiced disinterested men, the idea of making the line would never be entertained for one moment.

Mr. MOREHEAD said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with a great deal that has fallen from the hon. member who has just sat down. I was very much surprised to hear what fell from the Premier. There is no doubt that the hon. gentleman has tried to gloss over in a very clever way—in a way which he is an adept at—the financial position of this colony. I, however, do not shrink from saying that I consider the financial condition of the colony is a deplorable one, notwithstanding what has fallen from that hon. gentleman. Notwithstanding the figures he has produced, I hold that our position is a highly critical one—so critical that I think that, instead of this House being asked to go into committee to consider the expediency or otherwise of the construction of this railway, it would be a wise step—and I would propose it if there were any chance of carrying it—to have a committee of this House appointed to inquire into the existing financial position of this colony. I am perfectly certain that if we had the Auditor-General and others, including the late Treasurer and the Under Secretary for the Treasury, brought before that committee and

examined, they would show a very different state of affairs than that apparently revealed by the Premier, although I am convinced that hon. gentleman thinks it would not. Why, sir, it is only the other day that he sprung fully armed from the head of Jupiter. A blow of the axe on the head of Jupiter produced this Minerva, this bird of wisdom, this heaven-born Treasurer. If there is anything that wants thoroughly searching out it is our financial position. I have good reason for believing that our late Treasurer himself is mixed up and in a fog in the figures brought before this House. We have had sent backwards and forwards from one side of the House to the other, figures which I am not in a position to say are correct, unless we have a very searching examination into the Treasury accounts. No later than last night we had it from the Treasurer himself that the accounts were so much mixed up in the different departments that it was difficult to get the amounts together. That was conveyed in the hon. gentleman's answer to a return moved for by the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Palmer. Afterwards there was a return which practically met the demand of the hon. member, produced by the Premier himself, who had it tucked up his sleeve apparently all the time. That being the case I do not think we should be called upon to dispose of the funds of the public until we know what those funds are, and I say, at the present time, not that there is not a living man, but certainly there is not a member of this House, who knows what they are. Hardly any man but the Premier will deny that. In regard to this particular vote, it has been called a great national work. We are asked to believe, by the members for Darling Downs, that this is a great national work. I am sorry the Minister for Lands is not in his place. I hope he is not asleep; but that gentleman told us that it was a great national work. Now, I take it if a work is a great national work it will be one that will be decided upon great national lines. What was the division last year in regard to this great national work? Where did it begin and where did it end? It is considered a great national work by the members for Gympie, the Metropolitan group, the West Moreton group, and the members representing the southern end of the Darling Downs group. The rest of the colony is all against it, so it must be an enormously national work! The southern end of the colony has decided that this proposed line is a great national work, but the taxpayers all over the colony are to pay for it, and for whose good? For the good of Brisbane, and very little good to it, and for the good of that miserable dying village called Warwick. Even there it will be only a temporary good—while the railway money is being spent in the place. Afterwards it will only be a by-station, and in a few years, probably, only a byword. It will be wondered why it was ever considered fit to send a representative to Parliament. We know it is dying. We know that the present Government have bolstered it up by making it a constituency by adding portions of the surrounding district. Yet in this wretched state of our finances we are asked to plunge into an expenditure of this sort. I can quite understand, if there were some great discovery made, and a large accession of population had come where no provision had been made for giving proper means of approach to it, that Parliament might accede to a request of this sort, even if we were in adverse circumstances such as we are now. But here we are seriously asked by the Government to devote a considerable sum of money, and only a sum in advance, to make a railway to a place that produces nothing but bankruptcy cases, so far as I can understand, and so far as the gold-producing part of the district is concerned, and which will

in no way develop the country further than it is now. Why, sir, in regard to this line, I was only told to-day, by a mail contractor, that Thane's Creek township would not have existed but for the coach road that passed by, and it was only created a few years ago. To deal with the question of a railway to Goondiwindi—I was one of a deputation that waited upon the late Postmaster-General—I admit that I was unwise to do so—to ask for a second mail coach—a bi-weekly coach—biennial would have been better—from Warwick to Goondiwindi. The late Postmaster-General regretted very much that he had to refuse the request, because the traffic would not warrant it. Well, if the traffic would not warrant a bi-weekly coach from Warwick, will it warrant this House going to an expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds to make a railway in that direction? I think it will not. I believe there have been two coaches running there lately. I think the Postmaster-General gave £68 for the second coach. However, it is very interesting to know that there are two coaches running between Warwick and Goondiwindi, and both subsidised by the Government. In consequence of there being two coaches running we are asked to vote this enormous sum for a railway in that direction. Does it not seem preposterous? Does it not seem too absurd for any body of intelligent men to come together to discuss such a thing? To talk about this being a trunk line is to talk the most utter nonsense that was ever talked in this House. I know the country between Warwick and Goondiwindi. If the railway does go there it will do no good to Brisbane, which, of course, is the hub of the universe, so far as the bulk of hon. members opposite are concerned. It would not get a bale of wool more than it does now, and unless the Marsupial Act be destroyed it will not even bring a kangaroo skin to Brisbane. One of the uses of that line, as one hon. member said, is to flitch trade from the other colonies. If it is considered advisable to force back the trade that is drifting into New South Wales—irrespective of any flitching—would it not be better to adopt a suggestion seriously made by the Minister for Works to place an export duty on wool? That was one of the proposals made seriously by the Minister for Works in answer to a deputation that waited on him. If it is desirable, I say, to retain that portion of our trade so as to be of benefit to Brisbane, might it not be better—and possibly cheaper—to put an export duty on the wool transported over our border by land? That proposition, I repeat, was seriously made by the Minister for Works, and by those who knew the hon. member it was, I believe, not unexpected. I do not know whether it commends itself to most hon. members here, but it commended itself to that hon. member, and possibly to the Cabinet of which he is so remarkable a member. It is no doubt a step in the direction of protection, which the Premier seems to be hankering after; and no doubt it would be a much cheaper way of diverting wool to Brisbane than this proposed expenditure of £1,000,000 or £1,500,000. As to the proposed railway, does anyone assume for a moment that the people of St. George look on the line as likely to be of any benefit to them? I represent the electorate in which St. George is situated, and I think, therefore, that I may have a not unimportant say in this matter. As the representative of Balonne, of which St. George is the principal place, I say that we do not want the railway of which this line forms a part, and that if it is made to St. George in the direction proposed it will be of no benefit to the district. Any wool from the West, if it were ever brought by that line, would have to take a boomerang course to reach

Brisbane, and even were the *via recta* made, it would then have to be carried much further by that line than by the projection of other railways, of which more may be said when we get into committee. I protest against going on with this or any other railway in our present financial position. We should now cry halt until we know our position; we should not only regard ourselves in this matter, but also those who ought to be to us more than ourselves—namely, those to whom we owe money. We know that our railways are only paying £1 0s. 6d. on the capital invested. Can the Government prove that, by the construction of any line they can propose, we can better our position in that respect? If not, they should put the case before those from whom they intend to borrow money; for borrow money they must. The Chief Secretary seems to have disregarded altogether contingent liabilities; but a contingent liability is a liability that must be met.

The PREMIER: I have not disregarded them at all. They are all included in the figures I gave.

Mr. MOREHEAD: The hon. member disregarded them both last night and now. I believe the hon. member believes what he says to be the case, but I think that he is wrong, and I think that a large number of hon. members also think he is in error in making the statement he just made. And I think we ought to have a most sifting inquiry into the present financial position as regards the condition of the Loan Fund, before we move one step forward in regard to any proposed railway, north, south, east, or west. I want to preserve the fair fame of the colony; I do not want a black mark to be placed against it in the money market of Great Britain; therefore I warn hon. members to be careful in voting for any railway till we clearly understand our position, and know whether we are justified in going on with any proposed work or not. Even disagreeing with the hon. member for Enoggera, Mr. Dickson, I say that there may be a time in the history of a State, as in that of an individual, when a policy of rest and caution should be pursued; that there may be a time when even the most progressive country or person will have to stop and exercise that policy; and I say that the time for rest and caution has come now. I do not say it with the idea of saying anything likely to damage the credit of the colony, but I firmly and seriously believe that the colony was never, since 1866, in such a perilous financial position as it is at the present moment.

Mr. DICKSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I rise to make a few remarks about the financial position of the Loan Fund, which I think it only right should be made after the speech of the leader of the Opposition. If hon. members have been somewhat bamboozled as to the position of the Loan Fund by the figures hurled at us right and left by the hon. member for Townsville and by the Premier, I think we may very well be excused. If we did get fogged, as the hon. member says, by the different statements, we may fairly be excused for some uncertainty as to the financial position of the colony. I, however, take my stand upon a very secure foundation in viewing the financial position of the colony—namely, the report of the Auditor-General; and I listened with some amusement to the manner in which figures were so combined as to further the arguments used on either side of the House. I think that a great deal of anxiety has been raised in the mind of the public of late by certain rumours that the Loan Fund of the colony was in a very unsatisfactory condition. I know that all sorts of rumours have been reported to

me that the Premier, on assuming the office of Treasurer, complained of the embarrassment he felt in being unable to arrive at anything like a correct knowledge of the loan transactions and commitments of the colony; and that the hon. member even went so far as to say that he thought a commission ought to be appointed to inquire into the working of the Loan Fund and the revenue accounts generally. Possibly that may be the foundation of the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition; but I can only say that if these rumours be true I very much regret that such statements should have been made, because I think they were not only not justifiable, but they have also tended to create a panic in the public mind and in the minds of members of this House concerning the administration of the Treasury and the Loan Fund. I have listened with amusement to the figures given by hon. members, and even by the Premier, who has the Treasury at his back, and who could at once, if he asked for the information in such a form as is understood, have obtained information of an authentic character. What do we find in the report of the Auditor-General? That is what the House should look to. The statements made by the Treasury or the Works Department do not convey to us the information we have in the report of the Auditor-General. According to that it will be seen that the available cash balance in the Loan Fund is £2,734,000. There is one item yet to come in which has not been referred to by any hon. member—a sum of £190,000 from instalments of loan sales.

The PREMIER: That was included in my figures.

Mr. DICKSON: This will make a total of £3,224,000. Assuming, then, that the expenditure is kept in check to the extent mentioned by the Premier—namely, £1,800,000 for the year, at the end of the year 1887-8 there will be in hand a sum of £1,400,000, subject, of course, to any commitments to which the colony may be engaged. That is the state of the Loan Fund as based on the report of the Auditor-General, and from my knowledge of the Treasury balances at the time I left the Treasury, I know that that report is correct. There is nothing in it to justify any alarm with respect to our financial position or our ability to enter into further loan obligations. There has been raised in the mind of the public and in the minds of hon. members in this House a doubt and an uncertainty as to the condition of our finances, which it was very injudicious to excite; and seeing that when you sow the wind you reap the whirlwind, I do not at all wonder that members take advantage of such statements to challenge the present soundness of the financial position of the colony, and urge that a commission should be appointed to inquire into the condition of the Loan Fund. I, for my part, should not object to a commission being appointed to inquire into the financial position of the colony, but I do maintain that there is not the slightest cause for any alarm, suspicion, or anxiety concerning the amount of money to our credit, or the commitments to which we are engaged, or our future ability, when the time arrives, to solicit from the English creditor a further loan obligation. I do not intend to go any further into the question of the Thane's Creek railway. We must bear in mind that the sum of £250,000 has been voted by the House for that line, and surely it does not seem to be a very large or excessive demand for us to contemplate the expenditure of £100,000 in the direction sanctioned by Parliament. I never intended to apply to the hon. member for Townsville any idea that he advocated the total

cessation of railway construction. He seems to labour under that impression. All I contended was that if there was any foundation for his arguments, it should be extended to apply to the extent that no further construction of railways should proceed. That, to my mind, was the legitimate conclusion from his argument, although, perhaps, he himself did not intend that it should go so far. We had previously before us a debate concerning the construction of a new line of railway, which was never contemplated by the Government when they formed their loan policy of 1884. That debate resulted in approval of the diversion of a certain amount of money from the Cloncurry railway to provide for the construction of a line from Normanton to Croydon. There was no objection made to that railway at the time, as to the financial ability of the Government to provide for the construction of the line, or in any other respect. There was no ground taken by the hon. member for Townsville adverse to the construction of that line by the Government on the grounds of financial weakness or otherwise. On that occasion I pointed out that I considered it was undesirable to divert a special parliamentary appropriation to a line which had never been sanctioned by the House—not that I was at all adverse to the line. I still maintain that ground, and I only received this afternoon a message from Cloncurry which, with the permission of the House, I will read. It is dated 13th October, and is as follows:—

“I am directed to transmit to you the following resolution passed unanimously last evening: ‘That a telegram be sent to the Hon. J. R. Dickson in the name of the people of this district with the desire of expressing to him their sincere thanks and hearty appreciation for the able advocacy on 30th September of their claims to have the amount already voted for the Cloncurry Gulf railway kept intact and immediately applied to the construction of the line.’”

“J. P. ORMOND, Hon. Sec.,

“Cloncurry District Progress Association.”

That message was a surprise as well as a satisfaction to me. I make no comment about it, nor would I, so far, have digressed from the subject under consideration as to refer to it, were it not that I wished to place in juxtaposition the action of the hon. member for Townsville, and also of the Premier, I may say, in approving of a new line of railway which has not yet received parliamentary sanction, and for which there has been no parliamentary loan appropriation; and the action of the member for Townsville in opposing the construction of a portion of a line for which parliamentary appropriation has been obtained many years ago. I think that no arguments have been urged against the construction of the section now proposed, and without wishing to detain the House any further on that matter, I will merely say that I rose to avail myself of the opportunity afforded to say a few words concerning the financial footing of the colony. I felt tempted very much last night to make a few remarks after the Premier had spoken, to show, from all that he had said, that any rumours that had been in circulation respecting the embarrassed condition of the Loan Fund, or the state of the Treasury balances, were satisfactorily disproved by his statement. I wish this to be understood, and I wish it to be understood by members inside and by the public outside the House, in this colony, and in the mother-country, that our position as a colony and as a borrower was never better or sounder than at the present time.

Mr. WHITE said: Mr. Speaker,—I feel very anxious that the indifference which I have observed among hon. members with regard to our present railway system and its cost should be removed, and with the permission of the

House I will read an extract on this subject from the *Town and Country Journal* of 1st October. It is as follows:—

“Sir Henry Parkes, in his recent border tour, had a few ideas given to him respecting railway construction in the Murray districts. Railways, without doubt, are very urgently required to open up the country districts all over the colony. But there is no necessity that these branch lines should be constructed on the expensive and extravagant principle on which trunk lines are formed. A light system of lines similar to the Sydney trams is all that is required to provide feeders for the trunk lines already made.

“In the construction of railroads it is all very well to preach the doctrine of substantiality irrespective of cost. This might suit in a country like Britain, where the land is already teeming with population, and industries are at the height of their development. But in a country like Australia, cost and the services to be performed have everything to do with the matter. It is surely a waste of public money to construct a line of railway costing £5,000 per mile in a district where a line costing only £1,000 per mile would answer equally as well. Taking the Riverina district as an instance, I think that light lines of railway might be run through it in every way equal to its present requirements very cheaply indeed. And as population settled down on the soil, and its resources become developed, a better road-bed and heavier rails might be substituted. The ballasting of light traffic roads with broken metal and gravel at great expense is quite unnecessary, as witness the thousands of miles of railroad on the Pacific coast of America, where such ballasting is generally unknown; and yet immense quantities of traffic pass annually over them with quite as few accidents as we have in Australia. We have roads in Riverina now not paying working expenses, constructed on a principle capable of carrying the heaviest traffic in the world. Time will rot the rails before traffic sufficient to pay working expenses will pass over them. The difference between the value of a road which would have answered all the present requirements in such districts, and the condition of the roads now constructed, is simply money wasted, and the public of New South Wales should see that in future the same errors are not committed again. First of all, construct cheap roads, never mind if the speed should not be quite as high. And let the cheap roads earn the money to build better ones.”

Mr. ALAND said: Mr. Speaker,—I only want to say a word or two, and of course speak with a great deal of deference after the ex-Treasurer. He looks upon the state of the public funds in that glowing manner in which he generally looks upon matters of finance. That gentleman is always very pleasant when he is talking about figures, and I am quite sure that his ideas upon all matters of financial expenditure are of a very sanguine nature. He speaks about the present condition of the Loan Fund, and I am not in a position to reply simply because I do not understand the figures, nor do I believe that nine-tenths of the members of this House understand them. But, however, we will suppose that the Loan Fund is in the state which the Premier and ex-Treasurer believe it to be in; but will they state that the consolidated revenue of the colony is in the same satisfactory condition; those hon. gentlemen have forgotten to explain to the House how the increased expenditure caused by the raising of loan money is to be met. It strikes me, then, that is where the trouble is coming. Possibly we may have no great difficulty in raising money, but unless the Government are prepared to bring in some other schemes, we do not know how to pay the interest on the money which we are borrowing. On the last money borrowed we have not money out of the consolidated revenue to pay the interest, and so I presume it will be when the next loan is floated. It is very easy to borrow the money. Even my credit would allow me to borrow a lot of money, but when the interest had to be paid, I might not find it so easy to pay it, and so it will be with the colony. We may go on borrowing money, but we shall find that our deficit will become larger, and then possibly the lenders at home will not be so willing to lend money in the future as they have been in the

past, or may be at present. Now, I hope the Premier and Minister for Works will explain to us how the interest is going to be met upon this increased borrowing of money. I am rather surprised that we have had no more information from the Minister for Works. It is all very well to say that we shall get it in committee, but I consider the information should be forthcoming, the motion having been declared informal. I had thought that when the hon. gentleman's department was attacked in the manner in which it has been, he would have considered it his duty to stand up and defend it. We have heard the Railway Survey Department attacked. The hon. gentleman is the head of that department, and ought to defend it if he can. Of course, if he does not feel in a position to defend it, then he is perfectly right in sitting still. Now, I hope before we get into committee we shall yet have some information from the Minister for Works.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I am merely going to say a word with regard to the speech of the ex-Treasurer. We know what his particular temperament is, and we know how much he courts popularity. He is one of those prophets who prophesy smooth things, and things that the people like to have. He has dealt with the figures of the Auditor-General, and he has pointed out that a mistake has been made by the omission of the sum of £490,000, which is part of the last loan floated, and which has not been taken into account. Well, I would just direct the attention of the House to page 10 of the Auditor-General's accounts, where the general balance of the colony is presented to us. Assuming that we float the whole of the loan, assuming that we float it at par, assuming that all the Treasury bills are sold and turned into cash, and assuming that this £490,000 is also received, we have a total asset of £7,655,136; but against that we have liabilities amounting to £8,576,392, showing a deficit in our finances on the 30th of June last of £921,255. To that must be added the expenditure belonging to the financial year concluding on the 30th of June, and which may be put down at £200,000. The condition of the colony on the 30th June last is simply this—that we had an excess of liabilities over assets of £1,121,000.

The PREMIER: That is absurd. That is counting this railway as one of the liabilities.

Mr. NELSON: Exactly.

The PREMIER: That is one way of making a deficit.

Mr. NELSON: I presume the Premier is not going to dispute the Auditor-General's figures. Those works are provided for in the Loan Act of 1884. If we discharge all our liabilities we shall have a deficit of £1,121,000—that is as clear as possible. What I was going to ask the late Treasurer is this: Was there ever a period in the history of the colony since it was a colony when such a balance was shown as is shown at present?

The PREMIER: Oh, yes!

Mr. NELSON: Never!

The PREMIER: The only difference from the previous year is a debit balance from the current year's account.

Mr. NELSON: That is a difference of nearly half-a-million. There is an excess of liabilities over assets of over £1,000,000.

The PREMIER: The liabilities include the route to Warwick, from there to St. George, the Cloncurry railway, and other votes.

Mr. NELSON: If we had to meet all our engagements—all our promises—we should not be able to do so by the amount of the sum I mention. I say the financial position of the colony was

never in that state before. We see the same thing from the Treasury tables. If we look at the tables for 1884, we find the excess of assets over liabilities was £118,000, and according to the Treasury tables now, there is an excess of liabilities over assets of nearly £700,000. That shows the direction which our finances are taking, and I do not think we can have a clearer proof of it than that. As for the late Treasurer trying to make us believe that the position of the colony, financially, is as good now, or better, as he says, than it ever was before—though hon. members on the other side cheered that statement, I think there are very few of the public who will accept that statement, merely upon his word, without some further evidence being adduced to show that such is really the case. The mere fact that hon. members on this side, like the hon. member for Townsville, are unable with all their research to get a correct statement of the Loan Account proves there is something rotten in the state of affairs. The sooner we reform our system the better, because it must be evident to everyone that in a matter of such moment as this there ought to be no difficulty in arriving at the position we are in on the 30th June of any one year. Yet it is evident with all the talent in the House we are not able to arrive at what is the true state of our affairs.

Mr. CAMPBELL said: Mr. Speaker,—I am rather surprised that when such an attack is being made upon the Warwick to St. George railway, the hon. members for Darling Downs do not get up and defend their case.

Mr. KATES: We are not going to help you.

Mr. CAMPBELL: I wonder also to see the Minister for Works so silent upon this question involving an expenditure of £250,000. It is rather too big a thing to be silently introduced, and left to be worried by hon. members who do not know a very great deal about it.

Mr. KATES: You are right there.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The hon. member may find that I know too much about it. I will deal briefly with what fell from the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, last night, who spoke of this line as a national undertaking. The senior member for Darling Downs, Mr. Kates, will not admit that this is a great national undertaking. He insinuates that it is only a branch line. I wonder whether he would like to see it laid with 35-lb. rails—and if it is only a branch line for the benefit of the farmers such rails will be heavy enough. On the road from Warwick towards Thane's Creek, the first decent bit of country is met with after a very few miles. There may be 2,000 or 3,000 acres of good country there. From that place you have to pass over a stretch of thirteen miles of barren country before you get to Darkey Flat. That is the place where the hon. member for Darling Downs, Mr. Allan, said there were 600,000 feet of timber cut annually for the last eleven years. You get a small bit of good country there, and thence you go to within a few miles of the proposed railway station at Thane's Creek, and you have to pass through barren currant-bush country. Hon. gentlemen who know that class of country can imagine what it will produce. I would like to ask what becomes of that 600,000 feet of timber? Where is it consumed? I am sure it is not consumed in Warwick, and I am certain it is not taken down the line towards Clifton, Allora, or Toowoomba, for from there they can supply Warwick with timber if necessary. I am certain it cannot go up country, because if you go beyond that you will find that there are pit-sawyers all over the colony, and they do not haul timber to such a great distance. And

for the hon. gentleman to stand up here and say there were 600,000 feet of timber cut annually during the last eleven years at Darkey Flat is one of the most monstrous things I ever heard of. I cannot imagine how the hon. member could have said anything so utterly absurd. It is, of course, well known that this line is to be carried on *via* Inglewood and Goondiwindi to St. George. If it is necessary that a line should be constructed to Inglewood, Goondiwindi, and St. George, I claim that this is not the proper line to construct, because on this route, after you pass Thane's Creek until you get to Inglewood, you have to pass over a series of barren ridges that do not feed the wallabies upon them; and after you get past Inglewood the route passes through very indifferent country, somewhat flooded, down to Goondiwindi. If a line to Goondiwindi is necessary—and I maintain it is not—I say it ought to go from Pittsworth, and if it is necessary to construct a line to St. George, leaving Goondiwindi out, it ought to go from Dalby; there is no question about that. That is the preferable route.

Mr. MORGAN: It is preferable to Too woomba.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The hon. member need not mind Toowoomba. Toowoomba is like Gibraltar; it may be stormed but it cannot be taken. From Pittsworth, the present terminus of the line, to Tumbarville is a distance of thirteen and a-half miles, and there would have to be a considerable bridge constructed there. Thence to the mountains is about sixteen miles, and from there you pass through the Gap and travel through good country until you get to within a few miles of Inglewood, and as near as possible to where this line crosses Cedar Creek close to the Macintyre Brook. But I do not think the time has come when we should construct this line. I feel justified in voting against the motion while the finances of the colony are in their present condition—particularly when it is remembered that we are in the last hours of our existence as a Parliament. Until the new Parliament is elected there is nothing to warrant us in constructing any one line of railway in the colony. I have always consistently been opposed to this particular line—I am opposing it now for the third time—and I hope to be able, as I feel it is my duty, to stop here this time, with other members, until the advocates of it are tired out. I scarcely think the Premier will allow this question to be fought out at the expense of losing the good work that is necessary to be done in a short time to save the country.

Mr. BULCOCK: That means obstruction.

Mr. CAMPBELL: It does mean obstruction pure and simple. Members who live in the vicinity of Toowoomba have been charged with opposing this line because they are jealous of the township of Warwick. It is no such thing; they cannot beat us. But it behoves us to think well what we are doing before we enter upon this enormous expenditure. It was amusing to hear the hon. member for Darling Downs speaking about the rich auriferous country out there. Men have been "fossicking" out there for the last twenty-five years for gold, and we know with what result. There is a Mr. Kenneth Hutchison, who figures very largely in the proceedings of last year, and who says he took £20,000 worth of gold from that field.

Mr. ALLAN: And if he says so, you may rely upon its truth.

Mr. CAMPBELL: There have been a good many bogus companies floated there, and they have all failed; with all the puffing of the Warwick Press not one has succeeded. I give the Warwick Press credit for sincerity; they

acted upon information received, and it was their duty to further the interests of the district; but it is well known that there has never been anything got there worth talking about. Men have never been able to earn wages there. Some gold was got there eighteen years ago, but from that time to this there has been nothing but "fossicking," and the result has been next to nothing. As I said before, I feel it to be my duty to oppose this line. I shall fight it out to the bitter end, and I trust hon. members will see the necessity of throwing it out, if possible.

Mr. ALLAN said: Mr. Speaker,—At this late hour I do not intend to speak at any length; but as the hon. member for Aubigny has thought fit to traduce the character of a gentleman for whom I have the highest esteem, I feel in duty bound to say a few words. Mr. Kenneth Hutchison is as well known in the colony as the hon. member for Aubigny is. He was formerly a squatter, a partner with Mr. Wildash, of Canning Downs, and he is a gentleman largely interested in mining, and is now managing the Surface Hill mine, near Tenterfield, as well as one of the largest sawmills in the south of this colony; and I would as soon take his word as that of any man I know. If Mr. Hutchison says that a certain thing is so, I would accept his word, believing it to be entirely true. But, in addition to Mr. Hutchison's word, we have also the word of a gentleman who long occupied the position of member for Warwick, and who states distinctly, with regard to the gold in the district, that his firm has regularly, for years, purchased over 1,000 oz. of gold from that part of the country, and that twice as much as that has been bought by others in Warwick. That means that 3,000 oz. of gold have come in yearly from that district to Warwick, and have been sold there. My only object now is to vindicate the name of Mr. Kenneth Hutchison from the aspersions that have been cast upon it.

Mr. PALMER: With the permission of the House, I beg to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment withdrawn accordingly.

Question put, and the House divided:—

AYES, 24.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Jordan, Rutledge, Dutton, Moreton, Fraser, Foxton, Smyth, Mellor, Isambert, S. W. Brooks, Bulcock, Sheridan, Dickson, Kellett, Annear, Salkeld, Kates, McMaster, Thorn, Morgan, Allan, Higson, and Bailey.

NOES, 19.

Messrs. Norton, Morehead, W. Brookes, Nelson, Aland, Black, Jessop, Hamilton, White, Adams, Campbell, Lunley Hill, Pattison, Donaldson, Palmer, Stevens, Philp, Ferguson, and Murphy.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Pairs:—For: Messrs. Buckland, Macfarlane, and Grimes. Against: Messrs. Chubb, Lissner, and Macrossan.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS moved that the Chairman leave the chair, report no progress, and ask leave to sit again to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the Committee obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. I do not suppose there will be much time for Government business to-morrow, which is a private business day; but if there should be time, I shall ask the House to take the second reading of the New Guinea Bill.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at seven minutes after 11 o'clock.