

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

MONDAY, 29 OCTOBER 1888

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Monday, 29 October, 1888.

Messages from the Administrator of the Government.—
Absence of the Premier.—Question.—Petitions—
Branch Line at Bundamba—Lindsay Railway Con-
struction Bill.—Normanton-Cloncurry Railway De-
viation.—Supply.—Marsupials Destruction Act Con-
tinuation Bill.—Supply.—Adjournment.

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

MESSAGES FROM THE ADMINISTRA-
TOR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

LOAN TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF BRISBANE.

The SPEAKER announced that he had re-
ceived a message from His Excellency the
Administrator of the Government, transmitting
a Bill to empower the Governor in Council to
authorise the Colonial Treasurer to advance, by
way of loan, a sum not exceeding £40,000 out of
the public funds of the colony to the Munici-
pality of Brisbane.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. B.
D. Morehead) said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that
the message of His Excellency be taken into con-
sideration at a later hour of the day.

Question put and passed.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES—1887-8, No. 2.

The SPEAKER announced that he had
received a message from His Excellency the
Administrator of the Government, transmitting
Supplementary Estimates for the year 1887-8,
No. 2.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr.
Speaker,—I beg to move that the Estimates be
printed, and referred to Committee of Supply.

Question put and passed.

ABSENCE OF THE PREMIER.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr.
Speaker,—I have to inform the House that
although the Premier, Sir Thomas McIlwraith,
is better, he is not likely to be very much in the
House during the remainder of the session. He
hopes to be here to explain and assist in passing
the Estimates of the department over which he
presides.

QUESTION.

Mr. BUCKLAND asked the Secretary for
Railways—

If it is the intention of the Government to complete
the survey of a line of railway from Cleveland to Red-
land Bay and Mount Cotton at an early date?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (the
Hon. H. M. Nelson) replied—

The survey to Redland Bay is now being made, and
the route of the extension to Mount Cotton has been
examined.

PETITIONS.

BRANCH LINE AT BUNDANBA.

Mr. SMYTH presented a petition from
Messrs. Stafford Bros., asking permission to
construct a branch line from their colliery at
Bundamba, to connect with the Southern and
Western Railway, and stated that the forms
required by the Standing Orders had been com-
plied with. He moved that the petition be
received.

Question put and passed.

LINDSAY RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION BILL.

Mr. MURPHY presented a petition from
John Taylor against the Lindsay Railway Con-
struction Bill; and moved that it be read.

Question put and passed, and petition read by the Clerk.

On the motion of Mr. MURPHY, the petition was received.

BOWEN RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension, section 2, of the Bowen railway, from 30 miles to 52 miles, in length 22 miles, as laid on the table of the House on Friday, the 26th day of October instant.

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

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension, section 2, of the Bowen railway, from 30 miles to 52 miles, in length 22 miles, as laid on the table of the House on Friday, the 26th day of October instant.

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

—said that the 2nd section of railway for which approval was now asked was a continuation of the railway from Bowen to Townsville, *via* Ayr. The 1st section was now being constructed, and it was proposed, as soon as convenient, to go on with the 2nd section. The section commenced 30 miles from Bowen, and terminated 52 miles from Bowen, the length of the section being 22 miles; and the direction was almost in a straight line, a little north of west. The railway, up to the end of the 2nd section, was common to all the various routes proposed, though there was much diversity of opinion as to what route the line should take across the Burdekin River. The construction would be almost wholly on surface formation, and the earthworks would consequently be very light. There were several creeks to cross, requiring from 100 feet to 250 feet of openings. No bridges of any magnitude would be required, but there would be several small culverts and waterways. The Chief Engineer estimated the aggregate length of bridging at 3,600 feet, including openings. The steepest gradient was 1 in 70, and the sharpest curve 15 chains radius. The land to be resumed would be a very small area—portions of two selections—and the compensation would probably not exceed £100. The Chief Engineer's estimate for the contractor's work only was about £3,500 per mile, or a total of £77,000, and probably the permanent way and supervision would add another £20,000 to the cost. The vote for the line at present stood with £208,000 to its credit, and the amount that would be required to complete the present section was £59,000, leaving a balance of £150,000 to meet the requirements of further extensions.

Mr. SAYERS said he would ask whether any definite route of the line beyond the 2nd section had yet been adopted by the Government?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it had not. Surveys had been ordered of all the proposed routes, but until full information was obtained as to the whole of them, the Government would not decide on which route the railway should take.

Mr. PALMER said he noticed that provision was made for two timber reserves of 20,000 acres. He thought that was an admirable idea, 1888—3 N

and he wished to know whether they would be under the supervision of the Divisional Boards, or a central authority in Brisbane?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said they would be under the control of the Minister for Lands.

Mr. GROOM asked whether any more plans of railways beyond those already placed on the table would be submitted for approval during the present session?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not think it at all probable.

Mr. BUCKLAND asked whether the Burdekin Bridge was included in the 2nd section?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it was not. The 2nd section would not go within fifteen miles of the Burdekin River.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he thought the Minister for Railways might give the Committee some information as to the railway policy of the Government generally.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it was not his intention to give any further information as to the general railway policy of the Government at the present time. Every information that could be given on the subject would be given before the close of the session.

Mr. SALKELD asked how far the end of the 2nd section would be from the Burdekin River?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he was informed by the hon. member for Bowen that the terminal point would be about twenty-five miles south of the Burdekin River.

Mr. DRAKE said he had no intention of objecting to the approval of those plans and sections, but he felt that some information with regard to the general railway policy of the Government should have been given before they were asked to approve of those railways. If that was not done, the Committee would have no means of insisting upon knowing the Government railway policy before the session terminated.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought the Minister for Railways had made it clear that it was the intention of the Government to let the House know what their railway policy was before the end of the session, and possibly within a few days.

Mr. SAYERS said he had been looking over the plans, and he found that members could get very little information from them. They were very poor plans to lay on the table for information, as they contained no local sketch. He was satisfied with the information given by the Minister for Railways, but they could not get that information from the plans.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said they were the usual form of plans as laid on the table, but he quite agreed with the hon. member for Charters Towers that it would be better that, where there were such marked features in the country as the Burdekin River, they should be shown in the plans. A local sketch, showing that the section ended at about twenty-five miles south of the Burdekin, should have been included in the plans, for the information of the House.

Mr. SAYERS said that he was very much pleased to hear what the Colonial Secretary had said. He was under the impression that the plans tabled in connection with the Cairns and Croydon railways included local sketches of those lines.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he had been under the impression that the plans under consideration included a local sketch, but he saw it had been omitted. If necessary, he could furnish it.

Mr. SAYERS said he was perfectly satisfied with the Minister's explanation.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions to the House.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, the report was adopted.

NORMANTON-CLONCURRY RAILWAY DEVIATION.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the railway from Normanton to 13 miles, being the permanent survey of the deviation of the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway, approved by Parliament on 8th December, 1887, as laid upon the table of the House on Friday, the 26th day of October instant.

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

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the railway from Normanton to 13 miles, being the permanent survey of the deviation of the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway, approved by Parliament on 8th December, 1887, as laid upon the table of the House, on Friday, the 26th day of October instant.

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

—said the motion was almost a formal one, the fact of the matter being that the railway was already constructed. The history of the transaction was simply this:—On the 16th November, 1886, Parliament approved of the plans of the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, or that part of it from Normanton to the Flinders River, a distance of 38 miles. In the following session Parliament agreed to a deviation of the line to make it suitable for a line towards Croydon; and there had been a resolution passed indemnifying the Government for making any deviation necessary for that purpose. That resolution was passed on the 8th November, 1887. The plans, section, and book of reference now tabled was the permanent survey of that deviation, and the junction would be at about 12½ miles on that section of the line. It commenced at Normanton, and ran through sections Nos. 37, 36, and 34, which were wholly resumed for station purposes. It passed through section No. 34, and thence generally in the direction of the Normanton-Cloncurry road to the termination of the section—13 miles. The Cloncurry road was crossed at 1½ mile, and there were slight diversions of the road at 3½ miles and 4 miles 10 chains. There would be level crossings provided at Landsborough and Thompson streets. There were two small creeks to be crossed—the Four-mile Creek and the Eight-mile Creek. The steepest grade on the line was 1 in 70, and the sharpest curve one of 20 chains radius. The resumptions from selections would amount to about 41 acres. The compensation for land, it was estimated, would be about £300, and about £1,600 in addition had been paid for improvements on the vacant Crown allotments at Normanton resumed for railway purposes. He moved the motion standing in his name.

Mr. PALMER said the length of the section specified in the motion was 13 miles. There was a piece of line about a mile and a-half long

between the landing on the river and Normanton township. Was that included in the 13 miles?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that section started from Normanton and extended to a distance of 13 miles. The Croydon junction was 12½ miles from Normanton. The mile and a-half referred to by the hon. member was not included in the section specified in the resolution.

Mr. PALMER said the mile and a-half of line to which he referred was already built; it extended from the landing to Normanton. The line was very necessary for the purpose of carrying material for the railway. It was built on wooden sleepers—bloodwood sleepers—which were obtained in the district, and were found very suitable.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that short piece of line was built for the conveyance of material. It was not a permanent line, and was more in the nature of a private than a public line. It had not received the sanction of Parliament.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he thought they wanted a little more explanation. How was the cost of that mile and a-half of line defrayed? He presumed that the hon. gentleman acknowledged now that the contention of the leader of the Opposition the other evening was correct when he stated that no formal sanction of Parliament had been granted for that 13 miles. That section extended from the town of Normanton to the crossing of the Norman River, a distance of 13 miles. But the country had to pay for the mile and a-half of line mentioned by the hon. member for Carpentaria. How was it to be paid for? How could it be said to be in the nature of a private railway? It passed through Crown land, he presumed, and it was constructed for the purpose of conveying material from the landing place to the railway. There was not the slightest doubt that before very long the Government would have to face two questions. The one was the improvement of the navigation of the Norman River at vast expense, and the other was to construct a railway from Normanton to the natural anchorage in the Gulf.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he had explained before that the leader of the Opposition was perfectly correct when he contended that those plans had not been formally approved by Parliament; but substantially they had been approved by the resolution passed in 1887, authorising such deviation as might be necessary for the construction of a line to Croydon. The plans were, however, never formally laid on the table. The work was put in hand by the late Government. With regard to the small piece of line laid down to the wharf, that was a very simple matter. It was quite a common thing for the Government to make a temporary road or temporary branch line to save money in the construction of a railway, and that short piece of line which was run down to the wharf would pay for itself in the extra saving of the cost in carting material from the wharf to the railway.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the resolutions to the House.

On the motion of the MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, the report was adopted.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On this Order of the Day being called,

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that it be postponed until after the consideration of Order of the Day No. 2.

Question put and passed.

MARSUPIALS DESTRUCTION ACT CONTINUATION BILL.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. J. Donaldson) said: Mr. Speaker,—I have it in command from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government to inform the House that His Excellency, having been made aware of the proposed amendment in the Marsupials Bill whereby provision is to be made for the destruction of bandicoots, recommends the necessary appropriation to be made to carry out the objects of the Bill.

COMMITTEE.

The SPEAKER left the chair, and the House went into committee to further consider the Bill.

Mr. MORGAN moved that the following new clause be inserted:—

The term "marsupial" in such Act shall include bandicoots, and the rate of bonus payable in respect of the scalps of bandicoots shall be 2d.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 2 passed as printed.

The House resumed, and the CHAIRMAN reported the Bill with amendments.

The report was adopted, and the third reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for tomorrow.

SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.

On the Order of the Day being read—

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the Speaker leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into committee to further consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Mr. PALMER said: Mr. Speaker,—I will take advantage of the motion before the House, not to ventilate a grievance, but to ask a concession from the House which I have not asked before. I will ask a concession from the Opposition side of the House, which I do not think they will refuse, and I will ask the Government if they will consider favourably the request I have to make. It is in the interests of the whole country that I make the request. I have been very desirous that the motion I have on the paper, dealing with the cultivation and preservation of virus for inoculation for pleuro-pneumonia, should pass before the session closes; and I think if the House will allow the motion to be considered in committee, it will be of great advantage, as experiments will then be carried on during the recess. Very likely the opportunity will not occur again, because, if the Bill does not pass, there will be no authority to proceed, and the gentlemen who will be in the colony and ready to undertake the work will have left for Europe. It is for the benefit of the whole country that these experiments should take place. We have more cattle in Queensland than all the other colonies put together, and the tremendous loss which occurs annually through the ravages of pleuro-pneumonia justifies Parliament in taking measures for preventing that loss. My motion will not take three minutes to put through committee; but in dealing with it this afternoon it would be advanced a further stage, and I should be able to get a message from His Excellency the Administrator of the Government recommending the necessary appropriation to give effect to the Bill. I trust the hon. gentlemen who represent the Opposition and the Government will not object to the postponement of business until this matter has been dealt with. If the leader of the Opposition does not object, I will ask the Government to postpone their business until Order of the Day No. 5—general business—is disposed of.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I need hardly point out to you, sir, and to hon. members, that, according to the rules of the House, what the hon. member suggests cannot be done—that is, to postpone all other business until after Order of the Day No. 5, general business. Further than that, it would be manifestly unfair to other hon. members who have notices of motion on the paper to do so. I think it would be much better for the hon. gentleman to give fresh notice for Thursday, for which day there is at present only one notice of motion on the paper. I do not see how what he asks to be done is possible. I admit at once that the question raised by him is a very large one. It does not affect the general taxpayers of the colony, as the money is asked to be appropriated from a special fund raised by stockowners. I think he had better accept the suggestion, and give fresh notice for Thursday next.

Mr. GROOM said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. gentleman's object might be attained without a Bill at all.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: There is no chance of getting a Bill through.

Mr. GROOM: There is no chance of getting a Bill through, but could not the hon. gentleman's object be attained by getting an expression of opinion from the House generally, with a view of justifying the Government to expend the £7,000 referred to.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: They are trust funds; that is the difficulty.

Mr. GROOM: Then why not expend the amount out of general revenue, and afterwards pass a Bill refunding the money to the consolidated revenue.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The contributors to the fund might object.

Mr. GROOM: As the hon. gentleman says, the matter is one which affects every class in the community. It is a question of national importance, and I can quite see the urgency of getting something done respecting it this session, if possible. At the same time knowing, as I do, something of the forms of the House, and seeing that the matter is only now in its initiatory stages, it is clearly impossible that a Bill can be passed through all its stages in this House and in the other House this session. Besides, as the hon. the Colonial Secretary says, it would be unfair to other hon. members who have private Bills—some of them of considerable importance—on the paper, that all their business and the whole general business of the country should be postponed for the sake of this Bill.

The SPEAKER said: I would point out in the first place that this is an Order of the Day, not a notice of motion. The only means by which the hon. gentleman could obtain his wish would be to get the Government to consent to a postponement of all their business, and to get all hon. members who have notices of motion or Orders of the Day before this Order of the Day to postpone their business. A rather complicated form of postponement of business would be necessary.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAYS—GENERAL ESTABLISHMENT.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that £11,865 be granted for salaries and contingencies, general establishment.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought before the Minister commenced discussing the items on the railway vote, it would be well to inform the Committee of the names of the two commissioners who were to be appointed to assist in railway management. If the hon. gentleman did so, it would probably save a great deal of trouble and discussion.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. gentleman was asking him to do what was impossible, because no arrangement whatever had been made for appointing those commissioners as yet. That had been intimated before, and there was not likely to be any appointment made for a considerable time. He was not quite sure whether the plan adopted in New South Wales was not a right one—that was, to postpone the appointment of the two junior commissioners, as they might be called, until after the arrival of the chief commissioner, so that he might be consulted in the matter. That had been done in Sydney, and there appeared to be a good deal of common sense in it. At any rate, at present no appointment, or promise of an appointment, either directly or indirectly, had been made to anyone. He might mention that there were no increases to salaries in the vote, and he was sorry for it, because he knew there were a good many officers in the department who deserved increases. But, on account of the financial condition of the colony, which necessitated the exercise of the most rigid economy, and also considering that the Minister who was responsible for such recommendations had been such a short time in office, and had had very little experience of it, he did not consider himself justified in proposing to increase any salaries this year. However, he promised that if the public funds were in a better condition next year, as he hoped they would be, some increases would probably be given. He might explain that the £25,000, "Adjustment of Stores Suspense Account," voted last year, was a sort of overdraft necessary to enable the storekeeper to carry on the store business. It was not required this year. In all other respects the vote was the same as last year. He might also explain that there were seven clerks down who were not on the Estimates last year. Previously those clerks, although in permanent and continuous employment, were paid out of the traffic vote as wages men. They had now been transferred to the principal vote.

Mr. NORTON said he wished for some information on a matter of administration—namely, the postponement of the increases to which some of the men in the employ of the railway department were entitled. According to a regulation in the department, certain of the employes were entitled to a certain increase at a certain time. Shortly before that time arrived, they received notice that their increases would be postponed for six months. When that six months expired, they received a second notice that their increases would be postponed for another six months. The second notice however, was afterwards withdrawn, and the men got their increases from that time. He wished to know whether the increases were paid from the time at which the men first became entitled to receive them?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied that he was informed that all the increases were paid from the time the men were first entitled to receive them.

Mr. NORTON said that was a point on which he had been in doubt, and he was very glad to receive the reply the hon. gentleman had just given.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that, in reply to the junior member for Ipswich, the Minister for Railways stated that he was unable to give any information as to the two junior railway commissioners, because the chief commissioner would have to be consulted with regard to those appointments. That was a most extraordinary admission. The chief commissioner would practically, according to that statement, have the appointment or nomination of his two colleagues.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. member was misquoting him; he had made no such statement. What he said was that he was in favour of the appointments being postponed until the arrival in the colony of the chief commissioner. He did not even say that the chief commissioner would be consulted on the question, although he did not see any harm in that. What he did say was that he thought it was proposed to be done in New South Wales, and they might very well follow that course here. There might be a considerable number of candidates for the appointments, and in the event of their having to undergo any kind of examination, they might ask the chief commissioner's opinion. That was all.

Mr. HODGKINSON asked if it was proposed to advertise for applications for the two junior commissionerships?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied that he hardly thought it would be necessary.

Mr. GANNON said that, with regard to compensation for resumptions, a man at present had no right of appeal from the decision of the Railway Arbitrator if the amount awarded him was below £500. That seemed an absurdity. Why should not every claimant, even though the award were only £50, have the same right of appeal? Would the hon. gentleman take it into consideration to alter the law in that respect, so that the small man should have the same right of appeal as the large one?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he was quite in sympathy with the suggestion of the hon. member, although it was rather too late to do anything of the sort during the present session. It should be remembered, however, that even at present a man whose land had been resumed had always the right of appeal to the Governor in Council, and the Governor in Council could grant him a re-hearing of the case. A great number of cases—those about which complaint was made in the House last session—had been dealt with in that way recently. Several of them had come before the Governor in Council, and in all of them a re-hearing had been granted.

Mr. SALKELD said that granting a re-hearing was quite different from getting the case heard before another tribunal. A person whose award was £500 and over, had a right of appeal to the Supreme Court; all below that amount could only get a re-hearing, which was a very different thing. There was a great deal in the suggestion of the hon. member for Toombul, that the small man ought not to be placed at a disadvantage of that kind. A man claiming £800 might be awarded £490, which would cut him off from the right of appeal, and the claimant might very naturally think that it had been done with that very object, when it was really, in the opinion of the Railway Arbitrator, the proper amount to award. The evil pointed out was one that ought to be remedied as soon as possible. With regard to the appointment of the two junior commissioners, he remembered seeing in a newspaper that in New South Wales the chief commissioner was consulted on the subject; the appointments were delayed until he arrived in the colony. It seemed a very strange proceeding, because surely he would not have the knowledge that members of the Government would have of the applicants for the position of one of the junior commissioners, who would most likely be persons resident in the colony. He could not see what assistance the chief commissioner would be in advising the Government as to the appointment of the other commissioners. The persons who would apply for the position of the assistant commissioners were almost certain to be persons resident in the colony or in the

neighbouring colonies, and the memoirs of the Government would be far better judges of those men than the chief commissioner was likely to be, unless he also had been resident in the colonies for some time. If he came from Great Britain, or America, or Europe, he would not have that knowledge of the other applicants. He did not think that there was anything in what the Minister for Railways had said, and the Government should not delay to appoint the assistant commissioners on account of that.

Mr. UNMACK said that there was a small matter on the Estimates that he desired to ask the Minister about. He noticed that on the previous year's Estimates, as well as on those for the present year, there was an amount of £95 set down as an additional retiring allowance to the late Under Secretary for Railways, Mr. Herbert. That gentleman was drawing a pension of £506 under Schedule B, and he presumed that £95 was put on last year for some reason, but he would like to know whether it was to be permanently charged to the revenue in future, and if so, what it was for.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he believed that Mr. Herbert, when acting as Commissioner for Railways, had been receiving a salary of £1,000 a year, and, under the Civil Service Act that entitled him to a retiring allowance of £601. At the time he retired he had been only drawing a salary of £800 as Under Secretary for Railways, and, as the pension was calculated upon the rate of salary a man was receiving at the time of his retiring from the service, his pension was consequently lower than it would have been had he retired at a previous time, and so it had been arranged by the previous Government that £95 should be from year to year placed on the Estimates to make good the full amount of his pension.

Mr. GROOM: Why is it not in schedule B?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it was not included in schedule B, because there was no Act of Parliament which allowed that to be done, and there was no other way by which it could be included under schedule B.

Mr. SALKELD said that vote provided for the general establishment of the Commissioner for Railways up to the end of the present financial year. A Bill had been passed through the House during the present session, and when it became law he supposed a change would take place with regard to the office of the present commissioner. He wished to ask the Minister for Railways if an Under Secretary for Railways would be appointed? There would still be a Minister for Railways, and he wished to know whether there would be an Under Secretary appointed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that the department would be under the management of the commissioners for railways, and he could not say at present whether an Under Secretary for Railways would be appointed or not—that was a matter for consideration.

Mr. MORGAN said he would like to ask the Minister for Railways if it were a fact that, in issuing tourists' tickets on the southern line from Queensland to the Southern colonies, the same fare was charged to go from Brisbane to Sydney, Melbourne, or Adelaide, as from Warwick or Toowoomba, or any of those stations near the border? Was it a fact that a person proceeding South from Warwick or Toowoomba had to pay at the same price for his ticket as a man proceeding from Brisbane?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that they had an arrangement with New South Wales by which they carried people from

Brisbane and any intermediate stations to Sydney. In most cases it was better for a man to take a ticket from Brisbane to Sydney than to pay his fare from Toowoomba or Warwick to Wallangarra, and then take a ticket from Wallangarra to Sydney, as in the latter case he would have to pay the full rates, while from Brisbane he could travel at tourist's rates. He did not know whether the original arrangement had been departed from recently or not, but there had been some correspondence on the subject. The original arrangement was only for going from one capital to another.

Mr. MORGAN said he knew that frequently people wanting to go overland asked him to bring their money down to Brisbane, buy their tickets in Brisbane, and forward them to Warwick. The return fare from Warwick to Melbourne was £12, and that was the same fare as was charged from Brisbane to Melbourne, although in the latter case 332 miles extra would be travelled more than in the former. He wished to know why a man who only used 60 or 70 miles of the Queensland railways, should pay the same amount as a man who travelled over about 400 miles. No doubt an arrangement had been come to with the other colonies which allowed that, but he thought some system should be introduced by which travellers from intermediate stations should be allowed a rebate. It was only fair to people residing near the border, that they should not have to pay as much as people living in Brisbane.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he found the statement was quite correct, and that the department here was in correspondence with New South Wales to get the arrangement the hon. member proposed, but as yet they had not settled the matter.

Mr. UNMACK said he was by no means satisfied with the answer of the Minister for Railways in reference to the sum of £95—additional allowance to Mr. Herbert. It appeared to him that there was a very important principle involved in that. That gentleman was entitled to a certain retiring allowance under the Civil Service Act, or some other Act, which appeared in schedule B; and, to place an additional sum upon the Estimates such as that, opened the way to a very grave question, and to corrupt practices. He was perfectly aware that the present Ministry were only following out the lines laid down by their predecessors; but, at the same time, he thought they should have some further explanation of how such a thing as that could arise, and, furthermore, whether similar allowances were made to other gentlemen who were also in receipt of pensions under schedule B. He noticed the leader of the Opposition was now in his place, and possibly he would be able to give the Committee some further light upon the subject. He expressed his firm belief that such a system was open to grave abuses and evil practices.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he was surprised at the hon. member. He seemed to think it was the correct thing for a Government to repudiate the actions of its predecessors. It was the action of the late Government that he was blaming.

Mr. UNMACK said he rose to a point of order. He had said nothing of the sort. He had distinctly stated that he did not blame the present Government, as they had only followed in the lines laid down by their predecessors, but that he desired some further information upon the subject, and that, as the leader of the Opposition was in his place, he could, no doubt, explain it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said Mr. Herbert had been receiving a salary of £1,000 a

year for some time, and then he went away on leave. When he came back the then Minister for Works, Mr. Miles, thought it desirable that he should not longer hold the office of Commissioner for Railways, so he was appointed Under Secretary for Railways at a salary of £800 per annum. Then Mr. Herbert desired to retire under the Civil Service Act, which entitled him to a retiring allowance based on the average of his last three years' salary. Of course that average was brought below £1,000 a year. If he had retired when he was still Commissioner for Railways he would have received a larger allowance than he did at present, and it was plain that he was morally entitled to it. Legally entitled to it, he certainly was not; but in order to do what seemed to be right he was told that in order to make up his retiring allowance to what it would have been if his salary had continued at £1,000 a year, the necessary amount would be placed upon the Estimates, with the intention that the vote should be renewed from year to year. Everybody thought that was a very fair arrangement.

Mr. SALKELD said, in reference to the matter of the through tickets to Sydney, complaints on the subject had been made by persons all along the line that they could not obtain tickets without coming to Brisbane, and they were not sure if they could get them at all. They were told they would have to pay the ordinary fare to Wallangarra, and then the ordinary fare from there to Sydney, which would cost a great deal more than a through ticket from Brisbane. The New South Wales Government, he believed, would not consent to any through tickets, except to or from Brisbane, and not intermediate stations; but the Queensland Government avoided that by allowing tickets to be sent to persons to join the train where they liked. He understood the contention of the hon. member for Warwick to be that the Queensland Government, by an arrangement with the New South Wales Government, received a certain amount of the money paid for all through tickets, but many persons wished to join the train at intermediate stations, and why should they not be allowed a rebate of the ordinary fare between Brisbane and the place where they wished to join the train? There seemed to be a want of business ability on the part of the New South Wales authorities, who would not make any arrangement in regard to tickets issued at intermediate stations. Perhaps there would be a better arrangement made when the new commissioners were appointed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the New South Wales Government would not agree to any tickets being issued from intermediate stations, and if the Queensland Government issued tickets from Toowoomba or Warwick they would be breaking faith with that Government. The system was only carried on on the understanding that certain rates were to be charged, and they were to receive so much of those rates and the Queensland Government the remainder. It was only on that understanding that the New South Wales Government would admit through tickets at all. There had been correspondence asking that Government to consent to the arrangement the hon. member had referred to, but they had not been able up to the present to do anything. They would still continue their endeavours in that direction, and perhaps, when the new management came into operation, they might be successful.

Mr. MORGAN said the New South Wales Government appeared to be not only managing their own lines but the Queensland lines also, and were making a pretty nice "mull" of them in that matter. I was not so much of

unfair charge levied upon people living at intermediate stations as the inconvenience in getting tickets at all to Sydney, Melbourne, or Adelaide. Any person living at an intermediate station had to send a cheque for the amount of the ticket to the Commissioner for Railways, or the station-master at Brisbane, and if he did that and forgot to add the exchange, it would probably be sent back with an intimation to send another 6d., but the ticket would not be sent. Gold could only be sent by a special messenger; and if notes were sent, the Postmaster-General would probably impound them, and say the envelope was not open at the ends, and a surcharge of 1s. 6d. extra postage would have to be paid. All sorts of difficulties and delays arose, and there was no knowing when the ticket might be received. He would suggest that the Minister for Railways should issue instructions to station-masters at intermediate stations, that they should telegraph to the head office and secure tickets for people who wished to join the train at such stations. Surely the hon. gentleman did not expect people to travel to Brisbane to secure tickets; and if the little convenience he had suggested were granted, it would be a great relief to people who wished to make use of the railway. He certainly hoped the hon. gentleman would press the matter with the New South Wales Government, and endeavour to have the present unsatisfactory arrangement altered with as little delay as possible. The New South Wales Government should not be allowed to interfere to such an extent with the Queensland railway as they had done. If through tourists' tickets could not be obtained on more favourable terms, the arrangement might just as well be done away with so far as people outside Brisbane were concerned.

Mr. WATSON said a matter had come before him in reference to a passenger who came from Sydney to Brisbane and had taken a return ticket; but the Queensland Government refused to take him back, simply because, being a cripple, he had caused some little detention on the line; and they refused also to refund the price of his ticket.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he could give the hon. member no information on the subject.

Mr. MORGAN said he wished to know if the Minister for Railways would consider his proposition in regard to issuing instructions to station-masters at such places as Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby, and the principal intermediate stations, authorising them to telegraph to Brisbane for tourists' tickets required by people at such places.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the hon. member was going to bring up the subject at all he had not gone far enough. A person in Toowoomba might want a ticket for a certain day and it might not have arrived. The tickets would have to be sent so many hours before the starting of the train. Of course, it might be arranged that a certain number of tickets might be sent from Brisbane to different stations on the line, but there would be no reduction in the rates, or there would be a loss of revenue. Then there was the danger that if the privilege were extended to Ipswich, Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby, the people at Laidley, Grandchester and other places might want it, instead of having to go to Toowoomba for tickets; and those who got into the train at Hendon and Cambooya might very well ask why they should not have the opportunity of getting their tourists' tickets there. There were all those difficulties to consider. He hoped that when there were commissioners at both ends, instead of Ministers, to deal with those matters, the traffic arrangements

would be better than they were now; but he could see difficulties in the way of the suggestion of the hon. member for Warwick, though at the bottom of it there was sound common sense.

Mr. MORGAN said that if tourists' tickets were issued to the station-masters at the stations he had named, a man living at Hendon would go to Warwick and get his ticket there, and a man living at Highfields would get his ticket at Toowoomba. The objection to the present arrangement was that people must get their tickets either at Brisbane or at the border; and at the border they had to deal with an entirely different set of officials, whose ways they did not understand. He was not raising the question as to the difference in the fares according to the distance travelled—he was glad to hear that the Minister was going to do what he could to remove that difficulty—and he could not see much force in the objection raised by the Colonial Secretary.

Mr. FOXTON said he could not see why a reduction should not be made in the fares of passengers who travelled a very much shorter distance over the Queensland lines, than those who went from Brisbane to Sydney and back. Of course, the department would lose something, but, on the other hand, the department did not give value for the whole of the money received at the present time; and he could not regard that as a loss in the true sense of the word. He failed to see why it should be necessary to consult Sydney before making a rebate with respect to Queensland lines.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Because we should lose revenue.

Mr. FOXTON said the department would only lose revenue to the extent of the payment for work which was not performed; and he failed to see why a man travelling from Stanthorpe to the border, on his way to Sydney, should pay the same fare as a man who travelled from Brisbane to the border on his way to Sydney. He thought an allowance should be made to people who took tourists' tickets from any station in Queensland to Sydney and back, the rebate or reduction being proportionate to the mileage of Queensland railway between Brisbane and Sydney not travelled over by them.

Mr. GLASSEY said he thought the item of £95, additional retiring allowance to the late Commissioner for Railways, required some further elucidation. He believed that there was a considerable amount of friction between Mr. Herbert and the late Government, and that he received twelve months' leave of absence, on full pay, to get clear of him, and the Government did not know how to get rid of him when he returned. First one office was found for him, and then another, and finally he retired on a pension. When a man got a pension of £506 a year, and then wanted it increased by £95, he thought it was time for the Committee to deal with the question. And it ought to be dealt with now, because, if it were allowed to remain on the Estimates, it would be a bone of contention year after year. If the hon. member for Toowoong moved the omission of the item, he would support the hon. member, as a protest against increasing the burdens of the taxpayers by paying such large pensions to men who were well paid while in the service of the Government. The time had come when those matters should be dealt with vigorously, because men who were in the receipt of large salaries for many years ought to be able to retire upon their savings.

Mr. MORGAN said he did not know whether the Minister for Railways thought there was an insuperable difficulty in the way of issuing

tourists' tickets at Ipswich, Toowoomba, Warwick, and Dalby, so that intending passengers for the Southern capitals might get tickets at those stations. He was now leaving the establishment of a differential rate out of the question.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it would certainly be done; in fact, the department were trying to do it now. The dominant idea in making the concession to railway passengers between Brisbane and Sydney was to compete with the steamboats. That was why the fare between Brisbane and Sydney was fixed at £5. At present, between Brisbane and Wallangarra, the department lost 14s.; that was to say, they made each passenger a concession to the extent of 14s. Their revenue was 14s. less on each of those through tickets than what it would be if a man took a ticket for Wallangarra and went from there on to Sydney. With regard to the passage from Wallangarra on to Sydney, they had, of course, no control over that. They might give concessions to persons going from any station between Brisbane and Wallangarra, but even then they could not expect to reduce the fare to £5, because he thought the fare from Wallangarra to Sydney was over £4.

Mr. McMASTER said that with regard to the item of £95 addition to Mr. Herbert's pension, the best plan would be for the Government to legalise it by passing a short Act for the purpose. If it had to come before the Committee year after year on the Estimates it would always be a bone of contention, and some day an amendment would be moved and it would be struck off. If the man was entitled to it it should be made legal.

Mr. GLASSEY said that as there appeared to be nothing further to be said on that matter, and as the hon. member for Toowoong did not feel justified in moving the omission of the £95, he was strongly inclined to move it himself.

Mr. JORDAN said he would call the attention of the Committee to another matter. His constituents considered it high time the Committee should ascertain whether the Government intended to carry out the extension to Melbourne street. When reference was last made to the matter he thought the Minister for Railways had conveyed the impression that the matter was still under the consideration of the Government, and he gathered from the tone of the hon. gentleman's voice that it was under favourable consideration by the Government. It had been under consideration for a very long time; it seemed impossible to bring forward any real arguments against it, and there were many good reasons why it should be carried out. If that extension was made, as he had often said before, it would enable persons travelling on the whole of their southern system of railways, to come to nearly the centre of the city. It was well known that the people of South Brisbane had been badly served with their railway many years ago, and that would be to them some measure of redress. Apart from that altogether, was it reasonable that persons travelling on the southern lines should be put out at the inconvenient place that was now used for shipping coal? That was a most inconvenient place of arrival for passengers from Southport, all the district of the Logan and Albert, and the Beaudesert and Cleveland lines. It seemed reasonable that the people of South Brisbane should now have some attention paid to their wish to know whether the Government did or did not intend to carry out the extension to Melbourne street. They had been led to suppose they did, not only from the manner and tone of the remarks of the Minister for Railways, but also from what had been said by the Premier in answer he thought, to a deputation that waited

upon him with respect to an additional bridge. If he mistook not, the Premier had stated distinctly that it was the intention of the Government to carry out that extension, and left the impression that it would be done at once. There were good reasons for doing the work—the money was lying by for the purpose, and the people had been promised it over and over again, and why should the Government hesitate and hang fire in the matter now? The Minister for Railways, he thought, should give some statement on the subject that would satisfy the people of South Brisbane. As to a bridge above the present bridge, and a line carried over that in order to connect the Southern system with the Southern and Western and Central systems in North Brisbane, that would be a useless and unnecessary expense unsatisfactory to all parties. The Melbourne street extension would bring the whole of the southern traffic close to the Victoria Bridge, and sufficiently near the centre of the city for all purposes. He would like some information as to the intention of the Government on the question.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that if the hon. gentleman had been in his place at an earlier hour, he would have heard the explanation that had been given on the subject of the railway policy of the Government. He did not believe that was a convenient time for going into the matter; but the hon. member brought forward the Melbourne street extension in season and out of season. He (Mr. Nelson) had explained that, in the course of a day or two, the Government would give the information as to what they were going to do.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is, as soon as you know. When you know you will kindly tell us.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not understand the hon. member. He never said that. Those were the hon. gentleman's words, and they conveyed a meaning that was fallacious.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he knew it. How could the hon. gentleman know what he knew?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: He can form a faint idea of what you do not know.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. gentleman's logic might be good enough for himself, but it did not follow that other people would accept it. He had told the hon. member for South Brisbane all he could tell him on that occasion, and he hoped the hon. member would be contented with it, and wait patiently to get all the information that was desirable. He did not think the consideration of the Estimates was the proper time to go into a discussion on the question of the construction of local railways.

Mr. JORDAN said he must apologise for not having been in his place earlier, but perhaps, as he could not get to the House until now, the hon. gentleman might kindly oblige him by repeating what he had told the Committee about the railway policy of the Government. He understood the hon. gentleman to say that had he (Mr. Jordan) been in his place earlier he would have heard what the railway policy of the Government was. Did he misunderstand the hon. gentleman?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he had told the Committee nothing with regard to the railway policy of the Government.

Mr. GLASSEY said he wished to give the reason why he refrained from moving the omission of the item £95 for additional retiring

allowance to Mr. A. O. Herbert, late Under Secretary for Railways. He did not like to be a party to repudiating an agreement made by the late Government with Mr. Herbert. But, had there not been a distinct arrangement made by the late Government he would certainly move its omission. He hoped that in future those pensions would not come up so thick and fast before that Committee as they seemed to have done hitherto.

Question put and passed.

SOUTHERN AND WESTERN RAILWAY AND BRANCHES.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that there be granted, for the year 1888-9, the sum of £299,195 for salaries, maintenance, and contingencies in connection with the Southern and Western Railway and Branches. The same remarks applied to that vote that he had made in regard to the former vote. The salaries had been cut down to the lowest point, too low in fact. With regard to maintenance, there were sixty-four miles more this year than had to be provided for in the Estimates last year, or a total of 890.28 miles, and the rate of maintenance had been calculated at the rate for the last six months. The rate hitherto had been £139 8s. 10d. per mile; but it would be found that the amount on that Estimate was slightly under that rate. With respect to the previous item—"Chief Engineer's Department"—that was omitted from this year's Estimate. That was done in accordance with what the Government considered sound principle. The Chief Engineer had the whole of his time taken up with construction and not with maintenance, and his salary had, therefore, been transferred to the loan vote, as he had suggested should be done when sitting in Opposition.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he could not agree at all with the hon. gentleman that the whole of the salaries of the Chief Engineer's Department ought to be charged to loan. They were permanent officers, and, although they were principally engaged in the supervision of the expenditure of loan money, he thought their salaries should come under the heading of permanent expenditure. The charging of their salaries to loan vote was objectionable on principle. Those officers would have to be continued whether the railways were constructed by loan or not, and he certainly thought the change which had been made was a step in the wrong direction.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said when they commenced making railways the engineers were always paid an allowance from loan, and their salaries appeared on the Estimates because they had then to take charge of existing lines. He did not know what they were going to charge to loan if they did not charge thereto the salaries of engineers employed in supervising loan expenditure. They never had been paid from revenue, and he thought the whole staff should be paid from loan. If the engineer was paid from revenue they might just as well charge the salaries of the staff employed in construction to revenue.

Mr. GROOM said he would ask the Minister for Railways whether he intended to utilise the workshops at Toowoomba for repairing rolling-stock, or whether the same practice was to be continued as had been hitherto adopted? It had been the practice in the past, when an engine broke down, or any rolling-stock was damaged, to bring it down the Main Range to Ipswich for the purpose of effecting the necessary repairs. He thought it was really time that that practice was stopped, as there were workshops at Toowoomba where such repairs could be efficiently executed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not intend to make any great change in that matter, as it was clearly one which would come within the functions of the new commissioners. He quite agreed with the remarks of the hon. member, and thought that when they had workshops situated on the top of the range, it was folly that locomotives should be dragged down to Ipswich for repairs. Of course it might happen occasionally that the repairs needed would be of such a nature that they could not be done at Toowoomba, but, as a general rule, he believed that the workshops there, if kept sufficiently manned, could do a great deal of the work that was now brought down to Ipswich. He would like to see that done. He believed it was the proper thing to do, but, at the same time, he was of opinion that it was a matter which should be left to the commissioners, who would have a technical knowledge which he did not possess.

Mr. GROOM said he would suggest that the Government should adopt the plan of inviting tenders for repairs to engines. There were two large foundries at Toowoomba, where young men were employed, and if tenders were called for repairs to engines and rolling-stock it would give them an excellent opportunity to learn those branches of their trade. It had always appeared to him a perfect waste of time and haulage power to drag locomotives, no matter where they were disabled, down to Ipswich for repairs, when they had the machinery and some excellent workmen on the top of the range. Those appliances ought to be utilised more than they were at the present time. There was a strong disposition to ignore country towns in such matters, and to concentrate all the work in Ipswich and Brisbane. He thought that was a mistaken policy, because the more they drove work out into the interior of the country the more would they settle it. There was the fact that the necessary machinery was at Toowoomba, and why should it not be utilised? There were capable men there, and the climate was superior, so that men could work with more comfort than they could in Ipswich. He certainly thought the time had now come when the colony had advanced to such a state that they should get out of the old groove of dragging every disabled locomotive, goods van, or passenger car down to Ipswich, when there were really good mechanics at Toowoomba, and the work could be done there equally as well. He believed it would be cheaper to the colony to invite tenders for the work. The foundries there contributed largely to the revenue; each of them employed from sixty to seventy men, and he thought they deserved some encouragement at the hands of the Government in the way he had mentioned.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he quite agreed with the hon. gentleman, and since he had been connected with the Railway Department the policy the hon. member advocated had been carried out so far as it could be done. Tenders were now invited for the construction of all rolling-stock, and a complete stop had been put to the construction of any new rolling-stock in any of the Government workshops.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he would ask what probability there was of the contractors for the construction of locomotives — Messrs. Evans, Anderson, and Phelan — carrying out their contract within the specified time?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the reports with regard to the construction of locomotives were sent in regularly. At first they were not as satisfactory as the Government could wish, but lately they had been of a more satisfactory character. There did not seem much

probability of the locomotives being ready to meet the requirements of the various railway systems, and he was sorry to find that they should probably require at least ten or a dozen locomotives in the meantime to get along with on account of the increased mileage of railways and not being able to wait for the locally-made engines. There was nothing in the reports to lead him to believe that there was anything of the nature of a failure in the construction of the locomotives here, but they were not being constructed quite as quickly as the Government would like.

Mr. BUCKLAND said: Was it the intention of the department to order locomotives from Great Britain or America in the meantime?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it was. The matter was now under consideration. Of course, if they were absolutely necessary to carry on the traffic, the department could not wait. It was simply that the locomotives were required to carry on the traffic that the Government would have to send out of the colony for a few to meet present requirements.

Mr. COWLEY said, with regard to the item of £2,500, was it intended for overtime for employes, and if so, was the Sunday traffic remunerative?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the men employed on the railways were only employed to work six days in the week. When they worked on Sundays they were paid Sunday's pay. The traffic was becoming very remunerative.

Mr. SAYERS said: Were guards paid for extra Sunday work as well as other employes?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said of course the guards were paid as well as others.

Mr. BUCKLAND said: Was it the intention of the department to run Sunday trains on the Logan line, South Coast Railway?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the matter had been recommended by the traffic manager, but there were a good many small alterations suggested, and it was not quite decided, but it was probable that trains would be run before long.

Mr. MORGAN said: Were the working plans prepared for the deviation of the Killarney Junction with the main line, in order that trains might be run direct to the station at Warwick instead of having to back in over the bridge?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes.

Mr. MORGAN said: Did the Minister intend to proceed with the work?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not at present.

Mr. MORGAN said: What was the cause of the delay? The plans had, he was informed, been ready for the past twelve months, and the necessity for the work had been admitted.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the fact of the matter was that there were a good many important works in hand, and everything could not be done at once, but the matter would be dealt with as the traffic increased. There was no doubt that it was very awkward to work the traffic as the line was now constructed. It was a pity that the line had been constructed in that way, and he believed the proper way was to carry it out according to the plans that were now ready. The matter would receive attention.

Mr. POWERS said he would ask if it was the intention of the Government to allow the contractors for the locomotives an extension of time? The contractors who did not get the tenders could

not carry out the work in the specified time. Had any extension of time been granted, or would the penalty for non-fulfilment of contract be enforced?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said no extension of time had been granted, nor was he aware that the contractors had asked for any.

Mr. AGNEW said he hoped, if the occasion arose, the contractors would be readily granted an extension of time. The two firms who had the contracts had to overcome the greatest mechanical engineering difficulties that had been undertaken in Brisbane. Every consideration should be shown to the contractors, when it was considered that, probably, a considerable loss would fall upon them. On that account he hoped the Government would give the contractors every reasonable facility for carrying out the contract, not only by an extension of time, but in every other reasonable way, in order that the manufacture of locomotives might be permanently established in the colony.

Mr. GLASSEY said he would direct attention to one very important matter—the extension of holidays to the lengthsmen on the various lines of the colony. The hon. the Minister for Railways, he believed, had made some improvement in that direction since he took office, and he thought employes of that class deserved very great consideration, because many of them were away from the centres of population and the various comforts of civilised and social life. They often had to endure great hardships. Unfortunately, too little consideration was shown to those who worked with the heaviest tools, and who had to perform labour for the country at all seasons and under all circumstances. While those who were in high places and received very much better salaries, and worked with very much lighter implements, received, so far as holidays were concerned, far more consideration, and he sincerely hoped that—he believed he was correct in saying so—for the first time in the history of the country, the Minister in charge of the department would adopt some measure that would be equitable as between man and man so far as holidays were concerned. He believed the hon. gentleman had made some improvements in that direction already, by enabling the lengthsmen to get the four recognised national holidays allowed together, which was not previously the case; and also by giving them tickets to travel along the various lines in the country. He should like to ask the hon. gentleman to kindly consider the necessity of going a little further, and granting those men fourteen holidays in each year, as was done with men under the Traffic Department. He would also direct attention to the case of engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners. The two former classes held very responsible and dangerous positions, and were obliged to be out at all seasons of the year. They were only allowed five holidays a year. He believed he was correct in saying that they were allowed to travel free over the various lines, but that they got only second-class tickets, while those employed in the Traffic Department were granted first-class tickets. Why should that distinction exist? His experience of life had shown him that there was nothing that grated so much on a working man, whether in the employment of the State or a private firm—that nothing caused so much annoyance and irritation as the distinctions made between man and man. Therefore he hoped the Minister would not only increase the holidays of those men from five to fourteen, which was the number allowed in New South Wales, Victoria, and, he believed, South Australia, but that he would give first-class tickets to lengthsmen, engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners, and allow their wives and families to

travel with them during the holidays. Hon. members might laugh, but if he were proposing such a thing for highly paid officers who received £500, £600, or £1,000 a year, there would not be the slightest objection to it.

Mr. SMYTH: There would, to wives and families. Wives of members of Parliament are not allowed to travel free.

Mr. GLASSEY said he believed some of them went free to the Melbourne Exhibition. He also wished to direct attention to complaints that they sometimes heard about the high freights charged for the carriage of produce along their lines. He held in his hand a way-bill showing that a farmer at Moggill had paid 5s. for the carriage of one ton of potatoes from Riverview to Brisbane, a distance of 18 miles. In addition to that he had to pay 3s. ferry dues, so that it cost him 8s. for the carriage of a single ton of potatoes to Brisbane. He should like to know if it was not possible to charge lower freights for the carriage of farm produce? One of the most prominent elements in settling people on the soil was cheap railway freights. The present Government had already made a considerable step in that direction, and he hoped they would carry it still further.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he was obliged to the hon. member for the way he had pleaded the cause of the men employed in the Railway Department. He knew very well that he (Mr. Nelson) had taken their case into consideration as favourably as he could up to the present, and he could only promise that he should continue to do so so long as he had charge of them, which was not likely to be very long—not that he wished to sever his connection with them, but because he thought they would be very much better managed by commissioners who would really know what their requirements were. With regard to the other matter, he was afraid he could not deal with it. The Commissioner for Railways was obliged to make a minimum rate; that was to say, there must be a charge fixed below which it would not be worth while to collect a rate at all. It was much the same with traffic rates as with divisional board rates—there must be a certain rate below which they could not go. Some cases had come under his observation before the minimum rate was adopted, in which, when they came to calculate the amount of haulage involved, and the expense in handling the goods and shunting, the charge was absolutely absurd. It was, therefore, necessary to have a minimum rate, unless they were to actually carry goods for nothing.

Mr. SALKELD said one matter which considerably affected the item for maintenance was this: He knew numerous cases—no doubt the Minister for Railways would remember some of them—where buildings erected at roadside stations had been found so very inconvenient that alterations had had to be made at considerable expense. If they had to spend £300 or £500 in each case of that kind, it would soon run into a very large sum. In a large number of instances there was great want of foresight, not only in selecting station sites, but also in the arrangements of the station buildings. There was also a great deal of inconvenience in connection with what were called “block sidings,” in which the only way to get in and out was by the same line. It was an objectionable and dangerous thing, besides wasting a lot of time. While travelling on the Northern Railway he did not see a single case where a siding terminated against two stop blocks; they all ran right through, with points at both ends. That was very desirable. Two or three sessions ago he took the trouble to take out the relative cost of maintenance of permanent way, locomotive department, and traffic department

on the Queensland, Victoria, New South Wales, and New Zealand Railways, and he found that in Queensland the cost of maintenance was very much larger in proportion to the total cost than in any of the other colonies, with the exception, he believed, of South Australia. That was a very important matter. The House had very little control over the expenditure in connection with engineering works; in many cases it was almost impossible to do so, and it increased the necessity for Ministerial control. But Ministerial control of late, in connection with the construction of railways, had not been nearly so effective as it ought to have been. Large sums of money had been absolutely wasted, by the wrong route being chosen in the first instance, which necessitated costly deviations. There was one, in particular, on the Northern Railway, near Charters Towers. He had gone over both routes, and even from the carriage window he could not help wondering why the right route, which was within a very short distance of the wrong one, was not selected before they went to the expense of constructing the original line. In his own electorate there were a number of railway stations which would have to be altered. Those duties would, he supposed, devolve upon the commissioners, and their attention ought specially to be directed to the excessive relative cost of the maintenance branch in comparison with the traffic and locomotive departments.

Mr. SMYTH said one thing that struck a mining member, coming to the Brisbane railway station, was the barbarous system in which coal and metals were dealt with. The same system was formerly followed at Charters Towers and Gympie, but now, at those places, the quartz was put into shoots, and passed into the drays with as little handling as possible; with the result that carting cost 6d. a ton less than it did before. The same alteration of system, and the same saving per ton, might easily be effected at Brisbane.

Mr. GLASSEY said that under the present regulations, station-masters were bound to remain at their stations during the whole of the year, except by leave from the department. Even supposing they had a relief at some time of the day, they must not leave their homes, except by special permission from the department, or they must sneak away as best they could; and if they should leave their stations, and any mishap occurred during their absence, they were held responsible for it. Some alteration was required in that regulation. In his opinion, when station-masters were relieved in consequence of overwork, the persons supposed to relieve them should be fully competent to take charge of the stations during their absence; if they were not they should not be employed. If they were so employed so soon as the station-master was relieved of his duty he should be at liberty to use his own time at his own pleasure, and not be held responsible for anything happening during his absence. He hoped the regulation would be so altered that men would not be tied down to their stations from the 1st January to the last day of December, except by leave in the way he had described. No firm in the world would ask their employés to be tied up after they had done their daily work. It was simply slavery.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he would ask the Minister for Railways a question which was put every session—namely, what were the returns of the earnings of the Sandgate Railway? Up to the present time no satisfactory answer had been given to that question—that was to say, that the exact earnings, as apart from the Southern and Western Railway, had never been given. He thought it only fair that with regard to lines

which had been constructed in the suburbs of the city, the Committee and the country generally should know how those lines were paying. When they were tacked on to the Southern and Western Railway and its branches it was impossible that the country could know the exact earnings of those suburban lines. One of his reasons for asking for those returns was that he was anxious to know how the suburban lines were paying, because he was in favour of extending the principle of constructing suburban lines, as he believed that they were the best paying lines in the colony. He hoped the Minister for Railways would be able to give him the information asked for.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that if the hon. member were to carefully peruse the Commissioner's report, which was furnished annually, he would get the information he required. They could not bring it up to the exact date, but if the hon. gentleman looked at page 13 of the report, he would find the two years 1886 and 1887, compared with each other. In 1886 the gross earnings were £24,100, and in 1887 £24,206—a very small increase. In 1886 the expenses were £15,030, and in 1887 £15,677. The net earnings in 1886 were £9,070, and in 1887 £8,529, and in 1886 the capital expended upon the line was £167,294, while in 1887 it had increased to £169,225. The percentage of net earnings to capital in 1886 amounted to 5·422 per cent., and in 1887 it had dropped a little, and amounted to 5·040. The percentage of expenses to earnings in 1886 was 62·37 per cent., and in 1887 64·77 per cent. He thought that supplied all the information required.

Mr. PLUNKETT said he rose for the purpose of asking the Minister for Railways to hurry on the completion of the line to Southport. He hoped the hon. gentleman would do his best to get the line finished before the hot weather began in December.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that the line was being pushed on with the greatest possible expedition. It was expected that better progress would be made in future, as the rails were laid over the Albert and Coomera Rivers. The line would be opened to Southport about the middle of December.

Question put and passed.

MARYBOROUGH AND GYMPIE RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that £72,316 be granted for the Maryborough and Gympie Railway—Maintenance Department, Traffic Department and Subdivision, Locomotive Department and Subdivision, and Stores Department. On that line there was an additional length of 30 miles since the last Estimates were passed, the total length at present open being 163 miles. The cost of maintenance was a little less than the Southern and Western Railway, and amounted to £127 per mile. There were no increases in the way of salaries, except such as were necessitated by the increased mileage.

Mr. TOZER said there was one matter in connection with the railway that he desired to bring under the notice of the Committee, and that was in relation to the Dickabram bridge. He had asked the Minister for Railways a question on the subject a few days previously, and whichever way the answer was given, it showed a state of affairs that must be at once remedied, whether it was the duty of the Divisional Board to remedy it, or that of the Commissioner for Railways, he could not form any judgment; but it was the duty of one or the other. He would tell the Committee what had happened in connection with the bridge, and they would see that it was absolutely

necessary to make some provision for avoiding similar questions in future. The Dickabram bridge was a very fine structure, and had been completed about two years. The extra outlay incurred in connection with the bridge by providing for road traffic amounted to about £7,000 or £8,000, and that amount had been absolutely lost to the colony for about two years, and was likely to be lost for the next twenty years, unless the Committee expressed an opinion as to how that state of things was to be remedied. He thought the difficulty all originated in a misapprehension, and that the Local Authority, Railway Department, and the Works Department, if they once came together, would at once see how the mistake arose. The chairman of the Tiara Board had written a short note to the *Wide Bay News*, and what that gentleman said completely showed that the Board had an answer to the Commissioner for Railways in the matter. The letter was as follows:—

“As the Press have commented upon the above”—

The answer he received from the Minister for Railways—

“I would ask you to insert the following explanation: The first road approach to the bridge in question being about one and a-half miles of road, parallel to and outside of the fence through Mr. Jenkin's property, was completed in March last right up to the railway fence adjoining the bridge, and within a couple of chains of the bridge itself. On the other side of the river (through Mr. Hatchin's property) the land, being even and not requiring any preparation for traffic, is ready at a moment's notice to bear vehicular traffic to the bridge as soon as the actual bridge approaches within the railway fence are completed—a work which would perhaps involve one and a-half chains of ‘bank’ on either side of the river. Surely it cannot be suspected that a divisional board shall complete works of any kind within a railway resumption fence? And yet this is the latest phase of this much-delayed work. The Commissioner for Railways (since the question was put in the House) writes to my board to the effect that the department ‘does not consider that it should be called upon to incur any further expense with regard to this work.’

“My board has had a long and tedious argument with the departments concerned relative to compensations for road resumptions, etc., in connection with this bridge, and have so far saved the ratepayers money being expended upon works, etc., which were within the legitimate province of the Government, and are still of opinion that ‘the officials whose proper duty it is’ to open the bridge for road traffic, by completing the actual approaches to the bridge (within the railway fence), are the Minister for Railways and his department.”

The whole thing arose from a misunderstanding, and the misunderstanding was a very stupid one. He found in the “Votes and Proceedings” that in 1883 the question of making additions to the bridge was first mooted. Several propositions were submitted by Mr. Stanley, the Chief Engineer of the department, and the plan that was accepted was to construct the whole bridge as for a double line of rails; but, in the first place, to utilise the width beyond that required for a single line of rails for the purpose of road traffic. It was a growing district, and it could not be very long before a double line of rails would be required; but, in the meantime, the extra width of bridge was to be used for road traffic. He also found that the probability was that Mr. Stanley was not made aware of the fact which induced the Government to make that concession, because he said, three years after the intention of the Government was made known:—

“The action of the divisional board is certainly most unreasonable in not making these approaches, for, although I am not aware of what led to the construction of the bridge as suitable for combined road and railway traffic, I presume action in this direction was originally taken in consequence of the representation of local authorities.”

That plainly showed that Mr. Stanley was not aware that the circumstances which led to the Government making the alteration were the pressure by local authorities, in consequence of the sudden washing away of the railway bridge somewhere lower down the river. The local authorities asked for assistance in putting up another bridge, and the answer of the Railway Department was: “We will make a railway bridge suitable for our own convenience, and we will also allow you to utilise it until we require it.” Then came the question: There was the bridge, and who was to finish it? It occurred to him, that as the whole of the land on both sides was originally freehold land, and was then vested in the Commissioner for Railways, the divisional board had a fair answer, when they said: “We cannot go within that freehold land and construct these approaches.” Perhaps the Committee did not know the state of the case, but it appeared to him that the Railway Department should not allow anybody but their own officers to make the approach. After crossing the river the road would have to cross the railway, and he apprehended that the Railway Department would see that the traffic, so far as the railway was concerned, was made safe. The residents of the district had sent in four or five petitions, and there were about sixteen pages of correspondence on the matter in “Votes and Proceedings.” That had been going on for three years. It was no use telling the divisional board to do the work, because the great majority of the residents were at the other end of the division; but something must be done to utilise a bridge on which the country had expended so much money. It was just to say that the whole of the inaction connected with the bridge took place during the tenure of office of the last Government, and he did not think the present Minister for Railways had had time to inquire into the facts; but he trusted that now the facts were laid before him one of the finest railway bridges in the colony, which had remained unopen for two years, would be made available for traffic, and steps would be taken to prevent a recurrence of such a state of affairs in future.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that to some extent he had inquired into the circumstances of the case, and he really did not think they were very creditable to the local authorities, notwithstanding the defence made by the hon. member. It was wonderful how very particular boards were with regard to spending any money outside their divisions; but they never had the slightest compunction in calling upon the Railway Department to spend money on their roads, and assist them in a thousand other ways. The department had no right, in his opinion, to build traffic bridges, and he would never consent to money voted for railway purposes being devoted to any such purpose. If the board were so very particular about going on land belonging to the Railway Department, he would lease the piece of land required for the road, and they could then get over their conscientious scruples about access to the bridge, make the approaches, and keep them in repair so long as the whole of the bridge was not required by the Railway Department. He thought the fact of the matter was, that the local authority did not want to spend the money.

Mr. STEPHENS said he was surprised to hear what the Minister for Railways had said with regard to bridges in which local authorities were interested. In South Brisbane the Railway Department had made a bridge, and the local authority was trying to get them to raise it. Did the remarks of the hon. member apply to that case?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that that was an entirely different matter. In the other case, the Railway Department had spent £7,000 or £8,000 on a bridge across a river for the benefit of the local authorities when they had no occasion to do so, and he considered that it was an improper use to make of money voted for railway purposes. The local authorities were offered the use of one side of the bridge if they chose to spend a little money in making the approaches, but they had been two years in thinking over it.

Mr. POWERS said he wished to know where the money came from for building stations or sidings on the different lines of railway? He referred particularly to the Wide Bay and Burnett district.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that all new sidings and station buildings were charged to loan. A railway when it was built and originally taken over was never considered as finished, and every year there was a certain amount of capital expended on all lines. When a line was first constructed the chief engineer put up such buildings as were absolutely necessary, and others were put up as the traffic developed. With regard to the repairs, painting, and renewals, they were included in the vote.

Mr. POWERS said he was pleased to hear that the money came out of loan, because some people seemed to fancy that it came out of the vote for maintenance, seeing that when applications were made for necessary buildings there appeared to be a desire to keep down the expenditure on maintenance. In his district the people sometimes wanted small buildings erected and could not get them, and he thought the difficulty was owing to the money having to come out of the vote for maintenance; but if it came out of loan there was less reason for objections for making additions as traffic developed. He would refer particularly to one instance, which would show the difficulty of getting what was required. At Abingdon, which was admitted to be the principal centre of the Isis district before the railway was taken there, the Government sold a township, and because people believed the railway was going there the colony realised a thousand pounds by the sale of land; but, though the colony had the benefit of that thousand pounds, no station was erected at Abingdon, but only a bit of a place for a gatekeeper, and no shelter for passengers or goods. He had tried to get a goods shed erected, and had been told that there were only one or two farmers there, and it was not a central place. But the fact was that the first school in the Isis Scrub was erected at Abingdon, and the only post-office and only hotel in the district were erected there also. So that the people themselves believed that Abingdon was the most central place. He went to the department and pressed the claim. They said there were some sheets of iron to put over the goods as they came. He (Mr. Powers) asked why they should not be put on props? The department said they would have to put up sides in that case, and it would be a shed. He (Mr. Powers) said that was just what they wanted. Though the Government received more revenue than would compensate them for putting up a shed, which would cost £20, they did not get such a revenue as they would if they put up a shed there, because people would not have their goods taken there until there was some shelter. There was another matter on which he had had interviews with the Minister when he came down here two or three months ago. There was a place called Torbanlea, where the revenue received amounted to £4,000 a year, and yet he had had the greatest difficulty to induce the

department to increase the scanty accommodation that had been provided there. If, as he understood, those matters were paid for out of loan he thought the Minister should give more consideration to the wants of the people in that district. The case of the Dickabram bridge mentioned by the hon. member for Wide Bay was an example of the neglect by the department of the wants of that district. So far as the shed accommodation to which he had referred was concerned, he thought £50 or £60 would be sufficient. Although the revenue from the Torbanlea Station was £4,000 a year, all the department paid there was £58 to the station-master, who had no assistance and had to work from 8 o'clock in the morning until 10 o'clock at night. He had to work from the time the first train went by in the morning until the last train at night, and he had then to make up his returns, and a knowledge of them might be gathered from an enumeration of the positions he filled: He had charge of the station at £58 a year, the post office at £12, telegraph office, £12, savings bank, £10, Isis Investment Company, and he was supplied with quarters and fuel valued at £20. He had, as he had said, pressed those things upon the notice of the department before bringing them before the Committee. Something had certainly been done to give more accommodation at Torbanlea, but some further consideration was necessary in the direction of providing more accommodation on that line. He was not going into the action of officials, or anything of that kind, as he recognised those affairs would be attended to by the commissioners to be appointed. He felt he had been perfectly justified in bringing those matters forward with a view to having them remedied.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he would make inquiries into the matters referred to by the hon. member, but he rose more particularly to say that the expenditure for temporary sheds could not be charged to loan. They only charged to loan anything that added to the value of the property and made it a better asset of the colony, such as large goods' sheds, and permanent buildings for the accommodation of the traffic on the lines.

Mr. ANNEAR said he would ask the Minister for Railways if the desirability of erecting a suitable railway station at Maryborough had been brought under his notice?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it had not. He had not seen the station there, but he hoped to see it shortly, and if it was not a suitable station for that large railway system they would see if they could not improve upon it.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was aware that it was the hon. gentleman's intention to take a trip up North during the recess and look through the different departments under his control, and he wished to bring under the hon. member's notice the inequality of the salaries paid to men doing similar work in different parts of the colony. In the Locomotive Department, for instance, he believed there was not a better man in the department than the foreman of the Locomotive Department at Maryborough, who got a salary of £250 a year, and the railway storekeeper and pay clerk there got only £180 a year. On the Central Railway, however, they found the locomotive foreman got £350, and the storekeeper and pay clerk got £250. Again, on the Northern Railway, the locomotive foreman got £350, or £100 a year more than the locomotive foreman of the Wide Bay and Burnett district. He knew the salary could not be altered now, but he mentioned it so that when the hon. gentleman brought down his next Estimate those inequalities might be remedied. He might have

taken up two hours of the time of the Committee that afternoon by introducing a certain subject, but he had refrained from doing so as he knew it was the desire of hon. members to get through the session as quickly as possible. However, a few moments would be sufficient to bring the matter under the notice of the Minister, and that he proposed to do. The members of the late Parliament, and he believed a majority of the members of the present Parliament, were of the opinion that the work which could be done by the mechanics they had in the colony should be done here, and the House had decided to call for tenders for the construction of locomotives in Queensland. Those tenders were called for with a certain specification, which specified, amongst other things, all the portions of the machinery that should be imported from other countries and all the work that should be done here. He brought that matter up with the request that the Minister would inquire whether the statement he had to make was true or not, and if it was true there had been a departure from the intention of Parliament in passing the resolution that tenders should be called for that work in the colony. Several mechanics had waited upon him, and he had received several letters on the subject, one of which he would read to the Committee. It was addressed to himself, and read as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,

"I take the liberty of addressing you on a subject which I think you will agree with me wants looking into. I allude to the successful tenderers for locomotives—namely, Messrs. Evans, Anderson, and Phelan, and Springall and Frost—importing a lot of the material required in a finished condition, leaving little or nothing to be done here by Queensland mechanics beyond erection. Now, sir, I cannot at this moment recall what the Government allowed the manufacturers to import; but wheels, axles, springs, steel castings, and steel forgings in the rough were, I believe, the principal items, but you will probably know that yourself. I do not think it was ever intended that they should be allowed to import link motions and other motions; and yet, sir, I am credibly informed tons of them have been seen on the wharf lately. These motions are fitted, turned, and finished, and are, I understand, directed to Messrs. Evans, Anderson, and Co. Messrs. Springall and Frost have imported three sets of frames slotted, planed, drilled, and finished ready to go together, and what more they are importing or intend to import; but I think you will agree with me that this is a great injustice not only to the Queensland mechanics, but to the unsuccessful tenderers—namely, Messrs. John Walker and Co., and J. W. Sutton and Co., and the rest, if there were any more. Sir, you would earn the thanks of hundreds of mechanics, both here and in Maryborough, in fact, all through the colony, if you would inquire into this matter and get it thoroughly ventilated. You can see that manufacturing locomotives in that way is nothing but a farce. It is simply erecting them, and I feel confident that the firms in question are going outside the specifications.

"Yours, etc.,

"BENJAMIN FORTESCUE."

That letter was not from any mechanic or any head of a firm manufacturing machinery in Maryborough, but was from a mechanic in Brisbane. He knew that the mechanics in the metropolis were up in arms about the affair. He did not wish to raise any discussion about it, but simply to point out that if what was stated in that letter was true it was a great injustice to the unsuccessful tenderers, and to ask that some inquiry should be made by the Minister. In one case the price they were paying for the locomotives was 15 per cent. more than they could get the engines for in the mother country. What was that 15 per cent. given for? It was that work might be afforded to mechanics in Queensland. But importing the parts finished was not finding work for them. Those contracts involved a large expenditure of money, and he contended that it was a misappropriation of that money if the tenderers were allowed to go outside the speci-

cation, and thereby injure the mechanics they had in the colony, who were fully competent to carry out that work.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said with regard to the salaries to which reference had been made by the hon. member, he had already explained earlier in the evening that many employes on the railways were not getting as much salary as they ought to do, and that he would be very glad indeed when he could increase them. With respect to the difference in the amounts received by persons holding similar offices on the Maryborough and Gympie Railway, and on the Central Railway, he would point out that in the former case, there were only 163 miles of line to supervise, while in the Central district the length of railway was 425 miles. He thought that would account for the difference in the salaries. However, it was not proposed to make any alteration this year. By next year he hoped the finances of the colony would be in a better condition, and that there would be a good many improvements grafted on the present system. With reference to the very important matter to which the hon. member drew attention in the latter part of his speech, he did not think it was wise to attach too much importance to letters of the nature of the one read to the Committee. At the same time he might mention that there was some truth in the statement. The whole work of constructing those locomotives was being carried out under the supervision of an inspector, and nothing could be done contrary to the conditions of the contract without its being immediately reported to headquarters. Some such reports as the one mentioned had been made, but the hon. member might rest perfectly assured that no departure from the conditions would be allowed. They might by accident be compelled to allow some of the material already imported to be used, but if that was done the department would be sure to get a *quid pro quo* for it.

Mr. TOZER said he wished, if possible, to get a clearer and more definite answer from the Minister in reference to the matter he (Mr. Tozer) mentioned a minute or two ago. He did not intend to take up the time of the Committee with any discussion on the subject, but he would point out that it was not a matter which could be relegated to the three new commissioners. It had been standing now for so long that he thought the suggestion he made might end it. There were at present engaged in farming, on the other side of the river, at least a hundred persons near to that bridge, and there was no bridge between Tiaro and Gympie, a distance by river of about 120 miles. Those men were, at this moment, debarred from crossing the river whenever there was a fresh. It was likely that in a month or two the river, as it did in ordinary seasons, would rise, and then those people would be desirous of utilising their farms. He was perfectly sure that the patriotism or good sense of the farmers would induce them, if allowed by the commissioner, to take down the railway fence and make the approaches themselves, quite irrespective of the divisional board. He accepted the conclusion of the commissioner that it was the fault of the divisional board. He would like the Minister either to take some steps to compel the divisional board to do their duty, or allow the public to take the matter into their own hands, and take down the fence and make the approaches to the bridge.

Mr. LITTLE said he could thoroughly endorse the remarks of the hon. member who had just spoken. It was a case of very great injustice. He (Mr. Little) had not lived in the district for many years, but it was only about five months since he had visited it, and he could say that the work

would cost the Government very little. If the divisional board did not perform their duty, he considered that the Government should step in and compel them to do it, or do the work themselves.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he could not give the hon. member the answer he desired. He thought it was a very scandalous state of affairs that that bridge should be such a length of time without being utilised; but he could only promise that he would have some further correspondence with the board, in order to bring the matter to a crisis. He was perfectly willing to act as fairly as he possibly could, so long as he was not diverting moneys appropriated for railways to purposes for which they were never intended. So long as he was satisfied on that point he would be glad to assist the residents in the district to utilise the bridge, if the divisional board shirked their duty.

Question put and passed.

BUNDEBERG AND MOUNT PERRY RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that there be granted for the service of the year 1888-9, the sum of £14,450 for salaries and contingencies for the maintenance, traffic, locomotive, and stores departments of the Bundaberg and Mount Perry Railway. The items in that vote were nearly the same as last year. The length of line was 68½ miles, and the rate of maintenance was very low, the lowest on any railway in the colony, the rate being £92 15s. per mile. There was also £100 extra for maintenance of permanent way.

Question put and passed.

CENTRAL RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that there be granted for the service of the year 1888-9, a sum not exceeding £121,554 for the Central Railway. He did not think the vote required any comment. Hon. members would notice that the increase was very small, and that there was an additional length of 24 miles of line. The total mileage was now 475 miles and the cost of maintenance £135 per mile.

Mr. MURPHY said he would like to know if it was the Minister's intention to fence in the Central line. Several serious accidents had nearly happened of late in consequence of trains running into mobs of cattle camped on the line, and it was necessary to have it fenced as soon as possible.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it was intended to fence the line, but not all at once. The most dangerous portions would be fenced at a cost of £7,000 or £8,000, but as it would cost £21,000 to fence the entire line, that portion running over the ranges would not be dealt with at present.

Mr. CROMBIE said he wished to draw the Minister's attention to the inconvenient time of the arrival of trains at Rockhampton. The train arrived on Friday afternoon with the mails, and the tender which went on to Keppel Bay to meet the mail steamer left port very shortly after the arrival of the train, the consequence being that the mails were left behind until the following Tuesday. He would suggest that the train should leave earlier in the day, so that the mails could come in the same day. It would be a convenience to the people if the train left Barcaldine at 11 or 12 at night instead of 5 in the morning. It would thus arrive at Rockhampton earlier in the day, and people coming down could attend to their business, and return by the day train. He would also ask the Minister if he

would put on sleeping cars, which would be much appreciated by the public, who would willingly pay the extra charge.

Mr. PAUL said he had received a copy of the locomotive foreman's report on the question of the retention of a smith and striker at Emerald, by which it was seen that the actual charges against maintenance at that place were from November, 1887, to January, 1888, £14 13s. 5d. whilst the wages drawn during that period were £68. He wished to ask whether during that period the repairs to locomotives and carriages were made in Rockhampton instead of at Emerald.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he would make inquiries with reference to the question. He would also consider the desirableness of introducing sleeping cars on the Central line.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH said he thought they should know the intentions of the Government with respect to the Central line. There were two proposed extensions of it—one to the east and one to the west. The one to the west was contemplated by the late Government, but now it appeared that the Minister for Railways had it in contemplation to extend the line to the eastward to Port Alma. They should know what the intentions of the Government really were, if they had any intentions at all. Possibly the Minister for Railways did not know what the intentions of the Government were, and they could not expect him to tell them unless he knew. But if the Government had any intentions known to the Minister for Railways then the Committee were entitled to the information.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not think he ought to reply to that kind of question. It was evidently put with the intention of irritating him.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: No.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. gentleman's intention was to try and get him to make a slip. The hon. gentleman kept on chaffing him by saying that he did not know anything about the policy of the Government, and he was not going to tell the hon. gentleman what he did know. He was not going to be caught in that way. If the hon. gentleman wanted to know what the intentions of the Government were with respect to the Central line, he might say that they intended to go both east and west.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH said that announcement would be received with a great amount of satisfaction by a certain number of people. It would be satisfactory to them to know that the Government intended to go from Rockhampton to Port Alma, and that was the first statement that they really had with respect to the intentions of the Government. But the statement would be received with a great deal of dissatisfaction by a very much larger number of people.

Mr. MURPHY: No; it will not.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH said he thought it would certainly not please a great many people when they heard that the Government intended to take the railway down to the mud-hole in Port Alma.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought the jocular tone adopted by the leader of the Opposition was met in the same jocular way by the Minister for Railways. Of course, it was the intention of every Government to extend the railway from Rockhampton in both directions, but the intentions of the Government with respect to that railway would be disclosed to the House as soon as the Hon. Sir Thomas McLlwraith was present, which he would be within two or three days.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the hon. gentleman's speech was really very funny. The Minister for Railways told them that the intention of the Government was to extend the railway eastward—of course to Port Alma—and the Colonial Secretary then told them that that was only a joke.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I thought you were joking yourself.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he had asked a serious question, on a matter that was engaging a great deal of attention in the Central district, and the hon. gentleman told them that the Government were going to make the railway to Port Alma.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not necessarily to Port Alma.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said then the Colonial Secretary said that must not be taken seriously. Now, it was quite certain that one or other, or both of these hon. gentlemen, did not know what the policy of the Government was. If the Minister for Railways did not know, why did he not say so at once; but it was rather too absurd for the Minister in charge of a department to make a statement, and another Minister to say that it was not to be taken seriously.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said if the hon. gentleman had been in his place a little earlier in the afternoon—

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I was here.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman was not in his place when it was stated that the railway policy of the Government would be explained in a day or two by the Premier, Sir Thomas Mellwraith. He certainly thought the hon. gentleman was speaking in a joking way when he got up and asked the Minister for Railways the question he did, and under the circumstances he was of opinion that the answer he got was not inappropriate—that they were going to take the railway east and west, and probably they would take it north and south.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They do not know anything at all about it.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am not so sure about that.

Question put and passed.

NORTHERN AND CARPENTARIA DIVISION.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, in moving £74,170, salaries and contingencies for the Northern and Carpentaria Division, said the amount was very nearly the same as last year, there being a few increases that were necessitated by the increased traffic on the line. There were now 260 miles of line, the cost of maintenance of which was £121 15s. per mile.

Mr. COWLEY said he rose to ask a question similar in purport to that put by the hon. member for Barcoo—if tenders had been called for fencing in portions of the line in accordance with a petition sent in on the subject?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the petition had been received and approved of, tenders had been called for, and the work would be carried out.

Mr. SAYERS asked if tenders had been called for repairs in connection with the Northern Railway, and if so, who was the lowest tenderer?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said such a thing had never entered into the brain of the Commissioner for Railways as to get repairs done by contract.

Mr. SAYERS: Rolling-stock.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said there was no such case on record.

Mr. ANNEAR said he saw £900 on that estimate as the salary of the Chief Engineer.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is for last year.

Mr. ANNEAR said, on turning to the loan vote, he found the salary of the Chief Engineer was put down at £900, and allowances £500. Why not put down £1,400 at once?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has always been put down in that way.

Mr. ANNEAR said there was a promise made last session to alter it. It was very confusing to hon. members.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the salary the hon. gentleman referred to in the vote before the Committee was for last year. The whole salary and allowances of the Chief Engineer were now put down to loan, and would be dealt with when they came to the loan vote.

Mr. SAYERS said he did not think he had made himself thoroughly understood by the Minister for Railways. What he wished to know was, whether tenders had been called for work in connection with repairs to locomotives and rolling-stock on the Northern Railway?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said tenders were invited at one time for some castings, which usually came under the designation of "stores." They were used for replacing worn-out portions of rolling-stock. The tenders were so high that none were accepted.

Mr. PHILP asked why the Chief Engineer and his staff had been removed from Townsville to Cairns? At least, he understood that the staff were removed to Cairns, and that the Chief Engineer himself resided at Cooktown.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not know any reason, except that the gentleman who was Minister for Railways at the time the change was made considered that it would be conducive to the interests of the service. He might say, however, that he thought it likely there would be some change made very soon.

Mr. GLASSEY said he saw an additional clerk put down at £104 a year. He should like to know if his beard had commenced to grow yet. If it had he was afraid his salary would not enable him to afford to get shaved.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Let it grow.

Mr. GLASSEY said it was too hot up there to let it grow. He hoped the Minister would extend his commercial conscience next year and increase that officer's salary.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the clerk in question was previously paid from the wages vote, and it was promotion for him to be placed definitely on the Estimates.

Question put and passed.

MACKAY RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, in moving £10,210, salaries and contingencies, Mackay railway, said there was a slight decrease on the vote of last year, due, he was sorry to say, to the shrinkage in the traffic. The length of line open was 32 miles, and the cost of maintenance £130 3s. per mile.

Question put and passed.

COOKTOWN RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that £10,471 be granted for the Cooktown Railway. There were 54 miles of line now open, and the cost of maintenance was £118 15s. per mile.

Mr. HODGKINSON asked why the cost of maintenance was so much greater per mile on the Mackay Railway than on the Cooktown Railway?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the difference was owing to the difference in the traffic on the respective lines. On the Cooktown line there was only one train per day each way, whereas on the Mackay line there were one or two branches to be served.

Mr. DALRYMPLE said there was a large amount of traffic—sugar-cane—carried on the Mackay Railway at a very low rate, and the soil was so extraordinarily fertile that a large number of men had to be constantly employed destroying the couch grass. It was possible that the extra expense was caused from that fact.

Question put and passed.

CAIRNS RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved that £4,400 be granted for the Cairns Railway. There were 8 miles of line now open. The cost of maintenance was very heavy—£187 *lis.* per mile—owing to its quite recent construction, and the amount of traffic upon it was at present very small.

Mr. PALMER said that as that was the last item on the Railway Estimates, he would take the opportunity of calling the Minister's attention to a subject which had always cropped up whenever the vote was going through the Committee—namely, the expenditure from loan which really ought to come from general revenue. It was not quite so bad that year as it had been in previous years; still there were many items shown in the report of the Commissioner for Railways as having been paid from loan which ought to have been paid out of revenue. There was an item, "Boring for coal near Dalby, £413." Was there any reason why that should have been paid out of loan? "Phillips's sleepers, £2,000." That should have been charged to the Normanton-Cloncurry railway account. Then, on old-established lines, "lands resumed with costs," were charged to loan. He might easily enumerate many other items charged to loan, which ought to have been charged to revenue. He hoped the Minister for Railways, or the commissioners to be appointed under the new Act, would make a searching inquiry into the matter, and see that no expenditure was charged to loan which really ought to be charged to expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that during the short time he had been in office the matter had not escaped his attention, and hon. members would notice that the amount charged to loan was not so great as it had been in past years, all the credit for which, however, was not due to him. It was difficult at times to decide under which heading items of expenditure should be placed. With regard to land resumptions on old-established lines, as traffic increased, additional sidings were required, and it frequently happened that in order to get sufficient land to put them upon, it was necessary to resume small portions of land. Cases of that kind had frequently come under his notice. With regard to Phillips's sleepers, that was a perfectly legitimate charge to loan, as the sleepers were, or ought to be, a good asset to the country. Those steel sleepers were not being used for repairs or renewals, but only in the construction of the line.

Mr. PHILP said that he would ask the Minister for Railways what chance there was of the contract for the Cairns railway being finished within the contract time?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he had no further information to give than he had given when laying the plans and
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sections of the next section of the line on the table of the House, and asked for their approval; but the Government had been informed that there was every probability of the work being finished within the contract time. The number of men employed at present on the line was about 1,500, although the section of the line was only a short section, 15 miles in length. It required something like twenty-one Government inspectors to look after the different branches of the work. They had had no very recent returns from the Government Engineer as to the progress of the work, but there was nothing to lead the Government to suppose that there would be any great delay in its completion.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Railways had overlooked the item of boring for coal to which attention had been called.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that it was very doubtful what ought to be done with that charge; at the same time, as it was doubtful, they should give the late Government the benefit of the doubt. It was a very precarious thing boring for coal—as much so as sinking a well; and everyone knew that they might sink two or three bad ones before they sank a really good well. That was a case where they might draw the line.

Question put and passed.

POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT— SALARIES.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the sum of £13,147 be granted for salaries. That vote was exactly the same amount as the vote for last year, and seeing that was so he would suggest that hon. members should discuss any matters they might wish to discuss, in reference to the administration of the department, upon the items in the vote he had now proposed.

Mr. GROOM said he did not want to say anything about the salaries, but that was the time to ask questions about the department. He wished to ask the hon. gentleman in regard to what might be a new rule being brought in, or what might be enforcing an old rule. Just now a large number of persons were being fined because there was not sufficient postage upon letters which were open at the ends. He had seen two envelopes, which had been shown to him, and, strange to say, one had come from the Education Department and the other from the Post Office. Each envelope had been cut at the ends, and he thought each had either a penny or a twopenny stamp on—he would not be certain which; but the parties to whom they were addressed had had to pay 4d. each for insufficient postage and 4d. fine, and as he had said the one had come from the Education Department and the other from the Post Office, where it would have been supposed people would really know what the regulations enforced. He had seen one that had come down from Allora containing printed matter, on which the fine for insufficient postage had amounted to 1s. 8d., and that had to be paid before the letter was given up. As he had said, that must be either owing to the framing of a new rule of which the public were not yet aware, or it must be the enforcing of the old rule, which said that the envelope should be so cut at each end that anyone could see what was contained in it. The public did not know how it was those fines were being imposed. If it were the enforcement of a new rule, he thought the public ought to be made acquainted with it, and if it were the enforcement of an old rule, then the information with regard to that rule was insufficient. Even officers in the two departments over which the Postmaster-General himself presided did not know of that regulation,

He could produce the envelopes now if necessary. They had been brought to him on Saturday, and he had said that when the Postmaster-General's Estimates came on he would put the question, and ask that hon. gentleman the meaning of it. He trusted the hon. gentleman would be able to explain it now.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that the hon. gentleman was quite right. It was not a new rule, but an old rule, but he was sorry to say it had not been strictly observed. Year after year it had been drifting in the direction of having a smaller and smaller slit in the ends of the envelopes, until there was at last almost none at all. If there was any one thing done wrong with regard to that matter, it was that no sufficient notice had been given by the department as to the enforcement of the rule. The regulation provided that either the ends or the sides of an envelope should be open in order to see that no written matter was inside. For years the slit in the ends had been getting smaller and smaller, until in some cases it was so small that it was only after very close observation that anyone could see whether it was open at all or not. He had found it really necessary that some steps should be taken to prevent the revenue being defrauded by unscrupulous and unprincipled persons, who were taking advantage of the regulation to send matter which should not be sent in such envelopes at all; and, therefore, instructions had been issued that, where the rule was not being complied with, the penalty should be inflicted. It was quite true, as the hon. gentleman had observed, that sufficient notice had not been given in that matter. However, that notice had been now sent out, and he had in the meantime suspended the fines until the general public knew the kind of envelope in which such matters should be sent. He did not think there was much to complain of.

Mr. DRAKE said he was glad the hon. member for Toowoomba had brought that matter forward, and he was also glad that the Postmaster-General had given his assurance that the further operation of the rule would be suspended until due notice had been given. He had been a considerable sufferer by the enforcement of the rule. The hon. gentleman had spoken about a fine of 1s. 8d., but he had had to pay 3s. 4d.

Mr. REES R. JONES: I paid 4s. 8d.

Mr. DRAKE said he had had also to pay 2d. for receiving a circular, which was the prospectus of a public company on which the hon. Postmaster-General's name appeared as a director. It was very mortifying, seeing the ends had been open. He supposed the hon. gentleman was going to give notice all round, so that there would be no more of those charges made. Only on Saturday last he had been in a printing office, and he had seen a number of boys industriously employed in enclosing circulars in envelopes with the usual little slits, and he had said to the proprietor that the Postmaster-General would charge 2d. on every one of those; and that gentleman replied that he was glad the matter had been mentioned, as he was sending out 5,000 of them.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: What a loss to the revenue.

Mr. DRAKE said that after the instructions were issued, all would be right.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that he did not think there would be any further difficulty in the matter, because now it was generally known, and the rule would be observed.

Mr. GROOM: It is not known in the country districts

Mr. REES R. JONES: Will you pay me my 4s. 8d.?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it had been properly charged. What the hon. member for North Rockhampton spoke of was a bank-book which was sealed up, and if persons sending documents chose to seal them, of course there was a certain rule laid down and they must make people observe that rule.

Mr. REES R. JONES said the envelope certainly was sealed; but he did not see why a seal was any worse than a piece of gum. The contents of the packet were quite visible. It contained a bank pass-book, and he was charged 2s. 4d. deficient postage and 2s. 4d. fine.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he wished to bring under the notice of the Postmaster-General what appeared to be a singular piece of administration and also loss of revenue. In the large towns in England a great deal of business was done in sending messages about town; but if he desired to send a message to some place in Brisbane, he could not send it from the head office. He could send one from the Belle Vue Hotel—he was not going to say a word about there being an office at the Belle Vue Hotel—but it did seem strange that they should not be able to do a thing at the head office which they could do at a branch office. There was another matter of administration he would notice. He sent a "collect" message to Thursday Island, to be delivered on board the steamer "Rockton," three days after the steamer had left Brisbane. The message was immediately returned with a notice that it could not be delivered on board the "Rockton." It was very evident it could not be delivered simply because the "Rockton" had not arrived, and he had a rather lively correspondence with the Telegraph Department, pointing out that his object in sending the message was to catch the boat. It was not much use sending it after she had arrived. But the department did not seem to recognise that fact, and he had had another message from the person to whom that message was sent complaining that even yet his message had not been delivered, although it was paid for. The gentleman who carried on the correspondence with him was Mr. Cowell, and the impression that gentleman was trying to impress upon his mind was that if his messages were sent in time to be of any service whatever, some rule of the department would be violated. Because the vessel did not happen to be in the harbour at the moment the message was received, it was returned. The Government must have a large amount of business of that nature, and so had a number of commercial firms, and surely the officers in the department had sense enough to know that unless a message arrived before the vessel it was of no service whatever.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said if the hon. member had sent a prepaid message it would have been delivered. Collect messages had to be accounted for every day, and that was the reason why the hon. member's message was not delivered. He would inquire into the matter and see if an alteration could be made. In regard to the other matter of sending messages about the city, he had made inquiries and hoped to be able to make arrangements by which messages might be sent from the Central office even to the Belle Vue.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he was glad to hear the hon. gentleman's statement as to the latter point, because he would find it brought a considerable additional revenue. In regard to the Thursday Island matter, if it had been contrary to the rules to send a collect message, why did they not say so? It would have been paid for.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That would have been rather difficult if there was nobody at the other end to pay for it.

The Hon. A. RUTLEDGE said there was a curious mode in the department in connection with the delivery of letters. A case had come under his notice where a letter was addressed to a friend of his to some address in Brisbane. But he was not there when the letter-carrier went round and the letter was put into the dead letter office. That gentleman was a member of Parliament, and must have been known to the authorities at the post office, but it was only discovered accidentally that there was a letter lying for him at the Post Office. He also wished to ask the hon. gentleman if he had considered a matter he brought under his notice lately in regard to the delivery of telegrams about the city and the suburbs. It seemed a monstrous thing that he should be able to send a telegram hundreds of miles for 1s., and yet it should cost 1s. 6d. to deliver one. Something ought to be paid for delivering telegrams in the suburbs, but 1s. 6d. was too much.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had no knowledge whatever as to the first matter referred to by the hon. member for Charters Towers, but, in regard to the second, the charge was 6d. for every half-mile radius from the Post Office, and he did not think 6d. was too much. He would have to consider the matter well before he altered it, and he had been so busy that he had not been able to inquire into some of those matters. The hon. member must remember that a great many boys in the office had horses, and if a charge were not made there would be a great loss to the department.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said they ought to go back to the old system of giving receipts for telegrams. At present the position was that a lad of no very great age or size would perhaps deliver a telegram to another small boy in an office—a merchant's office, or the office of a barrister like the hon. member for Charters Towers, for instance—and there was no receipt given. There used to be, and very properly, and the time of delivery was stated also. But that was done away with, and if a telegram went astray they would only have the conflicting testimony of those two lads. One would say he delivered it, and the other would say he did not receive it, and the telegram might be of very great importance. As a business man, he never could see why the system of giving receipts was abolished. It was a safeguard to the office, and a safeguard to the receiver.

Mr. BUCKLAND said that he went downstairs the other evening to send a telegram, and was informed that the office had been removed to the Belle Vue Hotel.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: It should never have been done.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he agreed with the hon. member, and he hoped that members would be again afforded the same facilities they had always enjoyed with regard to a telegraphic office in the building. There was also another matter to which he wished to refer. Persons receiving telegrams from other colonies used to be able to send "collect" telegrams in reply, but now all replies sent to the other colonies had to be prepaid. He did not think there was any loss to the department under the old system, and he hoped a return would be made to that system.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it was the rule of the department to only send prepaid telegrams to other colonies. With regard to the removal of the telegraph office from the Parliamentary building, it was only a convenience to

hon. members, and they were not put to any inconvenience by the change. There was hardly an hon. member who used to go downstairs to send a telegram; they usually sent a boy down with their messages, and very often there was the difficulty of the messenger having to go and get change.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I never sent one by a boy.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that he used to do so. Another thing: whilst the office was in the building it was used exclusively by members, whereas now it was at the Belle Vue Hotel it was used not only by hon. members but also by the general public; and it was paying now, whereas it was a dead loss before. Besides, the office was now guaranteed against any loss to the State. There was very little difficulty in sending a boy over to the Belle Vue, and the office there was a considerable convenience to people in that part of the city.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said the hon. member used the argument that the office at the Belle Vue paid. Of course it did, because it was open to the public, and there were many visitors at the hotel who used the office, and who would otherwise have to send their telegrams from the central office. If the office downstairs were reopened, and made available to the public, and a sufficient supply of change kept, it would have the same effect on the revenue as having the office at the Belle Vue Hotel. He did not believe in opening a telegraph office as a public office in an hotel. If arrangements were made to let public-houses have private telegraph offices, well and good; but he did not see why the Parliamentary telegraph office should be at the Belle Vue Hotel.

The Hon. A. RUTLEDGE said he could not congratulate the Postmaster-General on the change. He did not think there was a Legislature in the colonies that had not a telegraph office, and he did not see why hon. members should be required to go to the Belle Vue Hotel or any other place to send their telegrams. They might not be able to secure the necessary privacy; and, however respectfully conducted the hotel might be, the change was an invasion of the privileges of hon. members. They had a right to all the conveniences requisite for the efficient discharge of their duties as representatives of the people, and they should have a telegraph office on the premises; and he objected to the convenience of hon. members being made subsidiary to the convenience of any lodgers in any hotel, however respectable that hotel might be. Some succeeding Minister might think it better to have the office at "Lennon's" or the "Imperial," and then he supposed hon. members would have to go there to send their messages. The office should be in the Parliamentary Buildings. The argument that the old office did not pay might be applied to several telegraph offices in various districts; but it was not an argument that ought to be allowed a moment's consideration when it affected the privileges of hon. members.

Mr. ADAMS said he had met with some inconvenience before the office was shifted to the hotel. Frequently after the House had adjourned, he had been obliged to go out for change, but he had met with no inconvenience since the office was shifted. He always wrote his telegrams in that Chamber, and handed them to a boy to be despatched. He thought that the change was a vast convenience to a number of people. It was of no use for hon. members to talk of having to run about, because there were messengers paid to wait upon hon. members.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member seemed to have missed the point. The members of the Legislative Assembly, in common with the members of the Legislative Council, had certain privileges. One of those privileges was, that during the session there should be an office in the building for the use of members who wished to send telegrams to their constituents upon subjects which they did not want anybody else to know anything about.

Mr. ADAMS: Put them in an envelope.

Mr. GROOM said that was not the point. Hon. members had certain privileges, and those privileges should not be abridged. In the Victorian Parliament House there was not only a telegraph office for the convenience of hon. members, but also a post office, from which letters were taken to the members at frequent intervals. Here, on the other hand, as things were now, there was not the slightest convenience given to members for posting letters. Here, hon. members might write letters which it was most urgent should be speedily posted, and they had to be left to the messengers of the House to post, and they, instead of being in their place to attend on members, had to trudge down to the post office every day. It should be different, and the post office authorities should attend to it. In Sydney, the post office attended to the principal hotels, and sent round an officer three or four times a day, to empty the post boxes provided in the hotels. That matter had come before the Parliamentary Buildings Committee while he had the honour of being a member of it, and in the plans of the addition to the building they submitted, a post office and telegraph office was specially provided for hon. members. Those plans he believed were still in the possession of the Clerk of the Assembly; and in the new plans to be submitted he thought provision should be made for a post and telegraph office for members. If it was placed at the corner of the building fronting Alice and William streets, it could be utilised for the convenience of the public as well, and be, in fact, a branch post and telegraph office. In the suburban municipalities of Melbourne the town halls were utilised in that way. The Government utilised a number of public buildings in that way, and he found the plan worked well. In the municipality of North Melbourne, the police office, post office, telegraph office, and the offices of the municipal authorities were all in one block of buildings, the property of the municipality. As they had voted over £30,000 for additions to the Parliamentary buildings, he did not see why they could not make provision for a post and telegraph office at the corner of the building, which might also be utilised by the public. It was hardly in conformity with the dignity of hon. members that they should be asked to go to an hotel to hand in a telegram or to write a telegram. He went there once, but he would not go again, as he found some inquisitive individuals who were inclined to look over his shoulder, and in future he would have to go to the head office.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he concurred in the idea that provision should be made in the new building for a post and telegraph office, and the public should have the right of access to it also.

The Hon. A. RUTLEDGE: Why take away ours now?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the office they had in the middle of the building was inconvenient, and they could not let the public in there. The arrangement had not been satisfactory, as hon. members knew. He agreed also with the hon member for Toowoomba that there ought to be a post office within the building, or

rather that their letters should be taken from the building, not by the messengers belonging to the House, but by the post office authorities. It would be very much more convenient, and before next session he would see that some steps were taken in that direction, so that their letters might be regularly posted.

Mr. BARLOW asked if the hon. gentleman could give any information with regard to the telegraph office at North Ipswich. He understood that the officer who had been in charge there had been transferred to Allora, and he had been informed that morning that the office had been closed since Friday. There was another matter connected with the open-ended packets to which he would draw attention.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said they had been discussing that. It was quite true that the office at North Ipswich had been closed, and the operator had been sent to Allora.

Mr. GROOM said there was another matter in connection with those railway telegraph offices.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: I wish you would not bring that up this evening.

Mr. GROOM said he did not intend to bring on a discussion on the subject, but he had a word or two to say in regard to the railway telegraph offices being connected with the general telegraph offices. He did not know whether they were, but if they were not, they ought to be. It often occurred that passengers by the Southern and Western Railway on arriving at Helidon sent on telegrams to Toowoomba and arrived there themselves about two hours before the telegrams. That ought to be altered. He knew that the railway telegraph offices were a very great convenience indeed, and in fact it was through the medium of those offices that the intelligence connected with the death of the late Governor was conveyed to the Downs, and in the same way intelligence concerning the death of a gentleman who had lately died on the Downs at midnight was conveyed to Brisbane. The railway offices were, as he had said, a great convenience to the public, but their value to the public would be greatly increased if they were connected with the other offices. If, in the case he had mentioned, the office at Helidon was connected with the general office in Toowoomba a message sent from Helidon might be delivered in Toowoomba in a few minutes. That could be easily done, and without inconvenience to the department.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said his reason for asking the hon. member not to bring that matter up was, that considerable difficulty existed, as the two departments, in some respects, did not work as harmoniously as they should. On the particular matter mentioned by the hon. member, he could inform the Committee that the railway offices were connected with the general offices, but those in charge of the railway offices insisted upon their doing the work of the Railway Department first—and he dared say they were quite right in that—but there was often a good deal of delay on that account.

Mr. UNMACK said he had to refer to a matter affecting greatly the convenience and accommodation of the professional and commercial community. He referred to the fact that people should be able to obtain a receipt for a telegram sent where necessary. That could be easily done, and without the smallest expense to the department. Unfortunately he had become aware of various little peculations on the part of office boys. If a dishonest boy was trusted with a telegram to despatch he might simply tear it up and put the money in his pocket, and the sender would hear no more about it. He had heard of one case where, in consequence

of a telegram going astray in that way, the result was a loss of over £1,000, and he knew of other cases resulting in considerable loss. The remedy for it was simple. The telegraph office supplied a neat book of forms with butts and perforated slips, and particulars of the telegram—not the whole telegram—could be written on the butt and signed or stamped, just as deposit slips were stamped in the Savings Bank. That would answer all purposes, and any dishonest boy would be immediately found out in his malpractices. Unfortunately there were too many temptations offered to boys in town now, and he thought it was the right thing that he should refer to one form of temptation which ought never to be allowed by the authorities. He alluded to the numerous shops where totalisators or betting lists were opened at the trifling subscription of 1s. or 2s. 6d., on which boys who could not afford it were tempted to spend money, and possibly use money belonging to their employers. At any rate, he was of the opinion that in such a matter as that which he had referred to in connection with telegrams, some scheme such as initialling or stamping the butt of the telegrams by the receiving officer of the department should be adopted.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he would give an instance in point; showing the necessity of some such system. Some days ago a very important telegram dealing with a considerable number of bales of wool was sent to the office by his firm for transmission to Rockhampton. It was an instruction to send some wool down here by a sailing ship. The next he heard of that telegram was about half-past 11 o'clock on the Monday following, when a message was received from the Telegraph Department, stating that the telegram had been lost, and asking the firm to furnish a copy, so that it might be wired to Rockhampton. In the meantime the ship had left. A few days after that, within a week, they got 1s. 10d. in postage stamps returned to them, with the remark that the operator would be suitably dealt with. He never investigated what the "suitably dealt with" meant; probably it meant that the officer concerned would be charged with the 1s. 10d. Had the system suggested by the hon. member for Toowong been carried out, that case would never have occurred. The only thing that puzzled him (the Colonial Secretary) in the whole transaction was the Telegraph Department having admitted that they discovered the telegram was lost, because, as a rule, they sheltered themselves in every possible way.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the suggestion of the hon. member for Toowong was new to him, but it was one well worth consideration, and he would certainly give it careful consideration. There was one thing the Colonial Secretary did not give the department credit for in the case mentioned by him, and that was the system of checks by which they were able to discover the loss of the telegram. The one thing to be commended in the affair was the honesty of the officer concerned in the matter. If he had not been honest he (the Postmaster-General) would have had no hesitation in dismissing him.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said he would draw attention to the necessity of having clerks to transcribe telegrams who knew how to spell. It was very annoying, in addition to getting a telegram written in a villainous hand, evidently by somebody totally unaccustomed to writing, to find words misspelt. Careless people of that kind should not transcribe telegrams, but it was a matter of common occurrence. He would also like to have an assurance that the privilege of hon. members in having a telegraph office on the premises should be restored.

Mr. BUCKLAND said that the Postmaster-General, in speaking of the removal of the telegraph office over the way, stated that they could send a boy down with a message. He (Mr. Buckland) was in the habit of sending a good number of telegrams during the session, and he invariably wrote them in the telegraph office. He never trusted a telegram to a boy. The other evening when he went to the telegraph office over the way, he found, as the hon. member for Toowoomba stated, that anyone might look over his shoulder and see what he was writing, because the table was in the public passage. He hoped, therefore, that the Postmaster-General would assure the Committee that they would have that privilege restored to them. He would also ask the hon. gentleman what had been done with regard to a site for a post and telegraph office at Bulimba Ferry? The hon. gentleman had promised that he would secure a site for a building, and he would like to know whether that had been done. A promise was also made that a piece of land would be secured as soon as possible at Coorparoo, at or near the railway station. He hoped that also had been done.

Mr. GROOM said, in reference to the sending of telegrams, he might mention that the manager of the Singer Sewing Machine Company, at Toowoomba, came to him a few days ago and showed him a telegram sent from Charleville to Toowoomba, requesting that certain articles should be sent to Charleville by the afternoon train. The telegram was not delivered till five days after it was despatched. He did not know who was to blame in the matter, but he was surprised when he was told that the manager was informed by someone in the telegraph office that the message came to Brisbane, and had to be re-transmitted to Toowoomba. When the gentleman who sent the telegram from Charleville came to Toowoomba, he found that the telegram had not been received; and it did not arrive till two or three days afterwards.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that evidently that case was the result of gross carelessness. The message ought not to have been sent to Brisbane. He could not answer why any of those things occurred, but if they were brought under his notice he would deal severely with those who were to blame in the matter.

Mr. GANNON said he hoped that some arrangement would be made with reference to giving receipts for telegrams, and he was sure the business community would be very glad to see the proposed suggestion acted on.

Mr. PHILP said he did not like to make complaints against the telegraph office. He thought that the real cause of complaints was that the operators were overworked and underpaid. That was especially the case in the North. He knew of one instance where a man worked from 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning till 12 at night, and received a pittance of something like £120 or £130 a year. If the Committee were a little more liberal, and allowed a larger sum for the working of the telegraph office, he thought the department would be better conducted. He hoped receipts would be taken for telegrams delivered, and also receipts given at the office for telegrams sent in. In Sydney, about eighteen months ago, his firm found out that a system had been going on by which the boys receiving telegrams had put the money into their pockets, and the only way in which they could put a stop to that was by maintaining a private telegraph office and paying the operator. He thought the railway system might be adopted by the department, and that

ledger accounts might be kept, the different firms' telegrams to be paid for either weekly or monthly.

Mr. ANNEAR said he hoped the Postmaster-General would give some assurance that next session the telegraph office would be restored to the Parliamentary Buildings, instead of being placed in the Belle Vue Hotel. It was a matter of great convenience to hon. members to have a branch office in the building, and as to the expense, the officer was only there during the session and not when the House was not sitting in the morning. It was a disgrace that members should have to go to an hotel to execute their business. They were almost going back to the dark ages in pursuing such a practice. He sent away a large number of telegrams to his constituents and others, and had found the office in the building a great convenience. As to the question of change, he had never found any difficulty, as the operator was always willing to accept his IOU, or else the library messenger could obtain change. He thought the excuse given for removing the office was the most miserable one he had ever heard. It was useless for the Postmaster-General to talk about establishing a post and telegraph office when the additions to the building were completed. Hon. members wanted the telegraph office now. It was absurd to suppose that hon. members must go over to the hotel to deliver a telegram in a gale of wind, or when it was raining hard; and as to sending telegrams by a boy, many hon. members would not do that. As a rule, he had found the department most prompt and correct, and he hoped it would continue to be so, but he wished the Postmaster-General to give an assurance that the office would be restored to the buildings before next session.

The Hon. A. RUTLEDGE said the hon. gentleman must not think his administration was being found fault with. The hon. gentleman had the reputation of being a most capable administrator, but he had made a mistake in removing the branch telegraph office. It was a great indignity to put on hon. members to expect them to send telegrams from a public-house. It was the principle upon which he took his stand. The expense was a very small matter; and, as to the question of change, that could easily be remedied by the operator being supplied with a certain amount.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said, personally he thought he had taken the right step, but he was not going to run counter to the wishes of hon. members who had conscientious objections to going to an hotel to send telegrams, and he would take steps to restore the office to its original position.

Mr. BARLOW said he was sorry the North Ipswich Post and Telegraph Office was to be discontinued, because it was a great convenience to his constituents, and a good building had been put up for the purpose. He should be very glad if an arrangement could be made by which the staff of the South Ipswich office could attend to the North Ipswich branch. With regard to the prepayment of telegrams, hon. members were aware that in Melbourne telegrams could be prepaid by stamps, and he was going to suggest that the stamps might be cancelled in the offices of the sender, and that would prevent any possibility of fraud. As to bankers' pass-books, he was not going to speak in the interests of the banks, as they were quite able to take care of themselves; but as a lad, when a banker's clerk, he could remember that notes, remittances, and bank pass-books were sent about the country tied with tape and sealed. He considered it a great inconvenience that that was not allowed now. As to the North Ipswich Post and Telegraph

Office, he would again press upon the hon. gentleman the desirableness of continuing it, because to abolish it would be causing a serious inconvenience to the people in that locality.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the North Ipswich Post Office was only a mile and a-half from the central office, and if a branch was established so near to the central office it should pay some reasonable amount of the cost of its maintenance. He would read the takings for the different months during which it had been opened. In January, £3 3s. 6d.; February, £3 6s. 5d.; March, £2 4s. 2d.; April, £2 13s. 6d.; May, £2 10s. 9d.; June, £2 7s. 7d.; July, £3 0s. 6d.; August, £5 4s. 1d.; and September, £4 14s. 6d. The whole amount received from January to September was £29 5s., while the expenditure was £112 10s. Hon. members must admit that that loss was too great to be continued. If, as the hon. gentleman stated, the population of Ipswich was increasing in that direction, he should be very glad to re-establish the office as soon as the amount of business to be done demanded it. He always regretted having to close a telegraph office, because he knew it must result in some inconvenience to the public, especially if they had any great distance to travel to reach an office; but in this case the distance was not very great. The hon. member for Charters Towers had had a similar complaint to make about the closing of the office at Millchester; but he had shown that hon. member figures which satisfied him that the office there was being carried on at very great loss, the receipts from January to September amounting to £34 16s. 2d., and the expenditure to £100 11s. 9d. In the same way, at Drayton, the receipts for the same period amounted to only £10 15s. 6d., and the expenditure to £83 7s. 6d. Those were the only offices he had closed since he had had charge of the department, and he thought the Committee would agree with him that he had very good reasons for doing so.

Mr. McMASTER said he thought that when through gross carelessness in the Telegraph Department any person suffered loss, the Government should pay for it. He had sent a telegram from Fortitude Valley to Laidley not long ago ordering 100 bags of maize, knowing that the market was rising. That telegram was received at its destination three days after it was sent; in fact, a letter written afterwards was received before it. The result was that he had to pay 8d. per bushel more for the maize, and on inquiry he found that the fault was in the head Brisbane office, where the telegram had to be repeated. He was advised to report the matter, but as he thought that probably by so doing he might get the young man who committed the blunder the "sack," he did not do so. He thought in such cases as that the Government should recoup the loss incurred.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he trusted that any person who had any complaint to make respecting delay in transmission of telegrams would take the earliest opportunity of reporting it officially. He should inquire strictly into all such cases, and should unhesitatingly dismiss any officer found guilty of such gross carelessness as had been described.

Mr. McMASTER said he might explain that the case he had mentioned was previous to the administration of the hon. gentleman.

Mr. PALMER said, as a Northern member he was a good deal interested in the carrying of the mails by the Torres Straits route. He knew that the original contract with the British-India Company expired on the 10th February, 1889, but that as no notice had been given by either party to cancel the agreement it would not

terminate until February, 1890. He would therefore ask the Postmaster-General whether the Government had come to any decision with regard to the continuance of that service? He saw by the Postmaster-General's report that, allowing for detention at Aden, the average time by that route, between London to Brisbane, was 43 days 6 hours, while the average time by the Melbourne-Galle route was 39 days 11 hours, and by the Orient line 36 days 19 hours, a difference of about a week between the lesser and the greater number of days. He saw also by the same report that £1,500 had been paid in premiums for early arrivals by the Torres Straits route. The steamers of that line also lay for some time off Cooktown and other Northern ports, and he certainly thought that in view of the ever-increasing importance of the Northern portion of Queensland, the time had arrived when the service should be made a 12-knot service and a fortnightly one. He did not know whether the Government had entertained the proposal, but from the correspondence attached to the report to which he had referred, between the Agent-General, Sir James Garrick, and the Post Office authorities at home, it appeared that the colony was entitled to that concession. He should like to know from the Postmaster-General what the Government intended to do in the matter.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the present contract did not expire until February, 1890, and the Government had not yet considered whether they would continue the present service or make other arrangements. They had until February next to give notice to the contractors whether they would continue it or not. No doubt the service was rather slow. He thought that must be admitted by everybody. But it must be borne in mind that it was a great convenience to the people of the North, who got their mails much earlier by it than they would by either the Orient or the P. and O. Company. However, it was a big question, and one that the Government would take into careful consideration, and when they met the House next year they would probably be able to announce what arrangements they had come to with regard to the future ocean service of the colony.

Mr. BARLOW said he would suggest that the system of prepayment for telegrams by stamps would be a great convenience, not only in many parts of the colony, but also in North Ipswich if the office there was to be closed. By that system, which he believed prevailed in Victoria, postage stamps could be put in an envelope marked "telegram," posted in a pillar-box, and forwarded to the head office from whence the telegram would be transmitted. If the office at North Ipswich was to be closed, he thought they should have to ask the hon. gentleman to favour that locality with a few pillar-boxes.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the suggestion of the hon. gentleman with regard to sending telegrams by post was a very good one, and he would take it into consideration. He knew the system was in force down South, and he did not see why it should not be adopted here.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE asked the Postmaster-General whether the regulation sought to be enforced by the late Government with regard to "O.H.M.S." telegrams was being carried out? It had been found that that system was being abused to a very considerable extent, numerous messages being sent by wire which ought to be sent by letter, very much to the detriment of the general public. If that regulation were carried out probably the staff would be found sufficient for all requirements.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was not aware that the late Government took any steps towards preventing the abuse the hon. gentleman referred to. If they did, it must have been in Cabinet; because, so far as he knew, it had not gone any further. He quite agreed with the hon. gentleman that very great abuse was made of the system. He had seen a telegram sent by an Inspector of Police "O.H.M.S." which, if sent by any other person, he would have had to pay between 18s. and 19s. for. The whole of that telegram was on private business, not official; it related to his own comfort with regard to quarters. If the officer had had to pay for his telegram he would have reduced the number of his words very considerably. He (Mr. Donaldson) mentioned that, as he considered it a grave abuse of the O.H.M.S. system, and that the officer should pay for it; but the head of the Police Department did not think so, although if he could have had his way he would have insisted upon it. That was not the only case that had come under his notice. The abuse of the system would never be checked until there was an account kept between the different departments, when the heads of departments would make it their duty to find out how the expense had been incurred.

Mr. HODGKINSON said there were one or two departments where the nonsense sent in official telegrams would be well worth inquiring into, and if one or two of the officials were surcharged with them the abuse would be soon put an end to. But in the North, and especially in the mining districts, it was of the utmost importance that news from the head office should be sent by telegraph. Owing to the prevalence of floods at certain times of the year, the transmission of letters was often delayed for weeks, and even months. Especially in cases where the decision of a Minister was to be made known it should be made known by telegram.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he quite agreed that all public business, which required to be made promptly known, should be transmitted by telegraph. It was the abuse of the system by the sending of private messages that he complained of. In the North especially it would take a month to get an answer by post, and in such cases he had not the slightest objection to the use of the wire.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said the system was abused by officers who wanted furniture for their offices, or something else of that nature. They had got so habituated to using the wire that they at once resorted to it, instead of to the ordinary way of making their wants known.

Mr. UNMACK said there was only one way by which the extraordinary extravagance of some officers of the Government in that direction could be checked. During the inquiry into the Colonial Stores Department it transpired that the Telegraph Department supplied to the other departments of the Government £40,000 of telegrams during the year. If those telegrams were charged to the account of each department he was certain the sum would be reduced to at least £25,000. He did not see why the departments should be indulged in their extravagance. That was the only way to produce economy, and to ascertain exactly what each department cost the country annually. It was only a matter of book-keeping, and he trusted it would be seriously taken into consideration by the Postmaster-General.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he would remind the Postmaster-General that he had not yet replied to his question about the post offices at Coorparoo and Bulimba.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the hon. member was well aware of the steps he had taken in that matter.

Mr. COWLEY said he would call the hon. gentleman's attention to the desirability of allowing small bodies of settlers, who had no newspaper, and who only got a mail once a week, to receive telegrams of news at press rates. He knew of several such communities, some having, say, 120 persons, who would be glad to receive that concession. They wanted an agent in Brisbane to send them a budget of news once or twice a week, if they could get it at press rates.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that, although the hon. member had spoken to him on that subject a short time ago, it had escaped his attention, and he had not been able to consult with the officers of the department about it. It was not a thing to be done without consideration. Where there were communities such as the hon. member had referred to, it would no doubt be a very great convenience, provided it did not open the door to fraud. But the hon. member would see that it was a question not to be replied to without great consideration.

Mr. SAYERS said that, with regard to the mail contract which had been referred to by the hon. member for Carpentaria, the opinion of his constituents was that it was a very useful service, but they found great fault with its speed. He hoped that when the Government came to revise the conditions of the service they would insist on having a faster line of boats, and that, whatever vessels were employed, they should be bound to employ nothing but white labour. The people both in the North and in the South were very anxious on that question, and when the question came before the House it would be fought very hard. The country would not object to pay even a larger subsidy if the mail-boats employed crews of white men only. He believed it would be to the advantage of the company in a great many ways, as many people objected to go home by their boats on account of the coloured crews.

Mr. MURPHY: The Peninsular and Oriental Company have coloured crews.

Mr. SAYERS said he knew they had, but the Peninsular and Oriental Company had extraordinary accommodation on board their boats, which were not to be compared with the boats of the British-India Steam Navigation Company. He said, without fear of contradiction, that the voice of the country was against the employment of coolies on the mail steamers, and he believed that at the general election the question had been put to nearly every hon. member, whether he advocated the continuance of the service if it employed coloured labour? He hoped the Postmaster-General and the Government would take the fact into consideration, that the people of this colony were trying to do away with that labour, and wanted when tenders were called for another mail contract, to have a clause inserted in it stating that none but European crews should be employed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that he had already stated that it must be borne in mind that the contract had been made several years ago, and there had been improvements made since.

Mr. SAYERS: The service is of the past.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that there had not been much difference between the service and the Peninsular and Oriental service, and the Orient line; but those companies had improved several days since then. It was also to be borne in mind that when the contract had

been entered into it was thought to be a very good service, and a mercantile service as well as a mail service.

Mr. SAYERS: It is a good carrying service

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it was a combined service. It was a useful service in supplying the Northern ports as well as Brisbane, and it had been considered a good one, although rather slow. The Government, if they intended to discontinue that service, would have to give notice to the company in February next, and in that event they would have to consider the question very attentively. The question raised by the hon. member for Charters Towers, as to the employment of coloured crews, was one that would require consideration, and he thought that, probably, before next session the members of that Committee would have an opportunity of expressing an opinion upon it.

Mr. STEVENS said that in regard to what had fallen from the hon. member for Herbert, the suggestion was a really good one, and it would be a matter of no great difficulty to open up a way by which, in places where there were only weekly or fortnightly mails, several persons could associate for the purpose of getting telegrams on the leading topics of the day, and the Postmaster-General could very easily ascertain that they were *bonâ fide*. As a guarantee of good faith, the telegrams could be directed to the rural post office. He knew one country town in the interior which had had such a system. They formed a small association, but they had to pay full rates, and the scheme proved too expensive. He hoped the Postmaster-General would give the matter his consideration.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that there was a very simple way for small townships to get telegrams at a cheap rate. There were proper commercial channels through which to get press telegrams, but it was not the province of the Government to supply them. He had not risen to speak on that subject, so much as on the Torres Straits mail route. The discussion was rather premature, as it should be taken on a later item, on page 86, but as it had been raised, he would take advantage of it. There seemed to be some doubt—it might be only in his mind—as to whether the Government intended to continue the Torres Straits service, whether under the present conditions or fresh ones. The matter of speed was a simple matter of expense. That company had already shown that they were able to be in advance of their contract time every mail, and, no doubt, if their contract bound them to do so, they would be able to increase their average speed to anything that could be fairly demanded. He must say that the best feather in the cap of the present leader of the Government was the establishment of that mail route. Particularly to the North it had proved a great commercial feature, and he thought it might be just as deeply cherished by the whole of Queensland, because it made Torres Straits the portal through which all the trade of Europe would come to these shores, and he trusted that whatever the hon. gentleman in charge of the mail contracts might determine to do, and whatever alterations he might make in the terms of the contract, he would never for one moment contemplate the discontinuance of the Torres Straits route. There was no doubt that the project was a matter which had earned for Sir Thomas McIlwraith a great name in the North, and if the present Government wished to alienate any support they had in the North—and they had a considerable amount of support there—they could not do it better than by abolishing the present Torres Straits' route.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said that the discussion upon the mail contract should have come on when the item, conveyance of mails, was before the Committee. When that vote came on, they would have to discuss the matter all over again. He thought they should confine themselves to the Estimate under consideration. They might let that pass and get on to the others, on which he would like to say a few words.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said that as had been pointed out by the hon. gentleman, it would doubtless have been better to have spoken only upon the subject before them, but he had let it go on, and it had been taken up by other hon. members. The hon. gentleman was perfectly right in saying that they should have confined themselves to the Estimate now under consideration.

Mr. GLASSEY said he wished to revert to the closing of the North Ipswich Post Office, and to ask the Postmaster-General if he would give some information as to why the gentleman who had been in charge of that office, Mr. Gargett, had been removed from Fortitude Valley some two years ago? The Postmaster-General was a stranger in the office he knew, but he saw the Under Secretary in the gallery, and he wished to know something about that particular matter. He believed that was the third change which had taken place with respect to that gentleman in a short time. He believed the first change had taken place two years ago, when he had been asked to take a holiday, or something like it, at Southport. The man had been twenty-two and a-half years in the Postal Department when he was first removed, and he was a man of unblemished character and of undoubted ability, and a man who had always, he believed, given satisfaction in the department. After his holiday was over at Southport he was removed to North Ipswich. In the meantime, the new post office at Fortitude Valley was in course of erection, and a young gentleman, against whom he had not the slightest antipathy—also a man of ability, but a man who had been a much shorter time in the department than Mr. Gargett—was placed in the new building—in charge of the second post office in the colony. Mr. Gargett at that time had served eighteen and a-half years in the department. The gentleman who succeeded him appeared by the Estimates to receive in the shape of salary £160 a year, as savings bank officer £40, and also quarters valued at £40. By the way, he noticed there was a wonderful difference in the value of quarters—he saw that at Rockhampton the quarters were valued at £80. That made the salary of the postmaster in Fortitude Valley £240. While on page 67 of the schedule giving the amount of money received from various officers, he found Mr. Gargett down at £150 a salary—£10 below the gentleman in Fortitude Valley. He had quarters and light valued at £35, and £15 for taking charge of the savings bank. In all, he received £200, which was £40 less than the amount received by a man who possibly had not been more than half the time in the service that Mr. Gargett had.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the last removal that officer had was a promotion; he would receive a higher salary where he had gone to.

Mr. GLASSEY said he wished to know what was the cause of his removal in the first instance. Was he incompetent, or was there any charge brought against him?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he was sorry he could give the hon. member no information on the subject.

Mr. BARLOW said he would like to add his testimony to that of the hon. member for Bundamba concerning the satisfaction of the people of North Ipswich with the officer in question. He had some doubt about the wisdom of mentioning the names of any officers in the service in that Committee; but, as the hon. member had mentioned the subject, he would say that it would give him great pleasure to hear of Mr. Gargett's promotion.

Mr. GLASSEY said he had absolute confidence in the fairness of the Postmaster-General, but those were matters which occurred before the hon. gentleman took office; but it was only fair that the Committee and the country should know something about those changes and the cause of them. Mr. Gargett was a man with a family, and had been moved from post to pillar; and he considered that men with families should be considered before any removals were made. Another point he wished to mention was, that he saw the superintendent of mails received £550 a year salary and £50 for a horse. Did he keep a horse? and did he require one?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes; when on rounds of inspection.

Mr. GLASSEY said he doubted it very much, and would call for papers in regard to the matter.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he had received the reports of some inspections since he had been in the office.

Mr. GLASSEY said he observed that the letter-carriers and others who were bound to keep horses—and the Postmaster-General must excuse him for saying that the officer in question was not bound to keep a horse so far as his knowledge went—in order to discharge their daily duties received £40 only. Why were such distinctions made? One horse required almost as much feeding as another, and yet letter-carriers who had long rounds, and had to travel long distances over broken country, were obliged to keep good horses, and sometimes more than one, were only allowed £40. He supposed the reason was that one officer received £120 a year, and another received £550 a year.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he did not know the reason of it himself.

Mr. PHILP said there were twelve travelling mail officers at £150 each, and he wished to know where they were employed.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said they were all employed on the Southern and Western and Central lines with the exception of two, who would be employed on the Northern line.

Mr. PHILP said it was an unfair thing that the Southern and Western Railway should be provided with travelling mail officers, when there was not one provided for the Northern railways. A deputation waited upon the Postmaster-General some time ago in regard to the inconvenience of the trains running without travelling mail officers.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said two travelling mail officers had been appointed to the Northern line.

Mr. WATSON said there was a case he wished to draw the attention of the Postmaster-General to, and that was one which occurred at Rockhampton lately, where a young man named Robert Bulcock was tried for stealing a letter found in his pocket, and acquitted.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE: He was not tried.

Mr. WATSON said no true bill was filed against him. He hoped the Postmaster-General would give the person he had referred to his favourable consideration in the inquiry he

hoped he would make. He had known him for the last twenty-four years, and he came of a very respectable family in Fortitude Valley. At the time the letter was found, there were three coats hanging up, and it happened that the letter was found in Bulcock's coat. Before going to Rockhampton he was three years in the Brisbane office, and was much appreciated by those with whom he worked. He hoped the Postmaster-General would take the case into his favourable consideration. He did not believe the young man was guilty, because he had found that it was not in him to go and steal letters from the post office.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that Bulcock was dismissed under suspicious circumstances, but the late Attorney-General did not see his way to find a true bill against him. He had the case under inquiry, and in a few days hon. members would be very pleased to hear the result.

Mr. McMASTER said he had known the young man's parents for the last thirty-two years, and he knew that they were very respectable people. The hon. member for Barcoo laughed when the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. Watson, referred to young Bulcock's parents as very respectable people, as if there were no such people in the Valley. He believed that the young man had as good a character as any young man in Brisbane, and he thought the late Attorney-General could not have had much suspicion, or he would have found a true bill. He was satisfied that the young man was perfectly innocent; that there was jealousy in the Rockhampton office because he had been sent from the Brisbane office in the place of some person who was conducting himself in a very irregular manner. He believed the young man was wrongly dealt with, and he hoped that the Postmaster-General would see his way clear to reinstate him.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he trusted the case would not be debated further, because it was *sub judice*, and he was not able to state all he knew about the matter. He had no doubt that the result of the inquiry would be satisfactory to every hon. member.

Mr. GLASSEY said there was a gentleman down as an operator, who performed his duties in the post office—Mr. Alfred Wright. He was in receipt of £350 a year, as would be seen on page 119 in the Blue Book, and it was difficult to see why an operator should receive that salary, more especially when he did not do the work.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that Mr. Wright was the receiving officer in Brisbane, and had to deal with all the officers connected with the receipt and delivery of mails.

Mr. GLASSEY said he thought that answer was rather shaky. There was another gentleman down as mail officer, with a salary of £400 a year. There were two operators on the same page of the Blue Book, No. 119, at salaries £250 and £225 a year. There was a wide difference between them and an operator at £350. He wished to state distinctly that the gentleman who was called "receiver of mails" did not receive the mails. The mails were received and distributed by his subordinate officers, who received very inferior salaries. The time was coming when those matters would be probed to the bottom.

Question put and passed.

POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that £108,355 be granted for the service of the year 1888-9, for Post and Telegraph Offices. The Estimate for postmasters last year was £5,260 and the present estimate was £6,070, there being one additional postmaster at £250, one at £200,

and two at £180. The vote for managers last year was £17,865, and the present Estimate was £18,085. In 1887 the amount required for operators was £31,690, and the amount now asked for was £34,030. Last year the sum of £8,880 was required for line-repairers in charge, and now the sum of £9,360 was wanted in consequence of the appointment of three new officers at £160 each. For travelling mail offices the vote in 1887-8 was £1,500, and for the present year £1,800 was required; the appointment of two additional officers on the Northern Railway accounting for the increase of £300. Then there was an additional line-repairer at £120, making up the total of £9,010 as against £8,890 for last year. There was an increase in the number of messengers, making an increase in the vote of £4,840 required for 1888-9, as against £3,812 in 1887-8, making an increase of £1,028, and a total increase on the vote of £5,298.

Mr. HODGKINSON said there were some extraordinary items in the schedule attached to that vote. If they looked at page 63 of the schedule, they would find under "Georgetown" the total salary of the manager was £385, but amongst the items making up that amount was the item "Allowance to cover extra cost of provisions, £60." Then the line-repairer, whose appetite one would think would be fully equal to the postmaster's, and, in fact, rather in excess of the postmaster's, as he had a good deal more exercise, was only allowed £30 to cover extra cost of provisions. Then, again, at the Gilbert River, where there was no manager, the line-repairer in charge was allowed £40 to cover the extra cost of provisions, but the unhappy labourer, for the protection of the station, only got £25 as his allowance to cover the extra cost of provisions to appease his appetite. It would appear that the men who had to undergo the greatest hardship and the greatest physical toil were allowed less to eat than the man whose occupation was sedentary. On what principle were those Estimates framed? On what grounds could they be defended? Could they be defended at all, or were they only put down haphazard? There should be an officer of the department present to give the information which hon. members required. The hon. gentleman was himself at all times most courteous, but he had that evening to tell a member of that Committee that he could not give him the information he asked for. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) had a list of extraordinary things before him in connection with the department, for which no reason whatever could be given that he saw. He could not understand any reason or arguments that could be advanced to show why the allowance to cover extra cost of provisions should be £45 for one man, £25 for another, and £60 for a third. Were the capacities of those men for food gauged before they entered the department, or on what principle—or was there any principle on which the allowance was made?

Mr. GLASSEY said, of course there was a principle—and it was the one that ran right through the Estimates—that was, that those who were highly paid, and did very little work, got more than a fair share of allowance, while those who were paid poor salaries got more work to do and had only about one-half the allowance granted to those who were paid high salaries. He saw there were seventy-four sorters and letter-carriers receiving from £100 to £140 a year. He had no hesitation in saying that among the hardest-worked men in the colony were those letter-carriers, and some of them were doing that drudging work for a paltry sum of £100 a year.

Mr. SAYERS said he would like to call the attention of the Postmaster-General to the fact that the postmaster at Queenton was not allowed anything for quarters. Rents up there were very high, and a man could not get any sort of a house that was fit to live in under 15s. or £1 a week, and that officer only received £170 a year. He contrasted that man's case with the case of messengers in the Government department down here, who were voted as much as £70 and £80 allowance for quarters. The officer he referred to was kept in his office from 6 o'clock in the morning until 11 o'clock at night to receive mails, and he was only allowed £170 a year (of which £10 was paid by the Railway Department), and received no allowance for quarters. He had to pay for his quarters, and to furnish them, getting only £170 a year. The chances were, that a man in that position would be in debt when he got into the service of the department; he would hardly be able to get out of it. The salary paid to such an officer need not be a very high one, but it should correspond with the important duties of the position, and be sufficient to put no temptation to be dishonest in the man's way.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he was quite sure that if the hon. gentleman had an opportunity of looking through the details of the Estimate, and the inconsistencies in it, he would be as surprised as he was. He would read the hon. member a few more of the inconsistencies in the Estimate. The forage allowance, for instance, was the same, no matter in what part of the colony it was required. Whether in the extreme North, where maize ranged from 15s. to 30s. a bushel, or at Leyburn, close to an agricultural district, the allowance was exactly the same. An officer at Georgetown, Normanton or Gilberton got exactly the same allowance for forage as a man down here, where a horse could be bought for half the money, and forage for one-third of the money, it would cost in the North. Then, again, the manager at McDonnell received £80 allowance to cover extra cost of provisions, while the line repairer was only allowed £40. Could the hon. gentleman give any explanation of those differences? Was there any basis upon which the Estimates were framed? There did not appear to be any system. The delightful inconsistency of men in the same places and under the same circumstances drawing different allowances was enough to puzzle any man.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he regretted extremely that the hon. gentleman, when in office, did not give some advice to his colleagues about that matter, as it was his duty to have done, seeing that he possessed such information. He (the Postmaster-General) had framed those Estimates exactly as he found them. However, with regard to the questions asked by the hon. member, he might state that there had been a difficulty in some places in getting rations.

Mr. HODGKINSON: There is a difference in allowances at the same places.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said the head men might be married men.

Mr. HODGKINSON: So might the line repairers.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said line repairers were not, because married men were not sent out to those places as line repairers. Line repairers in charge might be married men, but that was a different matter. With regard to the grants for forage, very few complaints had been made about them, because it did not very frequently happen that line repairers had to pay for forage, as they generally kept a couple of horses, and turned them out in a paddock, using

them turn about. He believed it would take the whole of the money they received to feed their horses in a bad season like the present, but he was assured that usually it did not take anything like that amount, and the men actually made money out of their allowance for forage.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he hoped it would not be thought he was pointing out those inconsistencies because the hon. gentleman happened to have the unpleasant function of bringing those Estimates before the Committee. He would do the same if they were framed by his dearest friend. He knew that heavy charges were imposed upon the time of the hon. gentleman, especially from the complications that must arise when the leader of the Government was unfortunately so unwell—a circumstance they all regretted very much—and he simply pointed out the inconsistencies, knowing that the hon. gentleman would be as surprised as himself when he came to look into the matter. There was no system whatever in the way that allowances for forage were made, or they would not find a man at Leyburn receiving the same as a man at Normanton. In the extreme North repairers also ran the risk of having their horses killed by the blacks. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) had had such cases brought under his notice, and had tried to get the men an additional allowance, but had been met with the stereotyped reply that it was against the rule of the department, and if that request was granted they would have similar applications from other officers. There was no defensible system for those allowances. He had found those discrepancies to which he had referred after a brief glance at the Estimates that evening, and he had no doubt that if he had devoted his attention to the matter he could have found a thousand more.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said if those apparent discrepancies were carefully looked into they would be found to be more imaginary than real. As he had said before, it did not happen frequently that line repairers had to pay for feed for their horses; in fact, they often bought their horses out of their allowance. He probably had as much knowledge of the interior as any member of the Committee, and he never knew line repairers to pay 1s. for forage in that part of the colony. With regard to the remarks about blacks killing the horses of line repairers, he had heard of no such circumstances. But he could inform hon. members that some of the most pleasant letters he had received since he had been in the department had been letters received from a couple of stations in the North, where the men had fenced in their places and made paddocks for their horses in their leisure time and had not asked for any allowance. It was a real pleasure to him to learn that they had made their homes so comfortable in those far out places of the world.

Mr. GLASSEY said he had not yet received a reply as to the number of sorters and letter carriers who were receiving £100, and how many were receiving £140? The Postmaster-General said he had not received complaints from any persons with respect to forage. He was very sorry to have to make complaints.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: You need not be sorry so long as I am in the office.

Mr. GLASSEY said he was very glad to hear that, because where there was legitimate cause of complaint, the complaint should be heard with respect and properly investigated, no matter how humble might be the officer concerned. Those sorters and letter carriers had to be very attentive to duty, respectful, and intelligent, and he would ask the hon. gentleman if he

would kindly take the first opportunity of going among those men and ascertaining the duties they had to perform, the amount of work they had to do, and the miserable salaries they received. If he did he would probably come down next session and give them substantial increases in their salaries.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he regretted that he was not able to put any increases on that Estimate for the present year. It arose entirely from the financial position of the colony. He might take the hon. member a little further into his confidence and tell him that originally he framed the Estimates with substantial increases, but had afterwards to take off those increases. With respect to the sorters and letters carriers, there were thirty-five receiving £140 a year, five received £130, four £120, ten £110, and sixteen £100.

Mr. SAYERS asked if the Postmaster-General would take into consideration the advisableness of opening a savings bank at Queenston?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. SAYERS said that it would be a great advantage to the people who, when they came to town by railway, often found the banks closed when they arrived.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he would not have the slightest objection.

Mr. SAYERS said he would ask if the Postmaster-General had received any communication from the mail contractor in reference to an allowance being made for carrying the mails between Townsville and Herget station? He had asked for an increase of £35.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that whenever a route like that was ordered an allowance was made. He had had to deal with similar cases.

Mr. SMYTH said he had a grievance against the department. Letters arriving at the General Post Office addressed to members, on which there was anything to pay, were allowed to be there sometimes for a fortnight. A great many members had the same complaint to make. Letters should be sent to the House and charged against the House or against members. If he stayed at an hotel, letters were brought there, and if there was anything to pay on them of course they were not left until the money was paid. He would suggest that the boy who was sent for the letters should be made an officer of the department, so that he might be under control. It was a great inconvenience to have letters delayed in the way they had been from time to time.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said no one regretted the circumstance more than he did when he heard that hon. members' letters were detained, but while the post office had a great many sins to answer for, that was not a charge that could fairly be brought against it, inasmuch as the letters were addressed to the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly had a box like a private firm, and when letters arrived on which there was anything to pay, a card was put in the box showing the amount owing. That had been done in the usual way, but there must have been some neglect on the part of the boy who had charge of the box. He could not have given the information to members that letters were lying at the post office for them. The facts were not known to him (Mr. Donaldson) or to the post office authorities. The man who had charge of the boxes in the post office was responsible for the money owing on letters, but, in fairness to the department, it must be said that they were not responsible for the delay. He hoped to take steps to prevent a recurrence of what the hon. member complained.

Mr. MURPHY said, while on that matter, he would draw attention to the fact that telegrams sent from the hotel opposite were stamped with "Belle Vue Hotel." The consequence was that correspondents to whom the telegrams were sent addressed replied to the Belle Vue Hotel, and he was informed that evening that there were letters and telegrams lying there for him now. Of course his correspondents had sent them there seeing the telegrams stamped "Belle Vue Hotel." He hoped the Postmaster-General would put an end to that.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: That will soon be stopped.

Mr. HODGKINSON said, referring to his previous remarks about cost of forage and rations, he would ask the Postmaster-General to look at the allowances made at Normanton, where all officers were in the same position. He was quite content to leave the matter to the sense of justice of the hon. gentleman.

Question put and passed.

CONVEYANCE OF MAILS.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that there be granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1888-9, a sum not exceeding £162,200 for the conveyance of mails. The vote was £400 less than last year, and did not require to be discussed, as hon. members had referred to most matters in the preceding votes.

Mr. SMITH said he saw an item of £55,000 for "Mail Service, *via* Torres Straits." That was the time to speak about the service, and he trusted when the matter was considered the Government would be very careful in dealing with the service. He thought it was about the cheapest bargain the colony had ever made, and it had done more for the progress of the colony than anything he knew of. The speed of the mail steamers might be increased, but he hoped the Government would not discontinue the service.

Mr. MURPHY said there was no doubt that when the McIlwraith Government contracted with the British-India Company for the Torres Straits mail service they did a great benefit to Queensland. Although that contract was strongly opposed by hon. members opposite, still he thought they would now admit that it was a very wise step indeed. But the time had now arrived when that very British-India Company was becoming a very great danger to this colony. They were establishing a huge monopoly here, which, instead of being an advantage to the colony was becoming more and more a danger to their producing interests. Any person who had read the history of the British-India Company knew well the monopoly they had established in British India, and the injustice that was meted out by that company to its customers. At a port where there was competition they would lower their freights to such an extent as to drive that competition away. At other ports, where competing steamers did not touch, they would make up the whole of the losses incurred at competing ports by the heavy freights they imposed. That had been going on in British India for years. That company was hated throughout the length and breadth of that land. The Minister for Railways might laugh, but he (Mr. Murphy) was stating what was an absolute fact—a fact brought under his notice some time ago when he was in India. In fact, officers of that company had told him stories that were almost incredible about the way in which they treated the different ports in India. That company was gradually creeping in here, and the people of the colony would soon find them as huge a monopoly as they were in India. He therefore warned the Government about granting any more subsidies

to that company. At all events, they should call for tenders for their mail contract, and not limit it to Torres Straits. There was no fear now that the Torres Straits carrying trade would be discontinued. It was quite sufficient to keep a line of steamers on our coast, and there need be no fear that the British-India Company would withdraw from that trade. Whether they got the mail contract or not, there they were fixed, and if the Government were not careful they would become an incubus that it would be very hard to get rid of. If the Government called for tenders, it might be that they would have Brisbane made the final port of call for the Orient and the Peninsular and Oriental Company's boats. He rose solely for the purpose of impressing on the Government the fact of the great danger that was springing up in connection with that monopoly, and the necessity of counteracting it, by calling for tenders for their mail service. He was sure that if they did so some of the other great carrying companies would tender for it.

Mr. UNMACK said he was very glad to be able, for once, to agree with the hon. member for Barcoo, who had really expressed himself in a manner which was highly creditable to him, and which would be endorsed by very many of the thinking part of the community. There was one thing, however, in which he was mistaken. The colony had no dealings with the British-India Company, but with an association calling themselves "The British-India Association."

Mr. MURPHY: It's the same thing.

Mr. UNMACK said he believed that really they were the same men; still it was not really the British-India Company. He was not going into the matter at length, because he had referred to it on the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech. He only wanted to express his hope that the Government would take the question in hand at an early date, so that they might call for tenders, and be able to lay them before the House next session, in order that hon. members might have an opportunity of expressing their opinions upon them. He was certain that if tenders were called, many advantageous offers would be made. The more competition they had in a matter of that sort, the better for the country. As the hon. member for Barcoo had said, there was not the slightest fear of the British-India Association relinquishing the Queensland trade, which had become a very profitable one to them. The very fact that they were going in for larger boats, and a larger fleet, was sufficient proof that it paid them. Certainly, they had received a handsome subsidy—between £60,000 and £70,000—for the last eight or nine years, and ought now to be able to stand upon their own resources without any subsidy. Still he would have no objection to grant them the contract, provided it was gained by open competition. If tenders were called for he did not care whether that company or any other got the contract. He was sure that if the Government did call for tenders they would get plenty of competition, and he hoped they would give timely notice through the Agent-General, so that when the House met next session the tenders would be before hon. members, and they could select which they considered the best in the interests of the colony.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was very glad the hon. member for Barcoo had raised that question, and he hoped the Government were not going to nurse that monopoly—the British-India Company—any longer. It was a monopoly and nothing else. Not satisfied with being a carrying company, subsidised by the Government, they must enter into competition with people trading on our coast by carrying and tendering to supply coal from Brisbane to our Northern ports. What

benefit did Brisbane receive from that company? None at all. On the contrary, it was a great injury to Brisbane.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. ANNEAR said it was an injury to Brisbane. What benefit was it to Brisbane to have those vessels coming here compared with vessels that had white sailors? The Lascar sailors employed on those boats spent no money amongst the people of Brisbane. He would give an instance. Put a British ship alongside the wharf on a Sunday, and a British-India boat alongside it. If a British sailor was found going on shore with contraband goods in his possession he would be at once arrested by a Customs-house officer, but the men belonging to the ships of the British-India boats were selling contraband goods every Sunday in Brisbane. He contended that the £60,000 subsidy to that company was for the benefit of the North alone. It resulted in no good, but in injury to Brisbane, and he hoped the Government would stop it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Stop it at Townsville.

Mr. ANNEAR said if they did stop it at Townsville, or any other port they should treat the company in the same way as they treated other companies—Howard Smith's Company—or sailing ships coming here. The British-India boats paid no light dues, no harbour dues, no pilotage—in fact it possessed a monopoly not enjoyed by any other company in the colony. He sincerely hoped the Government would call for tenders, and perhaps it might result in the Orient Company, with its steamers manned by white crews, making Brisbane their terminus. He believed that one boat like the "Orizaba" spent more money in Sydney in one week than all the ships of the British-India Company spent in Queensland in one month. They did not even buy their coal in Queensland; a large proportion of it was sent up from Newcastle, and taken on board on the coast. If the Government wished to retain the good feeling of a large majority of the people, they would prevent the British-India Company from continuing its monopoly.

Mr. LISSNER said the Torres Straits mail service had proved a great boon not only to the North, but to Brisbane. Brisbane was not much known until those steamers made their terminus at Brisbane. As to the allegation of the hon. member for Maryborough that £60,000 a year was spent for the North, he begged to deny it. He hoped that fair play would be given to the North as well as to Brisbane, and that could only be done by continuing a mail service through Torres Straits. As to the British-India Steam Navigation Company getting their coals from Newcastle, it was very well known that they had entered into a contract for 120,000 tons of coal from Ipswich. Perhaps the hon. member would like the company to have got their coals from Burrum; but unfortunately the geographical position of Burrum did not suit. He did not say the country should accept a contract without competition; but the British-India Company were getting quite as civilised as the other great ocean steamship companies, and were already putting on larger and faster vessels; and if the Government insisted upon it they could give as quick a service as the Peninsular and Oriental Company, or the Orient Company, neither of which companies, he was certain, would ever come through Torres Straits. He trusted the Government would consider the matter fairly for both North and South, and give the North that consideration which it deserved at their hands or those of any other Government.

Mr. WATSON said that if ever there was a good action done to the North, it was the

establishment of the British-India service. Previous to that, all the goods in the North were supplied from Melbourne to Sydney, from Sydney to Brisbane, and from Brisbane to the various ports on the coast; and the goods themselves were often the refuse of Great Britain. Under the new arrangement the North received the first-fruits of great freetrade England, and goods found their way to the Northern ports six weeks, occasionally, before they reached Brisbane. The British-India mail service had been a distinct benefit to the North. It had not been such a great benefit to Brisbane. Four or five years ago there were to be seen in Brisbane barques of from 500 to 1,200 tons, with an average of thirty men in each—Englishmen, who spent a considerable portion of their earnings in Brisbane. What did they see at present? For twelve white sailors who came ashore now to spend their money there were 600 in those days, and the country was overrun with Cingalese and others selling contraband goods. There were few of those fine young seamen coming to the port now, because the trade of the sailing vessels had been absorbed by the British-India Company's steamers.

Mr. DRAKE said he should be glad if the Postmaster-General would give the Committee an assurance that the Government would not enter into any other ocean mail contract until the House had had an opportunity of considering the tenders that might be sent in for that purpose? He should like to express an opinion on the matter before any decision was come to, and if such an assurance were given the present discussion might very well be postponed until that time.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said it was not possible for the Government to give such an assurance as that, because the matter would have first to be considered. The Government were quite willing to take the responsibility of their actions. He might say that he had consulted with the Premier upon the subject, and it would receive their most careful consideration. He had not the slightest doubt that the Government would act in such a way as to meet with the approval of the Committee. He would venture to say that there would be no renewal of the contract until the meeting of Parliament next session, but further information should not be asked of him, so that there would be ample opportunity of discussing the matter. Hon. members could not expect the assurance that any tenders which might be received would be submitted to Parliament. In any case, the Government would take the responsibility of their actions, if they called for tenders. That was a big question, and it was one which would receive the due consideration of the Government. Speaking for himself, he must say that no one was more opposed to a monopoly than he was. He had not the slightest sympathy with monopolies, but the matter might very well be left in the hands of the Government.

Mr. HODGKINSON said the Government would have to give notice to the British-India Steam Navigation Company. They had been told that next session would begin about May, and the Government must give notice to the British-India Steam Navigation Company in February next, if they intended to discontinue that service, as the company was entitled to twelve months' notice. If the Government allowed next February to pass they would have to continue the service for another twelve months. He was quite prepared to leave the broad question of the Torres Straits route in the hands of the Government, for he would not look upon the tenure of any Government, however it might be formed, as likely to be very firm if

once they put an end to the direct communication with Great Britain through Torres Straits. However divided the Northern members might be upon some subjects, they would be united on that point.

Mr. DRAKE said he did not wish it to be understood that he was opposed to the Torres Straits mail route. He thought great good had resulted from the initiation of that route, and whatever service they might have in the future, he hoped they would have a line of steamers travelling by that route; but he thought there was one important question for the Government to consider in calling for tenders, and that was to make it an absolute condition that the ships should be manned with white crews. The feeling of the country was very strong in that direction, and it certainly would not be advisable to make a contract with any company whose vessels were manned by coloured crews.

Mr. GLASSEY said that he had gathered from the remarks of the hon. gentleman that Parliament would meet in May next. Was it not possible for the Government to call Parliament together earlier than that, so as to let the country know whether they intended to renew the contract before the colony was committed to it? He thought Parliament should be consulted upon that particular question, as it involved the labour question. He sincerely hoped that, with a view of stimulating their local coal industry, they should consider whether any company carrying their mails, and which was subsidised with their money, ought not to burn their coals. As the hon. member for Enoggera had stated, they should have white men to man their ships.

Mr. MURPHY said there was one thing he would like to point out to hon. gentlemen who were arguing in favour of white crews. Although he was strongly in favour of white crews in the ships, they must realise the effect of the vessels trading with white crews. If they forced those steamers to carry white crews, they would have the Messageries ships coming here, and carrying goods at a less freight than the colony's mail steamers could afford, and they would thus have the whole trade of the colony carried in foreign ships, manned by coloured crews. Those vessels would carry at less freight than their own British vessels, unless they subsidised them to such an extent as to make it profitable for them to carry white crews and goods at the same rate as those other foreign vessels carrying black crews. It was a question that had to be looked into, as they did not wish to see foreign lines of vessels, carrying coolie crews, cutting out their mail company.

Mr. MORGAN: You are subsidising one now, but not the others.

Mr. MURPHY said they must remember that the foreign companies were subsidised by their Governments at a much higher rate than the colony subsidised its line. The Messageries line and the North German Lloyd's both received a very much larger subsidy for carrying mails than the British-India Steam Navigation Company.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: £10,000 a month.

Mr. MURPHY said the effect of what the hon. gentlemen on the other side proposed would be that the Messageries and the North German Lloyd's would get all the trade, although they carried coolie crews, and British ships would be driven out of the trade altogether.

Mr. HODGKINSON: The North German Lloyd's carry European crews.

Mr. MURPHY said they carried coolie crews, and the Messageries line carried coolie crews also.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY : The North German Lloyd's carry white crews.

Mr. MURPHY said the hon. gentleman informed him that the North German Lloyd's carried white men. He had been on board of some of their vessels, and he knew that, at all events, they carried coolie firemen; that he was sure of. Nearly all the vessels going through the Red Sea trading with the East, except the Orient Company, carried coolie crews.

Mr. GROOM: The Peninsular and Oriental Company have promised to do the same.

Mr. MURPHY: So far as Australia is concerned, they have not agreed to it.

Mr. GROOM: According to the latest telegrams, they have agreed to do the same.

Mr. MURPHY said so much the better. He only hoped they would all follow the same course and have white crews; but in studying the matter they had to study it from all points of view, and not rush hastily into it. They should not put a ban upon any line of steamers carrying coolie crews unless they were prepared to pay very heavily for it. Of course the Government, in looking at the matter, had to look at it from all points of view. He was not at all hostile to the Torres Straits route; he was only pointing out the danger of the Government lending themselves to the creation of a huge monopoly. He knew the benefit that route had been to the North, and, speaking as a shipper from Rockhampton, it would be a great loss if they were to lose the British-India steamers, or if they lost the Torres Straits route; but at the present moment there were thousands of bales of wool lying at the Central ports which the British-India Company could not take away, and the effect of the monopoly was that all sailing vessels had ceased to come to those ports, and there were no means of getting their produce away at all. In fact the steamers could not take a great deal of the wool away for some months to come, and what they were taking away they were taking away at an enormous freight—a freight equal to 15 per cent. upon the total value of the produce they took away. Of course he was interested in that matter, because he was one of the sufferers by it, and that was how those things were brought home to them most nearly. He wished to show the great danger there was of that company becoming a huge monopoly. It had become a monopoly already, but it might become more so. It was only feeling its way at present. It was only beginning to stretch out feelers in all directions, and would buy up one company after another, and the colony would find those feelers round them like an octopus before long, which would strangle all its interests. The Government would have to be careful how they dealt with that company. They were paying them £55,000 a year for the conveyance of mails, and that was not all they paid. They had to pay £23,000 for the conveyance of mails in other ways, and he hoped the Government would have no consideration whatever for the British-India Company, but would call for tenders in England, giving time if necessary to another company to build ships for that special trade. That was done in a great many other ocean contracts, and he was sure that if the Government called for tenders from the whole world they would soon have another line through Torres Straits competing with the British-India Company and breaking up the present monopoly.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he had no doubt that public sentiment would demand that coloured crews should be done away with. It was a great question with judges which were the most economical, taking into consideration the question of

insurance, and other matters. He knew the North German Lloyd's were employing white crews, for the reason that it was an important condition of their receiving a subsidy from the German Government that white crews should be employed, because one of the great objects of federated Germany was to build up a naval power. Behind the question of money, which was not the be-all and end-all of existence, there was the question of nationality, and making the crews reliable in the moment of national disaster, leaving alone the higher question—the text of all Australians—that was, that Australia was a white man's country. He quite agreed with every word that had been spoken by the hon. member for Barcoo about the danger of a monopoly by the British-India Company. That hon. member was evidently acquainted with the subject, and he would corroborate every word he said. One of the great things which helped to make that monopoly was the employment of coloured labour. If they were compelled to employ only white labour, that monopoly would soon cease. They were able to do their own loading in the Northern ports, and were able to drive every competitor from the field. Of course it was not advocated by any member of the Committee that the British-India Company should have a monopoly; all that was asked by the Northern members was that it should be recognised by the Government that the Torres Straits route was the one essential to the prosperity of the colony. They could make what other conditions they liked, and the first should be to debar the employment of coloured labour under any circumstances, and, with that restriction, throw open the contract to the world.

Mr. MURPHY said he did not wish the Committee to think that he was in favour of coloured labour in any way; but he was only pointing out that there were other things to be looked at about the question than the employment of coloured labour. He was afraid that they might throw the trade open to foreign vessels instead of into the hands of British people. He was distinctly in favour of having ships manned by British sailors. He would sooner sail in a ship manned by British sailors than in a ship manned by Lascars. Then there was another thing. If they called for tenders, and insisted upon the employment of British sailors, they would be sure to have a company to compete with the British-India Company.

Mr. GLASSEY said it might strengthen the hands of the Committee to know that a very large number of Southern members were favourable to the Torres Straits route. He himself should certainly favour the Torres Straits route, although he represented a Southern constituency. It had been a very great boon to the colony, particularly to the North. But on the question of coloured labour he and others would fight to the end, and if it were continued, there would be the greatest storm ever witnessed in the colony.

Mr. SMYTH said they might not have heard so much about coloured labour had it not been for that so-called trades unionism. They had had a great deal to do with it, and the unions had been great tyrants in the colony lately. They killed the old Australasian Steam Navigation Company, who employed nothing but white labour—cooks, stewards, and everybody else. They drove out the company that was competing. If they went in for white labour upon steamers it would be a very awkward question where to draw the line. They hardly ever saw white cooks. They were either Africans or coloured men of some sort; white men would not take the billet. He would be glad to see white sailors on board of those ships,

so that in case of war they could call them in to assist. No one was in favour of coloured labour. Shipowners had been treated in a most tyrannical manner, and poor persons and widows who had small amounts of money invested in the Australasian Steam Navigation Company lost all they had through the operations of that tyrannical organisation.

Mr. PHILP said he must protest against the assertions made by the Southern members, who talked about making Brisbane the terminus of a line *via* Sydney. Any line which did not come *via* Torres Straits would be strenuously opposed by all Northern members. No doubt the present service had done a great deal of good to the Northern part of the colony. It was now using some 4,000 tons of Brisbane coal every week, and that was not because Newcastle coal could not be obtained. Queensland only imported 16,000 tons of coal last year, and that went to the Northern ports for the gas companies there. In his opinion the question of black and white labour should not have cropped up in the debate; and it would not cost less to employ white men on steamers than black men. The Orient Company and German Lloyd's were now running regularly to the other colonies with white crews.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he might state, on behalf of the Government, that they had no intention of accepting any tender dealing with any mail service for the benefit of Queensland that did not come through Torres Straits.

Mr. SAYERS said he would have liked to hear the Colonial Secretary say, at the same time, that the Government would deal with no company that did not employ white seamen.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he thought the hon. member would see the inexpediency of asking such a question at the present time.

Mr. PHILP said that if the Postmaster-General called for tenders for ships manned by British seamen only he would not get a single company to tender. All the sailing vessels, and nearly all the steamers, coming to the colony were manned by Norwegians and Swedes.

Question put and passed.

MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that £63,584 be granted for the service of the year, 1888-9, for Miscellaneous Services. The increase of £2,000 in the first item was not only on account of the increase in the number of offices, but also on account of the increased business, which justified increases in salaries in many offices. For repairs to buildings, furniture, and fittings, another £1,000 was required. Many post offices, especially in the country districts, were very much in need of repairs. For mail bags, uniforms, forage, and incidentals an additional £1,500 was required, because last year the amount asked for did not cover the expenditure. The £1,000 for advertising was the same as last year. The vote for instruments and batteries was £10,000, as against £6,000 last year, owing to the increased number of instruments required. Nearly all the items had been discussed during the evening in connection with the votes.

Mr. GLASSEY said that some time ago he drew the attention of the Postmaster-General to the necessity for better postal facilities at Bundamba, and he must say he was disappointed at the reply he received. Probably the demands were excessive, but the district was entitled to some consideration, and if the department had met the people of the district in a reasonable manner, they might have abandoned some of

their demands. What they asked for, was a central office at Bundamba, with a money-order office attached, and a daily delivery to the various villages in the district. Since then he had gone fully into the matter and taken the number of houses in the various townships surrounding Bundamba proper, and he found that at Blackstone there were 86 houses; at Silkstone, 86 houses; at Booval, 66 houses; at Bundamba proper, 92 houses; between Bundamba and Dinmore, 16 houses; at Dinmore proper, 31 houses; at New Chum Colliery, 35 houses and 8 tents; at Dinmore Pottery, 17 houses. The total number of houses was 463, and there was in those townships a population of 2,266 persons. The district was a growing one, and the people ought to have better postal facilities, therefore he hoped the Postmaster-General would reconsider the matter and grant their request. He could speak at length on the question, but he did not wish to take up the time of the Committee at such a late hour.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said that when the application came before him he went fully into it and had reports from the postmaster at Ipswich, Booval, and the other stations mentioned by the hon. member, and he found that no one in the district had to send more than half-a-mile for letters, and that the amount of correspondence was astonishingly small for the number of houses. If he had granted the application it would have run the department enormously into debt, because there was hardly a place in the colony that would not make a similar demand. He would look into the matter again if the hon. member wished, but he would not hesitate to give him the same answer unless he could show very good proof why he should give a different answer.

Mr. GLASSEY said the figures he had produced showed they were entitled to some consideration; and he was sure there were many places where the population was much less than had better postal facilities. As to their not having to send more than half a mile for letters, in some cases people there had to send more than two miles for their letters, and there was no doubt it was extremely dangerous to send children to the railway station for letters. He had no doubt many of the station-masters reported adversely upon the establishment of a central post office in the district, as it would deprive them of the small additions to the miserable salaries which they received from the railway department. In spite of that fact, the station-master at Bundamba, who knew the place, reported favourably upon the establishment of a central office there, though he would probably lose by it to the extent of £18 a year, the amount he received from the Post Office Department.

Mr. PHILP said he had to direct attention to one matter that had not been referred to, and that was that all stores required in the department had to be obtained from Brisbane, and in some cases the cost of freight was a good deal more than the value of the stores. Officers in the interior, he thought, ought to be entrusted with a few pounds to buy what they wanted. There was a great waste of money in importing telegraph material from home for lines constructed up North. All the material, insulators, wires and so on, were brought to Brisbane first, and a contractor for a telegraph line in the North had to get all those things from Brisbane, and had to pay from £2 to £3 a ton freight more on them than he would have to pay if they were shipped in the first instance to the nearest port.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said he was sure the Postmaster-General agreed with him when he said that what had fallen from the hon. member for Townsville deserved a great deal of

attention from the Government. He did not think the department had been altogether run on commercial principles. But now they had a commercial man at the head of the department, he felt sure he would look into that matter and see that the public did not suffer loss in that way, as he was afraid they had suffered in the past.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL said he could promise that the material required for the construction of telegraph lines in the North would not first of all be brought down to Brisbane.

Mr. GROOM said he agreed with the Colonial Secretary that the department did require a little stirring up. He had been given to understand that if only a three-legged stool was wanted in some office in the interior, it was sent up from Brisbane at about six times the cost of the article. He had heard of an amusing case where a very important part of the out-houses required at a telegraph station was built in Brisbane and sent out, and even the very stumps upon which the structure was to be erected were despatched from Brisbane, a distance of he did not know how many miles. There was no doubt the department required thorough re-organisation, as it was defective in many ways, more particularly in the delivery of messages. That was not so bad in his experience now as it had been twelve months ago; but about twelve months ago the incompetence of some of the operators in Toowoomba was remarkable, and they had sometimes to get telegrams repeated from Brisbane. Anyone connected with the Press would understand that difficulty where there were long messages of over 500 words sent. Further, the writing was of the most miserable description, and would disgrace a school boy. The Colonial Secretary was right when he said the department had not been conducted on commercial principles, and he sincerely hoped that some improvement would be made now that they had a business man at the head of the department.

Question put and passed.

METEOROLOGICAL BRANCH.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL moved that the sum of £1,600 be granted for the meteorological branch. Hon. members would observe that Mr. Wragge's salary had been increased from £400 to £500, and he thought no hon. member who had watched the work of that gentleman would grudge him the increase. He was at the head of his profession in the colonies, and did most valuable work. It was necessary he should have a trained assistant, and his assistant's salary had also been increased. There was a considerable increase in the amount for the purchase of instruments and contingencies. They knew that in Queensland no proper provision had been made for a meteorological station, and the vote for the purchase of instruments would probably be an increasing amount for the next couple of years, until the colony was properly supplied in that respect. The vote for that purpose had been increased from £450 to £600, and the total increase on the vote, which he did not think anyone would grudge, was £600.

Question put and passed

AUDITOR-GENERAL.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the sum of £6,965 be granted for the Auditor-General's department. The vote occupied a peculiar position on the Estimates, as the gentleman they had to deal with stood as it were between the Government and Parliament, or between the Government and the country. The estimate had been slightly increased, but before

going on with it he might say that the leader of the Opposition had stated that the increases shown were approved of by him, and agreed to by him, and if it were not almost a formal matter, he would not have asked the Committee to agree to the vote at that hour of the night. The only increases were in the direction of increasing the powers of inspection by the Auditor-General, and that being so, and the facts being as he had stated, he moved the vote, and he might add that he did not propose to go further with the Estimates that night.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

ADJOURNMENT.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. The first business to-morrow will be the consideration of the Bill to empower the Governor in Council to authorise the Colonial Treasurer of Queensland to advance, by way of loan, a sum not exceeding £40,000 from the public funds to the council of the municipality of Brisbane. Then, after the formal motion, which I take it will be of the third reading of the Marsupials Destruction Act Continuation Bill, it is proposed to take the Brisbane Water Supply Bill in committee, and after that to go on with Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at sixteen minutes to 12 o'clock.