

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 27 AUGUST 1889

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 27 August, 1889.

Petition—introduction of Pacific Island labourers.—
 Motion for Adjournment—endowment of divisional
 boards.—Ministerial Explanation—overcrowding
 railway trains.—Question Without Notice—Croydon
 Divisional Board.—Companies Act Amendment
 Bill—third reading.—The Drayton Deviation—com-
 mittee.—Additional Sitting Day.—Adjournment.

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

PETITION.

INTRODUCTION OF PACIFIC ISLAND LABOURERS.

Mr. ADAMS presented a petition from the
 Chamber of Commerce, Bundaberg, praying for
 an extension of time for the introduction of
 Pacific Islanders beyond the 31st December,
 1890; and moved that it be read.

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

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

MOTION FOR ADJOURNMENT.

ENDOWMENT OF DIVISIONAL BOARDS.

Mr. STEVENS said: Mr. Speaker,—I wish
 to bring forward a subject of considerable import-
 ance to the House and the country generally—
 namely, the question of the endowment of
 divisional boards. I asked the Minister for Mines
 and Works a short time ago whether it was the
 intention of the Government to introduce a
 measure dealing with the question this session,
 and his reply was "No." My reason for asking
 the question was that I thought the divisional
 boards should have some time to consider their
 position in the event of the answer being an un-
 favourable one. The time for endowment at the
 rate of £2 for £1 expires next year; and under the
 Act of 1879 the only provision for divisional
 boards then is £1 for £1, and even that is not
 certain, because the Act states that if the fund
 set apart for the purpose is deficient the boards
 will only receive endowment *pro rata*. My
 experience of divisional boards in this colony so
 far has been, that they cannot cope with the roads
 at all with an endowment of £1 for £1. In a
 climate like ours, the country being subject to
 heavy falls of rain, portions of roads on which
 large sums of money have been spent are some-
 times washed away in an hour or two. It may be
 said that the railways having been constructed over
 such long distances the divisional boards have a less
 mileage of roads to construct and maintain. That
 is true so far as the main roads are concerned;
 but the very fact of railways opening up country
 necessitates the construction of a great number
 of cross roads, which have to be maintained and
 kept in decent order by the boards. I think
 Victoria was the first colony to introduce this
 system of local government, and, if I recollect
 rightly, the first measure introduced there was
 very much on a line with our own, providing that
 for a certain number of years a larger endowment
 should be given to the boards than in the years
 following. The terms of that Act expired many
 years ago; yet at the present time the Govern-
 ment every year find a large sum of money for
 the divisional boards of that colony. This year
 the sum of £300,000 has been set apart for
 endowment to divisional boards there. If, in a
 colony like Victoria, which is so much smaller
 than Queensland, which is almost riddled with
 railways, and has hundreds of miles of roads in a
 perfect state—if they require assistance from the
 Government, how much more do the divisional

boards require assistance in a colony like this, a colony of vast extent, with thousands of miles of roads at present in a very unfinished state? I think the boards confidently look forward to an extension of time for the £2 to £1 endowment, chiefly from the speeches made by hon. members all over the colony during the last general election. It may be possible in this case, as in another matter introduced this session, that hon. members will not feel quite so keenly as they did two years ago. Absence from political meetings, and from their constituents, may make them feel a little less warmly than then; but I hope that in this case it will not be so. I think hardly any hon. member will argue that the boards, in the outside districts at any rate, do not require very much more assistance than endowment at the rate of £1 for £1. I am aware that a number of delegates from the different divisional boards held a conference in connection with this subject, and that a deputation from them waited on the Premier this morning and expressed their opinion very fairly on the matter. The Premier did not give a decided answer, which I am not surprised at, because the notice given him was rather short, and the subject is of considerable magnitude. It would be a good thing if the Government were to hear an expression of opinion now from hon. members on the subject, because they will then have the advantage of the opinions of the gentlemen directly interested—the members of divisional boards—and also the opinions of the representatives of the people in this House. I think, whether there be a long debate on this question or not, hon. members will agree that it is one of considerable importance, and one that cannot be regarded too highly. If the boards are not to have this assistance, which they have been fairly led to expect from the utterances of the majority of the members of this House, they will be in a very difficult position; for this reason, that people dealing with large sums of money and having large areas of roads to maintain do not mature their plans in a few days or months. They look forward to expending their money years ahead, and if they are not to get this assistance, the sooner they are informed to that effect the better. I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS (Hon. J. M. Macrossan) said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman says I gave him an answer the other day which has impelled him to move the adjournment of the House. Well, I do not think that that answer should have impelled him, after the conference that has been held lately, and after the deputation which waited on the Premier this morning. However, let that pass. He says the boards should have time to consider their position; but the boards know exactly their position at the present time. There can be no doubt about their knowledge. That they may wish the Government subsidy to continue I have not the slightest doubt, and I have no doubt the boards and municipalities would have no objection to having the subsidy trebled even, but that is not the question at present. Hon. members who were in the last Parliament must recollect that in 1887 the present leader of the Opposition, who was then Premier and Treasurer, introduced into the Divisional Boards Amendment Act, which was then going through the House, a clause depriving the boards of the £2 to £1 subsidy, which they had obtained up to that time. When the boards came into existence—as of course hon. members know—to give them a start and carry them on for some time and assist them in making roads, the Government agreed to give them £2 for every £1 raised for five years, and that term was afterwards increased to another five years. The leader of the Opposition,

at the time I speak of, knowing that the country was in great need of revenue, introduced the clause I refer to. It was opposed by many hon. members on both sides of the House as appearing to be an act of repudiation; and it was on a suggestion made by myself, I think, that the then Premier agreed to give the boards a sum equal to what they had received the year before, and they were to receive that sum only until the end of the term of ten years. That sum was £165,000. After that they were to be paid only £1 for every £1 raised. Now, it is no excuse for the hon. member for Logan to say the boards want time to consider—if the double endowment is not to be continued: and I do not say whether it is to be continued or not—to consider their position. They have had two years, and surely that is sufficient time for them. But that is not the most important question. The most important question of all is the capability of the boards to carry on when they only get £1 for £1. Now, I state my own opinion here without fear of contradiction by anyone, that there is no country in the world—and I have examined very closely into the condition of local government in different parts of the world where property has been so highly protected and so strongly assisted by the State as in the colony of Queensland. The hon. gentleman instances the colony of Victoria. He tells us that in Victoria last year they paid £300,000, but the endowment there has never been more than £310,000. That was the amount restricted by Act of Parliament. In 1874 they passed their Act, and the boards were to get £2 for £1 up to the year 1879, but in no year were they to get more than £310,000. When I say boards, I mean shires and boroughs. They stand in the same position as boards do here.

Mr. STEVENS: They have road boards and shires.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: That was the Act in existence, and that is the Act in existence still. The Premier of the colony of Victoria, having an immense surplus to deal with, including the amount realised from the sale of the Yarra Bend Asylum, a surplus of over £2,000,000, promised to increase the endowment by £140,000, making it £450,000, and even then it does not reach the endowment that we pay here. £450,000 is not equal in Victoria to the £165,000 that we pay here at present. I have got figures here in proof of that statement. The total amount of revenue of the different shires in Victoria in 1877-8, including Government grants, amounted to £622,000, out of which the Government gave £257,000, being only 43½ per cent. of the total revenue of the boards. Here the total revenue of the boards is not so much as it is in Victoria, and the Government give 56½ per cent. of the revenue. I say that this £450,000 which the Premier of Victoria has promised to bestow, not only on shires but on municipalities and boroughs, is not as much as we give here. It amounts to very little more than £1 for £1, because property in Victoria has increased in value since 1877-8. Let us see what the boards in this colony have received from the Government. I really think the owners of property have nothing at all to complain of in the way of Government grants. Of course I will admit that the boards, as a rule, are expending the money they get more profitably than the Government would expend it, but at the same time I know they have not expended it so profitably as they ought, because when they can get money so easily as they have been able to get it, they are not so careful as if the money all came out of their pockets. Hon. members will be very much surprised to know that the total amount paid in subsidies to divisional

boards since they started nine years ago amounts to £1,081,000. That is out of the consolidated revenue in double endowment of £2 for every £1 raised. In addition to that, we expended from various sources of revenue—loan and surplus revenue—an amount equal to £251,000, making a total of £1,333,000 in nine years, or over £150,000 a year.

Mr. STEVENS: How much of that was borrowed?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Not a penny. I am talking about money given to the boards either as subsidy or Government endowment. Not a penny of the amount I have spoken of has been borrowed. I have also the amount borrowed by the boards, which is quite a distinct thing. I am not now giving an answer to the hon. gentleman on this question—on his motion for the adjournment of the House—any more than was given to the deputation from the conference by the Premier this morning; but I am just giving a few figures and facts for hon. members to think over, so that they may know exactly what is the position we occupy here in Queensland in regard to the encouragement and protection given to property. The boards here have received £153,000 a year from one source and another from the Government, since the first day they were started, entirely independent of loans made to them. Now, when we come to consider that this money has been received from the whole population, and not solely from the owners of property in the population, we see how liberal the endowment of property has been. More than three-fourths of the whole population do not own a single acre of land, and they are the people who are really finding this money to enhance the value of the property of the ratepayers under the divisional boards. The statistics obtainable in Victoria are more accurate and more widely extended than in this colony, and I find that in Victoria one in every four persons in supposed to be a ratepayer, leaving three persons out of four who are not owners of any land or property at all. I am certain the proportion is much larger here, but taking it at that only, it is clear that 75 per cent. of the population of Queensland are obliged to find this money for making roads and bridges and improving the property generally of gentlemen who are paying rates to divisional boards. I have spoken of the condition of things in Victoria, but when we go to Europe, what do we find? We find that property there has a great many financial duties to perform which it has not to comply with here. In the different countries of Europe, the property holders have not only got to keep their own roads and bridges in repair, but they have to pay very heavily to poor rates, and that is not an item of expenditure here for the ratepayers of divisional boards. The property holders in Europe have also to contribute to benevolent asylums, lunatic asylums, and many other benevolent institutions which we have free here or which are provided by the general Government through the taxpayers of the colony generally. They have to pay for these institutions, and not those who benefit by the expenditure of divisional boards. If we go to America we find a similar state of things. It is a country like this in its newness, its advancement of population and settlement, agricultural and otherwise; and a similar state of things exists there. There the State does not give one penny towards the making of roads in country districts. Property holders there have to make their own roads and build their own bridges. We should take these facts into account, and consider the immense sums we have borrowed and spent on railways, as well as

the large sums which have been voted by the Government during the last nine years to divisional boards, bear in mind that all that expenditure has tended to the enhancement of the value of property. If the Government find themselves in such a position as to be unable to continue the £2 to £1 endowment, the men who had received such benefit from the expenditure of all that money should not be so chary in putting taxes upon themselves, and increasing the rates they have to pay, if it is found necessary to do so, so as to make up the deficiency should the Government be unable to continue the old endowment. In Victoria they have to pay from 6d. to 2s. 6d. in the £1. Sixpence is the lowest and 2s. 6d. in the £1 the highest rate that can be levied there. There are something like 130 or 140 shires in Victoria, and in 114 of them a rate of 1s. in the £1 is struck, and all above that number strike rates higher than that, from 1s. 3d. to 2s. 5d. in the £1.

Mr. STEPHENS: On what annual value?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: On the annual rating value in the shire.

Mr. STEPHENS: Is that 5 or 10 per cent., because that makes a lot of difference?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I have not gone into that, but it is upon the fair annual value, I presume. If the hon. gentleman wishes to find that out he can get the information from the Victorian Year Book. He will find there the value of property in every shire, the amount of rates levied in every shire, and the rates struck in every shire. Taking all these matters into consideration, and seeing the necessity there is for economy, I have felt it my duty to give hon. members these figures and this information concerning the present position of boards in Queensland, the amount of money they have received, and their position as compared with similar local authorities elsewhere. Further, the Government cannot continue the endowment of £2 for £1 without altering the Act of Parliament, which distinctly says it shall apply only during the ten years which expire on the 30th June next, when only £1 for £1 will be paid. The Act, therefore, must be amended if the double endowment is to be continued, and the Government must have time to consider the position before doing that, and before they can give a decided answer one way or another.

Mr. MELLOR said: Mr. Speaker,—I presume the Premier will give an answer to the deputation that waited upon him this morning as soon as possible. The question of the continuance of the double endowment is one that affects the whole colony, and I think the Government can scarcely decline to accede to the request that has been made. I believe that most members of this House pledged themselves at the last election to advocate the continuance of the double endowment. The argument used by the Minister for Mines and Works—that the general taxpayers are paying the subsidy to divisional boards, and thus enhancing the value of property owned by ratepayers, has something in it; but when we take into consideration the enormous value put upon the lands of the colony by the construction of railways, it is a strong argument for a land tax. I think it would be better for the Government to think seriously about this; I think they should impose a land tax and continue the double endowment, and then property would be giving to the Treasury something which it would get back again. The money given to shire councils and other local authorities in Victoria can scarcely be compared with the position of things here, when we consider the vast extent

of this colony as compared with Victoria, and the tremendous extent of roads which have to be maintained throughout this colony. Outside divisional boards are pressed very hard to make and keep their roads in proper repair. Divisional boards have also a great responsibility, and if any accident takes place in dangerous parts of the roads, the person who meets with an accident can sue the board and get damages. It is a well-known fact that when the inauguration of divisional boards first took place a great amount of responsibility was taken off the Government. In reference to the argument of the Minister for Mines and Works, that the amount of endowment averages £150,000 a year, I think that had the same system continued that was in existence before the Divisional Boards Act was passed, the Government would have had to pay nearer £300,000. The people of the colony take a great deal of interest in the working of the divisional boards, and I must say that the money, so far as I know—and I have been in the colony now for a long time—has been expended to much greater advantage than it formerly was by the Government. I trust the Government will look upon this question favourably, as it is a matter of vital importance to the whole colony. Of course we all know that the endowment is taken from the people in one way, but it is given back to them in another. I would like to see a more equitable mode of taxation—such as a land tax, or something of that sort—so that owners of property would contribute to the revenue, receiving their contributions back in the form of endowment in proportion to the amount paid.

Mr. COWLEY said: Mr. Speaker,—I sincerely trust the Government will give this matter their earnest consideration. The Minister for Mines and Works has told us that £1,333,000 has been given to divisional boards during the last nine years; but admitting that that is so, how much would have been spent if the divisional boards had not been in existence? I suppose that during the previous ten years there was quite as large an expenditure *pro rata* to the value of the property. Then another thing to be considered is this: This money has been spent in improving State property to a great extent, as there is no doubt that the great bulk of the land in the country districts belongs to the State, and it is only fair that the State should contribute the greater part of the money spent in improving that property. The Minister for Mines and Works said that at least 75 per cent. of the people in the colony are not ratepayers. But who are these 75 per cent. of the people? Do they include men, women, and children, or are they only adult males? If they include women and children I do not think the argument goes for much. But if these 75 per cent. of the people are not ratepayers, and do not own property, they use the roads, and if they do not contribute in one form they should have to do so in another. Taking the whole matter into consideration it is justly due to the divisional boards that they should receive the double endowment. In many of the divisions outside the large centres of population, where the population is sparse, and where the roads had little done to them previous to the existence of divisional boards, it is only fair that the endowment of £2 for £1 should be continued. We have heard a great deal about Victoria, but we must bear in mind that the State owns very little of the land in that colony now, but that the great bulk of the property is in the hands of the ratepayers; and in that case it is only just that the State should contribute less and the ratepayers more than in this colony. I do not think the arguments of the Minister for Mines and Works should carry much weight, and I sincerely trust

that the Government will give this matter their earnest consideration, and that they will see their way clear to adopt the suggestion thrown out by the hon. member for Logan.

Mr. MORGAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree with the hon. member for Herbert that if the Government had not brought forward the Divisional Boards Act, instead of having been called upon to give £1,333,000 during the nine years that Act has been in force in the shape of endowments, probably they would have been called upon by hon. members representing the various constituencies to pay very much more than that amount for the construction of roads and bridges throughout the colony. I think the hon. member for Logan deserves credit for bringing this matter before the House, because it is one in which the whole of the colony is very deeply interested. I am perfectly sure that the system of local government in this colony, outside the municipalities, is one of which Queensland has every reason to be proud, and it would be a serious mistake to do anything which would be calculated to interfere with the satisfactory way in which our local government system has worked in the country districts. If we reduce the endowments paid to the divisional boards, I very much fear that disaster will overtake many of the outside divisions. Take, for example, the division of Duaringa, which, during the financial year ending 30th June, 1888, received from the Government as endowment the princely sum of £149. How they manage to make both ends meet even under the present circumstances, is rather a puzzle to me. When the late Government introduced the Amending Act of 1887 I voted for it. I gave my reasons for doing so then, and I repeat them now. I voted for it because I believed that too much of the endowments paid by the Government to local authorities was going to the local authorities centred in the metropolitan radius, and I think the whole question ought to be taken up and seriously considered by the Government as to whether it would not be wise, in the interests of the whole colony, to introduce a system of differential endowments. I have in my hand the report of the Auditor-General for the financial year 1887-8, and in the last table, on page 58 of that report, I find that the total endowments to divisional boards paid during that year amounted to £178,992 10s. 6d., and of that sum one-fourth was paid to the divisions within a few miles of the capital city of Brisbane. The division of Booroodabin received £9,341; the Bulimba board received £2,071; the Balmoral board, £3,000; the Nundah board, £2,344; the Stephens board, £2,528; the Toombul board received £5,114; the divisional board of Woolloongabba received £20,910; and the Yeerongpilly board received £3,237—making altogether nearly £50,000 received by Brisbane boards out of a total of £178,992. In addition to that, the municipalities and shires in and around Brisbane received, out of a total of £87,000, quite £40,000. The amount paid to South Brisbane is not separated from the amount paid to Brisbane. I suppose that the adjustment of accounts had not then taken place; but Brisbane is set down as having received nearly £35,000. The shire of Ithaca received £1,266; Toowong, £2,144; and Windsor, £1,352. Adding the amount paid to divisional boards in the metropolitan radius to the amount paid to councils and shires in and around Brisbane, including the city, we have a sum of nearly £90,000 out of a total of £265,000 paid away in endowments. That is altogether a most unfair proportion of the money voted for this purpose, which goes towards maintaining roads in a very small area and in the midst of wealth. Take the case of a division like Woolloongabba, for

instance, where they have a few hundred acres of territory and a very few miles of roads to maintain—roads which were handed over to them already made when that board was constituted. In that area almost every allotment is more or less improved. Compare that with a division in the back blocks, where property is worth very little, where very little of it is improved, and where they have hundreds of miles of roads to maintain, the majority of which are in a state of nature. And yet you call upon such boards to maintain roads, over perhaps a million acres of land, with half the sum of money that a board with a few hundred acres in the metropolitan radius has bestowed upon it. This is a most unfair state of things, and I am sure that the majority of the people—in the country districts at any rate—would welcome any measure introduced by any Government which would have the effect of compelling those divisional boards in and around Brisbane to incorporate, or to be content with a lesser rate of endowment than that at present paid. I do not see why they should receive the same rate of endowment as is received by boards in the outside districts. But they will not incorporate, because the moment they do they cease to receive the £2 endowment; and have to be content with £1. They will never come under the Local Government Act until they are compelled to do so. I maintain that some step in that direction ought to be taken. I quoted the case of the Duaringa Board, but there are quite a number of boards all over the colony in which the local revenue does not amount to anything like £500, nor the endowment to anything like £1,000, and if you are going to reduce the endowment you will cripple many of those boards and throw the whole system of local government, outside municipalities, in the far interior, into a state of confusion; and if you do that once you will have very great difficulty indeed in bringing it again into the state of satisfactory working which has characterised it since its establishment nine years ago. By compelling these boards to come in under the Local Government Act, and be content with the lesser rate of endowment—that is to say, £1 for £1—you would at once reduce the contribution by the Government in the shape of endowments to local authorities by £25,000 a year, and that would give the Treasurer a measure of relief for some years to come. I cannot see any justice in allowing these few boards, exercising jurisdiction over such small areas in and around Brisbane, to draw such large sums from the total amount that the taxpayers of the colony contribute yearly to this endowment.

Mr. HODGKINSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The subject introduced by the hon. member for Logan is one of very great importance, especially to remote districts such as the one I represent; but I do not see the utility of a discussion upon it this evening on a motion for adjournment. The matter is before the Government now. The conference on the subject made certain recommendations to the Government, and the Chief Secretary has promised—it is a very momentous matter, and he should have time for consideration—to give the chairman of that conference his answer. There is a good deal to be said on the point raised by the hon. member for Warwick, but I do not see that any good can result from a discussion upon it this evening. When we get an answer from the Government it will then be our duty, if that answer proves repugnant to the interests of local government, to redeem the pledges we all made at the last general election, and see justice done to the outside divisional boards, where the extent of country is so great that it would be impossible for any board to carry on its proceedings if any change is made in the rate of endowment. It is not because I have nothing to say on the question, that I do not pro-

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pose to speak on it now, but because I think it would be unjust to the Government, seeing that they have the matter under their consideration. Let us see what they have to say first, at any rate, before we begin to catechise them.

The PREMIER (Hon. B. D. Morehead) said: Mr. Speaker,—I thought, after what had passed between myself and the very large and representative deputation from the conference, that the hon. member for Logan would not have moved the adjournment of the House for this purpose. The Government cannot, even if they wished, give an immediate answer; nor is the question one of such immediate and pressing necessity, so far as the £2 to £1 endowment is concerned. As hon. members know, the £165,000 will be paid on the rates collected up to the end of this year, so that pressure will not come upon the boards during the year 1890. Hon. members, especially those who sat on the conference, must know that this is a matter that requires very serious and deliberate consideration on the part of the Government as to what course they will adopt. There is a great deal in what the hon. member for Toowoomba put before me to-day, and which the hon. member for Warwick has accentuated to-night, as to a system of differential rating. That is a question that must receive the very serious consideration of the Government. I understand that it prevails in Victoria; and it has to be very seriously considered whether the larger centres of population are not too heavily subsidised at present, and whether the outside boards are not too lightly subsidised; also whether, in the interest of fair play and justice, a Bill dealing with the matter on those lines should be introduced. Hon. members will see, therefore, that the question is not one that can be dealt with in a debate raised on a motion for the adjournment of the House, more especially as it has been very seriously considered by the conference, which was composed of representative men from various portions of the colony. The result of their deliberations will be very seriously considered by the Government, with the object of meeting out fair play to all parts of the colony.

Mr. GRIMES said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not agree with the hon. member for Burke that no good will come from the hon. member for Logan raising this question on a motion for adjournment. I think now is the time to urge on the Government the necessity of continuing the £2 to £1 endowment. There is, no doubt, only one opinion amongst those interested in divisional boards at any distance from Brisbane, that the endowment of £2 to £1 is really necessary to carry on the work of those boards. With reference to Victoria, we are not at all in the same position as that colony. In Victoria the whole of the land is settled upon, and there are far more rates obtained from certain areas of land than can possibly be obtained in the country divisions of Queensland. In Queensland we have a large amount to expend upon roads, and yet we have very little rates coming in from the holders of property adjoining those roads; and I think it is necessary that we should urge upon the Government to give a speedy answer in connection with the matter. It will not do to let it go on until next session, because the divisional boards will be striking their rates for the year 1890 in the early part of the year, and if they are to depend upon only £1 for £1 endowment it will be necessary for them to strike a much higher rate, in order to enable them to carry out necessary works, than they would otherwise do. That must be done before we meet next session. Therefore it is of great importance that the divisional boards should know beforehand whether they can depend upon

the £2 for £1 being continued. I think the hon. member for Logan has done good service in bringing the matter forward this afternoon, so that we may have an opportunity of urging the claims of the outside districts upon the Government, and also of pressing for an immediate reply.

Mr. GANNON said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the hon. member for Logan brought this matter forward for the purpose of getting an expression of opinion from hon. members respecting it. It is a matter that is prominently brought before the country, and I think the general opinion is that the £2 for £1 endowment should be continued. I have always been in favour of it myself, and I think an expression of opinion from hon. members now will have a great deal to do with what the Government will do by-and-by. If the majority of the members present, who are the immediate representatives of the country, express an opinion that £2 for £1 should be paid, I am perfectly certain the Government will see their way clear to pay that amount. I therefore hope hon. members will express their views upon the question.

Mr. McMASTER said: Mr. Speaker,—I think every hon. member should give expression to his intention of supporting, or otherwise, the £2 for £1 endowment; and this discussion will very materially help the Government and the Colonial Secretary in coming to a decision, and sending an answer to the chairman of the conference that waited upon him this morning. A good deal has been said about the large amount of endowment that has been paid to divisional boards around Brisbane. Woollongabba, Booroodabin, Toombul, and other large centres of population have been spoken of by the hon. member for Warwick, who said the outside districts had so many hundreds of miles of roads to make and keep in repair, but I know that in the majority of cases the roads in the outside districts are never made.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Nonsense!

Mr. McMASTER: It is not nonsense. There are large tracts of country in the outside districts where roads are never made. I do not say it is so all over the colony, but we know how much money has been spent on the roads about Croydon. The Booroodabin division has been spoken of, but I venture to say that there are more taxes paid to the State by the inhabitants of that division, and of Woollongabba, in the shape of revenue through the Customs, than by any dozen boards in the interior. The Hon. the Minister for Mines and Works smiles at that, but it is true, nevertheless. In some of these closely settled divisions, such as Woollongabba and Booroodabin, the boards have to make roads through swamps and other difficult places. The Government has obtained the money for those lands; it has all gone into the Treasury, and the occupiers of these lands are the very best taxpayers the colony has at the present time. It has been said that over a million of money has been spent on the boards by way of endowment during the last nine years, but I would point out that the Booroodabin and Toombul boards have had to pay £14,000 for a bridge over Breakfast Creek. The Government contributed only a small sum to that work, although it is for the convenience of the general public. Those boards are now talking of building another bridge on the Bowen Bridge road, which, I suppose, will cost £6,000 or £8,000. That also will be for the benefit of the general public, so that I think a great deal too much has been said about the large endowment paid to boards in centres of population, because, as I said before, those centres of population contribute very largely to the Treasury in the shape of taxes that they pay through the Customs.

Mr. WATSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I hope the Government will see their way to continue the £2 for £1 endowment. I maintain that the divisions in and around Brisbane spend the money entrusted to them as judiciously as it is spent in any part of the colony—in cutting down hills and building bridges; some of the latter of which were handed over to them by the Government in a very dilapidated condition. The Minister for Mines and Works has referred to Victoria, but there is no comparison between Victoria and Queensland, so far as shire councils and divisional boards are concerned, because in Victoria the country is nearly all level, entirely different from Queensland. The hon. gentleman also said that in America there was no such thing as endowment for local works; but let me inform the hon. gentleman that during the war of secession there were no less than 30,000 or 40,000 soldiers protecting the inhabitants from the Indians, and at the same time making roads throughout the whole of the country. That was from 1867 to 1874 and it was a far heavier tax than ever came out of the revenue of Queensland as endowment to divisional boards. There is another thing to be said with regard to divisional boards. Unquestionably the Divisional Boards Act is one of the best Acts ever passed in Queensland. It put the ratepayers to the right-about-face, and insisted that they should furnish the money to improve their own properties; and they have done so. Some of the divisions about Brisbane have had to undertake very heavy works. As the hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMASTER, said just now, where is there a division in the whole colony that has done so much to improve and beautify the district as the Booroodabin Board? Even their water-tables show how judiciously they spend their money. The construction of the Breakfast Creek Bridge is a very severe tax upon the two divisions that have had to pay for it, and the new bridge, on the Bowen Bridge road, will cost about £12,000. All that has to come out of the ratepayers' pockets, and I hope the Government will see their way to give the matter most favourable consideration.

Mr. MURRAY said: Mr. Speaker,—If the object of the discussion is to get an expression of opinion respecting the amount of the endowment, I think there is very little doubt as to the result of it. I do not think there is a single member who will vote against the continuation of the present endowment, and therefore I see little use in continuing the discussion. I have had considerable experience in divisional board matters, and I must say that in the country districts it will be very difficult for the boards to continue operations with less endowment than they get at present. I think that before any definite action can be taken in the matter we shall require a fresh Divisional Boards Act, so as to strike a differential rate in some way, by which we shall give less to the metropolitan local authorities than to boards in the outlying districts. Property within municipal boundaries has increased very much in value, not at the expense of the individual owners, but at the expense of the colony generally. For that reason I think it would be only fair that the endowment to the metropolitan local authorities should be reduced.

Mr. BUCKLAND said: Mr. Speaker,—This question of endowment was made a test question at the late general election; and I believe every hon. member made a pledge to support a motion for continuing the endowment at the rate of £2 to £1. The Minister for Mines and Works has referred to the fact that some property-holders in Victoria are subject to rating as high as 2s. 6d. in the £1; but I may point out that in no place in Queensland is land

rented at so high a figure as it is at Warnambool, where it is rented as high as from £5 to £7 per acre. When tenants can afford to pay that rent it is evident that the rating must be high.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. J. Donaldson): How much land is rented at that rate?

Mr. BUCKLAND: I believe several thousand acres. I will point out, also, that in Victoria nearly all the land is in the hands of individuals, while in Queensland from 80 to 90 per cent. is still in the hands of Government, and that in paying endowment at the rate of £2 to £1 the Government are paying for the improvement of their own estate. I approve of local self-government, and I have no doubt that if the Divisional Boards Act had not passed, the roads and bridges throughout the colony would not have been in nearly as good a state as they are at present; but I am convinced that if the endowment is reduced to £1 for £1 the divisional boards will very soon be in financial straits. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, referred to a certain board to which the hon. member for Burke called attention last week; but I am happy to say that that is only one instance of the kind. I hope the Government will take this matter into consideration, and continue the endowment at the rate of £2 for £1 for some time at least.

Mr. PAUL said: Mr. Speaker,—I agree entirely with the hints thrown out by the Premier the other day when the deputation waited on him in connection with this matter—namely, that there should be a differential rate of endowment. There is no doubt that the suburban districts have been created, as it were, by the enterprise of those who have gone into the interior. In the interior the divisions contain large areas of land, and are sparsely populated, and I think it would be only fair that divisions in the Leichhardt district, for instance, should receive endowment at a higher rate than the thickly populated divisions.

Mr. SMITH said: Mr. Speaker,—Having had a considerable amount of experience in connection with divisional boards, I can say that if the £2 to £1 endowment is taken away in the outlying districts the boards will not be able to carry on at all, on account of the large extent of roads, the small number of ratepayers, and the consequently small amount of rates. Without that endowment they will not have sufficient money even to keep the roads in repair. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley, Mr. McMaster, referred to the large amount of rates collected in divisions near the metropolis; but that is just the very reason why they do not require the large endowment. The ratepayers are numerous, property is valuable, and the money collected through rates is sufficient to keep the roads and bridges in repair and do anything else that is required.

Mr. McMASTER: I spoke of the amount received from them through the Customs.

Mr. SMITH: In the outside districts there is a much larger extent of roads to keep in repair than about the metropolis; and the hon. member for Herbert hit the right nail on the head when he said the Government ought to endow the outside divisions at the rate of £2 to £1, because the money is expended on the improvement of Government property; and when land is sold in those divisions the Government must expect to gain by the roads being made. That is a point well worthy of consideration. If the £2 to £1 endowment is discontinued the outside divisions will simply have to cave in, so far as road-making is concerned. I believe that in

Victoria there is a differential rate varying from £3 to £1 in the far outside districts to 5s. for every £1 near the large centres of population; and I am strongly of opinion that there should be a differential rate in this colony, and that the outside divisions should receive a larger endowment than those near the large centres of population.

Mr. LITTLE said: Mr. Speaker,—In the electorate I represent there are three divisional boards and one municipality, and unless the endowment of £2 to £1 is continued we must collapse, because it will be a moral impossibility to exist. In fact, as it is we could not have carried on but for the financial assistance we have received from the Government occasionally. There are 2,574 miles of public roads in the electorate I represent, and it is very thinly populated at present, pending the construction of the Cairns-Herberton Railway. The property is not valuable enough to be rated sufficiently high to pay the expense of keeping the roads in repair, apart altogether from opening up new roads. When the Divisional Boards Act first came into operation, I considered it gross injustice to the North. We got only £500 to start with, and now that there are four divisions in my electorate, we require more money to carry on with. I think it is only fair and just that we should get £3 to £1 in Woothakata, because in days gone by we contributed to the making of roads, railways, and bridges in the South, and we have had nothing in return. I entirely object to the subsidy being curtailed.

Mr. BATTERSBY said: Mr. Speaker,—I am glad to hear the hon. member say that the Minister for Mines and Works has got a soft spot in him. I did not think he had. The hon. member says he was able to get £500 out of the Minister.

Mr. LITTLE: I said occasionally.

Mr. BATTERSBY: I thought it was only one £500. Now I see by the papers that a deputation, introduced by the hon. member for Rosewood, waited on the Minister recently in reference to the complaint of teamsters, who objected to a wheel tax. I would like to know how many of those gentlemen were ratepayers. In one of the divisions I am connected with there are 150 teams working now, and not more than thirty of them contribute rates to the division.

Mr. LITTLE: That is your fault.

Mr. BATTERSBY: They have got no property, and all we can make them pay is £3 a year, which does not nearly represent the damage they do to the roads. It is not the agricultural settlers who destroy the roads, but the floating population in the shape of teamsters and others. I know that if the endowment is curtailed in the country districts we might as well shut up shop. I hope the Ministry will see their way clear to deal with the country districts fairly, and continue the endowment.

Mr. SAYERS said: Mr. Speaker,—The Minister for Mines and Works has said that the holders of property benefit by the making of roads, and I have no doubt that is a fact in a great many places, but on goldfields, as he well knows, the property chiefly belongs to the Crown, so that the people do not derive any direct benefit. There is not as much freehold land as there is in other districts. I quite agree with him that property should be taxed to pay for the making of roads. If a man puts up an addition to a house he is now taxed extra, but I think the land should be taxed. If a working man puts up a fence round his house it will

cost him 5s. or 10s. more per year. The Divisional Boards Act, therefore, instead of helping to improve property in the country has the opposite effect. That is the case in the district to which I belong. It has been said here that Victoria does so-and-so. Well, Victoria is not much larger than a good-sized division in Queensland, and you can hardly compare the two colonies. Victoria is a small and compact colony; but a great many of our divisional boards are two or three hundred miles in extent. I quite agree that the outside districts should be taken into consideration. I find, as a member of a board, that when a division is subdivided into three subdivisions, although one subdivision may pay twice the rates of the other two, that subdivision requires more money to be expended upon it, because the roads in it have to be made to allow people from the outside districts to come into the centre of population. Generally you will find that the subdivision of a division where the largest population exists is in debt to the other subdivisions. I think that matter should be taken into consideration, when the subject is under the consideration of the Government. It must also be remembered that the Government send mails throughout the colony. They have to pay for those mails, and, as a member of a divisional board, I know we have continual requests from the back country, asking us to form the roads so that the mail coach can go across. Large sums of money have to be expended for that purpose, and if those roads were not made the Government would have to pay much more for the carriage of their mails. I remember how expensive the old Government-stroke system of forming roads and bridges was, and I am sure the Government have saved hundreds of thousands of pounds through the existence of the divisional boards. They have done good work, and I believe the money has been well and judiciously spent in the majority of instances. If the Government could see their way to continue the subsidy for another period of five years they would meet the wishes of the whole community; but if they cannot do it, then let the divisional boards know that, because early next year the rates will have to be struck, and certain works have been let with the expectation that the present endowment would be continued. It was only lately that I had any doubt as to the endowment being continued, and I think the conclusion to be drawn from the remarks of the Minister for Mines and Works is that it is not the intention of the Government to continue to give £2 for £1. He has not said so in so many words, but that is the conclusion I draw. I hope the Government will at the earliest opportunity let us know whether the endowment is to be continued or not.

Mr. MURPHY said: Mr. Speaker,—Most hon. members connected with divisional boards have spoken upon this question, and I may as well say a few words upon it. I hope the Government will continue the double endowment for the reasons adduced by various hon. members who have already spoken; but I hope that when they are doing so they will adopt some such scheme as that alluded to by the Premier, and that is a differential rate of endowment. There should be a vanishing point for the endowment, and I do not see why a large endowment should be paid by the country to assist in paving the streets in Brisbane. Surely Brisbane is rich enough now to be expected to pave its own streets without levying upon the general taxpayer for the purpose; and South Brisbane, too, is surely rich enough to pave its own streets without any direct endowment from the State. I hope this matter will be looked at from the point of view of with-

drawing all endowment from large centres of population, and that the endowment where granted will be fixed according to the value of ratable property in any division or municipality. Let the poorer ones get the highest rate of endowment, the richest none at all, and the intermediate ones a smaller rate. If some such scheme as that is adopted this divisional board endowment may be made very much less burdensome to the general population. As a matter of fact, when before my constituents, I pledged myself to do all I could to maintain the endowment of £2 for £1, and I shall have to redeem that pledge to my constituents should the matter come before the House.

Mr. ALLAN said: Mr. Speaker,—I trust the Government will take into consideration the advisability of carrying on the double endowment—at least, in the outside districts. I believe that the scheme suggested by the Premier will receive the sanction of a large majority of the members of this House. I believe they will be in favour of a differential rate, if introduced in a Bill, to regulate the subsidy to divisional boards. Some members seem to be under a misapprehension as to the work done by divisional boards in country districts, and the member for Fortitude Valley appears to think that they do no work in the outside districts. I will only take one road in the district represented by the Minister for Railways and running from Yeulba to the border of New South Wales at Mungindi, a distance of about 200 miles. It goes through a very sparsely-populated country, and yet every creek of any consequence crossed by that road is bridged, and there are cuttings wherever necessary upon it, and the whole road is kept in trafficable order for coaches and so on all the year round. That is a specimen of the work done by outside boards, and I trust the Government will continue to help them in carrying out such work. A strong argument for the differential rate is that the £2 to £1 improves the freehold property of people in the city, while in the country it improves and enhances the value of State property.

Mr. STEPHENS said: Mr. Speaker,—As I have been chairman of two or three country and suburban divisions and also an alderman of the city, I may say a word or two upon this matter. It is a matter of the greatest importance to all the divisional boards in the colony. I think the hon. member for Logan is to be congratulated upon introducing the subject this afternoon. It has been brought under the notice of the Government by the conference that has been sitting, but I think it is just as well that hon. members of this House should have an opportunity of letting the Government know what their views on the subject are. I do not say that, in order that the Government may shape their course accordingly, because I believe the Government will do what they think right, independently of what hon. members may say; but it is as well they should know what hon. members think of the matter. My experience leads me to the conclusion that if the endowment of £2 for £1 is not continued a great many roads will become impassable, and some of our boards may as well shut up shop. I was rather amused at some of the figures the Minister for Mines and Works gave us this afternoon. It is not a proper comparison to make to compare our population and what is given by the Government here with the population and the Government endowment in Victoria. The question for comparison is how many acres of land are owned by the State and how many by private individuals, and what proportion do the Government and

private individuals pay towards the moneys spent on the roads of the colony? Those are the figures that should be compared, because the Government and private individuals are joint proprietors, and we should compare the proportions in which they contribute to the maintenance of roads. The hon. gentleman also told us how they were rated in Victoria, but everything depends upon the annual value upon which the rate is struck, and 5 per cent. on one is only the same as 10 per cent. on another. Unless we know how they get at the annual value, the rate they strike is neither here nor there. I understood the Postmaster-General to say they took the rental, but that is no guide either. A man may put up a wooden house on one allotment and let it at 10s. a week, and another may put up a substantial brick building on the next allotment of the same size to let at £5 a week, and it would be very unfair to rate those places on the rentals. The proper thing to do is to rate upon the capital value of the land and not tax the value of improvements. If a man likes to put up a good house on his land he ought not to be taxed for that. The rate should be like a land tax on the value of the fee-simple of the land only, without improvements. The Premier has almost admitted that the Government should go in for a differential rate of endowment, and allow more in the country divisions than in the towns and suburbs, but I trust the Government will not decide that question until both sides have had time to make out their cases. When the towns have made out their case I am inclined to think it will be found that more should be given to them and less to the outside districts. Take the Barcoo district for instance; there is a railway made out there to bring in wool, which hardly pays for the grease on the wheels, and it is the people in the large towns who maintain that railway.

Mr. MURPHY: Who keeps Brisbane going?

Mr. STEPHENS: The money comes through the Customs, and the people of the city maintain that railway, while many of the suburban districts around Brisbane have not got a railway at all. If they have to keep railways going for the country people, they should be allowed to have some of their own money to maintain their roads. Another reason why the amount given in and around Brisbane should be so much larger is because the people's hearts here are larger than those of people in the country. I will explain that in this way: If you go to look at land in the country districts and ask a squatter what he will sell it for, he will tell you he would not sell it for less than £10 an acre, and if you go to the divisional board office and look at the rate book you will find it valued at 10s. an acre, and you will see that the squatter pays the large amount of 6d. in the £1 on a £5 per cent. annual value as a rate for it.

The PREMIER: Where is that?

Mr. STEPHENS: I could give you the names of such places, and I have seen the books. Then go to the suburbs of Brisbane and you will find in many instances that the land is rated at more than it will fetch, and in some places the rates amount to 2s. 6d. in the £1, as they do in South Brisbane to-day. That is because the people here are willing to tax themselves, and if the people in the country districts taxed themselves more they would have a good deal more to spend. My knowledge of some of the outside divisions is, that the boards have large balances in the banks, and some of them, I am told, do not know what to do with their funds. The country there is open, and they do not require to make roads, but spend a good deal of their money in boring for water and trying to secure a supply of

water. They do not in any way try to make the roads. The people who really do want the larger endowment are those in the mining and agricultural suburban districts, and not the squatters. If the £2 for £1 endowment is not continued, I believe that a great many farmers will have to stop farming, because the roads will be impassable, but the higher endowment is not so much required in the outlying districts. In some of the divisions in the district of the hon. member for Warwick, if some of the property were rated at its full value, and 1s. in the £1 paid, they would get far larger endowments than they do now. There is another thing to be said for the city. All the people from the country districts come here and use our roads, while we do not use theirs, and I know that some hon. members representing country districts are quite willing to walk up and down the streets in their own districts through a great deal of mud, but when they come to Brisbane and find a little mud they complain of it at once. I trust that the Government will see their way to continue this endowment to the divisional boards a little longer. In any case, I hope they will give their answer as soon as possible, because they (the Boards) want to know so that they can make their arrangements accordingly. I think that if by introducing this question to-day the answer will be given a little sooner, the hon. member for Logan will have done a great service to the divisional boards.

Mr. STEVENS, in reply, said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall only say a few words in reply, for the simple reason that I think all the arguments advanced against the continuance of the endowment have been met by previous speakers. I rise to put myself right with regard to my introducing the matter this afternoon. Two members of the Government who spoke upon the subject said that they were rather surprised—or words to that effect—that I should have brought this subject up before their answer was given to the conference. I preferred bringing it forward before that answer was given to the deputation from the conference so that the Government might know the feeling of the House on the matter, which is of more importance to them than the opinion of the divisional boardmen who waited on the Premier; because the representatives of the boards may naturally be supposed to be directly interested, while the members of this House look at the subject from a larger point of view. For that reason I think what has fallen from hon. members should have quite as much weight with the Government as anything that can be said by the divisional boards. The idea of the conference was a very good one. Nothing could have been better for the divisional boards than that a conference should be held, while the way in which it was managed reflects great credit upon the representatives from the different boards who took part in it. I would impress upon the Government that it is evident that a very large majority of members of this House are in favour of the continuance of the present endowment. Whether a differential rate should be introduced or not is quite a different thing. It has been pointed out that it will be necessary to introduce a Bill before an Act of Parliament can be altered, but there is not very much time for a Bill to be introduced. The endowment ceases on the 30th of June next year, and the divisional boards want time to consider how they will manage their affairs. If the endowment is continued, of course they will be able to carry out more enlarged plans than if it is to be reduced. I shall not detain the House any longer, but I am positive something has been gained from the discussion which has taken place this afternoon.

Question put and negatived.

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION.

OVERCROWDING RAILWAY TRAINS.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. M. Nelson) said: Mr. Speaker,—I take this opportunity, with the permission of the House, of making a statement with regard to some remarks made by the hon. member for Toowoomba on this day week, having reference to the management of the railway traffic, and the overcrowding of carriages.

The SPEAKER: Do I understand the hon. member wishes to make a Ministerial statement? If he wishes to move the adjournment, it will be necessary for some other business to intervene before doing so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is simply a Ministerial explanation, in order to show to the House what the real facts were. I promised on that occasion that I would bring the matter before the Commissioners. But it was not necessary for me to do that, because the traffic manager noticed the statement, and immediately reported upon it to the Commissioners, and his report I found on my table. The report says that there is no truth whatever in the statement. There was a much larger number of passengers than usual, of course—we expected that on an occasion of running excursion trains—but as far as the inconvenience of passengers was concerned on this particular train, every station master on the way down reported that there was sufficient sitting accommodation for all the passengers in the train. I think that on occasions of that sort if the department finds sitting accommodation, without finding accommodation to lie down on the seats, it is all that might be expected. I may state that I came down the very same day, only by an earlier train in the morning. It was very well filled, and when we left Toowoomba there was scarcely sitting accommodation in the carriage I was in for all the passengers. As we came along the line, and took up other passengers, this particular carriage became, I admit, somewhat crowded, but that was relieved by another carriage being put on at Ipswich. So that as soon as it was possible for the department to provide for the wants of the public they were provided for, and so far from there being any complaints on the subject, the only remark I heard on the way down on that occasion was, what a good thing it would be for the colony if all the trains were as full every day. But people on excursion occasions expect to be crowded; it is part of the fun; they expect it before they start. From the report before me it appears there was ample accommodation the whole way down. The train was divided into two sections—five carriages in one, and seven in the other; and at every station along the line the station master reports that there was sitting accommodation, at any rate, for the whole of the passengers.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

CROYDON DIVISIONAL BOARD.

Mr. HODGKINSON said: Mr. Speaker,—If I am not out of order, I should like to ask the Minister for Mines and Works a question, without notice—Whether he has received a telegram from any individual in connection with the Croydon Divisional Board, and if so, whether he has any objection to lay it on the table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Yes, I have; and I will now lay it on the table of the House.

COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

On the motion of the POSTMASTER-GENERAL, this Bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be returned to the Legislative Council by message in the usual form.

THE DRAYTON DEVIATION.

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

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Drayton deviation, in length 10 miles 55 chains 61 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Friday, the 16th day of August 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 Drayton deviation, in length 10 miles 55 chains 64 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Friday, the 16th day of August 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 hon. members had before them the statement of the Railway Commissioners, under the Act recently passed, giving particulars with respect to the proposed deviation. That statement, as well as the plans and book of reference, had been before the House for a week or ten days, and he must assume that hon. members who took an interest in the progress and development of the country had devoted attention to those documents, so as to enable them to arrive at a sound judgment respecting the proposal on its merits. The first paragraph of the statement of the Commissioners described the route of the proposed line. It was unnecessary for him to go through that. It was shown on the map which had been on the table for some time, and those who were familiar with the district would have no difficulty in following it. The next paragraph dealt with the length of the line to be constructed, and also the saving in distance that would be effected, as compared with the existing line. Here he noticed what appeared to be a slight error, inasmuch as the Commissioners said the saving would be nearly nine miles, whereas from his information on the subject it would appear that the saving was slightly over nine miles, not under it. However, that was a very small matter. The next paragraph described the provision which would have to be made for stations and platforms along the line. Those, he might mention, were the stations and platforms considered necessary at present. It did not follow that no more would be required. As soon as the traffic showed that more were necessary, they would be provided by the Commissioners in accordance with the Act. The next paragraph dealt with the quantity of land to be resumed, which amounted to over 173 acres. Of that about 46 acres were Crown land; the alienated portion being 22 acres of town and 104 acres of country land. The estimated value of that land was put down at £15,000; but he, having some knowledge of the district, thought that estimate a little beyond what might fairly be put down. He believed the land required could be purchased for less than the amount stated. In the next paragraph it was stated that the ruling grade was

1 in 50, and that the minimum radius of curve was fifteen chains. Those were matters that affected the maintenance of the line very materially, because the steeper the grades and the shorter and sharper the curves, the greater in proportion would be the cost of maintenance. In the next paragraph the Commissioners stated that they had gone personally over the line and formed their conclusions from that inspection. The next paragraph dealt with a matter of some importance. It was there stated that for a considerable number of years back the Railway Department had been hauling stuff over fifteen miles of the Southern and Western Railway for nothing; that was to say, that if wool, merchandise, or anything else was hauled thirty miles, the owner would be charged for only fifteen miles, and so on in proportion. If the distance was 100 miles, he would be charged for eighty-five, and so on. That was an anomaly that did not exist in any other colony, and it would be obviated by the construction of the proposed line. As soon as the line was constructed, the ordinary rates that applied to all main lines would be charged. The Commissioners then said that, apart from those considerations, in their opinion the saving in distance warranted the construction of the line. The next paragraph dealt with the financial aspect of the question, in which the Commissioners referred to the fact that the vote on the Loan Estimates for 1884-5 for that work was only £44,000; the estimated cost was £67,000; and they accordingly advised that £23,000 additional would be required to finish the line. There was a slight error in connection with that, inasmuch as the Commissioners had failed to observe that about £1,000 of the vote of £44,000 had been spent in surveys and other preliminary work; so that it would be his duty to ask the legislature to provide at least £27,000 or £28,000 instead of £23,000. He mentioned the matter now, so that there should be no hitch with regard to the financial part of the question. Another important matter to consider was the fact that when the deviation was completed there would be eleven and a-half miles of railway which would not be required for the purpose for which it was now used. With regard to that question the Commissioners said:—

“Although it does not in this statement properly fall within the province of the Commissioners to say whether the line between Gowrie Junction and Beauaraba Junction shall be maintained after the construction of this deviation, they consider it their duty to point out that should the traffic on this line, which is about eleven and a-half miles in length, and runs through rich agricultural land along its whole course, warrant its retention, the cost of its maintenance with an occasional train service for the carriage of farm produce, etc., will be inconsiderable.”

When the traffic on a line was diminished to a very large extent, it followed that the expenses connected with it would be diminished also. That was known to be the case from experience. He did not anticipate that there would be any great objection to that part of the statement furnished by the Commissioners, because that piece of railway would still be of service to the people in that part of the country through which it ran. He might mention that a survey of the Drayton deviation was made ten years ago, and there had been a good deal of agitation in the district as to the different routes. The late Government settled the route, and he believed they had very good reasons for choosing the route now proposed. He thought one reason that influenced them was that the original survey crossed the watershed near Drayton, at least 124 feet higher than the present survey; it involved the construction of two and a-half miles more than the present survey, and it was less suitable from an engineering point of view—

the curves were sharper, the cuttings more expensive, and the cost of maintenance would be greater. He therefore adhered to the route now proposed, and he thought the reasons given were substantiated. The line ran through a very large number of properties; it was not like some lines which ran through one man's property half the way. It ran through the town of Drayton, which was one of the oldest towns in the colony; it would open up communication by railway with that town; and it was believed—and he had a great deal of faith in the belief, having known the locality for a great number of years—that that township would receive a very much increased development from the construction of the line. He looked upon Drayton as one of the healthiest resorts that could be found on the Downs. It had always been considered so since he had been living on the Downs, and that was about thirty years. There was no doubt that the place had gone backward, but that was because Drayton had been eclipsed by Toowoomba, which was on the line of traffic, while Drayton turned out not to be. It was originally intended that Drayton should be on the line of traffic, because it was on the old road from the westward. It was intended that the main road should go from Gowrie, through Drayton, and then over the Main Range; but a subsequent survey showed a better route leaving Drayton some miles to the west, and the consequence was that the place had not developed as much as one would like. At the same time it was excellently situated for people looking for country residences, and he looked forward to a very considerable increase in the population of Drayton if the railway was constructed. He had already shown that its construction would result in a considerable saving in haulage of the whole of the Southern traffic, and also in the cost of maintenance. He had also drawn attention to the fact that the line went through settled country the whole way; at present, however, it was only sparsely settled compared with what it would become after the completion of the line, because the whole of the land through which it ran was capable of close settlement. He was sorry to find that the line had been made, to a large extent, a political line. He did not ask anyone to look upon it in that respect, but rather the reverse. He would rather ask every member of the Committee to throw out of sight everything with regard to the politics of the line, and judge it entirely upon its merits. If the information before the Committee was not considered sufficient, he would be happy to give any further information he was able to supply. But let them, once for all, try and get rid of the old party feeling with regard to railways—“If you will vote for this, I will vote for the other.” He did not want that. He did not ask any member to vote for the line unless he was satisfied that it was a good thing for the colony. There were no party politics about it so far as he was concerned, and he looked upon any promise which the leader on either side might have made with regard to the line as so much wind. He did not feel bound by any promises that might have been made by his predecessors either on one side or the other. He asked hon. members to discard that from their minds, and simply look upon the line as one which, he believed, would be a benefit to the colony, and which he believed would be worth all the money it was proposed to spend upon it.

Mr. MELLOR said before the motion was put, he would like to ask the Minister for Railways when he would be able to place on the table the plans of the 4th section of the North Coast Railway? He did not wish to refer to the motion, but he believed the plans of the line he referred to were ready.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he knew it was usual whenever a railway was proposed to travel over the whole colony and deal with every railway that had been proposed before, and if that was the wish of the Committee he would have to submit to it; but he thought it much better to confine their attention to the question before them. He was quite prepared to answer the hon. member, but at the same time there might be other hon. members who had similar questions to ask, and as he desired to save the time of the Committee perhaps it would be better to postpone his reply until he had heard what others had to say. Possibly he might be able to make one reply to a number of questions.

Mr. NORTH said he would like to ask the Minister when the plans of the Laidley branch line would be placed on the table of the House.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he was quite sure the hon. gentleman who had brought the question forward would be prepared to answer any number of questions that might be put to him. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) did not wish to put many questions, because he had always been somewhat favourable to the proposed deviation, and knew thoroughly that taking the line away down the creek to Gowrie was a political job. Still at the same time the work was not of immediate necessity. Toowoomba was very well supplied with railways. When money some years ago was granted for that line, it was also granted for a great number of other railway works as well, and if money could be found for that line, the hon. gentleman ought to be able to show the greater necessity that existed for it than for other lines for which money had been voted. The hon. gentleman said a survey was made ten years ago, which was set aside, and another lately made. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) knew of a survey up the Brisbane River which was made eight or ten years ago which had not been altered, which did not need alteration; and money was granted on the Loan Estimates for the line. He referred to the line to Nanango from Esk. Now around Drayton, Toowoomba, and those places, there was great facility for travelling, but up the way he spoke of there was none, for the reason that the district was intersected by two large rivers, and several wide creeks. There was really no means of conducting traffic there. During his last trip to that place he found that many of the farmers, living only fifteen or twenty miles away from the terminus of the line at Esk, could not reach their market. As to the line now proposed, there were no creeks or dangerous rivers to block traffic, and there did not seem half the necessity for the line as the one he had referred to. He had reduced the demand of his electorate to one section of a railway that would go right into the centre of the agricultural country along the Brisbane River. If there was such an immediate necessity for the Drayton deviation he would like to know by what trick or mystery was it now brought forward. Had the hon. gentleman any system by which branch lines could be run through West Moreton? East Moreton had been very well supplied with branch lines, but West Moreton had been entirely neglected. Not one shilling was being laid out there. The money for the Stanley line had been granted eight or ten years ago, and why not expend that at the same time as the Drayton deviation vote? Were there some favourite spots in the colony that were to receive special favours from the Minister for Railways, and would he be kind enough to tell the Committee the reason for those special favours? Many years ago £30,000 was granted for the Laidley Creek branch line. There were three branch lines in West Moreton that must be made at all hazards: One section of the Esk line; a

very small section of about seven or eight miles from Marburg to the centre of the greatest agricultural district in all Queensland; and about eighteen or twenty miles to Rosevale. If those three things were done he was quite satisfied the electors of West Moreton would allow the Government to carry on the best way they could, and would not clamour for any more branch lines until the revenue recovered itself. He must say the present Government were to be pitied with regard to the state of the finances of the colony; and he believed that until the Loan Estimates came on his constituents, and the electors of West Moreton in general, would not wish to press them. They wanted to know from their representatives in that House why the Government had passed them by and gone on to Toowoomba to make that branch line. Another branch would come on by-and-by, from Dalby to some fancy coal-field, he believed. If they had money enough he would go for them all, but as they were poor in pocket they should take care to lay out what they had to the best advantage. Then there was the *via recta*, and that was as necessary as any, and if the Drayton deviation cut off eight or nine miles, how many miles would the *via recta* cut off? Then again, look at the thousands of acres of the finest land that could be utilised by the construction of that line. The Minister for Railways had left them very bare in not telling them what the Government intended to do and how many branches and railways they intended to bring on. He did not wish the hon. member for Toowoomba to think that he was against the Drayton deviation for a moment, because he had always advocated it. The line should never have gone the way it had been taken, and it was only taken in the way it went now by the grossest job. He trusted some other members would get up and ask why that branch was being taken first. Was it because the Minister for Railways lived in that district himself? He did not wish to impute motives to the hon. gentleman, but he said that if that district wanted a railway the district he represented wanted one a thousand times more. He had not risen to oppose the motion, as he could not do that after the many promises he had made to support it, but he would like to know whether any justice was going to be done to the district he represented, and which had not had a shilling laid out upon it since he came into the House, with the exception of a trifle handed over to the divisional board by the Minister for Mines and Works.

Mr. MORGAN said he would very much like to see his way clear to vote for that railway; but in the absence of some testimony from men having local knowledge and members representing the constituencies intersected by the proposed line, as to the necessity for its construction, he could not at present see his way to do so. He would like to have some authoritative assurance from those gentlemen that the line was really required, and that the country would get value for the £70,000 it was proposed to expend upon it. The hon. member for Toowoomba, or the hon. member for Aubigny, should tell them something about the line, as they knew the country well, and the wants the proposed line was expected to serve. The Minister for Railways had only told them what was in the Commissioners' report; but they knew all about that. They wanted a little more than the dry facts contained in that official document. If the junior member for Toowoomba had been in his place, no doubt he would reply, and give the information the Committee desired to have.

Mr. BARLOW said he did not wish to create any unpleasantness on that occasion, and he

fully sympathised with the position of difficulty which the Government found themselves in with respect to the finances. They no doubt had experienced that in connection with the matter that had that afternoon been discussed on the motion for the adjournment of the House, and on the question of loan matters they felt, in common with the rest of the colony, the pinch of the shoe. It appeared, however, that though the people of the colony were poor in pocket in the matter of those railways they were very rich in faith. There was a matter of much more importance immediately concerning his constituents, and that was the *via recta*. The *via recta* was a deviation of a most important character, and possessed the qualifications of being at the same time a great national work and a branch line of very considerable importance. In the present state of the finances, and the decided difficulty of negotiating fresh loans in the immediate future, they could not expect everything; but all those constituencies interested in the schedule of the Loan Estimates for railways looked to receive a certain amount of dividend, as it were, from those votes. Speaking of West Moreton—and he was sure the hon. members for Cunningham and Warwick would support what he said—they look, to a certain extent, for a dividend in the matter of the *via recta*. They would be very glad if they could receive some assurance from the Minister for Railways that the first section of the *via recta*, from Mumbilla, should be proceeded with. He thought they were all pretty well agreed that that section should be commenced first. He gave the Minister for Railways credit, and believed, as he should believe a gentleman occupying his position, that he had no intention to divert from its purpose the money standing to the credit of the *via recta* on paper, but at the same time he would like to see some dividend from it. If the Drayton deviation was a matter of importance, in that it would save nine miles of running, it was a still more important matter to save four hours in time and nearly sixty miles of running. No doubt some day not far distant steps would have to be taken for the construction of an alternative line to the border or the duplication of the Toowoomba line, because it was utterly impossible for the traffic of this great and growing colony in the Southern districts to continue to go over that single line of railway. He was only discharging his duty to his constituents in mentioning that matter. He did not know whether the remarks addressed to the Minister for Railways would have any definite reply or any definite result; but, still, their constituents looked to them to mention the matter. As to the windy promises referred to by the Minister for Railways, he was not sufficiently acquainted with the exact terms of those promises to go into that question, but he knew that those windy promises when circulated about an electorate often blew votes into a ballot-box. He would leave the further discussion of the question to other members representing West Moreton, and would only express a hope that something like a proportionate and ratable grant of railways would be made, and something would be done for West Moreton where, as the hon. member for Stanley had said, no public work whatever was at present going forward.

Mr. SALKELD said he thought the Committee had a right to hear from the Government what their railway policy was, as it was wrong to take the lines one by one and bring them before the House in that way.

Mr. GROOM said he presumed that, as the representative of the district in which that railway was situated, he would be expected to

address a few remarks to the Committee upon the motion, but he thought it was wholly unnecessary that he should do so. When the vote of £44,000 was before the Committee in 1884, the subject had been fully debated. He thought nearly a whole evening had been occupied in hearing the arguments *pro* and *con*, and he did not think that he could add any force or strength to the arguments then used. The result of the debate was that the Committee had voted that sum of £44,000 for the construction of the line. He could only state that the construction of that line was simply redressing a most grievous wrong which was done to the district in 1866, when the line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick was determined upon. Early in the year 1866, when the general election had taken place, he had given a distinct pledge to his constituents that he would vote for no line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick which did not take the town of Drayton in its course; and he had attended a meeting at the Colonial Secretary's Office, in conjunction with certain other members of the then existing Parliament, which only numbered thirty-two members altogether. At that meeting the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Fitzgibbon, had been present, and he assured him (Mr. Groom), the Hon. J. Taylor, who had occupied a seat in that Parliament also, and Mr. John Watts, who represented Western Downs, that it would be impossible to take a line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick *via* Drayton, in consequence of the engineering difficulties. He stated that the station would have to be on what was called a decline, and that such a thing as that was wholly unknown in railway engineering. The Committee must remember that at that time there was no other engineer in the colony who was supposed to be an authority on railway engineering, and his word was law. The entire railway policy of the colony was based upon Mr. Fitzgibbon's report. In those early days he (Mr. Groom) had had the honour of introducing a resolution, in the old Parliament House in Queen street, to the effect that before the colony was committed to what was called the 3 feet 6 inch gauge, they should have an additional engineer in the colony to report upon the question of a broad gauge. An evening was devoted to the consideration of what was called "the war of gauges," but he thought that, with the exception of the hon. member for Stanley and himself, there was not another hon. member now present who had heard the question of gauges discussed. The engineer who had decided in favour of the 3 feet 6 inch gauge, as against the 4 feet 8½ inch gauge, was the same engineer that assured them that the station would be on a decline, supposing the railway should be carried through Drayton, and that that was impossible. But there were other considerations apart from that. There was also the powerful influence of the chief owners of runs on the Downs to take the line by way of Gowrie Junction towards Cambooya. Not long after the railway had been formed, a trial survey was made, more as an experiment than anything else, from Toowoomba to Drayton, and it was then discovered that the information received from Mr. Fitzgibbon with regard to the formation of a line of railway in that direction was incorrect. He felt so strongly on the matter that in 1878 he tabled a motion asking the House for a grant of £500 for the survey of a line of railway from Toowoomba to Cambooya, *via* Drayton, more for the purpose of testing the accuracy of the information given in the earlier days than for the purpose of having the line definitely constructed. That survey was carried out, and it was found that there was not the slightest engineering difficulty in the line being taken over the course suggested in the first instance. If that had been done it would have

taken in not only Toowoomba and Drayton, but other large agricultural districts, such as Spring Creek, King's Creek, and Allora, which were entirely deprived of railway communication through the mistake made in the first survey. So that the short line proposed now was simply intended to remedy the injustice which was done to the district in the earlier history of the colony. Independent of that, since 1878 the district of Pittsworth had rapidly grown in importance. It had become a closely settled district, and the last census returns showed a population of 4,000 settlers. If the railway was continued to Back Creek a very large area of Crown land would be opened up for settlement in small agricultural farms of 160 acres each, which would be rapidly taken up. The proposed line would shorten the distance to the whole of those farmers in bringing their produce to market and taking their supplies back, by nine miles each way, or eighteen miles on every journey, which was a very serious consideration indeed. The hon. member for Warwick laughed. He wished that hon. member, while they were considering other questions, would for the moment sink the *via recta*. As he was saying, the proposed line would effect a saving of nine miles of haulage each way, and there would be a corresponding saving to the whole of the selectors on the Darling Downs also.

Mr. MORGAN: No!

Mr. GROOM said he was referring to the Southern line, and the line would not only shorten the distance as far as Pittsworth was concerned, but to the whole of the residents on the Southern line by eighteen miles. That was a very important consideration. Not very long ago a sum of £16,000 or £20,000 was voted to make a deviation of a mile and a-half or two miles in the neighbourhood of Ipswich.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That deviation cost double that amount.

Mr. GROOM said that when he made a statement to that effect the other night he was contradicted, and he was glad to hear a confirmation of it. However, there was no objection on the part of the House to voting the amount, because the report of the Engineer-in-Chief pointed out that the wear and tear of the permanent way which would be affected by that deviation justified the expenditure on the part of the House. If that was the case with regard to the saving of a mile and a-half or two miles, how much more was it necessary when the saving was eighteen miles, not only in regard to wear and tear of permanent way, and shortening the distance to all the selectors settled along the line, but also to the mail trains which started from Sydney and Brisbane simultaneously. So that in whatever way it was regarded, he thought that the proposed deviation was a desirable one. In reference to the character of the land in the neighbourhood of Drayton, it was some of the finest on the Darling Downs, and there was no doubt whatever that when the railway was constructed that land would be very closely settled upon. Therefore, on the ground of stimulating settlement the line was desirable. But the paramount consideration was that the construction of the line would remedy a grievous injustice which was done to the district twenty-three years ago, when their railway system was first initiated. Through political considerations of the very worst character the line was taken by its present route, although the line to Dalby would have suited all the people in that locality, and the seven or eight members who endeavoured to resist it were unfortunately unable to do so. He was prepared to tell the Committee that the Toowoomba railway station had no business to be where it was. It was

never intended by nature or by circumstances to be there. The proper place for it was the Queen's Park, where there was ample Government land, and which was high and dry; but in place of that an exorbitant price was paid for the present site, and owing to political considerations the line was taken round by Gowrie instead of trending away to the south-west through fine agricultural land, and on towards Warwick. The land through which the line passed was sheep walks when it was constructed, and it had continued sheep walks ever since, and all the close settlement that was to take place as soon as the railway was constructed had not been realised. For the last fifteen years he had fought continually and persistently to get that injustice remedied. The voting of the money in 1884, was one step towards that end, and the present Government had now come down and asked the House to complete the remedy by authorising the construction of the line. He could assure the Committee that the money would not be misspent. It would effect a great saving in every way and assist to develop the traffic on the line. If he were to talk for hours he could say no more on the subject than he had. He was not going to disparage any other lines. He had referred only incidentally to the *via recta*; he was quite prepared to let that line rest on its merits, and hoped the same course would be adopted with regard to the line before the Committee. He was sure that had that railway been proposed by the late Government it would have been carried long ago, but it had been retarded by being mixed up with other lines. He thoroughly endorsed the remarks of the Hon. the Minister for Railways that railways should be considered altogether apart from political considerations, and entirely on their merits. If that was done he was sure that every district in the colony would get justice in the future. He repeated that the work was a very necessary one, and would remedy a great injustice that had been inflicted on the district by political considerations and a great deal of dissimulation. The construction of the railway by the present route had nearly cost him his seat for Toowoomba, and it was only after getting documents from the Colonial Secretary's Office to show that he had been misled that his constituents were satisfied that he had acted upon wrong advice, and that the fault was not his that the railway was not taken through Drayton, as now proposed. He was glad to observe from the tone of the debate that that great injustice was likely to be rectified.

Mr. MORGAN said the hon. member for Toowoomba had told the Committee that when the extension from Toowoomba to Warwick was first mooted, the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Fitzgibbon, led hon. members and Parliament to believe that it was impossible to construct a railway from Toowoomba direct to where Cambooya was now situated, *via* Drayton, and the hon. member also told them that he believed that statement. How any hon. member who had witnessed the construction of the Southern and Western Railway across the Main Range to Toowoomba could be so green as to swallow such utter rot as that, he (Mr. Morgan) could not imagine for one moment. The ascent of the range was the most difficult feat in railway engineering that had been witnessed in the colony at that time, and how any member in his senses could give credence to the assertion that a railway could not be made *via* Drayton to Cambooya was quite beyond his comprehension. He thought there must have been other reasons for giving assent to the construction of the line *via* Gowrie. But it was not necessary to go so far back into ancient history. Their business that evening was to say whether it was wise in the interests of the colony generally, and particularly of those people

who used the Southern Railway, to construct that deviation; and notwithstanding what the hon. member for Toowoomba had said, he (Mr. Morgan) was not at all clear that it was a wise thing to construct the line. The hon. member had not shown any good grounds why the colony should commit itself to the construction of a line which the Minister for Railways said would cost £71,000, but which he believed, when the balance was struck, would cost very nearly £100,000. He did not think it was wise, considering the few people who would be benefited by that line, to commit the country to such an expenditure. There were other districts in the Southern and Northern portions of the colony very much more in need of railway communication than the few remnants of the pioneers of the Darling Downs, who still existed in the salubrious climate of Drayton. No doubt it was a healthy climate; they had some of the early pioneers who came over with the Leslies and the Campbells still living in Drayton. They would remain there probably till they died; but, if a railway was wanted for the benefit of those people, one could be built, making the distance less, and at less cost than the one now proposed. The hon. member for Toowoomba had suddenly developed a consideration for the farmers of the Southern district. It was not so very long ago since that hon. member assisted during a twenty-four hours' sitting to stone-wall a railway that would have been of the first importance to the farmers of Southern Queensland. He did that, not in the interests of the country, but in the interests of Toowoomba; and there was no doubt that if the railway now proposed was not to come into Toowoomba it would have met with his opposition also. What was the use of talking about benefiting people who were at a disadvantage of sixty-five miles in distance and four hours in time by shearing off nine miles of the journey to the metropolis? It was like giving a drop of water to a man famishing with thirst. It would not help them at all, but would have the contrary effect, as he hoped to be able to show. At present the produce of the Southern farming districts was sent largely to Dalby, Roma, Charleville, and the intermediate towns. That produce was carried from Warwick along the existing line to Gowrie Junction, and then along the Western line to its destination. The distance from Beauaraba Junction, the point at which the Drayton deviation would join the main line, to Gowrie, the point at which the Southern line joined the Western line, was eleven miles, and the Commissioners plainly hinted that when the Drayton deviation was built that line would be closed. All the produce from Stanthorpe, Warwick, Allora, and the intermediate stations would then be carried to Beauaraba, along the Drayton deviation to Toowoomba, and back along the line to Gowrie; so that instead of travelling eleven miles from Beauaraba Junction to Gowrie Junction it would have to travel ten miles from Beauaraba to Toowoomba, and nearly eight miles to Gowrie Junction, making a total of eighteen miles, as against eleven miles at present travelled—making a clear loss of eight miles to consignors in the Southern districts. He would now refer to another so-called benefit, which was also a benefit of the wrong sort. At present a rebate of freight for fifteen miles was allowed from stations south and west of Beauaraba Junction to stations north and east of Toowoomba, in consideration of the fact that they were sixty-five miles farther from Brisbane by rail than geographically; but in consideration of nine miles being cut off by the Drayton deviation, the Minister proposed to

abolish that allowance of fifteen miles, so that there would be a clear loss of six miles in freight to the people of Stanthorpe, Allora, Warwick, Killarney, and the intermediate farming centres. Were those advantages such as would induce the representatives of those districts to vote for the construction of the line? He said, "No." They did not want the Drayton deviation, and he hoped it would not be passed. It would only benefit a few people at Drayton and a few people at Pittsworth. But the people at Pittsworth already enjoyed railway communication and were in no worse position in regard to their market, Toowoomba, than other districts in the colony. They were not so badly situated as the people of Killarney, who were seventeen miles from their market town, Warwick, while the railway from Warwick to Killarney was twenty-seven miles long. If the Drayton deviation were passed he would have just as much right to pester the Government eternally for a direct line from Warwick to Killarney. The deviation the people in the Southern districts wanted was a deviation from Ipswich direct to Warwick and on to the border. That would save the people there sixty miles in distance and four hours in time; and if the hon. member for Toowoomba and his friends were so concerned for the welfare of the people in the South, they could not better consult their interests than by giving their support to that railway. The hon. member for Toowoomba recently headed a deputation to the Minister for Railways when in Toowoomba in support of the early construction of the Drayton deviation, and one of the arguments he used was that it would enable people to visit the cemetery regularly.

Mr. GROOM: That is not so.

Mr. MORGAN said he supposed the hon. member was misreported. He had a file of the *Darling Downs Gazette*—

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That paper is no good. You must get the *Chronicle*.

Mr. MORGAN said he was sorry to hear the Minister for Railways make such an assertion. He believed that hon. member held a considerable interest in the paper, and he did not think he would give his co-directors away in that fashion. He was told that the hon. gentleman was the chairman of directors, and that one year the paper paid 10 per cent.—he did not know whether it had done so since. In the issue of the *Darling Downs Gazette* for the 17th June there was a long report of a deputation that had an interview with the Minister for Railways. They wanted the plans of the line tabled at once, and the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom, in the course of his arguments, was reported to have said:—

"The inconvenience of backing into the Toowoomba station would be obviated, as trains would go straight ahead. Then there would be a platform at the cemetery where many thousands were interred, whose relatives were scattered all over the Downs. The desire of being united in the grave was strong in human nature, so that if the convenience existed the burials in the cemetery would be very numerous."

Now, he hoped the hon. member would admit that he was quoting him fairly.

Mr. GROOM: If you ask the Minister for Railways he will not admit that that is true. It is a perfect caricature.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Really I do not read the paper.

Mr. MORGAN: Did the hon. gentleman tell him he did not read the *Darling Downs Gazette*?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; nor the *Chronicle* either.

Mr. MORGAN said the matter was one that should be seriously considered by the Minister for Railways, whether, on the ground advocated

by the hon. member for Toowoomba, the line should not be withdrawn at once. If he wanted to depopulate Toowoomba and Drayton he would proceed with his intention of constructing the railway, because one of the strongest arguments used in its favour by the hon. member for Toowoomba was that the moment it was constructed people would die off and be carried to the cemetery, and there be united in the grave in obedience to that impulse which they were told was so strong in human nature. He had shown that the railway would deprive people in the Southern districts of the colony of the allowance of fifteen miles which was at present conceded to them; he had shown that it would not pay, and that on the outward produce from Warwick to the Western districts the people would be placed at a disadvantage equal to about eight miles. Every year almost there was a large output of flour from Warwick, and the largest market was the Western district. The line would place millers and wheat-growers at a much more serious disadvantage than they at present had to bear. That was why he said he hoped the Committee would not consent to the adoption of the plans. There was another reason why he hoped the Committee would not adopt the plans, and that was because it was recommended to the House by the Commissioners as a portion of a system of railway construction continuing on from Pittsworth to the South-western district. Now, they were well aware that the only line of communication with the South-western districts that had ever been presented to the House was a line which had been surveyed from Warwick along the southern border towards St. George. There was in the Loan Estimates of 1884 a sum of £250,000 set down for that work.

The PREMIER: Towards St. George by Goondiwindi.

Mr. MORGAN said the Premier knew all about it. That was the only route which had in any way had the sanction of Parliament. The money was voted in 1884, and the plans were submitted to the House on two occasions, but were defeated mainly through the efforts of the present Premier. Now, if there was to be an extension from the existing system of Southern railways to that district, he contended that it should be in accordance with the wish as expressed by the last Parliament, and that was that the starting point should be Warwick. He did not know why the Commissioners had gone out of their way to suggest a scheme of future railways which were in no way to be considered with the question before the Committee. The Drayton deviation could only be justified in his opinion on the ground that the hon. member for Toowoomba advanced to the Minister for Railways when he headed that deputation recently. It would benefit the people of Drayton and nobody else.

Mr. GROOM: Nonsense! You don't know what you are talking about.

Mr. MORGAN said he had a very clear knowledge of what he was talking about. It would certainly benefit nobody between Clifton and the southern border; and, as to the traffic it would obtain from Drayton, anybody who knew that historic town would be forced to admit that it would be very small indeed. The people of Drayton were already within a few miles of railway stations; and he was sure that even if a railway was run through the place, it would get very little of the small amount of produce grown in the locality, because the farmers, having horses and drays of their own, and having to put their produce on the drays in order to get it to a railway station, would just as soon carry it to market in that way as unload it at the

railway station and load it again. The line would practically be a dead letter, so far as goods traffic was concerned, and therefore he thought it was not desirable to spend the amount of money proposed in constructing a line that would be only useful for the purpose of accommodating funerals. Now what was the cost likely to be? They were told in the Commissioners' report that 173 acres of land must be resumed. Of that, 37 acres were reserves—Government reserves, and possibly some might be reserves held by the Toowoomba corporation, who might plunder the Government as they had plundered it before, for compensation. Nine acres were roads and streets; 22 acres town land, and 104 acres country land. The estimated value of that land was £15,000. That was the Commissioners' estimate. He did not know whether hon. members were aware of this fact, that the extension traversed almost the entire length of the town of Toowoomba, and went through town allotments the whole of the distance. Having reached one end of the town, it doubled round and traversed almost half the distance again. Every one of the property owners were on the look out for making a good thing out of the State cow, and he would warrant they would milk her to some purpose. When the Minister for Railways had come to pay his last cheque he would find that the amount would be nearer £30,000 than £15,000 for the land resumed. The line ran the whole length of Toowoomba, following the depression formerly known as "the swamp." Land on the street frontages was selling at a high rate—£30 or £40 a foot. There was no doubt that the town had progressed very rapidly, and town land was very valuable. The people having to make a forced sale to the Government would not hesitate to open their mouths pretty fully, and he was sure from what he knew of the land that was proposed to be resumed for that line £15,000 would not be anything like the amount of the claims that would be made for compensation. He had a few other facts in connection with the railway to lay before the Committee, but he did not wish to monopolise the discussion. He was disposed now to allow the hon. member for Aubigny to say a few words on the subject in order to convince him that he was wrong, if possible, though he thought he was right.

Mr. GROOM said he had told the Committee that the hon. member for Warwick spoke of matters he knew nothing at all about, and the concluding remarks made by the hon. member had proved that. It was a great pity that the attention of the Committee should be directed from a great purpose by such absurd statements as the hon. member had made. The hon. member stated that the railway was going through swamp lands.

Mr. MORGAN: I said originally swamp lands.

Mr. GROOM: And that they were worth £30 or £40 a foot.

Mr. MORGAN: I said the street frontages.

Mr. GROOM said the hon. member must stick to what he said, and he had said that before the Minister for Railways paid his last cheque the amount for compensation would probably have reached £30,000. The hon. member spoke in ignorance of the present Act of Parliament. They had an Act, for which they were indebted to the present Minister for Mines and Works, which precluded any such extravagant sums being paid as the hon. member had named. There was no use in the hon. member trying to mislead the Committee by such absurd statements. There was a considerable quantity of what the hon. member called swamp land, which was the property of the Crown, and for which

they would have to pay no compensation at all. With regard to another matter the hon. member would permit him to say that, when the hon. member talked about the interest he took in the farmers of Southern Queensland, he (Mr. Groom) had advocated their cause in that House when he stood almost alone, with the exception of the hon. member for Stanley. He was not quite sure whether the hon. member for Warwick was born at the time, but, if he was, he must have been an infant of very tender years, when he (Mr. Groom) and the hon. member for Stanley fought the cause of the farmers. Had it not been for the votes of the hon. member for Stanley and himself it was very questionable whether the railway to Warwick would have been carried when it was. He had referred to 1866, but he found it was in 1865 when he spoke on the subject, and when the plans, sections, and books of reference of the Drayton deviation were laid before Parliament. He found on reference to *Hansard* he was reported in this way:—

"He must confess that he felt very considerable hesitation as to the course he ought to pursue on this occasion, and he felt hesitation in this way—he had in a measure given a pledge that he would not vote for a line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick which did not include the town of Drayton in its course. Since that pledge was given he had made it his business to have an interview with the Chief Engineer of Railways, who had assured him that there were insurmountable engineering difficulties in the way of the construction of a line of railway from Toowoomba to Warwick which would include Drayton. After that he was almost absolved from his pledge, and he felt at liberty to vote upon this question irrespective of any considerations which that pledge involved."

Then the vote was carried, and he then advocated it more for the purpose of the Warwick district than for the purposes of his own district. The then hon. member for Western Downs, Mr. Watts, opposed the railway, and warned the House to ascertain first how many bales of wool it would have to carry, for that was the prevailing point at that time, and he (Mr. Groom) had pointed out to the hon. member for Western Downs that the area of land even then under cultivation in the Warwick district was some 14,000 acres, and of course it had increased very largely since. He had supported the Warwick line on that occasion against the interests of his own constituents, but in support of farmers of Southern Queensland. Then the Hon. J. Bramston, in moving the approval of the plans of the line before the Upper House, made use of the following remarks:—

"I may state that the proposed line between Toowoomba and Warwick is to be carried through a country of the easiest possible character—a country which presents but few engineering difficulties and those of no great severity. The chief obstacles have been avoided, although possibly not in a way which will be considered most acceptable to the inhabitants of Drayton, inasmuch as the railway will not approach that town so nearly as they would have liked to have adopted; the line of country which would have given them most satisfaction would, however, have entailed a considerable extra expense; and would have involved the necessity of erecting a station half way down an incline, which I need hardly say would have been most undesirable, and particularly inconvenient for stoppages. In Victoria such a contingency occurred, and a great deal of money was expended in the construction of a large and substantial station midway on an incline, under precisely similar circumstances, which had afterwards to be abandoned. The Government of this colony have no desire to incur any unnecessary expense, and they are, therefore, desirous of avoiding difficulties of this nature. This will be effected by carrying the railway along the line selected by the engineers."

Hon. members would see that that was just the reason why the railway was not taken to Warwick *via* the town of Drayton at that time. There was nothing about a grievance, but the opinion of the engineers was accepted, just as it was proposed to accept the opinion of the

engineers now. He believed that the opinion given by Mr. Fitzgibbon was given in good faith, and it was then thought to be reliable. It was since found that it was not reliable, and that the railway could have been taken through Drayton, and a station formed there without any incline. He need not state again that political, and not personal, considerations had resulted in the taking of the line in the way in which it had gone.

Mr. SALKELD said that before the adjournment for tea he had stated that the Committee had a right to expect that the whole Government policy in regard to railways would be laid before them, or their railway policy for the immediate future at any rate, as until that was done the Committee would not be in a fair position to form a judgment upon any railways brought forward piecemeal. They should at all events have an assurance from the Government as to whether they intended to carry out the railways indicated on the loan schedule. He hoped the hon. member for Toowoomba would not interpret his remarks as adverse to the Drayton deviation; but he took the opportunity to call the attention of the Government to the necessity for some statement as to their railway policy. He found that in the Southern districts there were three railways, the plans of which had not been passed—one was the Laidley Creek branch, another the railway from Warwick towards St. George, and the third was the railway from Ipswich to Warwick. Nothing had been done in regard to those three lines, whilst in the case of all the others in the Southern districts something had been done towards carrying them out—by the passing of the plans, or the laying of them before the House. That being so, he thought it was a very serious matter that in the Southern portion of the colony there were no railways being constructed. With the exception of the extension of the North Coast line towards Gympie, there was not a railway going on at the present time in the South of the colony, as he thought the Southport and Cleveland lines were nearly completed. There was great depression in business circles in the Southern portions of the colony, and people were complaining in all directions. Perhaps they had expected too much from the return of the present Government to power. With regard to the contention of the hon. member for Toowoomba, in favour of the proposed line, he (Mr. Salkeld) understood that for every mile saved between Toowoomba and Warwick by the Drayton deviation it would cost about £8,000, and that for the same amount for each mile in distance saved the *via recta* could be constructed—namely, for about £480,000. He would also point out that few persons would be served by the Drayton deviation, as no one was more than five and a-half miles from a railway at present, while in the case of the *via recta* settlers were two and three times that distance away from a railway. The first section from Warwick to Maryville would accommodate a large number of settlers, and if the line were constructed for ten or twelve miles from Mumbilla on this side of the range a large number of settlers would also be accommodated. Those two sections would pay far beyond the average of branch lines. He could not understand why there should be any delay, as he believed the working plans of the first sections from both ends were now ready, and there was nothing to prevent the Government from bringing them before Parliament, and obtaining the decision of Parliament upon them. As to the talk about railways standing upon their own merits, it was easy for people to say that they did not believe in political railways but when a

railway affecting their own district was concerned, they went straight for it—the hon. member for Toowoomba included. When any matter affecting Toowoomba was before Parliament the hon. gentleman went straight for it, and he did not wonder that the hon. gentleman had been returned by the electors of Toowoomba for over a quarter of a century, because he had been a first-class member, and had looked after the interests of Toowoomba admirably. He did not blame the hon. member for doing that, but he must allow other hon. members to look after their districts. If they did not they would soon be thrown into the shade. He (Mr. Salkeld) had not troubled the Committee much about the *via recta*. The Minister for Railways knew that he had been once or twice to see him upon the subject. He considered they ought to have some declaration from the Government as to whether they intended carrying out the lines provided for in the Loan Estimates of 1884. He did not intend to oppose the proposed deviation, but they should have an early explanation from the Government as to their intended course of action with regard to the plans for the remaining railways provided for in the loan vote of 1884.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that he was not going to touch upon the particular deviation under discussion at all; but he thought it was high time that the Government laid before the Committee some railway policy. It had been hoped by many hon. members that, on the appointment of the Railway Commissioners, railway construction would have been removed from the sphere of political influence. He was not going to press unduly upon any horns, but was there no political contingency apparent just at present which had had some influence in bringing the proposed deviation prominently forward? He was not going to dwell upon that point, but he would dwell upon the point that it was simply disgraceful that any hon. member should rise in that Committee, and should advocate the duplication of a railway to any small town in the Southern portion of the colony, while large areas in the colony were destitute of railway communication altogether. He knew perfectly well that there would be no hon. member of that Committee sitting as the representative of a Northern constituency who would be returned at the next election unless he assisted in grappling with that question. The debt of the colony was growing very great, and the interest payable upon money spent in railway construction was becoming very rapidly a sum which the revenue of the colony was barely able to meet. There had been about £17,000,000 of money spent in railway construction, and he should like to know how much of that money had been spent north of Rockhampton. Had anything like a fair proportion been spent in the North? Money had been voted years ago for a line from Normanton to Cloncurry, and where was that money? It certainly was not in the Treasury, if they were to credit the statement made by the Colonial Treasurer, and he knew no reason why they should not credit that statement. They were told that they must be careful in what they did; they were told that the £10,000,000 loan was absolutely apportioned, and that, in fact, there was a deficit through the liabilities already undertaken by the Government, and that very shortly they would have to float another loan. The colony stood in a very peculiar position at the present moment. There were very grave movements being carried on in the old country, which would seriously affect the credit of Queensland, which at present had not the best of reputations amongst what was termed the Imperialistic party at home, owing to their interfer-

ence in the appointment of a Governor, and other matters. They knew that there was a strong desire in the old country to appropriate the whole of the Crown lands in Western Australia in the interests of certain syndicates, and in addition to that there was a very artful proposition—which he was surprised to notice had received the support of the Premier of one of the Australian colonies—to garrison the coaling stations at the extremities of the continent with Imperial troops. Hon. members might ask what that had to do with the Drayton deviation; but when they could construct no railway in the colony without borrowing more money, and it only required a few remarks from influential people at home to discredit the next loan put on the market, what position would the colony then be in, with about £22,000,000 of debt, and something like £1,000,000 of interest to pay annually? Hon. members might laugh at that as verging on the absurd, but he could assure them that it was anything but absurd, and he very much feared that the laugh would be on the other side of their mouths when the next loan was launched, if they persisted, as he trusted they would, in conducting their own affairs in the manner they thought proper. There was the hon. member for Toowoomba, universally recognised as one of the best, if not the best, local representatives in the House, in addition to his ability in other ways; what did his advocacy amount to with regard to the Drayton deviation? Simply that it would save nine miles, at a cost of £10,000 a mile—that it would enable people, at a little less possible trouble, to shed tears over the graves of their relatives in the Drayton cemetery. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) wished, on behalf of the Northern members, who represented one-third of the colony, to come to some understanding as to how the money of the colony should be appropriated. The North did not get its share, and never had done. It was very easy for any member to put a pile of statistics on the table showing that there had been more money voted for the North than it was entitled to either on area or population basis; but had it been expended? The first principle of railway construction was the remuneration to be derived from the line constructed. The last report of the late Commissioner for Railways showed that the only line in the colony which paid more than interest on cost of construction was the Northern line.

Mr. AGNEW: And the Sandgate line.

Mr. HODGKINSON: And yet the South was not satisfied; they wanted to duplicate all those lines, to reticulate the country, and to have parallel lines almost running from the same place. There were already two lines to Gympie; the line from Toowoomba was to be deviated *via* Drayton; there was already a line to Warwick, and hon. members wanted Warwick to have a *via recta*. How could it possibly be a *via recta* when the rest of the colony was to be defrauded to construct it? He should have thought that one of the first instructions to the Railway Commissioners would have been to make a general inspection of all the railways in the colony. But what were their instructions? They were to go to Cooktown and no further. Cooktown was by no means the terminus of the colony.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who told you they were to go no further than Cooktown?

Mr. HODGKINSON said he was only repeating what he saw reported in the papers, and he had too much confidence in the accuracy of the two leading papers of Brisbane not to conclude that their information was correct. He knew it was a very difficult thing to drive a Government official of high rank beyond latitude 16 degrees;

and even then he only went when the weather was agreeable, instead of going at a season when he would see that the country was absolutely impassable by any other means than railway communication. During the present session three lines had been brought forward by the Minister for Railways—the Sandgate extension, carrying the line to some little tin-pot dredging affair, where, he was told, the crabs absolutely carried back the sand as fast as it was dredged out; an extension of the South Brisbane line; and now they were asked to sanction the Drayton deviation. The Sandgate extension was to cost £20,000; the South Brisbane extension, £200,000; and the Drayton deviation, £70,000. The hon. member for Warwick said it would cost much nearer £100,000, and, judging from past experience, that estimate was most likely to be correct. There was a sum of at least £300,000 to be expended upon those lines, not one of which was of primary importance. He admitted that they were useful things, that they were lines that should be constructed if the colony were in a good financial position; but they were not absolutely requisite, and they would not add to the earnings of those railways one shilling. Every passenger who went to Sandgate to catch white-bait, and every farmer at the Drayton deviation who grew a pair of pumpkins and a goat would do the same if this additional cost were not incurred. That sum of £300,000, if spent as it ought to be, would construct not less than 100 miles of the line from Normanton to Cloncurry, and shorten the distance between those two places by one-half; it would construct the entire line from Croydon to Georgetown; or it would construct 100 miles of line to the west of the Central railway and open up to settlement a large amount of country, the wealth of which would benefit that portion of the colony far more than those petty extensions which the Committee had been asked to sanction. It was very painful to be iterating and reiterating those demands of the North; it was sickening; but he was asking nothing unreasonable. He believed the Government were animated by as sincere a desire to do justice to the North as any previous Government. Let them divide the colony into three sections, and say, “We have so much money to spend this year on railway construction; we intend to give the South so much; we intend to give the Central district so much; and we intend to give the North so much; and under no circumstances shall one fund be appropriated for the benefit of another section of the colony to which it does not belong.” With that the North would be perfectly satisfied. Unless it was wished to divide the colony into hostile sections, to have a body of men in the House who would simply oppose everything because they felt conscious that they were subjected to injustice, they would always have those ceaseless complaints from the North. He was not exaggerating, or making any statement that was not borne out by facts. It was a well-known principle that main lines of railway should be constructed before they sought to build branch feeders; for this reason, that on main lines of railway the Government had little to pay as compensation for land, but in thickly populated districts the item of compensation was a very serious one; and he asked if it was not time that the Ministry should say to any section of the community that wanted a branch line in any special locality, that they would not construct it unless the residents agreed amongst themselves to give the land free. Why should the whole colony be taxed to pay enormous sums as compensation for the benefit of a very small section of the community? They had had a long discussion that evening about divisional boards, and, without going into that question again, he would point out that there

was a vast difference between the position of the settled and unsettled districts of the colony. When a place became populous, surely its ratable property became equally extensive, and they should be able to pay for improvements which benefited themselves, and themselves only. They were now spending public money which they borrowed on the distinct understanding that the works were reproductive, but would any hon. member tell him that the Drayton deviation was going to be remunerative? Or would any Government dare close the alternative line? As long as there was a pumpkin grown along that line, and an hon. member was returned to represent that pumpkin, that line would remain open; no Government would dare close it. He would ask the Government, instead of bringing in those little bits of railways, to bring down a substantial railway policy, one that they could discuss once for all. If they were defeated by a hostile majority they would accept the position, but he did not like those little lines—a sop here and a sop there all over the colony. Let the Government bring forward something like a national scheme—the extension of the main line from Cooktown, the extension to Cloncurry, which would open up one of the greatest sheep districts in Australia, and similar works. He said let the various portions of the colony know what they were entitled to before any more of those petty deviations were brought forward. Let them have a settlement of accounts. He had understood that the Minister for Mines and Works was going to bring in a Bill on the subject. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) had seen a draft of such a measure which would at any rate place the different portions of the colony in the position of knowing how they stood. He was sure that he was speaking the wishes of the Northern and Central members when he said it was the duty of the Ministry to stop, once for all, those petty log-rolling railways, and arrive at a determination as to how much money they proposed to expend in railway construction, and divide it *pro rata* among the several districts, keeping each account separate for the district for which it was voted.

Mr. LITTLE said he thoroughly endorsed the remarks of the hon. member for Burke. As a Northern member he would like to know why the public money should be spent and lavished on railways in the South, while people in the North were waiting and praying for railway communication which they could not get. He had heard that day, to his utter astonishment, that some hon. members were going to try and stop the Cairns-Herberton Railway. But £400,000 had been spent on that line, and that money could not be thrown into the sea. That railway was a blunder, not made by the present Government but by the late Government. That line was secured by fraud and misrepresentation, and the moment he heard that the line was to start from Cairns he knew gross injustice was being done. Port Douglas was the natural outlet of the district; but £400,000 could not be thrown away, and he would caution any hon. member who attempted to stop the construction of the Cairns-Herberton Railway that he would never be returned again to that House.

Mr. COWLEY said the hon. member for Burke had stated that he would like to know how much of the £17,000,000 expended in railway construction had been spent in the North. He (Mr. Cowley) would state the amount, and then hon. members would see that in justice to the North something should be done there in the way of railway construction, instead of doing everything in the South. During the present Parliament they had authorised the construction of one railway in the North—to Croydon—and three in the South. In

the South he included the Central and Wide Bay and Burnett Divisions. He found, from the tables furnished by the Commissioner for Railways, that the total public debt for railways amounted to £17,578,652. The Southern portion of the debt amounted to £14,293,152, the Northern portion, £3,285,000. The total expenditure to date of the report was £13,487,851, of which £11,484,337 was expended in the South, and £2,003,520 in the North. The balance unexpended was £4,090,794, the Southern proportion being £2,808,815, the Northern, £1,281,979. Out of the amount voted for the North, £3,283,500, there was a balance of £1,281,979 available; and out of £14,000,000 voted for the South there was a balance of about £2,800,000 unexpended. He was aware that the Government were in a very peculiar position, that they were in a straitened position; but it was incumbent on them to do something, and to let it be known what that something was. They knew the country had been demoralised by the £10,000,000 loan vote, because that vote involved the expenditure of another £5,000,000, and it would take another five or six years to complete the works authorised when the vote was passed. They could feel for the Government on being placed in such a position. He knew that the leader of the Opposition the other day, when the South Brisbane line was under consideration, cautioned the Government against borrowing any more. But what did his remarks amount to? "Do not borrow any more money. Construct the railways which we have already authorised. Husband your resources, and when I come into power I will borrow another £10,000,000." The hon. member knew that if he could get the Government to carry out that policy the people would probably be so dissatisfied that they would fly to the other party, knowing that they would borrow money and extend railways all over the country the same as before. It had been shown that the construction of the Drayton deviation was not necessary, and that its construction would result in closing a line already in existence, which would be an injustice to the people settled along the line that would be closed. The only gain from the construction of the line would be a saving of thirty minutes in the journey; and he would ask whether that was sufficient to justify an expenditure of from £70,000 to £100,000, especially considering the disabilities under which many other portions of the country were labouring? It was hardly fair to ask the Committee to vote the money for the line; and it would be much better for the Minister for Railways to withdraw the motion, and for the Government to formulate their railway policy and let hon. members know exactly what they were prepared to do. He did not advocate log-rolling; but he objected to the piecemeal manner in which the railway policy of the present Ministry was being disclosed. He thought he had given sufficient reasons to show that the present time was not opportune to ask the Committee to approve of the plans and sections of the proposed line.

Mr. SAYERS said he thought that before they passed any more railways they should know what the railway policy of the Government was; and until that was known he intended to oppose any railway that might be brought forward. He did not pretend to be an authority on the line now under consideration, because he did not know the country through which it would pass; but he had only heard one member besides the Minister for Railways say anything in its favour. He should have thought that the other members representing constituencies about Drayton and Toowoomba would have had something to say on the question. They were asked to expend £100,000 on a railway demanded by one

little town, while the demands of places with twenty times as many people were overlooked. It had been stated that an Act had been brought in by the present Minister for Mines and Works, to prevent a high price being given for land resumed for public purposes, but he failed to see how it would prevent that. He failed to see that the Government could resume land in Brisbane at the same price as in Toowoomba, for instance. If a man had land worth £40 or £50 a foot, and the Government resumed it, he would ask that amount, and if the matter went before the arbitrator, and he was not satisfied with the arbitrator's award, he could go to court. So that he believed the land resumed for the purpose of making the line would cost a great deal more than the £15,000 estimated by the Commissioners. Another thing, the line would go through private property all the way. The present holders of that property were the only people who would benefit by the construction of the line, and he did not see why the country should pay a high price for the land resumed to make a railway for the benefit of the owners of that land. As was said by the hon. member for Burke, the time had arrived when the people who wanted a railway built through their private property should be prepared to give the land required for the purpose of making the railway. He intended to vote against the motion.

Mr. ALLAN said that though the proposed line would shorten the distance to Brisbane for his constituents, he did not feel justified in supporting the motion. He did not think they ought at the present time, whatever might be done with regard to the proposed deviation in the future, to approve of a line for which the money had not been voted. There was a sum of £44,000 on the Loan Estimates for the Drayton deviation; but it was estimated to cost from £67,000 to £71,000, and the balance would have to be provided before the line could be made. There was another line, however, which would open up a large amount of country, and save a distance of nearly sixty miles. The money for that line had already been voted, and he thought that line was far more worthy of attention. He had been brought to speak of that, more on account of what fell from the hon. member for Burke as to the *via recta*, as the hon. member showed that he did not understand the question.

The PREMIER: It is not a *via recta* to New South Wales.

Mr. ALLAN said it might not be, but if the Premier did not consider that fifty-seven and a-half miles saved was not much more a *via recta* than the present line, then he could not explain it to him. It was the shortest route they could get for many a long year. He wished to see the line that was surveyed, and for which money was voted, constructed, and that as soon as possible.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The money is not voted.

Mr. ALLAN: The whole of the money—£500,000—was voted for that line. The *via recta* would certainly be the most direct line to Sydney, and, in addition to saving fifty-seven and a-half miles, would open up country which had no communication by railway at all—very rich agricultural land, which could not be utilised without a railway. It was a very easy line to construct, and could be made within the vote, and it would open up a sanatorium for Brisbane on the top of the range, 2,500 feet high. He would not take up the time of the Committee. He wished to correct the hon. member for Burke, because he believed him open to conviction. To show how much

communication there was with that part of the country—between Killarney and Brisbane—he might state that the train which left Killarney daily at ten minutes past 8 o'clock to go to Brisbane meandered all round the country, and at half-past 4 o'clock reached Toowoomba, and then the passengers were farther from Brisbane than they were when they started in the morning. He had spoken so much of the *via recta* on previous occasions, that he need say no more; but before voting for the construction of a railway, the money for which was not voted, he thought they should give their attention to those lines the money for which was voted, and the plans of which were completed.

Mr. CAMPBELL said he imagined, from what the hon. members for Warwick and Charters Towers said, that they thought the proposed line went through his electorate, but he wished to disabuse their minds of that. It passed through the electorates of the hon. members for Toowoomba and Cambooya, and he thought there were very good reasons why it should be constructed. He could not understand why the hon. members for Cunningham and Warwick should oppose the line.

Mr. ALLAN: Honesty of purpose.

Mr. CAMPBELL: The hon. member for Cunningham was at present representing the hon. member for Cambooya, and as the line would benefit a very large section of that hon. gentleman's constituents, he thought it a very great pity that the hon. member for Cunningham was opposing it. Gross injustice had been done in the past to the people of Drayton, and now they had an opportunity to amend the mistake, it should be done. Then, again, there was the country round Pittsworth, a very large and growing district, which would benefit by the railway, and there was not the slightest doubt that the Pittsworth line would have to be extended if the people who were settling on the land were to get the benefit of it. With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Warwick, as to the produce from the Warwick district suffering if the line was constructed, that was a mistake. The produce that would come direct from Warwick to Brisbane would benefit by the nine miles, and if, as the Minister for Railways had said, it was not the intention of the Commissioners to close the other line, they would also reap the benefit of their produce coming down on the old track. He was sure that the constituents of the hon. member for Cambooya would feel very much aggrieved when they found that the hon. member for Cunningham, who had undertaken to defend their rights, had opposed the line. On the whole, he thought it a very great pity that the hon. member for Cunningham had taken upon himself to act for the hon. member for Cambooya, because if that hon. gentleman knew that such action was to be taken he would be in the House to speak strongly in favour of the line. He hoped the Northern members would not be carried away by what was said by the hon. members for Warwick and Cunningham, because there was not the slightest doubt that they would oppose anything that was brought forward before the *via recta*. He believed that the *via recta* would not only cost the £500,000 that had been voted, but that it would run into £1,000,000, or probably nearly £2,000,000, before it was completed. When it reached Cunningham's Gap it would be found that it would cost something like £35,000 a mile to construct. Considering that the line proposed was not likely to cost more than £4,000 per mile, exclusive of course of the purchase of the land, and that it would not only be a benefit to Pittsworth and other districts, but a saving to the colony generally in the wear and tear of rolling stock, he

hoped hon. members would take that view of the matter, and that if they went to a division the Drayton deviation would be carried.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he had never heard a speech like that before from the hon. member for Aubigny. He never heard a more able speech from the hon. gentleman, but it had had precisely the opposite effect to what was intended. So far as regarded the hon. member for Toowoomba, of course they all knew that his sense of rectitude towards his constituents would compel him to support the line; but he was sure that the speech they had heard would not affect the hon. member for Cunningham, except to confirm him in the opinion he entertained that hon. members ought to consider the interests of the colony as a whole. The hon. members for Warwick and Charters Towers, and others who had spoken against the line, had not done so because they objected to the deviation, but simply on the ground that it was not of such supreme importance that it should be pressed on at the present time, considering the state of the Treasury, and that there were districts that were absolutely devoid of any railway accommodation whatever. If the Colonial Treasurer was in the position of his colleague of Victoria, they would vote for the line with one accord; but that hon. gentleman was not, and, therefore, they asked him to hold his hand in that matter of the re-duplication of a line until the necessities of the colony had been administered to, and certain other localities enjoyed the luxury of railway communication.

Mr. MURPHY said after a careful study of the matter it appeared to him that there was no good or valid reason why the Government should make that line. He classed the line in question along with those political lines, such as the Fortitude Valley line, the Cairns-Herberton line, and the *via recta* that the hon. member for Cunningham was so anxious about. When he came to look at the map he found that the persons who would be benefited by the line were now only from two and a-half to four miles from railway communication, and it was monstrous that the country should spend £100,000 in order that those people, who were within an hour's walk of a railway already, should have a railway made through their land. What good would the line do to the general community? None whatever. It might shorten the distance from Brisbane to New South Wales by nine miles; but that would not be any advantage to the community as a whole. He was sure it would not benefit the people of Warwick or Cunningham. Could any representative of a farming community say that farming was such a poor industry that the farmers could not afford to cart their produce four miles to a railway station? A contention of that kind was a very poor compliment to the farmers, and farming must be a very poor game in Queensland if they could not afford it. Even in Victoria, which was always being quoted and which had done more for the farming industry than any other colony, he was sure the farmers would not grumble to take their produce far greater distances than that, as most of them had to do. He would rather see the Government spend their money upon the extension of trunk lines, either in the North or between Normanton and Cloncurry. He agreed with those hon. members who had been twitting the Government for not having brought down a comprehensive railway policy. Before the Government brought in any of those patchy little lines they should have brought down a comprehensive railway policy, so that Parliament might know what was to be done in the way of trunk line extension. He gave the Government every credit for going on with the Croydon line; but instead of making the

South Brisbane extension and the Sandgate extension, and frittering away the money of the colony in that way, they should have laid it out in making the railway from Normanton to Cloncurry, where there was a huge area of magnificent country only waiting development—pastoral country, and perhaps agricultural, but certainly mineral country—the opening up of which would add materially to the wealth and prosperity of the colony, as well as employ the surplus labour. When the Government were going in for railway construction, they should construct those railways that would develop most country, and extend the present trunk lines, or commence others. He was sorry that he should have to vote against the Government; as a rule, he was in accord with them; but strongly as he believed in their policy generally, he could not see any justification whatever for the construction of the twopenny-halfpenny line they had now brought in. He could only class it with other political lines he had met with during his Parliamentary experience, which he was sure the authors of them bitterly regretted.

Mr. GANNON said his first idea when he heard of the line was to vote against it, but after hearing certain arguments which had been adduced, he would vote for it, not because he thought it was specially required at present, as the present line could do all the work for the line for some time. One reason he had for voting at present was that just now work was very scarce, and there were a number of men idle who wanted work. It was all very well for some hon. members to laugh at that; but probably they did not know what it was to be hard up, and in want of work. He knew there were a great many men at present in want of work, and he would like to see the Government bring forward a strong and comprehensive railway policy. The time had arrived when they should know something about the Government railway policy, and when the Government should tell the Committee what they intended to do, and, if necessary, go in for borrowing some money to carry out railways. During the session he had heard hon. members of some standing in the House attacking the credit of the colony, and crying "stinking fish." That he considered a great mistake, as those remarks went a long way and were calculated to do the colony harm. There was no doubt Queensland was richer than any of the other colonies, and he believed that if they asked for £5,000,000 or £10,000,000 they would get it to expend upon reproductive works, and especially upon railways. Hon. members should think a little before they said such things as had been said about the credit of the colony. As to the Drayton deviation, he knew the country through which it passed very well, and the engineer who said they would have to build a station on a down grade was trying to hoodwink hon. members who were present when the present route was first proposed. Hon. members who had travelled over the line between Toowoomba and Warwick could easily understand that it had been a huge job, and the line had been wobbled about in every direction to increase its length, as those who were making it were getting a good deal out of it. The proposed deviation would do a good deal of good in decreasing the length of the journey, and would benefit certain land owners on the proposed line, and on the Warwick line. He agreed with hon. members who had spoken as to the desirability of constructing the line, and he would support the motion.

Mr. FOXTON said that as the matter involved in the motion before the Committee directly interested his constituents, he did not propose to

give a silent vote upon it. Whether the plans were adopted now or not, it was clear that the proposed line must be constructed some time or another, and it must be evident to every hon. member who would give a vote on the question that evening, that it was only a matter of time as to when the line would be constructed. That was a very different thing from the question as to whether it should be immediately constructed or not. In that connection, he would like to say a word with respect to the remarks which had fallen from the hon. member for Toombul. That hon. member had said there was a necessity for providing work for the unemployed at the present time. No doubt there was a large number of persons unemployed in the country now, but there were works of very much greater necessity and importance than the one under consideration, which might be commenced, and by which employment for the unemployed might be found. As had been correctly stated, the line proposed would undoubtedly shorten the distance by a few miles between Warwick, Stanthorpe, Pittsworth, and Killarney at one end, and Brisbane at the other. But it had already been pointed out that, owing to the concessions made by the Railway Department, giving an allowance of fifteen miles, it would as soon as the proposed line was constructed, really be a direct loss to those who were engaged in carrying produce along that particular line at the present time. The consideration of that deviation was inseparable from the consideration of the *via recta*, and the proposed extension from Warwick towards St. George. No one was a stronger advocate than he was for both those lines, as he believed there was an absolute necessity for them, if not at the present moment, at all events in the very near future, and much sooner than any necessity would arise for the construction of the line now under consideration. When the *via recta* was constructed it would shorten the journey between the districts around and beyond Warwick and the metropolis to such an extent that the reduced cost of carriage would be a very appreciable item to those requiring the line to bring their produce forward to market. That had all been argued out in that House before, and he looked forward to the time when, not only the *via recta* would be made, and the extension from Warwick towards Inglewood, Goondiwindi, and St. George, but also to the time when a line would be extended from Pittsworth much in the same direction, because there was very much valuable land to be tapped by such a line, which had not yet been opened up.

The PREMIER: Nonsense!

Mr. FOXTON said the Premier called out "Nonsense"; but the hon. gentleman probably knew nothing about it.

The PREMIER: I know all about it.

Mr. FOXTON said he did not think the hon. gentleman did know all about it. Around Mount Dornville there was some of the finest agricultural land in the colony, and it would be tapped by the line from Pittsworth towards Inglewood and St. George.

The PREMIER: I am not ambitious for two railways to St. George.

Mr. FOXTON said he knew that the hon. member was wedded to a railway to go from Yeulba towards St. George; those two splendid cities.

The PREMIER: I have always opposed the extension from Yeulba to St. George.

Mr. FOXTON said he knew the hon. member advocated a railway from some point west of Dalby towards St. George.

The PREMIER: That is not the case either. Mr. FOXTON: Then from Dalby to St. George?

The PREMIER: Try again?

Mr. FOXTON said he did not know and he did not care where the hon. gentleman wanted to take his blessed railway from, but he was credibly informed that the Government were going to bring forward another railway from Dalby, in another direction, to pass almost entirely through private property; and that was the railway from Dalby to the Bunya Mountain. That, apparently, was part of the Government railway policy, and he would be very curious indeed to see the report of the Railway Commissioners on that line, and many other hon. members would be equally curious on the subject. As he had said before, he looked forward to the time when the district lying to the east of the Warwick and Toowoomba line would be tapped, not only by a railway extending from Ipswich to Warwick, but by an extension of the Pittsworth line. Then when that line was constructed the time would come when that particular link between that line and the metropolis should be made. At present he considered that the line was inopportune, and that the money might be expended more profitably in extending the Fassifern line towards Warwick, and so making another link in the *via recta*. For those reasons he could not support the motion of the Minister for Railways at the present time.

Mr. GROOM said that it appeared that members who, when sitting on the other side of the House, had voted for the line, when they sat on the Opposition side of the House opposed it. No hon. member had more strongly supported the *via recta* than the hon. members who had supported the Drayton deviation, and voted for it. The motion had been affirmed by most of the members sitting on that side of the Committee when sitting on the Government benches, with the exception of the hon. member for Warwick, who was not there in 1884; but with that exception, every other hon. member on that side then present had voted for setting aside £44,000 for the construction of the line.

Mr. FOXTON: Who voted against it?

Mr. GROOM said the gentlemen sitting on the opposite side of the Committee had voted against it, but that was no reason why the hon. gentleman should oppose it now, simply because the gentlemen on the other side were now supporting the line. The Government had already affirmed, and no doubt correctly affirmed, that they would carry out the policy of their predecessors; but it now appeared, from what he could see, that the line was being opposed, not upon public grounds, but upon personal grounds. That was initiated by the hon. member for Warwick, and other hon. members had taken it up, and it was being opposed purely upon personal grounds. Certain hon. members had created a breach between different districts on the Darling Downs, and were widening the breach, but he would warn them that the results would be more disastrous to that side than to the Government side of the Committee, and hon. members on that side would have no one to blame but themselves for it. The speech of the hon. member for Cunningham had surprised him more than anything else, because they knew that the hon. member for Cambooya, who had been called away by business to Melbourne, had entrusted the interests of his large constituency, composed almost entirely of selectors and farmers, to

the hon. member for Cunningham; and that was the way in which he was keeping his trust. What effect his action would have he (Mr. Groom) left time to tell; but he could not refrain from drawing attention to the fact that the hon. gentleman who had just sat down had strongly supported the deviation when it was bitterly opposed by hon. gentlemen opposite. Now, because hon. gentlemen on the other side were supporting it, he opposed it, and he had given no reason for it, except that, perhaps, it was conflicting with the *via recta*. He had no hesitation in saying that he did not believe the *via recta* would be constructed till the crack of doom, and the hon. member might rest assured that a large section both of Parliament and of the country were strongly opposed to the construction of the *via recta*—though that was not the proper term for that line—because there was no necessity for it. When the railway was extended to the Tweed River—and the New South Wales Government had already sanctioned the survey of the line—that would be the *via recta*. How could they ask the colony to go in for an unknown amount of expenditure—an expenditure which according to one of the best engineering authorities in the colony—Mr. Phillips—whose word would carry more weight than that of a non-professional man—would cost a million sterling—and he knew that other engineers quite as qualified as Mr. Phillips to judge would be of similar opinions? They had the authority of the Engineer-in-Chief himself to the effect that the gorges over which that *via recta* would have to cross were so terrible that it would cost £10,000 to construct a road for the men to be able to reach their work. If they were just on the point of making the ascent of the range, and had only taken the railway to the foot of the Main Range, and the question was which was the easiest way to reach the Darling Downs—then there might be some reason in considering the *via recta*, but not in constructing it. But as the ascent had been made at a cost of £25,000 a mile, there was no need to construct the *via recta*, which would cost £50,000 a mile. He had already seen a railway which had cost £22,000 a mile, but that was nothing compared to the *via recta*, and he was justified in saying that that line would cost £50,000 a mile to construct. He could read between the lines, and it was clear to him that because certain members had opposed the *via recta* the advocates of that line were determined that they would not allow any other railways to pass.

Mr. FOXTON said that he could not let the remarks of the hon. gentleman pass without taking some notice of them. He could assure the hon. member that he had made a great mistake if he thought that he (Mr. Foxton) was opposing that line on personal grounds. He considered such a remark as that was altogether uncalled for from the hon. gentleman, and was altogether unworthy of him. Had the hon. member for Toowoomba opposed the *via recta* on personal grounds, because the man who accused another of that sort of thing must surely have had some lingering idea in his mind of having done what he accused others of doing? The hon. gentleman had opposed the *via recta* far more violently than anyone had opposed the Drayton deviation. The *via recta*, and the extension from Warwick towards Inglewood and St. George, had both been opposed by the hon. member, and were they to understand that, because he had opposed those lines, he had necessarily done so on personal grounds? He was not there to accuse the hon. gentleman, but he asked him in all fairness if he (Mr. Foxton) was not justified in inquiring whether, after the remarks he had made, he

had voted against those lines from personal motives? The line from what was known as the Beauaraba Junction to Pittsworth, the *via recta*, the extension towards St. George, and the Drayton deviation were all part of one scheme, and the district of Toowoomba had already got two railways constructed out of that vote; but so far as he was aware no other railway was being constructed in the more Southern portion of the colony. It was no argument to say that hon. members voted for the £10,000,000 loan as a whole. The railways in the different districts should progress side by side, and one district should not have the whole of its railways constructed, while others were altogether left out in the cold. That was his reply to the remarks of the hon. member for Toowoomba in reference to his voting the money required for the construction of that line. He believed that the deviation should be constructed, but he would not support it at present as it was being taken out of its turn, and not in the proper order of things. The railway which ought to be constructed at the present time out of the portion of the £10,000,000 loan appropriated for the purpose was the railway which would bring into closer connection the towns of Warwick and Ipswich.

Mr. CROMBIE said the hon. member for Toowoomba seemed to think that the proposed deviation was being opposed on personal grounds. He (Mr. Crombie) intended to oppose it, and he did not do so on personal grounds, but because he did not believe in it. No doubt the line would save half an hour's travel at a cost to the country of £70,000 to £100,000, but he thought they would be paying too dearly for so trifling an advantage. His duty was perfectly plain to him, and he was going to vote against the proposition.

Mr. BUCKLAND said he intended to vote for the proposition, as he did for the proposal on the loan vote in 1884. If the Government had come down at an earlier date with a definite railway policy there would not have been the opposition to the proposed deviation which they had witnessed that evening. It was evident the Northern members were not satisfied with the information the Government had given to the House with regard to their railway policy. There was no doubt that the proposed deviation would open up a considerable amount of valuable agricultural country. The Commissioners, in their report, said:—

"On the 2nd instant the Commissioners, accompanied by the Engineer-in-Chief (Southern and Central Division), went over the whole length of the line, and were much impressed with the general excellence of the country on either side of it, the soil being of the richest description and well adapted for agricultural purposes; and as the district is well within the area over which frequent periodical rainfalls are experienced, there is every reason to anticipate that the country along the route will, in the near future, be closely settled, and that there will be an increasing local traffic."

That seemed to warrant the Committee in passing the resolution; and as to the cost—£60,000 or £70,000—he thought it a very reasonable sum for the construction of the line. The hon. member for Toombul had thrown out a very good suggestion—that it would be wise for the owners of the land through which the railway passed to make a present to the Government of the land required for the purpose. The value of it could not be very great. Anyhow he intended to support the proposition.

Mr. LUYA said he also intended to vote for the deviation, for one reason that it would rectify an immense blunder that was committed many years ago. He was only surprised that previous Governments had not taken the matter in hand long since, and it was rather unfortunate that

the present Government should have had the legacy of the £10,000,000 loan, which, he saw, was going to lead to a great deal of trouble. Between 1864 and 1866 he happened to be located on the Main Range, and also on the Warwick line, and he could never understand why the railway was taken all round the country to get to the Southern plains. The only explanation was that the surveyors received a commission on the length of the line. He did not look upon the proposed deviation as a part of any new railway policy, any more than he did on the extension of the South Brisbane and Sandgate lines. The Drayton deviation was the rectification of a blunder, and the South Brisbane and Sandgate extensions were the completion of lines already in progress. The hon. member for Carnarvon admitted that the deviation would have to be made some time. That being the case, he could not understand why the hon. member should oppose it at the present time. The present route was a blunder, and the sooner that blunder was rectified the better. Because the rectification had been delayed, there was no reason why it should be delayed any longer.

Mr. PHILP said he regretted he should not be able to support the motion. It had been stated by hon. members who ought to know, that the line was not specially required, but that it would be a good means of providing work for the unemployed in the colony. If the line was not specially required, there was no immediate occasion for making it. There were many parts of the colony possessing fine agricultural lands, and rich in mineral wealth, which were not within a hundred miles of railway communication; and they should first have their one line before other parts got two lines of railway. At some time it would be necessary to widen the gauge of their lines to that of New South Wales, and it would be better to wait until it was definitely decided which should be the direct route to Sydney. It would be folly to spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on a line, only to find afterwards that it was not the direct line to the southern colonies. It had not been shown that the proposed deviation would bring about more settlement, or increase trade in any way to pay for the cost of construction. It would merely be a convenience to some persons living on the Downs, by enabling them to get to their homes half an hour earlier. When they heard hon. members representing districts west and south of Toowoomba saying they did not want the line, and while there were districts in other portions of the colony thirsting for railway communication, he did not feel justified in voting for a line which was not wanted.

Mr. LISSNER said he believed the proposed deviation was the first line introduced into the House by the new Commissioners, and he was very sorry on that account to have to vote against it. No doubt the deviation would be a benefit in one respect; it would cut off nine miles, and bring passengers twenty minutes sooner to the border of New South Wales. But considering that there were other lines of railway in other portions of the colony for which money had been voted, and which would be really useful, he was of opinion that the Drayton deviation might wait a little longer; and, more especially as they were given to understand that there was very little balance left from the £10,000,000 loan. He failed to see where the money was to come from for the construction of the work, and he felt compelled, much against his desire, to vote against the first proposition of the new Commissioners.

Mr. PALMER said the Minister for Railways had asked hon. members to put out of sight the question of a railway policy, and consider the line now proposed on its merits. He (Mr. Palmer)

thought the Committee were going to take the hon. gentleman at his word, and vote as they considered best in the interests of the country. The interesting circumstance about the Commissioners' report on the line was, that it was the first report they had submitted to the Committee. The Commissioners stated that they had personally inspected the route of the proposed line, and from that personal inspection they could recommend it as a line going through an agricultural centre. It was to be hoped that they would, in future, make their reports on projected lines after a personal inspection of the routes. If they had inspected the routes of railways authorised to be constructed in other parts of the country they would have had a far more authoritative report to make to the Committee in respect of them. The statement that the line to Drayton would bring some agricultural land a mile or two nearer to the centre of population was what could be said of almost any district in the colony where there was a considerable population. But to say that an agricultural line which was to go through agricultural country where the alienated land to be resumed was 127 acres would cost only £5,000 a mile was a statement that he did not think would be borne out by facts. The Minister for Railways had not taken the Committee into his confidence as to how the extra amount over £44,000 which was required for the line was to be provided. It had been stated that that was a branch line. There were nine branch lines in the colony, and according to the Commissioner's report they were all worked at a loss. The one which the line now under consideration was to supersede merely saved its bacon, as it only returned 6s. 8d. per cent. Was that a recommendation for the Commissioners to bring before the Committee? Out of the nine branch lines five were in the Southern district, two in the Central, and two in the North, and they were all worked at a loss, showing that branch lines should not be the policy of the Government in these days when there was so much mineral and other country requiring railway communication to open it up. Railways constructed from a port to mining centres had always paid in every part of the colony, and there need be no hesitation in constructing such lines or main trunk lines. With regard to the statement made by the hon. member for Toombul, that it would be well to construct the line under discussion, in order to find work for the unemployed, the same argument would apply to other parts of the colony. There were 150 unemployed persons at Normanton, and they were situated in a part of the country where they could not get away. They were as it were in a sort of *cul de sac*, so that the argument would apply to the railway in that district as well as to any other.

Mr. STEPHENS said the loose way in which loan money had always been raised and spent had been a puzzle to him for some time. What he meant by loose way was this: Generally when they were going to borrow £4,000,000 or £5,000,000, certain names were put down on a sheet of paper, and lump sums opposite to them, and it was usually considered that the works for which the money was voted would cost half as much again. After the money was voted, plans and estimates of certain railways were submitted and passed, very often three or four at a time, and the Government were left to say how much money they would spend in each year, and which railway would be started first. A general scramble ensued, as in the present case. Most of the hon. members who had spoken did not object to the railway now proposed, but they thought there ought to be a general railway policy. He thought that before any money was borrowed there should

be, as nearly as possible, an accurate estimate made of what the works for which the loan was obtained would cost, and that every year the Committee should vote the money on the Loan Estimates, so that hon. members might know the actual amount to be spent, and see that it was divided proportionately among the Northern, Central, and Southern districts. Until they had something of that sort, there would always be a general scramble or log-rolling. From the trip which he had recently made up North, he was quite convinced that railways should be extended in the North before they talked about duplicating lines in the South. The present railway, on which it was proposed to make a deviation, had served for a number of years without duplicating it, and they should construct railways inland and up North, so that mineral and agricultural districts, which had not even decent roads now, might have the advantage of some railway communication, before duplicating their existing lines. For that reason he would vote against the motion at the present time.

Mr. MORGAN said he would just like to say a few words in reply to the hon. member for Toowoomba, who was not, he was sorry to say, in his place just then. That hon. member charged hon. members on that side of the Committee, who had expressed their intention of voting against the line, with doing so from personal motives. For his (Mr. Morgan's) part he entirely repudiated the charge, which was utterly untrue. He had told the Committee the reason which had induced him to decide against that railway, and that was that it would be a direct injury to the part of the colony which he represented, if it was constructed. It would certainly save a few minutes in the journey between Brisbane and the southern border, but what was a saving of half an hour in a journey of ten or twelve hours? It was simply a drop in the ocean; it was not appreciable. On the other hand, the construction of that line would increase the freights to a material extent, and they were already so high as to be burdensome, so burdensome that they stopped the progress of that part of the country. That was the reason which had induced him to make up his mind to vote against the deviation. He did not believe it was required in the interests of the country, and he sincerely hoped it would not be passed by the Committee. With regard to the latter portion of the remarks made by the hon. member, he never heard so many misstatements crowded into so few sentences as the hon. member succeeded in making in the last half-dozen sentences of his speech. They bristled with misstatements. He (Mr. Morgan) was quite certain that the Minister for Railways must know that almost every figure the hon. member gave regarding the probable cost of the direct line of railway was grossly exaggerated.

Mr. GRIMES said he did not rise particularly to oppose or support the motion, but rather to express his great regret that the Government had not seen fit to disclose fully their railway policy. The Committee were getting it piecemeal—a little railway being introduced at one time, and another little railway at another. He supposed at the end of the session they would have voted a large sum of money for railways, and yet not have got to know the railway policy of the Government. The Minister for Railways had referred to windy-promise railways, and the remark had created a feeling of surprise in the minds of hon. members who had little pet railways that they were advocating on behalf of their constituents. He (Mr. Grimes) wondered whether the railway for which he had a partial promise from the hon. gentleman to

support, was amongst those railways which could be termed windy-promise railways. He referred to the railway from Indooroopilly, *via* Brookfield, to North Ipswich. A deputation waited upon the hon. gentleman some time ago on the subject, and he gave them every encouragement—promised to favourably consider the case; but he (Mr. Grimes) was afraid from what he had heard, that that was one of the windy-promise railways. He certainly thought that before hon. members were asked to vote for those little railways piecemeal, they should be told what the railway policy of the Government was. Then they would be surer about voting the money than they were at present. Of course hon. members consistently advocated the railways they believed in, and when they found one particular railway picked out and brought forward more from a political point of view than anything else, it was very hard for those who were left out in the cold.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said before the debate closed he rose to express the pleasure he had felt in listening to the speeches that had been delivered. He sincerely congratulated the Committee on the amount of wisdom that had been laid before it. He did not do so with any jocular intention whatever, because he firmly and sincerely believed that the debate would prove one of the most useful they had had during the session. There was a considerable amount of principle involved in passing or rejecting that railway, because it might be considered as an approval or otherwise of the political morality of the late Government in particular and of the House as a whole. The question was whether they were to continue that policy, or whether everything that the late Government had done was to be thrown overboard and an entirely new policy commenced. So far as he had been able to judge by the speeches made, every one of them tended in that direction. Here was a railway brought before the Committee, in some respects on entirely new principles. They had, as provided by the new Railway Act, the benefit of the independent opinion of men who were entirely outside political bias; they had reported to the best of their ability upon the line, and had gone so far as to recommend its construction. It was the particular function of those men to say whether the traffic on the line was such as to justify its construction; they had reported that it would justify the work being carried out, and it now remained for the Committee to say whether the railway was to be built or not. Of course, if the Committee were of opinion that railways of that sort were not to be constructed—that the circumstances of the colony did not warrant their construction—he would take it as an instruction that he need hardly bring any further railway proposals before the Committee. That was the state of affairs, as it appeared to him. They had had during the debate several samples of the amount of self-esteem which some hon. members could display. The hon. member for Warwick appeared to know a great deal more about the proposed line than the Commissioners. Although those gentlemen had had every possible source of information before them to enable them to arrive at a correct estimate, the hon. member said he knew a great deal better than they did what it would be—that, while the Commissioners said the cost would be about £50,000, he said it would be nearly £100,000. Then the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Sayers, appeared to know the value of land in Toowoomba better than the Commissioners, and stated that it would cost more than their estimate. He (the Minister for Railways) just mentioned those things to show the sort of arguments that had been brought

forward. There had not been a single argument adduced to show that the railway would not pay, and that it would not be a good investment for the country. The whole and sole argument put forward was, "Show us your railway policy;" and judging by the speeches of hon. members, what they meant by the railway policy of the Government was this: That he (the Minister for Railways) should go round to every hon. member and say, "I am going to build your railway for you; possibly you will vote for this other one." That appeared to be the idea, because every hon. member who had spoken was prepared to say that his railway was the railway that ought to be constructed first, and that no other railway should be constructed until his was commenced. The question of the railway policy of the Government had been referred to so often, that perhaps he had better deal with that matter first. He might say first of all, negatively, that their railway policy did not consist in going in for a £10,000,000 or a £12,000,000 loan, or any large loan whatever. It had been stated over and over again that the last big loan demoralised the country. That it demoralised the last Parliament and the colony, as a whole, he had maintained from the very first. He stoutly opposed it from its very inception, and fought over every item that came before the House during his membership of the last Parliament. Possibly hon. members, looking over the debates, would see that he had opposed the very railway he was now proposing, but he voted against them all on principle, for the simple reason that there was no member in the House at that time who was more thoroughly convinced of the rotten policy of going in for a £10,000,000 loan than he was, and he urged upon Sir Thomas McIlwraith to adopt every means, even to take advantage of every form of the House, to try and block it in its inception. He himself, being then a young member, thought it would appear arrogant on his part to attempt to take the lead in anything of that sort. One reason why he was so strongly opposed to that loan was because he looked upon it as thoroughly unconstitutional. That position it was very easy to maintain. For many years back it had been the practice of all rightly constituted Parliaments to carefully guard themselves against committing their successors in any way with regard to the expenditure of public money. That was the policy brought in by the late Government, wherein they assumed that they possessed more wisdom than the succeeding Parliament could attain to, and that they were in the year 1884 able to lay down what the policy of the year 1889 ought to be; and they proceeded to fix the policy which was to regulate the colony by passing a Loan Act wherein all the railways were defined, and the amount of money allotted to each one. The consequence had been financial disaster and difficulty. Railways had been constructed without there being any chance of getting interest on the money; the loan expenditure of the colony had been rushed up to £2,000,000 a year and the colony had got into such a state that the present Government, without any prospect of getting any credit for what they did, had to bear the brunt of the situation, and try to carry on the colony the best way they could with all the engagements made by the previous Government hanging over their heads. With regard to the constitutional point, he would like to refer to the report of a debate he read in the *Times* the other day; and he would like to make the point clear to hon. members. There was an important debate in the House of Commons with regard to naval defence, the question being brought forward in the first instance by way of resolution. The House of Commons, as a whole, was entirely in favour of

providing for the defence of the kingdom, and there did not appear to be the slightest doubt that the three resolutions would be carried by a large majority. But a constitutional point was raised by Mr. Childers, who, upon the first resolution—with which he agreed so far as it went—proposed to move this addition:—

“But this House sees no reason why provision for the building and arming of ships to be employed in Her Majesty's service should be made otherwise than in accordance with the constitutional practice hitherto observed—namely, by annual votes in Committee of Supply.”

That had been the policy of the Home Government, he should say, for the last forty or fifty years at any rate. After some debate, Mr. Gladstone spoke on the subject, and in the course of his remarks referred to Sir Robert Peel in the following terms:—

“The man who most of all laid down this doctrine of annual provision for the wants of the year out of the means of the year, was the man who raised his own financial reputation to the highest point—namely, Sir Robert Peel, and raised it expressly and implicitly by maintaining that doctrine, and by using all his eloquence and influence to induce Parliament to apply it.”

He need not quote the whole of the speech, but he commended it to hon. members as laying down a very sound doctrine. Mr. Gladstone referred to certain exceptions having been made to the rule—and those exceptions only proved the rule—and after pointing out one instance he said:—

“What we complain of in the present proposal is the withdrawal of these charges from the control not only of the present, but of a future Parliament. Three years hence, as I conceive, a new Parliament will be chosen. There are those who believe that the inclinations and ideas of that Parliament may be very different indeed from those of the present. But quite apart from speculations of that character, the true contention is that Parliament ought to be free. It is not desirable to bind more than absolute necessity requires the hands even of the present Parliament as to future years. The right and power of the Parliament is to judge the wants of the country from year to year, and much of the power and influence of this House, as well as the primary duty and obligation of the House, depends on the maintenance of that principle intact. But I must say that it is going very much further indeed, when not satisfied with endeavouring to bind yourselves, you go beyond that, and endeavour to bind, by making charges on the consolidated fund, a future Parliament as to expenditure of which you forbid it to be the judge, and of which it ought to be judge. What right have you to distrust the Parliament?”

But that was what was done all through by the late Government in their spirited policy of going in for that immense loan—an unprecedented loan as far as the history of Queensland was concerned. The effect of that policy was that the hands of the present Government and of the present Parliament were almost completely tied. The Government were not free to go in for any policy they might desire, because they were bound up by the contract made for them by the late Government, and unless they went in for a policy which no hon. member would advocate—a policy of repudiation—they must carry out all existing engagements and contracts. When discussing the Financial Statement the leader of the Opposition referred to the balance of the loan. There was only £709,900 of that loan to be floated, and yet the balance in hand was comparatively small. And there was over £340,000 of that loan for which the colony had not a rap to show; it had all gone to pay the expenses of floating the loan; and the Treasurer when he went to the London market again, as he would have to go soon, would have to go on conditions different from those on which any Treasurer had ever been before. In the case of the loan of 1884, though the amount of the loan was large, the amount of deficit on the previous loans provided for under the Act of 1884 was only £35,000; but when the Treasurer went on the London market again, he

would have to provide for a deficit of nearly ten times that amount. That was the lesson he wanted to impress on hon. members of the Committee, particularly Opposition members, when he was referring two or three weeks ago to the balance of the loan fund as criticised by the leader of the Opposition, who did not seem to see how it was made up. That was the precarious position they were in, and it was all very well for the hon. member for Burke to say that the expenditure on that line would discredit the colony in the London market. He (the Minister for Railways) thought it was not a thing which would discredit them; but what would do so was the fact that £350,000 would be required to pay the expenses, discount, and charges on the previous loan. He was rather afraid that John Bull would button up his pockets, and ask them why they were borrowing for that purpose. As far as he (the Minister for Railways) was concerned, he had always advocated that those charges should be paid out of the revenue. However, such was the position they occupied. He had stated, negatively, that the policy of the Government was not to attempt to bind their successors, or the next Parliament, or even this Parliament to any length of time, and he thought it might be said that their policy was what might be called a very hum-drum policy.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: A hand-to-mouth policy.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he wished it was a hand-to-mouth policy. They had a great deal to do with their hands as well as put them in their mouths. They had a lot of things left by the late Government to do; a good many engagements to fulfil, and not very easy of accomplishment. At any rate, that was the policy he was determined to pursue and the Government entirely agreed with him, that no railways should be placed before the House until they had got the best and most reliable information concerning them. He would bring no railways forward until the permanent survey had been made, and until proper calculations as to cost were complete. It would appear, however, that doing so had no effect on some members unless the line was one in their own districts, which they would then swallow at once. They had had so many samples of the evil of pursuing the opposite course to that which he had indicated, that it was even better to wait a short time than rush into large transactions without knowing where the end would be. He had made some notes of what information hon. members wanted, but he got tired of doing so. The general cry had been for a disclosure of policy, and he did not think he need say any more on that point. The policy of the Government, in regard to railways, was to supply railway communication throughout the colony as fast as the financial position of the colony would permit, but no faster, and to that they had been and were devoting their attention. The hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, wanted to know about the North Coast line. Well, that was easily answered. The plans and sections were lying on his (the Minister for Railways) table at the present time, as well as the report from the Commissioners. A great many hon. members seemed to think that there was more present necessity for other railways than the one proposed. Well, that of course was a matter of opinion. He did not blame every hon. member for thinking the railway in his own district should be first constructed, but all he had to say was that he had no interest in the line as the hon. member, Mr. O'Sullivan, seemed to think. If he wanted to benefit his own residence he might have adopted the first survey, which would have brought the railway within a few chains of his property,

instead of which the route proposed would not go within several miles of it. He could only assure the Committee that, in regard to railways, he had no bias whatever, and as for the order in which they were brought forward, that would depend a great deal on what he had already said as to reliable information being available. The railways that were nearly ready to be brought forward were the North Coast line, the railway from Rockhampton to Mount Morgan, the Bundaberg to Woongarra, and the Dalby to Rocky Point lines.

Mr. SAYERS: All down this end!

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With regard to further information, he might say that a great interest seemed to be taken in the *via recta*, and he had a good deal of information concerning that line. It started from Mumbilla, just twenty-three miles from Ipswich, on the Fassifern line, and traversed, on the whole, very good country as far as Llandawke, which was nineteen miles and thirty chains from the starting point. The country along there was very good country for settlement, and very good farming country. There was only one thing to be said against it. Although there were a few straggling selectors, the greater portion of the line went through the property of one firm. Then from Llandawke it began to wind up the Main Range, and the whole of the difficulties in surmounting the range were concentrated on one section. It went up a spur of Mount Edward, and at one point it doubled round and ran spiral fashion something after the style of the San Gotthard railway. One part of the line crossed over another part, about 100 feet below, and it turned about in every direction of the compass. On that section of twelve and a-half miles there was a ruling grade which they had not upon any other line in the colony—namely, 1 in 33, the average grade being something under 1 in 40. Of course it would be impossible to surmount a difficulty of that kind with their present rolling-stock, and it was proposed to keep a spare powerful engine in order to assist the traffic over that section. That twelve and a-half miles of line would cost about £200,000, exclusive of land and rolling stock. The curves were rather sharp, some of them only having a radius of five chains, the consequence of which would be that the cost of maintenance would be very heavy. In fact, it would cost about £250 per mile, at the lowest estimate, annually for maintenance, or more than double the cost of any ordinary line. After the range had been surmounted the line ran over fairly easy country, and would cost about £3,000 or £7,000 per mile, but that part of the line had not been permanently surveyed. The survey had been completed as far as the top of the range, at Spicer's Peak, a little to the south of Cunningham's Gap, and estimates had been made of the exact quantities of work in detail. Looking at the cost of the line, he did not expect during his term of office to build all the railways of the colony, and he thought the one he was referring to he would leave to his successor. At the same time it was quite worthy of consideration whether a few miles of it, to tap the good agricultural country he had mentioned, might not before long turn out a reasonable undertaking. That, however, would depend upon the policy that would be adopted in future in regard to branch lines. He had been collecting all the information he could from deputations and other sources during the past year, and the number of lines requisitioned for would surprise hon. members. The mere schedule of them occupied three pages of ordinary foolscap. They had been all tabulated,

and the officers of the department were working up information about them. It was quite possible, by making some alterations in the traffic arrangements, that they might be able to construct a very considerable number of those branch lines, and there was no doubt that farmers must have some assistance in order to get their crops to market. In nearly all the farming districts he had visited, the people had told him that the freight they were paying from their farms to the railway lines were something enormous. In some cases where they were ten or twelve miles away it cost as much as 30s. and even £2 per ton to get produce to the railway station, and when they considered that if the railway were extended that distance, they would only be charged 1½d. per ton per mile for agricultural produce or 1s. 3d. instead of 30s. for ten miles journey, they should be perfectly willing to pay rates much higher than those usually charged. But if the line were constructed under the hitherto existing arrangements, they would at once, he feared, get up an agitation for a reduction of freights. He had already spoken to the Commissioners and asked them to work the matter up, and see if they could submit some general principle of cheaper construction or cheaper mode of working traffic whereby they could accommodate the farming community throughout the colony. In regard to other lines, he might mention that the line to Cleveland would be opened in about two months, and the survey of the South Coast line had been continued. There had been a dispute as to whether the line should go by Tallebudgera or by Burleigh Heads. The cheapest route was that near the coast by Burleigh Heads; but at the same time there were a great number of inhabitants in the other direction who, of course, strongly urged that that was the proper way for the line to go. Those were all matters he could not determine, and he could hardly ask the Commissioners to decide until they had received more accurate information to go upon. The North Coast line was progressing fairly, and the Government expected the next section to be opened soon, probably in November, or at any rate by the end of the year. The third section was also making good progress, and it was intended to have the fourth section in hand at the very earliest date, so as to complete a line which would effect a saving in the traffic arrangements of the whole of the Southern and Western Railways, and also provide rapid through communication between Brisbane and the Wide Bay district. Going North to the Central line they were aware that it was being extended by a pretty long section out West. Tenders were in for it, but had not yet been accepted. It seemed almost a pity to have called for tenders now when they found from the Committee that it was a mistake to go on with those railways. That would be no better than the one he had submitted to the Committee, and which it appeared was to be thrown out. He could bring forward no argument in favour of it which could not be applied to the line before them, except that it was a line of about fifty miles, whereas the one before them was a line of ten or eleven miles. However, presuming that the tenders for the Central Railway Extension were eligible tenders, they would be dealt with in due course. A survey had been completed and laid before the House years ago of a railway between Gladstone and Bundaberg. One section, starting from Gladstone, of the permanent survey had been completed, and the permanent survey of the section from Bundaberg towards Gladstone was not yet completed, but was within a measurable distance of completion. The work in connection with that line would be proceeded with

with as little delay as possible. Surveys had also been authorised to a large extent in that district. There was an extension towards Mount Perry, and one into the Isis Scrub; another to Pialba, as well as several branches from the North Coast line; one to Noosa, one over the Valley of the Brisbane towards Kilcoy. Those surveys were all in progress, or would be, as they had an available staff to go on with them. With regard to the Mackay Railway, which was the next going northward, there was an extension going on there, and also a proposal to join with the Sugar Company's tramway. At Bowen, the first section was almost completed for about thirty miles, then there were twenty more miles authorised and provided for, and tenders would probably be called for the second section before the end of the present year, or before the present section was completed. With regard to where it would go after that, it was a very vexed question.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Have plans been approved beyond the present section?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; for fifty-two miles in all. As to where the railway would be taken afterwards, that was a matter which would have to be fully inquired into. Two trial surveys had been made and a third was now in progress. When they had sufficient information on the subject they would be able to come to a decision as to which of the routes suggested it was best to adopt in order to join with the Northern Railway at some place or other. In the meantime the matter was held in suspense as far as the point of junction was concerned. Then there was the Northern line, and there was no particular extension proposed there at present, because there were no surveys ready. The only work likely to be done there was the carrying out of the jetty line, which had been authorised some time ago, and the money voted for it. That could not have been commenced sooner, because the jetty was being constructed, and had not yet been handed over. Arrangements would be made with the Harbours and Rivers Department to provide facilities for shipping to lie alongside a wharf that would be constructed by the Railway Department for that purpose. There was a projected line from Townsville to Ingham, and it was one which he looked upon with a great deal of favour. It had been reported upon four or five years ago by Mr. Ballard whose report would be found in the "Votes and Proceedings." A fresh survey would have to be made before they could do anything, and if it was favourably reported upon, and the Commissioners were satisfied also, it would when they had sufficient information about it be brought on for discussion, but he could not make any promise about it even so far as next session was concerned. The Cairns Railway was the next he came to, and he would rather not say much about it. It had been a source of worry and trouble to him ever since he had had anything to do with the Railway Department, and he feared it would continue to be so for a considerable time longer. The whole history of that railway appeared to him to be a history of continuous bungling and mismanagement. He believed it was a blunder from the first, as the hon. member for the Herbert had said, and they had been blundering on with it since. The country had turned out very treacherous, and although they could hardly blame the engineers on that account, yet, at the same time, it must be evident to anyone who knew anything about it that it was a work of immense magnitude, which had been rushed into without due consideration, and they had now to pay the piper in consequence. There was still one very bad place on this side of Surprise Creek which they had not been able

to conquer yet, and they hardly saw their way to conquer it, though, of course, the engineers would never be beaten. The last proposal, which was the fourth deviation from the route as at first surveyed, was to do away with two small tunnels and two bridges, and go right into the mountain and make one tunnel of considerable length take the place of those works he had mentioned. That would involve a tunnel of about 380 yards, and it was estimated to take about fifteen months to excavate and line it. So that it was very likely it would be at least fifteen months yet before that section of the line was completed; and when it was completed it would be of no use, because it simply landed them in an inaccessible region which teams or even pack-horses could hardly reach. Unless the House would be prepared to go further, and take it on to the head of the Barron River, he hardly knew what was to be done.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No sane person would stop at that section. No one ever proposed to stop at the Barron Falls.

THE PREMIER: No sane person would ever have gone there.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said of course the line must be gone on with, and the question was how far they were to go. The House had voted £200,000, and there had been an additional vote of £400,000 making £600,000 in all. About £50,000 or £60,000 had been spent on the first section, and the balance on the second section. The vote was showing considerable symptoms of exhaustion already, and it was estimated that to complete the present section, which would only take them twenty-five miles from Cairns, an additional vote of £90,000 or £100,000 would be required. In fact, if they got out of the job under £35,000 or £40,000 a mile they would do well, but at present they could not see the end of it; and as to estimates, they had had so many estimates of what that railway was going to cost that he was sick of asking for any more. In fact, no one could tell what it was going to cost until it was finished. The further extension of the line could be made at a reasonable price. He was quite satisfied that when they got a few miles further on they could construct the line at a cost of under £8,000 a mile for a portion of the way, and under £3,000 per mile for the remainder, so that there was some encouragement in that; but unless they took it some considerable distance—say, to Rocky Creek, or to some of those places where they would tap a large timber industry—he did not see any probability of the line ever paying working expenses. The Committee would have to decide how far the line should go, and then when the present section was nearing completion, the Government could call for tenders for the whole of the remainder in one section. With regard to the Cooktown line, that was nearly as unsatisfactory as the Cairns line, except that on the Cooktown line they had not committed themselves to spend the money, but just pulled up in time. The reports he had received about that line were most discouraging in their nature. Many hon. members would remember the graphic description which the hon. member for Burke, Mr. Hodgkinson, had given of the Mossman Valley last session, and he (Minister for Railways) believed that every word the hon. member had said was perfectly true. The reports he had received of the surveys were such as to compel the Government to abandon the construction of that railway. He would remind the Committee that they had, at his instance, approved of the construction of the fourth section of the Cooktown line; but although he had advised the Committee then to approve of the plans, no false pride would

prevent him from asking them now to disapprove of the plans, and to rescind the resolution carried last year. The engineer said in his report:—

"I have the honour to advise that my approximate estimate for the construction of the above section, including cost of rails, and fastenings, and allowance for station buildings is in accordance with details herewith.

"I have not taken the item of fencing into account, as I find the previous sections constructed are only fenced through private land, and the whole of this section is through Crown land.

"The work will be very costly, as timber will have to be procured from a distance averaging thirty miles, or imported from the South. Possibly also there will be but little competition in the tendering, there being few firms in the colony capable of undertaking such heavy works.

"From the perusal of past correspondence, and the recommendations given by the officers of this department as to the alternate route, I presume the Government has just reasons for selecting the Mossman route, which will be a most costly undertaking, attended with very expensive maintenance."

I may mention that this route was determined upon in the year 1886, and the surveys have been in process ever since.

"My estimate must be considered as the lowest possible figure for which the section can be constructed under favourable circumstances.

"Some of the cuttings have been calculated at slopes of one to one, and others at three quarters to one, in accordance with information supplied. It is possible that the worst of them will not stand at a slope of one to one.

"The following are descriptions from the surveyor of two of the large cuttings:—

"(1.) Steep sidling with loose earth and rotten slate boulders; ground appears very rotten.

"(2.) Might turn out very rotten when opened up, being site of old landslide."

"There are many such remarks in the surveyor's books, which point to the advisability of sinking trial holes before letting the work.

"For 17½ miles I have allowed for 1½ lb. rails, and for the remaining 10½ miles, 60 lb. rails.

"The approximate estimate of section No. 5 shall be forwarded in October, as at present there are not sufficient data to hand. There will be 19 miles to construct to get to Maytown."

His estimate of the fourth section—the one approved of last session—which was twenty-eight miles in length, and which took the line up nearly to the head of the Mossman, nearly to the Lonestar Gap, within four miles of a hotel known as Folder's Inn, on the road to Maytown—was £488,992 19s. 4d.—that was an average of £17,464 per mile. The engineer said that the first sixteen miles were over very easy country, and, including the cost of erecting a bridge over the Laura River, could be constructed at a cost of £3,000 per mile, while the last twelve miles—over very rugged country—would cost £36,749 6s. 8d. per mile. Then with regard to the balance of nineteen miles to take the line to Maytown, seven miles of it would cost at the rate of £37,000 a mile—or £259,000; while the other twelve miles would cost £15,000 a mile—or £180,000, making a total of £439,000 for the fifth section. That was estimating that it was built under the most favourable circumstances, so that nearly £1,000,000 would be the total cost from the present terminus to Maytown. The alternative line, by way of Palmerville, although twenty-five miles longer than the Mossman route, might be constructed for £300,000 or £400,000 less than the route now being followed.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Is that through Palmerville, and then back to Maytown?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes. The route which he understood the hon. member for Burke had suggested last session, was intermediate between the two he had spoken of. There had been no survey made yet of the route suggested by the hon. member, but possibly

it might be of advantage to have one made, if they were ever to get a railway to Maytown at all. What he proposed to do now was to bridge the Laura River at which the line at present stopped, and either make that the terminus, until they had settled what they were going to do, or take the line on seven, eight, or nine miles to a good terminus, where the coach and dray traffic could approach the railway with ease. He believed there was a good place on the Little Laura River, but he should not advise that to be done till the Commissioners had visited the place, which they would do in a very short time. He might here mention that the hon. member for Burke was altogether wrong in his assertion, based on statements contained in the Brisbane newspapers, that the Commissioners were not going beyond Cooktown. There was never any such intention. Just now the whole of them might not go further, but it was quite possible, and highly probable, that one at least of them would take a trip round to the Gulf before returning to Brisbane. That was at any rate part of the present arrangement. Going on to the Gulf, most hon. members were aware of the state of affairs there. The Croydon Railway was being pushed on as far as it could be until a further supply of sleepers arrived. A contract had been made for the sleepers in England, and arrangements had also been made for the freight. They had had the greatest difficulty in getting tenders for the new kind of sleeper, which, as he had mentioned before, was very much heavier than the old one that was used on the section already completed. The first time the Agent-General called for tenders, such was the press of work at home that only one firm out of fifteen put a tender in; and, as it was never deemed satisfactory to accept a tender when there was no competition, fresh tenders were called for, and even then two tenders were all they could get. The price, on account of the rise in steel was a good deal higher than Mr. Phillips's estimate. The freight had been arranged on very favourable terms. That was one of the first actions of the Commissioners when they assumed office. They made an arrangement with a colonial firm to bring out the sleepers from Glasgow to Normanton, at a rate a little under any offers they had from England. In fact, they were now getting sleepers brought from Glasgow and landed at Normanton at 2s. 3d. a ton more than the cost was from Brisbane to Normanton. So that although there might be a little further expense in the cost of the sleepers, there would be a considerable saving in the freight. In that way the cost of the railway, so far as they could tell, would not very much exceed the estimate he laid before the House last session. He had now taken the Committee a pretty good tour round the colony.

Mr. HODGKINSON: What about the Normanton to Cloncurry line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that with regard to that, Mr. Phillips was up there now with instructions to lay out the best route he could find from the twelve and a-half miles, or anywhere about the Norman Bridge, to Cloncurry.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: He wants to go up the low-lying lands along Spear Creek.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he did not think Mr. Phillips had any particular fad. He had a reputation to maintain, and he believed he would do his best. Mr. Phillips was the only engineer they had who knew the country, and if the Government had not believed in him they would not have continued the agreement made with him by the last Government. That was a most anomalous

agreement, and they had only continued it because they believed Mr. Phillips to be an honest and capable surveyor. Mr. Phillips had also received instructions to extend the survey of the Croydon railway as far as Georgetown, and to make any further suggestions to the Government as to future extensions of railways in the Gulf. He was expected to be up there for six months. Nothing had been done yet with regard to the extension from Hughenden, but it was probable that the chief engineer would have a staff of surveyors there before very long. It was inevitable that the Gulf country must be connected with the east coast, but where that might be it was at present impossible to say. Very little indeed was known about the Gulf country. In fact, there was so little really reliable information regarding it, that it would be extremely difficult and very injudicious to come to any conclusion as to where any particular railway was to go. He had now, he believed, given the Committee a general idea of what was going on in railway matters, and he thought the Government might fairly claim credit for having done all they possibly could, and the circumstances of the colony would allow, for the requirements of the colony. If hon. members would only look upon the entire railway system from a conjunct point of view, they would not be so clamorous each for his own particular railway. It must be evident that to carry out the immense amount of railway extension asked for, and which in most cases was really required, was utterly beyond the power of any Government unless time was allowed for accomplishing it, and money was forthcoming as well; and time must be allowed to the Treasury to recuperate after so many years of depletion. He did not wish to press the particular railway before them by any means; he thought he had made that plain at the outset. But he certainly looked at the principle involved, and if that line was objected to, he was of course bound to take note of all the objections alleged against it. One objection seriously alleged was that the amount voted for the line would not complete it, and if it was a sound one it absolved him from further responsibility with regard to nearly every railway under the £10,000,000 loan. The sum voted for the *via recta*, for instance, it was evident would not complete that line, of that he was perfectly certain.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he did not rise for the purpose of prolonging the discussion, although the hon. gentleman in his somewhat lengthy speech had introduced a great deal of controversial matter. He (Sir S. W. Griffith) might fairly invite hon. members who were new to the House to compare the statement made just now by the Minister for Railways that the Cairns Railway was embarked upon without due consideration and without proper inquiry, with the almost continual attacks that were made upon the Government of the day for what was alleged to be their deliberate determination to put off dealing with the matter. The then Government were from day to day accused of dilatoriness in dealing with the matter.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not by me.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he was stating what happened. Those were the accusations they were met with from day to day, and now they were told by the hon. gentleman who sat with the accusers who did that, that the construction of the railway was entered upon without due consideration.

THE PREMIER: Who did that?

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said the then Opposition did it. He could not refrain from

noticing a thing like that. The late Government were now accused of rushing into the matter with undue haste, when at the time they were accused of deliberately putting it off. That kind of thing was unfair. However, he did not want to go into matters which would give rise to a long discussion. He was glad to hear the Minister for Railways say that he wished the Committee to take a comprehensive view of the railway systems of the colony. That was exactly what they ought to do, and if the hon. gentleman had opened the discussion that afternoon by asking hon. members to take a comprehensive view of the subject, and had given them some idea of the intentions of the Government, he (Sir S. W. Griffith) was sure there would have been very much less opposition to the motion before the Committee. The complaint all through was that members did not know what was the intention of the Government. The Committee were entitled to know which of the proposals the Government considered most urgent. If that had been stated he believed the proposed railway would have been accepted practically without opposition, at any rate with very much less opposition. He would, of course, support the motion. It was part of the policy of the late Government, adopted deliberately, and he was glad to see the present Government endeavouring, although with lukewarmness, to carry it out. He took that opportunity of repeating what he had said before, namely, that he could never see any connection between the *via recta* and the Drayton deviation. It appeared to him that each of those lines should be dealt with on its own merits. He believed both of them had merits; some persons thought that neither of them had merits. But whatever their merits or demerits they were entirely distinct subjects, and he was, therefore, quite unable to understand the warmth with which some hon. members advocated or opposed those two lines respectively in connection with one another.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said he did not wish to prolong the discussion, but before the question went to a vote he desired to say a word or two. He had opposed that line and the *via recta* also. He did at one time support a survey of the *via recta*, and he was extremely sorry he did that, but he did it because he then held the opinion, as he did still, that in any place where it was possible to make a line of railway which would be serviceable, that line should be surveyed and the land resumed. With that object in view he began a survey of the *via recta*, but he was extremely sorry that he did so, for he certainly saw no merits in it, and he hoped the successors of the present Government would leave its construction to their successors. As to the line now before the Committee, he saw some merits in it, although he previously opposed it. He would just ask the attention of hon. members to the report of the Commissioners, in which it was stated that the deviation would effect a saving of fifteen miles rebate, which was now allowed by the department. That saving was effected in this way: There were fifteen miles of carriage between Toowoomba, and Warwick, and Stanthorpe which were not charged by the department, because the line was so much longer than the road. The road was forty miles and the railway sixty-five miles long. The deviation would make the line where it should have gone at first, and the ground for asking for a rebate would then be removed. That was a point worthy of consideration.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That will not make the income any larger; there will be the same income for a shorter distance.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said he would show how it would make the income larger in another direction. The saving by the deviation would be nine miles of carriage. The Minister for Railways informed him that the cost per train mile at present was 3s., and that there were twelve trains per day. He (the Minister for Mines and Works) had made a calculation a few minutes ago. Multiplying 12 by 9 they had 108 miles, which would be saved in railway carriage, and if they continued the calculation they would find that at the end of the year there would be a saving of £4,957. The cost of the construction of the line would be £67,000; say £70,000. The interest on £70,000 was £2,800, so that the interest upon the cost of construction would be a little more than one-half of the saving which would be effected by those nine miles of railway.

Mr. FOXTON: Are you taking the twelve trains for the whole nine miles?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Certainly.

Mr. FOXTON: They do not go over the line.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said that was another instance of hon. members knowing more than the gentlemen in charge of the Railway Department. Some hon. members knew more than the Commissioners, and others knew more than the Minister for Railways. He was speaking with authority—with the authority of the Minister for Railways.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That includes the western train.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said it included every train.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It only makes a slight difference; the figures are a little too high, but not very much.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said the hon. gentleman, in speaking about the Cairns railway, had stated that the Cairns railway had been forced upon him, as he had been called upon every day to bring up the plans of that railway. There was no doubt that the members of the district had asked for the plans to be produced; but if the hon. gentleman would refer to *Hansard* he would find that the only thing which had prevented him (the Minister for Mines and Works) from stonewalling that line from Herberton to the coast was because he would have been misunderstood. If he had opposed the line people would have said that he had wanted to make it to Port Douglas or Mourilyan. He really did not believe in the line, according to the plans laid on the table of the House. He had never seen any person who knew anything about making a railway, propose such a line as was submitted to the House; and the Cairns line was even worse now than then. He accepted the line because it was so long under survey, and for no other reason; so that the hon. gentleman had no right to say that he was forced to make the line by the members of the Opposition.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I did not say that. I said that we were accused of dilatoriness then, and that now we are accused of undue haste.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said that three or four years were occupied in surveying the line, which should have been surveyed in far less time. There was no doubt about that. When he went up there last year he walked over that portion of the line which had been referred to in the discussion that evening, and he found it was so bad that, only that the Government would have had to pay a large sum to the contractor by way of compensa-

tion, he would have advised them to stop the line; and he believed it would have been better to have stopped the line then than to have continued it. It had got so far now that they could not stop it, and it would have been better to have sacrificed the £250,000, which would have had to be sacrificed, than to have continued the construction of the line. He hoped hon. members would take a note of what he had said about the saving that would be effected by the adoption of the proposed line. He had opposed it before, but on the strength of the Commissioners' report he now thought it ought to be adopted.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 21.

MESSRS. Nelson, Morehead, Macrossan, Black, Jordan, Pattison, Donaldson, McMaster, Watson, Campbell, Plunkett, O'Sullivan, Drake, Groom, Glassey, Mellor, Gannon, Buckland, Grimes, Adams, and Sir S. W. Griffith.

NOES, 23.

MESSRS. Hodgkinson, Murphy, Hamilton, Sayers, Murray, Wimbale, Foxton, Dunsmure, Little, North, Cronbie, Philp, Lissner, Allan, Cowley, Archer, Morgan, Dalrymple, Stephens, Corfield, Palmer, R. R. Jones, and Smith.

Question resolved in the negative.

The House resumed.

ADDITIONAL SITTING DAY.

The PREMIER, in moving—

That, during the remainder of this session, unless otherwise ordered, the House do meet for the despatch of business on Monday in each week at 3 o'clock p.m., in addition to the days already appointed for meeting; and that Government business take precedence on that day—

said: Mr. Speaker,—The reason for the motion is that there is a great deal of business on the paper, and the Government find it necessary, as time is running on, to ask the House to sit an additional day in the week, and that Government business should take precedence on that day.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said: Mr. Speaker,—As I have already intimated, I shall not offer any opposition to the motion; at the same time I wish to take the opportunity of pointing out that it is hard work to sit five days a week, especially if we sit late. It is harder for Ministers than for other members, but it is hard on me as a private member; and I have had experience in both capacities. I notice that we sit longer than they do in any other colony. In New South Wales they have reduced the number of sitting days from four to three.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: They sit all night, though.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I do not hold them up as an example to follow in any particular. But if we are going to sit five days a week, it is a matter for consideration whether we should not have Wednesday evening for a rest, as is the practice in England. I presume the Premier will arrange that on Mondays, in accordance with the usual practice, contentious business will not be taken, but that the Government business will consist probably of the Estimates.

The PREMIER: Certainly, if the hon. gentleman will promise that the Estimates will not be contentious.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. gentleman knows what I mean. I presume that contentious business, such as Land Bills, will not be taken. Very likely some of the country members will not be in town on Mondays and there will be a thinner House than on other days.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—With the permission of the House, I may say that I quite agree with what the hon. member has said. The Government business on Mondays will not be of a contentious character.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—In addition to what the leader of the Opposition has said about sitting on five days a week, I may say that the time is not far distant, if we really wish to do work, when we shall have to adopt a different system. In the House of Commons they get through between 400 and 500 Bills in a session.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Not so many as that.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Yes; and the work is done quite as well as it is done here. I believe that at the end of this session we shall not have passed more than a dozen Bills. In America thousands of Bills are passed in one session. The whole of the work is done by committees, and there is very little contentious matter left for the House to consider. I do not say that we require such a large amount of legislation; but if we are to carry on the ordinary amount of legislation we shall have to adopt a different system. There is too much talk at present.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. The Government business for to-morrow will be the further consideration of the Crown Lands Acts Amendment Bill in Committee.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at fifteen minutes past 11 o'clock.