

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 1 OCTOBER 1889

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 1 October, 1889.

Message from the Governor—Day Dawn Freehold Gold-mining Company's Railway Bill—assent.—Questions.—Woongarra Branch Railway—committee.—Mount Morgan Branch Railway—committee.—Cairns Railway—committee.—Day Dawn Freehold (Charters Towers) Railway—committee.—Adjournment.

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

MESSAGE FROM THE GOVERNOR.

DAY DAWN FREEHOLD GOLD-MINING COMPANY'S RAILWAY BILL—ASSENT.

The SPEAKER announced that he had received a message from His Excellency the Governor, assenting in the name of Her Majesty to a Bill to authorise the Day Dawn Freehold Gold-mining Company, Limited, Charters Towers, to construct and maintain a branch line of railway to be connected with the Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Gold-mining Company's branch line.

QUESTIONS.

Mr. SAYERS asked the Minister for Railways—

1. Have the Railway Commissioners reported on the railway bridge over the Burdekin River and made any recommendations on the same?
2. If so, what is the nature of the recommendations?
3. When do the Government intend to commence the erection of the new bridge?
4. Will any, and what, steps be taken to secure the present bridge from accident?

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

1. No.
- 2, 3, and 4. The report of the Superintendent of Maintenance shows the bridge to be in good order. The Chief Engineer has been instructed to make a thorough examination and report.

Mr. BARLOW asked the Minister for Railways—

1. Whether he is aware that disquieting rumours are in circulation as to the stability of the Sadleir's Crossing Railway Bridge, Southern and Western Railway?
2. Whether before the end of the present session he will be pleased to lay upon the table of the House such a report as will allay the rumours as to the effect upon the bridge of the flood of January, 1887?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied—

1. No.
2. A report on the present condition of the bridge will be obtained and laid on the table.

Mr. DRAKE asked the Minister for Railways—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the construction of the Samford (*via* Enoggera) Railway?
2. If so, will the necessary provision be included in the forthcoming Loan Estimates?
3. Will plans be submitted for the approval of Parliament during the present session?
4. Have the Government received any official report with regard to the said railway?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied—

1. No authority has yet been obtained for the construction of the railway.
2. The Loan Estimates will shortly be laid on the table.
3. No.
4. Yes; from the inspecting surveyor, and Chief Engineer.

Mr. SAYERS asked the Chief Secretary—

1. Have the Government taken any steps in connection with the Chinese Immigration Restriction Bill passed last session?
2. Have any communications passed between the Government and the British Government on the subject?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. B. D. Morehead) replied—

The House has been made aware of all that has passed between the Government and the Imperial Government on the subject, with the exception of certain negotiations which are in progress. On the completion of these latter, the papers relating thereto will be laid before Parliament.

WOONGARRA BRANCH RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Woongarra branch railway, from South Bundaberg to Burnett Heads, in length 9 miles 60 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.
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 Woongarra branch railway, from South Bundaberg to Burnett Heads, in length 9 miles 60 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.
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 it would hardly be necessary for him to draw the attention of hon. members to the statement of the Railway Commissioners, which had been on the table of the House and circulated for some considerable time. The statement began with a description of the railway, which he need scarcely read. It was well known that the line started from Bundaberg and proceeded towards Burnett Heads. The 2nd paragraph of the

statement referred to the route and character of the country through which the railway would run. It was very aptly described as rich agricultural land, a large area of which was under cultivation. The amount of cultivation was shown on an accompanying map and coloured green. In that map hon. members would see that the quantity of land under cultivation was very extensive indeed, amounting, he believed, to about 13,000 acres. Probably most hon. members had visited the locality. He had had an opportunity of inspecting it, although somewhat cursorily. At the same time he saw enough to convince him that the country was of exceptional character. It had this advantage also, that it had already undergone all that was required from the hands of man to turn it into a fruitful field. It had all been cleared, and, with the exception of a small area, was now under cultivation, the crops being principally sugar-cane. No doubt the Committee had heard quite enough on that subject but he believed every member was willing to encourage the cultivation of sugar if it could be encouraged upon conditions that would not in any way interfere with the progress of the colony in social or other matters of that sort. It was, he believed, the unanimous opinion of hon. members that the cultivation and manufacture of sugar might be very profitably and advantageously disassociated. The two industries were distinct, and it would be of benefit to the colony if they could be encouraged. There was no place in the colony that he knew of where that could be carried on with greater prospect of success than in the locality known as Woongarra. There was everything in favour of it. All the surrounding conditions of the country and the climate were in favour of it, and it was a place where cultivation could be carried on with a minimum amount of manual labour by the employment of first-class agricultural implements, using horses, or other motive power. There was no doubt that in that locality at the present moment most of the properties were of a good size, but he thought there was every prospect in the near future of the mill-owners turning over the land to other people who would undertake the cultivation of the cane and leave them to go on with the manufacture of sugar. At any rate, there was no other place in the colony that he knew of that was so favourably situated, or gave better prospects of looking forward to that very desirable result. The number of mills along the line, he believed, was about twenty, of which, independent of the large mill at Millaquin, there were half-a-dozen which were manufacturing mills, the others being mills solely for the crushing of cane. He did not anticipate that they were going to sacrifice the sugar industry altogether, and anything that could be done to encourage it in a reasonable manner every member of the Committee would assist in. He did not see any way that would more conduce to that than by providing means of railway communication in order to reduce as much as possible the cost of production. That was one of the most legitimate ways in which they could foster and encourage that very important industry. He looked upon it as a very important industry, principally in this respect—that farmers growing other kinds of products were to a large extent competing with each other, being dependent upon local consumption. Where they depended upon the towns for the consumption of their products they were competing one against the other, and in a good season, such as they would shortly probably have, the farmers to a very considerable extent stood to be ruined almost by the superabundant harvest. The better the harvest, very often the worse were the profits; but if they were to encourage the sugar industry in any way, the small farmers in

particular would produce a crop which did not compel one farmer to compete with the other, but produce a crop which could go into the markets of the world, and which enriched the country by enabling it to increase its imports. Even if all that country at Woongarra was taken up by holdings of considerable size, there was a great opening available if the railway was constructed. He referred now to the Isis Scrub, which was on a branch line of the main line between Maryborough and Bundaberg. In that piece of land, which would soon cease to be designated as a scrub, there was some of the richest land in the colony. The whole of it nearly had been taken up by small selectors. There was a village settlement within that area at Cordalba, which was one of the most prosperous of those kinds of settlement, and, as a matter of fact, those selectors now were planting sugar cane. Upon that they would mostly depend to get a living off their land, and it was only by making the railway that they would be likely to be able to make a profitable existence. Arrangements had been made whereby they would be able either to sell or bring their produce to the mills and have it converted into juice, and the juice would be carried by train to one or other of the mills which would be situated on the land he referred to.

Mr. HODGKINSON: From Isis Scrub?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said yes. Such were the arrangements now in progress, although they were not quite completed. In the *Courier* of that day there was a short paragraph saying that a large and powerful crushing mill was in course of erection in the vicinity of that area of land. The selectors had made arrangements to sell their cane, and have it there converted into juice, and the juice would be transported by means of tanks on trucks from the Isis Scrub to Millaquin or some of the other mills on the railway. Further development that would be encouraged by that railway would be the consumption of coal from the Burrum, and everyone would admit that was a most important industry. Nearly all the mills in operation in the district through which the railway went required coal now, and all would require it in a short time for producing their motive power. The timber available had nearly all been worked off, and if further facilities were afforded the people there by the construction of that line, he had no doubt the consumption of coal, and the traffic on the railway because of it, would be very extensive. In no part of the colony connected with the sugar industry that he had visited were the settlers and mill-owners in particular in such good heart as they were in that Woongarra district. They did not hear the wail there that was heard in other parts of the colony. So far from that, when he visited the district in November last, they were increasing their machinery, and introducing the latest improvements they could secure. He believed the Sugar Commissioners would be able to endorse what he had said in that respect, as they had been in the district later than he had. He had been very much struck indeed with the amount of private enterprise he had seen developed there; and he had been particularly pleased to find that the people there were so sanguine as to the results, and instead of being disheartened and talking about giving up the cultivation of sugar, they evidently had the firm intention of sticking to it to the very last, and clearly had no great fears as to the future. They would also require in the working of those sugar mills, besides the coal, a large quantity of limestone. At present the limestone was brought from the Northern ports, and

principally from Rockhampton, by means of shipping, but there were large quantities of that stone in the Gympie district, and there was not the slightest doubt that if that railway was constructed the whole of the lime required there would be brought from the Gympie district. All those things would, he thought, help to prove that that line was one which would be a profitable investment for the colony. The Commissioners' report went on to describe the line with respect to the gradients and curves, and from that description hon. members would see that the line was one in connection with which there would be no very great engineering difficulties. The report stated that there were comparatively few curves, the minimum radius being ten chains, and that simply meant that the line was almost as light to construct as a straight line; and the difference between the cost of maintaining a line with curves, none of which were of less than ten chains radius, and a straight line was hardly appreciable; it was only when they had short curves of five chains or less, that the cost of maintenance was comparatively heavy. The first mile and a-half of the line would be very expensive on account of a large bridge being required over Saltwater Creek, and a considerable amount of filling-in and embankments. The cost of that part of the line up to the spot where the private line to the Millaquin mill would start from was estimated, in the detailed estimates, to be within a trifle of £16,000, and if they deducted that from the total estimated cost of the line, it would be seen that the remaining portion of the line would be comparatively cheap to construct. The Commissioners, in their report, further stated they had visited the district, and traversed the whole length of the route, and they went on to say that—

“With the exception of the short section of about a mile and a-half to a point near the Millaquin Refinery, from which a branch of about twenty chains in length will require to be made to accommodate the refinery, on which there will probably be an annual traffic of about 20,000 tons, provided the cultivation of sugar in the district is continued to the same extent as it is at present—it does not appear that there will be sufficient prospective traffic on the line beyond this point which would warrant its extension at present to the Burnett Heads.”

That paragraph, he admitted, was rather disappointing to him, as he took a much more sanguine view of the matter than the Commissioners. On the whole, he was inclined to think the reports of the Commissioners, and this one in particular, were somewhat bald and meagre. They did not altogether come up to his expectations, and he could only account for that by the fact that the Commissioners were new to their work.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said they could hardly expect them to be heaven-born Commissioners, acquainted with the whole of the circumstances of the colony all at once. He had himself got credit for being cautious, but the Commissioners beat him at that, and they were evidently determined not to commit themselves. However, he had no hesitation in committing himself with regard to the advisability of building that line, as he considered it as good a line as had ever been brought before the Committee. He had expected that the Commissioners would have given the Committee information as to a good many details with regard to the traffic and so on.

Mr. UNMACK: How could they when there is none?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, the prospective traffic. How could there be traffic upon a line that had not been constructed?

Mr. HODGKINSON: What details would you ask for?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he expected they would be supplied with some details that would enable them to form an opinion, for instance, as to the probable traffic, with regard to the population of the district, the number of settlers there, the quantity of sugar now being produced there, and some information with regard to the probable future of the cultivated land. His impression was that the Commissioners had formed their conclusions from data which were neither very copious nor comprehensive. Hon. members probably knew more about the future probable traffic and the desirability of constructing that line than they could expect the Commissioners to know at the present moment. The visit of the Commissioners to the place was almost as hurried as his own. At the same time he thought that a good many more details might have been furnished, and might probably be furnished that night, for the conclusions come to with respect to the line. Be that as it might, he confidently drew the attention of the Committee to the line, and he was prepared to submit it with every confidence. They should not look at it altogether from a traffic point of view, as there were other considerations that always weighed in the case of any railway proposed; and that line should enlist the strongest sympathies of hon. members from a statesmanlike point of view. He thought he had shown that by the construction of that line they would encourage and help to expand a good many of the industries of the colony, and that was one of the main objects for which they constructed railways. They would extend the cultivation of sugar and other products; they would encourage and find a market for the coal industry at Burrum and other places on the Maryborough and Bundaberg line; they would encourage, to some extent, the production of lime at Gympie; and they would also encourage the settlement of the land, which was one of the greatest objects the Government had in view. There was no doubt that a large quantity of land in the Isis Scrub had not yet been taken up, and if the line was passed, at once a large area of that land would be put under sugar-cane, which would be brought to be manufactured at Millaquin. All those things taken together would provide traffic over the line, and also over the line already built, as the coal for Yengarie, the limestone from Gympie, and the juice from the Isis Scrub must go along the main line. With regard to the township of Wallace, it had been surveyed, but none of the land had been sold. There was a considerable amount of passenger traffic, however, towards the Burnett Heads from Bundaberg. The population of Bundaberg itself was about 5,000, and that would be a holiday resort for the people of that town. Reckoning the passenger traffic at a very moderate calculation, it would nearly pay the interest upon the cost of the construction of that portion of the line beyond Millaquin. It was admitted on all hands that the line as far as Millaquin would pay at once; and he had little doubt that the remaining portion would also pay, as, in his opinion, the passenger traffic alone towards the Burnett Heads would pay the interest on that portion of the line. Taking into consideration all those things, he had much pleasure in proposing the resolution standing in his name.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that was another item in the Government railway policy, but it was not accompanied by any mandate to the Committee to pay great attention to the report of the Railway Commissioners. Their report by no means bore out the eulogy of the Minister in charge of the Railway Department, and that hon. gentleman

took the somewhat unusual course of overriding those gentlemen who had been appointed to inspect the line. The Minister for Railways had expressed disbelief in their opinion, and had pointed out to the Committee that they were absolutely too cautious in the discharge of the duties which had been intrusted to them. It was quite evident to the Committee that the duty of the Commissioners was laid down in the Railways Act, and it was the province and duty of the Committee to be very careful not to vote any money for any line which did not have the warm approval and direct sanction of the gentlemen whom Parliament had appointed to discharge those duties with the view of eliminating the construction of their railways from Ministerial control. There was not a single argument adduced by the Minister for Railways in favour of the line being constructed beyond the Millaquin Refinery. The other day the hon. gentleman had proposed the construction of the line to the Bunya Mountains, in order to enable people to see a celebrated bull; and now he proposed to construct a railway to a place where people could go to picnics. Considering the financial condition of the colony, he wondered at a gentleman possessing the gravity of the Minister for Railways proposing to construct a line for picnics. He should like to know on what computation the hon. gentleman based his contention that any traffic would ever flow from the Isis Scrub to that line. It was a well-known fact that no sugar was grown in the Isis Scrub, and it was a matter of great doubt whether any there might be would not go to Yengarie instead of to Millaquin.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Who told you that?

Mr. HODGKINSON said many people well acquainted with the locality had given him that information, and he knew it from his own acquaintance with the district. Some years ago he had carefully examined the Isis Scrub, when he had been deputed by the late Government to report upon the sites for central mills. Owing to circumstances not necessary to mention, he had not been able to see any opening for a central mill at the Isis Scrub. Any produce of the Isis Scrub was bound to go to Yengarie, in the natural order of things. As to the prospective growth of sugar in the Isis Scrub, he could tell the hon. gentleman that, owing to the declaration of the Government against coloured labour, no sugar would be grown there. Many people with whom he was acquainted had been waiting until the Government policy with regard to an extension of the operations of the Polynesian Labourers Act was made known, and as the Government had indelibly recorded their determination, there would be very little sugar grown in that locality. The line was admittedly for the benefit of Millaquin, and if it could be proved that it would benefit Millaquin, he would warmly support it, even if that were the only reason in favour of the line. He would support it in order to show the great and important sugar industry that in every way that they possibly could, members on his side of the Committee would assist the industry. He trusted that members in general would also do the same. If any expenditure of public money that could be devoted to the development of such an exceptionally rich area of agricultural land as that proposed to be traversed by the line could achieve that object it would have his hearty support. But let them consider the line on its merits. The Commissioners distinctly stated that there was no prospective traffic for the line beyond Millaquin at present. He would consider the construction of the line up to Millaquin, and see if there

were any sound arguments in favour of the construction of that part of the line. Did the Minister for Railways know that at present all the cane grown in the district was crushed at the various mills, and the juice was afterwards sent to Millaquin to be treated? That juice was conveyed in pipes by the action of gravitation, and after those pipes were once laid, the expense of cartage was dispensed with, and it was merely a question of the maintenance of the pipes. And after the sugar was made, where did it go? It went by water, and not one ton of it would ever go by the railway, because there was a wharf immediately in front of the factory from which vessels took the sugar away. At any rate there was this to be said for it, that it was calculated to give an impetus to one of the greatest self-contained enterprises in the colony, and for that reason it deserved a certain amount of support. But why they should be asked to construct nine and a-half miles of line, in face of the Commissioners' distinct statement that beyond the one and a-half mile section there was no prospect of traffic, he did not know, and should like very much to hear the reason. The first part of the line was to cost £16,000; that amount would be sufficient to construct it, and the remaining £29,000 might stand in abeyance. It was a considerable sum of money to run to Burnett Heads for the sake of enabling the Bundaberg people to go on picnics. But the whole of that little arrangement was prospective, and it seemed very strange why the Government should develop the prospective wants of the colony in one or two favoured spots while there were other places where railways were absolutely required as main arteries of communication. They were told, when the Commissioners were appointed, that the construction of railways would be subject to their revision. It was very probable that if those gentlemen had been in a position to give any detailed estimates of probable traffic they would have done so. How did they manage to do that upon those little out-of-the-way places? For men who had only just arrived in the colony it was a most extraordinary thing. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) had been in the colony twenty-seven years, and he should have never thought of running a railway to the Bunya mountains, or of the Drayton deviation, or of those little arrangements now before the Committee, or one or two others which they would, no doubt, be asked to sanction. Was there to be any system in the railway policy of the Government, or were the Opposition, or, at least, a portion of it, to be simply driven to stop further progress with regard to supply? It was in the power of one or two determined members to bring the Government, however powerful they might be, to a sense of their duty; and it was almost the duty of the Opposition to do so, unless the Government showed some intelligent policy of railway construction, instead of bringing forward those little dribbling railways just as occasion seemed to offer.

The Hon. C. POWERS said that if the contention of the hon. gentleman was right—that if the Commissioners reported against certain lines they were not to be dealt with—it would be simply handing over the railway policy of the colony to the Commissioners. It was distinctly affirmed when the Railway Bill was passing through the House, that the railway policy of the colony was to be retained in the hands of the House. The House was to say where the railways should go, and the Commissioners were to manage them as best they could. Under no circumstances would the House lose its hold over railway expenditure. Even assuming that there was nothing in the Commissioners' report to warrant the construction of a line, it was quite

open to the Committee to discuss it, independently of the Commissioners' report, if other facts could be adduced in its support. He quite agreed with the Minister for Railways when he said the report was bald. That was shown not only by the remarks of the Minister for Railways, but from the report itself. The report began by stating:—

"This line commences at the northern end of the South Bundaberg station, and runs along Quay street, which is one and a-half chains wide for about half-a-mile; thence to the right of Burnett street and to the left of Princess street, passing within about thirteen chains of Manchester and Scott's saw-mills, and within about twenty chains of Cran and Co.'s Millaquin Refinery."

The first thing the Committee ought to know from the Commissioners was, what was likely to be the traffic on the line to those saw-mills, and what was likely to be the traffic to the Millaquin Refinery. There was sure to be some traffic to the saw-mills and some to the refinery in connection with the line. And as far as that went, he was certain that when the line was built it would open a traffic not only to sugar and other produce, but to timber from the Isis and other scrubs.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Timber is now sold at less than cost price in Brisbane.

The Hon. C. POWERS said that might be so, but the timber trade was still going on, and the carriage of timber was a very important item in the railway receipts. The Commissioners had omitted all mention of another large saw-mill—Skyring's saw-mill—that had been erected there. The line went to that place as well as to Manchester and Scott's and the Millaquin Refinery, and some traffic, at all events, might be expected from it. The Commissioners ought to have given some information to the Committee to enable them to know whether they would be justified in going on with that portion of the line.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Why was not the report sent back to them?

The Hon. C. POWERS said that if the report had been sent back it would have had the effect of putting off the sanctioning of the line for the present session. The money was voted last session—

Mr. HODGKINSON: The money for the Normanton to Cloncurry line was voted five years ago.

The Hon. C. POWERS said a portion of that money was passed over to Croydon to help in the construction of the Normanton to Croydon Railway. However, that had nothing to do with the present question. The Commissioners said—

"The whole of the country through which the line passes is rich agricultural land, and a large area is under cultivation, as shown in green on the chart attached to the plans."

It would have been some assistance to the Committee to have been told that that rich agricultural land amounted to from 20,000 to 30,000 acres, instead of the narrow strip through which the line passed; and that of that quantity 12,000 acres were under cultivation. There was not a finer patch of agricultural land in the colony, 12,000 acres in extent, through which a railway could be run. If they were not to make their railways through agricultural areas, where were they to make them? In his opinion it was the very best thing they could possibly do, especially where, as in the present case, it opened up 30,000 acres of rich agricultural land. Were they to vote against every line that went through agricultural land because the Commissioners, after a brief visit, said they did not see enough traffic to warrant its construction? He would ask anyone who had seen the country whether they had seen a piece of land in the colony more suitable for sugar culture, or for any other kind of agricul-

tural produce, than the Woongarra Scrub? It was admittedly one of the best agricultural areas that could be found anywhere; and it was to such places that lines of railway should be taken in order to develop their resources, more especially where the area to be opened up was so very large. The hon. member had stated that because pipes had been laid down to Millaquin, therefore there was no necessity to build the line, inasmuch as the juice was carried from Woongarra to Millaquin. That was right as far as it went, but it did not go to the full extent of the question, because not only were there those juice mills, but there were six large manufacturing mills on the route at present. One of them alone was capable of manufacturing from 1,000 to 2,000 tons of sugar, and had cost about £30,000. They wanted to get that sugar carried when manufactured. It now cost some shillings a ton to get it delivered in Bundaberg, and if the line was constructed, that would be so much traffic for it. The Millaquin Refinery would also be able to get the coal they required and their sugar taken away. He did not wish to say anything against Cran and Co., because they acted fairly with the planters, but they practically ruled Woongarra. They had only to hold up their hand to ruin almost any person there by refusing to take their juice at the mill, and it would be dangerous to allow that power to pass into other hands. That would be broken down by the construction of the line, because it would enable planters to put up crushing and manufacturing plants, so that it would be a benefit to the whole district. He was very anxious, in the interests of the planters, that the line should be continued past Millaquin. As the hon. the Minister for Railways had stated, arrangements had been made to crush juice at the Isis Scrub and take it to Millaquin or Yengarie for manufacture. The timber industry would also be helped by the construction of the line, and the coal industry would be benefited because of the consumption of the manufacturing mills there already, and also because he knew that other mills would be put up immediately the line was constructed. There would be an output of 5,000 tons of coal at least in connection with that industry as soon as the line was built, and the timber, which was rapidly vanishing, was used up. One planter had promised to take 1,000 tons of coal annually, if the line was taken to his plantation. There would be at least 5,000 tons used yearly, and anyone could easily calculate the revenue from that, when carried forty miles at 3s. 4d. per ton. That alone would furnish considerable traffic, independent of the 14,000 tons that would be taken at the Millaquin Refinery alone. That was a strong argument why the line should be taken past Millaquin, because it would be a large item of traffic, besides assisting to develop the Burrum coal mines, because no coal had yet been found nearer. Those matters had not been pointed out by the Commissioners.

Mr. GROOM: Why were they not?

The Hon. C. POWERS said that was the fault of the Commissioners; they had not put all the information available before the Committee. Another matter which had been pointed out by the Minister for Railways, but was not mentioned in the report, was that there was a population of from 8,000 to 10,000 in Bundaberg alone. The hon. member had referred to picnicking on the coast, and supposing that only 200 out of that 8,000 or 10,000 travelled along the line weekly, say, on Sundays, they would willingly pay 2s.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Nine and a-half miles—about £20 for a special train; and keeping the railway servants working on Sundays!

The HON. C. POWERS said if only 200 passengers travelled on Saturdays or on the Thursday half-holiday, or any other day of the week—without taking into account settlers along the line—they would willingly pay 1s. each way, which would amount to over £1,000 a year. He believed there would be more than that; but taking that low estimate, it meant over £1,000 per annum from passenger traffic, independent altogether of the coal and sugar traffic and the development of the industries of the district. That would be a material item in paying the interest. Then, again, it was not like starting an entirely new line from one place to another. They had the station at Bundaberg already, so that the line was only a branch, and only one or two more stations would be required.

Mr. HODGKINSON: You will want several stations.

The HON. C. POWERS said the more stations that were wanted, the more it would prove that the line would pay. If the passenger traffic alone paid half the interest it would be a great item. It would, at any rate, pay more than the working expenses, which was more than some of their lines did now. He looked upon it in the same way, taking the population of the two places to be equal, as asking for the construction of a line to Sandgate, except that instead of passing through stony hills it would go through some of the richest agricultural land in the colony. The question was, was such a line worth building? He contended that it was. Anyone looking at the Commissioners' report would see that the number of mills in the district, and the population they employed, was very great. He knew the facts from having visited the place. He was interested in it in connection with the Burrum coalfield. He was satisfied that the construction of the line would add greatly to the output of coal; that it would benefit the sugar industry and the timber industry, and that it would be a paying line. Under those circumstances he considered the Committee would be quite justified in passing the resolution.

Mr. DRAKE said he listened very attentively to the debate which took place on the Railway Bill, and he came to another conclusion altogether than that which had been arrived at by the hon. member for Burrum. As far as he (Mr. Drake) could gather, the principal argument put forward for the appointment of Railway Commissioners was that their appointment would put an end for ever to political railways; that in future no railway would be constructed except for the benefit of the public generally; and that no railway would be made for the benefit of private individuals or for political purposes. The reports that had been made by the Railway Commissioners up to the present time were made by virtue of the 27th section of the Railway Act. They were reports made to the Minister before the plans and sections were brought down to the Committee. He could not see how the Commissioners were going to prevent the passage of political railways if they were not to report upon any railways but the particular lines referred to them by the Government. He would like to know whether any facilities had been afforded the Commissioners to advise the Government as to the general railway policy of the country. The Commissioners were to a certain extent responsible for the success of the railway policy, and should, of course, have an opportunity of advising the Government as to what particular railways should be made. It was very evident from the reports that had been made up to the present time that the Commissioners had acted in perfect good faith, because they had seen that the Commissioners had, in one instance, reported favourably on a line which the Government did

not want to make, and in another had reported to some extent unfavourably on a line which the Government did want to make.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is not true.

Mr. DRAKE: It is true.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Quite true enough for you.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he rose to a point of order.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. member for Enoggera stated that he (the Minister for Railways) brought forward a railway which the Government did not wish to pass. Could there be a greater insult than that offered to any Minister?

Mr. UNMACK said it was a very objectionable practice for a Minister to accuse an hon. member of making statements which were quite true enough for him. He (Mr. Unmack) did not think the hon. member for Enoggera had ever been guilty of wilfully making a misstatement to the Committee.

Mr. DRAKE said the matter was not worth taking any notice of. The public knew the facts and could judge for themselves. He referred first of all to the Drayton deviation. That line was proposed by the Minister for Railways, who brought down a report from the Railway Commissioners which was favourable to the construction of the deviation, and then asked hon. members not to vote for it unless they could conscientiously say it was for the good of the country that the line should be made. Had the hon. gentleman ever recommended any other railway in such a way as that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes, every one.

Mr. DRAKE: Would the hon. gentleman ask the members of the Committee not to vote for the proposed railway unless they were satisfied that it was for the public benefit?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Certainly.

Mr. DRAKE said that up to the present time the hon. gentleman had not brought down any railway and recommended it in that manner, with the one exception of the Drayton deviation. From that fact, and from the fact that the Government supporters sitting on the cross-benches trooped over to the other side of the Committee, and defeated the Drayton deviation proposal, he inferred that the Government did not want to pass it. If his inference was wrong, that was another thing, but he was not stating what was untrue.

Mr. MURPHY: It is a wrong inference.

Mr. DRAKE said it might be a wrong inference, but if he was wrong he stood wrong with a very great number of other people who drew the same inference. The other railway to which he referred was the Bunya Railway, a line which the Commissioners certainly did not recommend. When the Minister for Railways brought forward the proposal for the construction of that line he recommended it very strongly, and it was a significant fact that every member on the Government side of the Committee, including the members on the cross benches, voted for it, while every member on the Opposition side, with the exception of one, voted against the line. From that he inferred that if the Government had been as anxious to pass the Drayton deviation as they were to pass the Bunya Railway they could have passed it with ease. He did not wish to speak particularly with regard to the line before the Committee just at present. He was merely speaking on the general subject, because he thought that

if the Railway Commissioners were to be responsible for the working of the railways of the colony, and were to be expected to make as good a report at the end of the year as the Victorian Commissioners had made, they should have some voice as to the lines that were to be constructed. It was absolutely useless to put upon the Commissioners the duty of reporting upon proposed lines, and then for the Government to come down to the Committee, and if the report was favourable to their views, praise the Commissioners to the skies; but if it was not favourable to say, "Oh they have only been a little time in the country, they do not understand these matters, you must not take any notice of their report." Either the report of the Commissioners must be accepted by the Committee as of some weight and have some effect on their deliberations, or they must understand that the report of the Commissioners was not to be observed. He thought it would be very much better to have an understanding that the Commissioners should be afforded facilities for making inquiries as to the extensions of the railway system of the colony which should be undertaken, and that they should not simply be asked to bring down a report on any particular railway submitted to them by the Government.

Mr. MURPHY said that, as one of the members who advocated the appointment of Commissioners for the management of the railways of the colony, and as one of those who were anxious that the railways should as much as possible be withdrawn from all political control, and that lines should be made only in those parts of the colony where they would be most likely to pay and be a benefit to the community as a whole, he must oppose the railway under consideration, because the report of the Commissioners was, in his opinion, not a satisfactory one. He was sorry to have to oppose the proposal brought forward by the Government, and he had only come to the conclusion to do so after giving the matter the most careful consideration. He could not go into the merits of the proposed line because he was perfectly unacquainted with the country, but the Commissioners having made a report which would not warrant him in voting for the line, he was bound to oppose it. It had always been complained in that Committee that sufficient information was not given with regard to lines proposed to be constructed. He himself had complained when sitting on the other side that railways were brought forward by the then Government under Sir S. W. Griffith without sufficient information to warrant hon. members in voting for them. The country had now gone to enormous expense in providing Commissioners for the purpose of reporting on railway proposals, and when they did not give sufficient information on the subject—and in the present case the information was either too meagre or the opinion of the Commissioners was very much more unfavourable than appeared from their report, he must oppose the railway, otherwise his action all through would be most inconsistent. As he was one of those who always advocated the appointment of the Commissioners, and as he always made a strong point of it, that when they had the Commissioners they would have an independent opinion to guide them, he must now abide by their opinion. Were they going to vote dead against that opinion and make a railway in defiance of the opinion of those gentlemen? He could not see where his consistency would come in if he in any way supported that railway. When the Minister for Railways was speaking upon those clauses of the Railway Bill relating to the appointment of the Commissioners, he said the Railway Commissioners were not only to be a board of advice to the Government, but to Parliament also. Those

words expressed the intentions of Parliament, and if they were simply to ignore the advice of the board and make railways in defiance of their opinion, they were going back entirely upon the object for which the board was appointed. For those reasons he was sorry he was unable to support the railway.

Mr. ADAMS said he was extremely sorry to hear the hon. member for Barcoo say that he would not support the proposal of the Government, because he did not know the country.

Mr. MURPHY: No! The Commissioners have reported against it.

Mr. ADAMS: The hon. member ought to have listened to the speeches of the Minister for Railways and the hon. member for Burrum. The Commissioners had reported that it was desirable that the railway should go as far as Millaquin, and had given their reasons. The hon. member for Enoggera insinuated that that line was a political line.

Mr. DRAKE: No; I was speaking on the general question.

Mr. ADAMS said some three years ago when the line was first talked about he waited on the head of the Railway Department with a member of the firm of Cran and Co. to urge the necessity of constructing the line, but at that day the Government would not have anything whatever to do with it if it did not go further than Millaquin. The consequence was that he had to lay some figures before them to show that it was absolutely necessary, and that the line would benefit the whole district, and should be continued down towards the Burnett Heads. The hon. member for Burke seemed to have visited some portion of the Isis Scrub, and had come to the conclusion that cane could not be grown there.

Mr. HODGKINSON: I never said so.

Mr. ADAMS said that was the inference he drew from the hon. gentleman's speech. There was one mill which had been in operation there for the last five years, and he knew, as well as the hon. gentleman knew, that they were turning out sugar there in some instances at the rate of two and three tons to the acre. That was plain proof that cane could be grown in the Isis Scrub. Was it reasonable to think that Cran and Co. would have accepted tenders for a plant costing £15,000 or £16,000 to place in the Isis Scrub if cane could not be grown there? The intention of the company was not to take the cane to Millaquin, but to crush it there and take away the juice, which in itself would be a great means of making the railway pay. The hon. member for Burrum had said that the average consumption of fuel at Millaquin was 14,000 tons annually; but a few days ago only, Mr. Cran had told him (Mr. Adams) most distinctly that the consumption of coal was 15,000 tons per annum, and if the line was constructed they would take the whole of their limestone from Gympie. That item itself meant something like 5,000 tons in addition, which had to be carried to Millaquin Refinery. Therefore, he thought that proved most conclusively that the line to Millaquin would not only pay, but would assist the other line to pay also, and, like the Sandgate line, he believed it would be one of the best paying lines in the colony. When they got past Millaquin, as had been shown by the hon. member for Burrum, they found that there were six manufacturing plants. In the early days of sugar-growing in the district, Millaquin could not take the whole of the juice that was produced, and consequently they would take it from one planter in one week and from another the next week. The planters did not know from day to day when they could send down their juice or

when they would be told to stop their mills, because the juice could not be taken. That meant that the whole of their hands had to remain idle until such time as crushing could be proceeded with. Therefore, whatever little profit might be derived was partly taken away, simply because they could not get their juice refined. That was found so disastrous by some of the planters that they stopped sending their juice to the refinery, and erected a manufacturing plant themselves. Since a number of those manufacturing plants had been erected, the Millaquin Company was obliged to look round for other means of supply, and they had gone to the Isis Scrub. Anyone who had gone over that district must know perfectly well that where all those mills were situated the whole country was denuded of timber. There was no fuel, and either coal or wood must be burnt. If they utilised timber, it would have to come along the Burrum line, and if they utilised coal it also would have to come from the Burrum, because there was no coal nearer to the mills. Those planters would have to get fuel, and they would be obliged to get coal in a very short time, and if that line was not constructed the consequence would be that they would have to cart their fuel for some seven or eight miles from the railway, and that would be almost disastrous to them. He did not say the consumption of coal at the other mills would be so great as at Millaquin, but he was perfectly convinced that the consumption of coal would be increased to one-half at least of what was consumed at Millaquin. Those mills would have to get fuel from some place to get up steam, and the construction of that line would provide them with the best means of getting it. It was not only the plantations along the line that would be served by its construction, but there were plantations all round the district that would be served by it. Speaking of the traffic likely to be provided for the line he considered that in an average season they might expect to have 6,600 tons of sugar carried on the line, and in a good season there would, no doubt, be double that amount of traffic. Hon. members should bear in mind that that was independent of the traffic that would be provided by all the small farmers around, who grew considerable quantities of maize and other produce, which would vastly help to pay the working expenses of the line. If he could only have got the statistics for the district for the past few years he was sure he would find that some 30,000 bags of maize had been exported from that Woongarra Scrub year after year; and even since the development of cane-growing he was sure it had averaged 12,000 bags a year. It was plain, therefore, that the line would pay even from the start. The hon. member for Burke had rather made a jest of the remarks of the Minister for Railways with reference to the probable passenger traffic, and the hon. member had said it was the first time he had heard of a railway being made for the purpose of taking people to picnics. He (Mr. Adams) was not sure of that himself, as he believed railways had already been constructed in more sparsely-populated districts than Woongarra to carry people to the sea beach. To show what the inhabitants of Bundaberg could do, he might mention that, about two months before he came down that session, he had gone to the station-master at Bundaberg and applied for a special train to Maryborough; and he had been told that the Commissioner would have to be asked. The Commissioner's reply was that he could get the special train, but he would have to guarantee £7 10s. He had said he was perfectly prepared to guarantee the £7 10s. if they would allow him half the surplus; but that was not agreed to. However, he did

guarantee the sum of £7 10s., and the result was that for two days the passenger traffic amounted to £210. He believed that if there were facilities afforded by the proposed line to get to the sea beach, there would be a large number of persons going down there to live, and for pleasure, and the passenger traffic would also be a considerable item towards defraying the expenses of the line. He need not further take up the time of the Committee, as he believed they had conclusively proved that the proposed line would pay the country even from the start.

Mr. ANNEAR said he approached the question with a great deal of disappointment, because he felt that, after the many promises that had been made, one of the first lines that would have been submitted to the Committee would have been the line from Maryborough to Pialba. He agreed with the hon. member who had just sat down that it was necessary to provide means to enable people to go to the seaside, and the question of providing a railway, not only for the large population of Maryborough, but of the whole of the Wide Bay district to visit Pialba, one of the best watering-places in the colony, had been before the country for many years. He did think that, with a Minister of the Crown representing that district, they would have seen that line tabled by the Minister for Railways. Maryborough had been tabooed ever since he had known it, and it always came in second; but under the new system they had initiated he felt sure that justice would be done to that part of the colony by the Commissioners they had appointed. They did not want any more than that, and were prepared to rely upon the merits of any railway they thought should be constructed and let the Commissioners decide upon its merits. They could reach Pialba now by the construction of fourteen miles of railway at an outside cost of £35,000, and it would bring Pialba within twenty-one miles of Maryborough. It appeared they would have to wait a bit longer, though he had felt sure it would have been brought on that session. Objection had been taken to the Commissioners' report, and the other night they had discussed what the Commissioners did with respect to an individual, and that day they were discussing the Commissioners' report upon a railway. He had contended all along that Parliament had not handed over everything to the Commissioners. Those gentlemen had to submit a report to Parliament, and it was for Parliament to decide whether that report should be adopted or not. Looking at the report before them, he saw nothing in it very strongly against the construction of that railway. It was merely a plain statement which they could only make, being only a few weeks in the colony. Hon. members could not expect them to make an exhaustive report when they had been only such a short time in the colony. Every hon. member who had been to Bundaberg, knew that that was a line that should be made, and he believed he was correct in stating that the present Chief Engineer had recommended that the line should be made long ago. Other lines had been referred to, and he might state that he was very sorry he had not been present to give his vote in support of the Drayton deviation. It had been stated that the line now proposed was to be made especially for the Millaquin Refinery; but anyone who knew the Woongarra Scrub would know that that statement would not hold water. He agreed entirely with what had been said by the hon. member for Burrum some time ago, in speaking on the sugar question. The hon. gentleman said that whatever the result might be he felt confident that sugar would be grown at Bundaberg. Now he (Mr. Annear) felt confident that sugar would be grown at

Bundaberg, and that it would be grown by white labour. The Minister for Railways had said a great deal in reference to the line, and he could concur with every word the hon. gentleman had said, as he had not overstated the case at all. He believed the traffic the hon. gentleman had stated the line would carry when constructed would be exceeded. Some two years ago he, in company with the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, and the then member for Wide Bay, the late Mr. Bailey, had attended a large meeting of farmers in the Isis Scrub, when the question of growing sugar was discussed. It was decided that it would be no use growing sugar until a mill was erected in that locality, whereby it would be made to pay. He alluded to that to show hon. members that sugar would be grown in the Isis Scrub in large quantities, and that it would be grown by white labour. He had seen by the papers that the firm of Messrs. Cran and Co. had accepted the tender of Messrs. John Walker and Co. for an engine and rollers alone, which would cost £16,000. Now, that machinery was for the purpose of crushing the cane and extracting the juice which was to be sent to Millaquin. By that means a very large amount of traffic would be carried over the railway already constructed. He knew that the Queensland Colliery Company the season before last had entered into a contract to supply Messrs. Cran and Co. with over 15,000 tons of coal for that one season. They had a railway constructed from Burrum to Bundaberg—about forty miles in length—but none of that coal had been taken over that length of railway. All that coal had been taken, at a heavy cost, from Maryborough to Bundaberg by sea. By the making of that branch line every ton of that coal could go over the forty miles of railway already constructed, and that extra length would bring it to something like forty-nine miles. Then there was another thing. Some two years ago it was decided that a large sum of money should be expended at Bundaberg in the erection of coal shoots. At the present time, he believed, that money had not been expended, and by the construction of that line it would be unnecessary to erect them. It would be far better to erect the coal shoots opposite Fairymede on the line, than have them five miles away, Fairymede being four or five miles down the river, and nearly opposite to where the proposed line would go. He would support the line most heartily. Hon. members must take him as an example of Maryborough men. He was heaping coals of fire upon the head of the hon. member for Bundaberg in supporting the line, as that hon. member had always opposed any railway being constructed in his (Mr. Annear's) district. However, he would not follow the example of the hon. member for Bundaberg, and he was sure the hon. member would do justice when other lines came before them for consideration. Of course every hon. member in favour of the line stated that that would be one of the best branch lines, but he believed seriously that no piece of railway had ever been proposed in the colony which would prove more beneficial to the general public than that short line.

The HON. P. PERKINS said he was not going to give a vote with any feeling of anger or disappointment, on account of past transactions. He had looked at the map, and he had seen where the line was to go. He considered it was unfair to praise the Railway Commissioners, and it was also unfair to blame them for their reports, as they had had no opportunity of ascertaining the wants of the community, or of getting the local knowledge which was necessary before they could give their opinion as to the advisability of constructing any line. Many hon. members of that Committee knew far more about the requirements of Bundaberg than

those men could possibly have acquired already. No doubt they had visited the place, and all sorts of stories were told them; but still, as wise men, they would take their own course. It was most unfair to praise or to blame them as yet. Before he had gone to Sydney he had had an interview with the Minister for Railways with regard to the Drayton deviation. That hon. gentleman had told him that he would call upon the Commissioners to report upon the line, but he had objected, as the Commissioners knew nothing about it. He had told the Minister for Railways that surely the hon. gentleman himself knew all about the requirements of the district, and that there was no need to refer the matter to the Commissioners. He had blamed the Minister for Railways for the line having been rejected, but he now wished to retract what he had said, as he had ascertained that it was purely an accident. He had left the hon. member for Cunningham to look after the interests of his electorate in his absence, and owing to some boring machines driving a lot of hon. members, including the hon. member for Cunningham, to the smoking-room, when the bell was rung for the division they followed the hon. member for Cunningham without any question, and voted against the proposal, which was thus defeated. They had naturally concluded that, as that hon. member was looking after the interests of that electorate, they should vote with him. But the hon. member for Cunningham was the father of the *via recta*, and intended voting against the Drayton deviation. He did not blame the hon. gentleman, though he ought to have acquainted him as to how he was going to vote. With regard to the line under discussion, he had found by the map where it was proposed to take the railway, and from that, coupled with his own knowledge of the locality, he believed that a syndicate was concerned very largely in the land the line would pass through; but he was not going to allow that to turn him aside. The land was agricultural country, and if good did not come out of the construction of the line at once it would in the future. He considered the line was a necessary one, and on that account he should vote for it.

Mr. STEVENS said that in spite of the expression of opinion of the Commissioners in the concluding paragraph of the report, if hon. gentlemen looked at the question carefully in the light of their experience of railway construction in the colony in the past, they would find that a very good case was made out for the construction of the proposed line. In the 2nd paragraph the Commissioners pointed out that the line would pass through rich agricultural land the whole distance, of which a large area was under cultivation. Then in the next paragraph they pointed out that it would be a comparatively easy line to construct, as the gradients were not steep and the curves were not very sharp. As the line would run close to the seaside, it was evident that fast trains could be run, and if persons could get to the seaside within a few miles from where they lived, they were sure to take advantage of it largely. The construction of the line would cost £45,000, and if they allowed liberally for the cost of the construction of rolling-stock, and added that to the £45,000, a revenue of something over £3,000 would pay the interest on the whole cost of construction, including the rolling-stock. When there was a large coal traffic, when 20,000 tons of traffic had been almost guaranteed from one sugar factory, and traffic from other factories on the line as well, together with a constant stream of passengers passing to and fro between the seaside and the other terminus of the line, there was very little fear that the

interest on the cost of construction would not be earned. His chief object in rising was to oppose the idea that they were to be entirely guided by the Commissioners in their judgment as to whether lines would pay in the future or not. At present the Commissioners' education in that direction had not been a very large one. Their training had been in connection with a traffic totally different from almost any there was in Queensland, and it would be almost impossible for them to form a correct idea of what the traffic would be in the future. Suppose the Commissioners had been installed in their present position ten or fifteen years ago, and their judgment as shown in that case had been allowed to prevail all through; how many miles of railway would the colony have had at the present time? The principal reason why the suggesting of new lines was taken out of the hands of the Commissioners, when the Bill passed through the House last year, was that it would be impossible for them, in the present state of the colony, to suggest where new lines should go. It was decided that that particular work should be dealt with by Parliament. As business men wishing to make themselves perfectly safe, he could understand the report they had sent in; but he maintained that it would be unwise, and contrary to the interests of the colony, to accept their report as final. The question must be looked at more from the point of view of the future. If they were only to build lines where it could be absolutely shown by statistics that the line would pay immediately, the probability was that very few lines would be constructed.

Mr. MELLOR said he agreed with what had fallen from the hon. member for Logan. He thought the Commissioners had not been sufficiently long in the colony to state definitely whether any line would pay or not. Even Mr. Gray was, he believed, quite a stranger to Bundaberg. He believed the line when constructed would be a paying line. He knew the country very well, and could say that the land was exceptionally good. The only drawback was that the terminus ran to a place where the beach was stony instead of sandy. But even with that drawback, he believed it would be a great convenience to the Bundaberg people. There was a large settled population there of 7,000 or 8,000 persons, a population that was rapidly increasing. Watering-places should be made accessible to large centres of population. He hoped to see some day a line constructed to Noosa for the benefit of the people of Gympie. That line was already under consideration, and a trial survey had been made. How would the Commissioners calculate whether a line from Gympie to Noosa would pay or not? It could only be from information they might obtain as to the number of people passing between the two places. Many years ago the Government then in power gauged the amount of traffic between Maryborough and Gympie by employing a man to note the number of people who passed a certain spot by coach, on horseback, or otherwise. That was for the purpose of ascertaining whether the proposed railway would pay or not. That railway, apart from the branch lines, which were drawbacks to it, had been the best paying line in the colony, without exception. It had paid over 5 per cent.

Mr. AGNEW: The Sandgate line is paying very nearly 7 per cent.

Mr. MELLOR said he thought the proposed line was being taken to the wrong place. The Government had about 1,260 acres of rich agricultural land within three miles of one point of the line going straight down to the coast. A tramway company owned all the land near the beach for a long distance, and they had reserved a portion

for a tramway, about half a mile from the sea. That tramway, which was for the convenience of the people growing sugar on both sides of it, was bound to be made at some time, and it would be a feeder to the railway. The length of the line taken there would be about three miles shorter than the one proposed, and the Government would have had 1,260 acres of land to cut up, which would have almost paid for the construction of the line. But, apart from that, he believed the line taken as proposed would pay. It was certainly being taken a little too much along the river, where water carriage was always available. Had it been taken straight on it would have served the purpose better. It was not usual to make a line of railway alongside a waterway, but where people could not get communication by any other means. But even where it was, the line would pay, and he should support the motion.

Mr. O'CONNELL said that in the few words he intended to say he hoped to be able to show good reasons why the line should be made. It was the natural terminus of the Burrum coalfield, and it was only by connecting the sugar-mills at Bundaberg with the Burrum coalfield that the line could be made to pay. The line ran through a splendid agricultural district, and that had always been adduced, whenever a railway were asked for, as a very strong reason for making the railway. Another reason was, that it was a watering place for the town of Bundaberg, and the district at the back of it, Mount Perry, and was likely to become a very favourite resort for a lot of Gympie residents who invested largely on the coast.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: Are there any houses there?

Mr. O'CONNELL said there were several houses, three hotels, three schools, and a number of small settlers round about the proposed terminus of the line. If a line of that sort would not pay, no railway in the colony could pay, except those connected with large centres of population. It was a feeding line which would help to make the line from Bundaberg to the Burrum coalfields a success, and if those feeding lines did not pay he did not know what lines would. With regard to the report of the Commissioners, he believed those gentlemen were in Bundaberg six hours, and on the experience gained in that time they had based their report.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Whose fault is that?

Mr. O'CONNELL said it was not his fault. He supposed the Commissioners did what they could to make themselves acquainted with the requirements of the country during the short time at their disposal. They could not expect men to do more than was possible. No doubt the Commissioners did their best to get all the information they could in time for presentation to the Committee that session; but the fact that they had such a short time to get that information should be taken into consideration, and their report should be taken to some extent with a grain of salt. That might be urged as a reason for saying that the report should not be adopted. He thought, however, that under the circumstances the Committee had a good right to view the matter from the larger experience of hon. members. He had great pleasure in supporting the making of the line. He was quite satisfied that if it did not immediately give a fair return it would not be many years before it did so.

Mr. SMYTH said he did not intend to give a silent vote on the question. He intended to take the advice of the Railway Commissioners, and vote for the making of the line as far as the Millaquin refinery, if they did not make the

whole of it. He knew the country pretty well, and believed there would be very large traffic from Woongarra. It was one of the finest pieces of agricultural land in the colony. The country was level, so that the line would be easily constructed, the most expensive portion being within the first mile or so, where a bridge would be required across Saltwater Creek. There were several mills there, and the limestone used at Yengarie was taken from a quarry in his district. That used at Millaquin was got from the islands in the North, and if that line were constructed it would get all the traffic of that kind which was now done by sailing vessels. When they considered the extensive machinery and boilers at Millaquin it would be seen that the quantity of coal consumed during the season would be something immense. The seasons would last longer after this year than ever they had before, because arrangements were being made to carry the juice from Isis by rail in tanks. He would suggest that coal waggons should be so constructed, that the coal could be tipped from them into shoots, which would carry it into punts, so that those punts could go up and down the river, and distribute the coal to the various plantations. At present the coal was handled several times, and it was well known that every time coal, timber, or anything else was handled, it added to the cost, and the less coal was handled the better. He thought the Woongarra people had a just claim for the construction of the line, and he hoped that the engineers would see that provision was made for putting large coal shoots on some portions of the line, so that the planters could have one each. By having large shoots the trucks could empty and return at once, but at present the trucks had to be used as stores for the coal, there being no places to put it, and that led to shortness of trucks. He thought it would be wise to construct the first portion of the line, if not the whole of it.

Mr. TOZER said, as one of the representatives of the Central district, he trusted the Committee would pass that line. There was not likely to be any large expenditure of public money in the Wide Bay district for some time. He had already stated, in connection with the Wide Bay electorate, that the circumstances of it did not call for much expenditure. But there was a large revenue from it, and on the principle they had affirmed—that revenue should be expended wherever it was collected—it was absolutely necessary that reproductive works in that district should receive consideration, no matter in what particular part of the district they might be made. He was not at all interested personally in the expenditure of money in or near Bundaberg, but he knew that there was some fine agricultural land there. He knew the land well, and not only was there a probability of it being made more valuable and more largely settled upon than it was at present by the construction of the line, but he also knew that if the Government cut up the large reserve connected with the township, the increased value given to it would be so great that it would nearly pay for the railway. For those reasons he thought they were justified in spending money in the Central district, and he hoped that hon. members who voted nearly £250,000 the other day for South Brisbane, would not object to voting £50,000 to be spent in the Central division.

Mr. AGNEW said he intended to vote for the line from the experience he had had of a line in a portion of his own electorate. He well remembered the debates that took place some years ago respecting the initiatory steps for the construction of the Sandgate line, and how it was urged that that line would never pay—for even the

grease on the wheels. But statistics now proved that the Sandgate line was the best paying line in the colony, although probably no line that had been passed had ever received so much hostility. He was confirmed in his conviction that whatever arguments had been brought against the line now proposed, they had also been urged against the construction of the Sandgate line; but it was well known that wherever there was a large population in any part of the world the people always flocked to the seaside. With regard to the Commissioners, they would make mistakes, no doubt. They were no more infallible than other men; and although they were well selected men of great experience in their profession, they could not be expected to have the same grasp of things in the colony as hon. members who had resided in it for many years. He felt sure that the extension from Bundaberg to the Burnett Heads would be a paying one. Few members who had visited Bundaberg had not been asked by the residents of that town to take a drive to Burnett Heads. He had been there some years ago, and again a few months ago, and on each occasion with great pleasure to himself. He supported the line with the certainty that it would pay, if not on its initiation, at any rate in the immediate future. People who were pent up in large manufacturing cities and towns always found their way to the sea coast, and therefore extensions to those places were sure to become payable lines. He supported the line on the same grounds on which the Sandgate line had been constructed.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said his mind was so thoroughly made up to vote for that line before he entered the House that not even the speech of the Minister for Railways would stagger him. If there was any chance of his voting against the line it would be because of the speech of the Minister for Railways. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) did not always agree with the hon. member for Cambooya, but he agreed with the hon. member when he stated that the Railway Commissioners should not be subjected to praise or blame in that Committee. Give them time. During the short period they had been in the colony they had not been idle, and it would be time enough by-and-by to talk about their action. His reason for voting for the railway under consideration was exactly the same reason he had for voting in favour of every railway he had supported—namely, that it would open up the country. It was very clear, as had been stated by the hon. member for Nundah, that in some cases in which they had unfavourably prejudged the paying capabilities of a line, those lines had turned out the best paying lines in the colony. But that was not the point. The point was that railways opened up the country, and for that reason he would always vote for branch lines. He had experienced great pleasure in going through the country which the proposed line to Burnett Heads would traverse, and he could endorse the remark of the hon. member for Gympie, Mr. Mellor, that it was too close to the river. Had it gone higher up it would have done an immense deal more good. He (Mr. O'Sullivan) was reared in a farming country, and he could say that in all the parts through which he had travelled in this colony and the other colonies—and he had done his share of travelling—he had never laid his eyes on such beautiful country as that through which the proposed railway would pass. He never believed until he went there that there was such country in Queensland. There was nothing which was grown in any part of the world that would not grow there. It would be an enormous mistake to vote against that line. If it were only that it would benefit the sugar industry they should construct it. If they did not give the planters black labour they should

give them other assistance. He was confident that if the planters made up their minds to cut up their land and sell it to farmers in forty, fifty, sixty, or 100-acre blocks they would make a fortune out of it. Such splendid country was really worth a visit to go and see it.

Mr. CROMBIE said it was not his intention to give a silent vote on the question. He was going to support the line, because they were going to do away with black labour at the end of next year, and it was the duty of the Committee, and of Parliament, to do something towards keeping the sugar industry going. If they would not give the planters black labour, they should give them something else. He thought that railway would do good to the sugar industry, and that probably they would have to do the same thing in other parts of the colony. He therefore supported the railway with very great pleasure, and was quite sure that it would be beneficial to the whole of the colony.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he confessed that he had some difficulty in getting over the report of the Commissioners. He did not see how the proposed railway could be regarded as a return to sugar planters for stopping black labour; it was no more a return than giving them cakes to eat would be. He did not see any connection between black labour and that railway. The planters had no difficulty in getting their produce to market now. He quite agreed with the hon. member for Stanley that the country which the line would traverse was as beautiful a piece of country as any in Queensland, but that would not make the railway pay, and it was the duty of the Committee to see whether the line would pay before authorising its construction. It was not a line to open up the country; the land there was opened and was nearly all private property. He believed there was some Government land on the coast, but not close to the line, which went to a township started a few years ago and called Barolin. The line would not open up any country, and he did not see any present justification for its construction. He would like to vote for it if he could. Reference had been made to the Sandgate line, to show how a line made to the seaside would pay; but there was a very great difference in making such a line from a city with a population of 50,000, and taking one from a town with a population of 5,000. According to the report of the Commissioners, it did not appear that there would be sufficient prospective traffic beyond Millaquin to warrant the extension of the railway at present to the Burnett Heads. He did not see his way to vote in favour of the line if they were going to pay any attention at all to the report of the Commissioners. He was quite prepared to vote for the extension to Millaquin, but could not see how he could vote for a further extension, unless it was that they would be doing an act of kindness to Bundaberg. But he did not think Parliament was justified in passing a line of railway as an act of kindness to any part of the colony.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that before the motion was put he wished to say a few words, especially with regard to the remarks made by the hon. member for Enoggera. He was quite prepared to apologise to the hon. member for the remarks he (the Minister for Railways) made to him, but he thought the Committee would admit that he had a great deal of provocation. The hon. member argued that when the Drayton deviation was before the Committee he (the Minister for Railways) stated that he would like hon. members to vote upon it according to its merits. That was perfectly true. He did say that, and at the same time

gave as a reason for doing so that he was aware from his knowledge of the locality, and the political feeling existing there, that the railway had been made a question of party politics on both sides of the Committee. He particularly pointed that out, and that was the reason he made the remark he did in that particular case. He did not consider it necessary for him to say it on every occasion, but he wished it to be taken as stated with regard to every railway that he brought before the Committee. There was no railway that he would ever consent to bring forward unless it was a railway that was justifiable upon its own merits, and he thought he had said sufficient that evening to show that the line they were now discussing had merits quite sufficient to justify the Committee in authorising its construction. Then, again, a great deal had been said about the Commissioners. One member said he could not vote for the railway because the Commissioners had not approved of it. He (the Minister for Railways) did not see anything in that argument. Was Parliament to subordinate its functions?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It is the opinion of the Commissioners we must be guided by.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said Parliament was to take their opinion for what it was worth. That was distinctly pointed out when the Railway Bill was before the House. Parliament had not parted with any of its privileges, and when the Commissioners give them the data upon which they formed their opinions, and if that data was copious and comprehensive, then they could form their opinion of the value of the recommendation made. On the present occasion the Commissioners had not had time to do so, and he maintained that the Government had a perfect right to recommend what they considered was in the interests of the colony, and what would conduce to the interests of the colony, as he was perfectly convinced the construction of that line would. He felt certain that most hon. members were now satisfied that the construction of the line would prove a good investment for the colony, looking at it from every point of view. He might remark further that the amount required to complete the line, over and above what was now in hand, was £42,000. The question really before the Committee was with regard to the approval of the plans and sections—as to the expediency or otherwise of constructing the line; but as to the capability of the colony to immediately construct it, or as to whether the present was an opportune time, there would be another opportunity afforded to hon. members of deciding that.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Oh, no!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Oh, yes!

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: This means the immediate construction of the line.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said it did not. He begged to differ from the hon. gentleman. It would be observed that to some extent the Government were reversing the operation with regard to the way that railways were submitted to the House, compared with what was done by the late Government. What the late Government did was to commit the House to a large expenditure of money in the most indefinite manner, and then having obtained authority from the House to borrow the money, there was nothing more to be done but to submit plans and sections, and then the Government could build the line. The present Government's plan was quite different. All the estimates which the late Government gave with regard to the cost of railways were altogether unreliable.

There was, on the contrary, no railway that he had submitted the estimate for, the cost of which was not based on permanent surveys and upon detailed valuations in accordance with the permanent survey. They had some security then, at any rate, that they knew the cost of what they were going to construct.

The HON. P. PERKINS: How about the Cairns line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said they might hear something about that in the course of the evening, and perhaps it would be more opportune to refer to it when that railway came on for discussion. He thought he had offered some security that the country was not going to be led into a speculation. Having stated that the cost would if anything be under the estimated cost, and having produced data upon which the cost was calculated, hon. members might without much reluctance approve of the plans and sections of the railway, provided they were satisfied that the route was the proper one, and that the survey had been honestly and faithfully carried out. There was an additional safeguard against any rash expenditure of money, because, before any one of those railways he had proposed could be commenced, the House must provide the money. That was so even with regard to the Croydon Railway that was introduced last session, and for which Parliament would have to provide the balance necessary for its completion. It was so with the Sandgate extension and the South Brisbane railway.

Mr. HODGKINSON: The Croydon line has been opened to the forty-seven mile peg.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. member did not know what he was talking about. He forgot that the House provided last year £150,000 to build that line to the forty-seven mile peg. He did not know that, although the line was in his own district, and, moreover, the money was not all spent.

Mr. HODGKINSON: You said just now the money would have to be found.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said £150,000 was voted last year, and a good part of that was available still. He only mentioned that fact so that hon. members might have less hesitation in approving of the resolution before the Committee, because they were not absolutely committed, so far as the expenditure of the money was concerned. The money had to be voted hereafter. It would have to be voted that session, or else nothing would be done with the line.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said the hon. gentleman who had just spoken had made a very important statement, and he had not been able to follow him. He understood the hon. gentleman to tell the Committee that there was a new departure being taken. He did not know that, and thought such an important matter ought to be thoroughly understood. He did not know where any new departure came in. The hon. gentleman said they must not be so particular about passing the plans and sections of that railway, because there would be another occasion on which they could criticise the proposals of the Government, because they had inverted the old policy. Now, they were asked to pass the plans and sections of that line, and would be asked in the future to vote the money. But was that the case? Did the Minister for Railways tell them that he was going to ask them to pass the plans and sections of all the railways dealt with in the Loan Estimates beforehand. If that was the case it was a very great departure from the old policy, and they ought to have had some notice of it

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before. He had been listening to the debate with the full knowledge that when the plans and sections were passed the Government would have full power to deal with the railway. If there was any change to be made why did the hon. gentleman delay making it until the end of the debate?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he had always understood there were two things to be done before a Government got authority to construct a railway.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: So there are by law, but not by practice.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said either of which being rejected by the House the railway was not constructed. He thought that a very wise law. He did not disapprove of it at all. The Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith seemed to think there was some new departure.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: You said so. That is why I rose.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said they were not taking away any one of those safeguards. They both remained, but what they were doing now was putting one before the other. The policy of the late Government had been to first raise the money and having got that authority they brought down plans which the House might or might not approve of. Having passed the £10,000,000 loan, the previous Government considered themselves authorised to go on with the construction of the railways mentioned in the schedule, but at the time that loan was submitted to the House no proper estimates of the cost of those railways were submitted to the House. They could not be submitted, and had to be purely speculative, as there were no plans and sections prepared. The difference between their systems was that, in the case of every railway he had himself submitted to the House, the estimate was based upon the permanent surveys, with plans and sections and quantities taken out, so that they might know what they were going to do.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: What about your Loan Estimates last year? You have not brought forward the plans and sections with respect to them yet.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that the present proposal was one of them, and a certain amount had been put on the Loan Estimates; as much as would pay for the survey.

Mr. UNMACK: What about the Mount Morgan line?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that was only a preliminary amount to provide for the expense of a permanent survey.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

Mr. UNMACK: £60,000!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that no more of that had been spent than was required for the permanent survey, and he did not consider the House was committed to the Mount Morgan line. Did the leader of the Opposition or the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith consider themselves bound down to the approval of the plans and sections of the Mount Morgan line, or of the line before them, or any other line, because it had been included in the Loan Estimates? They did not, and they had the same safeguard that they always had. Nobody ever dreamt that £60,000 was going to build the Mount Morgan line. From the knowledge they had it was well known that that sum would never build that line. His only reason for mentioning that matter was simply to disabuse the minds of hon. members of the idea that by

voting for those plans they were absolutely committed to that line and the Government would thereby be at once authorised to go on with the construction of it. With regard to what was going to take place in the future in the new Loan Estimates, hon. members must have a little patience for a few days when they would be laid before the House; probably in the course of a week. It would not be his place to say what they would consist of, but they would very shortly be before the House and the country.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said that if the hon. member's statement was right as to the new Ministerial policy, that hon. gentleman need not promise or refrain from promising anything about the Loan Estimates, as they would know what they would be. The hon. gentleman had told them that the new departure was to pass the plans and sections, and come for the money afterwards. If that was the case they would know what there was to be on the Loan Estimates. Did the hon. member mean to tell him that the Government were prepared to adopt that policy? He did not know what might be in the mind of the Government, and there must be some fresh departure intended—but he was sure it could not be as the Minister for Railways had put it. The hon. gentleman was misleading the Committee when he told them that that would not be the last opportunity they would have of stating their opinions on the line. That was the last opportunity they would have, unless some fresh start had been made, which he was quite sure had not been made, and which had not been indicated to the Committee except in the speech of the Minister for Railways.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said his colleague in the representation of North Brisbane had anticipated what he was going to say. The Minister for Railways was quite right in saying that before a railway was made the law provided that Parliament must approve of the plans, and must also vote the money for it. But that had not always been the practice.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It ought to be.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I hope you will adopt it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he was quite aware that that ought to be the practice. There was not the slightest doubt that, if those plans were passed, the Government, slightly changing what the hon. gentleman said—would make the railway and there would be nothing further for the Committee to do but to vote the money. The hon. gentleman said that the late Government—no doubt their sins were numerous, and the hon. gentleman included this amongst them—passed the £10,000,000 loan without the plans and sections of the railways mentioned in the schedule. What the late Government had asked the House to do was to approve of a general scheme of railways from one place to another without any particular plans and sections, and that was always done. How could they have the plans and sections of a line of railway prepared first of all unless the House approved of the principle of making that railway? It might be done in some isolated cases, but not generally. He would be bound that the hon. gentleman had plenty of works in hand now for which the money had not been voted.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What are they?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he had seen in the papers the other day a statement with respect to work being done in connection with the extension of the Fortitude Valley line to Mayne. That work was going on and it had

not been authorised by Parliament. That was a distinct breach of a promise that no more money should be spent on that work than was voted. The Government had not obtained the sanction of Parliament for that. Hon. members must not therefore run away with the idea that they would have another opportunity of considering the line now before them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They will.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: When?

Mr. HODGKINSON said there was one point upon which they should have some more information. The majority of the Committee would probably vote for the line with a feeling that they would by so doing do something for the sugar industry, after the blow that had been struck at it.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he did not say all would, but the majority would, and quite naturally; but he saw another item of expenditure in connection with the line, and that was that no less than £8,000 was put down for compensation for land. The line as proposed ran almost wholly through private land, and the only place where the Government might have recouped themselves to some extent by the sale of land had been carefully avoided. The line as proposed ran down in competition with water carriage, and took a course through the town of Bundaberg, running through as many allotments as it could. There was a township named Barolin, and he did not know whether it was a private township or a Government one, but the line ran through it where the land was cut up into small allotments, and what compensation would be required for that land? Every acre of land the line served would be quadrupled in value directly the vote was passed, and was it fair that out of a total expenditure for the line of £45,000 the Government should ask them to pay £8,000 for the improvement of private proprietors' land? They had had the option, according to the best local authorities, of bringing that line in connection with a section of the country belonging to the State, and which would have enabled the Government to recoup a great portion of the expenditure. It was all very well for members of the Government to feel annoyed at opposition to their proposals or any unpleasant references; but what else could be expected, when they saw plans like that brought down, when they saw any amount of country languishing for railways as a vital means of communication, and when those paltry branches were brought down running through private property and quadrupling its value, and they were asked to compensate the individuals whose property was thus improved?

The HON. P. PERKINS said he agreed with what the hon. member for Burke had said. They had a record of the false pretences by which that property had been acquired. He thought he knew who the owners of it were, and he thought they were a number of speculators about Maryborough. That land should be given to the Railway Commissioners for nothing. He knew a little about the persons who owned the land, and if he had known as much about those fellows some time ago, they would never have got their title deeds.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he observed from the book of reference attached to the plans that one piece of land to be resumed, about three or four acres in extent, was described as being a reserve for a tramway, and belonging to Messrs. E. B. C. Corser, C. Powers, and W. K. Williams, called the Barolin Land and

Tramway Company, and further on there were a number of pieces of land belonging to E. B. C. Corser and C. Powers. He did not know whether they were the same as the Barolin Land Company; but he saw their names ran down along the course of the line. It was rather curious.

The HON. C. POWERS said he wished to state that he had looked carefully at the plan and at the book of reference, and he could tell hon. members that he and those others whose names had been mentioned did not own a single allotment in the town of Barolin which would be resumed for the railway, or which would be interfered with in any way by that railway in the township. He knew that the Barolin Land Company had sold the land all round that railway terminus in the township of Barolin, and, so far as he knew, they did not now own a single allotment within a quarter of a mile of the station. He would go further and say that there was no spot where that line could be taken to the sea coast which would benefit either the Barolin Land Company or himself less than they would be benefited by taking it to the proposed place. The proposed terminus was within a few chains of 123 acres of Government land—a lighthouse reserve—which fronted both the river and the sea. That was as nice a place as could possibly be selected for a seaside residence, and no doubt the line would some day be extended another five chains to bring it to that land.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Why not go the five chains now?

The HON. C. POWERS said he did not know why; there was a swamp just beyond the proposed terminus, fronting that reserve, and it would entail an extra expenditure to cross the swamp. There was a school reserve of twenty acres near the station. He had simply risen to explain—and he hoped the Committee would accept his explanation—that the many allotments put down as belonging to other persons and himself resumed for a station were no longer theirs. The Barolin Company had reserved land for a tramway.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he would ask the hon. gentleman if the Barolin Land Company were not under a contract to construct a tramway, and whether that line was not contingent upon the tramway being constructed? If that were so, why should the Government come down and want to run the railway in competition to the tramway?

The HON. C. POWERS said as far as the Barolin Land Company were concerned, it would be to their interests if the railway were never constructed, because the traffic would not, in that event, go to Bundaberg, but to a place on the river where it was proposed to take a tramway. Land had been reserved for a tramway, but there was no contract entered into, and it would be a direct loss to the company if the railway were constructed. If the line of railway were constructed, it would probably take the traffic to Bundaberg along the Government railway; but if the company's tramway were constructed, the traffic would go to a place which was the property of the Barolin Land Company. Land had been reserved all along the coast for the purpose of taking a tramway to the river Burnett, and the question came in whether the construction of the railway would not be a loss as far as the company were concerned. There was no contract for the construction of a tramway by the Barolin Land Company, but the land need not be resumed.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said he could not give his support to the proposal to construct that line of railway. The reason why he could not do so had been well expressed by the hon. member for Barcoo, who pointed out that the

Parliament last year passed an Act to give to the Commissioners appointed under that Act, not the direction of the Government policy in regard to the construction of railways, but a very strong power to advise and inform the Government in such a way as would have the effect of enabling the Government to shape their railway policy in as far as the construction of railways was concerned. It seemed to him that the Commissioners had, in that instance, discharged very carefully the duty intrusted to them, to report upon that proposed line of railway; and he could not, in view of what they said in the last paragraph of their report, give his support to the proposition to construct the line. Two of the Commissioners, the chairman and Mr. Gray, visited the spot, and after having traversed the whole length of the route, and made the necessary inquiries and calculations, they said—

“It does not appear that there will be sufficient prospective traffic on the line beyond this point which would warrant its extension at present to the Burnett Heads.”

The Government proposed to set aside that recommendation of the Commissioners, against the construction of the line beyond Millaquin, by saying that they had not had much experience, and that members of the House knew as much about the matter as the Commissioners themselves. Whatever want of colonial experience might be attributed to the chairman, the same argument could not apply in the case of Mr. Gray, who was a very old colonist, and must be assumed to have as much general knowledge of the matter about which he was speaking, as most members of the Committee. He did not think that Mr. Gray, with the extensive knowledge he possessed, would be likely to have coincided in a report of that kind if he were not fully impressed with the conviction that a line beyond Millaquin would not be a paying affair. He (Mr. Rutledge) did not take exception to the construction of short branch lines. In fact he concurred very heartily in the general principle, so frequently enunciated by the hon. member for Stanley, that branch lines were to be encouraged wherever there was a prospect of their being in any way remunerative, or if they would help to make the main trunk lines pay the interest on the cost of their construction. The proposed line was an exception, because, instead of tapping a large district offering inducements to extensive settlement, it was only a short line going down to the Burnett Heads. Therefore the arguments used in favour of the construction of branch lines in general did not apply. The case was altogether different from that of the Sandgate line, the Emu Park line, and the so much talked of line to Pialba. In the case of Sandgate and Emu Park there were good reasons why branch lines should be constructed to the seaside; in the case of Sandgate, because it was fourteen or fifteen miles away from the metropolis, and there was a large population already settled there, and there was every reason to believe that from the outset it would pay. In the case of Emu Park, the point to which it was proposed to take the line was twenty-five miles from Rockhampton, and the Government had a large area of unalienated land there, the sale of which would go a very long way towards providing the cost of the construction of the line. There was also a considerable population there before the line was constructed at all. That was not the case in this instance. He had not heard it stated that there was much land at the point to which the line was proposed to be taken in the hands of the Government. The hon. member for Burrum had told them that there were 123 acres there, as a lighthouse reserve, but surely it could never be contended that a large portion of that reserve should be set aside for the purpose of sale, to enable a few persons to have seaside residences,

He had not a word to say against Bundaberg or any claim that it might have on the consideration of the Committee. When he visited it, he was surprised at the evidences of prosperity everywhere in that very progressive town. He had nothing but a kindly feeling towards Bundaberg, and should be prepared to give its claims his very best support, but when he was confronted with the statement of the Commissioners—the trusted officers of that House, to whom the Minister for Railways referred last year, when introducing the Bill, as being intended to be a board of advice to Parliament—when he found that they stated deliberately that, in their opinion, the traffic beyond Millaquin was not likely, even in the future, to justify the construction of the line, how could he, in the interests of his constituents in the Northern part of the colony, and charged to guard against any extravagant expenditure, refrain from raising his voice in condemnation of a proposal to spend a large sum of money on a line that was never likely to prove remunerative? If the Commissioners were to be anything more than a mere farce, their recommendations must receive the most serious consideration of hon. members. They had gone to enormous expense to create a board of Commissioners, who must, he presumed, be men who knew what they were talking about; and if hon. members were justified in setting aside the recommendations of those Commissioners, and saying that they knew as much about the matter in question as the Commissioners themselves, then it was a great mistake to intrust the Commissioners with the important functions intrusted to them by the Act passed last year. It was distinctly contended on behalf of the Commissioners last year by the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government that, while they were not to dabble in politics, they would have a good deal to say in regard to the railway policy of the country. The Commissioners had a most important function to discharge in making their report, and no doubt it was disagreeable to them to report against a proposal of that kind, as it was for members of the Committee to decline to support it; still they had a duty to perform, and they had performed it faithfully. In the face of their report, he could not be a party to voting that sum of money. No doubt it would be a proper thing to extend the line to Millaquin. The arguments of the hon. members for Wide Bay and Gympie with regard to the development of the coal and the limestone traffic would be thoroughly well met by the construction of a line to Millaquin, and what justification was there for going beyond that? The great bulk of the land there was in private hands, and that unalienated was not sufficient to reimburse the colony on the outlay on the construction of the line. And above all that, the point to which it was proposed to carry the proposed railway was not so far away as to make it indispensable that the people of Bundaberg should have a railway there to enable them to reach it. It was only a nice afternoon's drive from Bundaberg.

The PREMIER (Hon. B. D. Morehead): Has everybody got a buggy?

The Hon. A. RUTLEDGE: Everybody had not a buggy, but people who could afford to build seaside residences would be very likely to have buggies; at all events, they had other means of locomotion. He did not see any necessity for the construction of the line to enable the people of Bundaberg to get to the sea coast. When the Cleveland line was proposed to be constructed some time ago, the hon. gentleman then in charge of the Works Department informed the House that he had made a stipulation to the effect that if the people desired the line to be constructed they should give the land through

which it passed. There were very few instances in which that stipulation had not been carried out; it was carried out in a great many cases, and that proviso did a great deal towards facilitating the construction of that line. That was one of the reasons why the construction of that line was justified, and if there was any pressing need for this line, which he contended there was not, the persons to be benefited by it should be asked to give the land for the purpose of constructing it. But no less than £8,000 was to be devoted to re-purchasing lands which the original purchasers had obtained from the Crown at a very insignificant amount. He held that one of the first things the Minister for Railways should have done in a case of that sort, was to have provided that the cost of the land resumed should be almost next to nothing. It was not gratifying to find the Government coming down and asking the Committee to expend £45,000 on a line which the Commissioners said was not justified, when there was such a continual outcry in the North with regard to the absorption of such large sums of money for public works in the Southern portion of the colony. He was aware that the line would be constructed out of loan, not out of revenue, but still the residents in the Northern part of the colony would have to bear their portion of the burden of interest on the loan; and he would ask, was it wise for the Government to unnecessarily foment irritation in the North by the continual expenditure of large sums of money that their own board of advice distinctly said was unnecessary? Unless some good reason was shown why the advice of the Commissioners should be disregarded, surely it ought to be given effect to? While, as he said before, he should be very willing indeed to do what he could towards the encouragement of a district like the Bundaberg district, yet he could not allow his instincts, which were generous in that direction, to override the demands of what he regarded as justice. The constituency which he represented never made demands upon Parliament for the construction of lines of that kind. It enjoyed a line of railway with the coast, which was notoriously one of the most remunerative railways in the whole colony, as was shown by the Commissioner's report for last year, and his constituents did not claim any railway expenditure by which they should be benefited at the expense of the rest of the colony. It was with the greatest difficulty that any claim put forward by the miners of Charters Towers could get any consideration. It was in vain that, year after year, a grant of money was asked for the establishment of a school of mines, or something that was likely to be productive of benefit to the people who lived in that locality, and contributed largely to the wealth and prosperity of the colony. Yet the Government coolly came down and asked the Committee to sanction a line of railway at an enormous cost, especially for land resumptions, that the Commissioners distinctly advised against. Unless a policy of that kind was altered, the irritation and agitation, which it was to the interest of all parties in that Committee to try to discourage, would be still further fomented, and it would be more difficult to render the people of the Northern districts of the colony more agreeable to the present condition of things than they had been hitherto. He hoped that nothing he had said would be construed into any desire to withhold from the people of Bundaberg anything to which they were justly entitled. There was no doubt that the construction of the line to Millaquin was justifiable, but beyond that, according to the report of the Commissioners, by whose advice they should be guided, its construction was not justifiable.

Mr. DRAKE said that before the question was put, he wished to say a word in reply to the remarks made by the Minister for Railways. He (Mr. Drake) was not aware when he stated that in his opinion the proposal to construct the Drayton deviation was brought down with no intention of carrying it, that he was saying anything offensive to the hon. gentleman or anything unparliamentary. In the explanation which he had given, the hon. gentleman admitted that in bringing down that railway and recommending it, he regarded it from a different point of view from that in which he regarded other railways. The hon. gentleman stated that that railway was one which had excited a great deal of political feeling—in other words, that it was a political railway.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not necessarily.

Mr. DRAKE said he was, as hon. members knew, a young member. The Minister for Railways had explained away the report of the Commissioners with regard to the railway under consideration, on the ground that they were new to the country, and therefore they ought to be excused for having made a report which did not exactly agree with his views. The hon. gentleman might also excuse young members for not being able to recognise a political railway at sight. He (Mr. Drake) must admit that he did not know the ear-mark by which to distinguish a political railway, and he could see nothing about the Drayton deviation to lead him to suppose that it was a political railway beyond all other railways. On the contrary, it appeared to him that, if they were to be guided by the reports of the Commissioners, they were entitled to regard the Drayton deviation as being a distinctly non-political railway, because they were told last session when the Railways Bill was going through that the appointment of Railway Commissioners would save them in future from passing political railways. The Commissioners were described by the Minister for Railways as a board of advice, and certainly the idea intended to be conveyed to the Committee was that that board of advice would inform Parliament from time to time whether any particular railway was a political railway or not. Gauged by that standard, they could come to no other conclusion than that one railway which the Government had pressed that session was a political railway, and that another which they certainly did not press was a non-political railway. The latter was the railway which the hon. gentleman in introducing stated he regarded as a political railway. With regard to the railway under consideration, he (Mr. Drake) felt very much in the same position as the hon. member for Stanley. He (Mr. Drake) did not like voting against any railway and had not done so up to the present time, as he believed in a general policy of railway extension. But he thought they had a right to know what position the Railway Commissioners were going to occupy, whether they were going to be a board of advice whose advice should be acted upon, or a board whose advice should be taken or rejected, just as it happened to suit party exigencies. A great many members would, he thought, agree with him that there was nothing more dangerous than running about asking for advice from anybody whatever with a preconceived determination only to take it if it happened to jump with one's own inclination. They had been told, and facts seemed to bear out the statement, that the boards would act as buffers between the parties aggrieved and Parliament, and it seemed that the board of Commissioners for Railways was going to be used as a buffer. When the Government desired to make a railway, they called

upon the Commissioners to make a recommendation. If the Government agreed with the recommendation of the Commissioners, they came down to Parliament and said, "Those are two highly paid gentlemen of great experience whom you have imported from the old country, and one gentleman of great experience in Queensland, and they advise that this railway should be constructed; you must accept that advice or else what is the use of a board?" On the other hand, if the advice they gave did not accord with the views of the Government they turned round and told the Committee, as the Minister for Railways did that evening, that "these gentlemen have not been long in the country; you must take no notice of their recommendation," or to use the exact words of the hon. gentleman, "You may take it for what it was worth." They all knew what that meant, and under those circumstances it was about time they had an understanding as to what position the Commissioners occupied as a board of advice for the construction of railways. He did not want to vote against that line; and if he did so it would be for the reason that he thought they should have a distinct understanding as to whether the advice of the Commissioners was to be accepted as valuable advice to be followed by the Committee, or as advice to be taken or set aside just as it might suit the Government of the day.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH said it appeared to be the general desire that the line should be constructed as far as Millaquin and no further. For his part he thought they ought to pay great attention to the opinion of the Commissioners, and ought not to go against it, simply because Ministers thought it convenient to do so. The Minister for Railways said they should take the recommendation of the Commissioners at a discount. He (Sir S. W. Griffith) could quite understand that view being taken if the Commissioners made a recommendation in favour of a railway. They would be entitled then to cross-examine them to get their reasons and arguments, and if they were not satisfactory, to come to a different conclusion. But when their opinion was against the construction of a railway, that was a somewhat different state of things. Then the burden was on the Government to show a very strong affirmative case, and give good reasons why hon. members should vote for the railway. He did not want to occupy any further time, as they had other business to do, but he proposed to omit the word "Woongarra" with the view of inserting the word "Millaquin" in the resolution. If that was carried he proposed further to omit the words "to Burnett Heads," with a view of inserting the words "towards Millaquin," so that the resolution would then read:—

"That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Millaquin branch railway, from South Bundaberg towards Millaquin, in length 1 mile 40 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo."

He should be sorry to vote against that portion of the line, but he could not see his way to vote for any more than that.

Question—That the word proposed to be omitted stand part of the resolution—put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 34.

Sir T. Mellwraith, Messrs. Morehead, Nelson, Macrossan, Black, Powers, Donaldson, Pattison, Smith, O'Sullivan, North, Archer, E. J. Stevens, Glassey, Palmer, Mellor, Lissner, Little, Wimble, Hamilton, G. H. Jones, Laya, Battersby, O'Connell, Smyth, Perkins, Plunkett, Agnew, Adams, Callan, Watson, Crombie, Stevenson, and Annear.

NOES, 18.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Messrs. Rutledge, Hodgkinson, Groom, Murphy, Barlow, Isambert, Foxton, Urmack, M'Master, Sayers, Salkeld, Buckland, Macfarlane, Morgan, Cowley, Hunter, and Drake.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. COWLEY said he wished to give a few reasons why he intended to vote against the resolution. It was not for the reasons which had been given by the Commissioners, because to his knowledge he believed the line would pay handsomely. He found there were eight plantations, with large manufactories, valued at £350,000, which the line would give access to, and those plantations had 3,000 acres under cultivation. He believed the total amount to be carried for those plantations would be at least 9,000 tons per annum. There were other plantations in the immediate neighbourhood which had no mills, but which had over 2,000 acres under cultivation, and they would contribute a great amount of traffic. Many hon. members had said they would vote for the resolution because it would encourage the sugar industry, but he felt sure that if the sugar industry came to grief in the Bundaberg district the whole of the land would be put under cultivation with lucerne, oat hay, and maize, and would give a great amount of traffic to the railway. He felt sure, therefore, that the line would pay, and pay well, and his sole reason for voting against it was, that a new loan would be required to carry it out, and he certainly objected to any new expenditure being sanctioned until it was known what proportion would be spent in the Northern portion of the colony. Although it had been said that the expenditure was practically in the Central district he did not think so. It was in the Southern district to all intents and purposes, and that was not a time to sanction increased expenditure in the South until they knew what was to be done with the other portions of the colony. The reason he voted for the amendment was that last year he believed a certain sum of money was voted for the line to carry it to Millaquin, but to take it beyond that point an entirely new vote must be proposed, and he therefore opposed it on that ground.

Mr. GLASSEY said that before the motion was put he wished to say that he had listened attentively to the debate, and he concurred almost entirely in the remarks made on the question by the hon. member for Logan, that this proposed line would be a paying one from the start. Knowing the district in and around Bundaberg, and knowing its capabilities and the intelligence and industry of the people there, he was free to confess that, notwithstanding the adverse opinion of the Railway Commissioners, if the proposed line did not pay, he questioned whether a single branch line in the colony was likely to do so. The hon. member for Herbert had expressed the opinion that some hon. members had voted for the line with a view of doing something to aid the sugar industry, and he at once admitted that that had induced him to vote for the line, in addition to what he had stated already. He was entirely opposed to black labour in the colony, in any form, whether on the land or in ships coming to the colony, and subsidised largely by the colony. If they abolished black labour, as the House and the country had done—and he trusted the Act abolishing it would be affirmed, and not disturbed—some assistance should be given to the planters, whatever it might be, so long as it did not clash with the general interests of the people. The best way in which assistance could be given them was in the way it was now proposed to assist the planters of the Woongarra district by establishing railway

communication, and affording them the utmost facilities for the carriage and immediate despatch of their produce. He thought it his duty and the duty of every member of the Committee to render them assistance in that way. Another way in which assistance could be given them was to, as far as possible, enable them to irrigate their land, in order to insure crops with more certainty than had hitherto been the case with them. For the reasons he had given he was induced to support the line.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that before the vote passed he wished to recite to the Committee the opinions advanced by the Minister for Railways on the Commissioners' report with respect to the Drayton deviation, so that hon. members might note the stress then laid upon the remarks of the Commissioners as compared with the manner in which the hon. gentleman now treated their report. The hon. gentleman said:—

“ 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.”

Then the hon. gentlemen went on to criticise the opinions of individual members, and dealt his blows right and left. There had been no question on that occasion of deferring to private knowledge of the line, because it did not suit then and it did suit now. The hon. member, of course, was only doing his duty when he brought a proposal before the Committee, to advance all the arguments he could to induce them to agree to it. The position he himself took was that taken by the hon. member for Herbert, and it was his intention to oppose all those railways until the hon. gentleman came down with a definite statement of the railway policy of the Government. They were not going to stand that system of a line here and another there, in deference to influence, of whatever kind it might be. He did not pretend to say that it was not good and weighty, but he did not see why the hon. gentleman should not rise and say the line would advance the interests of the country. He was prepared himself to say that as far as Millaquin it was a line which anyone might support, but beyond that he preferred to take the opinion of the Commissioners, especially as he had some knowledge of the district himself. They did not want those perpetual cavillings about the railway policy. As the hon. member for Herbert had said, the line would have to be provided for out of loan, and the interest upon the money was charged to the whole colony. They saw by the accounts for the past twelve months the manner in which the future capital of the Northern colony, if there should be a Northern colony, was being absorbed to meet deficiencies in the South. They had a surplus there last year of £113,000, and the intention now appeared to be to tap a new bank, which they would call upon as long as it would honour their drafts. They had been told, and he hoped it was not true, that all the available land in the South had been sold. He did not know whether that was the case, but he knew that, by the operation of the land laws, a very large area of land had been alienated that might otherwise have been relied

upon to provide for Southern works. There was very little left to rely upon now it appeared, and the Government were now travelling up North in order to dispose of the unalienated Northern lands. The question was now whether the Government were prepared to come down and propose a fair allocation of revenue and expenditure. The North was perfectly prepared to accept the decision of the Committee; but they would be better satisfied if they knew what amount the Government intended to give them as their quota of the revenue and loan expenditure. All that quarrelling would be at an end, if the Ministry would make some proposal on the lines of the Decentralisation Bill, and let the members for the Central, Southern and Northern districts decide amongst themselves what work they wanted carried out—whether they wanted main or branch lines. They would get a certain amount of money and let them do what they liked with it. It was no doubt disagreeable to every member to be kept there night after night as they would be so long as that piecemeal ragged railway policy was put before them, one night on the recommendation of the Commissioners and the next in spite of them. Unless something was done in the way he suggested the quarrelling would go on, and, like a snowball, the discontent would gather strength until it would be felt more than it was at present.

Mr. FOXTON said the position the Government were in was a most unenviable one in connection with the reports laid upon the table of the House upon the various railway proposals they had recently brought forward. The hon. member for Burke had quoted from a speech made by the Minister for Railways during the present session, and he would quote from one made last session, when moving the second reading of the Railways Bill. The Minister for Railways was reported to have spoken as follows:—

"No new railway can be made until the plan, sections, and book of reference have been laid on the table and received the approval of Parliament; but the Bill provides, in addition, that the Commissioners in a case of that sort will act as a board of advice—not exactly to the Government, but to Parliament—because, before any such plan, sections, or book of reference can be tabled, a statement is required from the Commissioners giving in detail their estimate of the cost which the work will entail, as well as their estimate of the traffic that may be expected when the line is completed. This information is such as has frequently been demanded in this House, but not obtained. I myself have frequently had to complain of the meagre information laid before the House when we have been asked to approve of railways for construction. If, however, this Bill is adopted, we shall get the information we require from three independent gentlemen who will be experts in their profession. They will take evidence if they require to do so, and will send in, at the same time the plans are laid on the table, a statement giving full details of everything in connection with the railway proposed to be built.

"Mr. MURPHY: No more Fortitude Valley lines!

"The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I think every hon. member will admit that this is a vast improvement on the system that has prevailed hitherto."

Now, what improvements had there been? Were there any at all?

Mr. DRAKE: None.

Mr. FOXTON said one of the strongest arguments in favour of the appointment of the Railway Commissioners had been that they would be independent of the Government, and that they would be able to advise Parliament and the country as to what lines should be constructed. If their appointment was worth anything at all, why not pay attention to their advice and shelve the line which they had damned with faint praise? The whole thing was a farce. The important function which the Commissioners were appointed to perform was

reduced to a farce by the very Government which had introduced the Bill authorising their appointment, and which had actually appointed them to their offices. The Railway Commissioners said, as plainly as they possibly could, that the line would not pay beyond Millaquin. Granting that it would pay as far as Millaquin, he failed to see why the proprietors of that property should not be placed on exactly the same footing as the owners of coal mines and other properties of that character were placed in with regard to railway extension. If those people wanted a railway, why should they not construct it at their own cost? The Government appeared to take up the position of saying that they did not care what the Commissioners did, or what they said. If they were opposed to the views of the Government, the Government, with their majority, would force the line through Parliament, and the colony would have to accept it and pay for it, notwithstanding what those gentlemen, who had been described by the Minister for Railways as experts, might say to the contrary. Of course, if the report of the Commissioners was favourable to the construction of the line the Ministry were sure to take advantage of it, and quote from the report *ad libitum*; but as soon as it happened that the Commissioners did not agree with that of the gentlemen occupying the Treasury benches, then, and not till then, they were prepared to set aside the report of the Commissioners. He knew that the result of the vote upon that question would be as he had predicted—that the Government with their majority would carry it through, notwithstanding that the gentlemen whom they had appointed themselves had reported as strongly as they felt justified in doing against the project.

Mr. SAYERS said he did not believe in the system of railway-making laid down that evening. In the first place, the Commissioners had not reported favourably upon the line. Then the portion they had favourably reported upon was that part which went as far as Millaquin, which was the property of Messrs. Cran and Co. If a mining company were to ask the Government to make a railway to a crushing mill, the Committee would receive the request with laughter; but when an agricultural or sugar district asked for a line they got it. Private companies had erected mills and built railways at their own expense, such as the Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Gold-mining Company, which had built a line from the mine to the Government railway, and then another line from the Government railway to the crushing mill. If they had asked for a railway to be constructed at the expense of the country, he wondered how many hon. members would support them. One or two might, but not more. Certain industries were to be pampered, and all sorts of arguments were brought forward in support of building railways for them. In his electorate a certain locality failed to prosper, although there were large quantities of quartz raised, and there were seven or eight mills there, and there was no doubt that the failure of that district was largely due to the heavy price which had to be paid for carting the quartz to the crushing mills. It was mooted that the Government should be asked to construct a railway to the locality, to advance the interests of that portion of the colony, or to advance the interests of the owners of the mines; but nothing had been done. He would not say that he should have voted for the construction of that line; but he considered that what was fish for one industry should be fish for another. No distinction should be drawn by the Government between the various industries. The Government were now asking them to agree to the construction of a line through a district where the land had all been sold; and he

considered that the owners of the property, who would be greatly benefited by the construction of the line, should pay for it. He had heard repeatedly since he had come to Brisbane, people say that if a line of railway were constructed through their land they could get thousands of pounds for what had only cost them perhaps £50. In fact, many people had been able to retire from business owing to the fact that they had received large sums of money by way of compensation for resumption of their land for railway purposes. He could not support the construction of the proposed line for the reasons he had given. He hardly thought it was right, but he would have supported the construction of the line as far as Millaquin, because there was a prospect of that portion of the line paying; beyond that there was not the slightest possibility of the line ever paying, as had been stated by several hon. members.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed; the CHAIRMAN reported the resolution.

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

MOUNT MORGAN BRANCH RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said: Mr. Speaker,—I 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 Mount Morgan branch railway, commencing at 9 miles 63 chains 94 links on Central Railway (Kabra) and ending at Mount Morgan, in length 14 miles 8 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.

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

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker,—The Government should consider their position at the present time, especially after the remark made by the Minister for Railways, and defer the consideration of this and the following propositions until the Loan Estimates have been laid before the House. Hon. members have been informed of a change of policy; what that change is I do not know. I know there ought to be one, and there was a change foreshadowed at a previous period of the session; and that the House relied upon its being carried out I have not the slightest doubt. If there was one question more prominent than another at the last general election, it was that the House should assert its control over the purse of the colony; and if there is one thing that the present party in power are pledged to more than another, it is to do everything they possibly can to assert the power of the House, not only over the amount spent from consolidated revenue, but also over the amount spent from loan. We are drawing near the end of the session, and the Government have placed a large number of proposals before us, which, if carried, give the Government the power to go and spend the money as they please. They are not bound to any amount, according to previous practice, and any faults of that sort will be condoned. Before, therefore, we go further, I think the House is entitled to learn something, at all events, of their general railway policy. We have still the evil we have always laboured under, and what the whole of the party are pledged to is, that Parliament shall repossess itself of the control which they have let go into the hands of the Ministry. I do not mean to make a long speech; I will put what I have to say into as few words as possible. The commencement of the evil was the £10,000,000 loan. That loan passed through the House in a way that I very much regret, and I am sure every hon. member

who looks to the welfare of the country regrets also. The result has been that the House has lost all power of supervising the money that has been spent. We all saw for several years during which the late Mr. Miles was Minister for Railways, that he, although a man not particularly distinguished for great administrative ability, attained a power which I do not believe any Minister ever attained in this country, that is, the power to manipulate how that £10,000,000 went. He had more power than Parliament itself had over the spending of the money—a power they ought to have kept in their own hands. We see the evil results, and the country sees them too. I have the most thorough sympathy with the Government in their present difficulty, but I want to see them make some effort to show that they are intending to get the country out of it. I do not see anything up to the present time. I see them bringing forward a large number of propositions that commit the country to an expenditure over which the House has no control, but over which the Ministry has control. We are putting into their hands the power of spending more than they can spend this year or are likely to spend next year, so that the Government have the power of saying in what way it shall be spent. When the leader of the Opposition, at an earlier period of the session, made a speech in which he said that the expenditure from loan for the ensuing year should have the approval of Parliament, it was gladly accepted by the Government. I was the spokesman on that occasion, and I know I spoke with the sympathy of my colleagues. There was not a single word said against it. But are we any nearer now to the adoption of that system than we were before? The Government are asking an approval for the expenditure of a large amount of money, at the end of the session, which, if sanctioned, will give them, in addition to the amount of loan money already at their disposal, a further sum of £3,000,000 or £4,000,000, to carry out the works. That is simply intensifying the evils under which we have been labouring. Why should we accede to that? The Government are bound, from their position, to show that they are endeavouring to remove the evil. I know the difficulty very well, but I know we ought to do the same as is done in the other colonies, and keep the same power of the purse over loan expenditure that we have over expenditure from the consolidated revenue. Night after night, in passing the Estimates, we settle the minutest details, and see that the Government do not depart from the instructions they get from the House. Here they ask us, in the same way that the £10,000,000 loan was passed, to give them exactly the same power with an addition of £3,000,000 more to spend. The Government will be in this position, that unless they can show by their policy, as promised to be placed before the House next Monday, that there is to be some change, we shall say that they have broken faith with the country. They will have the assistance of the party, I am sure of that; but there must be something to show that they see the necessity of action, and to show that they are intending to do something to carry out the wishes of the country. That the country looks upon that as the greatest part of the policy of the Government, I have not the slightest doubt. It was discussed a great deal more, at all events wherever I was, than the black labour question. I spoke more about it, at any rate; it was mentioned in my manifesto, and there was never a speech I made in which I did not point out that. I do not believe in seeing the session end and leave us in a worse position than we were before; that is, actually condoning all the faults that were

committed by the late Government in this respect, and adding £3,000,000 to the amount. My advice to the Government is to withdraw the consideration of this matter. I have a great deal to say about the next two railways on the paper, and if the Government fancy they are going to get them through before Monday next they are very much mistaken. They will not go through before next Monday. The House should have the general exposition of the policy of the Government before we do anything of the sort.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said: Mr. Speaker—

The SPEAKER: The hon. gentleman having spoken in moving the motion is not entitled to speak again in reply, except by permission of the House.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I wish to make a few remarks in reply to the hon. gentleman who has just spoken. I do not quite understand what his recommendation to the Government is. I have already explained that we are adopting a different principle to that hitherto adopted, which consists simply in this: Instead of asking for the money first, we are attempting to carry out the principle of knowing previously what the money is to be spent for, and that the works on which the money is intended to be expended will cost something near what we ask the House to grant for them. I think myself that that is a principle which must commend itself to every member of this House. First of all, ascertain the cost of the work you intend engaging upon, then let the House vote the necessary funds for carrying it out, if it considers that the time is opportune, and that the financial condition of the colony will admit of the expenditure. I think no sounder principle could be laid down than that; and that is the principle we are endeavouring to carry out.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: You have not told us how you are going to do it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: With regard to the railways already approved of by this House during the present session, before the session ends, probably next week, if sufficient progress is made, proposals will be submitted to the House to provide the money for these railways.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Those which you wish us to sanction now?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Those which have already received the approval of the House. The House has approved of certain plans and sections: it says they are good railways to build, that they had been properly surveyed, and having received an estimate of the cost, it says they are worth the money. When the Loan Estimates are laid before the House it will have another opportunity of saying whether the financial condition of the colony is such that it will give the Government authority to proceed with the construction of the works.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: This motion is the authority.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: If you pass the Mount Morgan line, that is authority to go on.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; it is not.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It ought not to be, but that is the practice of Parliament, which has been universally condemned all round.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I know it has been condemned. Quite so. We will say that we made a mistake last year in putting £50,000 or £60,000 down for the Mount Morgan line, but not a penny has been spent more than was necessary for the survey, so that the House is not committed in any way beyond that. Last year the late Treasurer asked the House for authority to raise a certain sum of money for that line, and when the Loan Estimates are submitted for that railway, as well as every other one, the House will be asked to approve of raising sufficient money to complete it. It will be the same with the Croydon Railway, the Melbourne street extension, and the Sandgate extension, the one we have just approved of, and the Mount Morgan line also. With regard to the future, I have no hesitation in telling the House what we intend to propose, the details of which will be laid before it with the Loan Bill. It is this: We intend to ask the House, as far as future railways are concerned, simply to authorise the Government to raise a certain sum of money, but the Government will have no authority whatever to expend one farthing of that money until it has been appropriated in the same way as estimates of revenue are appropriated now by the House. I think that is the principle we have been striving for all along, and that is the principle we intend to submit to the House. With regard to the railways the permanent surveys of which have been completed, and other railways of which the House has already approved, we do not require to vote a block sum for them. Whatever the exact amount required will be, the House will be asked to approve of it. Until that is done, neither I nor any member of the Government consider that we are in any way authorised to go on with the expenditure of that money.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH said: If I may be allowed I should like to say a word with reference to this exposition of the policy of the Government. It is a policy that I have heard nothing about. It comes to me for the first time.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS (Hon. J. M. Macrossan): It does not.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I say it does. What I understood the hon. gentleman to say is that an Appropriation Bill will be brought down with every sum of money that is to be spent.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No; he did not say that. Don't you believe it?

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: That is what I understood the hon. gentleman to say. What does it mean then?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: He does not know.

The HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: I am sure I don't know what it means.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said: Mr. Speaker,—I think the Hon. the Minister for Railways quite misapprehended the point of the objection made, which was to the system that had been going on for years in the expenditure of loan money. I said several times last session, and in the previous session, 1887, when I was Treasurer for the first time, and I hope the last, that we have been going along on the wrong track for many years with regard to loan expenditure. It is no use saying that the £10,000,000 loan was the beginning of the evil. That was only a continuation of the system that had been going on for many years before.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: It intensified it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Hon. members may say it intensified it; but it was only a larger amount. I do not think the late Mr.

Miles could be charged with expending money that was not authorised. No one could have spent money more conscientiously or painstakingly than he did. I am sure all who knew him will agree with me on that point. The practice for years has been this: First of all, a sum of money was placed on the Loan Estimates, which, as I said last evening, was merely a proposal to the Committee of Supply to authorise the borrowing of the money for a particular purpose. After the money was authorised to be borrowed the Government assumed that they had authority to expend it. The next step necessary was, if it was a matter of railways, to get the approval of the route. An estimate was always given of the probable expenditure, and it was then the practice for the Government to make the railway; and as the work nearly always cost more than the amount authorised to be spent, Parliament was asked to vote the balance. So Parliament lost control. That has been the practice ever since we started making railways. The hon. member for North Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, was quite right in saying that at the last general election, public attention was called to the want of control exercised by Parliament over the expenditure of loan money. But attention was not then called to it for the first time. I called attention to it several times during the session of 1887, when I occupied the position of Treasurer, and I am not prepared to go back on anything I then said because I am now in Opposition, nor shall I, if in office again, go back on anything I now say while in Opposition. I contend that it does not tend to the good Government of the country to allow the Government to expend money without the control of Parliament. Parliament should keep effective control over all expenditure. What is the proposal now before the House? Last year the Government proposed to borrow a sum of money, including £60,000 to make a railway to Mount Morgan. We are now going to be asked to consider a proposal to spend an unknown amount, probably about £140,000, on that line. It might be £140,000, or £150,000, or £160,000, or £200,000. It is simply a guess, and that unknown amount may be spent this year, next year, some time, or never, as the child's legend says. The proposal is, that without any further authority from Parliament, the Government should be authorised to construct that line. They say, "We have only £60,000 in hand, let us spend that." But when they enter into a contract, and have spent all the money, the contractors will come down and ask for the balance, and Parliament will have to provide the money. The Government ask authority to borrow a sufficient sum of money to pay for the estimated cost of the line; but when the money is to be expended is not under the control of Parliament. Parliament should have control, and its consent should be required, not only for the borrowing of the money, but also of the time and conditions under which it is to be expended. This is a matter to which the hon. gentleman who last spoke did not address himself.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; I did.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that he is going to adopt the principle for which I contended two years ago, last year, and this year, that there should be an annual Loan Appropriation Bill?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; I said so.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I listened very attentively to the hon. gentleman, and certainly did not understand him to say so.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I said that not a cent would be spent until the money was appropriated.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. gentleman means that he is going to bring down Loan Estimates, and then pass a Loan Bill?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No!

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Does the hon. gentleman mean to say that there will be a distinct appropriation of the moneys to be expended out of the loan fund for the year?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes!

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I am very glad to hear it; but I listened most attentively to the hon. gentleman, and failed to apprehend anything of the kind from his speech. I have been hammering away on this subject for some time, and last evening I attempted in vain to extract a pledge from the Government to do something of the kind. Now the hon. gentleman says he has made that statement without conveying it to my mind, although I listened most attentively to the hon. gentleman, and without conveying it to the mind of the hon. member for North Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith. It is a very extraordinary thing that the Government should announce this most important change without conveying the idea to the minds of the two gentlemen who were the most prominent in calling attention to it, and now I am afraid that when we read the speech of the hon. gentleman in the morning it will not appear there, but that we shall have to look at the interjections in my speech to see what is the policy of the Government. When that policy is adopted, the passing of plans and sections like these will become almost a formal matter, because Parliament will have control over the expenditure of the money afterwards; and for the same reason the authorisation of the borrowing of money will become almost formal. But it is really a remarkable thing that the change of policy to which the Government have been driven should have been announced in a manner which was unintelligible to anyone listening to the speech.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: said: Mr. Speaker,—I was not surprised to hear the leader of the Opposition say that he did not understand what had been stated by the Minister for Railways; but I was surprised that the hon. member for North Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, did not understand it, because the matter was discussed by him in the Cabinet. It is not a declaration drawn from the Government, as the leader of the Opposition seems to think, because we have it here in type what we intend to do. The hon. gentleman knows what is the system in Victoria.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They have a special Act of Parliament for railways.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: When the Victorian Government borrow money, they borrow certain sums for railway purposes and other matters; but I will just keep to railways in order to illustrate what is done now. They borrow, say, £5,000,000 of money for railways, but specify no particular railway for which the money is borrowed. They simply borrow the amount in one lump sum, and every year the Treasurer, or the Minister in charge of that particular vote, comes down with an Appropriation Bill and asks Parliament to appropriate a certain sum out of that £5,000,000, for certain railways, which he specifies, and for which the plans and sections have been passed. That is the system which we propose to adopt now in Queensland, and I think that, on the adoption of that system,

the House will have much greater control over the expenditure of the Loan Fund than ever it has had before. Instead of the Government wishing to take the expenditure from the control of Parliament, they wish to have the whole of the expenditure subject to the control of Parliament, because we believe Parliament ought to have control, and that the Government should be amenable to Parliament for any expenditure over the amount authorised. But that cannot apply, in the same sense, to the construction of railways to which Parliament is already committed, as we must provide the money to carry on those railways. For instance, take the Cairns Railway, which is the next one on the list, after the one under discussion. It must be continued to some certain point, even if it is not carried through to Herberton, where the traffic will be such as to pay something towards the cost of construction, and to make the railway available for the district for which it was intended. Parliament having been committed, by the action of a former Government, to that railway, it is not in the same position, or under the same control with regard to the expenditure, because Parliament must vote the money willy-nilly. Parliament, therefore, will not have the control over that, which it will have over all new railways to be constructed in the future. Does the hon. gentleman follow me?

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Perfectly.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: That is the position we are in. The Mount Morgan line will be under the control of Parliament, as the country is not committed to the making of that line in the same way as it is to the construction of the Cairns Railway. We have given the Colonial Treasurer authority to borrow £60,000 for the Mount Morgan line, and the Minister for Railways has spent none of that money, except on the making of surveys. Surveys have been made, and the plans and sections are now brought forward, and, if they are passed, the sanction of Parliament will still be required for the expenditure of the money on that railway. Therefore, I say this particular line is out of the category of the lines which have already been approved by Parliament.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker.—In explanation of the statement made by the Minister for Mines and Works, that I agreed to this in the Cabinet—

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I said you discussed the matter in the Cabinet.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I would not have referred to the matter myself; but, as it is of importance, I will refer to it, and state exactly what took place in the Cabinet—

THE SPEAKER: I must remind the hon. member that he has already spoken.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I am speaking in explanation, by the indulgence of the House.

THE SPEAKER: Of course, with the indulgence of the House, the hon. member will be in order in making an explanation.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I want to state exactly what took place, and because the hon. gentleman has referred to it, I cannot feel that it is any breach of confidence to explain what transpired. The morning on which I left the Cabinet, the Brisbane railway station was not the only point in dispute between myself and my colleagues. There was another, and that was the form in which they should bring in their Loan Estimates. The Treasurer submitted a schedule

—the very schedule I have in my hand at the present moment, which I will use for illustrating what I wish to say, is the form in which he proposed to put the whole of the railways before the House. Of course it is a very simple plan to ask the House for authority, and if the House gives it, it would be a very simple thing for the Government to spend the money. Now, the way in which the matter is arranged in Victoria is this: I will read exactly the part that was before the Cabinet. It was "An Act for the construction of railways, and other works connected therewith, including rolling stock, etc., a sum of six millions." It is voted in one lump sum for all railways, all stations, and all rolling-stock. When this proposal was started by the Treasurer here—I think it was the Treasurer. I do not remember whether the Minister for Railways started it; but at all events the Ministers expressed their opinions very strongly in favour of the plan—I pooh-poohed the matter, and used very strong language, saying that if Parliament were asked for the money in that way it would never pass an item of that sort. I put before them the sea of difficulties into which they would get if they asked Parliament to sanction for railways generally an amount of, say, two or three millions. I pointed out that that was not the way in which they did it in Victoria, and not the way in which it had been done here. The hon. gentleman quite misunderstands the way in which the matter is dealt with in Victoria. There is no doubt the Government's proposal is a part of the process, but it is commencing in the middle of the process. In this very matter of the expenditure of six millions I will show how it has actually been approved of by the Victorian Parliament. There was an Act passed in which this very loan is referred to, "An Act to authorise the construction of certain lines of railway by the State and for other purposes." In that Act every railway was scheduled, you could pick out on the map yard by yard every portion of every line of railway that received the sanction of Parliament at that time. That was the most important Act of the year. It was asking the authority of Parliament for the construction of certain railways. The schedules extend over many pages. That is the first process; not only that, but they ask the consent of the House for the construction of railways of particular classes, and the Act says that the expenditure on railways of a certain class shall be restricted to an average of £3,960 per mile. Then they go on to fix the minimum for another class, and with regard to suburban lines they say that the maximum shall not exceed £14,290 per mile. Then there is a clause in the Act that says:—

"Before any expenditure shall be made, or contract entered into for the construction of the aforesaid railways or the purchase of land, an estimate of the expenditure which the Commissioners propose to incur for the said purposes during the ensuing twelve months, and also a statement showing the works or purposes for or in respect of which the moneys during the preceding year may have been applied, shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament, and the aforesaid estimate shall be submitted for the sanction of the Legislative Assembly in the same manner as the annual Estimates of expenditure for the public service."

Now, that is a very definite Act. That is the first step in the making of railways in the colony of Victoria. Then comes the next step. That is to borrow the money, or simply authorising the Government to raise a certain amount of money. In this case it happened to be £6,000,000; the sanction of Parliament is obtained for each line laid down; the limit of cost is fixed for the different classes of line and for the works connected with the railways, such as rolling stock, station buildings, etc. Hon. members will see at once therefore that it was not necessary to specify the railways, because the destination of the money had been pretty well fixed before, and

therefore the £6,000,000 of money was voted *in globo*. Ministers ought to have seen at once, if they had read the Victorian Act, that they were not following the same plan. If the hon. member will give me what he says is printed I will see whether it corresponds with this, and will point out the error into which Ministers have fallen. The Act says: "In the construction of railways and other works connected therewith, already authorised by Parliament." Then comes the third process: The Act which actually appropriates the money for the particular railways and for station buildings, etc. Now, in what way does the process proposed by the Government in any way correspond with that hinted at by the Minister for Mines and Works? All that the Government proposed up to the time I left was to ask for a lump sum of money for the construction of railways. The application of the money was not discussed. The question was only whether we should ask for a lump sum for railways or not. I broke off the discussion short, and said, "What is the use of arguing that? Let us commence with the details." The details were commenced with, and one of the first was the construction of the Brisbane railway station, and then the matter ended, so far as I was concerned. That was the position in which the Government were left, so that they have not had the benefit of my advice, and the hon. member is not right in saying that the matter was discussed in Cabinet, or that any such scheme was sanctioned by me. I will go further, and say that for six weeks before I left the Government I wished the Loan Bill to be brought forward. I proposed to the Treasurer to bring it forward before his Estimates, and that is what I would have done myself. But it was not my business, and that was only my opinion. I did not see at all that the Government should commit the same errors as their predecessors, and come down on the last day of the session and say, "We want three millions of money, and we must have it." I do not think we would be right in trusting any Government with that amount of money until they had given a better explanation of their conduct than the Government have given up to the present time.

The PREMIER said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not rise with any pleasure to speak on the present occasion; but I must inform the House that if they are led to believe that the hon. member for North Brisbane read to the Cabinet what he has read to this House they will be misled.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: I did not inform the House that.

The PREMIER: The hon. gentleman has fallen into error as regards the facts. It was not on the day that he left the Cabinet that the matter was discussed, but at a previous meeting.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: It was not.

The PREMIER: The hon. member must excuse me if I contradict him. The hon. member when dealing with the Victorian mode said he did not think it was practicable at the present time, and did not recommend it during this session.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH: That was months ago.

The PREMIER: It was a meeting or two before the hon. member left the Cabinet. The hon. gentleman said, "I will take the Victorian statutes home with me, and have a look at them," and I got one of the clerks to bring them and put them on a chair near him; but whether he took them home with him or not I do not know. As far as my memory serves me, there was no angry discussion on the matter in the Cabinet; and I can appeal to my colleagues as to

whether my statement is correct or not. The question was never seriously discussed at all, and all that passed was as I stated. The hon. gentleman did not think it was practicable, and said he would take the Victorian statutes home to see whether it was or not. Since the hon. gentleman has left the Cabinet, the Government have considered that such a scheme is practicable; and they intend to ask this House to agree to the scheme which is now in my hand in print. It is proposed to submit a vote—

"For the construction of such railways and works connected therewith (including resumptions, rolling-stock, and material for permanent way) as Parliament may approve.

"Provided that before any expenditure is made, or contract entered into for the construction of such railways, or for the purchase of land, an estimate of the expenditure proposed to be incurred for the said purposes during any financial year shall be submitted for the sanction of Parliament."

Those are the lines on which the Government intend to ask the House to allow them to borrow a certain sum of money. I regret that I should have had to speak on this matter. It is not a pleasant subject, but I was determined to put myself and my colleagues right on the matter, and I have stated exactly the facts as known to myself and my colleagues also.

The Hon. Sir T. McILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not wish the House to be under the impression that I used the forms here that I did in the discussion that took place in the Cabinet. But the Premier is wrong in saying that the discussion did not take place on the morning I left the Cabinet. I know what took place then. It was a very angry discussion. The discussion to which he refers took place some weeks before. I advised the Treasurer as to what he should do, and looked up the books for him, and told him to get Mr. Cullen and go over every one of them; and the Treasurer knows that was done. I believe the books went to the Treasury—at all events I advised that they should go there—but that was weeks before I left the Cabinet.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. W. Pattison) said: Mr. Speaker,—I regret that I cannot agree with the hon. member. He has not stated matters as I understood them; nor did the matter happen in the Cabinet as related by the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith; nor was it in the Cabinet room that the discussion took place on the first occasion in reference to the method by which we should bring down the Loan Estimates. It occurred in the Ministers' room, not so very long before. He did speak to me about the Loan Estimates, but not so far back as he stated, as far as I can remember. I believe it is six or seven weeks since I had the first chat with him in reference to the Loan Estimates. I may say that I was expecting considerable assistance from Sir Thomas McIlwraith, not only with regard to the Loan Estimates, but also with regard to the general Estimates and the Financial Statement; and it is only fair that I should say a word or two on that. It is scarcely necessary, however, that I should do so; and I will content myself with saying that I hoped to receive considerable assistance from him, but that the state of his health possibly prevented him from giving me that assistance. As to any angry discussion, there was none, as far as I can remember, even on the morning he left the Cabinet. There was a little excitement, so far as Sir Thomas McIlwraith himself was concerned, but the feeling of the entire Cabinet was friendly towards him. We were discussing certain details in connection with the Loan Estimates, but the method by which we should submit future railways to Parliament was not discussed on that

morning at all, though it may have been casually mentioned. We were only sitting a few minutes before the item of £40,000 came up for discussion, and the discussion on that did not occupy very many minutes. As I said before, I am sorry I cannot agree with the statements made by the hon. gentleman; and he is certainly mistaken as to the dates.

Mr. HODGKINSON said: Mr. Speaker,—The Ministry are like sheep going astray. Patroclus has been destroyed. Ajax has lost his head and rends his own flock. Wise Ulysses called into council, has lost his memory through the seductions of Circe. The Minister for Mines and Works says that the Government are committed to the construction of certain railways, on account of promises which must be carried out; but it is strange that he did not take the same view the other night with reference to the extension of the Maytown and Cooktown line. He then said that, owing to the report of the Commissioners, he was not ashamed to confess that he would ask the House to rescind the vote. When it suits the Government they must keep their promises, but when it does not suit them it appears that they can let them lapse. Is not this a pitiable spectacle that we have witnessed to-night? Who is the leader of this Government? Who is the gentleman responsible to the country for this Cabinet? Who but the hon. member for North Brisbane? You may talk about constitutional quibbles as long as you like, but it was that gentleman who was put into power by the country, and now that he has seceded the Ministry have no possible bond of cohesion. Look at the composition of the Cabinet.

The SPEAKER: I must call the attention of the hon. member to the question before the House. By leave of the House the hon. member for North Brisbane was allowed to make a second speech, and that led to further irregularities; but I hope that hon. members will not now depart from the question under consideration.

Mr. HODGKINSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I shall always bow to your decision. I think my argument would have shown why we should not go on with the motion at present; but I will take another opportunity of saying what I have to say on the matter.

Question put, and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 35.

Messrs. Nelson, Morehead, Macrossan, Donaldson, Black, Powers, Pattison, Murphy, Jessop, Stevenson, Dunsmure, Callan, Crombie, Watson, North, Plunkett, Agnew, Perkins, Adams, O'Connell, G. H. Jones, Lissner, Battersby, Cowley, Stephens, Wimble, Annear, Archer, Stevens, Palmer, O'Sullivan, Paul, Smith, Hamilton, and Luya.

NOES, 18.

Messrs. Rutledge, Groom, Barlow, Isambert, Foxton, Unmack, Tozer, McMaster, Mellor, Sayers, Salkeld, Smyth, Morgan, Macfarlane, Buckland, Drake, Hunter, and Glassey.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed Mount Morgan branch railway, commencing at 9 miles 63 chains 9½ links on Central Railway (Kabra) and ending at Mount Morgan, in length 14 miles 8 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.

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 he submitted that railway with greater confidence on account of the expressions of opinion he had heard during previous discussions upon railways, as it seemed to be the opinion of

hon. members that if a railway would pay that was quite sufficient justification for its construction. There could be no doubt that the proposed railway would pay from the time it was opened. Referring to the Commissioners' statement upon the line, it would be seen that it was a branch line, starting from Kabra Station on the Central Railway, about nine and three-quarter miles from Rockhampton. There were considerable engineering difficulties to be surmounted, inasmuch as it was necessary to cross a range of mountains known as the Razorback, and that would necessitate the construction of a very long tunnel of slightly over half-a-mile in length. The survey had been very carefully made, as would be seen from the fact that while the distance in a bee-line over that country was twelve miles, notwithstanding the difficulties to be surmounted, the railway track only covered a distance of fourteen miles and eight chains. Yet the railway would be one of a good character so far as maintenance was concerned, because there were no curves sharper than eight chains in radius, and no gradient steeper than 1 in 50. The cost of the line was reckoned at £140,000, or in round numbers, £10,000 per mile. With regard to the traffic, which was really the main thing to be considered, it would be seen from the Railway Act that it was one of the functions of the Commissioners to estimate the amount of traffic upon any proposed line. They were required to give their estimate of the cost of a railway—which they could not do until the line had been surveyed—and in the next place they were required to estimate the probable traffic. That they had done in all cases, and in reference to that line they considered that the traffic would not only be sufficient to provide the interest on the cost of construction, but would leave a fair margin for working expenses. He thought their estimate was rather low, because they deducted all the amount of the traffic between Rockhampton and Kabra, whereas they knew that a very large proportion of the traffic which now went from Rockhampton to Mount Morgan went direct by drays from Rockhampton. The construction of that line would therefore to that extent increase the receipts upon the main line between Rockhampton and Kabra. The same remark applied also to the passenger traffic, although that was not mentioned in the report. When he had visited the place in April last there were no less than ten coaches, the great bulk of them running between Rockhampton and Mount Morgan, whilst the rest ran between Kabra and Mount Morgan. If the railway were constructed they assumed that the whole of that large passenger traffic would go by the line. Part of that would be credited to the main line as far as Kabra, and part to the new line. The only doubt which seemed to linger in the minds of the Commissioners was with regard to the question as to the length of time that Mount Morgan was likely to last. That was a problem which a great many people would like to solve. He did not pretend to be able to offer any opinion upon the subject, and neither did the Commissioners, but all hon. members who had read Mr. Jack's report upon the mine, and other descriptions of it, must have formed the opinion that the mine was going to last for a considerable number of years, at any rate, and if the mine continued to pay as well as it had been doing, the line would very soon pay for itself. The same objection might, of course, be raised to the construction of a line of railway to any gold-field. No one could tell how long Croydon, or Charters Towers, or Gympie would last. But on the other hand there was the prospect of further discoveries of gold, and judging from the reports upon the mine, that was not at all unlikely to be the case. If that were so, the revenue

from the line would be increased. He did not expect any opposition to the proposal. At one end of the line there was the large centre of Rockhampton, having a population of 14,000 or 15,000, while at the other end there was a town of considerable size containing 5,000 people, and under those circumstances the railway was certain to be remunerative. He had every confidence in moving the motion standing in his name.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he would take that opportunity of congratulating the Government, and especially the Colonial Treasurer, upon the advance in their ideas since the previous evening. He had on that occasion asked the Government whether they would be able, before the Loan Estimates were passed, to bring down a return showing the estimated expenditure out of loan during the present year. The Colonial Treasurer said he hoped to be able to do so, but he was not quite confident of his being able to do it, though he gave the promise that he would do so if possible. That evening they were informed that it was the fixed and settled policy of the Government to submit every year a separate Appropriation Bill embodying all the expenditure out of loan for the current year. He supposed they had arrived at that settled policy that morning. Last evening it was only a faint hope on the part of the Colonial Treasurer that he might be able to do it. That day it was the settled policy of the Government. He was always glad to see the Government advancing in the right way. Since last evening they had made an important advance in their policy, and he congratulated them upon it.

The PREMIER said he stated last evening that two of the largest departments already had their returns completed, and that they only waited revision.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said that with respect to the proposed line, he must confess he felt considerably embarrassed on the subject. He believed it was a railway that ought to be made, and the trouble with him was whether it was likely to be a permanent and profitable line or not. He held that the colony ought to have all the main thoroughfares of communication in its own hands. If that was likely to be a main thoroughfare it ought to belong to the colony. If it was only a temporary one, he did not think it ought to be made by the country. The question to his mind was whether it was a line that should be treated as a matter of public importance or only as a matter of private importance. The Railway Commissioners, if one might read between the lines of their report, seemed to think it was more of a private matter than a public one, and that the line should be made by the company. If that was the correct conclusion to come to from the facts, he should be disposed to agree with them. That was the only point on which he had any doubt. Two or three years ago, when the question was first mentioned, he thought he expressed an opinion that a line of that kind should be made by the Government, as it was too important a line to be allowed to fall into the hands of any private company. Now the point really was that they were bound to be satisfied, before authorising the appropriation of public money, that it was a line which it would pay the country to make. If, from any accident, the mine stopped working, it would be a dead loss. Probably there was no hon. member who could give the Committee positive information as to the permanency of the mine. Nobody knew for certain, at all events. He had expressed exactly the state of his mind on the subject, and

with the information at present before them, contained in the Commissioners' report, he felt very great difficulty in supporting the line.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it might possibly save the time of the Committee, and relieve hon. members from a lot of trouble, if he were to state at once that if Parliament would give the company power to construct the line they might relieve the Government and the Committee from all further consideration of it. He quite agreed with the leader of the Opposition that it was more properly a private line which should be constructed by the company, or rather by the larger shareholders of the company. But, supposing them to be willing to undertake such a scheme, they would like some assurance from Parliament that that permission would be given. They could not expect that Parliament would assent to the construction of such a line by a private company without surrounding the permission with safeguards, and under the condition that should the country think fit at any time to buy it back, they could do so on reasonable terms to be arranged by both parties—on similar terms, in fact, to those he placed before the leader of the Opposition some years ago, when a syndicate proposed to construct a line from Rockhampton to Port Alma. If the Committee would agree to such a proposal, the line would be withdrawn from their consideration, and that would do away with all cavilling. The shareholders who would undertake the construction of the work knew best what the prospects of the mine were, although perhaps, as the leader of the Opposition said, no one could speak with certainty on the subject. The line was to be constructed entirely for the one mine. As set forth by the Commissioners, there was no great goldfield outside the mine, although it was quite possible there might be. At present there was not, and he took the case exactly as it stood. It was only fair, therefore, that the company should take the risk upon its own shoulders. It was a line that must be constructed either by the Government or by the company. He could give the Committee plenty of information as to the amount of traffic, and could show clearly that it would be a paying line; but at present there was no necessity to do so. As the company were perfectly willing to undertake the work, he would suggest to the Minister for Railways that he withdraw the motion, with a view of enabling a private company to construct the line.

Mr. HODGKINSON said a fairer offer could not possibly be made, and the Committee knew perfectly well that it was made with the full intention of carrying it out. There were only two courses the Committee could adopt with regard to the line. One was to adopt the suggestion of the hon. member for North Brisbane; the other to challenge the vote of every member of the Committee holding shares in Mount Morgan. If it went forth to the country that in the present state of the finances they had voted £140,000 for a mine which was paying dividends at the rate of £100,000 a month, it would reflect disgrace on the House. The line, he admitted, would be a payable one, and the Colonial Treasurer had made a very fair and straightforward offer, and it would be ascertained before the debate closed, no doubt, whether the offer was likely to be accepted or not. He could not imagine any man of common sense opposing it. There was a precedent for it at the Day Dawn, Charters Towers, whose dividends, as far as he was aware, did not compare with those from Mount Morgan. There was no doubt, also, that the line would be constructed more cheaply, and worked more economically by the company than by the Government; and the money devoted

by the Government to the purpose would construct seventy miles of line on an economical system over some of the Northern portions of the colony. He firmly believed that it would be a paying line, but he did not see how any hon. member could conscientiously vote for it when the company, through one of its leading mouthpieces, volunteered to incur the liability of constructing the line themselves.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he wished to explain that he did not speak as the mouthpiece of the company, but on behalf of a few of the larger shareholders.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that was almost a distinction without a difference. The hon. gentleman knew what he meant. If the suggestion of the hon. gentleman was accepted by the Committee the matter would be settled; if not there were members on that side of the Committee who would go to considerable length in preventing it from going any further.

The HON. A. RUTLEDGE said he hoped, after what had fallen from the hon. the Treasurer, that the Government would withdraw the motion and bring down a short Bill authorising the Mount Morgan Company to construct the line at their own expense. He did not see any difference in principle between the construction of railways to gold mines and to coal mines. The House had already authorised the construction of railways to coal mines, and he did not see why they should not do the same thing with reference to gold mines. Everybody did not share the confidence the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer had expressed in the future of Mount Morgan. Everybody hoped it would be as great a mine in the future as it had been up to the present time, but whether it was going to be a permanent concern for the next twenty years, or whether the bottom might suddenly drop out of it, was all a matter of conjecture—a thing that no one could forecast. Under those circumstances, he did not think the Government would be justified in incurring large expenditure for the construction of the line. If the shareholders themselves were willing to make the line it would remove all ground of complaint on the part of the people of the colony, and he earnestly hoped the Government would adopt the course he had suggested.

Mr. MURPHY said he hoped the Government would adopt the course suggested by the hon. member for Charters Towers, Hon. A. Rutledge, and by the Colonial Treasurer himself—that they should withdraw the motion, and bring in a Bill authorising the proprietors of Mount Morgan to construct the line. That mine was private property, and there was no immediate chance of any large settlement taking place in the neighbourhood, because the land there was perfectly valueless, except for mining. It was about the poorest grazing country he had ever seen, and the principal population there were those who were working at Mount Morgan. That place was on all-fours with other private lines that had been constructed to coal mines, the only difference being that it was a little longer, and the mine was very much richer than any other ever known. With the hon. member for Charters Towers, he hoped Mount Morgan had as grand a future before it as the Colonial Treasurer, who was one of the largest shareholders in it, anticipated. He hoped the Government would not press the question to a division, but that they would withdraw it and give the shareholders authority to construct the line. By that means the line would be made, and the public money that would otherwise be spent on it would be

saved, and be still to the good for the construction of some other line in the Central district. In that way a double good would be gained.

The HON. P. PERKINS said the hon. member for Barcoo had stated that there was no chance of any settlement taking place at Mount Morgan—perhaps the hon. gentleman had sheep in his mind. He would like to ask him how many sheep the settlement that had taken place at Mount Morgan was equal to. He could inform the hon. member that there was gold to be found in the neighbourhood of Mount Morgan which, if not quite as rich as in that mine, was payable when the shareholders were prepared to put up similar machinery to that in operation at Mount Morgan. That would be equal to any sheep station the hon. gentleman had ever seen out West, or two or three of them. He would like to ask whether or not the disputes between the late Premier and his colleagues had not something to do with the opposition to that motion? It seemed to him that that was the real position of affairs. He considered the proposal as fair a one as had ever been made. It was much more reasonable than many others that had been submitted to the Committee in the past, and he believed it would be payable. But he thought it was a very improper thing to authorise the making of those private railways when all the railways of the country were in the hands of the State. It would lead to friction, and irritation, and embarrassment, the end of which they could not foresee. The offer made by the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer was a very liberal one, but if the question went to a vote he should be prepared to vote for it, because he believed it was necessary. He was not one of those who believed that all the gold in the neighbourhood was confined to the Mount Morgan Company. He knew to the contrary. If he believed that all the mineral wealth of the district was held by the Mount Morgan Company, he would say, "Put your foot down, and don't vote for the railway." But he was quite of the contrary opinion, and he believed the making of the railway was a necessity. He had seen the difficulties—the almost insuperable difficulties—they had in taking machinery out there, and he thought it was a pity that members on either side should let their feelings get the better of them, and say they would vote against the line because it was a railway to Mount Morgan.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said after the expression of opinion given by many members of the Committee with regard to that railway being built by private enterprise—a system of building railways that he was not altogether in favour of; and as there appeared to be some doubt as to the permanency of the requirements of the colony for that railway, though he did not entertain very much doubt himself; and as they had the further statement that the railway could be built almost immediately by private enterprise, he had no hesitation in accepting the expression of opinion that had been given. The feeling appeared to be in favour of allowing the railway to be constructed by private enterprise, and under the circumstances he would move that the Chairman leave the chair.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he understood it was the intention of the hon. gentleman to bring in a Bill for the construction of that railway, similar to the Stafford Brothers Railway Bill and the Day Dawn Freehold Gold-mining Company's Railway Bill?

The PREMIER: Not during this session.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said it could be done if the Government chose. He asked the question because the railway was a railway of some public importance. His only

difficulty had been in making up his mind as to who should make it. If it came to a vote, he probably should not vote either one way or the other. If it was going to be a really profitable railway the Government should have it; but if there were any doubts on the subject, the Government ought not to undertake the risk. Of course the proposal the hon. gentleman made disposed of the matter as a Government railway for the present session.

Mr. STEVENSON said that personally he did not care whether the railway was made to Mount Morgan or not. Mount Morgan would go ahead just the same, and would continue to do so long after they were under the sod. But he would just like to refer to the most extraordinary and inconsistent proceeding of the leader of the Opposition. If it had not been for the action of the hon. gentleman, in stating that he would oppose the line if Parliament was asked to sanction its construction by private enterprise, a railway to Mount Morgan would have been in existence at the present time.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: When did that happen?

Mr. STEVENSON said that happened two or three years ago, and now when the proprietors of Mount Morgan decided that it was no use bringing forward a private Bill, and the Government proposed to construct the line, the hon. gentleman opposed it again and got his party and some members on the Government side to agree to the idea that it would be much better to build the line by private enterprise. He (Mr. Stevenson) would have been perfectly satisfied if that had been done in the first instance; but after putting it off so long, it was very unfair for the hon. gentleman now to oppose the railway and get his party to do so. The railway would be one of the best paying lines in the colony.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: If that is so, the Government ought to have it.

Mr. STEVENSON said that was exactly what he contended. But what did the hon. gentleman mean? Was he going to oppose it as a private line, and also oppose its construction by the Government? The hon. gentleman said "Hear, hear," when the Minister for Railways stated that he did not believe in private railways, and yet opposed the motion before the Committee. Was the Mount Morgan Company to be balked in every way? He (Mr. Stevenson) quite agreed with the Minister for Railways in withdrawing the proposal after the opinion had been expressed that the Committee should sanction the construction of the line by private enterprise, but under no other circumstances should the motion be withdrawn. He would like to make a few observations with regard to the statements made that evening about ignoring the reports of the Railway Commissioners. He knew something about the Commissioners, who were appointed in the old country, having travelled with them from England; he also knew something of Mr. Gray, and no one had a higher opinion of those gentlemen than he had, but he never understood that the reports of the Commissioners were to be final. He understood that, as shown by the remarks made by the Minister for Railways on the second reading of the Railways Bill, as quoted by the hon. member for Carnarvon, the Commissioners were to be a board of advice not only to the Government but also to Parliament, and that Parliament should finally decide whether the railways reported on should be constructed or not. The Minister for Railways was twitted with having his party behind him to reject or carry any railway he thought fit, whatever report the Commissioners made, but the other night a railway on which the Commissioners had reported

favourably was defeated by the vote of a majority of members on the Government side of the Committee, and several members of the Opposition. That showed that the final decision rested with Parliament, and it was perfectly right that it should be so, and he hoped he should always see members going from one side of the Committee to the other when voting on railway proposals. Hon. members had more knowledge of the country than the Railway Commissioners, especially at the present time, when two of them had been only a short time in the colony, and it would do no good twitting either the present Government or the Opposition with disregarding their reports. He hoped that whatever Government was in power, they would always maintain that Parliament should exercise control as to what railways should or should not be constructed in the colony notwithstanding any recommendations that might be made by the Commissioners.

Mr. FOXTON said no one denied that Parliament must finally decide whether a railway should be constructed or not, but although it rested with Parliament to say whether a line should be constructed, it having been recommended by the Commissioners, it was an extraordinary proceeding for any Government to bring forward a line which was practically condemned by the Commissioners.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said he hoped the Government would not withdraw the motion, as it was a very dangerous thing to place the construction of railways in the hands of private persons. What had induced the hon. gentleman to withdraw the motion? Simply a statement from the Treasurer, made on his own account and without the authority of others. He would give his vote against allowing the railways of the colony to go into the hands of private persons. The whole country was very much interested in that line. He was quite sure that plenty of settlement would take place on the road to Mount Morgan, and there was no guarantee that the line would not be extended further. Who could tell how many gold mines would be found in the vicinity, and what power would the Government have to take the line out of the hands of a private company? It was a very serious thing to allow the construction of railways to get into the hands of private persons.

Mr. PALMER said he was perfectly in accord with the resolution that had been come to, as he had been returned in 1883 in support of the transcontinental scheme, which embodied the same principle as the construction of a private line to Mount Morgan.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: No, no!

Mr. PALMER said it was fully time that private enterprise should be called into requisition, in view of the enormous demands made on the Government. He would ask the Chief Secretary if he would extend the principle? There was another place where private enterprise had offered to build a railway. The Cloncurry Company had offered to build their railway, and considering that it was five years ago since half a million of money was voted for that Cloncurry line and none had yet been spent, he would like to know if the principle of constructing railways by private enterprise would be extended?

The PREMIER said he could give the hon. member no information on the subject. He did not know that any measure brought in for the purpose of authorising the construction of the Mount Morgan line would be carried. If the hon. gentleman chose to introduce a private Bill with regard to the Cloncurry line he must take his chance with it.

Mr. HUNTER said he quite approved of the motion being withdrawn with the object of bringing in a Bill giving power to certain persons to build the line, but at the same time he did not pledge himself to support the motion, and he hoped none of the large shareholders in Mount Morgan would consider Parliament pledged to pass the Bill. With regard to what has fallen from the hon. member for Carpentaria as to the Cloncurry line, that was an entirely different thing. The offer made by the Cloncurry people was that they were prepared to float a loan in London provided the Government would guarantee 4 per cent. interest. He hoped the Government would never consider such an offer as that.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

CAIRNS RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved—

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Cairns Railway (supplementary section 3) from Bibbhora, 42 miles to Granite Creek, 47 miles 30 chains, in length 5 miles 30 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.

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

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS, in moving—

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the Cairns Railway (supplementary section 3) from Bibbhora, 42 miles to Granite Creek, 47 miles 30 chains, in length 5 miles 30 chains, as laid upon the table of the House on Tuesday, the 24th day of September ultimo.

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

said the proposal was to give the Government authority to proceed with the construction of the Cairns-Herberton Railway two miles beyond Bibbhora, to which point the line had already been approved. The reason for the proposed short extension was that Bibbhora was not sufficiently central to command the whole of the traffic of the district, whereas by extending the line to Granite Creek the whole of the traffic from the north-west and the south-west would be secured, and a most suitable site would be available for the terminus. There was no doubt it would be more satisfactory to the people of Herberton and the surrounding districts to have the line brought a little nearer to Herberton; but the construction of the line as far as Granite Creek was as much as could be expected within the next couple of years or a little more; and it must be of great assistance to the people in the district to be able to get all their produce to the railway by means of drays instead of having to use pack horses. It was almost unnecessary to speak of the valuable lands in the valley of the Barron River, but he might state that the section would tap some of the best timber country in the colony. The cost of the line was very considerable. As he had mentioned before, nearly £600,000 had already been expended, and unless something more was spent in extending the line, the whole of that money would be simply wasted. The point to which the construction of the line had already been approved was altogether inaccessible to traffic, but by extending it to Granite Creek, there would be a reasonable prospect of getting sufficient traffic on the line to

keep it working. The amount of money asked, in addition to the £600,000, would be £300,000, making altogether, as far as Granite Creek, £900,000; at the same time he must say that the estimates for the completion of the present section was, to a large extent, uncertain. Since he last addressed the Committee on the subject a further estimate had been prepared, but there were several matters that had not been settled yet. He thought he mentioned before that at one of the worst places on the Kamerunga side of Surprise Creek it was proposed to make a tunnel 380 yards long. If it was decided to build that tunnel—which he thought would be the most advisable course to adopt—that, in itself would take about a year or fifteen months; at the same time it was considered advisable to get on with what could be done on the third section; and if the Government got the necessary authority, and Parliament appropriated the money, arrangements would be made by which it was highly probable that the railway to Granite Creek would be open five or six months after the second section was completed. That was what the Government wished to do, and that was what they considered to be the best thing in the interests of the country. With regard to the progress made on the second section, the last report he had from the Chief Engineer was dated the 13th of last month. In his report he said, in regard to the condition of the construction works, that there were fourteen tunnels on the line, besides the one 380 yards in length recently approved. Of those, ten were lined complete, one had the lining nearly finished, two were excavated ready for lining, and one was not yet opened. The permanent way was laid for a distance of six miles from the commencement of the contract; so that the works were as well advanced as could reasonably be expected. There were 1,000 or 1,200 men in constant employment. He (Mr. Nelson) might say that the further extension of the line could be done very cheaply, because when it reached Bibbhora the whole of the engineering difficulties would have been surmounted, and it could be extended beyond Granite Creek at £2,500 or £2,600 a mile. He thought that under the circumstances the Committee could not do better than give the necessary authority for the proposed extension, and he therefore moved the motion standing in his name.

Mr. TOZER said that having viewed that railway, he would like to know where it was going to ultimately? Of course, it was to go to Granite Creek, but he would like to know what its ultimate destination was; whether it was to go to Herberton or somewhere else? If his question would embarrass the Government he would not press it. When he was up North he had made some inquiries with respect to the line, and he had been informed that there would be great difficulty in getting past Granite Creek, and when they got into Herberton with it they could not get out again. There was no doubt that they were committing the country to a considerable sum of money in respect of that railway, and he would like to know whether there was any reliable engineering statement as to whether the line could ever be constructed as was proposed. It might be a scheme, but he would be glad to hear whether the construction of the tunnel was possible. He had travelled over all the railways in the world with the exception of those of America, and he sympathised with any Government or engineers that had to undertake the task of surmounting the difficulties on that line. He would like to hear from the Minister for Railways whether there was any positive certainty that the line from Kamerunga to the head of the Barron Falls could ever, in the course of engineering, be completed. If not, there was no

use in their going over the top of the range. He thought the best engineers in the colony should look at that line, and together come to some conclusion upon it.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: There is one there.

Mr. TOZER said he knew there was, but he really thought that the best engineer in the world would like to have the assistance of the second best in undertaking the construction of that line. Hon. members could hardly conceive the engineering difficulties that must beset the Government in undertaking that work. He had travelled on railways over places which he thought were hardly safe for goats, but there were rocks underneath them, but in the case of the Cairns-Herberton Railway there were boulders and rotten ground without any bottom. If he got the salary the Minister for Railways got as well as his own it would not induce him to go round places he had seen on that line. It would relieve doubts in a good many minds if the Government could give some authoritative statement as to whether "bottom," he called it, would ever be found for that railway between Kame-runga and Surprise Creek. When he was there the men were cutting at the side of the hill some forty or fifty feet in from the line, and the earth had fallen away from it, and it was left suspended in mid-air. The rough opinion he had formed at the time from his knowledge of geology—and it appeared it was the opinion of more practical men—was that it would be necessary to tunnel through the hill. The question was whether they would ever be able to build that tunnel, and he would like some statement with respect to it to be made.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said he understood the hon. member doubted the possibility of constructing the line, and no doubt there were very great difficulties to surmount in connection with it; but the chief engineer, Mr. Annett—an officer in whom he had the utmost confidence, and whose word he would take at any time—seemed to think it was possible. There was hardly anything engineers could not do; it was only a question of money. If they got plenty of money they would take a railway anywhere. He had no hesitation in reading the last advice he had received on the line, which was dated 13th September. The engineer said with respect to the tunnel 380 yards long:—

"As intimated to the Commissioners on the grounds, on the 2nd instant, a traverse has been run, and cross sections taken to determine the expediency of lengthening this tunnel, with a view to the safety of the line at this treacherous point; but I have not had sufficient time to examine the route. I propose doing so next week, and will forward all the available information. In connection with this I would add that the adoption of this deviation will not affect the estimate; the estimated cost of the excavation remaining to be done to the cuttings at this mileage amounting to very nearly the cost of the lengthening of the tunnel."

He went on to say that the cost of maintenance would be very heavy, but that was of course understood in the case of a line mainly composed of sharp curves of five chains radius, and where the distance between the reverse curves did not average more than one chain. Every precaution would have to be taken for some considerable time. It would be absolutely necessary to keep a man ahead of every train, and it would take some two years after the line was finished before the cutting of the slopes and the trees overhead was completed. They would have to try and make the line as safe as possible as far as Granite Creek. As to where it was to go after that he could not make any promise, and would not lead people into any expectations; it would be time to consider that when it was in full operation as

far as Granite Creek. If any hon. member wished for more information he would be glad to give it.

Mr. COWLEY said he understood the hon. gentleman to say that the first and second sections had cost nearly £600,000, and that it would take another £300,000 to complete them, making in all £900,000 to finish the second section.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: To finish the third section.

Mr. COWLEY said he wished to know how much it would take to finish the second section?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the hon. member could easily calculate that for himself. The cost of the line from the end of the second section to Granite Creek was given as £155,692, and it followed, therefore, that to complete that section they would require about £150,000, or thereabouts.

Mr. COWLEY said he also wished to know if there was any detailed estimate which would enable them to arrive at a correct conclusion. Were there any estimates taken out for the tunnel which had been referred to? Did they know what that tunnel consisted of? The hon. member for Wide Bay said it was of earth with boulders in it. Had there been any borings taken, or were they working in the dark?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said the Chief Engineer said a traverse had been run right into the mountain, and that cross sections had been taken to determine the expediency of lengthening that tunnel, with a view to the safety of the line at that treacherous point, but he had not had time to examine it. He was expecting a further report every day. If the tunnel turned out to be hard rock, so much the better.

Mr. COWLEY said he wished to know whether it was the intention to call for tenders for the third section before the second section was finished?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said that would depend upon circumstances. Probably it would not be advisable to call for tenders until the second section was within a measurable distance of being finished, say, within five or six months, so that the contractors for the third section would be able to avail themselves of the line to carry their material.

Question put and passed.

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

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

DAY DAWN FREEHOLD (CHARTERS TOWERS) RAILWAY.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS moved:

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

1. That the House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed branch railway line at Charters Towers for the Day Dawn Freehold Gold-mining Company, Limited, commencing at 0 miles 31 chains 75 links on the branch line of the Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Gold-mining Company, Limited, in length 23 chains 30 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Thursday, the 12th day of September 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 branch railway line at Charters Towers for the Day Dawn Freehold Gold-mining Company, Limited, commencing at 0 miles 31 chains 75 links on the branch line of the Day Dawn Block and Wyndham Gold-mining Company, Limited, in length 23 chains 30 links, as laid upon the table of the House on Thursday, the 12th day of September instant.

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

said that as that railway had been already before them in the shape of a Bill that had passed through both Houses of Parliament, and had received the Royal assent, he considered it was almost a matter of mere form to propose the resolution. Everything was in order. The survey had been approved of, the money had been deposited, and the Commissioners were agreeable to undertake the construction of the line. He knew of no objections, and would simply move the resolution.

Question put and passed.

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

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn. The business to-morrow will be the second reading of the Local Government Acts Amendment Bill, the consideration of the District Courts Act Amendment Bill in committee, and after that Supply.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at twenty-eight minutes to 11 o'clock.