

Queensland



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[Hansard]

Legislative Council

THURSDAY, 10 OCTOBER 1889

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LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Thursday, 10 October, 1889.

North Coast Railway Extension.—Railway from Dalby towards Bunya Mountains.—Supreme Court Bill—committee.—Church of England (Diocese of Brisbane) Property Bill—second reading.—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4 o'clock.

NORTH COAST RAILWAY EXTENSION.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE (Hon. A. J. Thynne), in moving—

That the report of the select committee on the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the North Coast Railway (section No. 4) be now adopted—

said: Hon. gentlemen,—As I stated, at an early period of the session, in considering lines now under construction, and to be constructed, we have the advantage of the assistance of the Railway Commissioners, who have been appointed to investigate and make reports upon any proposed line. In this instance the select committee have contented themselves with calling Mr. Mathieson, the Chief Commissioner, and he refers to the Commissioners' report, which describes the railway, as follows:—

"This section commences at the terminus of the 3rd section of the line now in course of construction, at a point in the Yandina Town Reserve, 70 miles and 25 chains from Brisbane, and ends (90 miles 29 chains from Brisbane) at Cooran Station, the southern terminus of the 5th section of the line, which has been open for traffic from Gympie for some months past.

"This line, when constructed, will form the connecting link of the North Coast line from Brisbane to Gympie, and will give through traffic to Maryborough, Bundsberg, and Teningering.

"The line traverses very difficult country, including the crossing of the well-known Blackall Range, the ascent of which from the southern side will involve gradients more or less steep for a continuous distance of 3 miles. The route, however, is very good considering the engineering difficulties met with, the total length of the survey being only about 2½ miles in excess of the exact distance in a straight line."

As the report has been circulated amongst hon. members, I do not think it necessary to read the whole of it. The questions submitted to the select committee were, first, the question of the policy, and, secondly, the probable cost of the section.

I think the question of policy has been affirmed in this House, over and over again, in connection with the different sections that have been brought forward for approval, so that I deem it unnecessary to reopen that question now. With regard to the cost, the estimate is £153,402, or at the rate of £7,651 per mile, exclusive of land and rolling-stock. The Commissioners expressed the opinion that the completion of this section, which will admit of through traffic to the Gympie, Maryborough, Wide Bay, Bundaberg, and Burnett districts, will be an important addition to the railway system of the colony, and that there will be a considerable traffic on the line. The resumptions are small, considering the length of the section. The land required to be resumed is 466 acres 2 roods 27 perches, and, with the exception of 153 acres 1 rood 5 perches, it is all Crown land. The Commissioners point out that for the completion of the line an additional sum of £127,792 will be necessary, in addition to the sum already provided. Without saying anything further, I think I may content myself by simply moving that the report be now adopted.

The HON. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think it may go without saying that this motion will practically pass as a formal one. I remember when the Minister of Justice was speaking on what he termed the last railway proposal he would deal with last session, he intimated that it would be the last railway he would propose under the existing system, and a number of hon. members were curious to know what was to be the different system. We were looking for something worthy of the expression the hon. gentleman then used, but there is no difference of system at all. The Railway Commissioners are in the position of being able and willing to give evidence, from their point of view, as to the desirability of constructing any proposed railway, and also as to the cost thereof. It appears to me, however, that it is quite unnecessary that the time of a select committee should be taken up over this little section of the North Coast Railway, and I do not think the country, or either House of Parliament, expected the Railway Commissioners to give evidence at all on this section. The policy of the line from Brisbane to Gympie was settled years ago, and the cost was reported upon by the Chief Engineer, and it seems a farce that we should go through this formula of referring the question of the policy and the cost of every little section to a select committee, when the policy of the whole line has been emphatically adopted by the country. Of course I heartily support the motion, and I sincerely trust that the Government, in calling for tenders, will take such steps as will enable the section to be opened at the earliest possible date, because I believe it will be productive of a great increase in the revenue from the North Coast Railway.

The HON. W. PETTIGREW said: Hon. gentlemen,—I may say that I am interested in this line, and also in the timber traffic which it is expected to develop. It states in the Commissioners' report, that arrangements have been made for a station at 76-miles, where provision will be made for timber traffic and agricultural produce. I do not think that 76-miles is the proper place—but, in my opinion, 36 chains further on would be much better. I mention that because, if the station is fixed at 76-miles, it needlessly lengthens the distance people will have to travel by 30 chains. I hope the line will be carried out as soon as possible, because I believe it will be one of the best paying lines in the country.

Question put and passed.
1889—s

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE, in moving—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed extension of the North Coast Railway (section No. 4 from 70 miles 25 chains at Yandina to 90 miles 29 chains at Cooran, in length 20 miles 4 chains, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 11th September.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form—

said: Hon. gentlemen,—In moving this motion I will take the opportunity of referring to a few remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Macdonald-Paterson on the last motion. The purport of his remarks would lead one to the conclusion that he is of opinion that our Standing Order which requires that every railway proposal should be referred to a select committee, ought to be rescinded. In this instance the proposal was referred to a select committee, but as the matter was one on which the committee were quite aware no question would be raised, they contented themselves with the formal execution of the duty required under the Standing Order. They asked Mr. Mathieson two or three questions, and brought up their report. I can understand, however, that it is judicious to retain for some reasons, the system of examining into these questions of railways in the future. Doubts may arise as to the facts upon which a railway proposal is based, and the best way to get at the actual facts is to have the line referred to a select committee. Therefore it is desirable to observe the practice, though, in many cases, the execution of the Standing Order will be rather a formal proceeding.

The HON. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I do not wish anyone to run away with the idea that what I said has been correctly interpreted by the Minister of Justice. Nothing was further from my thoughts than to diminish the authority contained in the Standing Order, which regulates the consideration of railway proposals made to this House. What I endeavoured to point out was this—and the hon. gentleman must have found it out by this time—that it is a very great tax on the time of hon. members to sit on select committees, even though the work may be comparatively formal. I have always held the view that the correct reading of the Standing Order is that the select committee should examine into "the policy and probable cost of each separate line of railway" (*vide* Standing Order No. 111)—not each separate section. The Government of the day having decided that it is good policy to construct the railway from Brisbane to Gympie, and the select committee having taken evidence on that question, and their report to this Council having been adopted, there should be no select committee appointed to consider every ten, fifteen, or twenty-mile section. I think the Minister here could give such information as hon. members might desire in connection with the stations, or the cost of each section, or whether any section takes one particular side of a range rather than the other side. No one will say that the railway from Brisbane to Gympie is other than one line, and it was undoubtedly the intention of the framers of the Standing Order that the select committee should inquire into the whole line, and not into each separate section. These observations are not made with the intention of taking up the time of the House, but to give hon. members an opportunity of considering whether some such mode as I have suggested should be adopted with regard to railway proposals brought before this House. The policy of a line having been adopted, and the approximate cost having been reported upon, there should not be, for example, ten select committees to deal with ten different sections, after that line has been adopted as the policy of the country.

The PRESIDENT: The 111th Standing Order is quite clear upon the point. All plans, sections, and books of reference must be referred to a select committee; and the Standing Order will have to be altered before any alteration can be made in the practice.

Question put and passed.

RAILWAY FROM DALBY TOWARDS BUNYA MOUNTAINS.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE, in moving—

That the report of the select committee on the proposed branch railway from Dalby towards Bunya Mountains (section No. 1) be now adopted—

said: Hon. gentlemen,—In moving this motion I will first read the report of the select committee. They report—

"I. That the committee have considered the question of the policy and probable cost of the proposed railway. They are of opinion that the construction of the proposed line will tend to open up a valuable source of coal supply, which is likely to prove highly advantageous to the Railway Department; and that it will also assist in securing a considerable agricultural and timber traffic.

"II. They recommend that the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed railway be approved."

I will now refer to the report of the Railway Commissioners, and will enter more fully into this proposal, inasmuch as it was intimated at an earlier stage that there are some hon. members who are opposed to the construction of the line.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON: No; I said "prejudiced."

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE: I accept the hon. gentleman's correction. The report of the Commissioners is as follows:—

"This section leaves the main line from Dalby to Roma, at a point a quarter of a mile beyond the western end of the Dalby Railway Station, and runs in a northerly direction (partly along a closed road) for nearly nine miles; it then proceeds north-easterly alongside a road to a site close to the Rocky Point Dam, where the section terminates, fourteen and three-quarter miles out from Dalby.

"The course of the line is mainly straight with easy curves; there are, however, two curves twelve and ten chains radius respectively. The gradients throughout are all very easy, the steepest being 1 in 55, and this only occurs in two places, the longer of which is about twenty-one chains.

"The plans will show that a large portion of the line is surface work, but there are several flats (wide shallow watercourses, draining large areas of level country, where a depth of 2 or 3 feet of embankment is required. The total quantity of earthwork is, however, inconsiderable. About eighty-two 20 feet openings must be provided for, but they are very low, and the other waterways are unimportant.

"Provision has been made for a station at the railway reserves, about eight miles out, for another at eleven and a-half miles to accommodate the traffic from the adjacent Jimbour cultivated areas, and for a temporary station at the end of the section. The gradients generally are such that additional stations can be made at several points along the line if required in the future.

"The area of land required to be resumed for the construction of the line is 133 acres and 11 perches, classed as follows:—

CROWN LANDS—		A.	R.	P.
Streets or roads ... ..	...	5	0	6
Town ... ..	...	0	0	36
Country ... ..	...	30	1	25
ALIENATED LAND—				
Town ... ..	...	0	2	20
Country ... ..	...	96	2	34
Total ... ..	...	133	0	11

"The value of this land has been estimated at £1,100, but it is possible that this will be found to be in excess of the amount required.

"The country through which this line passes has hitherto been used solely for grazing purposes, and although the soil is of excellent quality it is doubtful whether the land immediately along the first seven or eight miles of the line will ever be thickly settled, owing to the uncertain rainfall along this belt of country. Between Rocky Point and the Bunya Mountains, where it is understood the line is intended to be projected, the traffic is likely to be an increasing one, as the reports furnished to the department indicate that the land in the vicinity of the Bunya Mountains is well adapted for close agricultural settlement, while the mountain scrubs contain an unlimited supply of excellent timber for building purposes.

"In the neighbourhood of the railway reserves, about seven miles out, extensive coal deposits are known to exist, and as it has been ascertained that excellent coal has been obtained there in large quantities the Commissioners are of opinion that the value of this discovery in so favoured a locality for railway purposes cannot be over-estimated.

"From a return laid before Parliament during the present session it will be observed that during the year 1888, 13,504 tons of coal were consumed by the railway department at Toowoomba, and at stations west and south of it. Had this coal been supplied from Dalby the haulage over the steep gradients which are met with on the Little Liverpool and Main Ranges, over which only half train loads can be conveyed, would have been avoided, and would have resulted in a considerable saving of time, labour, and steam power to the railway department. If the quality of this coal can be maintained, and there is no reason to doubt that it will be, the Commissioners are of opinion that there will be an increasing demand for it, not only for railway consumption, but for gas and other purposes, in districts west of the Main Range.

"On the 22nd instant the Commissioners, accompanied by the Chief Engineer Southern and Central Division, traversed the whole length of the line, and were much surprised to find such an extent of really good country as they met with so sparsely settled. There can be little doubt that with fairly good seasons the greater portion of the area between the reserves and Rocky Point can be profitably worked for agricultural purposes, as the appearance of the country fully bears out the report furnished by Mr. A. C. Gregory, late Surveyor-General, that 'the land is of an extremely fertile character, and contains all the mineral constituents necessary to support vegetation as well as a large proportion of organic matter, forming a soil which is well adapted to the growth of cereals, such as wheat, maize, sorghum, etc., and leguminous plants, etc., of which in favourable seasons heavy crops have been successfully raised for many years.'

"It is to be regretted that it should have been found necessary to terminate the first section of the proposed line at Rocky Point, as the Commissioners are informed that by an extension to Maida Hill, about three miles further on, the line would have reached a rising agricultural centre; whereas the proposed terminus has been placed at the edge of the district where the small selections commence; this, however, cannot be remedied until a further extension is determined upon.

"The Engineer for the Southern and Central Division estimates the cost of the section at £46,690, or at the rate of £3,096 per mile, exclusive of land and rolling-stock, and as the amount appearing on the Loan Estimate of last session is only £14,000 (for six miles), a further sum of £32,690 will have to be provided to meet the cost of this section."

The select committee having this report were not quite contented with the formal discharge of their functions, by sitting and making a report in the usual manner. Mr. Mathieson, the Chief Commissioner, was examined pretty fully upon that occasion, and the opportunity was offered to hon. gentlemen to express their feelings and prejudices against the construction of the line. But the only evidence that was taken was that of Mr. Mathieson, and that of Mr. Carmody, a resident of Dalby. Mr. Mathieson in his evidence said—

"Do you recommend the construction of this line as one that is likely to be of advantage to the country? Yes; we do. In the first place, there is said to be, and no doubt it has been proved, a large field of coal that

will be served by this line; and the importance to the Railway Department of securing such a source of revenue in the district can hardly be over-estimated. In the second place, there is no doubt the railway will serve the agricultural district, and it will also induce settlement, I believe. And there are very large quantities of timber there that could be got easily into the market if there were this means of transport."

Then inquiry was made as to the extent to which this coal mine had been tested, and hon. gentlemen can judge for themselves as to the information given by Mr. Mathieson, who said—

"Are the tests that have been made of the coal from this coalfield in your opinion satisfactory? They are not altogether what one would desire to see. There appears to be a considerable amount of clay, or some other sort of refuse, mixed with the coal, which does not suit so well for locomotive purposes. But altogether apart from that, the coal is a good steaming coal and a hard coal; something like what we call in the old country, 'split' coal, developing a good deal of gas; more of a canal than an anthracite coal. But we believe it will be very suitable for railway requirements."

Then he went on to say that he thought the construction of the line would make a saving of fully £3,000 a year in regard to the carriage of coal, an amount which of itself would be a very great inducement to the construction of so short a line. It appears that trial shafts have been put down on the coal reserves, and considerable quantities of coal—not merely a few specimens, but several hundreds of tons—have been tested in various ways. Mr. Mathieson says, perhaps the tests were not quite up to the mark; but still they were quite sufficient to induce him to recommend the construction of the line. It appears, from reports in the possession of the Railway Department, that there is a considerable area of coal in the district, irrespective of that which has been worked. Mr. Carmody gave evidence to show that, in his opinion, there were something over 400 homesteads in the district, which is well known as a good farming locality; but which is devoted to grazing purposes, and such small quantities of agriculture as are necessary for supplying local wants only. From the want of means of conveying agricultural produce to market, the people have not been tempted to go into a larger area of cultivation. I think, upon the whole, it will be seen that the small amount asked for the construction of the line and the prospect of its paying have justified the Commissioners in making the recommendations they have. I move that the report be adopted.

The Hon. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I approach this matter from a purely commercial point of view more than any other. I have no sentiment whatever about the development of timber country, or the prospect of enlarging the farming operations or closer settlement in the vicinity of the territory which this line will traverse. I take up very much the same stand as the Commissioners have done in the matter. Taking the matter from that point of view, I may say that in calling at the proper office to obtain what information I could, external to what is presented to the House, I found that there was some very valuable evidence, that I think it is my duty to refer to. There is a report from Mr. Fryar on the subject of the existence of coal in the locality, and that report, to my mind, is an extremely satisfactory one. Mr. Fryar is, of course, responsible for the information contained therein. It is not with the Parliamentary papers, although I thought in the usual course of affairs it would have been brought forward by the Hon. Minister of Justice in support of the motion. The date of the report is February 8, 1889, and it shows that the evidence furnished by the Commissioners

was furnished upon reasonable grounds. Now, the next point I would like to call attention to is the return of coal delivered at the railway stations at Toowoomba, Dalby, Roma, and Charleville. That statement shows that the total carriage of coal to Toowoomba and westward, at 1d. per ton per mile, came to £11,400 in round numbers. The distance from Ipswich to Toowoomba is 67 miles, and from Dalby to Toowoomba 52 miles, so that it would be 119 miles from Ipswich to Dalby, and the new coalfields would be 15 miles further. Hon. gentlemen will observe that this return gives the gross earnings in respect to all coal delivered between Ipswich and Toowoomba, and the stations westward from Toowoomba, and what I wish to draw attention to is this: That I cannot see where the saving of £3,000 will come in. The first cost of the railway is set down by the Commissioners at £46,000, exclusive of land, which will cost some £1,100 or £1,200. That is the value set upon it; so that, for the purpose of discussion, we may take the cost of the line at £50,000, which will be allowing a few hundreds of pounds for contingencies. Now, £50,000 at 4 per cent. will be £2,000 a year. Next, there is the item of maintenance, one which very often escapes the attention of members of the legislature, as well as the public when waiting upon the Commissioners to seek for a reduction of freight, or other favours. Now, the last annual report, that for the year 1888, shows that on the Southern and Western system our railways cost an average expenditure per mile, for maintenance last year, of £134 4s. That was the cost per annum per mile for maintenance of the Southern and Western system of railways, and I think we may take this line at an average of £150 per annum for the next two years. Fifteen miles at that rate will make a debit of £2,250. Then there is another item which has been omitted from consideration, and that is the cost of transit from the proposed new mine to Toowoomba of all the coal that is consumed there in connection with the traffic to Warwick, Killarney, and Wallangarra; nor has consideration been given to the cost of hauling the coal from the mine to Dalby, over that short distance of fifteen miles. We will put that out of consideration for the present, and deal with the coal that must go to Toowoomba from the new field. We will take it at one-half the present cost of transit from Ipswich, or in round numbers £5,700, although that is rather below what the actual haulage will be. Therefore we will have: interest upon the cost of construction £2,000, maintenance £2,250, transit of coal to Toowoomba, a moiety of what it at present costs from Ipswich to Toowoomba, £5,700—total, £9,950. The Minister of Justice shakes his head; but I should be extremely glad to hear him explain that away.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE: There is a mistake in the calculation.

The Hon. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON: Then the report is wrong. I have understated the amount because, as a matter of fact, the carriage of the coal consumed at Toowoomba and westward is £6,500.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE: Haulage from Ipswich to Toowoomba is always double—you can only take half loads—and therefore the haulage is really equal to twice the distance.

The Hon. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON: Against that there is the few hundreds of pounds I have not taken into consideration at all. The total carriage of coal from Ipswich to all portions of the Southern and Western system is put down at, say, £11,400, and Toowoomba alone gets

credit for £6,500 of that. I have not made up a scientifically exact statement; my figures are only in the rough; but the concrete idea is to be found in what I am saying, so that paring off these odd hundreds of pounds, and omitting from calculation the fifteen miles of haulage from the coalfield into Dalby, I say that the Government are proposing a work that will diminish the output of coal at Ipswich, and the only advantage of which will be that it will effect a saving of time. Work it out as you may, the advantage of a double quantity of coal being hauled by the same power from the new field to Toowoomba is more than counterbalanced, at least in round figures, by the extra cost per annum, in the aggregate, of interest charges, maintenance charges, and the credit of the same haulage rate to the new line, as is charged now. We come to the same figures; if anything, they are adverse to the new line; but that is about the position. It is just as well that hon. gentlemen should understand that we are about to construct a work from which we will not receive £1 of profit upon the present method of carrying coal from Ipswich. The question of saving time may be an advantage, but I do not think that will justify the building of this line precipitately.

The HON. W. FORREST said: Hon. gentlemen,—The Hon. Mr. Macdonald-Paterson has referred to certain of the disadvantages of this line, and also to some advantages. I am not prepared to criticise his figures, but there is one matter that he has not taken into consideration, and that is that the line will open up a rich agricultural country. The indirect advantages of the line may do more good than the direct advantages enumerated by the Commissioners. I have seen a similar district in another colony, which within three years after it obtained railway communication, had become one of the greatest agricultural districts in the Australian colonies. I hope, if this railway is made—and I trust it will be—that the same thing will occur here.

The HON. A. C. GREGORY said: Hon. gentlemen,—I have had some personal experience of this part of the colony, and also with the coal there. Some few years ago I went and examined the coal mines with the Inspector of Mines, Mr. Fryer, and we found they were really first-class mines. Then as regards the character of the coal itself: So that there would be no picking and choosing, I took a fair average sample, and brought it down to Brisbane, and I tested it practically in a steam engine, and found that its value was within 4 or 5 per cent. of the best class of Ipswich coal, or such coal as is imported from Newcastle for making steam—although it was greatly inferior for some purposes, such as smiths' coal. I found that I got more work out of the engine with that coal than with any other coal in Queensland; but at the same time rather more was burned, so that we can place it, as nearly as possible, upon a par with the Ipswich coal. Then as regards the question of distance from Dalby. The coalfields are not fifteen miles away, they are only about seven miles away, and I believe they will be worked nearer to Dalby than that, and under those conditions we certainly ought not to charge the whole of the maintenance of the line to the haulage of coal. Then I come to the question of how much is to be saved by using this coal upon the Downs. If I sat down to it, I could draw up a nice sheet of figures by which I could show anything you like. I could show that our rail ways pay interest and are a wonderful investment for capital, and I could also show that it would be better to pull the lines up and throw them into the sea. The figures in neither case would show the truth. The true results are simply these, that we have to haul the coal to

the Western lines over the Main Range, a distance of about sixty-five miles from Ipswich to Toowoomba, which haulage is equal to about 130 miles as regards the cost, because we can only take half loads. Toowoomba would practically be only half the distance from the Dalby mines, so that really with the same amount of haulage we could send coals from Dalby to Warwick at the same cost that it takes to convey them from Ipswich to Toowoomba. When we go westward towards Charleville we find a line which is being rapidly extended, and which uses more coal through the increasing traffic, and instead of conveying the coal from Ipswich, which is 130 or 140 miles from Dalby, we will have the coal within seven miles of Dalby, and there will be little or no expense in getting the coal on to the line. The cost of haulage is a great deal less upon the Western lines where the gradients are very gentle, and there can be no two opinions, if we take a practical view of the subject, as to the advisability of constructing the line so far as the coal is concerned. As regards the other benefits to be derived from the construction of the line, it must be remembered that the country for the first ten or twelve miles out of Dalby is not particularly good, but it improves greatly until you get into a district which has a better climate than there is in any part of the plain near Dalby. The truth is that the Bunya Mountains are a range of hills which intercept the rain to a great extent, and cause a very dry district to the westward, near Dalby. The Bunya Mountain district has a greater amount of rainfall than any other district in that part of Queensland. There is a good deal of bad land in the district; but on the other hand there is a great deal of good land that would be available for small settlers, because it consists of rich valleys amongst ranges on which the soil is not so good; and that is the class of country upon which small settlers have always succeeded best. A small farmer cannot live entirely on his cultivation; he must have a certain amount of stock, and for that stock he must have grazing land. The Bunya Mountains district is very well adapted for that kind of settlement; it is a valuable timber district, and it is the most westerly point from which any large supply of sawn timber can be obtained for the western interior, where there is a total absence of pine and very little good hardwood. Under these circumstances I think we may fairly conclude that the proposed line will pay as well if not better than the average of the branch lines constructed in this colony.

The HON. F. T. BRENTNALL said: Hon. gentlemen,—I think it is due to the House that I should say a word or two with regard to my objection to give evidence before the select committee, as well as my objection to taking a seat on that committee. My name was proposed for that committee without my consent or knowledge, and after the notice of motion was given I spoke to the Minister of Justice on the subject, and told him that I was prejudiced against the line, but that if it was his wish I was prepared to go and hear the evidence, and give my vote as a member of the select committee according to my judgment. Subsequently the Hon. Mr. Moreton said he thought it would be inadvisable to sit on a committee to deliberate on a proposal against which both of us had some prejudice. We were subsequently asked if we would attend that committee, or suggest witnesses who might give evidence in support of the views which we took on the subject. My views were not sufficiently definite for me to go and give evidence before the committee; if they had been, I would still have been unprepared to go and express to the committee the views I might feel it my duty to express before this House. I simply look at the question

on broad and general grounds, as to the policy of the railway. There has been some evidence brought forward as to the probable receipts from one particular class of freight. I think the argument of the Hon. Mr. Macdonald-Paterson was a little more elaborate than it need have been—something like the argument of the Hon. Mr. Gregory, whose argument covered a great deal of ground. The Hon. Mr. Gregory took us to Toowoomba, to Warwick, and beyond, and along the Western line as far as this coal will have to be carried, to show what may be saved in haulage. But the Chief Commissioner of Railways makes the simple statement that £3,000 annually may be saved to the department on the cost of coal for the Western railways. That is putting the whole argument about coal into a nutshell. That is his estimate of the maximum saving per annum, supposing this coalfield is opened up and the railways are supplied with coal therefrom. In order to save £3,000 per annum it is now proposed to build a line of railway at a cost of £46,690, besides the additional expense of rolling-stock, to say nothing of the annual cost of maintenance—which I make to be £2,385 at the maximum rate of maintenance for last year—and to say nothing of the cost of the land in addition. Taking 5 per cent. interest—which, though higher than the rate now paid on public loans, may be taken as a fair rate, and easy of calculation—taking 5 per cent. interest on the cost of construction, purchase of land, cost of rolling-stock, and annual maintenance, we shall have, in round numbers, an expenditure of something like £5,000 a year in order to save £3,000 a year to the railway department on the cost of coal. When this line was proposed in the Legislative Assembly in the year 1882 by Mr. Jessop, he moved for a sum of money to be placed on the Estimates for a survey to be made of this line. He then advanced two reasons why this line should be constructed. Those reasons were the resources of the Bunya Mountain district in stone and timber. We hear nothing whatever now about the valuable stone in the district. Somehow it has disappeared, yet we have heard nothing of an earthquake in the district; but, by some oversight, this stone seems to have disappeared, and the agricultural resources of the district have been brought to view in its place. It is confidently predicted that this line will pay. How many branch railways have been constructed which are not paying and are not likely to pay for many a year to come? Yet when the plans, sections, and books of reference of those branches were before Parliament, much the same arguments were used—arguments quite as forcible—as have been used on behalf of this proposed branch line. Were we not told that there was not the shadow of a doubt that the Crow's Nest line would pay? Were we not told that the Highfields branch would open up a magnificent agricultural and timber district, and that there was no doubt about that line paying? Were we not told that the South Coast Railway would lead to the development of one of the best agricultural districts in the colony, where agriculture, including the growing of sugar, was already so productive that the line would pay from the very start? And what is the inference to be drawn from the fact that these lines do not pay as was predicted? The inference is that if you have no more to depend on than the agricultural resources of a district, you will not have a paying line of railway. Does the line from Ipswich to Fassifern pay? Where is the line that pays simply by the carriage of agricultural produce? There are very few branch railways that pay working expenses and interest on the cost of construction. The Sandgate branch pays, not because it goes to an agri-

cultural district, but because of the large passenger traffic. If it could be shown that this proposed line would command a large passenger traffic, as well as a traffic in coal and timber, then I might see my way clear to vote for it. I have seen it stated that there are 300 settlers in the district; but Mr. Carmody goes a little higher; he thinks there may probably be 400 families. If we take the average number of persons to a family at five, there will be something like 2,000 people in the whole district. What possible chance of a paying traffic will there be in a district like that? Suppose one-tenth of those people travel by rail once a month, you will have, say, eight persons travelling along the line during each day, Sundays excepted. Will a passenger traffic like that pay for grease for the wheels of the rolling-stock, let alone the interest on the cost of construction and the cost of maintenance? And what is going to be done with all this timber that we hear about? Some, I believe, has been brought to the metropolitan market; but those who are acquainted with the condition of the metropolitan timber market would conclude that it would be a poor and unprofitable business to bring timber from the Bunya Mountains at the present time. Competition in the trade is so keen here, that I for one should not care to be a shareholder in a business of that kind, where the timber had to be brought all the way from the Bunya Mountains. What demand can there be for timber from the Bunya Mountains in the Southern and Western districts, to justify the construction of a line for the purpose of carrying that timber to consumers? As for the coal, it is admitted that it is not of the highest class. It is a fair average quality of coal, such as is being already obtained in other parts of the colony and used on our railways. Something was said elsewhere about the unjustifiableness of contending that enterprise in some new locality is to be fettered out of consideration for enterprise in a locality where the same class of work has already been developed. To put it in plain words, Ipswich is our coal district. A large amount of money has been spent by private individuals not only in driving into the hillsides, but in sinking shafts, erecting machinery, and in constructing branch railways in order to bring the product to the main line of railway; and it is now deliberately proposed by the Government to make another line in another district, which will save £3,000 a year on coal at a cost of £5,000 a year to the taxpayers, and do incalculable injury to another district in which a large amount of private capital is already invested in coal mines. I put that out without laying undue stress on the argument. But I lay considerable stress on this argument—that the gentlemen who want to open up those coal mines in the vicinity of Dalby, Jimbour, and the Bunya Mountains should do so in the same way as the coal proprietors in the Ipswich district have done. They should spend their own money on the enterprise and make their own branch lines. There was a splendid example set them the other day in another branch of the legislature, when it was proposed that a branch line should be made to Mount Morgan at the expense of the country. After the subject had been thrashed out to a considerable extent, one of the proprietors got up in a magnanimous way and stated with a kind of pride that the company owning that valuable property would not trouble the country to build that bit of a railway, that they were competent to build it for themselves, and that they would build it themselves. If there be a valuable coalfield of such potent promise in this district why should Parliament be called upon to vote money for the opening up of that coalfield, unless it can be shown that the

taxpayers of the colony are going to get some benefit from the construction of the line? My contention is that the taxpayers will be losers, that we shall be making the railway to benefit private owners, and that out of the consolidated revenue there will have to come year after year a considerable amount to pay the deficiency on the working of this branch line. Let the gentlemen interested come forward, as the gentlemen interested in the Mount Morgan line have come forward, and say that they scorn to ask the country for the money—or at any rate that they scorn to press the request on the country—to build for them this little branch railway. This coal is probably as hypothetical as the stone which was spoken of by Mr. Jessop when he proposed that money should be put on the Estimates for a survey in 1882. One of the principal arguments I propose to leave for the consideration of the House is this: I do not think that there is a single branch line to an agricultural district that is paying interest on the cost of construction, the cost of its maintenance, and its working expenses. If we have one I should like to know where it is. I think we have gone quite far enough in spending public money upon these unprofitable railways, especially when public money is becoming scarce and hard to get. The argument goes for nothing, in the face of past experience, that a line going to such a district must necessarily pay from the start. Some of us are becoming incredulous about such predictions being fulfilled. I am incredulous in the present instance, and if the matter comes to a division I shall vote against the motion, because I am strongly convinced that if the line is made it will be made more for private benefit than for the public benefit, and that in any case it will not pay. A strong consideration with me is that those who want to get a particular benefit in this direction should do the same as other proprietors of both coal mines and gold mines have done—they should show their faith in the coal resources on their own property by building a railway for the development of those resources without troubling the public treasury.

The HON. B. B. MORETON said: Hon. gentlemen,—I may say that the remarks made by the Hon. Mr. Brentnall about being prejudiced against the line apply to me also, and that was the reason why I declined to sit on the select committee. The Treasury Bills Act passed last session included an item of £15,000 for the first section of a railway from Dalby towards the Bunya Mountains, and I understood from reading the debates in another place, that the line was only going to the coalfields in that district. I therefore asked whether it was proposed to extend the line beyond those coalfields. In reply to my question the Minister of Justice said:—

“The intention at present was to construct the line to connect the coalfields spoken of with Dalby. Any further extension would be a matter for the subsequent consideration of Parliament.”

It is evident that there was nothing more at that time in the mind of the hon. gentleman but a line from Dalby to the coalfields, and that the stone, timber, and agricultural resources of the district had nothing to do with the question at that time. It was then presumed that nearly all this coal was on private land. It appears now, however, that there is some on a reserve; but I find that this reserve is farther away than where the coal has been tested. The coal that has been tested was found on lands belonging to two or three gentlemen—in one case to a company, and in the other to a Mr. Simpson. I agree with the remarks that have fallen from the Hon. Mr. Brentnall, that the line ought to be made by those who own the coal, seeing that only seven and a-half miles of railway would

have to be constructed by them. As to the line opening up Government land, I do not suppose the Government would lease those reserves at the present time under the Mineral Lands Act, because there would be an outcry on the part of the private owners of coal lands in the neighbourhood that the Government were interfering with the industries of the people of the district. In view of what the Minister of Justice said last year, and believing that the line, if constructed at all, ought to be made by the persons interested, I shall vote against the motion.

Question put, and the House divided:—

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The HONS. A. J. THYNNE, T. L. MURRAY-PRIOR, J. SCOTT, J. C. HEUSSLER, W. G. POWER, W. D. BOX, A. C. GREGORY, J. C. FOOTE, C. F. MARKS, J. C. SMYTHE, P. MACPHERSON, W. GRAHAM, and W. FORREST.

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The HONS. T. MACDONALD-PATERSON, B. B. MORETON, W. F. TAYLOR, J. S. TURNER, F. T. BRENTNALL, and J. SWAN.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE said: Hon. gentlemen,—I beg to move—

1. That this House approves of the plan, section, and book of reference of the proposed branch railway from Dalby towards Bunya Mountains (section No. 1), from Dalby to Rocky Point Dam, length 14 miles 58 chains, as received by message from the Legislative Assembly on the 11th September.

2. That such approval be notified to the Legislative Assembly by message in the usual form.

Question put and passed.

SUPREME COURT BILL.

COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE said: Hon. gentlemen,—I beg to move that this Order of the Day be postponed until after the consideration of Order of the Day No. 5. It is rather a late hour in the evening to enter upon the discussion of this measure.

The HON. W. F. TAYLOR said: Hon. gentlemen,—I see no reason why this Order of the Day should be postponed. I have been sitting here for the last hour and a-half, waiting to have this measure considered. It was discussed very fully last evening, and I think hon. members have made up their minds how they are going to vote. Therefore, I see no reason for postponing it further.

Question put and passed.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (DIOCESE OF BRISBANE) PROPERTY BILL.

SECOND READING.

The HON. B. B. MORETON said: Hon. gentlemen,—As I moved the adjournment of the debate on the last occasion this was before the House, it falls upon me now, I suppose, to say what I have to say on the matter. At the time, I had not looked very carefully into the Bill; but from what I have seen in the schedule to the report, I thought it advisable to look further into it, and in going through the Bill I found in clause 6 some points that I objected to. It does seem strange to me that while we are going in for decentralisation in everything else, the religious bodies of the colony are trying to centralise everything they possibly can in the hands of one man; I say one man because that one man is the head of the Synod. The 6th clause says that if by reason of death, absence from the colony, or other disability, the execution or consent of any trustee to the transfer of property by this Act cannot be obtained within

three months after the passing of the Act the Bishop may, by writing under his own hand, consent to such transfer, in place of any such trustee. According to this clause, in a case where a trustee cannot be obtained, the Bishop, after his consent has been published in the *Government Gazette*, may order the transfer of such property to the Synod. In looking at the schedule I find a case which would come under this clause. It is a case with which my name is connected. The property consists of 83 acres, which used at one time to be the residence of Sir Maurice O'Connell when he was land commissioner in the Gayndah district. It was afterwards bought by the inhabitants of that district for the purpose of erecting a church, and building a residence for the clergyman. The deed was made out in the names of Thos. Jones, Clement F. Lawless, and H. Herbert. Before Mr. Lawless died he gave myself and Mr. J. O'C. Bligh a power of attorney to receive the rents and look after the property, and that property, which was bought by the inhabitants of that district, can, under this clause, be swept into the coffers, if I may say so, of the Synod, against the wishes, or without the consent of those to whom it really belongs—namely, the inhabitants of Gayndah and the neighbourhood who are members of the Church of England. I know that, so far as the country is concerned, there is a very strong feeling against country property of that description going into the hands of the Synod, and although it is said that this Bill was passed through the Synod without any objection whatever, still I have it from some of those who were present that the laity held their tongues, because there was not the slightest chance of their being able to carry any amendment, if they wished to do so, on account of the clergy being so powerful. Therefore I would point out that clause 6 is not one that is likely to increase the interest that such localities take in their religious affairs. I know, in this case, everything has been done by the inhabitants of the Gayndah district, without going to the Synod. They did apply to the Synod to see if they could get some assistance, but they were told nothing could be done, and unless they paid a certain sum of money they could not send a synodsmen down. For many years they did not care whether they sent a synodsmen down or not, and they were perfectly independent of the Synod. I feel certain that those people do not wish to see their property pass into the hands of the Synod against their will, but by this clause the Bishop has only to have a notice published in the *Government Gazette*, and he can, by writing, under his own hand, consent to such a transfer at once, as there is not a single trustee in this colony to prevent it. I look upon this Bill with a great deal of suspicion. I know that it may be and has been said by some, that it is far better to have a central body to work church affairs; but I myself am not disposed to think that it is necessary for our religion to have a central body. I think we can go to the happy place without even the Bishop or the Synod. Although I shall not vote against the second reading of the Bill, I should like to see some alterations made in the 6th clause, to prevent the hardship which I have pointed out.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE said: Hon. gentlemen,—I am not going to follow my hon. friend in discussing the question of the necessity for these institutions, which are, no doubt, very important and very necessary in British communities; but I think I am right in saying it seems to me that the Hon. Mr. Moreton has, to some extent, exaggerated the effect that some of these clauses may have with regard to different trusts. The 6th clause does not apply at all,

unless a trustee is absent from the colony, or dead, and then, surely, there ought to be some person, or persons, or some corporation, or recognised authority, who could consent, or act on behalf of people who might not be get-at-able. This clause 6 is a mere adjunct to clause 5, which provides—

“When any persons hold any trust property for or on the behalf of the Church or of any person holding office therein, they or a majority of them may, if they think fit, transfer or consent to the transfer of the trust property to the corporation upon the trusts to which the same is subject, and such transfer when duly registered shall from and after its date operate as a discharge to the transferring or consenting trustees from the duties of the trust.”

It seems to me that this transfer to the Synod does not do more than enable the trustees to appoint the corporation of the Synod to be the trustees of the property, upon the trusts under which it is held. Under our Real Property Act it has become a matter of almost daily occurrence for trustees, by the simple nomination of other trustees, to transfer trust properties to their successors, and it is merely giving the power to the present trustees to transfer it to the corporation, which, I take it, is a recognised body and which will carry out the trusts of the Church of England property throughout the colony. I can sympathise very much with the members of the Church of England who framed this Bill, because I can quite imagine that it would be a very difficult thing for those who are charged with the conduct of Church matters in the colony to keep a proper record of the different properties throughout the colony. I do not know whether this 6th clause will have any effect at all, except in the case of absence from the colony, or disability of trustees. Trustees, as a rule, are in this position, that when one of their body dies the property devolves entirely upon the surviving trustees, and all that is necessary is to produce a certificate of death, property certified, and the name is taken off the title deed. This clause will apply to very few cases indeed. So far as I have been able to study the Bill, there is a desire through it to preserve the trusts under which properties are held. In the schedule of trusts given in the report there are some nine or ten cases where properties are held in the names of gentlemen without any declared trusts, but it is recognised that they are Church properties. It is as well that they should be vested in a body which must hold them as trustees for the declared purpose of being for the benefit of the church.

The Hon. B. B. MORETON: The one I am alluding to was that for the use of the Church of England inhabitants of Gayndah.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE: I do not see that that particular property is referred to in the schedule. However, it seems to me that, in this Bill, very great precautions are taken to prevent a diversion of property from the trusts under which it was originally given; and provision is made that properties which are held for Church purposes shall be put upon a proper and legitimate basis.

Question put and passed.

On the motion of the Hon. P. MACPHERSON, the consideration of the Bill in committee was made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

ADJOURNMENT.

The MINISTER OF JUSTICE said: Hon. gentlemen,—I beg to move that this House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at five minutes to 6 o'clock.