

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 15 OCTOBER 1889

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 15 October, 1889.

Question.—Diseases in Sheep Act Amendment Bill—third reading.—Supply—resumption of committee.—Messages from His Excellency the Governor—assent to Bills—Defamation Bill—Drew Pension Bill.—Supply—Loan Estimates—committee.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTION.

Mr. GLASSEY asked the Colonial Treasurer—

1. If he is aware that a person named Adolphus Dehl, an A.B. seaman, on board the barque "Elizabeth Nicholson," was left behind by that vessel on clearing from Townsville for Newcastle, on the 20th day of August last; and, although the master of the said vessel knew that Dehl was in hospital at Townsville when he left that port, he proceeded to sea without reporting the matter to the shipping authorities?

2. Is he also aware—if not, will he inquire—whether Dehl was not left on his return from hospital in a state of great destitution; in consequence of, as is alleged, his wages and clothes having been taken away in the said vessel?

3. Will he cause an inquiry to be made into the matter complained of, with a view of bringing the master of the above-mentioned vessel, if found to be at fault, to justice, and to afford some relief to Dehl in his extremity?

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. W. Pattison) said: Mr. Speaker,—I have no knowledge of the subject to which the hon. member has referred, but I will cause inquiries to be made into the matter, and I hope to-morrow to be able to give him more definite information.

DISEASES IN SHEEP ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

SUPPLY.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said: Mr. Speaker,—Before moving that you leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply, I propose, in accordance with the usual custom, to offer a few remarks in reference to the Loan Account. I need not trespass on the time of the House at any great length, as hon. members will deal with the items in committee. I believe I am following the usual custom in adopting the present course. Before saying a word in reference to the Loan Estimates I will call attention to the state of the loan balances as disclosed in the Financial Statement on the 30th June last. Hon. members will recollect that the unexpended amount of loan balances amounted to £4,840,952 1s. 7d. As against that there was unforeseen expenditure amounting to £16,763 9s. 2d., leaving a net balance on loan account of £4,824,188 12s. 5d. As against that we have in the various banks in the colony, and in the Queensland National Bank, London, a sum of £2,416,511 11s. 4d., thus showing that to complete the work disclosed in the loan balances we require a further sum of £2,407,677. Since the date of the Financial Statement a fresh statement has been prepared up to the 30th September. On the 30th September the loan balances stood at £4,373,600, less a small sum to be credited to the Victoria Bridge, of

£305. The cash in the banks was £1,976,090. The unsold portion of the £10,000,000 loan now stands at £709,900, and the Treasury bills not issued at £1,304,854. Hon. members will note that the amount is decreased by the sum of £60,000, the amount passed in the loan vote of last year for the Mount Morgan railway, which has since been withdrawn, and therefore, instead of the balance standing at £1,364,834, it now stands at £60,000 less. I do not know whether the same course should not have been followed with other railways in the past. For instance, the *via recta*. Although a sum of money was voted for it, I am not quite sure whether the amount so voted does not yet stand to the credit of the loan vote or not. Still I thought it better in this case, the Mount Morgan line having been completely withdrawn from consideration, that the loan vote should be decreased by that amount. In the statement of Loan Estimates also, hon. members will note the deficit on previous loans is estimated at £350,000. That has been slightly decreased, and the amount now stands at £333,248 1s. 1d. The unforeseen expenditure amounts to £49,323, or a total of £4,323,767. Hon. members will note, Mr. Speaker, that the sum at credit appears to be £1,976,090, but it must be remembered that at the end of this present year we shall have half-a-million of interest to pay in London. I think it is a little in excess of £500,000, to say nothing of the small amount due in the colony. The balance in London will almost disappear when the payments on account of interest are made, and our London account will practically be so small that it will require to be replenished very early in January. It has been said outside and mentioned to me frequently, that with such a large balance as £2,000,000 in hand why do we want to go into the market and borrow money? And it is only right that I should say a word in reference to that matter. If hon. members will look at the tables and see what the deposits in the various banks are, they will see that it is absolutely necessary that we should go into the market at a very early date. I need not say much in regard to the wisdom of pursuing such a policy of holding large sums in the banks here. If I were to give notice to the banks of the withdrawal of the fixed deposits, hon. members can imagine that that would upset the commerce of the colony to a great extent—a thing which we should avoid by all means in our power. I have my own opinion as to the wisdom of the policy of holding such large sums at fixed deposit here; but I do not think that at this stage it is necessary that I should enter into that question, except to say that I do not think it is a wise policy to have such large amounts at fixed deposit, because when the coffers of the banks are so inflated trade is disturbed to a certain extent, and is made to drift into channels which it ought not to drift into. If notice of withdrawal is given, of course the banks must put the screw on their customers, and financial disaster must arise. I had gone very fully into that matter when preparing my Financial Statement, but it was excised for good and sufficient reasons. The same opinions that I held then, however, I hold now. I think it is a mistake for the Government to have large sums of money lying in the banks, and it would be a mistake if I gave them notice of withdrawal of any large sum of money now. Therefore I say it is absolutely necessary to have money at both ends, and replenish our London account. True, we could do that by floating the balance of the last loan, amounting to £709,000, but that would be a miserable sum for a large colony like Queensland to place upon

the market, and I do not think we have ever yet floated so small a sum, but we could replenish our London account to that extent. It has been said that we might place the balances of the three last Loan Estimates, amounting to £1,304,000, on the market, and by that means raise £2,000,000, but the Government prefer not to do that. We prefer to come to Parliament with a general Loan Estimate, and ask the sanction of Parliament for a loan which will embrace the latter amount. The other one we are free to deal with at any time the Committee think fit. I scarcely think it would be a prudent course, as I have said, for a colony like Queensland to put so small an instalment of loan upon the market as £709,000. The amount we are now asking for in the Loan Estimates may be split into two or three loans without our having too much money in hand at any time, and at the same time having in hand sufficient to carry on the works of the colony and meet all requirements. So much for the state of the loan account on the 30th June and its present state. I do not know whether hon. members have studied the statement issued in the *Government Gazette* of the 5th October, which deals with that matter very fully and in a concise form. I may say that the sums I have mentioned do not cover the whole of the money we have in the banks, as hon. members will remember we have certain trust funds to include. We have in trust funds a total of £804,400, and that is in addition to the amount I have already mentioned. That appears in the returns published in the *Gazette* of the 5th October. Now, in reference to the Loan Estimates submitted to Parliament: I have said they will be more properly discussed in committee, but I think it necessary to say a word or two in reference to some of the items. I need scarcely assure the House that a great deal of thought, care, and attention has been devoted to the preparation of the Estimates now submitted, and not only to the Estimates, but to all matters relating to the finances of the colony the members of the Cabinet generally have paid particular and marked attention. It has been said that these Loan Estimates will be severely criticised. Possibly they will be, and I am quite prepared to listen to the criticisms. It would be strange if they were not severely criticised, as no Loan Estimates have been brought down in perfect shape. There was only one Loan Estimate that I remember that at all approached perfection, or was supposed to do so at the time, and that was the £10,000,000 loan. We modestly only ask for half that amount, and I will explain directly how a great deal of that is due to the £10,000,000 loan. Possibly that would lead to a great deal of debatable matter and would be better discussed in committee. In the Loan Estimates submitted to the House we ask for £250,000 extending over two years for immigration and that is £125,000 for each year. If hon. members will refer to table N of the tables presented with the Financial Statement they will see a statement of the expenditure upon immigration from 1860 to last year. Last year—1888-9—the Government spent £129,640 upon immigration, as against £179,824 spent in the previous year; showing a very substantial reduction upon the amount spent by the late Government. The Government have cut down the expenditure as far as they possibly can in connection with this vote, and have strictly confined the immigrants to agricultural labourers and domestic servants. We have positively refused to bring out any artisans, and though it is possible that some may have come to the colony under our immigration system by means of false pretences, it has been without the knowledge of the Government. The Government have endeavoured, as far as

they possibly could, to strictly enforce the instructions issued that only agricultural labourers and domestic servants should be brought out. Some people appear to think there has been an outcry in some parts of the colony against the Government importing immigrants at the rate they are doing, and of course we know that they come into competition with the labour of the colony when they arrive. In the time of drought and depression we have had in the colony, there has in some districts been a surplus of labour, and the people of those districts may in some instances have lifted their voices loudly against the continuance of immigration that would compete with them in the fields of labour. But we must look at it from a broader point of view. The drought and depression affect all classes; not only the digger, the farmer, and the agricultural labourer, but the business men of the colony generally feel the effects of the depression, and I do not think it would be right to unnecessarily stop the flow of immigration which is so necessary to our national life. We have had long debates upon that for-ever-settled question of the sugar industry, and we have proclaimed to the world that we will have no more kanakas or servile labour; and surely it is only fair that we should introduce some sort of labour that will get a chance to find employment on the sugar plantations, or on their own little plots. Whatever becomes of the sugar industry, we may take that liberal view of the question, and help those engaged in the industry by the immigrants we may import. There is, of course, no question of importing them at a rate that would tend to drop wages to the state referred to by the hon. member for Bundamba the other evening, when he told us men were employed for 12s. 6d. a week including rations. Such a state of things I never heard of until the hon. member spoke of it, and if it exists at all it must be in isolated cases; but I have grave doubts that such a state of affairs exists at all. The Government have no intention of importing unnecessary labour, and I think the substantial reduction of £50,000 on last year's Estimates upon the vote for the previous year, shows that there must have been a considerable diminution in the inflow of immigrants. Now comes this one million vote. I suppose we may consider this as the battle ground of this debate. The Minister for Railways, I think, will defend this matter. It is a matter of surprise to the Ministry, who have so fully considered this question, and tried to do all they can to restore to Parliament the control of the purse which it ought to possess, to find that the very first attempt in that direction is cavilled at. I am not at all astonished to hear the laughter of hon. members; but what has been the course in the past with regard to our railways? A number of railways have been brought forward without surveys, without plans, or without any knowledge of the country, and Parliament has been asked to vote £50,000 for one line, £250,000 for another, £500,000 for another, and so on. All the information given about them has been that they have been told, "Oh, there is a block of open country there, we can take the railway in any way. We are informed on the best information that we can run our lines in such a direction, and build them at such a rate." There can be no doubt that that has been said, and that it has been believed in the past, and the result of the expenditure in railway construction shows how unreliable such information has been. The present Minister for Railways has very properly laid down the rule that before he will submit a railway for the consideration of this House, he must have a correct survey, and he must have a reliable estimate of how much the line is likely to cost.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Oh!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That may appear a very astonishing statement to the ex-Minister for Mines and Works, nevertheless it is a fact. That is the system which we shall endeavour to carry out, in order to restore to Parliament the control of the expenditure which it should have. Whenever the Minister for Railways has brought forward a railway proposal, he has been asked what our railway policy is, and has been accused of introducing it in bits and scraps. The reason for that has been because we have been simply carrying out the policy of the late Government.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Hear, hear!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: We have had to follow that policy, because the policy which the late Government tied the country to must be carried out, and unless we complete the lines they commenced they will be virtually useless. We have had to continue that policy, and that has been our policy, and I have no doubt the leader of the Opposition can see that very well—that he has put us in such a very tight place that we have had to carry out his policy in railway construction and not our own.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

The COLONIAL TREASURER: We can now see daylight through those dark days, and carry out our own policy. True it is only a small matter as yet, but it is a beginning, and now we shall be able to ascertain in what direction our railways are going, and their probable cost, as the Government intend to submit to this House, in the future, the plans and schedule of every proposed line.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Mount Morgan and Bunya Bunya.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The less said about Mount Morgan the better. Hon. members have not had much reason to grumble about Mount Morgan, as the shareholders want no assistance from this House, and especially from the late Minister for Mines and Works. They are quite able to take care of themselves, and to do it in an honourable way. However, I think the policy of the Government must commend itself to the majority of hon. members, if not to the whole of them. What is this policy which we are now about to submit to Parliament? We do not intend—nor shall we have the power—to touch one shilling of this money without authority from Parliament. That must be apparent to every hon. member. I take it that when the House assembles next session, or very soon after that date, the Minister for Railways will submit a schedule of railway proposals for consideration, accompanied by the plans, books of reference, and other necessary information which hon. members may desire. It will then be for the House to vote the money required if they think fit. Whether the Estimates may be correct or not will be for them to determine. The Government will not be able to simply say, "We will give a railway here, and another there." I think it will be to the advantage of the colony generally, as the money can then be fairly apportioned among the various divisions of the colony—North, Central, and South—so that one district will not get an unfair advantage. There is a great cry that the North has had too much money spent there, and certainly, as far as railways are concerned, there are several unnecessary and costly railways in that district. In the future all will get their fair share. That is debatable matter which I need not discuss now. The North says the South is getting too many railways. There is no doubt about that, as we can see in many directions railways which have been constructed to oblige political

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supporters. Possibly the same may be said of every district, except the one which I have the honour to represent—the Central. The Central Railway has been no political railway, although some of our branches may be useless. I shall say nothing about that. As I have said, the most of the railways set down on the Loan Estimates are continuations of lines started by the late Government out of the £10,000,000 loan. Harbours and rivers appear on the Loan Estimates for the sum of £172,000, which will cover the expenditure of two years at the least. Lighthouses will take up £19,000. We propose to spend about half of that sum this year. The works are very necessary ones. Year after year Captain Heath, our very efficient Portmaster, has called attention to the absolute necessity for these lighthouses, and in his last report he dwells very earnestly upon the question, and says that he almost despairs of ever getting his requirements attended to. His last report will show the importance of the question in the estimation of the Portmaster. The Government are endeavouring to make the lighting up of our coasts more efficient than it has been in the past. The whole amount of the vote is not a large one—it is under £20,000, for a very necessary work. The Minister for Mines and Works will go into details about the items for buildings, £38,000, and bridges on main roads, £30,000. For electric telegraphs we are only asking for £50,000; and for loans to local bodies, including the Brisbane water supply, £500,000—certainly not a very large sum considering that Brisbane alone will take £360,000. However, with the balance we have in hand we think £500,000 will be fully sufficient to deal liberally with all local authorities applying for loans—that is, as liberally as we can, and having due consideration to the requirements of the Loan Act. In the past they have been rather extravagant in their demands on the Treasury for loans, and I have had to refuse many of them, and possibly shall have to do so in the future. Last year the sum by way of loans to local authorities was considerably in excess of what has been the case previously, notwithstanding that an amount equal to the amount granted was refused to many of those local bodies, not altogether from want of funds, but because I think it is just as well to put the brake on the borrowing propensities of some of them. For the defences of the colony £60,000 is put down. It appears that that sum is necessary, and I think it will commend itself to all members of the House. With respect to the last item, deficit on previous loans, £350,000, I have already explained that the amount now stands at £332,000, or a decrease of between £16,000 and £17,000. Having briefly referred to the various items of the Loan Estimate, I will now move, Mr. Speaker, that you do leave the chair.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: What about the estimates of loan expenditure during the present year?

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The amount proposed to be spent this year on railways is £1,148,005.

Mr. HODGKINSON: There is a mistake of £90,000 in one item.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I shall be very glad if the hon. gentleman will point it out at the proper time. On electric telegraphs we propose to spend £27,200; on harbours and rivers, £69,895; on lighthouses, £9,500; being about one-half of the total sum asked for on the Loan Estimate; on loans to local bodies £100,000, which will be amply sufficient with the sum already at our disposal; we have a fund in hand to draw upon that will be sufficient for all purposes; on bridges, £27,800; on buildings, £49,630; on water supply, £25,000;

and on defences, £27,250; making a total of £1,607,280. That is a little less than we spent last year. Although the expenditure for the first quarter of the year has been rather heavier than we anticipated, still I feel confident in saying that I am quite sure that that estimate will not be exceeded during the present year. The Government are determined to keep expenditure down as far as they possibly can, not only loan expenditure, but expenditure from general revenue as well. There is no doubt it is rather a hard thing to keep expenditure, whether loans or otherwise, within anything like reasonable bounds, but the Ministry are doing all they possibly can in that direction, and I have no doubt those efforts will be more strenuous possibly in the future than they have been in the past. Indeed it must be done. Already, as hon. members know, we have an enormous sum to make up by way of interest year by year, and it is quite certain that should these Loan Estimates pass, there will be a still further increase in the interest to be paid on the public debt of the colony. That is a very serious consideration, but it is too late in the day to go into that matter now. Whether right or wrong, we must go on and complete the works we have taken in hand. The £1,000,000 asked for railways is a very modest amount on which to form the railway policy of the future. However, that is a question I need not further discuss. It will be sufficient, and perhaps some hon. members on the other side may say it is more than sufficient, to intrust the present Ministry with. Whatever the opinion of hon. members may be, I have honestly given you the ideas of the Ministry in submitting to you this vote for £1,000,000, surrounded with safeguards which remain in the hands of this Assembly of apportioning that million to the various portions of the colony, and not only to apportion it, but also to scrutinise closely all the railways submitted to them for their full and final approval. We have seen quite enough during this session to show that where members make up their minds to oppose a vote there is not much chance of getting it through. We have had instances of that in the Drayton deviation and the Mount Morgan line, and I do not think the Government will be likely next session, although they may be as strong then as they are now, as I believe they will, for I fail to discover any signs of decrease in the number of their supporters—I say I do not think they will be likely to use their powers unfairly or bring pressure to bear upon their supporters in connection with the fair consideration of all railways submitted to the House. I need not trespass on the time of the House, further, Mr. Speaker. If there is anything I have not disclosed, or any information which lies in my power to give, I shall be quite prepared to give it in Committee. I therefore move that you do now leave the chair, and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the Supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH said: Mr. Speaker,—I think it is just as well that I should take this opportunity of saying a few words upon the general question of the loan account of the colony, without going particularly into details. The hon. gentleman has mainly called attention to the figures disclosed by the papers laid upon the table of the House, and I do not think he has thrown very much additional light on the subject.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No; it is not to be expected.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. gentleman referred first of all to the amount of loan money lying in the banks. I do not think that is a matter to which particular attention

need be called in this debate. I dare say we shall have to borrow more money soon, but if we go on borrowing money that is not utilised it shows that our finances are not very wisely managed. It is, of course, necessary that the House should be in possession of all information on the subject, so that hon. members may be able to scrutinise closely and thoroughly the proposals that are made. I observe from the opening remarks of the hon. gentleman that about £500,000 has been spent from loan during the last three months. I find that at the beginning of the financial quarter the net balance, according to table D attached to the Financial Statement, was £4,834,000; and according to the table presented to the House yesterday the net balance on 30th September was £4,324,000, showing a difference of exactly £500,000. I am aware that another part of the table shows the difference to be only £460,000. I should like to know what has become of the difference between these two amounts. If it has not been spent, what has become of it? I should also like to know which of these sets of tables we are to consider as authentic. I observe, further, that the table laid before the House yesterday and table D of the Financial Statement are compiled upon entirely different principles; so that it is practically impossible to make any comparison between them at all. The table laid before the House yesterday gives particulars of the items, and arrives at a total of £4,324,000, the items being those upon which money has to be spent—works and services; whereas table D of the Financial Statement shows an item of £1,240,777 as the deficit on loans. How that is to be divided and apportioned to the items of the table laid before the House yesterday, I confess I do not know. It is quite evident that we cannot rely upon these tables. How is the House to intelligently scrutinise the finances of the colony when the papers laid before it are so absolutely and entirely misleading? It is impossible to reconcile the two things. The only conclusion we can come to is—well, I do not know what, as I do not know what principle the tables go on. At any rate, there is a serious error there, and I shall be able to show a few errors of £100,000 or so, here and there as we go on.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You may assert them; you cannot show them.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: I am going to point them out. I have shown that there are two sets of figures, and I do not know which is right and which is wrong. They cannot both be true.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Different dates.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: I know that. There is a difference of £500,000 during the three months; how has that been expended? The next matter I wish to call attention to is this: Taking the table laid before the House yesterday as accurate, provisionally—only provisionally—I find on the first page that there is a sum of £1,694,000 raised or to be raised by loans, which the Government do not intend to spend, so far as we know. I will give the items: Drayton deviation, £39,000; Ipswich to Warwick, £492,000; Laidley Creek branch, £29,000; extension from Roma, £257,000; Warwick to St. George, £244,000; extension from Charters Towers, £202,000; Normanston to Cloncurry, £436,000. These items make a total of £1,694,000, out of the £10,000,000 loan, which the Government do not intend to spend. Allowing for the £700,000 not yet raised, and the

£300,000 deficiency, and other minor items, there will be about a million as a sort of nest egg for the Government to keep in the banks, and now another million is proposed to be borrowed for the construction of no railways in particular; so that they will have £2,000,000 of borrowed money lying quietly in the banks to assist trade, as stated by the Hon. the Treasurer. I think hon. members should not forget that. The Government have on this occasion done one good thing. They have, in compliance with the wish of the House, which was very generally expressed last session, recognised that it is desirable that the House should have stated to it in each financial year what money is intended to be spent out of the loan fund. Hon. gentlemen opposite think that by doing that, they get over the difficulty; but it is merely observing the practice required by our Constitution, but which has fallen into desuetude in consequence of it being supposed that a Loan Act authorised appropriation in the same way as an Appropriation Act. All our Loan Acts contain a provision that the money so raised shall be paid into the consolidated revenue and be appropriated—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Applied.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Applied to the purposes for which it was raised, and to be accounted for in the same manner as all other money. And that word "applied" was supposed, from a very early period in the history of the colony, to be a sufficient warrant for the expenditure. I have very little doubt that it was not a sufficient warrant, and, as I have said many times before, all Colonial Treasurers really require an Act of indemnity for the expenditure of these moneys.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. M. Nelson): You are very late in finding that out.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Better late than never. It is now more than two years since I said in this House that that was my opinion, and that the Government should bring in an annual Appropriation Act for loan expenditure, the same as for the ordinary expenditure of the colony. I am very glad that the Government intend to do that; indeed they could do so, their attention having been called to the matter, nor could any other Government that might be in their place. Perhaps it will be well if I now refer to the statement of the proposed expenditure during the present financial year. I will only call attention to some curious points in that statement. Many of the items are of course small items. And I would call attention to this fact, that a great many of the items are matters over which the Government have practically no control, because the contracts are already let, and the money will be spent, and the rate at which it will be payable will depend not on the Government but on the rate of speed at which the contractors do their work, so that as far as railways are concerned I do not think they will be able to make much difference in the expenditure. But it is very important nevertheless to know how much we are expending and it appears that in the first quarter of the year the Government have gone a long way beyond their intended average. I observe one or two very curious statements in these estimates of proposed expenditure. One is in connection with the proposed expenditure on the Cairns Railway. The total amount voted for that railway up to the present time has been £600,000, of which the sum of £510,000 had already been spent up to the 30th of September last, some of that I presume during the first three months of the current year—I do not know how much, but I assume it is about £40,000. I do not know at what rate the works are progressing, but I observe that the

total estimated expenditure on this line for the whole twelve months is only £102,000. Is the work going to stop?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Then how are you going to keep down the expenditure to £102,000? It is perfectly obvious that there is a great mistake in the calculation. The sum of £540,000 has been spent on this railway during the last two years, so that the expenditure has been considerably over £200,000 a year. The work is going on, and a great deal of work has still to be done; yet we are told that only £102,000, including the money spent during the last three months, is to be expended. Evidently there is a mistake there; I do not know the amount of it. Take another item—the Normanton Railway. The expenditure on the Croydon and Cloncurry Railway is estimated at £19,000. Will hon. members listen for a moment to the actual figures in connection with that railway? I suppose the line will be finished next June, unless the work is going on very slowly. The amount authorised to be borrowed by Treasury bills for that line is £150,000, and the Government propose to borrow £39,000 more, making altogether £189,000. That will be the cost of the railway according to the Estimates, which, for the purposes of argument, I take to be accurate. Up to the 30th of September last, £80,000 was spent, which leaves £109,000 to be spent to complete the line; and yet the Government only propose to expend £19,000. There is an error there of £90,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not at all; you don't understand it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Then the figures are unintelligible. Possibly further expenditure is stowed away in some other figures, but if so, it is done in an entirely deceptive manner. What I have stated is what appears from these tables, which are put forward for the purpose of giving the House information, and I am pointing out some of the large errors which are apparent. Surely the tables should be prepared in such a way as to be intelligible. We know that on that line the estimated expenditure as shown by these papers is £109,000. That will have to be spent during the current year, but when we look to the Estimates we see that what is proposed to be spent is £19,000. It would appear, however, that the information is supposed to be found in some other place. All I can say is, that if the rest of this £109,000 for the Croydon Railway is disguised in some other vote on these Estimates, that is a very curious way of doing things. I have then pointed out two apparent errors of about £100,000 each. There is another one to which I will now direct attention. I find that on the Estimates-in-Chief we have a statement of expenditure from the loan fund for salaries amounting to £104,115. £3,000 of that is for immigration, and I presume that is included in the £123,000 proposed to be spent on immigration during the current year. The rest of the salaries will not come in under any of these items of estimated expenditure from the loan fund. That is another error of £100,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Not at all.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I wish the hon. gentleman did know a little more about it. The sum of £104,000 is proposed to be spent from the loan fund, though, by-the-by, there is no such thing as the loan fund, and of this £3,000 is for immigration and £15,000 for water supply. I look at this estimate of expenditure for water supply, which is £25,000, and I find that it includes tanks, dams, and bores. I do not think the remaining £10,000 will cover that

expenditure; if it does there will be very little done. Then, turning to harbours and rivers, I find that there is about £33,000 for salaries in connection with dredges, which salaries are to be paid out of loan fund. I look here at these Loan Estimates, and where is that to be found? The amount put down for expenditure in connection with harbours and rivers is for contract work, and does not include that amount for wages at all. Then I find that there are a great number of items for wages in connection with railways paid out of loan fund. I have not added them up, but they amount to a considerable sum, and all I find put down in this vote is about £5,000 for extension of surveys, so that there must be something left out. There is therefore a manifest error of £200,000 or £300,000. I am not surprised after this that, although we are told that the estimated expenditure for this year is £1,607,000, it is £500,000 for the first three months. At the rate the Government have been going on for the past three months it will be about £2,000,000, and I fear it will be. I hope it will not, because we cannot afford it. Now I will refer to what are called the Loan Estimates—the proposals to borrow money. It is quite true that the Government have adopted their policy in the matter of railway construction from the late Government with two exceptions. I do not blame them for that. They have probably done better by doing that than by evolving one out of their own minds. The only two exceptions, so far as they have been evolved from the chaos of the hon. gentlemen's minds, are the Dalby towards Bunya Mountain line and the Woongarra branch.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: The Croydon line.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The Croydon line was authorised by the previous Government in 1887. I brought in a Bill authorising the diversion of £150,000 from the Normanton-Cloncurry vote, and it was prevented from becoming law by the Opposition. That is the extent of the originality of the Government up to the present time in railway construction. We are told that is all to come in the future. There is a great scheme which has yet to be evolved. In fact the scheme is something like the scheme evolved in the South Sea Bubble time. A company was formed for the purpose of working a project of great value and profit, but no one was to know what it was. I believe the shares were taken up, and there may be gentlemen on the other side of the House who, judging from their conduct lately, are quite prepared to take shares in or back up this proposal. They are prepared to vote for the proposals of the Government which include proposals of great value and benefit to the country, but no one knows what they are.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS (Hon. J. M. Macrossan): That is an old statement of the hon. gentleman's.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It may be an old story, but it is a very good one. But I do not think it is usual for a Government to do that kind of thing. If private persons go into the market with projects of that kind, they are likely to be called by very ugly names; but it is not usual for Governments to do anything of that kind. Now, many of these items on the Loan Estimates do not require much consideration at the present time. Many of them are probably required and must be voted, and the amounts may be discussed in committee; but there is one item which is certainly remarkable, and that is the proposal to borrow a million of money. The Colonial Treasurer said he expected some opposition to that

Well, I should think he did. In fact, I am quite sure he did. Very likely the Government have brought down this proposal with the best intentions. I will give them credit for that; I believe they have simply blundered. I believe they had a kind of blundering desire to do what was the right thing, but as they did not know how to do it they have made this proposal. That is the most charitable view to take of it. If that view is not taken it must be taken to be like the proposal of the South Sea Bubble time. They may take their choice as to which alternative they like. In his speech the hon. gentleman endeavoured to explain what he conceived to be the errors in past years, in the borrowing of money for the construction of public works, and the improvement he proposes to adopt. Now the error in the past was that we did not vote the Estimates each year so that Parliament might keep control of the actual expenditure. That was the mistake that was made. That was the error in principle; but the hon. gentleman seems to think that the error was in telling the House what railways it was proposed to construct before money was borrowed to construct them with. That, he appears to think, was the mistake, but it was not. I have never heard yet of Parliament being asked to borrow money without being told what it was for. If the hon. gentleman's view is correct, the proper thing for the Government to have done in 1884 was to bring in a Bill to borrow ten millions of money "for railways and other public works." That would have been the proposal. The amount does not make any difference in principle. The hon. gentleman is unable to disassociate the form from the principle. The principle up to the present time has been this: When it was proposed to construct lines of railway, the House has been asked to affirm the desirability of constructing them. We have had to go through two forms: First, to ask for authority to borrow money for the construction of railways, and, secondly, to approve of the plans and sections. The third form should be to authorise the expenditure during the current year, so as to keep control over the actual expenditure, but that has been omitted. I mean, keep control over our banking account, but we have ignored that.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL (Hon. J. Donaldson): It was a fortunate thing it was so when your Loan Bill was passed.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The idea of asking Parliament to say that we want to construct certain specified works before asking authority to borrow has never been departed from, nor do I know of any country where it has, nor do I think there is any country where it has. I am quite certain there is no country where it has been departed from in such a method as this. The hon. gentleman seems to think that by saying he will not spend this money until the House has afterwards sanctioned its expenditure on particular lines, he has removed all objections to borrowing money for an unknown purpose.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: For railways.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: For what railways? It is really difficult to treat such a proposal seriously, and yet the hon. gentlemen think that they have made a great discovery. They have blundered all through. They wanted to do what was right. I can quite understand the impelling force behind them. They have promised us a railway policy from time to time. They have promised it to their supporters. They have told us we should be enlightened during the session, but I know very well that they have no railway policy any more than they have any policy on any other subject, and yet they are anxious to do something. They cast about to see what they can do, and they say, give us a

blank cheque and we will fill it up at some future time. We know their railway policy. The Bunya line, the Woongarra line, and the biggest of all, the Mount Morgan line, which has been withdrawn. They have no policy; they have no proposals to make, but they say, "Give us a sum of money, and trust to us, and we will make some proposals." But in the meantime what is to become of this million of money? What would be the position of a Government who had been authorised to borrow a million of money? What would they be able to do? One would think we were tyros in the art of government, and had never seen lump sums placed on the Estimates, and the struggle made by the constituencies to get portions of it appropriated to them. That is not a new thing in this colony. It has been done on two or three notable occasions, and has always been condemned by gentlemen on the other side, and I have never heard any arguments to justify it. I remember my late hon. colleague, Mr. Miles, when he had £100,000 to dispose of, which had been voted on the Estimates for general purposes, and he was never happy until he had appropriated the last thousand of it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: He did me out of part of it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. member is mistaken. Now, what will the position of the Government be? What promises can they not make? There is a railway wanted to Pialba; that is to come out of this million. There is a railway wanted at Rockhampton to Port Alma; that is provided for in the million. There is a railway wanted from Townsville to Ingham; that, too, can come out of this million. There is also an extension of the railway from Southport to the border; I assume that is in the million. Then there is one wanted by the constituency of Moreton, and that will come out of the million. If during the recess any election should take place, of course it can be conveniently said, "There is money on the Estimates for your railway."

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The same as you said as to the Springsure Railway.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The Springsure Railway has really nothing to do with this matter. The money for the Springsure Railway had been appropriated by Parliament under the preceding Government, who had pledged themselves to carry out the work, and the succeeding Government carried out that pledge. There is no connection whatever between these two things. This is a proposal by which Parliament, as I say, is asked to vote blindfolded, and give the Government a million of money, which they can promise to any supporter who may be becoming importunate. I should like to know how many promises have been made already; of course not officially—not in writing. How many votes are to be asked in favour of that million of money, because members have been told: "You may rely upon it you will get something out of it?" I would like to know that. I would like every member to be put upon his honour before he votes for that million, and state whether or not any promise of that kind has been made to him. I have mentioned only a few places where railways are clamoured for, but there are a great many more, and if any case arises during the recess we know the statement will be the same, "Oh it is all right, we have a million to spend."

The HON. C. POWERS: Parliament has to approve of it.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. member who interrupts me is very young in the House. He says, "Parliament has to

approve of it." We know that very well. If the hon. member knew more about the subject, he would know that the words included in this Estimate—"provided that before any expenditure is made, an estimate of the expenditure proposed to be incurred during any financial year shall be submitted for the sanction of Parliament"—mean absolutely nothing. That is in the Constitution Act. It is part of the Constitution of the country. I am quite prepared to believe that not only that hon. gentleman but several of his colleagues thought that when putting in those words they were doing a wonderful thing, and showing their extreme candour and openness. But, as I said before, that is one of the points that afford conclusive evidence that they entered into this thing because they did not know any better.

The HON. C. POWERS: It will be in the Loan Act too.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: "It will be in the Loan Act too!" How can you borrow money unless by a Loan Act? The hon. gentleman had better not interject until he has looked up his constitutional law a little. A great deal more might be said on this subject. I do not believe that any set of men in possession of their sound senses could make such a proposal to Parliament, and I am quite certain that nothing but very extreme circumstances would induce a majority of any House, or even a small minority, to support such a proposal. There is not an argument that can be urged in favour of it. In fact, it is very difficult to deal with such a proposal seriously; but when such a proposal is made one is certainly justified in asking who it is that makes it? Who is it that proposes this extraordinary innovation in constitutional government? Who are the Government that propose this thing? Who are the gentlemen who ask this House to give them power to promise the expenditure of a million of money which may be used, as has often been said, for the purpose of exercising undue influence?

Mr. MURPHY: The House gave you £10,000,000 for the same thing.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I say that when such a proposal as this is made, we are justified in asking who are the Government that make it? Are they men distinguished by their past character and knowledge of constitutional government? Have they shown in their past history that they are men who may be trusted with the expenditure of money uncontrolled? Are they men who represent even a definite section of the community in this colony? Who are they at all? When we come to ask that question it leads to the further inquiry—How did they get there and how long are they likely to be there? Before we are asked to repose this unheard-of trust in them, we should know whether they are likely to be the persons who will exercise the trust. If we are even satisfied with knowing who the persons are to whom we are intrusting this money and the power of promising it, we shall have something to work upon; but we do not even know that! I may not unfairly remark that the information has been public property for a long time that at least one of the Ministers does not intend to be here next session. It is currently stated also with respect to another of them that he is not at all unlikely to leave office. I refer to the hon. gentleman at the head of the Government, and I may say I was glad to see him here this afternoon, and am extremely sorry he was unable to remain to take part in this debate. That does not, however, relieve me from the duty of referring to him, and it is commonly stated that that hon. gentleman, at any rate, contemplates retiring. Then who are to be the Government? Is this House,

before going into recess, to commit a trust of this kind to hands they do not know? Who are to be the successors of the present members of the Government? What will happen next session, and what will happen in the meantime? We may go a little further and say, "How did these gentlemen get there?" Did they get there as they are; is that the Government put into office by the country? I venture to say that if the country, at the last election, had had to decide between the Government then occupying the Treasury benches, and the Government at present occupying them, we should have had a majority of two to one. There is not the slightest doubt about that, and I suppose no one will dispute it. The present Government are, in fact, in their present position as the result of an accident. The fact that they are the Government is simply accidental. But this House has to deal with very serious business. The government of the colony is a very serious thing. The finances of the colony are a very serious affair, and they are in a very serious condition.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: You put them in that serious condition.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. member must remember that there is no use in saying "You're another." Let me tell the hon. gentleman that a large majority of the members of this House do not take the slightest interest in the question as to who made the mistakes this year or the year before. Their concern is the good government of the country. I have made mistakes and so has the hon. gentleman, and I dare say I shall make more, of that I am not ashamed; but what we are concerned with now is the future, and it is most important that we should deal with the finances of the colony in a serious way. We have every reason to suppose that at the termination of the present financial year there will be a deficit. Unfortunately, we have every reason to suppose that because, so far as we have gone, the expectations of the Treasurer have not been nearly fulfilled, and there is no immediate prospect of improvement. The expenditure will be considerably larger than the revenue, and he proposes now, by these Loan Estimates, to add a burden of about £100,000 a year for interest, if he floats one-half of the loan he proposes. I think the hon. gentleman might have told us what his proposals were for paying the interest, because we cannot borrow money without paying interest for it, and we must be prepared in some way to meet the charge for interest. The hon. gentleman by his speech did not show that he had any grip at all of the financial position of the country or the probable expenditure. I scarcely believe it possible that any intelligent House can accept this proposal; but it may be that some hon. members may be prepared to do as they have done already this session on more than one occasion, and afterwards try to explain away their action. I hope that in a matter of this sort wiser counsels will prevail, and that the House will not be asked to do a thing that is utterly wrong, utterly opposed to all principles of sound government, and utterly unprecedented, and which they cannot justify to their constituents. I challenge any hon. gentleman to justify such a proposal to his conscience if he can. If anyone can, I should like him to explain to the House the manner in which he does so—I, for one, shall be very much interested to see it done. I sincerely hope that the Government will let wiser counsels prevail, and that, when they see the untenableness of the proposal they are making, they will have the good sense to

withdraw it. As the Colonial Treasurer said, they may very likely withdraw the railways if the vote does pass. I understood the hon. gentleman to say, that the Government had already withdrawn one line, and that another has been thrown out by a majority of this House, so that very likely many of their future proposals would be withdrawn.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I said no such thing. I spoke of the future railways that we might submit next year. I said that it would be for Parliament to consider the proposed lines, and the Government would not use the majority at their back to force any railway upon the House. That is exactly what I said.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is quite right, and that is exactly what I said the hon. gentleman stated. I was quoting his words, and he has got up and repeated them. I advise the hon. gentleman, instead of waiting for these railways to be brought in next session to be paid for out of this £1,000,000 loan, and then either withdrawn or rejected, to have the good sense to withdraw this item now, and let Parliament next year, in dealing with the railways, consider whether it is desirable to borrow money for them. Before we borrow money we ought to know what we are going to borrow it for, and that is especially necessary at present, considering the present condition of the loan fund, and the condition of the finances of the colony. We ought to know for what purpose we are borrowing before we authorise the floating of a loan. I should also like to know what the public creditor will say. Hon. gentlemen opposite seem neither to think nor care about that matter. What will be the result? The condition of the colony is as well known in England as it is here. What will our creditors think of the Government proposing to borrow money for unspecified works? That is too much like the South American States. At any rate it looks as if the affairs of the colony had got into the hands of some people utterly incapable of managing them. For every reason, I consider this item should not be persisted in. The hon. gentleman can scarcely hope to carry it. I do not know whether the Government are bound by pledges to make the proposal to the House, but if they are wise they will take my advice, as they have sometimes done before—I do not suppose they will however, as they appear to look upon it with distrust. I certainly am not offering them bad advice when I ask them to withdraw this most objectionable item from the Estimates, so as to let us get on with the work of the country, and finish the session as soon as possible.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

MESSAGES FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

ASSENT TO BILLS.

DEFAMATION BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that His Excellency, in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty, had assented to this Bill.

DREW PENSION BILL.

The SPEAKER announced the receipt of a message from His Excellency the Governor, intimating that His Excellency, in the name and on behalf of Her Majesty, had assented to this Bill.

SUPPLY.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS said: Mr. Speaker,—I do not rise to reply to the remarks of the hon. gentleman opposite. A lazier speech was never delivered in this House. He first of all praised the Government for being animated with proper motives in their proposed method of dealing with the loan vote, and then he abused us inferentially by wanting to know whether it would not pain our consciences. He began by giving us credit for being actuated by good motives, and then said that no one in their senses could expect the House to accept their proposal. What can be made out of that I leave the House to decide. He began by attempting to throw dust in the eyes of the House by making use of his ability in dealing with tables. The hon. gentleman actually revels in tables, and if he can get hold of one which can be twisted about in any way, he is quite at home in it. Take, for example, the deficit on the loans. He turns to the tables which the Colonial Treasurer furnished with the Financial Statement, and he says there is a vast discrepancy between them. So there is.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: He mentioned something to the same effect when the House went into Committee of Supply on the Treasurer's Statement, and I pointed out then how the discrepancy arose. I shall do so again.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They both purport to be statements of the loan balances, the same as this one.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The deficit on loan balances, he said, was put down at £1,240,777, but from the table on the opposite side of the page it put the balance at £2,416,511, and he wanted to know where the difference arose.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I never compared those two things together.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You did. I assure you, you did.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: The hon. gentleman must have been wool-gathering.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is table D, and here is the other part the hon. gentleman referred to.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I never referred to that item of £1,270,777 at all.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I suppose the hon. gentleman gives it up now. I will point out to the hon. gentleman that the deficit from the loans of 1882 and 1884, was not included, because the accounts were not complete. Anyone can see that for himself. I told the hon. gentleman before that the deficit was very large, but he said it might be £40,000 or £50,000. He would not believe that it exceeded that, but we find it is about £350,000.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I am sorry I did not make myself intelligible to you.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is still a balance of that loan unsold of £709,900, on which there will be a further deficit. The Under Secretary for the Treasury, I presume, estimates that the total deficit, including the amount of £6,481 on previous loans, will be about £350,000. Any hon. member can see that for himself. Then he says that on the loan balances laid on the table of the House yesterday there are a large number of items which we do not intend to

expend. If he means to say, which we do not intend to expend during the present financial year, he is quite right. We do not intend, for instance, to expend the balance on what is vulgarly termed the *via recta* during the present year. Why it is called by that name I do not know except from its consummate crookedness. The amount put down for that line will remain there until it is used for the purpose for which it was borrowed. We are not going to spend any of it this year. Anyone can see that from the table of proposed expenditure during the present financial year. I rather think the hon. gentleman now wishes us to bring the whole of those balances into one large consolidated fund.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It has to go into the consolidated revenue fund by law.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I quite agree with the hon. gentleman there; but the money is virtually appropriated, and it cannot be used for any other purpose. If it is a part of the consolidated revenue—as I have no doubt it is—then I presume that Parliament can appropriate it at any time; but until Parliament does appropriate it, it must remain where it is. Then the hon. gentleman referred—although it was rather out of place—to some of the details of the expenditure of the present financial year. I will not go through the whole of them, as I shall have to do that when we get into committee. I will content myself with one instance, so that the hon. gentleman will see that we are not making the gross mistake he imagines we are making. I can assure the House that these Estimates have been very carefully prepared. They were prepared a considerable time ago, and have been revised and re-revised, and if they do not turn out correct, it is not for want of care on the part of the various departments in framing them. The hon. gentleman referred to the Croydon line, and said we are only proposing to expend £19,000. That is true; we only propose to expend that amount out of the vote for a particular purpose. The whole of that amount will be spent in wages to the men employed upon the line; but if he looks at the item for steel sleepers and permanent way material, he will find that there is about £70,000 for the Croydon railway.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I guessed that was the case, but the tables do not show it. They ought to be made more intelligible.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is the way the hon. gentleman made up his Estimates in 1887.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Indeed it is not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman will find that it is, because I have compared them. He says that on the Estimates-in-Chief we are voting a large amount for salaries. That is true also. It has been done annually since 1875. In that year I think it was that for the first time a clause was inserted in the Loan Act making it imperative that salaries should be properly appropriated by Parliament. We are going to ask the House, on the Estimates-in-Chief, to vote salaries and wages amounting to about £49,000, and surely it would be a foolish blunder to ask the House to appropriate the same money twice. Then we ask the House to vote all other items of expenditure exclusive of salaries, and the hon. gentleman wants us to include salaries in that vote as well.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I do not. I say you must add the £100,000 to this total to get a correct total. You have only just discovered that the expenditure will be £1,700,000. The Colonial Treasurer put it at £1,600,000.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It takes a lawyer to do accounts properly, and not being one I am rather slow at the work. The chief fault the hon. member has to find with the Estimates seems to be that we have no comprehensive railway policy. I have replied to that charge previously, and I have little to add to what I have said, as I am not going to repeat it all over again. The system hitherto has been that the Government come down to the House with a railway to propose. They state in the vaguest terms where the railway is to be, such as "a railway from Cloncurry to the Gulf," and the House is asked to vote a certain sum of money to build the line, and is ultimately persuaded to vote the money. I might mention no end of cases near home—only I do not wish to start any debate on the subject—where the estimate laid before the House has been of the most indefinite nature, and most unreliable; where, although the House has been assured that a certain line could be made for a certain sum of money, that estimate has been exceeded by 50 per cent., 75 per cent., and sometimes nearly 100 per cent.; yet the House has voted the Loan Estimate.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is how you did last year.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I can appeal to the oldest member of the House—the hon. member for Toowoomba, Mr. Groom—and ask him if he has not said that if he had known certain works were going to cost so much he would not have voted for them? Yet that is what is called a comprehensive policy—to come down and ask the House to vote sums of money on the understanding that such sums would be sufficient to complete certain works, and for hon. members then to find themselves committed to perhaps double the amount. This comprehensive railway policy has been in vogue ever since railways were first started in Queensland. Ever since the late Mr. Macalister started his comprehensive railway policy, which was to cover the colony with a network of railways, nearly every Loan Act has been a comprehensive policy; and I do not think the country has benefited very much by those comprehensive policies, as they have been called. I believe that the colony has lost millions of money by them, nothing less. I believe that, if you examine every one of them, it will not be shown that they exhibited any large amount of statesmanship; but I will tell you what they have shown—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Jobbery!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They have shown quite another quality. You will find that they are all characterised by the same feature—that they have shown a large amount of State craft.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That distinguishes this one.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They have been very cunningly devised, I have no doubt; and they have been dexterously used as political machines. It is in order to avoid that, Sir,—

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: To improve on it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I say it is in order that we shall have no more of this, that the Government now propose to pursue a different course. I have no doubt this kind of thing will not suit the hon. gentleman who has just spoken. We may be quite sure of that.

Mr. MURPHY: It is too straightforward.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The effect of these great comprehensive policies has been to land us in our present position. The

present Government had to take up, as everyone knows, the thankless job of taking over the Treasury with an immense deficit balance. We are then asked to specify what railways we are going to discuss, presumably for the next ten years. According to the 1884 Act, at any rate, it was thought the scheme of railways then proposed would be enough for the colony for an indefinite period. I ask why should we do that? It is quite contrary to the Constitution. I say according to the strict letter of the Constitution Act every year's expenditure and every year's revenue ought to be kept within itself. We are asking for authority to borrow this £1,000,000, not because we shall have the spending of it ourselves probably, but for the simple reason that the funds must be kept going. Our Treasurer is not in the position of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; he cannot go and raise money at a day's notice. The Government are merely asking to be authorised to raise this money, and place it to the credit of the consolidated revenue, to be afterwards dealt with by this Parliament or its successor. What more constitutional system could we pursue than that? We ask no authority to spend one farthing of this money; and what objection there can be to the proposal I have not been able to see. The hon. gentleman who has just sat down certainly stated none; none that had any logical effect.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: You have not attempted to answer them.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The only difference between the £10,000,000 of 1884 and this vote is this: That the late Government kept dangling before the country immense sums of money for their whole term of office, and used them to keep their supporters together in a compact body; and it served their purpose for a considerable length of time. Supposing that we adopted the same policy—which we are not going to do—but suppose that is the object we have in view, how long do you think that would last?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Until next session; then you will all disappear.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is no matter how long I shall last. The country can go on very well without me, and perhaps without the hon. member also. I do not think either of us is essential to the existence of the colony. I do not doubt that you might have a Minister for Railways running all over the colony promising railways right and left; he might do that, and seriously compromise his colleagues; but he cannot either compromise this House or commit it to anything. This House is the only judge—the only authority that can sanction the expenditure of public money. If this Government were asking for money the same as the last Government did—

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: There is no such thing as corruption possible.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I say if this Government was as corrupt as the last Government was—

Mr. HODGKINSON: You had better drop that style, or the same thing will be brought out about this Government.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: Out with it!

Mr. HODGKINSON: You will get it time enough. You are making charges, and you will get them back again.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: We have had enough of yours.

Mr. HODGKINSON: You will get a little more yet.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman who has just sat down says the million of money now proposed to be raised, but which we do not ask any authority to spend, might be used for corrupt purposes. I do not suppose he meant to say that it would be used for actual bribery, but that it might be used for political purposes—for getting political votes and so forth. I say even if it is, we now stand in a better position than the Government that raised the £10,000,000 loan, because only one-tenth part of the corruption can be carried on.

MR. FOXTON: You can make it some ten times over.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. member says we can make it some ten times over, but his leader has informed us that I cannot last beyond next session. The £1,000,000 loan is what I am talking about, and the hon. gentleman says I cannot last beyond next session. I do not care whether I last until next session or not. What has that to do with the subject? I do not care whether I stand here next session or not.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said: Mr. Speaker,—Will the hon. gentleman allow me to correct him. The hon. gentleman referred to the possibility of the Government using money for corrupt purposes, and asked how long that would last, and I ejaculated, "Until next session; then you will all disappear."

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The ground is shifted then. However, it amounts to this: That we should not get authority to raise this money, because there is another Government coming in next session, and they should not be trusted with it. I think I should be almost justified in voting against it on those grounds. However, Sir, I believe the House is prepared to trust the Government in power until next session. It has been argued that the Government in asking the House to vote this £1,000,000, is asking it to sign a blank cheque, but it is really nothing of the sort. We are asking the House to authorise the raising of a distinct amount for a specific object. The money is to be borrowed for the purpose of constructing railways, and cannot be devoted to any other purpose—not legally; and if it is appropriated illegally, the checks we have provided will very speedily put a stop to that. I do not think it is worth while raising such wide objections against the vote as that it is a general vote. General votes, as the hon. member himself mentioned, have not been uncommon at all. I will illustrate my argument by referring to some of the general votes that have been passed by this House. Hon. members will know something—I know a great deal—as to how they were expended. The first general vote in the Loan Act for 1884 is buildings and sidings, Southern and Western Railway, £366,000; other general votes in the same Estimate are buildings and sidings, Wide Bay and Burnett district, £35,000; buildings and sidings, Central Railway, £32,000; buildings and sidings, Northern railway, £55,000; surveys, £90,000; rolling-stock, £737,000; railway telegraph lines and other works, £36,000; and electric telegraphs, £250,000. I will just draw the attention of hon. members to the manner in which these votes have been managed in the past. Every one of these votes as soon as that Act was passed were absolutely beyond the power of Parliament. That is an error, a very grave error, and it is one we are now correcting. With regard to the vote for electric telegraphs, the Postmaster-General can put a telegraph line in any part of the country he likes, without coming to Parliament for any authority; he simply draws on the vote. If I want anything for passenger coaches or wagons for the railways, I

do not come to Parliament and ask authority to spend the money. I draw from the vote for rolling-stock just as much as I like. Where is the blank cheque then? The same course is followed with regard to lighthouses. Do we specify every lighthouse that we are going to build when we go to the old country for a loan? Certainly not; we put down a lump sum for lighthouses, and the same for electric telegraphs. It is because that system is so unconstitutional, and otherwise so objectionable, that we are now trying to bring back the control of the expenditure to the place where it ought to be—namely, the Parliament of the colony.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is the intention, but I do not think you have adopted the right method for carrying it out.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: As the hon. gentleman admits that that is our intention, he should help us to carry it out. The hon. gentleman says we are doing right, but doing it in the wrong way. Of course, unless it is his way, it is sure to be the wrong way; but as long as we can get it done, we are not very particular as to the exact mode by which it is done. The system of dealing with railways, according to the system we propose, I will now briefly explain. Whenever the Government are ready to propose a line to the House, they must be prepared with the permanent surveys, plans upon these surveys, and proper estimates taken out from the data thereby acquired.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is done now.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has never been done. I admit that I made a great blunder last session in this respect in connection with the Cooktown railway; but I have this consolation that by a little caution I prevented the country being committed to an expenditure which might have involved at least £1,000,000. Although I asked the House to approve of the plans and books of reference, yet I took very good care that the contract was not let until the permanent survey was made and proper plans prepared. I say that never before has the House been asked to vote money for a railway with a proper estimate of the cost laid on the table, but on all occasions the money has been voted in a vague and loose manner. The estimate given of the cost has invariably been far below the amount actually required. That I hope will not happen with the estimates I have laid before the House.

MR. GROOM: How will this million be expended?

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This million will be expended in the same way as any other money in the consolidated revenue. I will give the hon. member an example of how it will be expended. Suppose I bring on again next year the Drayton deviation—it is quite possible that that may be done, though the leader of the Opposition seems to think that vote should be wiped out—

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I did not say so.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The hon. gentleman referred to the vote for that railway, and said it was not going to be spent, because the House refused to pass the plans and book of reference, and I understood him to say that it should be deducted from the total amount. But suppose the plans and book of reference of the Drayton deviation are brought forward next session—they are all ready and the permanent survey and estimates have been made—and the House in its wisdom sees fit to approve of the plans which it refused to do this session,

I have already to the credit of that vote a certain sum of money, and shall require £25,000 or £30,000 more before I can accept a contract.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Then why not include that in these Loan Estimates?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We do not require to do that, because we will take it out of this £1,000,000.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Is there to be an election up there?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Perhaps I was wrong in saying that it will be taken out of this £1,000,000. I spoke rather hastily. What the Government will do is this: We will submit to the House a proposal to appropriate the necessary sum from this £1,000,000. That is what I really mean. If the House approves of the plans, it will then be asked to appropriate out of this £1,000,000 the amount required to enable the Government to accept a contract for that particular line. As I stated on the last occasion on which I spoke on this subject, the House will always have an opportunity of revising its judgment come to on a motion to approve of the plans of any particular railway. I was told, however, that the House would not have that opportunity. I will just show how it will have the opportunity, and will take as an illustration the Croydon Railway, which has already been referred to this evening. The plans and sections of that railway have been approved of as far as Croydon; and they were approved of on a thoroughly good estimate made by the engineer in charge of the line. The amount voted last year for the first section—namely, £150,000—is not enough to complete the line as far as Croydon. We shall require a further sum of £39,000 to complete the line. That £39,000 is in the amount that we are now asking the House to authorise us to borrow and place in the consolidated revenue. The House may refuse authority to do so, although the plans have been approved of; in which case that railway will of course be hung up for the time. But, supposing the House gives authority to borrow this £39,000, the Government have still no permission to go on and accept a tender until the House has further appropriated for the year the sums that have been already referred to—namely, the £19,000 for wages and expenditure, and the remainder for sleepers and permanent way. So that the House has everything in its power, and this is simply bestowing on the House the rights and privileges which it has always possessed, but which have been allowed to fall into desuetude by a laxity of practice. If the system now proposed is carried out, the House will assert to itself that which is its greatest function—namely, the taking care of the purse-strings, and on every occasion it can check the expenditure that the Government propose to incur. I do not think practically that any better or more effective system of check on wasteful and reckless expenditure could be proposed. The Loan Estimates, as disclosed here, will, of course, form the basis of a Loan Bill which will be submitted to the House after the Estimates have been passed. In the Loan Bill it is proposed to insert a clause such as the clause which makes it imperative to vote salaries, and making it absolutely necessary to vote annually the amount which is to be spent. If that is not considered sufficient to retain to Parliament the full authority to appropriate that money as it may desire, then a clause will also be inserted specifically defining how the money is to be dealt with. I can see nothing else that can be raised in objection to this proposal. The hon. member, as usual, referred to the growing size of our loans. He

says we are going to borrow £5,000,000, and increase our interest by £100,000 a year. Well, that is not correct. In fact it is very far wrong.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: You are going to borrow money, surely?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We are paying interest on the Treasury bills.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No; we are not.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Well, it is the same thing. We are paying interest on the money which has been used in the place of them. We have discounted those bills ourselves.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: With our own money.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Very well. This is only getting proper authority for raising the same amount of money as was authorised by the Treasury Bills Act.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Unfortunately you have not proposed to do that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Do what?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: To cover those bills.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: You have not seen the Loan Bill yet. It is not necessary to put in the Estimates money already voted by this House.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I strongly advise you to read the Constitution Act before bringing in your Loan Bill.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: If the Treasury bills are included in the Loan Bill that will be sufficient.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: You had better take my advice.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There may be a technical point in that. I do not care very much about technical points so long as we do what is just and honest. The hon. gentleman asks what the public creditor will say when we ask for a million of money for unspecified purposes? Well, a great deal of his speech I have heard before. I have read it in the *Courier* during the last ten days; but surely the hon. gentleman does not think there is anything in the argument about the public creditor refusing to lend a million of money for a specific object such as the building of railways.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They have heard of political railways in England.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There is no doubt about that. They did when the 1884 Loan Bill was passed. One person wrote about them, and advised people not to lend money upon them on that account, and there were a great many other objections taken to the 1884 loan. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman recollects the circumstance, but I remember him sitting here and looking straight at me, and expressing the hope that he did not see in front of him the persons who wrote those letters.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I certainly never suspected you.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: When a Minister looks at me in the way I was looked at, I certainly think he means me.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I could not have looked at you. I suspected some of your friends.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; it was very unjust. It would be far better if the hon. gentleman was a little more generous in his ideas. But what we have to guard against is

really the stock-jobbers. If they want to "bear" the market they will do it, and it does not matter how we specify the loan. When we were placing on the market the 1884 loan they did not know about the Cleveland Railway or any other lines. They had not come before the public at the time. The English investor saw the prospectus issued by the Bank of England, and the statement issued by the Treasurer here; and when the stock-jobber attempts to depreciate our debentures, I do not know anything that we can do, except to put a plain statement of facts before the public in England, and I have no doubt there is no man who is more capable of doing that than the present Agent-General. On the other hand, when we can reach the investor himself, what does he care whether a railway is going to St. George, or Charleville, or Adavale? Very probably he never heard of these places. All he thinks of is "what sort of a colony is this? Is it a free colony with a responsible Government. Is there a responsible Government on one side and an Opposition on the other who do their duty? Is it a colony which pays its way?" If the colony bears a good character, it does not matter two straws what particular railways we may make, so long as we are sure that the colony enjoys all the rights of responsible government, and that these matters are carefully considered by Parliament. There is no better scheme than this that I know of, because we are making it a condition that every sixpence that is spent out of the loan shall be approved of and passed in detail by this House before the Government have any authority to spend it.

THE HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH said: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interpose at this stage of the debate as replying to a Minister, nor do I want to take up the position of a Minister replying to the leader of the Opposition, but I wish to state my case in a way irrespective of my position as a member on the Government side. In order to lead up to the question I will try to state the position, and in doing that I can state it more clearly perhaps by criticising some remarks made by the leader of the Opposition, and which were provoked by some remarks made by the Treasurer. The leader of the Opposition says that the Government have no railway policy—that they have passed through a whole session and have brought down no railway policy. That is not an accusation that I bring against them at all; and I think the reply to that on the part of the Government is perfectly clear—that before an accusation of that sort can be brought against them, the conditions under which they took up the government should be considered. They took up the government with a very large amount of loan money in the Treasury, and with a deficit in the consolidated revenue, and very large responsibilities, in the shape of commenced railways, which they could not possibly ignore. In the next place, they followed a Government who had pronounced as a part of their policy that it was a good plan to get a large loan and put a large portion of that money in the banks, and keep it there for certain business purposes. The purposes as then stated by the Treasurer of the day were to facilitate the operation of the Land Act of 1884. It was supposed at the time that a large number of people would rush in and take up lands, and if they had a full Treasury the Government could afford to lend money for speculations or business of that kind. That was the object as expressed by the then Treasurer. There were other reasons and other details given of matters which might be assisted if they had a full Treasury in the colony, but I instance that only as one. The Government last year, when they commenced, had plenty of loan money, no doubt,

but far more obligations, and a great part of the money left them was not available for carrying out those obligations, as it was locked up in the banks. That was the position, and how can we possibly in the face of those facts, and knowing that one of the great evils under which we were labouring was our having rushed into far too many railways before we saw how we were going to pay the interest upon them—knowing that, how can we possibly justify a policy of rushing down with a great many more railways? We could not possibly justify it, except for one reason, and that is a reason which I am sorry to say has been evident throughout our politics on all sides of the House—that is, being good to our friends. No doubt a lot of that has been done. The hon. gentleman opposite has done a good deal of that, and he has often accused me of doing the same. Without that pressure there should have been no railways proposed except some very urgent lines that were really required, and the Government did not see them. The Government have been obliged to carry out their obligations, and with respect to all railways, any that were proper railways to construct they were bound to carry out, and if they were not, they were bound undoubtedly to leave them behind; and that is what the Government have done. Up to the present time the Government have done perfectly right under the obligations imposed upon them. They worked along just as a man will do when he has a heavy burden upon his shoulders. The Government should have the sympathy of the country, having that burden, which they did not impose upon themselves, but which they are in duty bound to carry. Having said so much, I come now to the Estimates before the House, and the one item to which I may devote the most of my time, because I think many of the other items would have gone without much discussion, inasmuch as there was not much difference of opinion upon them, so far as I remember at the present time. I will now refer to the second item on the Estimates—the general item of £1,000,000 for railways, without particularising them. No doubt this vote has been led up to during this session. At an early period of the session the leader of the Opposition, on two occasions, drew attention to the fact that so little control was given to Parliament, at the present time, over expenditure of this kind. I have seen that and have acknowledged it, but it has grown with the growth of the colony, and our legislation has not kept pace with it. When I entered Parliament the question of deciding upon a railway during the session was a great thing. It was a thing which had to be studied carefully, and looked at from all sides, and before it was decided we had an estimate of the cost, and almost every detail connected with it previous to our reaching the stage of asking for the money for it. Gradually the laxity of control has grown. The members of the Opposition side of the House have not been entirely to blame for this, because, as I say, it has grown with the growth of the colony, and our legislation has not kept pace with it. At last we came to the time when the Colonial Treasurer got a £10,000,000 loan in 1884, and that had virtually the effect of taking the control of the money completely out of the hands of Parliament. It is perfectly plain how it was done, and it was done in this way: So long as the Ministers only asked for a certain amount of money to be spent every year, we could control the votes, and we had a grip of them, until they brought forward the Estimates next year. When they did that, if they had been imprudent men, or had been squandering the public money, or had kept back their minds from Parliament, and had not divulged what they were going to do with the money—I

am talking about the ordinary consolidated revenue—then, of course, we saw in the Supplementary Estimates every item which we would have to pass. There had always been, then, a complete control over Ministers, because the Estimates were brought forward, in some shape or form, and the Government would always be pulled up if their Estimates were bigger than those presented by their predecessors, and the reason would have to be given. We could always find out who were extravagant Ministers, and the men who had not paid sufficient attention to provide properly for the wants of the departments. That is the check Parliament has on the consolidated revenue, but when we come to deal with loan moneys it is very different. The loans are by law, as they ought to be, part of the consolidated revenue, and they ought to be treated in exactly the same way. But from the peculiar form of our Loan Act, it has always been considered by Parliament to be an Appropriation Act, and the control of the money has got completely outside Parliament, because the Act itself defines very definitely the amount of money that is to be spent, but not the objects for which it is to be spent. It is put down in such quantities that over-expenditure in any particular item does not often occur, because Ministers can always apply to Parliament for an additional amount before the vote is exhausted. And Parliament having passed an Act, and given consent to a certain amount of money being placed in the hands of Ministers, it never again comes before them, except in one way, and that is when Parliament is asked to sanction plans and specifications for a certain railway. It was the custom, until a few years ago, to give an estimate of the cost with plans and specifications, and it was the custom to accept the opinion of the engineer. As a matter of fact, I think we do not find the opinion of the engineer given until the years 1883 or 1884. I do not remember ever seeing an estimate before the House signed by the engineer before that time. Then the opinion of the Chief Engineer is not taken as anything binding upon the House, but an opinion simply given to Parliament by the courtesy of Ministers. The engineer states that a line will cost so much, that the gradients are so-and-so, and that it goes through so-and-so's land. That is information given by the courtesy of Ministers, and which they are not forced to give by law. The consequence of this has been, that Parliament having once given its sanction for a line Ministers can spend the money upon what they like. They get the sanction for so many lines, and they can spend the money on whichever line they choose. Parliament does not decide which line shall be gone on with; but so many lines are provided for in the loan, and the influence of Ministers or members decides what particular lines shall be gone on with during a particular year. The Government in coming to the conclusion that they should have a certain loan, came to the conclusion that no men in their position could have avoided. It is perfectly plain for the reasons which both they and I have given, that they must have a loan, and a pretty large loan. I shall not go into the details of that loan now, although I shall do so afterwards; but there is one item in it which attracts the attention of hon. members more than any other, because it is unprecedented in the history of this House. It is an item unprecedented in the history of legislation in any of the colonies which have representative government. I have not taken the trouble to examine the Loan Acts of the colony of Western Australia, but I have examined carefully the whole of the Loan Acts and Appropriation Acts of the other colonies of Australia and New Zealand, and I find that there is not one single

precedent for the extraordinary course the Government have adopted. In adopting a course of this kind their object has been to give back to Parliament the control over the loan moneys, which we have lost through past practices. If that is the object that was to be attained, there is one easy way in which they might have attained it, and that is to go back to the colonies where the expenditure of borrowed money has been a success—that is, where they have borrowed gradually year after year; and where they have expended the money on the objects for which Parliament has approved its appropriation; and where from year to year Parliament keeps the control of the moneys which have been voted. Now the machinery for keeping this control has been improved considerably in the colonies, as their Parliaments have got more wisdom. I shall recount the position of affairs in other colonies. On a previous occasion I referred to the practice followed in Victoria. There, the Government, when they wish to construct railways, bring down a Bill. That Bill authorises the construction of certain railways in certain places. The details of these places are minutely given, and the descriptions of the railways are as minutely given as the circumstances will permit at the time. A fair amount of information is given for the purpose of enabling Parliament to judge whether the various lines ought to be agreed to or not, and on that information they decide. Parliament in giving leave for the construction of a railway stipulates that the line shall not cost more than a certain amount per mile, and they also stipulate about other matters which I need not detail, the cost being the most important point. When that has been done—that is leave granted for the construction of a line in a certain place—a Loan Bill is introduced. That Bill does not specify the various railways in detail, because they have previously been scheduled, and the amounts which are to be appropriated from loan have been approved of by Parliament. The Loan Bill, therefore, only specifies that so many millions for railways are to be borrowed. It is not necessary to have all the details, because, virtually, they have already voted the various amounts, and it would be going over the same ground twice were they to discuss the items in the Loan Bill. They do not ask Parliament to go over the items one by one, but simply put down a lump sum for railways. That is the middle part of the process. Then the last part of the process commences. Parliament will not allow the money to be spent, simply because it has been voted, and is lying in the Treasury, but they insist that an Appropriation Bill should be passed every year, just as is done in the case of expenditure from the consolidated revenue fund, of which the loan fund is really a part; and they also require that an indemnity should be given next year for any amount which has been spent in excess of the votes granted the previous year. That is, that what we call Supplementary Estimates are introduced, and that is one of the first things considered before going into the financial arrangements for the ensuing year. That system is complete, and I have been trying to work up to it, and I should be glad to see this House work up to that system; but I never for a moment supposed that the Government would try to adopt that process by beginning in the middle, and putting down a lump sum for railways before they had ever been asked their direction, their locality, or whether they were even in the colony. They have done this instead of adopting the Victorian system, which they say they are willing to adopt, and where every item is discussed and passed by Parliament first.

That is the Victorian system. Let us now see what they do in South Australia. That is a country that has borrowed a great deal of money, and got into difficulties similar to our own; but they learned wisdom, and kept hold of the purse strings much better than we are doing at the present time. The system there is this: By the Railway Act each railway gets a special sanction by Parliament under a special Act. There is an Act for every railway that passes. That is a cumbrous Act, because there are many clauses common to all railways which should be in a general Act. However, it is a certain safeguard. The only point I wish to direct attention to is, that it is stated in the preamble of the Bill in which the sanction of the House is asked for the making of the railway, that the plans, sections, and book of reference, signed by the Engineer-in-Chief, which binds them to the cost of construction, has actually been deposited in the office of the Surveyor-General. The Bill then goes on to give authority to the Commissioners for Railways to construct this railway according to those plans and specifications. Then comes the Loan Act, which specifies the railways that are passed, and that schedule is made to agree, and does agree, with the details that had passed the House at a previous time. That is the system in South Australia. In New Zealand the system is quite as stringent; it works in the same way so as to give Parliament a complete check over the details. The Act, which looks as if they passed items of this sort *in globo*, is called the Loan Act, and it does authorise the loans *in globo*. For instance, in the Act I am referring to there are £700,000 put down. It took some searching before I could find any authority for this amount being put down *in globo*. But turning to the Appropriation Act I find that every item making up the £700,000 put into the Loan Act had been voted on the Estimates a month before. The details of every railway are passed in committee, and the Act itself receives the assent of the Governor on the same day on which it has passed through Parliament. The next colony is New South Wales. I need hardly refer to their system in detail, because our system has been based on theirs; it has been copied from their system. But they have adopted a system which I need only refer to here. I refer to the Public Works Act which passed last year or the year before. There it is provided that before any loan can be passed for a railway the whole of the details of it, including the cost, shall have been actually passed by a committee of both Houses of Parliament. In each of these systems we have a complete assurance that Parliament approves of the object for which the money is going to be borrowed. The Minister for Railways says that is the object he wishes to attain. He says that previously railways used to be brought down in a most straggling way—so much for one and so much for another, and the amount mentioned had very little reference to the cost they afterwards came to. We all admit that, and we all admit that it was a vicious system. But what is the proposal the hon. gentleman puts before us? Is it that we are to have these railways more accurately specified, and their cost more accurately ascertained, so that we can come to a judgment, if it is worth while, upon them? No. He comes to the conclusion that he will borrow the money and then decide whether he will make a railway at all. That is not the conclusion he ought to have come to. The conclusion he ought to have come to was that he would do at first what he says now he will do afterwards. The Colonial Treasurer says we cannot spend that money until we get the leave of the House. I am surprised, seeing

he has been in the Treasury so long, that he does not know he can spend a great deal of it before he gets the leave of the House; and I know that if he remains in the Treasury long enough he will spend it. The hon. gentleman also surprised me by saying he did not know what had become of the small item for the *via recta*; he informed the House he was not aware what had become of the money, whether it had vanished or not.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No; that it was not on the list.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I must have misunderstood the hon. gentleman. As to whether it was on the list or not, I have an authority here in black and white, signed, "W. Pattison," that it is on the list; and it cannot come off the list until an Act of Parliament is passed. Now let us see, first, what are the reasons given by the Treasurer? He says in the first place, "I cannot spend the money." Well, I am going to ask, if he cannot spend the money, and I can show that we don't want it, what is the use of borrowing it? This is a very extraordinary course for the Government to adopt, and some reason should be given for departing from the proper course, and he gave at last another reason—that the Government wanted the money to use in formulating the railway policy of the future.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No!

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I say yes. The hon. gentleman said they wanted this million of money for that purpose. He is not going to be in the Treasury for a long time; possibly I may be Treasurer, and I should be very sorry to be bound by what I may call the rather silly remark on his part—to whatever may be the future policy of the Government when they ask for a million of money to make railways, and they do not even know where those railways are to be located. That is no reason. Those hon. members have evidently been seeking for reasons, and the Minister for Railways illustrated how it would be a very good and useful thing to have this money. I do not remember his exact words, but I think his idea was: Supposing the House sanctioned a certain amount of expenditure, and when it became necessary to finish a contract, and money was required for that purpose, it would be very convenient to have this amount to fall back on. That is what I understood his argument to be.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes!

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: Very well. But if the hon. gentleman had looked at the figures compiled in the Treasury, of which the Treasurer does not seem to know very much, he would find that the only occasion on which he would have required to use that money since the last Loan Bill was passed, was to the extent of £49,852, the amount of unforeseen expenditure that has actually taken place during that time, so far as I can understand the Treasurer's figures.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What were the Treasury Bills for?

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: They were for the purpose of raising money if it was required, but not for the purpose of keeping it in the Treasury until the hon. gentleman borrowed more money for railways and bought them back. The hon. gentleman said they want the money for the purpose of keeping the Treasury going. Of course we are all anxious to see the Treasury kept going, but is that any reason for borrowing an extra million of money? If the hon. gentleman had calculated how much money he wants us to commit ourselves to at the present time he would see that it is close up to the £10,000,000 loan, from the evils of which we suffered so much. The House is now

asked to sanction the raising of £3,781,996; the net balance from previous loans, as furnished in the information supplied by the Treasurer, is £4,323,767. The trust funds—savings bank and other funds—in the hands of the Government amount to £777,000; therefore supposing, in order to understand my argument, that this loan is sold, the Government will have at their disposal £8,882,000. To come off that is the amount of the depreciation of the 1884 loan, £332,247; then there is the deficit, which although not very big just now, will go on increasing as we get further away from the big payments made during September—about £405,000. That will leave over £8,000,000 at the disposal of the Government, and we remember what a row was kicked up about the £10,000,000 loan. Are we going to do this, especially when there is an item of £1,000,000 which is perfectly undefined? The Minister for Railways, who I believe is thoroughly sincere, says he wants to provide a good check; but I do not think the check he will provide will be a practicable one this session. It is a check, but I do not think it will be a practicable one. At all events there must be some provision made for the expenditure of that money, and that money alone. No Minister has hinted at the passing of an Appropriation Act, one of the clauses of which will make it illegal to spend more than each year's appropriation. If they succeeded in accomplishing that, they would succeed in a very praiseworthy object—in doing quite as much, or perhaps more, than I thought they would be able to do this session, and I am sure it would have the hearty approval of the House. But we must not forget that unless some special provision of that kind is made they have at present the right to spend a great deal more; because I contend, with all due deference to the leader of the Opposition, that all the Loan Acts passed are really Appropriation Acts. They have been read and recognised as such for years, and are, I believe, practically Appropriation Acts for every railway that has received the sanction of the House. The Government have, therefore, the power to spend between £2,000,000 and £3,000,000, unless that power is circumscribed and definitely settled in the Bill. Hon. members will not consider me, at all events, as not speaking the mind of the party on this side of the House. I have been accustomed to speak it for a long time, and I do not think I differ very much from them now. I know perfectly well that a difficulty such as this would not have arisen if I had been taken into consultation as to what took place when I left the Cabinet. I am thoroughly satisfied that the thing has been done hastily, without due consideration, and without regard to the great interests of the State. I am perfectly convinced that if the men now sitting on the Treasury benches had considered the whole matter, they would have seen that they were not supplying a check on future expenditure, but that they were rather making it much more easy to get money out of the Treasury, and at all events giving greater stimulus to the host of applicants for railways, who torment the life out of the Minister for Railways, and other Ministers too. To have a million of money at their disposal for railways which are not even named, which they do not even know where they are going to, would be bound to be a bone of contention much greater than if the railways were named. There is bound to be a scramble over it that will introduce more political immorality than ever we have had before by putting over £7,000,000 in the control of the Government to manipulate.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Where is it?

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I do not believe the hon. gentleman understands his own figures.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You don't understand them. You are counting the unexpended balances as cash in hand.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: And what else are they? Of course they are cash in hand. You have got the money; you have not spent it. I would have put it another way if I had thought the hon. member was so dull as that. If the hon. member will look at the figures, he will see that they make up the amount I have stated as being at the disposal of the Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Nonsense!

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I do not think the hon. member has had experience enough in the Treasury to say that what I state is nonsense. I have put the matter perfectly plain, and I am quite satisfied that the House understands what I mean. No man can misunderstand these accounts, even from the information the hon. gentleman gave, except himself. I was sorry to see one matter imported into the debate which I think had better be kept out, and that is the grievances of the Northern and Central districts of the colony. I think that when they are analysed there is not very much to growl at in either case. At all events it is a wide subject, and I think that of all members of the House the Treasurer should have been the last to complain about what has been done for the Central district. Judging the matter in any way one pleases the Central district has been well treated. According to population, far more money has been expended in the Central district than in any of the other divisions of the colony. That was the great difficulty we had to get over in drafting a proper Decentralisation Bill; and to hear a complaint on that score coming from the Treasurer of the colony, only shows how easily people can get up a cry of injustice to the Central district and to the North. But let them examine the figures, and they will see that there is a good reply to their arguments. I am perfectly prepared to meet the hon. gentleman when he brings the matter forward in a tangible manner. I give my advice to a party which will perhaps not use it. I think the Government have acted in a disgraceful manner, and that the leader of the Opposition has acted with discretion in not moving that the item be struck out. If he had done so, the result would probably be that there would be a party vote on the question. I ask the Ministry to consider the wisdom of putting an item of this sort on the Estimates. The Treasurer knows perfectly well that he will not want it, because as the Act is now, he will have a little over £5,000,000 that he can borrow at once. The Minister for Mines and Works said that he himself looked upon this as a loan for two years.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: No; the Minister for Railways.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: I understood the hon. gentleman to use it as an argument the other day, that it was only a loan for two years, and now the hon. gentleman contradicts me flatly. What does he mean?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I mean what I said, and always do mean what I say.

The HON. SIR T. MCILWRAITH: The hon. gentleman surely does not understand what I said. I quoted him as saying that he considered this as a loan for two years.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I say so now.

THE HON. SIR T. McILWRAITH: Then why does the hon. gentleman contradict me? As this loan is simply for two years, the extra £1,000,000 will never come in at all until after two years, even if we keep up the balance in the banks at the present time. Therefore, instead of that being an argument in favour of getting it, it is really an argument against it, because we shall only be doing what we have been doing up to the present time—namely, putting a large amount of our loan money in the banks. It is all very well to say that it helps trade; it no doubt does to some extent; but if we have that money lying about, there will be a scramble for it by the banks. I hope the party will consider this matter, and not allow the schedule to include this amount of money.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said: Mr. Speaker,—The hon. gentleman who has just sat down has taken upon himself to speak for the party, and to speak to the party as if he was still the leader of the party. He also censured the Ministry to a certain extent for acting hastily and without consulting him, even after he had gone away from the Ministry. I ask you, Sir, or any member of this House, would any Ministry have demeaned itself by asking him for his counsel or advice after the way he acted? I say the Ministry did not act hastily. This matter has been under the consideration of the Ministry, and under the consideration of the hon. gentleman himself, if he would only tell the truth, for the last twelve or fifteen months. Every Act the hon. gentleman quoted from to-night I got for him last session. The hon. gentleman smiles, but he knows it to be true. I got those Acts for him last session so that he could build up a policy by which we should get away from the evil system under which we have been operating on loans for the last fifteen or twenty years. The hon. gentleman tells the Treasurer to-night that he does not consider if he becomes Treasurer again that he will be bound by the statement of the present Treasurer. I know that very well. The hon. gentleman does not want to be bound by anything; he never did want to be bound. He would sooner Parliament had no control over him when he becomes Treasurer. But the effort of the Ministry at the present time is to try and bind any Treasurer, whoever he may be. That is the intention of the Ministry. I, for one, would never consult the hon. gentleman, and would not have remained a member of a Ministry which would consult him after the way in which he treated the Ministry, and the way in which he left that Ministry. The hon. gentleman also talks about the Treasurer introducing Northern and Central grievances. I did not hear the Treasurer speak of any grievances.

AN HONOURABLE MEMBER: Yes, he did.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I did not hear any grievances spoken of, except by the hon. gentleman himself. The hon. gentleman also talks about separationists. Why, he is a separationist himself, when it suits him. The hon. gentleman, when in Townsville, said that if he were a Northern man he would be a separationist, and now he tells the House that the North has no grievances. What he said at Townsville, when he spoke of their grievances, must then be bunkum. The hon. gentleman admits that the Ministry are trying to introduce a check on the waste of expenditure, and also to give control to Parliament over the expenditure, which they ought to have, and he thinks this might be done if there is a clause put into the Appropriation Bill which will insist upon a check of that kind, so that the money specified in the annual Appropriation Bill will be expended, and that not more than that money will

be expended during the year. The Minister for Railways stated distinctly that it was the intention of the Ministry, in introducing the probable loan expenditure for this year, to pass an Appropriation Bill for that expenditure, and fix it as tightly as any member of this House could fix it. Our intentions are perfect in the direction in which they go. Now the hon. gentleman tells us that this million cannot be spent for two years, even if we pass it to-night or at any other time this session. I am surprised at the hon. gentleman saying that. He knows very well that if the Minister for Railways is able to have proper surveys made of the lines which the Ministry will make, and brings down those surveys to the House, and they are approved by the House next session, the estimates for such lines can be put into the annual Appropriation Act of the year, and the amounts appropriated spent immediately afterwards, as the contracts are let. The hon. gentleman knows that full well, but he says we ought now to have a schedule of the railways which we intend to make before we bring down this estimate for a £1,000,000 vote. Now I ask him does he not know that no such schedule could have been introduced by the Ministry this session? Does he not know that the surveys ought at least to be two years ahead for a purpose of that kind, and that the surveys have not been kept ahead for that purpose—that they were left behind by our predecessors, and we were compelled to take up the surveys which they left off, so as to continue the construction of the railways which they passed in the Loan Act of 1884? The hon. gentleman knows that as well as we do. I also know what the practice of the other colonies is. I am not at all afraid to meet him in discussing that practice. I know the practice as well as he does, and I say I looked up for him those Acts of Parliament bearing on this question on which the hon. gentleman could frame a policy. Let us see what they do in Victoria. It is not exactly what the hon. gentleman said it was. The hon. gentleman says all the details are given—minutely given, were the terms he used—and all the facts connected with the railways are given, and the amount appropriated to each line, before a line can be brought in. Now let us see what the Victorian Act really does say on that subject. I quote from the great Railway Construction Act of 1884, and I may premise my remarks by telling the hon. gentleman that this is very much like the great Loan Act of Queensland of the same year. In fact, it is a remarkable coincidence—it may be an undesigned one, but it is a strange thing that both those Acts, so remarkable in their way, should be brought in in the same year. I do not know who first set the example, but they are both bad, and had the same object. In 1882 a Railway Bill was brought in by the then Government of Victoria involving an expenditure of four millions of money. It was not entirely for railways. There were other works provided for, but it involved that amount of expenditure. That passed the Lower House in Victoria, and was thrown out in the Upper Chamber, because it was looked upon as a great vehicle of corruption.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: As this Bill will be.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: That Government went out of office. Their successors in 1884 brought in another Railway Construction Bill larger in amount—nearly double—containing a great many of the railways which were in the Bill of 1882. Some of them were left out because the gentlemen in whose districts the lines were to be made were then in opposition, and a great many other railways were put in in favour of the men who were supporting what was then called the Coalition Government.

Now, let us see the amount of information given in this Railway Construction Act. Clause 3 of the Act of 1884 begins in this way. I take the first railway on the list:—

“A railway commencing at the Avoca railway station and terminating at or near the Ararat railway station, in the line and upon the lands described in the first schedule hereto, to be called the Avoca and Ararat Railway.”

I do not know what “the first schedule hereto” really says, but I have looked at some of the schedules. The first schedule begins by stating that the railway shall commence at the termination of the Maryborough and Avoca Railway, and describes the number and sections of the allotments of land that it will go through before it reaches the place it is intended to reach. After describing all that, the engineer and Minister are given a limit of deviation of five miles. That is to say, the Minister could deviate that railway for five miles in any direction, either to oppress opponents or satisfy supporters. That is the kind of information which the hon. gentleman says is given so minutely. That is minutely enough. The limit of deviation is given minutely enough, but all the rest is left very open indeed. There are railways in this schedule that actually deviate ten miles. Now, I ask any hon. member whether that is the system which he would wish the Ministry of this colony to imitate? We are restricted by the Railway Act to a very much smaller deviation. That is all the information that is given. No more information is given than is contained in this Railway Construction Act, and I must tell hon. members that there were between sixty and seventy railways provided for. A railway for every member supporting the Government, with the members of the Opposition left out.

Mr. HODGKINSON: The same as the artesian bores.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I regard this Railway Construction Act as the greatest vehicle of corruption that was ever attempted to be passed, and did pass, in any colony of Australasia. Why should we follow such an example? That is no example for us, and I ask any hon. member would he be satisfied with any Ministry that followed such an example?

Mr. ANNEAR: They are the best paying railways in Australia.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: I do not dispute that; but that has nothing to do with the question. There are some hundreds of miles of these railways that have never been built, although the Bill was passed, five years ago, and the immediate successors of the Ministry talk of bringing in another Bill—not this session. They cannot do that, because they have not the surveys sufficiently ahead to state what allotments of land the lines will probably go through, but they are going to bring in another Bill next year. That Bill of 1884 has answered so well in keeping the party together that they will bring in a Bill providing for double the number of railways provided for by the Act of 1884. It provided for 1,100 miles of railway, but next session they propose to bring in a Bill providing for 2,000 miles. So that the present Ministry will be an everlasting Ministry in Victoria. The members of it may die, but the Ministry and the party will always remain there so long as there are railways to be constructed and money to be borrowed. Now what is the next process after that amount of information is given? The next process is to borrow the money. The Loan Bill became law in 1885, and it contained nine-

teen clauses, and no further information than was contained in the Railway Construction Bill as to the railways that were to be built, or as to the amount of money to be appropriated for each railway. There is no such information given in the Victorian Act. No such information is given, and the hon. gentleman made a mistake in saying that the amounts appropriated for each railway are put down in the Act. They are not, though they are given afterwards when the Loan Appropriation Act for the year is passed in the House, in the same way as the Loan Appropriation now on the table of this House, when it is passed, will be dealt with, and of course the amount of money to be spent on each particular line during the year will be put down. That is the only information given, and it is the last information given. Let us see what is contained in the schedule of this Act, which was for an £8,000,000 loan. The Treasurer of course is directed in this Loan Bill what to do with the debentures; how the money is to be raised; how it is to be raised out of the consolidated revenue for different works, and so on; and then we come to the schedule, which says:—

“For the construction of railways and works connected therewith,”—

Almost word for word what we have here in this Loan Estimate—

“including rolling-stock, already authorised by Parliament.”

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Already authorised in the way I have described, with ten miles of deviation allowed on either side. That is twenty miles within which a railway may gerrymander through the country, just as it suits the engineer or the Minister to take it—

“Or of such other works connected therewith, including rolling-stock, as Parliament may by any Act direct, and for the repayment into the consolidated revenue of any sums advanced therefrom and spent, or to be expended, upon any railways or works connected therewith—£6,000,000.”

Now, the next process is the process mentioned by the hon. member for North Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith. This is what is called a Railway Loan Application Act, applying the money to be expended for the year, the same as we intend to do this session, to the different lines and other public works intended to be carried out during the year. That is the last process of all. In that Loan Bill of 1885 there were two or three other very strange items which Parliament never got the slightest information about. Little as the information was that was given by the Railway Loan Act, there was none whatever given about these other items, and the Minister of the day had the power to do whatever he liked with this money—under an Act, of course, that was to be passed afterwards. I find this, also, in the Bill—

“For irrigation works and water supply in the country districts, to be expended in such manner as Parliament shall direct—£1,300,000.”

That was given entirely under the control of the Minister without any check whatever. When he made up his mind that a certain district should have a water supply he would have a survey made and an estimate of the cost, and he would bring that down in the schedule of the next Loan Appropriation Act and he would ask Parliament to vote it. What is the difference between that system and the system we have asked the House to adopt?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: A very great deal, I think.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: There is none whatever. There is a difference between the words "railways" and "water supply," and that is all. There is no more difference than that.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is a great deal.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Now, let us see whether I am correct in the statement I made that the Minister in Victoria has the sole control of the expenditure of this money or that the Parliament has scarcely more control, if any, over it than the Parliament had here under the 1884 Act. I shall quote from the Victorian *Hansard* of 1885 on the debate upon the Railway and Irrigation Works Loan Bill—the Loan Bill I have just mentioned. Mr. Service moved the second reading of that Bill. He stated that he wanted so much for railways and so much as a beginning for water supply—£1,300,000 for water supply. He made a very short speech indeed upon such an important question. When he sat down he was asked some information by a Mr. Harper, and in answer to that gentleman, Mr. Service said—

"He would be happy to give the fullest explanations in committee. The points referred to by the hon. member for East Bourke, Mr. Harper, were specially fit for discussion in committee."

Mr. Wrixon then said:—

"It appeared to him that there was in the Bill something entirely new in principle. It was proposed to float a loan for £3,000,000 and to leave it open to the Government to avail themselves of the money at their pleasure. (Mr. Service: 'That is always done.')

That is the colony we are asked to imitate. A colony where the leader of the Government, an extremely able man, admits that the control of money has always been left entirely in the hands of the Government. The following year Mr. Service was out of the office of Premier, and Mr. Gillies was in as Premier, and in bringing in an estimate of expenditure that was in a way supplementary to the Railway Construction Bill of 1884, Mr. Gillies was asked a certain question by a Mr. Graves, and the Victorian *Hansard* reported the matter in this way:—

"Mr. Graves said he would like to know whether it was intended to apply any of the £300,000"—

Mr. Gillies was asking for £600,000, quite independent of the Railway Loan of the following year—

"to the construction of new lines of railway during the year 1885? (Mr. Gillies: 'Certainly!') Were hon. members to be informed what lines of railway it was intended to construct?"

Mark the fact, that the question was as to new lines of railway.

"Mr. Gillies remarked that it was impossible at present for the Government to inform hon. members which lines would be constructed out of the £600,000."

And that £600,000 was granted. The hon. gentleman will see, then, that Victoria, with all its success in borrowing money and expending it, is not an example we should follow. Now, let us go to New South Wales. I need say very little about New South Wales, as they followed the same vicious system we had up to the year before last, when they initiated a different system. The year before last they passed an Act by which a "Public Works Committee," composed of certain members of both Houses, was appointed to decide what public works should be constructed, whether railways, buildings, or any other public works costing more than £20,000. They took evidence, and got the opinion of experts and engineers, and they made certain recommendations then to Parliament. That is the

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system they have now in New South Wales. I do not know whether we are prepared to adopt a system of that kind or not; but in any case it is too late in the day to adopt it this session. Now, let us go to New Zealand. The hon. gentleman made a similar mistake in regard to New Zealand as he made in regard to Victoria. The present system in existence in New Zealand with regard to public works and loans began in 1870. If the hon. gentleman reads the Acts passed there in 1870 he will find that the Immigration and Public Works Act passed in that year, lays down the conditions upon which public works are to be carried out—not railways alone, but roads, water supply, bridges, and buildings, especially water supplies to goldfields. All the conditions are laid down distinctly in this Immigration and Public Works Act. At the same time that this Bill was going through Parliament in New Zealand, there was also a Loan Bill going through, called the Loan Act of 1870, and it has been called that ever since in all Public Works Acts since that date. Now there are certain railways mentioned in the schedule of this Immigration and Public Works Act, and mentioned in the same vague way as the works are mentioned in the Victorian Act which I have just read—in fact, more vague than that, because a limit of deviation was not agreed to. The 8th clause of the Immigration and Public Works Act of 1870 says:—

"There may be issued and applied out of any of the moneys authorised to be raised under the said Loan Act for railways, and made applicable to the purpose by the General Assembly, all such sums of money as the Governor may from time order for the purposes mentioned in the two preceding sections."

Then the next section goes on to say:—

"The railways to be constructed under this Act shall be only such railways as shall from time to time be determined by the General Assembly."

That gave the General Assembly, and not the Ministry of the day, the power to fix the railways which were to be made under the authority of this Act, out of the moneys appropriated by the Immigration and Public Works Act, which was passed in the same year. It also goes further than that. There are clauses in it which actually provide distinctly for railways which are not surveyed—railways which are to be made in certain portions of the colony of New Zealand, which was at that time divided into provinces, which have since been abolished. Now the Loan Act which was passed at the same time as the Immigration and Public Works Act, contained this information in the schedule:—

"Such railways as shall from time to time be determined by the General Assembly, including the expense of raising this part of this loan—£2,000,000. This sum to include the moneys payable to Middle Island Railway Fund account, under the Immigration and Public Works Act, 1870; immigration, including expenses as aforesaid, £1,000,000; construction of roads, including repayments of advance from consolidated fund already made for same purpose, and including expenses as aforesaid, £400,000."

Then come several large items for the purchase of land, and for the making of telegraphs, making a loan of £4,000,000 altogether. Now the money received from the sale of debentures from that loan was to be called the "Public Works Loan Account of New Zealand"; and every Loan Act which has been passed in New Zealand since then has the same clause putting the money into that Public Works Loan fund every year. When the Minister for Works wishes to make any railway, or road, or any other public work, he introduces a Bill for the purpose, and he prefaces it by enumerating all the loans which have been made in New Zealand from 1870 up to

the present time, and enumerates the amounts of money received from each loan, winding up the preamble by saying :—

"Whereas it is expedient to expend so much—£2,000,000 or £1,000,000, or whatever the amount may be—of the unexpended balances of the aforesaid loans, be it enacted :—"

And then he goes on and says what works are to be paid for out of these unexpended balances, and they are all put into a schedule year by year. That is the same system as we are now adopting here. All our works will be scheduled; we shall have our Loan Appropriation Act every year, just as we have our annual Appropriation Act for the expenditure out of consolidated revenue, and we shall specify every individual work which will be carried on during the ensuing year. Now, let us see what the tender consciences of those two hon. gentlemen who have spoken so strongly against this million loan, on account of the vague way in which it is put down—so they say—let us see what their tender consciences really amount to. As I stated before, the only difference between the irrigation works in Victoria and this loan, is in name. Let us take the Loan Act of 1884, and see how much of that is unspecified, and left to the discretion of the Minister, without Parliament having control of it. We find there the following :—

"Rolling-stock, £737,000; railway telegraph lines and other works, £30,000; improvement of harbours and rivers, £533,000; lighthouses, £10,000; public buildings, £455,000; bridges, £100,000; electric telegraphs, £250,000; loans to local bodies, £500,000; water supply and storage, £250,000; defence of the colony, £100,000."

That makes a total of nearly £3,000,000 left entirely in the control of the Ministry of the day, without their being compelled to ask the sanction of Parliament for the expenditure of one single penny of that money. And yet these gentlemen of tender consciences exclaim against the million we are asking for railways which we shall begin to construct next year, and they object because we do not specify what particular works are to be constructed out of that million, although we have stated distinctly that not a penny of that money will be spent without the sanction of Parliament.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH : The two things are essentially distinct.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS : There has been nearly half a million spent on buildings and sidings on railways, of which Parliament never gets an account from the Minister. The only account which can be found is contained in the reports of the Auditor-General and the Commissioner for Railways. Parliament has not had the control of one single penny of that expenditure; and yet these gentlemen object to our asking Parliament to have the controlling power over every penny of the million we are asking for now. The hon. member for North Brisbane, the Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith, and the other hon. member for North Brisbane, the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith—in fact it seems to me to be a Brisbane combination—appear to be very much alarmed that this will be a vehicle for corruption, and that Ministers will not be able to withstand the pressure of their supporters—they do not say a word of their opponents, of course—for the construction of railways. All I can say with regard to this prediction of corruption, or probability of corruption, is that I am not aware that any member of this party has asked the Minister for Railways for a single railway, or myself for a single work out of this £1,000,000.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH : Are all the reports of deputations we read about in the newspapers untrue ?

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS : It is this £1,000,000 that I am speaking of. There is a general demand for railways all over the colony. The Minister for Railways has a sheet containing railways that have been asked for which it would cost £12,000,000 or £13,000,000 to build.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH : He will promise them all now out of this £1,000,000.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS : The Minister for Railways is a very cautious Minister, and he has taken very good care not to promise one. I have not the slightest fear of this leading to any system of the kind which the hon. member, Sir T. McIlwraith, anticipates. Next year, when we come down with a schedule of railways to be constructed during the year the system will follow just the same as the systems of other colonies, by giving Parliament greater control. It will be a schedule of railways alone as they are wanted, but with the difference in the case of Victoria, and New Zealand—where Parliament has more control than in Victoria—that Parliament will have sole and entire control. We do not care how stringent the Loan Act may be made, so that not a penny can be spent of the £1,000,000. We do not care even if they put a provision into the Loan Act that Ministers will be liable to impeachment if they spend one penny without the sanction of Parliament.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH : Who has the power of impeachment? I wish there was one.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS : So do I; I have often wished it. The leader of the Opposition also spoke about the deplorable state of our finances, and the probable deficit at the end of the current year. In a grave tone he told us to be careful what we were doing on account of the serious position the colony is placed in, and not to add any more to the interest we have to pay, or as little as we possibly can, or than we are obliged to do. I do not think the Colonial Treasurer is afraid of any deficit this year. I do not believe there will be any. I hope we shall be able to wipe out a little of the deficit the hon. gentleman left us. Although he says the members of this House and the people of the country do not care who put the country into the position it is in, I think differently. I think they do care. I think the people of the country care very much who has placed the colony in its present position, and I am certain the majority of the members of this House care very seriously indeed. And they have reason to care, because by the position that hon. gentleman left the colony in by his 1884 Loan Act, and his extravagant expenditure, he has prevented the Ministry of the day from carrying out works which they believe are necessary for the progress of the colony. We were fettered on coming into office as strongly as any man in irons at St. Helena is fettered. We were bound hand and foot by the 1884 Loan Act as if we were perfect slaves, and by the Land Act of 1884 as well. This is the first attempt to make railways, which we believe should be made, in addition to those which the Act of 1884 provided for the making of. This is the first attempt we have made to make railways in different parts of the colony, giving to each district its fair share, and we are met by the objection that we are not honest, and that we cannot go on with this system because it is dangerous to the virtue of members of Parliament. The hon. gentleman must think the members of the present Parliament are extremely corrupt, even more so than the Parliament of 1884. I think we are less so. I think the lesson the country and the members of the House learned from the

Act of 1884 will prevent the realisation of the unfortunate anticipations of either of the two hon. members who represent North Brisbane.

Question put and passed.

COMMITTEE.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH asked whether the Government intended to go on with the consideration of the Loan Estimates, or to give the Committee further time, say, a week, to think over the matter?

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the Government were perfectly prepared to go on with the Loan Estimates, but the acting leader of the House proposed to go on with the votes in his department in the Estimates-in-Chief. He had no doubt the leader of the Opposition would find a very great deal to digest in the speech just delivered by the Minister for Mines and Works.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: I have no objection.

BUILDINGS.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said the proceedings that night had been very unusual. It was the first time a debate had ever taken place in the House on a motion to go into Committee on the Loan Estimates. In 1879 the hon. member for North Brisbane, the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith, when introducing the Loan Estimates, made a Financial Statement, and that course was followed in 1884 when Mr. Dickson was Treasurer; but no discussion took place on either of those occasions. In 1881 and 1882, when Loan Estimates were introduced, no Financial Statement was made at all. The proceedings in the present instance had been very unusual; but perhaps it was better that a little steam had been let off at that stage. He now moved that the sum of £92,390 be granted to Her Majesty, for the service of the year 1889-90, for buildings in connection with his department.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he wished to know when it was proposed to go on with the Loan Estimates? And he wished to say one word as to what the Minister for Mines and Works said was an unusual thing. The proper place to debate questions of principle was in the House when the Speaker was in the chair; the proper place to discuss details was in committee. On the occasions to which the hon. gentleman had referred no question of principle was involved.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said it was proposed to go on with the Loan Estimates to-morrow. He hoped the Premier would be in his place then.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH said he presumed the hon. gentleman would take first the proposals to borrow money.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS: Yes.

Mr. HUNTER said it was understood yesterday that the Government intended to go on with the Loan Estimates now, and a great number of members would have spoken while the Speaker was in the chair had they not been led to understand that the Loan Estimates would be taken in Committee as soon as the motion for going into Committee was passed. The Government had taken hon. members by surprise by taking the present course. It was a general thing for them to spring matters on members, but he did not think it would assist them in getting through the Estimates in the present instance.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that if the Committee were desirous of going on with the Loan Estimates he did not think there was any objection.

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said there was no objection to going on with the Loan Estimates; but the Government were merely following the usual practice. The hon. member for Toowoomba could inform the Committee that the practice was to go on with the general Estimates when the Speaker left the chair on a motion to go into Committee of Supply on the Loan Estimates, leaving the consideration of the Loan Estimates over till a future occasion. The Government were quite prepared to go on with the Loan Estimates if the Committee wished; and their reason for not doing so at once was because they were following the usual practice and because the Premier was unable to be in his place.

Mr. HODGKINSON said that a great many hon. members had attended at great inconvenience, because they expected the Loan Estimates to be discussed. Whatever might have been the exact words used by the Colonial Treasurer on the previous night, there was a general impression that the Loan Estimates were to be discussed; and there could not be a better time than the present, because there was such a large attendance of members.

Mr. GROOM said the Minister for Mines and Works was quite right as to the practice; but on the present occasion members on both sides understood that the Loan Estimates were to be discussed seriatim as soon as the House went into Committee of Supply, and a great many of them were present with that intention.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR MINES AND WORKS said it appeared to be the wish of hon. members to proceed with the Loan Estimates; and he would therefore, with the permission of the Committee, withdraw the motion he had made.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

IMMIGRATION.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said that, in the absence of the Premier, he would formally move that there be granted out of loan, for the service of the year 1889-90, a sum not exceeding £250,000 for immigration. He had explained earlier in the evening the intentions of the Government with respect to immigration, and he would only state now that the amount asked for the present year—namely, £125,000, was a substantial decrease on the amount expended last year.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he would like some better authority on finance than he was to continue the discussion on that question, especially as there was considerable difference of opinion respecting it. A very great authority on finance had pointed out that the Colonial Treasurer was not acquainted with his own figures, and the conclusions to be drawn therefrom; and he (Mr. Hodgkinson) was in a greater fog on the matter after the hon. gentleman's supposed explanation than he was before it. But he took it that those loan votes rested upon somewhat higher ground. They were asked to commit the country to the expenditure of a very large sum of money, and the question was whether, as the representatives of the country, they were justified in doing so; and in order to view the matter in its proper light, he must go a little over the history of the past two sessions. The Minister for Mines and Works appeared, in his explanation of the course objected to by the hon. the senior member for North Brisbane, Sir T. McIlwraith, not so much to be anxious to defend the course of action he himself proposed, as to contradict that recommended by the hon. gentleman in

question. The examples the hon. gentleman gave were examples which that Committee were not prepared to follow. He had quoted the example of New Zealand, but they knew very well that an able financial gentleman in that colony had let off such a quantity of financial fireworks that they had landed the colony in a state of considerable financial distress. He did not think that was a recommendation which that Committee should accept, especially as it was quoted not so much with the view of persuading them to adopt the course which the hon. gentleman himself proposed as in contradiction of the statements of the hon. member for North Brisbane. But the Government had asked them to do more. The Government of Victoria always indicated, at any rate, the point from which their railways started, and their point of termination; and their line of deviation was limited to from five to ten miles; but hon. members on the Treasury benches asked the Committee to vote for railways that they had not even named. Their deviation run from Cape York down to the Logan, or perhaps outside the colony altogether. That was the system of railways the Hon. the Minister for Mines and Works had introduced into that Assembly. In what position did the Government stand? Was it a position in which they could be trusted with the expenditure of any money under constitutional principles? At the last general election there was a certain distinct basis of policy put before the people, and the gentleman returned to power, the Hon. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, undoubtedly commanded the confidence of the country. His opinions were supported by a very large majority. If hon. members would peruse the addresses of any member now supporting the very discordant conglomeration of atoms that formed the Government, it would be found that the whole of them pinned their faith to the hon. member for North Brisbane, Sir T. McIlwraith.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no!

HONOURABLE MEMBERS of the Opposition: Hear, hear!

Mr. HODGKINSON said some hon. members cried "no," but he could bring extracts from every paper in the colony, and from the organ that was subsidised by the party to express their political views, to confirm his statement that without Sir Thomas McIlwraith the party had neither head nor understanding. Their condition since that hon. gentleman had left them was self-evident. Their position was this: That hon. gentleman, whose ability and strength of character was undoubted, had accepted the most discordant Ministry that had ever sat on the Government benches in Queensland. They blindly pinned their faith to that hon. gentleman. If they denied that, then he accused them of the still graver charge of subordinating their private opinions for the purpose of getting into power. They either did that, or they blindly pinned their faith to a gentleman whose policy had never been a matter of doubt. That hon. gentleman's reputation as a financier led the country to believe that he would extricate it from the so-called pressure of financial difficulty. He was well-known to be an ardent protectionist, and the country, believing in protection, selected him as the leader of the Ministry. His reputation, his disavowal of black labour, at once quieted supporters on that important element of the situation. The country cheerfully accepted his Ministry, believing that it would be held well in hand by him, although it was composed of three freetraders, and three avowed advocates of black labour, and a power behind the throne to which he was not going to refer at present. That was the Ministry that,

after acting the part of the cuckoo, and ousting the parent bird from the nest, now claimed the support of the colony, for what? For the construction of a series of railways, although no one knew where they were going to start from, or where they were going to. He would ask hon. members whether they could, from the history of that Ministry, place confidence in them? What had been their appropriation of public moneys heretofore? One member of the Ministry had tried to lead them to believe that there was no such thing as political corruption on their side, that it was a thing of the past, and belonged to that series of undesigned coincidences to which he was so fond of referring. But had there been no political corruption by the present Ministry in connection with the vote for artesian wells?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: No, no!

Mr. HODGKINSON said he would ask if anyone could point to a single instance in which an electorate represented by a member sitting on the Opposition side of the Committee had had a bore put down in it. The amount of that vote was admittedly small, but it was quite sufficient to show that the money had been expended for political purposes; and were they going to trust men who had exemplified their conduct in that matter with an enormous sum for unknown purposes! Take their conduct with regard to the Croydon Gold Field. He unhesitatingly stated that the Government had been active agents in promoting a feeling of dissatisfaction and dissension between capitalists and the working classes on that field. There was not the slightest doubt that the goldfield regulations had been so strained in that quarter that the miners had been driven out of it, chiefly because no provision had been made for the first necessity of life and health; and why? Because the people there had dared, like all other free inhabitants in the colony, to return two members who were opposed to and did not believe in a Ministry who took office pledged to one set of principles, when their interests and public advocacy led them to entertain another. If it was necessary to bring any evidence in support of that contention, take the sugar debate. They all knew the dilemma in which the Government were placed when a Northern representative of the sugar planters, who were supporting the Government, introduced that question. Why did they support the Government? Because it was to their interest to do so. They believed that some means would be found to avoid the declaration against black labour; that having a Ministry which included three members who had avowed their belief in servile labour, some means would be found for relieving the planters and extending the Polynesian Labour Act. He would ask were they justified in intrusting that Ministry with the expenditure of such a large amount of money? With regard to railways, what had been their policy. They had heard a very naive confession that evening, that the present Government had adopted the policy of the late Government, so far as it would last; and they had not only adopted that policy but also the principles which animated the Opposition party. He should like to know whether the abolition of black labour was ever a principle of the hon. member for Mackay? He should like to know whether it was ever a principle of the legal luminary of the Government who astonished the colony with the fireworks of legal reform, the sparks of which were dimmed in the light of criticism? Yet those were some of the men to whom they were asked to commit the control of the expenditure of over a million of money. Now, what was the sketch that was painted for

the inhabitants of the colony when those gentlemen succeeded to power? They said, "We will at once relieve the colony of the financial distress, caused by the Griffith Administration; we will find employment for the working men, and we will develop every interest in the colony? But what had they done? They had absolutely spent a greater amount of money during the last quarter than the Griffith Ministry spent in either of the corresponding quarters for the two previous years; and they had provided employment for the working men to walk about in search of employment, because the industries of the colony had been paralysed by the tariff which had been imposed by the Government. They had let off their friends in every way, and they had corrupted the brewers by taking the tax off beer. There was not a single liberal thing that the National party had done; but they had oppressed the working classes, and their little finger in that respect was thicker than the thigh of their predecessors. Yet the Committee were asked to commit to those gentlemen the expenditure of that £1,000,000 in any way they pleased. But who were the gentlemen they were going to commit it to? What further change was there to be in that kaleidoscopic Cabinet? Hon. members knew perfectly well that the hon. member for North Brisbane, the Hon. Sir T. McLlwraith, who was the regulating will and brain power of the Cabinet, had departed. They had seen the helpless explanation, or rather want of explanation, which had been given of those Loan Estimates, and they knew perfectly well that two members of the Ministry were about to retire from office.

Mr. MURPHY: No.

Mr. HODGKINSON said they knew perfectly well that they had personally announced their intention of leaving the colony.

Mr. MURPHY: No.

Mr. HODGKINSON said the hon. member for Barcoo was the most gifted interruptionist he ever knew. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) should like to know who was to succeed them. Were things to come to the ridiculous pass that undoubtedly the most able member of the Cabinet was to take the nominal as well as the actual control? Were they to be presided over by a gentleman who had distinctly stated that he was in favour of black labour? Was the National party so reduced that it had to go to the ranks of its enemies to get a leader? Because undoubtedly the catechism of the National party was high wages, no black labour, and no taxation. How was that money to be expended? The great outcry for some years was against the gross crime of the leader of the Opposition in raising a £10,000,000 loan, the expenditure of which was to extend over a series of years. He (Mr. Hodgkinson) thought there was something to be said in favour of that £10,000,000 loan. Most of the money was expended during a period when the colony suffered from an unexampled drought, and had it not been for the circulation of that public money, the colony would have been in a very sad condition; a condition which they would all have regretted to see. But what did the present Ministry ask? They asked for the control of about £8,000,000, to be expended, if they considered it requisite, in two years, £1,000,000 of which was to be something like the secret service purse at home—to be expended if the Government thought proper, without the control of Parliament. It was ridiculous to say that the items for special appropriation would be submitted to a vote of that Committee. He had a great deal too high an opinion of the ability of the Minister for Railways to believe that he would bring down any

railway which he was not certain of carrying. They had seen the way in which railways were treated by the hon. gentleman. They knew the gentle vein of persuasion adopted by the hon. gentleman when he wanted to carry a railway such as the Bunya Railway and the Woongarra Railway; and they also knew the gentle insinuations thrown out by the hon. gentleman to members to act upon their own conscientious views when a railway was brought down which he was not particularly anxious to have carried, such as Drayton deviation. And why was that? It was because the contemplated vacancy in the representation of that district was not so immediate as it was supposed it was when the railway was first mooted. They were asked to give to those political lambs who wandered along in native innocence through the mazes of gigantic speculations the unlimited control of the money of the colony. The Minister for Mines and Works had taken upon himself to censure the late head of the Government for speaking for the party and advising the Ministry. But who were the party, and what was the Ministry? Could anybody tell him? Did they mean to say for a single moment that the gentlemen sitting opposite to him were a party, unless they used the word in a parti-coloured sense? If they used it in a parti-coloured sense he would admit that it was a party, and fit to go into the first political circus that had ever existed. He would take the pastoral tenants—those gentlemen who, if they were not remarkable for any great amount of intellect, were remarkable for a very clear appreciation of their own interests—he did not think they could congratulate themselves upon what they had got from the present Ministry during the last two years. The Ministry certainly made a very insidious attempt to revert to the old pre-emption system on an enlarged scale, with the view of patronising those gentlemen who were patriotic enough to sink artesian wells, but that was defeated.

Mr. MURPHY: No, it was withdrawn.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he did not know that the word defeated was exactly the word he should have used, because when they said a party were defeated they implied that they fought—that at any rate they had the courage of their opinions. But hon. members opposite had not the courage of their opinions; they did not fight, they ran away. In that case, instead of the word defeated, he would substitute the word "they fled." Now, what had the sugar planters got from the Government? They had had an opportunity of speaking at large on the question, and hon. members could certainly congratulate themselves upon having heard two or three speeches of a calibre to which they were unaccustomed. But neither their reasons nor their entreaties could procure any relief from the Government, except the suggestion from the Minister for Mines and Works, that there should be an importation of Italians. What solace would it be to the planter when he was sitting in the morning under the shade of his homestead with his kanakas away in their distant islands, to have a bandit from the Abruzzi, or a pifferaro from Calabria, or a gentleman with a hand-organ and a monkey? Was that a fit or proper recompense for those who pursued an industry which they were told supported 60,000 people out of a total population of 74,000 people? If those gentlemen were satisfied to continue their political support upon those conditions all he could say was that the Ministry could congratulate themselves upon having a body of adherents who were unexampled. But those gentlemen should not forget that they had another duty—that they were sent down to discharge another duty besides advocating their own immediate interests. They were sent down as

representatives of the Northern portion of the colony. They were sent down to fight and repel the injustice that had been perpetuated in regard to that portion of the colony for so many years. Now, the senior member for North Brisbane had stated that he was prepared at any moment when that question was gone into, to prove that the Northern and Central districts had nothing to complain of. He had not the slightest doubt that that hon. gentleman's consummate knowledge of figures would serve to convince the Committee in a clearer manner than the Hon. the Treasurer had convinced them that evening, that there was no financial injustice, so far as statistics could show, done to those districts. But those who lived in the North, and had suffered from the injustice, knew a great deal better, and it was the duty of those gentlemen, having relieved their souls of the immediate burden of the sugar question, to inquire into that greater question. But not one single thing had been done; not one single thing had ever been proposed by the Colonial Treasurer to rectify what was undoubtedly the cause of the great complaint, and terminate once and for ever those perpetual wranglings and dissensions about the division of the money. They had dealt with the matter more in a parochial way than as a House of Legislature. The Northern railways remained where they always were, and that was embedded in a column of figures. They existed in no other form, and had no meaning. Should not a proposal to borrow £5,000,000 have been prefaced by the production of an account showing the financial aspect of the question as between the three different districts of the colony? He spoke for the North. The North would submit to some injustice so long as they could obtain some final settlement; but instead of that the old system was to be continued. They were asked to vote a gross sum of £1,000,000, to be expended as the Ministry thought fit. They had had one assurance, like that they had in regard to the Italians, from the Minister for Mines and Works, that the Government were full of good intentions. But it was unnecessary for him to remind them that there was a very warm place the road to which was paved with good intentions. The whole of the hon. gentleman's argument was, whatever his real meaning might have been, in favour of the very system that he was decrying—in favour of leaving the money at the control of the Minister. The hon. gentleman seemed to regard that system with fond affection. He noticed it particularly, in fact his lips were smacking with pleasure at the very idea of the Minister in Victoria having the distribution of £8,000,000 at his own sweet will. There was not the slightest doubt that had he had the administration in Queensland, with only one-half of that amount, he would want no coalition to keep a party in power perpetually. Now, the Minister for Railways, upon whom fell the real gravamen of the debate, because the interpolation by the Minister for Mines and Works was rather in the form of a personal duel and contribution to the knowledge of the House—had stated that the leader of the Opposition had never before made such a lame speech. It was, however, impossible for any man, whatever his ability, to do otherwise than to make a halting speech when there were no facts to discuss. They were asked to discuss an appropriation *in futuro* and *in nubibus*. They did not know what was to be done, and how could they discuss the subject? Why did not the Government come down with a distinct definition of what they were going to do with the money? Why did they come down for a money Bill when it had been proved that they had at their disposal a larger amount than had been expended by any previous Government

in the same period of time? Had not the country a right to know to what object its contributions were to be directed? Had any Government, however good its intentions might be, a right to demand a blindfold grant of one million of money in the present financial state of the colony? Now, the question was this: The ablest financial authorities present in the Chamber had advised the Government to withdraw that second item of £1,000,000, and he did not think, even with the majority at their command, the Government were likely to carry it so easily as they expected. Could they quote a single authoritative opinion or precedent for the course they were adopting? Could any hon. member from his private knowledge quote a similar instance of obtaining a large sum of money without stating for what purpose it was required? If a man went to a bank to obtain a loan, or to a mortgagee to obtain a mortgage, were not all particulars required as to what purpose the money was to be applied? Yet they, who were nothing unless they were the true representatives of the people who sent them there, were asked blindfoldedly to incur an additional debt of one million of money for a purpose not specified. Was that right? Would it be just to anyone to do so?

Mr. STEVENSON: Yes.

Mr. HODGKINSON: Of course the hon. member for Clermont said yes. Well, undoubtedly there was a great muster of the party who were prepared to swallow everything put before them. They were very much like a flock of sheep. Having lost the shepherd, in their anxiety to express their opinions, they would follow anyone. Hon. members did not know who was to discharge the duty of leader, and how did they know that some mere figurehead would not come to the front? How did they know that the gentlemen now in power would be where they were during the next six weeks? How did they know that there would not be another turn over? There was another point. He thought it was almost indecent to settle a matter like that in the absence of a gentleman who was nominally responsible for conducting the Government business, and it seemed unfair also.

Mr. MURPHY: It is not his fault.

Mr. HODGKINSON said he wished the hon. member would concentrate his interruptions into one ejaculation. It seemed to him almost unfair to make any criticism in the absence of a gentleman who was not able to be present, and whom many respected.

Mr. MURPHY: You would not dare to do so if he was in the House.

Mr. HODGKINSON said if he thought the hon. gentleman's words carried the slightest weight he would take notice of them; but he dared do more than the hon. member ever dreamt of, and there were many things in the hon. member's small weak philosophy that he never yet dreamt of. However, he thought it was not worth his while to crush such an intellectual fly as that hon. member. He had to deal with greater matters, and when a subject came on that the hon. member's calibre was able to grasp he should be most happy to meet him in the contest. Well, the upshot of what he had to say was this: They were taking a new departure; they saw before them a Government without their natural leader; they saw gentlemen abrogating an Act of which they had expressed themselves in favourable words; they saw gentlemen acknowledging that they had taken their policy from a party that sat in Opposition; they saw gentlemen who introduced to the notice of the country a system of which they had never before heard, and he should be glad to

hear some arguments in its defence, and see the debate carried on with less acrimoniousness than had been hitherto expressed.

Mr. ARCHER said it was rather a difficult matter for a sober old man like himself to follow the eloquent coruscations of the hon. gentleman, and he felt some regret that he did not possess the vigour of twenty years ago, so that he might combat the hon. member's statements. At all events he could follow to some extent what the hon. member had said, and he must say that in addressing the Committee that hon. member had not addressed himself to the matter under consideration. The hon. member had endeavoured to show why the party in power should fall to pieces and sink its diminished head in the waters of oblivion. It would, of course, be out of his (Mr. Archer's) power to make either such a humorous or powerful speech, but he had a few words to say before answering several portions of the hon. member's speech. He had something to say on the question of borrowing a million of money without specifying for what purpose it was to be borrowed. It had been said that no member could conscientiously support such a proposal, but he said most decidedly that he for one would support it. He thought, in doing so, he would be doing the country a great benefit, because it was proposed to give to Parliament a full control over expenditure, and go further than they had ever gone before. If the present scheme was adopted, there would be no cases of railways costing three times as much as the estimate. They would never be able to vote £50,000 for a line which would ultimately cost £150,000. Under the old system, having once commenced to build a railway there was nothing to do but to continue the expenditure, although probably if the House had known the entire cost at the outset it would never have agreed to the construction of the line. He would take a familiar case that all members were aware of. Take the railway to Cleveland. For that beautiful line, which in his opinion was an advantage to no one but the holders of land along the route, £80,000 had been voted, but it would cost over £160,000 before it was paid for. Did anyone suppose that if £170,000 had been asked for a line to Cleveland it would have been agreed to? He knew that when the line was commenced the hon. and learned member for North Brisbane was all powerful, and he believed his party would have voted for the work in spite of all that could have been said; but they would have done it with their eyes open. The Government of the day agreed to build that line on the word of people who were either so unscrupulous or so ignorant that they were not fit for the places they sat in. He remembered quite well the Hon. the present Minister for Mines and Works asking when it was proposed to duplicate the Ipswich and Brisbane line, whether £85,000 would cover the entire cost, and the reply of the then Minister was that the engineer said it would cost more, but that he was satisfied that the engineer was wrong. The result was that it cost nearly double the amount asked for.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: This plan will make no alteration to the votes.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. and learned gentleman had a most astute mind, but if he did not see that submitting the plans and estimate of cost, and voting the money annually to particular works was not a new departure, then he was only blind, because he did not wish to see.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: That is not the proposal we are talking about at all.

Mr. ARCHER: That is the proposal.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: No. Nobody objects to that.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. gentleman had objected to it. The hon. gentleman wanted the Ministry to bring down a scheme of which they knew nothing themselves. Hon. members might laugh, but that was what they had done themselves when they brought down their scheme of railway construction. Did they know that the Cleveland Railway would cost £174,000? Did they know that railway from Herberton to the sea would cost £900,000?

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Did you? You initiated it.

Mr. ARCHER said he knew it was initiated in the 1882 loan; but no work had been begun until the Ministry of 1884 sent surveyors up there. There were plans and specifications put before the House; but they were utterly untrustworthy. The system now proposed would take the power out of the hands of future Ministries of leading the House blindfold; and that being so, he for one would support it. He might say that he did not think it was as perfect as it might be made yet.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: We would like to hear one of the elements that make it perfect.

Mr. ARCHER said he had several things to say yet. He remembered that in the early part of the present session a very interesting conversation took place between the senior and junior members for North Brisbane as to the manner in which loan moneys should be dealt with. After they had agreed as to the plan to be pursued, the senior member stated that there was no time to carry it out that year, but that in future it should be done in such a way. The present proposal was only an instalment of that measure, but it was so far an instalment that in future they would not do blindfolded what they did not wish to do. They could hardly expect the Ministry to bring down a perfect scheme as yet as to new railways they intended to build—he was not speaking from any knowledge, but from his impression of what the Ministry would be likely to do. It might be their intention to bring in railways to be passed for construction next year which were not now surveyed, and under the proposed system they would not say that they wanted £100,000 for this railway and £100,000 for that railway, but they would bring down not only plans and specifications of the railways they proposed, but also the Chief Engineer's estimate as to the exact cost of those lines, and the House could approve of them or reject them; but at all events they would know what they were doing, and they would not be going blindfold.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: They will have the money all the same.

Mr. ARCHER said that by that plan the Ministry had, in his opinion, made a decided step in advance. Though he had been Treasurer of the colony, he was far from pretending to say that he had an extended knowledge of finance, and he would be glad to see a finished scheme introduced when time was given to consider it, so that when a loan vote was brought down, the House would have the expenditure of every penny of it under control. In the present case, he repeated, there was a great step in advance, and one which was so great that any future improvement upon it would be small in comparison. It was hardly worth while telling people who had lived in Queensland during the last six or eight years what a dreadful position they had been led into by the action of the previous Ministry. It was easy to see why the Ministry were not prepared to bring forward any

railways, because of the hole they were put in through the action of the late Government. There were certain railways to be finished, and they must be finished. The senior member for North Brisbane had shown the fix in which the Government were placed, and the constitutional part of it. The previous Government had impressed their disastrous work upon a future Government who could not help themselves, and they had actually taken out of the hands of the country for years to come yet the power to expend money upon new works. Until that miserable £10,000,000 loan was done with, and the money all spent—and not until then—could the Ministry come down with a full scheme for public works and to carry it out.

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: What do they want a million for then?

MR. ARCHER said that would be shown them next year; and they would be able to accept or reject it, as they liked. The hon. gentleman did not seem to like that; but for what purpose did that hon. gentleman want £3,000,000, without having it appropriated for any special vote?

THE HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: It was so appropriated.

MR. ARCHER said it was appropriated for rolling-stock, and one thing and another; but not for any special railways. The House voted the money, and let the Government spend it as they liked. There was no schedule provided, or the works specified on which the money was to be expended. They were not asked to vote the money for fifty locomotives, or any definite proposal of that kind. They were just asked to vote a sum of over £3,000,000, and leave it with the Government to spend as they liked. He had now given his pennyworth of bread and he could not follow the hon. gentleman so well in the other remarks he made. There was one thing which the hon. gentleman had said with which he completely agreed, and that was that the Government in losing Sir T. McIlwraith had lost the best head in the Ministry. There was no doubt that that hon. gentleman was the ablest statesman of the party, and it would not surprise anyone to hear that his withdrawal had caused him (Mr. Archer) very great regret. He could not give any judgment upon the cause which led to the resignation of the hon. gentleman, and he did not intend to deal with that, but he could thoroughly agree with the leader of the Opposition in the opinion that that hon. gentleman had expressed of Sir T. McIlwraith. It was quite true also that in fighting the last battle before the electors they were fighting Sir T. McIlwraith's battles. That gentleman was certainly the leader of the party, and they were fighting under him. He had not deserted that hon. gentleman, and he did not know whether Sir T. McIlwraith had deserted him, but because that gentleman had left the Ministry he (Mr. Archer) was not therefore going to desert them. He thought the hon. member for Burke had probably been led away by his modesty to imagine such disastrous consequences would necessarily follow the retirement of the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith from the Ministry. The hon. gentleman knew that even after he strengthened the late Government by becoming Minister for Mines and Works, if the head of that Government had retired the Ministry would have fallen, as it was a one-horse Ministry. The hon. gentleman seemed to think that in the same way the present Government were helpless without the late Premier, but that was not so. There were competent men in the Ministry, and he, for one, was not going to withdraw his support because the country had met with a misfortune. He was prepared to

stand by them as long as they did what was right, and if he did desert them it would not be at a time when they were in difficulties. The hon. member for Burke had asked in a general kind of way, "Do you call that a party?" Well, he (Mr. Archer) was one of a party. No doubt, hon. gentlemen opposite had been buoyed up by some flourishing newspaper articles, and believed that they were going to float into power on those articles. He did not know who had concocted those articles. Perhaps some hon. gentleman opposite was himself the author of the "bunch of carrots" article. Those articles had not had the slightest effect upon hon. members on that side, and the hon. member for Burke could lay that flattering unction to his soul. He would find that it was so.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

MR. ARCHER said they would stick to the Ministry. Hon. gentlemen opposite might ask how long that would last. Well, that depended upon the Ministry, and not upon the party. As long as the Ministry did what was right, and as long as the party thought they were fit for their position—as long, in fact, as they discharged their departmental and legislative functions as they had done that session they would have the support of the party. They might regret that their late leader had left them, but they would support the Ministry, and would not be cowed by all the newspaper articles that might be printed. No doubt hon. members opposite had been buoyed up by those articles, but the courage of the Ministerial supporters was in no way daunted. On the contrary, they would only close up their ranks and stand stiffer. As long as the Ministry did what was right, they could depend upon their supporters sticking to them. They were not enamoured of the policy the late Government had committed the country to since 1884. That had not all been forgotten, and they were not at all willing to change the present possessors of office for those who might come into power if a sudden change were to be made. He was certain that in saying that, he was speaking the sentiments of that side of the Committee.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS on the Government side: Hear, hear!

MR. ARCHER said the hon. member for Burke likewise had advised the Ministry to withdraw the million loan they asked for, but he (Mr. Archer) would advise the Government not to withdraw it. There was no doubt that hon. gentlemen opposite had it in their power to protract the discussion for ever. They could go on speaking, and could make up their minds that the session should not close. There was no power to stop them except physical force.

MR. SMYTH: Put the gag on.

MR. ARCHER said he should have something to say about the gag by-and-by. For his own part, he had never participated in any stonewalling, and he had made up his mind that it should not be done except upon some constitutional question. He believed he ought to have stonewalled when the £10,000,000 loan was introduced, as he did not think it right to bind the country to a policy which lasted far beyond the then Ministry's term of office. He remembered that they had sat night after night for about three weeks, when the present leader of the Opposition had stonewalled most determinedly the ratification of the British India mail contract. The hon. gentleman even went so far as to cable home, warning the contractors that he would not consider it binding when he came into power. That was not a constitutional question, and yet the hon. gentleman stonewalled upon that question as if it involved a

constitutional question. Hon. members could speak as long as they liked, and the Government side must put up with it. They could show that they were not such fluent speakers as hon. gentlemen opposite. An hon. gentleman had spoken of putting the gag on. He had a word to say about the gag. He had been most effectually gagged that session by the flood of talk which had come from the Opposition side. He had not spoken at such length previously that session. The amount of talking indulged in completely knocked him down, and he could not stand it. He had never heard debates go on as they had during the present session.

Mr. FOXTON: What about the sugar debate?

Mr. ARCHER said that when the leader of the Opposition, the senior member for Burke, the hon. member for Charters Towers—in fact those gentlemen who had been in the late Government—had spoken and given their lucid opinions upon a question, did anyone imagine that the debate was even fairly begun? When the leader of the Opposition had spoken on the second reading of a Bill there were very few points left untouched, but what he had said had to be repeated again, and again, and again, until every man in the House had spoken. If that were done in all Legislative Assemblies it would be just the finish of all legislation. That was the gag which had been put upon him by hon. members sitting opposite, and probably they would do so again, so that the gag referred to had never been attempted to be used by the Government.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: What about ten days ago?

Mr. HAMILTON: Go back to 1887.

Mr. ARCHER said that was one of the few days on which he had not been present, but if he wanted to speak he knew very well that no Minister could stop him. He hoped he should never speak unless he had something to say that was worth listening to. He had stood up on the present occasion more for the purpose of informing the other side that they were utterly mistaken in supposing that the members on the Government side were at all despondent or cowed at what had taken place. What had taken place they regretted very deeply, but they were not going to desert the present Government; and if hon. members on the other side believed that those newspaper articles were going to pave the way to their crossing to the Treasury benches, they were never so much mistaken in their lives.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: We do not want to go across; we are very happy where we are.

Mr. ARCHER said the hon. gentleman had just asked where would the Government be in six months. If they went out there was nobody but the hon. gentleman who could come in. He could assure the hon. gentleman he would be disappointed, and that there would be no call upon him to come over to that side of the House. When hon. members on that side chose a moment to desert the party they were now serving, it would not be the moment of misfortune, but when they showed themselves no longer capable of continuing the good government of the colony. That moment had not yet arrived, and until it did they intended to stand shoulder to shoulder in support of the present Government.

Mr. MURPHY said it gave him great pleasure to follow the hon. member for Rockhampton, and to assure the Government that so far as he was concerned they had his most hearty support. He regretted as deeply as anyone the retirement of

Sir Thomas McIlwraith from the Ministry. As the hon. member for Burke had said, they adopted Sir Thomas McIlwraith as their leader in the late electoral campaign; he was a leader whom they were proud to follow, and he led them to victory. It was a matter on which he felt very deeply—the loss of the leader of whom they were lately all so proud, but whom they were still to have as a member of the party. But while he deeply regretted the defection of the hon. gentleman from the Government—a regret in which the entire party shared—he was pleased to think that the party were as solid—if not more solid—as they were when they first came into the House. As the hon. member for Rockhampton had said, newspaper articles would not frighten the members of that party. They were perfectly accustomed—they were case-hardened—to newspaper attacks.

The Hon. Sir S. W. GRIFFITH: And to public opinion.

Mr. MURPHY: And to such public opinion as the hon. gentleman represented. They were perfectly satisfied that they still had at their back the public opinion that placed them in the position they now occupied in the House. They had not the remotest shadow of a doubt of that fact, and they were perfectly satisfied that the Ministry of the day had the sympathy of the majority of the people of the colony. The leader of the Opposition said, "Oh, oh!" no doubt because he thought that on account of the Press of Brisbane having turned round on the party they were going to carry public opinion with them. Those politicians who were the most abused by newspapers had the longest lives; threatened men and threatened parties lived long. Than the hon. gentleman himself, there had been no better abused man by newspapers in the colony; and yet he was as politically alive and as great a factor in the management of the colony as ever he was, notwithstanding the lies that had been heaped upon him by the newspapers. Why should the lying slanders of newspapers—the misstatements that were being continually published in the newspapers of the city—injure the great party which sat on his (Mr. Murphy's) side of the Committee? They were as well able to live down those slanders as the hon. gentleman himself had done. The hon. member for Burke had accused the Government of having rewarded their supporters in the pastoral districts by sinking bores on main roads. But it was the Government of which that hon. gentleman was a member that authorised the sinking of those bores. It was the scheme of the leader of the Opposition, when he was the leader of the Government, to put those bores down in the western portion of the colony. That accusation of the hon. member for Burke had no foundation whatever. It was like a great many other arguments used by that hon. member—it had no foundation in fact. The hon. member no doubt delivered a very witty and humorous speech. He gave them a few brilliant little witticisms, but they were the same old witticisms he had served up over and over again in the House. In fact, if he had known the hon. member was going to address the Committee that night, he could have gone outside and written the entire speech out from memory. He knew exactly what quotations the hon. member would use, and how he would wander off into heathen mythology and the classics. The hon. member was a pedagogue; his profession was that of a schoolmaster, and when he came into the House he could not leave the pedagogue behind him. It was in every sentence he uttered, in his look, and in his manner; and he (Mr. Murphy) felt, whenever the hon. member got up, that he was a small boy

again, and the hon. member was going to birch him. The hon. member put him in mind of many old schoolmasters he had had, and whenever he got up to speak he ought to have a birch or a cane in his hand. He would be much more at home in a school-house than on the Treasury bench. They were there to discuss the Loan Estimates, and more especially the form in which those Estimates had been introduced. The main contention with regard to the way they had been put before the country was that the Government had put a million of money on the Loan Estimates without having shown how it was to be applied. That was the head and front of their offending. It was contended by the hon. members for Brisbane that the Victorian system was a very much better one than the system now proposed. The first thing the Victorians did was to introduce a Railways Construction Act. As explained by the Minister for Mines and Works, that Act and its schedules specified the lines to be made and, generally speaking, where they were to go. In the Railways Construction Bill they introduced in 1885 there were nearly seventy railways—a railway to the back door of every supporter of the Government. Hon. members could see how easy it would have been for the Government to have brought down a Loan Bill providing for railways to the back doors of members on the Government side if they wanted to be corrupt. Everyone who knew the history of Victoria knew that what had kept the coalition Government in power in that colony was that very system. Could not the present Government, if they had wanted to be corrupt, have adopted the same system? Instead of bringing down an estimate for a million of money, without specifying the railways to be made, could they not have apportioned it among the groups of constituencies represented by members on their own side? What a howl of indignation there would have been from the other side if they had done so! Those hon. members would have branded the present Government as the most corrupt Government that had ever sat on the Treasury benches. For his part he thought the arguments of the senior member for North Brisbane, Sir Thomas McIlwraith, upon that point were very weak. He thought the Government had avoided that portion of the Victorian system which was rotten—namely, the Railways Construction Bill—and had adopted all the subsequent checks, with the additional check of placing the plans and sections on the table of the House. In Victoria they simply drew a pencil line across certain pieces of country on a map which they knew would cross certain surveyed blocks, and they allowed a margin from half-a-mile to ten miles for deviation; so that practically there was no information placed before hon. members in that colony. The proposal in the present instance was to borrow £1,000,000 for unspecified railways, then to place the plans, specifications, and working drawings on the table showing yard by yard where the railways would go, and what they would cost; and then vote the money under a special Appropriation Bill. That would prevent anything from happening like the authorising of the Cairns to Herberton Railway, which the late Government said would cost £200,000, but which had already cost three-quarters of a million. It would save hon. members from plunging into such frightful expenditure as that. It would save them from permitting any Government in the future from doing what the late Government did when they plunged the colony into the financial straits, from which it was now suffering. Every hon. member would know exactly what he was voting for; he would not be authorising any railway in the dark; but he would have before him all the necessary

information; and that information would be verified by the report of the Railway Commissioners. Hon. members would know what they were paying for, and they would also know what they were to get for the money. Another reason why the Government did not at the present time bring down a comprehensive railway scheme, which they no doubt would have done otherwise, was because there were no permanent surveys made.

Mr. TOZER: Then why not wait till next year?

Mr. MURPHY said the Government had to borrow money to carry on the works that came as a legacy from the late Government; and when they were getting authority for a loan for that purpose they might just as well get authority to float another £1,000,000. It was of no use to go to the London money market for dribs and drabs. A large loan sold very much better than a small one, and the money could be got very much cheaper. It would be very much better to borrow the money required for the construction of new railways as well as for the completion of those already in hand. The money could be deposited in the banks; interest would be received on those deposits; and the Government could apply the money to the construction of railways as they were authorised by Parliament. He had closely studied the question as to the proper way to appropriate loan money for the purpose of railway construction; and he must say that at first he did not like the appearance of the proposal made by the Government; but the more he saw of the systems adopted in the other colonies the more he admired the scheme now proposed by the Government.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: You don't want a railway of your own?

Mr. MURPHY said he did not want a railway made in his electorate.

Mr. ANNEAR: There are no people there.

Mr. MURPHY said the hon. member for Maryborough thought that all the people of the colony lived in Maryborough; but he could tell that hon. member that there were more male adults in his (Mr. Murphy's) constituency than there were in the town that hon. gentleman represented.

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: Are they white or black?

Mr. MURPHY said they were white men. There were more black men in half-a-mile of one of the streets of Maryborough than in the whole of his constituency. Maryborough was a black man's constituency; his was a white man's. The Government had been advised by both the hon. members for North Brisbane to withdraw the item of £1,000,000 from the loan, but he hoped they would do nothing of the kind. He for one would see them through with it. He had heard it was threatened on the other side to stonewall, and he for one was perfectly willing to sit there and see the Government through with that loan if he had to stop there until that day twelve months. He was pretty well known to be a stickler when any stonewalling was about; and the Government would find that he was just as constant when sitting behind them in keeping a House together as he was when in Opposition fighting against a policy he did not like. He would give the Government every support, and he was perfectly satisfied that they would get the undoubted support of every member of their party. He was satisfied that the attacks that had been made upon them, both by their late leader and by the Press, had welded the party together more firmly than ever it had been before. No doubt the hon. the leader of the Opposition was disappointed at finding such a

solid packed phalanx supporting the Government. That was where the disappointment came in. The whole matter had fallen very flat. Hon. members on the other side had come down that night with the full expectation that something dreadful was going to happen to the Government party; that they were going to be scattered by the winds; but it had all ended in a fizzle. The able speech of his hon. friend the Minister for Mines and Works had flattened them right out.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: He talked about something else altogether.

Mr. MURPHY said the hon. gentleman showed most conclusively that there was nothing in the contention of the leader of the Opposition. He (Mr. Murphy) did not believe that either of the hon. members for North Brisbane thoroughly understood the question. They had not read it up so well as the Hon. the Minister for Mines and Works, who soon showed that there were precedents for what they had stated there were no precedents—for going on the London money market in the way the Government proposed to do. When the hon. the leader of the Opposition floated the £10,000,000 loan, he scheduled a lot of railways to that loan; but did he suppose for one moment that the English capitalists studied that schedule to see that they got security for their money in those railways? Did any hon. member think that the financiers in London looked at those schedules to find out where railways were going.

Mr. TOZER: Go home and find out for yourself.

Mr. MURPHY said he had been in England as often, and had mixed among people who lent money to the colonies quite as much as the hon. member, and he could say that the great bulk of the people who lent that money did not know whether Sydney was the capital of Brisbane, or Brisbane was the capital of Adelaide; they knew no more than that about the geography of Australia. Supposing they were told the money that was being borrowed was to make a railway from Cairns to Herberton, what information would that be to them? They would be no wiser by being told where the line went, and the money would not be got one penny cheaper. They trusted entirely to the wisdom of Parliament to apply the money properly and profitably. They knew that in Victoria, Parliament had applied their money properly and wisely in making their railways; and they knew that in countries like Queensland, where there were no great rivers, they must have railways to open up and develop their resources. The only possible way of doing that was by railways, which were reproductive works, and in course of time they would pay handsomely. He did not believe that if they put seventy or eighty railways in a schedule to that loan, they would get the money one bit cheaper. He thought the Government had acted wisely in that matter. They had done that which no other Government had ever done. They were going to introduce checks upon the expenditure from those loans. They had taken it practically out of the hands of the Government, and placed it in the hands of that Committee, and through that Committee into the hands of the people, to say how that money should be expended. They were not going to do what the leader of the Opposition did with the £10,000,000 loan—put it in the hands of the Minister for Railways and let him spend it as he liked, taking money appropriated for one line and spending it on another. Where was the money voted for the Normanton-Cloncurry line and for the *via recta*?

Mr. MORGAN: You have stolen it.

Mr. MURPHY said he had not found any of that money in his pocket, and he did not know what had become of it. He only knew that many of those unfortunate places that had been buoyed up with the hope that they were going to get railways almost immediately, had been bitterly disappointed when they found the money voted for them diverted to make some other line. The hon. the leader of the Opposition had acknowledged that the money voted for the Normanton-Cloncurry Railway had been appropriated for the construction of the line from Normanton to Croydon.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: By the authority of Parliament.

Mr. MURPHY said he knew it was done by the authority of Parliament; but under the scheme proposed by the present Government anything like that would be impossible. The money must be specially appropriated for each particular line, and if there was any surplus it must be brought down again, so that the money might be applied to some other purpose. Therefore Parliament would have the most perfect control of the money from first to last. He should certainly support the Government on that £1,000,000 vote.

The HON. SIR S. W. GRIFFITH: Or on anything else.

Mr. MURPHY said: No; not on anything else. He had shown that already.

Mr. UNMACK said that after the brilliant sparkling speech they had just heard he was afraid that the few practical remarks he had to offer might prove rather uninteresting to members of the Committee. In the first place he thought it should be the study and the primary aim of the Colonial Treasurer to jealously guard the finances of the colony, and to place any fresh proposals for loans before the country in such a way that they would receive not only the approval of the people but also of those to whom they had to look to advance money in that way; he should, therefore, take some slight view in advance of the present moment, before he asked the country to launch another new loan on the English money market. He (Mr. Unmack) was very much afraid that in the present case that system had not been adopted. The hon. member for Barcoo, who last addressed the Committee, laid particular stress upon the argument that they should not go in for loans in dribs and drabs as he called it, but that they should go in for a good loan, because they would be able to float it to greater advantage. The Minister for Mines and Works stated that that loan was intended to satisfy the country for about two years, but looking at the estimated expenditure from the loan fund for 1889-90, which was set down at £1,600,000, it appeared to him (Mr. Unmack) that it would be sufficient for the next four or five years. However, he was quite willing to admit that it would take between two and three years to consume that money and the amount they had already in hand. But he would direct attention to one thing which seemed to have been entirely overlooked by the Government, and that was that in about eighteen months a 6 per cent. loan of about £1,170,000 odd would fall due, and that the money would have to be provided for by a new loan. Was it the intention of the Government to bring forward another loan next session? Surely they were not going to trifle with the credit of the colony by bringing in a loan every year! That money should have been included in the loan now proposed to be authorised, but as it was not, the Government would either have to bring in another loan next year or a

supplementary loan that session. He would recommend the Treasurer to introduce a supplementary loan for that £1,170,000, and include it in the one Loan Bill. It was a matter that required very serious consideration. Every Treasurer ought to know what liabilities he had over his head.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: The matter has not been lost sight of, but there is time enough for that.

Mr. UNMACK said there was not time enough unless the Government were prepared to bring in an additional Loan Bill next session, and he contended that that was a most undesirable plan to pursue, as nothing was more damaging to the credit of the colony than going in for a fresh loan year after year. If they passed a Loan Bill that year for ten millions or twenty millions, it would not be half as bad as to pass a loan that year for five millions, and another next year for a million and a-half. He would therefore recommend the Government to bring in a Supplementary Loan Estimate to cover the loan which would expire in the early part of 1891. The Government proposed, as he had said before, to spend during the current year about £1,600,000, and as far as he could make out from the papers which had been circulated among hon. members they had in hand in cash and unsold debentures very nearly £3,000,000.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: No.

Mr. UNMACK said that was the amount, unless the statement was all wrong.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It is not wrong, if you will read it right.

Mr. UNMACK said it was very nearly £3,000,000. The amount of bank deposits and unsold stock was £2,665,989, which, for argument's sake, he would call in round numbers £3,000,000. That was amply sufficient to pay the £1,600,000 which it was proposed to expend during the current year. If he followed correctly the remarks of the Colonial Treasurer, the hon. gentleman stated that the Government had to act as a kind of wet nurse to the various monetary institutions of the colony—to find money to supply the banks with money for the purpose of encouraging trade and commerce. The hon. gentleman said he did not wish to disturb the monetary relations between the banks and their customers. He (Mr. Unmack) did not see why they should proceed on those lines. The industries in a prosperous colony like Queensland should stand on their own merits, without any such encouragement or wet nursing.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That is what I said.

Mr. UNMACK said he would like to know, if they were only to spend £1,600,000 during the year, what was to be done with the money to be obtained by a new loan when it was raised? He supposed it would be lent to the banks on fixed deposit, and in eighteen months the Treasurer would probably come to Parliament again and say, "Our money is in the banks on fixed deposit, and sooner than do anything to disturb the business relations of the country we must borrow again." He (Mr. Unmack) could not appreciate such a system. The money was given to the banks at a loss to the country, or if not at a loss, it certainly did not bring in any profit to the country. By going into transactions of that kind they were encouraging a false prosperity, and working on an unsound foundation, and the sooner they discontinued the practice the better. He did not for one moment agree that they should negotiate a new loan when they had so much money in their possession. There might be exceptional circumstances, such as during a time of drought, when it would

be undesirable to withdraw the money from the banks; but they should not negotiate their loans too fast, and encourage monetary institutions in their turn to enter into speculations which did not always turn out in the way they expected or desired. Several hon. members had made remarks that evening which were based on a perfectly erroneous impression. Some of them thought it was the desire of members on that side to oust the Government and their party. He could assure them that nothing was further from the intention of the leader of the Opposition or any member on that side of the Committee than to see such a calamity brought about, because they would consider it a calamity. They had no desire to dislodge the Ministry from the Treasury benches; they were not at all envious of the party on the other side of the Committee. They felt a great deal more comfortable where they were; they could speak their minds in their present position and were not gagged. Although what they said was not always received with much attention, yet they could say what they thought, and that was much better than being gagged like the members on the Government side were. They had had an experience of the gag only last week; it was not very pleasant, and he hoped it would not be applied again in a hurry. In reference to the £1,000,000 for railways, he had never heard a clearer exposition of the merits of the case in regard to the intentions of the constitution, or the practical manner in which the proper safeguards should be adopted, than had been given by the leader of the Opposition and the Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith. Their statements were clear and lucid to the mind of any man who desired to see proper safeguards established, in order to prevent either party which might hold the reins of power from spending money without proper authority. The Minister for Mines and Works had simply tried to prove that the wrong thing was done elsewhere, and perhaps he had succeeded to a certain extent in showing that in Victoria, and in other places, proper safeguards were not taken. But two wrongs did not make one right; and if they could see that the system adopted in Victoria was not the one that ought to be adopted in this colony, surely they were at liberty to adopt a different one. Where was the hurry for placing that £1,000,000 upon the present Estimates? If that amount was put down two years hence it would be soon enough for every purpose; and the statement of the Minister for Mines and Works amounted to this: That the surveys for the different lines were so much behind that they could not overtake them. But there was time enough, when the surveys were completed, for the Government to say, "We will now go in for this loan and propose it to Parliament." Surely that was the proper time to do it. He did not wish to ascribe any evil motives to anyone; but, as had been said, it appeared very much as if that amount was held out as a temptation for the consolidation of the party, more especially when they saw that the expenditure which was proposed to be incurred during the current year was all to be in the electorates represented by hon. members on the Government side of the House. That might be merely a coincidence. There had been large balances on the Estimates for years, but those balances were nearly all in respect of railways in electorates represented by hon. members sitting upon the Opposition side. Several of those lines were provided for in the £10,000,000, and it was to be presumed it was the intention of the Government to carry out those lines. Surely, therefore, it was not the duty of the successors of the late Government to

break faith with the public, or break pledges that had been made on behalf of the country. No doubt those sums remained on the Estimates, and in the sweet by-and-by some, if not all, of them would be constructed. That was only a fair conclusion to draw when they saw that nearly all the money that was to be spent during the present year was to be spent in districts represented by hon. members on the other side, and other railways were to be left out. For instance, there was the line from Ipswich to Warwick on account of which there was £492,000 lying untouched, why should not an attempt be made to go on with that line? At all events, it might be brought up for discussion; he could not say whether or not he was in favour of it. Surely it was time the matter was broached, and if it were the intention of the present Parliament to counteract what had been done, by all means let that £492,000 be wiped off that vote, and let some other part of the colony have the benefit of it. Then there was the line from Warwick to St. George, on account of which there was £224,395 available. Not one word had been said about that. Next, there was another line in the Charters Towers electorate, for which there was a credit balance of £202,000, and there was no word about that. It might be merely a coincidence, that all those amounts were standing to the credit of railways in electorates represented by members on the Opposition side, and which had declared against the party at present in power; but when they saw those balances, and saw over £1,000,000 down for railways which were not named, it was only a fair and reasonable conclusion to draw that that £1,000,000 was for railways in electorates which were represented upon the Government side of the House. As he had said, he failed to see why that money should be placed upon the Loan Estimates just now; there was ample time for it. Then there was another very serious question asked by the leader of the Opposition, which had been twice asked, but had not been answered. In what manner were the Government to cover that additional interest? How was the £100,000 to be covered? No provision had been made. They had a deficit which had not been much improved. It had been reduced by £116,000, but still there was every reason to anticipate that matters would look worse. Surely they had a right to know how the Government were going to find ways and means. It must be perfectly clear to every mind that the present revenue could not bear the strain of another £100,000 in the shape of interest. He knew in years gone by when a loan was proposed, one of the very first questions asked was how the Government proposed to find the interest on the money?

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: The last answer was given when the loan of 1884 was proposed. The Land Act was to provide the interest.

Mr. UNMACK said exactly; the Land Act was to provide the interest; and at that time that was an honest answer, and an honest conviction. If that conviction had turned out to be wrong it was unfortunate; but that was a better answer than they had received with reference to the loan now proposed. They had no information whatever as to the interest.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You do not give us a chance of making a reply.

Mr. UNMACK said he would give the hon. gentleman a chance, although he had had two already.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said if the hon. gentleman's intention was to force the hand of the Government and make them disclose their financial policy he was making an effort in the

wrong direction. Hon. gentlemen might do that as much as they liked, but the Loan Bill had to be passed first. It was time enough to discuss the question of interest when the next Financial Statement was considered. Hon. members might then have something to debate and discuss. He had no doubt the hon. member would pat himself on the back if he could get the Government to disclose their future policy, and perhaps it would be a little bit of a surprise to him if he could get some information on that question so far in advance of the time. The hon. gentleman would have to curb his spirit of inquiry until the proper time arrived, or until the next Financial Statement was delivered. No doubt there would be a revelation, and possibly the Government would be accused of stealing more of the policy of the present Opposition.

Mr. UNMACK said he was not surprised that the Colonial Treasurer should work himself into a state of excitement by imagining that he (Mr. Unmack) was endeavouring to ascertain from him what he never possessed—a policy. The Government had not got one. They never had one, and how could he get out of them a thing they never had? But that kind of answer would not do.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You will have to be satisfied with it.

Mr. UNMACK said he was afraid so, as they had to be satisfied with a great many other things; but if they had to take such answers as that from the hon. gentleman he would have to be satisfied to wait a long time before he got his Loan Estimates through.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: We are in no hurry.

Mr. UNMACK said hon. members wanted a lot of information, and they would have it. It was no doubt the constitutional duty of every Government, when they asked for a loan of that sort, to disclose how the money was to be provided for paying interest; were they to vote another loan for the purpose of paying that interest? Surely that was not the system proposed. That might be the intention of the Government, but he certainly thought it was not unreasonable to ask what their intentions were in that respect. It had certainly never occurred to him to ask what their policy was.

The POSTMASTER-GENERAL: Why did you ask the question, then?

Mr. UNMACK said he did not. He asked how the money was to be divided. Hon. gentlemen who were now sitting on the Government benches occupied a great deal of time in asking that question, when the £10,000,000 loan was being discussed. They insisted upon knowing how the Government intended to provide the interest on the £10,000,000 loan. He considered they were perfectly justified in asking that question, but yet they were told now that they should not ask such a question. It was a very reasonable question, and it deserved a courteous answer.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I gave you one.

Mr. UNMACK said it was unfortunate that the Colonial Treasurer should lose his temper over such a matter, but it was absurd to suppose that he (Mr. Unmack) wanted to get out of him what he had not got. He was sure there were other hon. gentlemen who would insist upon knowing how the interest was to be paid. He should have a further opportunity, no doubt, of making some more remarks, and he should therefore make room for somebody else.

On the motion of the COLONIAL TREASURER, the CHAIRMAN left the chair, reported no progress, and obtained leave to sit again to-morrow.

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 further consideration of the Loan Estimates.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at half-past 10 o'clock.