

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 12 JULY 1892

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, 12 July, 1892.

Questions.—Question Without Notice: Mr. Audley Cooite and land-grant railways.—Formal Motion.—Railways Construction (Land Subsidy) Bill: resumption of committee.—Adjournment.

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

QUESTIONS.

Mr. STEVENS asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. Whether Mr. Mansfield's appointment to the position of Locomotive Foreman at Ipswich is a permanent one?

2. What appointments has Mr. Mansfield previously held in the Railway Department?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. T. O. Unmack) replied—

1. No. He is temporarily in charge pending the permanent appointment of a foreman. Applications for the position have been invited by public advertisement since 27th April last.

2. He was employed from July, 1885, to February, 1888, to supervise the erection of hydraulic machinery at Ipswich, Toowoomba, and Maryborough. Since 26th February, 1890, he has been employed as travelling locomotive inspector, with the exception of the time (about four months) when he acted as district locomotive superintendent at Townsville during the illness of Mr. King.

Mr. SMITH, in the absence of Mr. Hyne, asked the Secretary for Lands—

What is the area of unalienated lands from the present terminus of the Mungar and Gayndah Railway to Gayndah that would be available for railway construction if the principle of construction by land grants was applied to that line?

The SECRETARY FOR LANDS (Hon. A. S. Cowley) replied—

The area of Crown lands within thirty miles on each side of the present trial survey is about 415,000 acres.

Mr. ISAMBERT asked the Secretary for Railways—

1. What arrangements have been made by the Railway Commissioners for the sale of old rails to a New Zealand firm, and what is the name of the firm?

2. Are the rails sold iron or steel?

3. What price is being paid, and does the price cover free on board, or alongside, or where delivered?

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS replied—

1. The offer of the Onehunga Foundry Company of Auckland, New Zealand, to purchase 4,000 tons, or over, of old rails and scrap has been accepted.

2. Iron.

3. Forty-one shillings per ton, delivered on the railway wharf, Woollongabba.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE.

MR. AUDLEY COOTE AND LAND-GRANT RAILWAYS.

Mr. NELSON said: Mr. Speaker,—I should like to ask the Chief Secretary a question, without notice—Whether his attention has been drawn to the telegram which appears in this morning's paper with regard to a party named Mr. Audley Cooite, in which he states that he has been here, and that he has been negotiating for the construction of land-grant railways? Is there any truth in that at all?

The CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. Sir S. W. Griffith) said: Mr. Speaker,—There is no truth in the statement, so far as I know. Mr. Cooite spoke to me on the subject of a land-grant railway somewhere—I forget where; I did not treat the matter seriously, and I have forgotten even where it was.

FORMAL MOTION.

The following formal motion was agreed to—

By Mr. SMITH—

That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing—

1. The total amount of exports and imports, giving tonnage and value of goods, and the number of ships entered and cleared in the different ports of the colony during the year ended 31st December, 1891.

2. The amount received by the Government in connection with shipping, exclusive of Customs, and the total expenditure during the same period.

3. The amount received and expended in connection with oyster fisheries.

4. The working cost per annum of the several pilot steamers in the colony.

RAILWAYS CONSTRUCTION (LAND SUBSIDY) BILL.**RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE.**

On this Order of the Day being read, the House went into committee for the purpose of further considering the Bill in detail.

On clause 4, as follows:—

“The contract may provide for the construction of a railway on any of the following conditions:—

(1) On the condition that the railway shall be and become the property of the Crown; remain the property of the company for a fixed period not exceeding fifty years, and shall then

(2) On the condition that the railway shall become the property of the Crown as soon as it is constructed;

(3) On the condition that the railway shall be and remain the property of the company subject to a right of purchase by the Crown within a time and upon terms to be defined by the contract.”

The CHIEF SECRETARY moved that after the word “construction,” in the 1st line, there be inserted the words “or for the construction, maintenance, and working.”

Mr. NELSON said he should like to understand clearly what was meant by the words, “the contract may provide for the construction of a railway on any of the following conditions.” He understood that when the word “may” was used in an Act of Parliament, it allowed absolute discretion to do or not to do the acts to which it referred, and he should like to know whether the Government would be restricted to the conditions mentioned, or whether they might make contracts under any other conditions.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the Bill empowered the Government to make provisional contracts under certain circumstances, but they must first have the sanction of the House for making those contracts. When that was given certain consequences would follow, which would not follow except under the provisions of that Bill. That being provided in the first instance, the clause went on to say that a contract might provide for the construction of a railway under any of the conditions mentioned. There was no power to make a contract under the Act under any other conditions. If a contract were made on any other conditions it would be entirely outside the Bill, and would stand on a different footing altogether.

Mr. NELSON: If that is so, I am perfectly satisfied.

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. NELSON said that clause involved a very important principle. From the time the construction of railways had been first commenced in the colony, Parliament had always insisted that all lines of importance—all main trunk lines—should be the property of the Government and be worked by the Government. That principle had been recognised up to the present time, and, so far as opinions went, he believed that the Chief Secretary and

himself were entirely in accord in that respect—unless the hon. gentleman had very suddenly changed his mind—that all the highways of the colony which consisted of railways must be and ought to be the property of the people. He (Mr. Nelson) had never known any difference of opinion to be expressed in that Committee on the subject, and he was loth, therefore, to see an attempt made to introduce the new principle contained in that clause. He failed to see any reason for it. The examples of railways the Treasurer gave the previous Thursday were all extensions of the present main trunk lines. If they had been branch lines he would not have objected to them so much, but that was not the case. He understood that their object was to provide for railways in the interest of the colony, not in the interest of private individuals. If private persons had property through which a railway was required, it was the duty of those persons to build that railway; and they had sufficient legislation now to enable that to be done. They had a great many private lines in the colony, all of which had been built under the Acts now in existence. He could see no reason why they should depart from the established practice in the construction of main trunk lines. They had been told that they must not object to a single line in that Bill, that it must be passed in a hurry, that the colony was in a desperate state, and if they did not pass that Bill immediately something dreadful was going to happen. He was not, however, going to be frightened into passing the measure *in terrorem*. All he required was that the Bill should be framed in the interests of the public, that the interests of the people should be properly protected; but he did not see how the public were going to be protected by anything in that Bill. Not only the construction of important lines, but their maintenance and management also was to be handed over to foreign powers. The Treasurer had stated that the present constituted railway authorities—the Commissioners—were to be quietly shunted by that Bill. He (Mr. Nelson) was very sorry to hear that, and thought it was a tremendous blot on the Bill. The next thing they would have proposed by the Government would be the shunting of the Auditor-General. The Railway Commissioners and the Auditor-General were precisely in the same position so far as Parliament was concerned. In both cases those officers were entirely independent of the Government. The Auditor-General was an officer of Parliament, and so far as the finances of the colony were concerned, the House could demand a report upon them from him if it was required; and in relation to their future railways the Commissioners for Railways were in exactly the same position. They could report independent of the Government, and were, in fact, appointed for the purpose, so that their action might be free from suspicion of political bias. Yet they were to be shunted entirely, and Parliament was not to have the benefit of their advice. They had been told before that if they took the Commissioners' advice they would be bound by it. They were not bound by their advice, but it was their duty to see that the Government should in all such matters have the advice of properly constituted officers, and that was all he had been asking for. The House had always asserted its authority in the matter of the construction of railways from 1863 up to the present, and no railways had so far been constructed for which Parliament was not responsible. They were not responsible for all the contracts made, but they were responsible for the railways that had been built. The function of the House in the first place, so far as he could understand the matter, was to see that a railway was required.

The COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. Sir T. McIlwraith): The old constitutional question.

Mr. NELSON said he was talking plain common sense. The difference between the present practice and the practice embodied in the Bill was this: So far from the House having one word to say in the matter, as under the present practice, the whole thing was to be handed over to the Government. The 3rd clause said that the Minister was to make a contract with the sanction of the Governor in Council.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Who else could make it?

Mr. NELSON said he would tell the hon. gentleman. Up to the present time the invariable practice had been for that House to authorise the Governor in Council to make a railway, and according to the 8th clause of the principal Act it was provided that a contract should be made in the name of the Commissioner for Railways, who was constituted a corporation, and could sue and be sued. There were good reasons for that. It was now proposed to depart from the whole of that, and hand the thing over to the Minister. Now the Minister was made the party to sign the contract. What was the reason for that? No satisfactory reason had so far been given for the change. He was not satisfied with the mode in which the Government proposed to carry out land-grant railways, although he was in favour of the principle.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Where is your amendment?

Mr. NELSON said the hon. gentleman did not always come to the point at once himself, and he should have a little patience. He would propose an amendment; he was not the least bashful in that respect. He proposed the omission of the first condition in the clause embodied in the words—

“On the condition that the railway shall be and remain the property of the company for a fixed period not exceeding fifty years, and shall then become the property of the Crown.”

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the hon. gentleman had not given any particular reason for the omission of the 1st paragraph any more than for the omission of any other part of the clause. As he understood him, the hon. gentleman objected to the general provisions of the Bill. He objected to railways being made that were not the property of the Government, and he said that up to the present time all the railways made had been the property of the Government. They were all aware of that; but it was the object of the Bill to alter that system and have some railways made that would not be the property of the Government. The hon. gentleman's objection was applicable to the whole Bill, and if the hon. member held the opinion he expressed he would be right in opposing the Bill. The object of the Bill was to allow of the construction of railways that would not, at any rate for a time, be the property of the Government; to try another mode of constructing railways. He would not further refer to that subject. Then the hon. gentleman said that whatever was done under the Bill ought to be done by the Railway Commissioners.

Mr. NELSON: No.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. The hon. member said they were the persons who should negotiate and make a contract, and not the Government. It seemed to him, however, that the work to be done under the Bill was entirely foreign to the functions of the Commissioners, who had been appointed to attend to the management of certain railways as a commercial or political speculation, or as a social speculation. They had been appointed as the commercial managers of the railways existing or to be

constructed under the Government; but that was an entirely different thing from dealing with the terms on which railways should be constructed by other persons. The Bill, so far as that point was concerned, preserved the old lines of policy—that it was the function of the Government and of Parliament to determine what railways should be constructed, even in the case of Government railways. The Commissioners did not come in until that had been determined. It was true that they took their advice before Parliament expressed its opinion or gave its order; and so they could take their advice in all the matters under the Bill if they thought there would be any use in doing so. The hon. member proposed to omit from the clause the condition that a railway might be constructed to remain the property of a company for a fixed period not exceeding fifty years, and then to become the property of the State. It seemed to him that the hon. gentleman's speech had been entirely in favour of the condition he proposed to omit. All the hon. member's remarks tended to show that land-grant railways should be made under that condition, and that the time within which they were to become the property of the State should be as short as possible. Fifty years was the limit fixed in other parts of the world. They could not say that that condition would be adopted here in the construction of private railways; but its having been adopted elsewhere was, at any rate, some reason for supposing that it might possibly be adopted here. He could not say whether they would be able to get railways constructed under that condition or not; but he thought it desirable to leave that condition in, and so far no reasons had been given for its omission.

Mr. NELSON said he was sorry the hon. gentleman did not understand him. He could remember the hon. gentleman's opinion on the Mount Morgan line, and he presumed his opinion had not altered. The hon. gentleman had always said that the main lines of the colony ought to belong to the people of the colony, and he had not answered him (Mr. Nelson) in that respect. The Bill proposed to introduce a foreign company, with managers independent of the people's representatives, and independent of the rest of their railway management. The company were to be at liberty to carry produce at 6d. per ton per mile, or something of the sort, and that would mean 50s. a ton on hay from Toowoomba to Brisbane. That was the minimum.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We do not propose that they should build a line from Toowoomba to Brisbane.

Mr. NELSON said he was quoting that as an instance of what the rates might be. Take the extension from Charleville. They introduced foreign management, and they would have to transfer the whole of the produce from one company's line to the Commissioners' railway. He knew that could be managed in the same way as it was managed on the English lines; but they had not reached that perfect state of organisation here to enable it to be done. When they were extending their main trunk lines why should they not have them under the same management as the existing lines? He knew the Commissioners were not popular just now, and no doubt the Treasurer was bidding for a little popularity when he said he was going to shunt the Commissioners out of the Bill. That was all very fine, but he thought the public would admit there had been some improvements since the Commissioners came here. Why there should be the anomaly of two different organisations and managements on the same trunk line he left it for the Government to explain. He could not see how it would benefit the colony. He thought

it would operate to its prejudice. That was the point he contended for. They had better stick to uniformity. When dealing with the Commissioners they were dealing with people they knew. They were not entirely independent. If there was anything connected with public policy, the Government at any time stepped in and interfered with the Commissioners. It was merely a question of responsibility: whether the Government would do so or whether they would not. It was absurd to suppose that the Commissioners had power to construct lines or make contracts. They had no such power. All their duty was to recommend that a certain tender be accepted, but the responsibility rested with the Governor in Council. He could easily see what syndicates had to gain, but not what the colony had to gain by introducing that mongrel system. Why not retain the railways in their own hands? That was all he was asking for by the amendment.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said he thought it was grossly unfair for the hon. gentleman to re-discuss the main and vital principles of land-grant railways on an amendment of that sort after they had actually passed the 3rd clause, whereby the first principle of the Bill was affirmed. The hon. gentleman had managed to muddle up very considerably the responsibilities of the Minister and the Commissioners under the Railways Act; but they had nothing to do with the matter. He said they should not be allowed to make an arrangement with any company on the first condition. Under certain circumstances that might be a good proposition, but it had not been universally accepted in this or any other colony, and there were very grave reasons for looking back at their experience and seeing whether it was the correct thing that the railways should belong to the State. It was an open question with many statesmen; so that for the hon. gentleman to assume that they should take it for granted because he said so was going a great deal too far. The hon. gentleman's experience did not justify him in coming to any such conclusion. But he forgot one other thing: Supposing they let a contract on the condition that the railway was immediately to become the property of the State, the principle of land-grant railways in that case was completely gone. The principle of land-grant railways was that they got a company to make a line, and gave them so much land. All their interests were in the improvement of the land so as to improve the railway, and in improving their land they improved ten acres of Government land to every one acre they held. The hon. gentleman said they could not possibly entertain a system by which extensions such as he (the Colonial Treasurer) had referred to, should not become the property of the Crown; but he made a muddle of that too, because he harked back and said that they were able at home to work two different railways together under two organisations. If a man went into a railway carriage at John o' Groats, he could go right through to London, and pass over six different lines, and travel probably in the same carriage all the way. That was done without any trouble. If a man asked for a ticket in London for any part of Scotland—Inverness, Dundee, Perth—he never moved from his carriage, and yet he passed over four different lines. The traveller to Glasgow had the choice of two routes—on one of which he passed over three different lines, and on the other over four different lines of railway; and he got to his destination as cheaply and as rapidly as if all the lines belonged to the same company. Then the hon. member started another bogey—that the companies were to be limited to 6d. per ton per mile for carriage. That was put in subject to amendment. Perhaps the best way would be to

leave the matter for arbitration, should there be a difficulty between the Government's approval and the company's proposals. The hon. member seemed to forget that the interest of the company would always be very prominent in their actions, and that they would not charge £2 10s. from Toowoomba, even if they were allowed to charge it, simply because they would not get anyone to pay it. They would do everything they could to develop their own land, and bring traffic on their lines. The principle was thoroughly thrashed out on the second reading of the Bill; it must have been so, because the House came to the conclusion that all the railways in the colony need not necessarily belong to the Government, and the principle was accepted that some of them, at all events, need not belong to the State. His opinion was that railways would be better managed, and that there would be lower fares and greater celerity if future railways were taken out of the hands of the Government. The most successful railways in the world, with regard to accommodation and the carriage of goods, were the American railways, and for accommodation and speed the English railways. Across the Channel, especially in France, where there was more or less Government interference with the railways, railway travelling was far and away inferior in every possible way; and that was entirely owing to the fact that many of the railways were the property of the State, while many others were controlled by the State. The experience of England and America showed conclusively that the public were perfectly well able to manage their own railways. So far from its being a popular thing in England now to advocate the purchase of the railways and make them State railways, it was quite the reverse; it was seen that they were better managed by private companies than they could be by the State. But the hon. member had omitted to point out that the colony had no other means of carrying out railways at the present time, and on that account he thought the country would accept the construction of them on the land-grant system, and would be anxious that it should be brought into operation as speedily as possible.

Mr. NELSON said the Colonial Treasurer had stated that by passing the second reading of the Bill certain things were established. Or reference to the speeches made on that occasion, it would be seen that the great majority of hon. members who supported the second reading declared that they did so upon the understanding that the Bill was to be seriously amended in committee. They were now told that because the second reading had been passed they were committed to the Bill. If that were so, it seemed to him that the second reading of the Bill was moved under false pretences. But it was his opinion, and he was fortified by the Speaker's ruling on the subject, that they were not committed to every principle involved in the Bill. They were not committed to the principle of giving up their trunk lines to foreign companies by passing the second reading of the Bill, although the Treasurer said they were. In fact, many of the speeches on the second reading were decidedly not in favour of it. If the lines to be built were going to be small branch lines, he should have no material objection to it, but those were precisely the lines to which the principle would not apply. It would not apply, for instance, to the railway from Bundaberg to Gladstone, and from Gladstone to Rockhampton. Indeed, they had been told that it would not apply to any coastal lines.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Only where all the land has been alienated.

Mr. NELSON said they were told it would not apply to coastal lines, but only to lines out West, where there was any amount of land that might be given away for a song. The Bill was a very serious matter, and railway construction should never—and it had never been—with his consent be made a party question. The great principle involved was whether, in future, the construction and management of railways should be carried on by the Government or handed over to foreign companies, or whether Parliament was to maintain some control. The Commissioners were to be shunted, and the Secretary for Railways was to be put in their place. He did not know any reason for doing that, and they knew that Secretaries for Railways knew nothing about the construction of railways. The present Secretary for Railways was no better than his predecessors in that respect, and his successor would probably be no better than he was. It was all very well with the present Government, because they had a man who did understand railways.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You said he did not.

Mr. NELSON said that the Government had in the Cabinet, in the person of the Colonial Treasurer, a gentleman who did understand railways, but they did not know whether he would be there when the Act came into operation. He objected, whether the hon. gentleman was in the Cabinet or not, to handing over that great power to anyone. They should take advantage of those experts whom they had to pay, and if they could not construct railways under those men they had far better leave it alone altogether. He had not heard a solitary argument in favour of taking it out of the hands of the Commissioners. With regard to what he had said about the confusion that would arise between two companies working on the one line, the Treasurer had cited instances in the old country; but they had not the organisation that they had there, and they could not get it easily. They had no Board of Trade in Queensland, which was a very important factor at home, and they had no legislation by which they could regulate those matters. Before they knew where they were, if the Colonial Treasurer got his way, the companies would have the whole of the present railways in their hands, and he would never consent to that.

The HON. P. PERKINS said that he had never heard lazier excuses made than those of the leader of the Opposition. The hon. gentleman must have some reason for opposing the Bill, but he had given none. He said that they would have two systems, and that they would have a mongrel management. Now, the success which had attended the railways in England and in America was owing to the competition. The hon. gentleman talked about foreign companies, but a colonial company might construct a railway for them. Surely the hon. gentleman did not contend that their railways were a success at the present time! They had enjoyed immunity from accident, but they were anything but a success. Did the hon. gentleman invite him to believe that if the railways from London to Edinburgh or London to Glasgow were in the hands of one company, people would be carried so safely and so cheaply as they were now? They were building engines to travel sixty-five and seventy miles an hour, and in their endeavours to make the lines remunerative they took good care to keep everything in good working order. If a new element were introduced into railway construction in Queensland, there were men who would come from America, England, or the Continent, who could teach them many things. What was the

hon. member's objection to the scheme? It would prove the life and soul of the country. They wanted a twist in the wheel, and the hon. gentleman had put forward no other system by which railways could be made, and they could not stop making railways. If, by passing the Bill, they held out inducements to capitalists to build railways, it would be for the good of all. He did not go so far as the Colonial Treasurer, who said that the whole of the railways should be handed over to companies, although that time might come; but he did agree with the Treasurer that a company could manage the railways much better than the State. They saw what was going on in Victoria. He was sorry that his friend, Mr. Speight, had got into the trouble he had, but it was the fault of the Minister. There had been, apparently, too much success; and they had pretended to have such a surplus one year that they reduced the freights, and did many other things with the railways which should not have been done. Now, a man had come to the front in Victoria who was causing the people hardship in every direction. The leader of the Opposition had not brought forward one substantial reason why the Bill should not pass. He had a right to do so on the second reading; and he had shown no other way out of the difficulty, and until he did that all his arguments were useless.

Mr. MACFARLANE said that he had stated on the second reading that clause 4 would very likely cause a great deal of discussion. He looked upon the clause as one of the most important in the Bill, although some other hon. members looked upon others as of greater importance. Simple-minded people outside really did not understand the alternative schemes proposed by the Government. Many of them, himself included, were quite willing to give away land for railways instead of money; they were in favour of land-grant railways pure and simple, and if the measure made provision for the construction of railways on that principle only, he would not for a moment oppose it, but he objected to the alternative schemes, and so did many persons outside the House. When he had told one of his constituents that it was proposed to pay the companies the cost of construction if they worked the lines for fifty years, the man held up his hands in horror and said that it was not a fair way of making railways.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What does it cost us now?

Mr. MACFARLANE said he was not going to enter upon that question at present. He merely wished to point out that while many persons were in favour of land-grant railways pure and simple, there was an objection to the 1st and 3rd subsections of clause 4. It had been said that, having affirmed the principle of the Bill on the second reading, hon. members should not discuss the principle now; but he maintained that the omission of subsections (1) and (3) would not interfere with the principle of the Bill. Those conditions were proposed for the purpose of giving the Government a larger selection of contractors; but he agreed with the leader of the Opposition that it would be better for them to have only one system of railways in the colony. It had been assumed that if railways were built on the principle proposed in the Bill they would provide work for the unemployed; but there was nothing to bind the syndicates who undertook their construction to employ colonials, and they might bring navvies from the other colonies or even engage kanakas if they chose, so that there was not much in that argument. The hon. member for Cambooya had referred to the success of private rail-

ways in America and Great Britain, and attributed that success to competition. But with whom did those private companies compete? They competed with one another, while the companies who would construct lines under that Bill would compete with the Government, and it was well known that in such cases private people generally got the better of the Government. If the two subsections to which he had referred were retained they would lead to a great amount of fighting over details and concessions, and he could not see his way to support the clause unless they were omitted. He hoped there would be no division on the question, but that some arrangement would be arrived at whereby the conditions would be omitted.

Mr. STEVENS said he was surprised to hear the leader of the Opposition state that the second reading of the Bill having been affirmed the Government expected hon. members to swallow the measure without amendment. If anything of the kind was said it must have been in the way of a joke. The leader of the Opposition was quite within his rights in proposing amendments wherever he thought fit, and such a course no doubt had the effect of ventilating the matter more fully. So far the Bill had not suffered from the discussions which had taken place, as not only were the majority of hon. members in favour of the principle of the Bill, but a large majority of the people of the country were also in favour of it. The amendment now proposed would have the effect of crippling the Bill very much. The object of the Government was, no doubt, to make such provision as would enable them to get alternative tenders, and it was desirable that they should have as large a field as possible in that connection. There would be no harm whatever in passing the clause as it stood, as Parliament would always have the right of eventually deciding whether a contract was a good one for the country, and if any proposal laid before it was hostile to the interests of the country, it would no doubt be rejected. With regard to lines constructed under that Bill coming into competition with Government railways, he believed that would have a very good effect. He also thought it was a wise thing to leave the Railway Commissioners out of the Bill. They had to run in a certain groove, or it was assumed that they had to do so; but a private company would not run in any such groove. Suppose, for instance, a quantity of produce had accumulated in an agricultural district, which it would not pay the producers to send to the markets on account of the high railway tariff, it was probable that in such a case the company would make a bargain with the producers to carry that produce at a certain rate, which would be an advantage to the grower and to the country. At the present time there were thousands of pounds worth of produce which could not be sent to the coastal markets because the railway freights were too high, and the Railway Commissioners assumed that they could not cut down the rates to meet the persons who owned that produce. They had had some experience in the colonies of lines constructed by private persons. There was the Hobson's Bay Railway, in Victoria, which was afterwards purchased by the Government. He forgot whether a very high price was paid for it or not, but they knew that the Government were not in a position to construct the line, and that the work was undertaken by private enterprise. Then there was another railway constructed by a private company to Riverina, and worked at a profit. It was certainly one of the best constructed lines in Australia.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: And it is still worked by the company.

Mr. STEVENS said he believed the line paid very well. At any rate, the Government would not build it, and the work was done by a company, and he thought that hon. members should do what they could to induce private persons to construct lines in this colony, so long as in doing so its best interests were not affected. Therefore, he could not see his way to support the amendment.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the Bill was framed on such lines as would enable the Government to get the best bargain they could for the country. It was impossible to say exactly what bargain they might make. Under their present system of railway construction they paid cash, and of course the best bargain to be made for the country was to get the work done for the smallest amount of money possible. They could not do that sort of thing now, and they did not know upon what terms contractors might be willing to bargain with them. Companies would have to be formed for the purpose; it was not everybody in the street who could send in a tender. Before negotiations could be entered into at all, the contractors would have to be at considerable trouble and expense in examining the country over which it was proposed to take the railway, and in estimating the probability of being able to make a profit out of the line while working it by means of the traffic they would be able to develop by the settlement of the land granted to them. In the clause three alternative ways were proposed under which a contract might be made. The hon. member for Ipswich preferred the second way, under which the line would become the property of the Crown as soon as it was constructed. If they could get lines made under that condition, he saw no reason why they should not; but suppose they could not? Were they to have no other strings to their bow? Why not try to get them made on some other basis? The hon. member thought that the next best way was that the line should become the property of the Crown, without any further payment, as soon as possible after it was constructed. That was the condition proposed in the 1st paragraph of the clause, and to which some hon. members were now objecting. But they might not be able to get a railway made under those terms, and then they proposed to fall back upon the system adopted in other countries in which they knew land-grant railways had been constructed—namely, the United States, Canada, South America, and West Australia; and that was provided for by the 3rd condition in the clause. The clause provided for three possible systems, and while he himself considered the third one the most dangerous to the country, it might be the only one under which they would be able to deal. They must take their choice of having railways or not having them, and if they could not get them on the very terms they would like, they must either go without them or get them on the next best terms, and for those reasons the alternative conditions had been introduced. It was right to say that the clause was an important one, because it really embodied the principle of land-grant railways, and was worthy of full discussion. Those who opposed it would, of course, oppose the whole Bill; but assuming that the Committee as a whole favoured land-grant railways on the best conditions they could get, there was really nothing to object to in the clause, which merely enabled the Government to make the best bargain they could; and if not the best the next best, and so on, doing the best they could for the country.

Mr. POWERS said the question was whether the Committee would authorise the Government to accept contracts to be submitted to the House

on either of the conditions mentioned in the clause. Under the first condition, the omission of which had been moved by the leader of the Opposition, they would, according to clauses 7, and 22, and 24, with which it must be read, have to pay for the railway twice over; and yet they were to allow the company, in addition to that, to keep the railway for fifty years. If hon. members would look at clause 24 they would find that though a company would be allowed to keep the railway for fifty years, they would as soon as it was finished get two-thirds of the cost of construction in land and the balance in leases during the limit of time fixed. What position did that put the country in? It would place the people of the country in the position that, so far as that portion of the land was concerned, it would be locked up against them under lease, subject only to the condition of the working of the railway during the whole of the term fixed. Although many hon. members had affirmed the principle, they had stipulated that the Government should hold the railways, because their experience showed them that the dual control of railways would not work well.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: All the members who said that voted against the second reading.

Mr. POWERS: No; and the hon. member for Bulimba, who spoke strongly upon that point, voted for the second reading. The whole question for them to consider was whether it was advisable to allow any Government to hand over railways to a syndicate for fifty years as well as paying for them in land. He knew the object of the clause was to give a syndicate a bonus for working a line that would not otherwise pay them to work. The State did not construct railways now because there was no possible chance of their paying; present circumstances were due to the construction of railways that had not paid, and the question was whether they were prepared to blindly enter upon the construction of lines which they knew would be such bad investments that they would require to guarantee a bonus of twice the cost of construction to ensure their continued working after they were built for fifty years. He agreed with the Colonial Treasurer, that "there were grave reasons for looking back" on the experience of other colonies that had been in the same condition as themselves. In the case of the railway from Launceston into the interior, the Government took it over seven years after it was built, with the condition that the syndicate should get everything over £22,000 net returns from it. In the case of the railway from Hobart to Launceston, the Government guaranteed the cost for thirty years, and, as the Chief Secretary had pointed out, that would not work at all. They then guaranteed to pay £600,000, and they had bought it back lately for £1,100,000. From their experience they now allowed private companies to build lines, but they only gave them a lease of the land for a chain in width along the line, and they were getting lines built there now in the mineral districts in that way.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Where?

Mr. POWERS: In Tasmania.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Whereabouts?

Mr. POWERS said there were three or four such lines, which he could refer to later on.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: Your information about Tasmania is very hazy.

Mr. POWERS said he had been perfectly correct, as the hon. gentleman would see if he looked up the Acts of 1880, 1890, and 1891; and the latest information they had about those railways had appeared in the *Courier* only the other day.

It was said there that some person was sued for 300 shares given to a member of Parliament for his vote, and the evidence was so glaring that a Royal Commission of inquiry was demanded. The conditions there were that when the lease expired the railway vested in the State, and the syndicate was paid for the railway and 1 per cent. in addition. Although they were private lines, they were not subsidised by land grants, and they were not paid for twice over. If, therefore, they were to look to past experience, there seemed to be good reasons why they should not agree to condition No. 1. In Western Australia a special Bill was passed dealing with each railway, but he contended that in passing a general measure they should be very careful to insert conditions favourable to the colony. He was glad the leader of the Opposition had moved the amendment, because these railways could be built on condition No. 2. That would not affect the principle, but it would prevent syndicates from being paid twice over for the same work.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. member said the experience of the other colonies had been against land-grant railways. That was a very broad assertion to make, and it would be better if he produced facts to show that that was so. The first case he cited was the railway from Launceston to the interior. Would the hon. gentleman tell him there was a land-grant railway from Launceston at all, and where it went to?

Mr. POWERS: There is not a land-grant railway at all in Tasmania.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: But the hon. member said so.

Mr. POWERS said he referred to that railway as the first in Tasmania to be built by a private company, and it had to be taken out of their hands. If he left the impression that that was a land-grant railway, he certainly made a mistake.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. member spoke of it as a land-grant railway, and said it was a failure. He also said the principle was a failure as applied to the line from Launceston to Hobart. Now, there was no such line constructed on the land-grant principle in Tasmania. It was a deserted line when he went over it officially nineteen years ago. It was only nine miles in length, and it had not been built on the principle laid down in that Bill. It was a failure, and had been a failure for years before; because when he went over it the thistles were over his head. The hon. gentleman insisted that the State should own the railways; but if the Tasmanian Government had done that they would have been in a very much worse position to-day than they were. And when he heard the hon. member invoke sympathy for the way in which the Tasmanian Government had been victimised, he thought he might be better engaged in invoking sympathy for the company. The Government had got a cheap main line of railway, and if it had not been for the indomitable skill, pluck, and energy of Mr. Grant, the manager for the company, the line would not have been running now. He had done a great deal towards pulling something out of the fire for the shareholders at home, and the Government had got a very cheap line. The hon. gentleman ought to direct his attention to the places where land-grant railways had been a success—that was in Western Australia. He read a telegram the other day from the Premier of Western Australia saying that the principle there had been an unqualified success, and the lines there had been based very much on the same principle the Government now proposed to adopt.

Mr. BLACK said the amendment of the leader of the Opposition, together with one to be proposed later on to omit the 3rd subsection, would entirely destroy the effect of the Bill. The second reading had been carried by a very large majority, and if the construction of railways under the Bill was to be reduced to the principle contained in subsection 2, providing that the line must immediately become the property of the Crown, they would get no one to make offers. Where were they likely to get any company to come to this colony and construct railways which would enormously increase the value of the Crown lands in the districts in which the railways were constructed, if they were not to derive some benefit by it. He considered it would be a positive advantage if they could get any body of men to expend their money in constructing railways in this colony, and it was only right that they should derive a substantial personal benefit themselves. He would like to see them make money out of it, because he was certain that for every shilling they made the rest of the colony would make ten times as much. If the system had been adopted years ago, the colony would have had a vastly smaller amount of debt, taxation would have been far lighter, and there would have been far better progress and prosperity than there was at present. If they could not borrow money for railway construction, they must accept the scheme proposed, and the intentions of the Act would be stultified by the omission of the 1st and 3rd subsections of the clause. Without them the Act would not be accepted by any syndicate. The main object of a syndicate would be to make money out of the land they acquired; and that could only be done by settling people on the land and developing those industries for which the land was particularly suitable; and the sections adjacent to those held by the syndicates would be equally enhanced in value. It would be far better to let a few people get rich in order that the whole colony might prosper; but some persons seemed to think that it was better to keep the colony poor rather than that any single person should get rich out of it. They must look at those matters from a more liberal standpoint than had hitherto been the case.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the hon. member talked about the Bill as it was intended for the whole of the colony, whereas it was only intended for a corner of it. It was not intended for the South at all. They had been told by the Treasurer that it would not apply to coastal or branch lines. If the system had been a success in Western Australia it was because it extended over the whole of the colony. But in Queensland the system would start in the North and end in the North—a portion of the colony that might be independent of the South in a very few years. What object had the Government in refusing to allow the Bill to apply all over Queensland?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is what we want to do.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said that if that were the case he should cordially agree with the Bill, but all that it was evidently intended for was for a line from the North to the West of the colony, and it was rumoured that the syndicate for such a line was already formed.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he hoped hon. members would not be permitted to make second-reading speeches on that particular clause. The hon. member for Burrum had made what was nothing else than a second-reading speech on the question of building railways on the land-grant system, and he had referred them to a very small island—Tasmania—which might be put into one of their pastoral

districts, and there might be some trouble in finding it. He would call the attention of the Committee to the fact, which seemed to be overlooked, that any contract entered into by the Government was subject to revision by the House; and if any of those conditions was found to be doing an injustice to the State, the House would deal with it. He could not support the amendment. They were all desirous that railway construction should go on, and the State was perfectly safeguarded against any injury being done to its interests under those subsections.

Mr. PALMER said that in his opinion the omission of the subsection would destroy the principle of the Bill. He did not see that it was the duty of the State to carry passengers by land any more than by sea. The passenger steamers along the coast were adapted to meet the wants of the time, and no Government could run them in the same way that the private companies did. Companies could work the railways of the colony at a far cheaper rate than the Government, and with profit to themselves and greater convenience to the public. The Southern and Western Railway had cost over £8,000,000, and the latest returns showed that the return was only £1 10s. 11d. per cent. on the capital invested. No private company would be satisfied with such a return for their money; they would devise some way to increase it. The Wide Bay system of railways had cost £1,325,000, and the return was £1 5s. 8d. per cent. That was an abnormal percentage for the Wide Bay system, as it was the most unprofitable in the colony. The Central system of railways had cost £2,549,000, and showed a return of 3 per cent. on the capital invested. The Northern Railway had cost £1,151,000, and showed a return of £4 15s. 3d. on the capital invested. On the Cairns Railway £847,000 had been spent, and its return was at the rate of 1s. 5d. per cent. It was really time the working of the railways of the colony was handed over to some private company. The Cairns Railway stood as the shocking example that the State ownership of railways was not profitable to the country. It was questionable if the Cairns Railway ever would pay. The whole railway system, which had cost over £16,000,000 up to twelve months ago, had given a net return upon that capital of £1 14s. 10d. Seeing that the people of the colony had to make up the balance of interest due, which amounted to about £4 10s. per cent., it was time that a change was made, and that private enterprise should be allowed to see if they could do better. They could not do worse, and they might do better. The omission of the 1st paragraph would ruin the whole Bill. It should provide that the line should be the property of the company for fifty years, because that in itself would be a guarantee that the company would construct the line and run it so as to make it a paying concern, and so that it would be permanent in character. If the company could be compelled to keep the line for fifty years, by that time the colony would be wise enough to see that a great mistake had been made in ever having had State railways.

The Hon. J. R. DICKSON said that he was one of those who desired, now that the Bill was before them, to see it made a really practicable measure; and, seeing the expression of opinion upon the second reading, hon. members should not endeavour to emasculate the Bill by insisting on the excision of the clause which was absolutely necessary, perhaps, in order to obtain tenders. While he still held that it would be desirable if they could provide that the railways built by land grants should become the property of the State on completion, at the same time it would be interfer-

ing with the freedom which they ought to give to the Executive in reference to the acceptance of tenders, if they omitted the alternative schemes. When they came to clause 7 he would speak more fully upon the question of the railways becoming the property of the State when they were constructed, because he observed that the remuneration to be granted to contractors in that event was not of that substantial character which would induce men so to tender. They must have some substantial *quid pro quo* for the construction of a railway upon such terms. The Bill dealt with tentative conditions, and no one could exactly foresee what the result would be; so that they were bound to enlarge the scope as far as they safely could to induce tenders to reach the Government, and those tenders would be the subject of consideration, in the shape of a contract, by Parliament afterwards. There might be advantages accruing to the State by the railways remaining the property of the company for fifty years or some shorter period. The Bill presented three advantages, and hon. members were closing their eyes to the third. The first advantage which had been impressed upon them was that it would find work for the unemployed, and they were unable—so it was alleged—to borrow money for the purpose of proceeding with the construction of railways. The second was that they were going to introduce a new system from which they might learn something. The third and most permanent advantage was that the shareholders in the company would be largely interested in promoting settlement on their lands, and that would be a distinct incentive to work the railway in such a manner as to make a profit out of their lands, and that could not be done unless by settling people on them. The shareholders would, therefore, run their lines in the interests of the country, because, if they benefited their own blocks, they would at the same time benefit the land belonging to the Government. He did not desire to press his views upon hon. members against what might be the good of the colony; but he thought that the dual management of the railways would not be so satisfactory as was contended. Still, he was willing to allow a fair chance of its being demonstrated that private possession of railways would be beneficial to the community. He could see that in such private ownership there was a direct incentive to make the lands through which the railways ran productive to the shareholders; and they might, therefore, wisely allow the 1st and 3rd paragraphs to remain in the Bill.

Mr. SAYERS said that there was a great fear about the quantity of land that would be given away; and if that 1st paragraph were allowed to remain, it would be injudicious to allow the Government to have that power. Hon. members had spoken of the great benefit that would accrue to the Government lands through the construction of the railways and the syndicates selling their lands or making them reproductive; but it had been found in practice that, as a rule, the syndicates so engineered it that the Government land was first taken up for a mere song, and then when the railway was completed and land became scarce in that locality the company reaped the benefit. It did not follow that land was used for the best purposes in places where there was railway communication. Hon. members knew that some of the best agricultural land was to be found along the Warwick-Killarney line, but, although the railway had enhanced the value of the land, it was still held for grazing purposes. There were certainly a few Chinamen growing tobacco on land which they rented for £1 an acre. Under the provisions of the Bill large estates could be acquired. He had heard that freehold estates could be acquired under that Bill to the extent of 500,000

or 1,000,000 acres, and they had no guarantee that those estates would be utilised for settlement. At the present time many persons held large freehold estates, whose value had been enhanced ten or fifteen times by a railway running through them, but those estates were not settled; they were still used for grazing cattle and sheep. Yet it was argued that the construction of railways on the land-grant principle would induce settlement. He maintained that the present was an inopportune time for building railways on that principle, because land everywhere was only worth about half as much as it was four or five years ago, so that any bargain that might be made would probably be a bad bargain for the country. Again, everything was to be left in the hands of the Government of the day. True, certain documents were to be laid on the table of the House, but if the Government had the strong following they had now, it would not be possible to throw out a contract. The Government had not made such good bargains with contractors when they had money to pay for railways, ever since they began railway making in 1863 or 1864, that hon. members should be encouraged to give them such powers as were proposed to be given in that Bill. He was perfectly satisfied that if the railways which had been built by the Government had been constructed by practical men they would not have cost one-half of what they had cost the country, and if the Government were allowed to make bargains with syndicates they would certainly make bad bargains—he did not say intentionally—and the country would be fleeced hand over fist. Then, again, they would have one part of a railway worked by a syndicate and the other part worked by the Government, and if any concessions were made in the way of freights they would not come from the syndicate, but from the Government, as had been the case in Tasmania and other places. The syndicates would, in fact, be able to make the freights so obnoxious to the people, if any were got to settle on the land, that pressure would be brought to bear on the Government to purchase the railway. He maintained that the country did not ask Parliament to give land away in the manner proposed, and that the country did not approve of the principle of the Bill. If the country did approve of the principle of the measure he would be inclined to support it; but as he believed that the country did not—that, at any rate, the people did not approve of the subsections proposed to be omitted—he should therefore vote for the amendment.

Mr. ISAMBERT said it was difficult to understand why the Government was so anxious that lines should be built on the land-grant principle, that they should propose to make unheard-of sacrifices of the public lands. Twice the amount of the maximum cost of the railways was to be paid for them in land. If the existence of the colony depended on those railways being built, he could understand the proposal, but no one asked for them. Where were the lines to be built, and what was the necessity for such a hurry in their construction? Experience had shown that railways in the settled portions of the colony were not paying at the present time, and the more those railways were extended in unsettled districts the less they would pay. The land to be given to the syndicates would be worth perhaps 2s. 6d. an acre, and as they were to receive land equal in value to twice the maximum cost of construction, they would be able to get large areas at 1s. or 1s. 6d. an acre. That was about the best scheme they had heard of for getting hold of land in the cheapest and most expeditious way, and there was no condition to compel the companies to work the lines after they were built, so that the

companies could drop the lines and sell the land to the squatters and make a good thing out of it. The conditions were preposterous. Any man or syndicate of men getting possession of land on such terms might consider themselves millionaires. Every argument advanced in favour of land-grant railways was an insult to the Committee. Was it not an insult to the country to say that exploiting, profit-hungry syndicates could make railways better than the State? Was it not far better that the people should remain shareholders in their railways, than that they should be the property of syndicates? He denied that their railways had been a failure. Some of the lines had no doubt been rather expensive, but take them all in all they were not a failure. He knew a person who was prepared to lease our railways at 4 per cent. on the cost of their construction. That proved that their railways were not a failure.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: That man keeps away from the Treasury. What is his name?

Mr. ISAMBERT said he would not mention his name as he might come under the disfavour of the Government.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: I shall be only too glad to see him.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the State should keep the railways in its own hands. If the Government had only been true to the professions under which those railways had been built, the Darling Downs lands would now be settled by as many people as there were at present in the whole of the colony, and then those railways would have paid. Railways were a necessary convenience for a settled population, but they had no instance of a railway paying without population. If, when they built railways, they allowed all the lands along them to be monopolised in large areas, how could they expect them to pay? Was it likely that a syndicate that would get land at from 1s. to 1s. 6d. an acre would cause people to settle on the land? Where was the line which was wanted so badly at the present time that they should be asked to make such a fearful sacrifice to make it? He did not know of any such line. Was the object to enable a syndicate to get hold in a cheap way of the rich mineral lands in the North, where they might find mineral treasures enough to pay for all the railways in the Australian colonies? If the railways they had did not pay, why should they not impose a tax upon the lands benefited by them? They were now beginning to find out that they had too many railways in the Australian colonies, when they considered the debts they had incurred and the interest they had to meet. They had in this colony 2,400 miles of railways, but a great deal of the land which those railways served was locked up. If the Government brought forward some proposal to settle the lands already opened up by railways, that would be a praiseworthy action. The railways would pay then, their revenue would increase, and they would be able to continue railway construction with their own money. The Government need not think the people were going to be caught with the chaff that the introduction of the land-grant system would give employment to the people. He had been told that a syndicate was all arranged and waiting for the House to pass that Bill. If the Bill was passed, the moment the syndicate got their concessions they could consider themselves as worth millions. They might make a start with a line for appearance sake; but the whole thing would be floated on the English money market, and they would "scoop the pool." There would not be much employment given to the people out of it. They had been going steadily down in the colony since 1884,

though during that time they had spent £10,000,000 in railway construction. In spite of that expenditure they had not prospered, and was the syndicates' money going to do so much more than the Government's money? There was a great misconception in the minds of some people that if railways were built on the land-grant principle they would not have to pay any interest for their construction. The fact was that it would all have to come out of the colony, and the profits into the bargain; and if the thing was calculated it would be found that they would have to pay the syndicate 200 or 300 per cent. for their money. They might do better by selling the land at 2s. 6d. an acre, and building the railways themselves. The State ought to own the railways. When Bismarck nationalised the Prussian railways, the very first year during which they were under State control they made a profit of 50,000,000 marks, besides allowing for concessions to railway servants, lessening Sunday work, making provision for railway servants in their old age, and giving increased railway facilities to the people. The reason for that was that they were managed far better by the State than they had been in private hands. Was it reasonable to expect that a profit-mongering syndicate would serve the people better than the State itself? Now, were they in such a desperate state as to have to grasp the hand of syndicates that had proved a curse to every country where they had got a hold? Anyone looking at the statistics of the various colonies would find that in exports and imports Queensland occupied about as sound and healthy a position as any colony of the group, and it was only a few millions behind New Zealand.

The CHAIRMAN: I must draw the hon. member's attention to the question before the Committee, which is an amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition to omit the 1st subsection of clause 4, under which contracts for the construction of land-grant railways may be entertained. It appears to me that the hon. member's remarks are not relevant to the question before the Committee.

Mr. ISAMBERT said the reason that the land-grant system was advocated was that Queensland was in so desperate a position that nothing remained but to resort to the help of syndicates. He was trying to prove that Queensland was the richest colony of the Australian group; that if they only managed their own affairs better they could build all the railways they required.

The CHAIRMAN: I would ask the hon. member to submit to the ruling of the Chair. I am of opinion that his remarks are not relevant to the amendment before the Committee. I again ask the hon. member to address himself to the amendment.

Mr. ISAMBERT said he could well understand that it was not agreeable to the large majority in favour of land-grant railways, probably for no reason that they could explain to themselves, to listen to anything which might be said against the Bill. He had yet to learn any reason why they should build railways on the land-grant principle and make such concessions as were proposed. For that reason he supported the amendment of the leader of the Opposition. He was grieved that the Liberal party should so change its opinion, and had lost confidence in the country.

Mr. NELSON said there seemed to be a general opinion in the Committee that the discussion with regard to land-grant railways should cease at 6 o'clock. It would be convenient to know what were the intentions of the Government in that respect.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD: Why not divide on your amendment?

The CHIEF SECRETARY said the intentions of the Government were to go on with clause 4 until it was disposed of.

Mr. NELSON: Any more?

The CHIEF SECRETARY said he was not prepared to say. He would not assist hon. gentlemen in trying to talk the Bill out. The intention had been plainly indicated in that direction, but it would not be talked out. He was not prepared to say what course the Government would take. If he said he would go on with the Bill until 8 o'clock, then some hon. gentlemen would talk the Bill out until that hour. He could not assist them in doing that.

Mr. DRAKE said the fact of the House having passed the second reading of the Bill by a large majority should not preclude hon. members from discussing the details of it, and more particularly the conditions embodied in the subsection, the omission of which had been moved. The Bill was one to make provision for the construction of railways by joint-stock companies, and to authorise the granting of Crown lands in aid of such construction. Surely it was competent for any hon. member to vote for the second reading of a Bill of that description with the intention of endeavouring to alter some of the details in Committee! That was the proper place to discuss whether Parliament desired that the land-grant principle should be introduced, or whether they should simply introduce a principle by which railways should be made and paid for with land instead of money. That was a most important matter. Hon. members must know perfectly well that it had been represented outside the House that the intention of the Government was to introduce a system of building railways, and paying for them with land and not with money. A very great number of persons who strongly objected to the land-grant railway agreements proposed in former Parliaments did so because the railway was to be paid for twice over; but many of them said they would have no objections to building railways on the land-grant system, provided it simply meant that the railways were to be paid for with land instead of money, and that when constructed they would become the property of the Government. Subsection 1 provided that the railway should remain the property of the company for a fixed period, and subsection 2 that the railway should become the property of the Crown as soon as it was constructed. Railways made under the conditions of subsection 2 would be the description of railways that the country had been led to expect that the Government intended to make. By the 7th clause it was provided that if a railway was made under subsection 1 the amount of land to be given should be equal to twice the cost of constructing the line, whereas under subsection 2, the amount of land to be given was to be only equal to the cost of construction. What could that mean but that a railway made under subsection 2 would have to be paid for twice over? The company had to undertake to work the line for a certain time. They were first of all to get the cost of constructing the line, and then they were to get an equal amount of land for working it for a term of years. It must therefore be manifest, provided subsection 2 was not a mere blind, that it was in the contemplation of the Government to construct railways that would not pay. If those railways would pay there could be no possible object in paying the syndicate over again for working them for a term of years. What advantage could accrue to the country for making railways which were not wanted and which would not pay? With regard

to the power of the House to alter the conditions of contracts, it had none whatever; therefore the present was the time to consider the conditions upon which the Parliament and the country would be prepared to receive proposals. It had been stated that amongst the advantages that were to be gained from a company contracting to make a railway under subsection 1 would be that it would compel the company to settle people on their land, and thereby enhance the value of the alternate blocks held by the Government. But according to the evidence of Professor Shelton before the Select Committee on assisted land settlement, the land-grant syndicates in America did quite the reverse. They simply held back their land, and by their influence compelled the Government to settle people on the Government land, and at the cost of the Government. The syndicate never attempted to realise until the value of their land had been enhanced in that manner.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD: What does it matter who puts the people on the land?

Mr. DRAKE said that if the State gave the increased value to the land there was no reason why it should not have the land as well as the railway. But in America syndicates had been very powerful inside the Government, and in Queensland they might probably be able to bring very great pressure to bear upon any Government and compel them to take artificial means to settle people on the land, in order to give an increased value to their own blocks. The Bill proposed on a large scale to lock up lands that were now only so far locked up that they were leased to the pastoral tenants of the Crown; and it might happen under that system that the syndicate, having obtained an enormous concession of land, and a company having been formed to buy that concession, the company might sell those lands to the pastoral lessees who at present occupied them. In that way they would raise money enough to construct the railway, but it certainly would not be an advantageous bargain for the State. Presuming that there were a great number of people in the country who were prepared to accept some system of land-grant railway construction, he was certain the system they meant was the system embodied in subsection 2, and not the system embodied in subsection 1. Therefore the leader of the Opposition had done quite right in proposing the omission of subsection 1. If there had been any alteration of opinion in the country since the country had emphatically rejected the schemes for land-grant railways which had been submitted to it, that alteration only went to the extent that the country would be prepared to accept the system of making railways and giving land instead of money in exchange. A railway of that kind would be made under the condition laid down in subsection 2, but there was no indication that the country had changed its opinion on the system of land-grant railways contemplated under subsection 1. It would be unconstitutional and improper to introduce that system in the last days of a dying Parliament.

Mr. HAMILTON said that there were indications that the country had changed its opinion. When the question was last before Parliament there was only a minority of sixteen for it out of a House of fifty-four; but now there were two or three to one in favour of it, and he had no doubt that hon. members represented the opinions of their constituents. In his own constituency the very men who a few years previously had been opposed to land-grant railways had unanimously passed a resolution requesting him to support this Bill, and the same thing had happened in other portions of

the colony. The arguments which had been brought forward that evening were against the principles of land-grant railways, and not against that particular clause. One objection was that the syndicates would make a profit. Why should they not make a profit? They could not expect them to build their railways unless they were to make a profit; and the greater the profit they made, the more would the colony benefit. He agreed with the hon. member for Mackay that it was a matter of great regret that many years ago they had not introduced the land-grant system of railway construction instead of spending the millions of borrowed money they had. They would not have had to pay so heavily for it as they had done, but millions of money would, on the other hand, have been introduced into the colony from England. They should make a change now. The experience of the last few years showed that they had made a mistake, and the sooner that mistake was rectified the better. It was most amusing to hear persons objecting to their getting rid of lands for fear syndicates might make some profit; but they could not expect them to build railways and not benefit themselves. Even if all the conditions were passed, it would be extremely difficult to find syndicates who would be willing to spend millions on building railways; and if the scheme was surrounded by the various restrictions proposed by those hon. members who had opposed that measure from the commencement, it would be almost impossible to do so. The hon. member for Enoggera had talked about paying for the railways twice over if the persons who made the lines and received double their cost in land were paid the cost of the lines after they had held them for fifty years. No doubt that might be so, but it should be remembered that after making the railways the companies would have to spend a large amount of money in settling and developing the country, probably just as much as would be expended on the construction of the lines in the first instance, and if they succeeded in developing the country that would make the land belonging to the State more valuable. The hon. member also stated that the syndicates got the Government to sell the Government land first. That, however, was not the case; at any rate, it did not agree with what he (Mr. Hamilton) had read on the subject. He recollected reading an article in an American non-political agricultural paper which completely exploded that idea. The editor gave his experience of a 5,000-mile tour which he took over the land-grant railways in that country for the purpose of affording his readers information as to the most desirable places to take up land. He explained that the various syndicates had bureaus of information where a person could ascertain where land could be obtained along the various land-grant railways, the price of the land, and the character of agriculture that could be profitably engaged in the different parts of the country. Intending agriculturists and producers were allowed to travel at half fares, and settlements were formed at certain places, twenty, thirty, and forty miles apart, where land was sold at a low rate in order to encourage persons to settle on it. Next year, when those persons had succeeded and formed the nucleus of an agricultural settlement, more land was put up, but at a higher price. The syndicates offered every encouragement to settlement, as it was their interest to do, by carrying produce at a low rate. In the same paper he saw that the syndicates were advertising their lands, and showing the great advantage there was in purchasing them instead of buying Government land; so that it was not correct to say that the State sold its land first. There was also a tabulated statement showing the

amount of land those syndicates had disposed of, and in most instances he noticed that they had sold every acre they possessed, and were depending solely on the railway traffic for their profits. In the course of the discussion that afternoon, when an hon. member stated that the construction of railways under that measure would certainly afford employment to persons who were at present out of work, another hon. member interjected, "Chinamen can come over from West Australia." That hon. member must know perfectly well that under the existing law no Chinaman could come over, unless he paid a penalty of £50 or suffered six months' imprisonment, so that that argument was of no weight. As to clause 14, under which the hon. member for Enoggera stated an agreement could be rejected, but could not be modified, it could be altered so that an agreement could be modified if it were considered desirable.

Mr. GLASSEY said most members of the Committee were aware that he did not favour the construction of railways by private companies at all. Neither did he favour the representatives of the people giving away the people's lands without distinct instructions from the people. He was satisfied that no such instructions had so far been given, and so far as the building of railways on the principle embodied in the Bill was concerned the people had on two occasions emphatically declared themselves against it. He did not agree with the last speaker that the country had changed its opinion in that respect; and he noticed that those who were strongest in the expression of that opinion were also strongest in their desire to retain their present position and most averse to appealing to the people at all. There might be a majority in the Committee prepared to carry out the provisions of the Bill in their entirety, but there were other members who were strongly opposed to them. Believing that there might be a majority in favour of the construction of railways by giving away portions of land in lieu of the money expended in their construction, he was bound to support the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition for the omission of the 1st subsection of clause 4. If they could not get all they desired they would get the next best thing to their desires. He had always held the opinion that it was necessary in a new country like this to construct railways for the purpose of opening up the country for subsequent settlement. Seeing that they had already constructed some 2,400 miles of railways, and finding that they had but a very small population settled along the lines they had constructed, their first duty was to endeavour to secure the settlement of those lands which were opened up by their present railways. To listen to some of the speeches delivered on the Bill one would be inclined to think that all the lands along their railways were now so densely peopled that it had become necessary to construct more railways.

Mr. BLACK said he would like to ask what was the question before the Committee?

The CHAIRMAN: The question before the Committee is the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition to omit subsection 1 of clause 4.

Mr. GLASSEY said those tactics would not do the slightest good, because he had certain things to say, and he should say them, and every time he was compelled to sit down would only necessitate his referring to them again when he arose.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: You will obey the orders of the House.

Mr. GLASSEY said he would obey the orders of the Chairman. The amendment before the Committee was the omission of subsection 1 of

clause 4. He did not think a company should retain possession of a line for fifty years. That was too long, more especially when they were asked in another provision of the Bill to give twice the cost of the construction of the line in lieu of the line itself. He should confine his remarks to the question as to whether they should have land-grant railways or whether their railways should be constructed by the State. As he had said, he did not favour the construction of any railways by a private company, and if it were necessary to construct any railways at all before the lands opened up by their present lines had been settled, then it was the duty of the State to construct them. He had on two occasions replied to the statements made with respect to the impoverished condition of the Treasury, and had shown that if it was necessary to construct more railways, the Treasury could readily find the means for their construction. They were told that there were certain places where it was desirable that railways should be constructed, and the Colonial Treasurer had mentioned a few the other evening; but so far no arguments had been adduced to show that it was absolutely necessary in the interests of the country that those lines should be made at all. They had had comparisons made with regard to the conducting of railways by the State in different countries and by private firms. The Colonial Treasurer had cited America during his speech that evening, and had also referred to the railways in Great Britain and France, and the whole tenor of his discourse went to show that wherever the State had control of railways they were not worked to the satisfaction of the people. Allusion had also been made that afternoon by the hon. member for Rosewood to the nationalisation of the Prussian railways some years ago. It was pretty well known that prior to 1871 the railways in Prussia were in the hands of private persons. The hon. member for Rosewood, no doubt, had obtained his facts from a book entitled "Bismarck and Socialism," in which it was stated that the first year in which the Government of that country took over the railways, giving increased wages to the employees, shortening the hours of labour, partly abolishing Sunday work, and providing clothing for the employees, the railways showed the handsome profit of 50,000,000 marks. That was a conclusive argument that in that country the railways being managed by the State had been fairly successful. America and England had been cited as countries where railways were successfully managed by private companies.

Mr. BLACK said he rose to a point of order. The hon. member was giving a dissertation on railways in general, and making a second-reading speech on land-grant railways. He asked again whether the hon. member's remarks were relevant.

The CHAIRMAN: It is a rule that is generally observed in this House, and I believe in all Assemblies, that in debating Bills general principles shall be discussed on the second reading, and in committee the discussion shall be confined either to the clause itself or the particular amendment before the Committee. The amendment before the Committee is to omit a condition upon which proposed lines of railway may be constructed under this Bill. I think the discussion of that amendment should be confined to the question as to whether it is desirable to construct railways upon the condition contained in the sub-clause it is proposed to omit, and I am of opinion the hon. member for Bundamba is going outside the reasonable limits of discussion.

Mr. GLASSEY said, then was he not to reply to the speeches that had been delivered that afternoon? Well, he might as well state, to begin with, that he was neither going to be brow-beaten or bullied.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Order, order!

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must treat the ruling of the Chair with respect.

Mr. GLASSEY said he had no desire to reflect upon the ruling of the Chair.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: But you were reflecting upon it.

Mr. GLASSEY said if there was an attempt made by certain hon. members to either brow-beat or bully him he would resent it.

Mr. ANNEAR: We know what your resentment is.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said, rising to a point of order, he thought the Chairman was entitled to inquire from the hon. member for Bundanba what he meant by the words "brow-beaten or bullied."

Mr. ANNEAR: Or his "resentment."

The HON. P. PERKINS said he should like to ask whether forty or fifty gentlemen were to be kept there listening to the skiting and trash and bunkum and falsehoods the hon. member for Bundanba was talking?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for Bundanba is in possession of the Chair.

Mr. GLASSEY said the Colonial Treasurer had that afternoon stated that private companies could work railways a great deal better than the Government; and he cited America and England as examples. Many arguments might be adduced in contradiction of that statement. If railways could only be conducted as they were in England, by working employees seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen hours a day, then he said the less they had of private railway management the better. Why, just recently an attempt was made by the railway employees in England to obtain—

Mr. BLACK said he again rose to a point of order. The hon. gentleman's remarks were utterly irrelevant to the question before the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman's remarks are not relevant to the amendment before the Committee. I trust he will not compel me, by other means, to take steps to confine him to the question under consideration.

Mr. GLASSEY said he was going to have his say.

Mr. HAMILTON: You are a brave man when in danger.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not think the hon. member for Bundanba is entitled to address the Chair in that way. He is at liberty, as any other member is, to address the Committee on the subject under discussion; but he is certainly not entitled to threaten or act in defiance of the Chair.

Mr. GLASSEY said he begged to move that the Chairman leave the chair, and he would then say what he was going to say. If discussion was going to be stifled in the manner it had been, then he would have his say.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Order, order!

Question put.

Mr. GLASSEY said he thought it desirable that there should be a short vacation, because it was clear, and he regretted to see it manifested, that there was not a desire, at any rate, to give fair play during the debate. He did not say on the Chairman's part; he wished that to be distinctly understood. He had no desire to reflect on the Chairman's ruling. It was the Chairman's duty, when a point of

order was raised, to deal with it, and personally he found no fault with the ruling. But he certainly thought there was a desire on the part of many hon. members on both sides to stifle discussion that was adverse to the Bill, and as he perceived that he was not likely to be treated in a fair and equitable spirit, there was nothing left for him but to move the Chairman out of the chair. It was not his intention, when rising to speak, to travel beyond the range the discussion had taken that afternoon, but when he saw an attempt made to prevent members from replying to statements that had been made, such members must protect themselves in the only way the forms of the House permit. He was saying that the Treasurer in his remarks comparing the working of railways—

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in continuing, on a motion that I do now leave the chair, the remarks which I have previously ruled out of order. He is entitled to advance reasons why I should leave the chair, but I repeat that he is not entitled, under cover of the motion, to continue remarks which were ruled out of order before he made the motion.

Mr. GLASSEY said he regretted that his remarks were to be so circumscribed, and that he could not say a single word except on the matter under consideration. It was essential that there should be a short vacation of the chair, because in the present temper of the Committee they were not prepared to hear arguments advanced against the statements that had been made by other hon. members. Finding that he was unable to pursue the line of argument that he had laid down, he thought it advisable that the Committee should have a little time to consider whether their treatment of himself was legitimate or fair.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We have had quite enough of the hon. member talking about himself.

Mr. GLASSEY: I hope the Chief Secretary will keep his temper.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Talk about the Bill, not about yourself.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: If a man is bitten by bugs he must scratch himself.

Mr. GLASSEY said that if hon. members would keep their temper they would get on with business much faster. He was there to perform a duty, and that duty he was going to perform in the best way he could. That way might not suit the ideas of some hon. members, but he did it to the best of his ability and judgment. Certain statements had been made that afternoon with regard to the making of railways on the land-grant principle which required to be answered, and he was endeavouring to furnish that answer as well as he could. The statement that the railways of England were conducted—

The CHAIRMAN: I again rule that the hon. member is out of order in discussing that question under cover of the motion now before the Committee.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: This is grossly unfair. I cannot stand this sort of thing.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Order! Chair!

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: What is the point of order?

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order raised. I have ruled that the hon. member for Bundanba is out of order in addressing remarks to the Chair, under cover of a motion that the Chairman do now leave the chair, which had been previously ruled out of order.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Bundanba was referring to the English railways, and the Chairman told him that in doing so he was out of order.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not a point of order. The hon. member for Bundamba is in possession of the Chair.

Mr. GLASSEY: My advice to the hon. member for Stanley is that if he wants to say what he intends to say he had better say it in favour of the Government or their supporters; otherwise he will not be permitted to say it.

Mr. AGNEW: You are not saying it to the Government; you are saying it to the mob.

Mr. GLASSEY: The squeaking member for Nundah!

Mr. AGNEW: The loafing member for Bundamba!

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Order, order!

The CHAIRMAN: I must request the hon. member for Bundamba to withdraw the expression he has just used.

Mr. GLASSEY: What is this dictation about?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: You called upon the member for Bundamba to withdraw an offensive expression he made use of. I hope you will insist upon his doing so before allowing him to proceed further.

The CHAIRMAN: I must request the hon. member for Bundamba to withdraw the expression he made use of with regard to the hon. member for Nundah.

Mr. GLASSEY: I withdraw the expression with pleasure.

The CHAIRMAN: I request the hon. member for Nundah to withdraw the expression he made use of with regard to the hon. member for Bundamba.

Mr. AGNEW said he was sorry he said the hon. member was a "loafing" member.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw the expression.

Mr. AGNEW said he withdrew the expression.

Mr. GLASSEY said he could not understand all that heat. He could assure hon. members they were not going to warm him. He should keep as cool as a philosopher, and all he desired was to have his say on the clause under discussion. If he could not do that in the usual form, he should be obliged to use what other forms were open to him. He did not think he was making an unreasonable request. But, going back to the question of railways, which he thought was the question under discussion—

An HONOURABLE MEMBER: No.

Mr. GLASSEY said in moving a motion that the Chairman leave the chair it was impossible to keep within the four corners of their regulations; and when other hon. members had travelled hither and thither all over the world to illustrate their arguments, it was not an unreasonable thing that the same latitude should be allowed to him. He had endeavoured, in the best way he could, to answer some of the arguments in favour of land-grant railways, and it was unreasonable for hon. members to attempt to prevent other hon. members from answering statements which they had made so far as railways in the British Islands were concerned.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in continuing his remarks in the strain he has been adopting. I have ruled him out of order on several occasions, and I trust he will show respect for the ruling of the Chair. The question is that the Chairman leave the chair, and the hon. member must confine his remarks to that question.

Mr. GLASSEY said it seemed that the Chairman was not anxious to leave the chair, but he was anxious that he should do so. He did not want to use strong language; but if the debate

was going to continue as it was, the sooner he left the chair the better. During the four and a-half years he had been in that Chamber he had never seen such manifest unfairness.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member must withdraw that expression.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in accusing the Chair of "manifest unfairness." No member of the Committee knows better than the hon. member that the expression is very disorderly, and ought not to be used; and being of that nature, it is my duty to ask him to withdraw it, and I now do so.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said surely it must go further than that. The Chairman, who was virtually the Speaker, had been charged by the hon. member with manifest unfairness.

Mr. GLASSEY: No.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said those words were applied to the Chair, and hon. members on both sides must uphold the dignity of the Committee. Were they to have a period of misrule simply because three or four hon. members chose to make themselves the chartered libertines of the Committee? It was an insult to the Chairman, and through him an insult to the whole House.

Mr. GLASSEY: What remarks am I to withdraw? I did not attribute unfairness to the Chairman.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The hon. member did.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in charging the Chairman or the Committee with manifest unfairness. I have ruled the expression out of order, and I have asked the hon. member to withdraw it. I now again request him to do so, and unconditionally.

Mr. GLASSEY said he would withdraw the expression, and it would not make the slightest difference to him if he made a thousand apologies.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Withdraw that expression.

Mr. GLASSEY said he withdrew the remark without reserve. But he might say, in passing, that the Chief Secretary should keep his temper.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: You keep order.

Mr. GLASSEY said he desired to keep order, but, finding that hon. members were not inclined to allow him to reply to remarks that had been made, there was nothing left for him but to move the Chairman out of the chair. He hoped they would be imbued with that British fair play they heard of, and would allow an hon. member who might differ from them to say what he had to say. He had listened night after night, and day after day, to many things he objected to; and how the hon. member for Balonne, above all others, could take up the position he had, he could not understand. If there was one hon. member who had been allowed very considerable latitude—latitude almost bordering upon license—it was the hon. member for Balonne; and, although he and the hon. member differed widely on political matters, that hon. member would have been the first man he would have applied to to assist him in obtaining fair play. Finding that the hon. member was just as stringent as some other hon. members, all he could say was that he was disappointed. They should consider whether it was wise to pursue the course now being pursued to prevent certain hon. members saying what they had to say in regard to the very serious question now under consideration. In debating the question whether it was necessary to construct more railways, and on what method those railways should be built, there might be some difference of opinion, and he differed very materially from many hon. members

He did not believe it was necessary to construct more railways at present, and if it was necessary there were means whereby they could be built.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is addressing himself to the main question, and not to the question "That the Chairman do now leave the chair." He is not in order in doing so. I have repeatedly ruled him out of order, and I can do no more. It rests with the Committee to take further action.

Mr. GLASSEY said that some two years ago he had taken part in a discussion on a matter of that kind, and the discussion had taken a very wide range. The discussion had been initiated by the present head of the Government when the late Government brought forward a proposal for the borrowing of £1,000,000 for the construction of unspecified railways. The Chairman himself had played an important part on that occasion, and there had been no attempt then to strictly confine the speaker to the question.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is out of order. If he thinks my ruling wrong his remedy is to move that it be disagreed to. My ruling is that he is not in order in discussing other questions than the question before the Committee. The question is, "That I do now leave the chair."

Mr. GLASSEY said that there was an article which he wished to read with regard to the construction of railways on the land-grant principle, and he wished hon. members would have a little patience. It would do no harm for hon. members to listen to him for twenty minutes or half an hour. He wished to read from a pamphlet by Archibald Forbes, published a few years ago, when the question had been previously before Parliament, in which Mr. Forbes gave the arguments advanced by those who were opposed to the scheme in 1883.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in the course he is pursuing. I can only think the hon. member is deliberately setting the ruling of the Chair at defiance, instead of setting an example to younger members.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. GLASSEY said that he had no desire to press the amendment. He wanted to discuss the main question which they had been considering all the afternoon. With the permission of the Committee he would withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the question—put.

Mr. GLASSEY said that perhaps a better spirit would prevail now that that little fizzle had been got over. The Colonial Treasurer had stated that afternoon that private firms could manage railways much better than governments; but he had heard no proof of that statement. England and America had been cited as examples, but if railways were to be conducted as they were in England, the fewer railways they had constructed by private firms the better. The employees on railways in England had to work from twelve to eighteen and nineteen hours a day.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES said he rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member addressing himself to the question before the Committee?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member's remarks are not entirely relevant to the amendment before the Committee. I have pointed out that the discussion must be confined to the question before the Committee—that is, that clause 4 be amended by the omission of the 1st subsection. The debate must be confined to

that question, and the remarks of the hon. member are not in my opinion relevant to the question.

Mr. GLASSEY said that the Government proposed to build railways and give lands in lieu of them, and one of the provisions—which it was moved should be omitted—was that the railway should be held by the firm for fifty years, receiving twice the cost of construction in the shape of land. That was a monstrous proposal, and it was made by the Government in the face of the fact that on two previous occasions the country had pronounced a most emphatic judgment against it. The Government had no right to reverse a policy which the people had given them no mandate to do. He felt sure that if the Government had the courage to go before the people on the question the people would hurl them from power; but they took advantage of their position, and because certain hon. members were opposed to the Bill they made every effort to stifle discussion.

Mr. PAUL rose to a point of order. Was it in order to say that the Government were attempting to stifle discussion?

Mr. GLASSEY said the hon. member was very impatient. The Government were asking that Committee to adopt a proposal of a most monstrous character. If they proposed that the company contracting to construct a railway under the land-grant system should receive full value for the money expended, that would be a reasonable proposal; but if a line would cost £4,000 per mile, it was an unreasonable proposal that £8,000 should be paid for it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Wait till the proposal is made.

Mr. GLASSEY said that the proposal was already made in the Bill.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: There is nothing of the kind in the Bill.

Mr. GLASSEY said it had been said that it was necessary that a syndicate should construct any railways that might be wanted because the syndicate would be in a position to settle the land along the lines much better than the Government could do; but he had heard no arguments in support of that. It said little for the capacity or the ability of the Government if they could not settle the land as effectively as any private firm. But he believed they were as capable of settling the lands of the colony as any private firm in the world, and the same might be said of the hon. gentlemen who preceded them on the Treasury benches. If they had the desire which it was said syndicates would have to settle the land, they had also the ability; but it did not follow, because the lands had not been hitherto settled, that means could not be found for their settlement. One of the first things that ought to be done was to devise the best means of settling people along the railway lines already made; and it was unfair until that was accomplished to try to pass a Bill giving some syndicate power to construct more lines of railway. He thought the tendency of the age, where railways were in the hands of private firms, was for the State to acquire those railways. He believed that in the United States there was an association called the national association, and one of the planks of the platform of that association was to take the railways from the hands of private firms and put them into the hands of the State. He did not agree with the statement made by the Colonial Treasurer that the feeling manifested some time ago in the old country in favour of the State acquiring the railways had died out; he thought it was stronger than it had ever been before. In

the London County Council a resolution had been carried, at the instance of Mr. Burns, that gas companies, water companies, omnibuses and trams should in future be acquired, worked, and controlled by that council; therefore, it was a reasonable inference that there was a strong feeling over the country generally in favour of taking the railways out of the hands of private persons and putting them into the hands of the State. He thought that the most advanced thinkers in many parts of the world were moving in that direction. He thought also that it was not unreasonable to say that land-grant railways had not been a success in New Zealand. If the Committee would only permit him to read a few extracts from the Melbourne *Leader* on that question he would be able to illustrate how the railways were working in that particular colony; but as hon. members were not inclined to permit him to do that he would refrain from doing it, for he had no desire to stonewall. He contended that they would be taking a false step—and one which the people of the country would perhaps have reason to regret in the future—if they departed from the principle which had been hitherto observed of making and managing their own railways. Western Australia had been cited as an example of a country in which land-grant railways had been a success, but he did not think the system had been tested there sufficiently long to enable them to judge of its success or otherwise. It was a great injustice to the people of any country to permit a monopoly such as a railway was to be in the hands of private firms, more particularly when they had another system of railway construction and management in operation. He should, therefore, support the amendment, and as he had no desire to stonewall, and other hon. members wished to address the Committee, he would give them an opportunity of doing so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said there was a rule observed in some cases that a man was held responsible for the natural consequences of his action. If a man fired a loaded gun towards a crowd of people and hit one of them, he was held responsible for that; and if a man threw a lighted torch at a haystack, and it caught fire, he was held responsible for that. The only exception was where a person who did those things was not in a state of mind to be held responsible for his action. It might, therefore, be inferred that the hon. member for Bundanba intended the natural consequence of his action. The natural consequence of the conduct of which they had had an exhibition from the hon. member for Bundanba that evening, and on several previous occasions, was that discussion on the subject before the Committee would be absolutely stifled. No attention would be paid to the subject; but, from sheer weariness and disgust, the Committee would go to a division and support anything the hon. member attacked. That was the natural consequence of his action. Surely the hon. member had sense enough to see that such tactics as he was pursuing could only have the effect of preventing any reasonable discussion. The Bill, the Government were conscious, was not a perfect Bill. They desired to have it discussed in a rational manner. He (the Chief Secretary) spoke for the majority of hon. members, who, he believed, desired to see the Bill made a good one, and to correct any mistakes there might be in it; but if they were to have their attention diverted from it by such tactics as the hon. member adopted, they would, in sheer weariness and disgust, refrain from discussing it. The House was getting tired of listening to long disquisitions about the hon. member for Bundanba. The hon. member could talk about other things; he need not

talk about himself. He thought there had been too much said about the hon. member in the House, but it was really too much when the hon. member favoured them with a disquisition about himself for a quarter or half an hour at a time.

Mr. NELSON said he must express his appreciation of the manner in which the Chairman had conducted that debate. He thought the Chairman had earned the thanks of the whole Committee. Hon. members generally desired that the discussion should be confined to the subject in hand, otherwise they would never get through the Bill. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that that rule had not been the custom hitherto, and the hon. member for Bundanba made a very good point when he referred to what took place in Committee about two years ago.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Different rules applied to that.

Mr. NELSON: The same rule applies in both cases.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: No; everything is in order on money matters.

Mr. NELSON said they had not altered their rules, but he hoped they would be altered. There was no doubt that when they commenced the debate that evening he himself, the Chief Secretary, and the Treasurer were very much out of order, and travelled beyond the subject.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not think so.

Mr. NELSON said at the same time he would point out to the hon. member for Bundanba that in Committee on a matter of that sort, according to the usual parliamentary practice, a certain amount of latitude was allowed to the Government. He did not claim any for himself, except when he was obliged to reply, as he had occasion to do that evening, against his will. If, however, they were to stand strictly on their rights, then the objection which had been taken ought to have been taken from the very start. There was no doubt that if the law of relevancy had been rigidly enforced many of the remarks which had been made would have been ruled out of order. He did not suppose the hon. member for Bundanba, unless he claimed to be a Minister—and he believed he was a minister generally known as the minister of strikes—would claim the privilege usually accorded to members of the Government. He (Mr. Nelson) was glad, however, to be able to back the Chairman up, and hoped he would always insist upon putting in force the law of relevancy in the same manner as he had done that evening.

Mr. DONALDSON said that before the question was put he desired to say a few words, and to intimate his intention of supporting the amendment. Although he was not himself in favour of land-grant railways he recognised that being in a minority in the Committee he would not be justified in taking action to prevent the passage of the Bill altogether, and he supported the amendment as tending more in the direction he favoured than the clause as it stood. They had three proposals before them. One was that they should pay twice the cost of the line; another was that the line should be paid for in land, and should then become the property of the State; and the third proposal was that the cost of the railway should be paid in land, and that the State at a subsequent date, to be mentioned in the agreement, should pay the value of the railway. If there was any one of the three conditions that would commend itself to the Committee, or to the country, it was that under which a line would be paid for in land and then become the property of the State. Further than that he was not prepared to go. It was a

step in the wrong direction to construct railways on that principle at all; but if they were to be constructed at all on the land-grant principle they should not be allowed to go out of the hands of the Government. For that reason he was determined to support the amendment of the leader of the Opposition. Taking the first proposal for paying twice the cost in land, he had not the slightest hesitation in asserting that a proposal of that kind was a monstrous one in the interests of the country. The country was not justified at the present time in constructing any railways upon any such basis, because the cost in the first instance would be too great, and it would be hard to say how any benefit to the country could accrue. Under that condition they would have to part with many millions of acres of land, and would get nothing in return unless they waited for fifty years, when possibly they would get a line worn out, rolling stock ditto, and would have paid twice the value of the line in land.

Mr. ANNEAR: You cannot work a worn out railway.

Mr. DONALDSON said that as the hon. member knew the line could be worked well for a time, and be allowed to get into a state of disrepair towards the close of the period during which it would remain in the hands of the company. They need not discuss that matter at present, because they did not know what the conditions of any agreement might be. They had, however, a precedent for what he stated in the case of a railway in another colony, which, when it came to be purchased by the Government, was found to be in a very bad state of repair, and it had almost to be reconstructed by the Government. They could take a lesson from that instance.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: What railway was that?

Mr. DONALDSON said that was the Hobson's Bay Railway.

Mr. AGNEW: Were the earthworks worn out?

Mr. DONALDSON said the rails were almost worn out, the sleepers were worn out, and the line had to be re-ballasted. It was like putting a new lock, stock, and barrel in a gun. He had already asked the Government to give the Committee some information as to the lines it was proposed to construct under that system, and also as to the districts of the colony which at the present time were languishing for want of railways. The Committee were entitled to that information, because that measure was certainly one of the most important that had ever come before that Chamber, and one in which the future of the colony was to a very large extent involved. If they were now to make arrangements by which the alienation of millions of acres of land in the colony could be brought about, he ventured to say that it would not meet with the approval of the people in years to come. He was one of those who believed that the bulk of the people of the colony were not in favour of the construction of railways on the land-grant principle. The only time the question had ever been put before the people of the colony a most emphatic vote had been given against the land-grant principle of railway construction, and he had no reason to believe that the bulk of the people had changed their opinions on the question since that time.

The Hon. P. PERKINS: When was it tested?

Mr. DONALDSON said the hon. member knew it had been tested in 1883, and the hon. member was a member of the Government that had then been sent out of power. Were they to take silence for consent? He had not been

informed, and he watched affairs pretty closely, of any public meetings having been held to affirm the land-grant principle.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: Second-reading speech.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: This is not relevant.

Mr. DONALDSON said the Chief Secretary had said just now that certain people should be held responsible for the consequences of their action. The hon. gentleman should be held responsible for his action, and he had used the strongest possible arguments against the adoption of the land-grant principle in 1883, and had induced the people to vote against it at that time. The people had adhered to the opinions the hon. gentleman had then assisted them to form, and was he not to be held responsible for the doctrine he had then given out?

The Hon. P. PERKINS: Is he never to change his mind?

Mr. DONALDSON said he did not blame the hon. gentleman for changing his mind, but was everyone else in the colony to change his mind because the hon. gentleman did?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: You are departing from the amendment.

Mr. DONALDSON said it was no wonder when so many interruptions were made. He believed in order being maintained, but if they were going to have a new order of things they should not commence it too suddenly. During the many years he had been in the House a great deal of latitude had been allowed in debate, and he did not know that it had been greatly abused.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: It was only when it was abused that any notice was taken of it.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: It is not what you say in the House; it is the man that says it.

Mr. DONALDSON said it would be a mistake to do anything that would stifle discussion. Such an important matter should be discussed from every point of view, and in dealing with such a matter it was sometimes necessary in giving an illustration to go a little away from the subject. He was not going to speak for an hour on the subject, far from it, and he made it a rule to confine himself to the subject and be as brief as he could. He challenged the Government to prove that there were parts of the colony now languishing for railway construction.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES: That could be very soon proved.

Mr. DONALDSON said it might be proved in one part of the colony.

The Hon. B. D. MOREHEAD: It can be proved for the whole colony.

Mr. DONALDSON said he did not think so, and he had as much knowledge of the colony as the hon. member had. Whatever his opinions were he should certainly adhere to them until he saw good reasons for changing them. Those were his opinions, and he was certainly going to adhere to them until he heard better arguments than he had heard from the other side. He had not heard that the part of the country he represented was making a great cry for railway construction, and yet it was one of the parts mentioned by the Treasurer the other night.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I thought they were very anxious for it.

Mr. DONALDSON said that was something more than he knew at present. He had not heard any demand for the construction of railways on the land-grant principle. He did not

wish to keep the discussion going at any greater length. He should vote for the amendment proposed, and trusted the Government would see their way clear to make some modifications, because up to the present time they were making none. If they adhered to the whole Bill it would not preserve the interests of the colony. It was drafted more in the interests of the companies who might construct railways, because nearly the whole matter would be in their hands.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he was sorry to have to disagree with his late colleague. He hoped the Government would stick to the clause as it stood, because he was certain that railways would not be made by means of land grants unless that clause was rigidly adhered to. The hon. member for Bulloo had expressed himself as averse to the principle of land-grant railways, but he (Mr. Morehead) had always been in favour of them, and his regret was that the Colonial Treasurer did not take his advice a good many years ago. He told him then that he had not educated the people up to the principle; that he would spring it upon them, and surprise the country, which would not go with him. But his hon. friend the Colonial Treasurer could not see through his (Mr. Morehead's) lesser glasses. He thought everyone knew as well as he did that it was good for the country, and he pushed it, with the result that his Government fell. He regretted exceedingly, not particularly its fall, as its fall in that direction. If the policy then advocated by the McIlwraith Administration had been adopted, Queensland would have far outstripped any of the Australasian colonies, and people who read what might be to them ancient history would see that that would have been the effect.

Mr. DONALDSON: That is only an assertion.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD: It might be only an assertion, but the hon. gentleman gave him an opportunity of saying something else. At that time there were certain antediluvians—he did not call the hon. gentleman one—who clothed themselves in a yellow coating which was called the yellow pamphlet. He had heard the hon. member for Leichhardt say he did not write it because he had not the power, but that he gave the idea. Well, he (Mr. Morehead) had met some of those yellow-clothed antediluvians, and some who were intimately connected with the hon. member for Bulloo, and they told him no later than last year, when he met them in England, that they regretted extremely having had anything to do with that pamphlet; that they found they were utterly wrong, and that if they had advocated the transcontinental railway it would have been a great deal better for the colony and a great deal better for themselves. Now, the hon. member for Bulloo had made an attack on the leader of the Government for changing his opinions.

Mr. DONALDSON: No; I did not.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said it was an indirect attack, and he said all credit was due to the Chief Secretary for changing his opinions. The man who never changed his opinions was an ass, and he admired the hon. gentleman for changing his. With regard to the particular clause before them, if the bottom and top were knocked out of it, and only the middle left—which was the proposition of the hon. gentleman who led what was called the Opposition—the Government might just as well withdraw the Bill. He looked upon the measure as one of supreme importance, and he hoped the Government would proceed with it. They would get the support of nearly three-fourths of the members of the House in carrying it through,

and he would say this: That if the leaders of the so-called labour party did not support it they were not doing what they ought to do in the interests of those they presumed to represent. It had been said with regard to that clause that it would only deal with a certain portion of the colony; but without making an electioneering speech, a thing he had never done, he might say that a railway could be made under that Bill from Yeulba to St. George. There was an enormous amount of wheat-growing country there. He believed the colony would be benefited by such a line in a way that hon. members had no idea of, and that the Government would get many applications to make a line in that direction. That was only one case in which he believed a railway might be made to pay handsomely as a feeder to the main Western line of the colony. He hoped that hon. members would not be lead away by the specious arguments of the hon. member for Bulloo, and by the party to which he hoped, if he was going to follow, he would not subordinate his own good judgment.

Mr. DONALDSON said there was no denying the innuendo which the hon. member made in the latter part of his speech. The hon. member was well aware that there was no truth whatever in the assertion.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he did not know what the hon. member meant. He gave his words a meaning which they were never intended to convey.

Mr. DONALDSON said the hon. gentleman ought to accept his contradiction.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: What is the contradiction?

Mr. DONALDSON said the contradiction that he was to be the leader of a new party. The hon. gentleman made that remark as plainly as it could be made, and no doubt it was so understood by hon. members. In justice to himself he would take the opportunity of stating that he had never been consulted by any member of the House with regard to the formation of any new party.

The HON. B. D. MOREHEAD said he had never accused the hon. gentleman of forming any new party; he had never even suspected him of any such thing.

Mr. PAUL said the hon. member for Balonne had alluded to him as an antediluvian, and had said that a man was an ass who never changed his opinion when necessary. Although the hon. member might consider him an antediluvian, he hoped he would not consider him an ass, because he had changed the opinion he held at the time alluded to. The people who first raised the opposition to the transcontinental railway were the squatters; and very reasonably so, because the railway was to be taken through runs for which they had paid very large sums, and no compensation was to be given them for the land that would be taken away from them. The case had changed since then. The runs had come under the Act of 1884, and for any land resumed from the leased portions compensation was to be given.

Mr. AGNEW said he had been listening a long time for some argument for or against the clause under discussion. He wanted to hear something as to the relative value of the proposals.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: We had all that this afternoon, when the hon. member was not here.

Mr. AGNEW said the Chief Secretary had gone out of his way to tell the Committee that he was not present in the afternoon. There was a reason for that: The time of the House was so wasted that he could not afford to be present in

the afternoons. But he was present now, and he had been listening in vain for some arguments bearing upon the clause under discussion. He was in favour of the main principle of the Bill, but before purchasing his whistle he wanted to know what price he was going to pay for it. He was not in favour of giving the whole colony away for a railway, and he wanted to hear some reasons why they should give twice its value for a line because the line was going to be worked by a company for fifty years. He was inclined to think that the proposal was altogether too liberal.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That question will come on more properly when we get to clause 7.

Mr. AGNEW said that in that case he would defer the remarks he had to make until clause 7 was reached.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said there was no doubt that most of the speeches that evening had been altogether apart from the subject before the Committee; but earlier in the afternoon it was pointed out by those who thought that the railways, or as many of them as possible, should belong to the Government, that it would be a good thing to make it a stipulation in the contract that after a certain time the railway should become the property of the Government without any further payment; and that the contract should provide for the giving of a certain amount of land at once as a bonus for its construction, and a further amount for its maintenance and working before the line was handed over to the Government. What bargain should be made under those circumstances, and what should be the maximum quantity of land to be given, was a matter to be discussed when they came to clause 7, when he hoped it would be seriously discussed with a view of arriving at a proper conclusion on the question.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN said the question was such an important one, and the Parliament was so near the end of its existence, that he thought the better plan would be to drop the Bill and allow it to be dealt with by the new Parliament. It would by no means be the benefit to the colony that it would have been nine or ten years ago. Since that time lines had been built from every port in the colony—from Southport to the Gulf. The lines to be built on the land-grant principle would reach no population; they would simply open up country further to the West. It would be of no use in any part of the South, as far as he could see; and a line in the district of the hon. member for Balonne would make no difference except for stock; it would not lead to settlement down there. The only part of clause 4 that he could agree to was the 2nd subsection, which provided that the line should be handed over to the Government when it was completed. Lines made on the land-grant principle would carry the traffic to the Gulf, and the people in the South would be very sorry by-and-by that the system was ever adopted. He would support the subsection if he thought it would be any benefit to the working classes; but he believed the Western Australian line was made by Chinamen, who were now wanting to cross the Queensland border. It was a wonderful thing that in altering the policy of a country a strong Government never applied to the outside public to know whether they agreed with it or not. Had this policy been adopted ten years ago the Chief Secretary need not have borrowed £10,000,000 and squandered it.

Mr. HALL said he was opposed to the principle contained in that 1st subsection, because he thought it would be more advantageous to have a definite bargain with a

company, in order that they might know the full extent of it. In fifty years' time steam railways would have become rather obsolete, and there was no telling what condition the line might be in.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said he observed that the hon. member who had just sat down had last evening addressed a public meeting in denunciation of the Government. If he had used the argument he had just now, he was sorry for his audience. The hon. member could not have read the Bill. If he would do so he would find that it carefully provided that the exact terms of the contract should be submitted for the ratification of Parliament before it took effect. No doubt the arguments of the hon. member would carry weight with an audience as ignorant as himself.

Mr. AGNEW said he found that clauses 4 and 7 must be taken together, and he objected altogether to the price proposed to be paid for the railway under that condition. Why should they give twice as much under the fifty years' condition? He did not object to land-grant railways, but would oppose that condition, and support the 3rd.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Clause 7 can be amended.

Mr. AGNEW said there was a definite issue before the Committee, and he thought the price too high.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: That is a reason for reducing the price, not for rejecting the principle.

Mr. POWERS said one of the objections that had been raised to the principle was that if the railway were under the control of the syndicate for any time there would be a dual control, which had not been found to work well elsewhere. There would be the control of one line by a syndicate, and of the rest of the lines by the Government. Wherever that had been tried, and the Government had the majority of the railways, they had been forced into buying the syndicate lines. In clause 7 the Government proposed to pay twice the cost of the railway, and the question was whether they should not have to pay for it three times over. The country would force the Government into buying the railway, and as no provision was made for the State purchasing the railway before the fifty years, or whatever the term was, they might have to pay twice the cost of the line in land and give some sum to the syndicate for the line. The cost was to include plant, and that would not be of much use after fifty years, and looking at the progress of electricity the plant might then be useless.

Mr. AGNEW said that he desired it to be distinctly understood that he was not opposing the clause for the reasons just given by the hon. gentleman. Anyone with any experience of railways must be aware that they had always to be kept in a state of efficiency, and that it was not possible to hand over a railway to-morrow in bad repair which was quite efficient to-day. That sort of thing could only be done in conversation, but was impracticable. He did not hold that the railways should always be the property of the Crown. Some people spoke as if they thought that, if a railway became the property of the country, people would immediately be allowed to travel over it without paying for it. They could not do that with their own railways, and if railways were owned by private enterprise they would not have to pay any more. The probability was that they would have to pay much less. His opposition was on the ground that they were proposing to pay too high a price for the railways. He believed in

the private ownership of railways. The country would never be properly developed until they had private railways; but, at the same time, he was desirous that they should get their railways as cheaply as possible.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said that all the arguments used by the hon. gentleman were in favour of the clause as it stood. The hon. member appeared to think that it was proposed to pay twice the value of the railway. That was not proposed at all. It was proposed to limit the Government, so that they could not promise to give more than that—not that they should give that, but that they should not be allowed to make a contract to give any more. If they made a contract to give so much, it would still have to be subject to the ratification of Parliament. The clause merely involved the principle that a contract might be made on the condition that after the lapse of a certain time the railway should belong to the Government without any further payment. The hon. member was in favour of allowing subsidies to be given to the company for the contract, and of allowing the Government to pay for it in cash at a later period, whilst the condition he objected to proposed that the railway should become the property of the State without any further payment. Surely anyone who was in favour of the third condition must also be in favour of the first.

Mr. DONALDSON said that if the Government had permission under the Bill to give twice the value of the line in land, what valid objection could be raised to prevent the ratification of a contract in which that was agreed upon? The hon. member for Nundah contended that the price was too high, and he agreed with him in that.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: But it is subject to ratification.

Mr. DONALDSON said that it was provided in the Bill that the Government might do so.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: The contract is only provisional.

Mr. DONALDSON said that the excuse of the Government would be that they had kept within the four corners of the Bill, and Parliament could raise no valid objection to the Government giving twice the value in land. The hon. gentleman had twice referred to the ratification of the agreement. At an earlier stage of the debate the hon. gentleman had said it did not matter in clause 14 whether the contract was to be subject to ratification in the way proposed, or whether it should be done in the form of a Bill. When they came to that clause he trusted that the hon. gentleman would be prepared to allow a Bill to be substituted for the ratification of the contract.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said that there was no danger, as Parliament was not bound to ratify the contract. If Parliament thought the contract a fair one it would ratify the contract, and if not it would refuse to ratify it. One would think that the Bill was introduced for the purpose of disposing of the property of the country for years to come; but the Bill did absolutely nothing except lay down certain lines within which the Government must run in dealing with a company. But when the provisional contract had been made it did not bind anybody. Parliament was not asked to empower the Government to make a binding contract. Hon. members had been talking as if they were asking power to dispose of the lands of the colony; but the Bill only limited the power of the Government in making a preliminary contract. At present the Government had power to make any sort of contract they liked, but it would not be binding unless ratified by Parliament. The hon.

member need not be so anxious about the future Parliaments. They would take care of themselves. They might try to tie future Parliaments up with red tape or with iron bands as much as they pleased, but it would be useless. The Bill went on that principle. It did not seek in any way to tie up future Parliaments, and yet the whole of the arguments used against it were that it would give the Government power to squander the lands of the colony. It only laid down certain lines within which the Government had to make provisional contracts for land-grant railways.

Mr. NELSON said the Chief Secretary had stated that they could not bind any future Parliament. That was a truism, and what was the use of repeating a truism?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because the hon. gentleman sitting at your side forgets it.

Mr. DONALDSON: I do not. I forget nothing.

Mr. NELSON said that he wished to draw the attention of the Committee to the important fact that they had been called upon to pass the Bill in a hurry, because it was required immediately. It must be evident that the Government were in a desperate hurry to get the Bill through, in order that they might make a contract and have it ratified by the present Parliament.

The COLONIAL TREASURER: It would be a good thing if it could be done.

Mr. NELSON said he had pointed out already that there was but one member of the Ministry who knew anything about railways, and that one was going to make the contract. He (Mr. Nelson) declined to hand over any such power to one particular member of any Cabinet, however good he might be. His principal objection to the Bill was that it destroyed the power of Parliament.

Mr. STEPHENS rose to a point of order. Was the hon. member talking on the clause before the Committee?

The CHAIRMAN: I must say that the hon. member's remarks are not relevant to the clause.

Mr. AGNEW said he understood the Chief Secretary to say that the clause to which he drew special attention could be amended in the direction he indicated, and if that were so he would be satisfied. He did not object to the principle, but he was not in favour of giving twice the cost of the railway.

Mr. ISAMBERT said that subsection 1, taken in connection with a subsequent clause, involved the payment of twice the amount of the cost of the construction of the railway, which, if undertaken at £5,000 a mile, involved a grant of 80,000 acres of land for one mile of railway, if the land was valued at 2s. 6d. an acre. He was sure it would not be valued higher. Suppose the syndicate did not care for working the line, they would only lose one-third of the amount, so that they would have 53,332 acres; and if the contract was for £5,000 a mile, they would not spend more than £3,000, so that every acre of land would not cost them more than 1s. 1½d. If the colony was in such dire distress for want of railways that land must be sacrificed at 2s. 6d. an acre, why could they not build the lines themselves by selling the land? If they did that, instead of giving 80,000 acres of land for a line which would really not cost more than £3,000 a mile, they would only have to sell 24,000 acres. If that measure was passed, the country would become alarmed, as it did in 1883 when a similar proposition was brought forward, in which the interests of the colony were better guarded than they were in that Bill. He was quite certain that if the Bill was passed the next Parliament would sweep it off the statute-book. The Government had not advanced a single argument to show that any lines which it was proposed to

construct on the land-grant principle were really wanted, or that syndicates could build railways better than the State had done in the past.

Mr. AGNEW said he had asked the Chief Secretary if, when they arrived at clause 7, he would be prepared to reduce the price to be paid for the railway. The hon. gentleman had not answered that question, and if he did not intend to do so he (Mr. Agnew) knew how he should vote on the amendment.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 36.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Sir T. Mellwraith, Messrs. Cowley, Tozer, Unmack, Hodgkinson, Hyne, Stephens, Campbell, Watson, Hamilton, McMaster, Casey, Morehead, Smith, Wimbie, Stevenson, Philp, Perkins, Murray, Callan, Mellor, Palmer, Battersby, Corfield, O'Connell, Black, Crombie, Barlow, Lissner, Annear, Dickson, Stevens, Paul, Little, and Jones.

NOES, 18.

Messrs. Donaldson, Powers, Nelson, O'Sullivan, Ryan, Hall, Hoolan, Glassey, Salkeld, Drake, Gannon, Foxton, Macfarlane, Sayers, Agnew, Isambert, Plunkett, and Jessop.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Mr. NELSON said he had another amendment to propose in the clause. He moved that subsection 3 be omitted.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said he did not know why the amendment was moved. That was the principle upon which all land-grant railways he was aware of had been made up to the present time.

Mr. NELSON said the condition which he proposed should be omitted provided for a railway remaining the property of the company subject to a right of purchase by the Crown within a time and upon terms defined by the contract. What was the contract? It might be in six lines, and it might never be brought before them. They wanted to know what the conditions of the contract were to be. The signing of a contract with a syndicate might be a matter for the Executive to deal with, but the conditions under which a contract should be made were for Parliament to deal with. Let them deal with them.

Mr. DRAKE said his principal objection to the condition, the omission of which had been moved by the leader of the Opposition, arose from the powerful influence which a strong syndicate would be able to exercise in a country like this, and with a Government that might not be very strong. If a line made under that condition turned out a good thing and a paying speculation, the company would stick to it; but if it turned out a bad speculation the company would at once exercise all their political influence to compel the Government to purchase it, and whatever the terms of the contract might be it would be impossible to prevent a powerful company from using their influence to have the terms of the contract varied. If at the present time, in consequence of the legitimate opposition to the land-grant principle of railway construction having been broken up, any of those powerful syndicates were allowed to get an entrance into the colony, he feared that the people might not afterwards be sufficiently strong to curb them, and there was great danger of a company building a line under the third condition of the clause exercising influence to have the terms of their contract varied.

Mr. PALMER said they had heard so often about political influence being exercised by those companies, and he would like to hear from the hon. member how it was going to be worked. It was a pity the hon. gentleman had not enlightened them on the subject before the Elections Bill

went through, if the influence referred to was likely to be exercised at elections. There was an everlasting chance that those companies would exercise political influence to suit their own evil purposes. Were hon. members going to get a bribe, and vote accordingly? How were they going to be got at? He was very anxious to know.

Mr. GANNON said he had expressed himself as against the principle of the Bill, and he thought hon. members lost sight of what might happen under it with a corrupt Government. The hon. member for Rosewood mentioned that the land might be valued at 2s. 6d. an acre. That would mean that it would take 80,000 acres of land to pay for the construction of one mile of railway. If a corrupt Government were to make contracts for 5,000 miles of railways on that principle, it would take all the land in the colony to pay for them. They were passing the Bill hurriedly, and if they took twelve months over it it would not be too long. Hon. members opposing the Bill were, in his opinion, doing right, and he intended to support the amendment proposed by the leader of the Opposition.

Mr. SAYERS said the hon. member for Carpentaria wanted to know where the corruption crept in, and the hon. member had only to read what appeared in the Press of Canada and of Tasmania to find that out. The hon. member would find that men occupying high positions as Ministers of the Crown in Canada were prosecuted because they had been got at by these land-grant railway syndicates. He thought they had grave reasons for thinking that that would happen in Queensland. It was not long since a judge on the bench in Tasmania said a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the working of certain railway contracts, and he (Mr. Sayers) had no doubt that corruption would creep in here. Men occupying the highest possible positions in Canada had been indicted for receiving bribes. He thought hon. members should read up the Canadian cases, in which a Minister of the Crown had been impeached for bribery, and they would then have some idea how things would be worked in this colony.

The COLONIAL TREASURER said the hon. gentleman would lead the House to believe he had read of cases of corruption among Ministers in connection with the Canadian railways. He would like to know one case in which a Minister of the Crown had been impeached in connection with the construction of land-grant railways. The hon. member said they all must know of it. Let him tell them of one case.

Mr. ANNEAR said it had been repeatedly contended that, in order to develop the great resources of this country, they must extend their railways and increase the population. They heard a great cry about the unemployed, but he maintained that the passage of that Bill would give employment to all those willing to work. The hon. member for Charters Towers said he had read all about the construction of land-grant railways in other countries, but he would give the hon. member some facts. He would take the hon. member to San Francisco, a city of more than 500,000 inhabitants, from which the Union and Pacific Railroad started—

Mr. NELSON said he would ask the Chairman's ruling as to whether a reference to San Francisco was in order.

Mr. ANNEAR said they were speaking about land-grant railways, and the hon. member for Charters Towers, Mr. Sayers, said that the directors of those companies were corrupt. Now, Mr. Crocker, the vice-president of the Union Pacific Railway—

Mr. NELSON said he had asked for the ruling of the Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN said he understood the leader of the Opposition to raise the question as to the relevancy of the remarks of the hon. member for Maryborough. He did not think the remarks of the hon. member were relevant to the amendment.

Mr. ANNEAR said he was going to support the clause as it stood, and in doing so he was sure he represented his constituents. Some hon. members said they ought to go to the country, and that they did not represent their constituents. He asked the hon. member for Enoggera whether he thought he represented his constituents when making the remarks he had made that evening? The hon. member knew he did not, and if he did not know it he (Mr. Annear) told him now that he did not represent the views of his constituents on the question. No agreement could be ratified until submitted to Parliament; either House could reject it, and he did not think anything could be fairer than that.

Mr. MACFARLANE said he thought the 1st subsection was a bad one, but the 3rd was worse. When the contract had been signed, what control had Parliament over it, or over the terms the Government might make with the contractors? Suppose the Government wanted to purchase the line after it had been worked for a time, they would either have to pay money or give more land. If the line was payable the company would not give it up. If it did not pay they would be very glad to give it up, but would make very hard terms with the Government. That had been his difficulty all along with the Bill. There would be such battles and fights that the Government were sure to get the worst of it. He should be very glad if the Chief Secretary could see his way to leave out the 3rd subsection. It would satisfy those who were opposed to the Bill to a certain extent, and would do no harm to the Bill. He did not think the 3rd subsection would operate well so far as the country was concerned, and he intended to vote against it.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said if the hon. member would look at the 38th and following sections he would find a provision specially dealing with the alternative form of contract. The 38th section provided—

“If the contract provides that the railway shall be the property of the company subject to a right of purchase by the Crown, then at any time after the expiration of ten years from the final completion of the railway, the Crown may purchase the railway, with the rolling-stock and all the appurtenances thereof, but not including the land granted to the company by way of subsidy for its construction, at the fair and reasonable value of the railway upon a basis of valuation to be specified in the contract.”

The contract itself would specify the basis of valuation. In an Act passed by the House in 1834, authorising the construction of a land-grant railway, which he had supported, it was provided, he thought, that the basis of valuation should be the cost of the line, with 5 per cent. per annum added. That was one basis of valuation. Another basis of valuation might be so many years' purchase of the average profits of the preceding ten years, and others might be suggested. In any case, the basis of valuation would be defined in the contract which would be submitted to the approval of Parliament. If any difference arose as to the amount to be paid on that valuation, it would be determined by arbitration. That, again, would be subject to the approval of Parliament, because Parliament might or might

not vote the money to pay the award. In fact, the matter was subject to the control of Parliament from beginning to end.

Mr. NELSON said he hoped the hon. member for Ipswich would not be led astray by that sort of argument, because clause 38 only applied to a railway after the company had abandoned it, and the conditions which then came into operation depended entirely on the contract made previously. They were told that the contracts made by the Government were to be submitted for the approval of Parliament. He held that it was one of the functions of Parliament to define what the conditions of a contract should be, but under the Bill the whole thing was left to the Government, and Parliament was nowhere.

Mr. SALKELD said he liked subsection 3 even less than section 7; the former defined the terms on which the Government had to take a line over, while the latter left it an open matter. Reference had been made to improper practices in connection with land-grant railways in other parts of the world; and, without going so far as to say that such practices might be repeated in Queensland, he held that it was their duty to the colony to see that every precaution was taken to preclude the possibility of it. If the door was left open, and scandals did occur, those hon. members who had not done their best to guard against them would be blamed by their constituents and by the colony generally. Without making any insinuations or charges against anybody in the colony, he could not close his eyes to the fact that very serious scandals in connection with land-grant railways had taken place in other parts of the world; and it was their duty to try as far as possible to prevent anything of the kind taking place in Queensland. The only safe way for the State was to venture no further than simply surveying the railways they wanted made, and then set apart the lands that would be given and call for tenders. Perhaps the simplicity of that mode might be an objection in the minds of some people, but not in his. They would also be dealing directly with the people who made the railway, and there would be no selling of concessions in the London money market. He should vote against the subsection because it left things too indefinite, and allowed the syndicate to force the Government to buy the line after a certain time. The time should be fixed without variation, because if there were any variation the colony would not come best out of the bargain. They did not want wealthy syndicates to bring pressure on the Government to take over a railway that was not paying, or not to take over one that was paying.

Mr. HAMILTON said the clause allowed the Government to take a line out of the hands of a company by paying a fixed price, and that price must be ratified by Parliament. Some people objected to that on the ground that there would be bribery. But people judged others by the sentiments that animated themselves, and if their conclusions were logical, why did not they object to the present system, because under it Ministers could be easily bribed by landholders to lay upon the table the plans of lines through their districts? They had never yet heard anything of the kind suggested. The arguments that had been used showed the weakness of the case, and the hon. member for Toombul had not shown himself qualified for the position of Colonial Treasurer when he said that if a line were to cost £5,000 a mile, and the land were valued at 2s. 6d. an acre, they would have to give 80,000 acres of land per mile. He had better go over his calculations again.

Mr. SAYERS said he had been asked to give an instance where there had been corruption in connection with land-grant railways. He might have mentioned the Chaleurs Bay Railway, with which one of the greatest Canadian statesmen was mixed up, and he was sure that hon. members must have heard of those scandals.

Mr. DRAKE said the Chief Secretary had referred to an Act he passed in 1884, which was a land-grant railway. That was the Maryborough and Urangan Railway, which was a very small affair compared with the Bill before them. It provided that at any time after the completion of the line the Governor in Council might purchase from the company that part of the railway between the school reserve in Kent street, Maryborough, and Croydon Junction, at a sum equal to the cost price of such part, with £5 per annum calculated from the date of such final completion for every £100 of the said cost price added thereto. Even in connection with that very small railway hon. members would remember that a successful application was made to the present Parliament for the refundment of the £2,000 deposited by the company as a guarantee.

Mr. POWERS said it had been urged that upon the land-grant system railways could be constructed without increasing the indebtedness of the country. But the Bill proposed that the company should be paid in full in land, and then after the syndicate had run it for ten years the Government should take it over at a fair valuation in cash, so that after parting with the land the indebtedness of the colony would still be increased. If the line were a good one, that valuation would be increased; and it had been suggested that the difficulty might be provided against by an Act similar to the New Zealand Act, which stated that certain things should be taken into consideration. His contention was that they would pay twice for the railway—once in land, and again in cash when the State bought the railway at the end of ten years. He would ask hon. members to note that no objection had been made to the condition by which a syndicate would be paid the full cost of the line in land.

Question—That the words proposed to be omitted stand part of the clause—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 34.

Sir S. W. Griffith, Sir T. McIlwraith, Messrs. Cowley, Hodgkinson, Unmack, Tozer, Jones, Philp, Stevenson, Hyne, Little, Watson, Stephens, Lissner, McMaster, Morehead, Wimble, Smith, Perkins, Murray, Battersby, Mellor, Palmer, Corfield, Barlow, O'Connell, Annear, Crombie, Casey, Hamilton, Dickson, Stevens, Paul, and Black.

NOES, 16.

Messrs. Donaldson, Nelson, Powers, Sayers, Plunkett, Glassey, Hall, O'Sullivan, Hoolan, Ryan, Salkeld, Drake, Gannon, Isambert, Macfarlane, and Jessop.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Clause 4, as amended, put and passed.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The CHIEF SECRETARY said: Mr. Speaker,—I move that this House do now adjourn. We shall go on with the same business to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

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